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King Lear

The Complete Annotated Text on One Page
Annotations by Michael J. Cummings

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Introduction

The following version of *King Lear* is based on the text in the authoritative 1914 Oxford Edition of Shakespeare's works, edited by W. J. Craig. The text numbers the lines, including those with stage directions such as "Enter" and "Exit." Annotations (notes and definitions) appear in boldfaced type within the text. The list of characters (*dramatis personae*) was augmented to provide more information for the reader.

Characters

King Lear: King of England and the main character, or protagonist. He is a headstrong old man who is blind to his weaknesses and misjudges his three daughters, believing that the two evil daughters have his best interests at heart and that his good and selfless daughter opposes him. He undergoes great suffering that opens his eyes and ennoble his character. Whether there was a historical

Lear is uncertain.

Goneril, Regan: Selfish, greedy daughters of Lear who pretend to love him when he announces that he will give them shares of his kingdom. Later, they treat him cruelly.

Cordelia: Loyal and unselfish daughter of Lear. He disowns her after confusing her honesty with insolence. She continues to love her father in spite of his rejection of her.

Duke of Burgundy: Suitor of Cordelia. He decides to reject her after Lear disowns her.

King of France: Suitor of Cordelia. He marries her even though Lear has disowned her.

Duke of Cornwall: Regan's husband, who is just as cruel as she is.

Duke of Albany: Goneril's husband. He turns against her when he realizes that she is an evil schemer.

Earl of Kent: True and honest friend of Lear who remains loyal even after the king banishes him. To continue serving the king, he wears a disguise and calls himself "Caius."

Earl of Gloucester: Old man who suffers from many of the same faults as Lear. Like Lear, he is old and self-important; like Lear, he misjudges his children and undergoes suffering that makes him a better man. However, Gloucester is less forceful and demanding than Lear and more given to compromise. Such qualities make him a foil of Lear.

Edgar: Gloucester's loyal son and heir. He resembles Cordelia in his loyalty to his father.

Edmund: Gloucester's evil bastard son. He resembles Goneril and Regan in his disloyalty to his father.

Fool: Jester loyal to Lear and Cordelia. The fool is a walking paradox—that is, he is the wisest character in play in that he is the only character who understands the motivations of Lear, his daughters, and other characters. He acts as a kind of mirror, reflecting Lear's faults and weaknesses.

Curan: Courtier.

Old Man: Tenant of Gloucester.

Doctor: Physician who attends Lear after the old king arrives at Dover.

Oswald: Villainous steward of Goneril.

Captain: Employee of Edmund.

Gentleman: Attendant of Cordelia.

Herald

First Servant, Second Servant, Third

Servant: Servants of the Duke of Cornwall.

Monsieur La Far: Marshal of France. He has no speaking part.

Minor Characters: Knights of Lear's train, captains, messengers, soldiers, and attendants.

King Lear

The Complete Annotated Text

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Act 1, Scene 1

A room of State in KING LEAR'S palace.
Enter KENT, GLOUCESTER, and EDMUND.

KENT: I thought the king had more affected **[favored]** 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.

[but now . . . moiety: But now you can't tell which duke he favors, for he divided the kingdom so equally that a close examination (*curiosity*, line 4) cannot reveal who received the bigger share (*moiety*).]

KENT: Is not this your son, my lord? 5

GLOUCESTER: His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge: I have so often blushed to acknowledge him, that now I am brazed to it. **[I reared him but have often blushed to acknowledge him. Now I am hardened to (or used to) doing so. (*Brazed*, or *brazen*, means hardened like brass.)]**

KENT: I cannot conceive you. **[I don't know what you mean]**

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?

[Sir . . . fault: Sir, this young fellow's mother could conceive him. She became pregnant and had a son for her cradle before she had a husband for her bed. Do you smell some wrongdoing?]

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

[the issue . . . proper: The child having turned out to be a proper young man.]

GLOUCESTER: But I have a son, sir, by order of law **[but I also have a legitimate son]**, some year elder than this, who yet is no

dearer **[no more special]** in my account:
 though this **knave** came somewhat saucily
 into the world before he was sent for, yet was
 his mother fair; there was good sport at his
 making, and the whoreson must be
 acknowledged. Do you know this noble
 gentleman, Edmund? 10

EDMUND: No, my lord.

GLOUCESTER: **[He is]** My Lord of Kent:
 remember him hereafter as my honourable
 friend.

EDMUND: My services to your lordship.

KENT: I must love you, and sue **[take
steps]** to know you better.

EDMUND: Sir, I shall study deserving **[study
what it takes to deserve your attention]**.

15

GLOUCESTER: He hath been
 out **[away]** nine yers, and away he shall
 again. The king is coming.

Sennet. Enter LEAR, CORNWALL, ALBANY,
 GONERIL, REGAN, CORDELIA, and
 attendants.

[Sennet: Sounding of trumpets]

LEAR: Attend the Lords of France and
 Burgundy, Gloucester.

GLOUCESTER: I shall, my **liege**. [Exeunt
 GLOUCESTER and EDMUND.]

**[Exeunt: The characters specified leave
the stage.]**

LEAR: Meantime we shall express our
 darker **[serious]** purpose. 20

Give me the map there. Know that we have
 divided

In three our kingdom; and 'tis our
 fast **[decided; steadfast]** intent

To shake all cares and business from our
 age,

Conferring them on younger strengths, while
 we

Unburden'd crawl toward death. Our son of
 Cornwall, 25

And you, our no less loving son of Albany,
 We have this hour a constant will to publish
 Our daughters' several dowers **[bequests;
inheritances]**, that future strife

May be prevented now. The princes, France
 and Burgundy,

Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,

30

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,—

**[Since . . . state: Since I will give up my
rule, my lands, and my cares of state]**

Which of you shall we say doth love us
most? 35

That we our largest bounty may extend
Where nature doth with merit challenge .
Goneril,

**[That we . . . challenge: That I may give the
largest share to the daughter with the
greatest merit]**

Our eldest-born, speak first.

GONERIL: Sir, I love you more than words
can wield the matter;

Dearer than eye-sight, space, and liberty;

40

Beyond what can be valu'd, rich or rare;
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty,
honour;

As much as child e'er lov'd, or father found;
A love that makes breath poor and speech
unable;

Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

45

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

**[Aside: Stage direction indicating that a
character is speaking only to himself (or
herself) or is whispering or speaking softly
to another character so that others cannot
hear what is being said.]**

**the other characters cannot hear what
Cordelia is saying.]**

LEAR: Of all these bounds **[boundaries]**,
even from this line to this,

With shadowy forests and with
champains **[open lands; open
country]** rich'd,

With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted
meads,

We make thee lady: to thine and Albany's
issue **[children]** 50

Be this perpetual. What says our second
daughter,

Our dearest Regan, wife to Cornwall?

Speak.

REGAN: I am made of that self metal as my sister,

And prize me at her worth. In my true heart
I find she names my very deed of love;

55

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 **[made happy]**

In your dear highness' love. 60

CORDELIA: **[Aside.]** Then, poor Cordelia!

And yet not so; since, I am sure, my love's
More richer than my tongue.

**[my love's . . . tongue: My love for my
father cannot be expressed in words.]**

LEAR: To thee and thine, hereditary ever,
Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom,

65

No less in space, validity, and pleasure,

Than that conferr'd on Goneril. Now, our
joy,

Although our last, not least; to whose young
love

The vines of France and milk of Burgundy

Strive to be interest'd; what can you say to
draw 70

**[interest'd: Interested. Here, the word can
be interpreted to mean *bound up*
with or attached to.]**

A third more opulent than your sisters?

Speak.

CORDELIA: Nothing, my lord.

LEAR: Nothing?

CORDELIA: Nothing.

LEAR: Nothing will come of nothing: speak
again. 75

CORDELIA: Unhappy that I am, I cannot

heave

My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty

According to my bond **[obligation; duty as a
daughter]** nor more nor less.

LEAR: How, how, Cordelia! mend your
speech a little,

Lest you may **mar** your fortunes. 80

CORDELIA: Good my lord **[my good
lord],**

You have begot me, bred me, lov'd me: I

Return those duties back as are right fit,

Obeys you, love you, and most honour you.



Why have my sisters husbands **[why do my sisters have husbands]**, if they say

85

They love you all? Haply **[perhaps]**, 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 **[entirely]**. 90

LEAR: But goes thy heart with this? **[Is this how you really feel?]**

CORDELIA: Ay, good my lord.

LEAR: So young, and so untender?

CORDELIA: So young, my lord, and true.

LEAR: Let it be so; thy truth then be thy **dower**: 95

For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,

The mysteries of Hecate **[in Greek mythology, an underworld goddess who was the protector of witches]** 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, 100

Propinquity **[kinship]** and property of blood,

And as a stranger to my heart and me

Hold thee from this for ever. The barbarous Scythian,

[Scythian: One of the nomadic people of Scythia, an ancient land north of the Black Sea]

Or he that makes his generation messes **[food]**

To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom 105

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

As thou my sometime daughter.

KENT: Good my liege, — **[My good lord —]**

LEAR: Peace **[be silent]**, Kent!

Come not between the dragon and his wrath. 110

I lov'd her most, and thought to set my rest **[retirement]**

On her kind nursery **[care]**. Hence **[go away]**, and avoid my sight!

So be my grave my peace **[I will know peace only in the grave]**, as here I give



Her father's heart from her! Call France **[king of France]**.

Who stirs? **[Isn't anyone going to do my bidding? Why are you standing there?]**

115

Call Burgundy. Cornwall and Albany,
With my two daughters' **dowers** digest the
third;

Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry
her.

I do invest you **[Cornwall and Albany]** jointly
with my power,

Pre-eminence, and all the large effects
120

That troop with majesty. Ourself by monthly
course,

With reservation of a hundred knights,
By you to be sustain'd, shall our abode
Make with you by due turn. Only we shall
retain

**[Ourself . . . due turn: Accompanied by a
hundred nights, I will reside with you on a
monthly basis—one month with Cornwall
and Regan, the other month with Albany
and Goneril.]**

The name and all th' addition **[respect and
privileges]** to a king; 125

The sway, revenue, execution of the rest,
Beloved sons, be yours: which to confirm,
This coronet part between you.

**[This . . . you: Share this small crown
between you.]**

KENT: Royal Lear,

Whom I have ever honour'd as my king,
130

Lov'd as my father, as my master follow'd,
As my great patron thought on in my prayers,
—

LEAR: The bow is bent and drawn; make
from the shaft.

**[The bow . . . shaft: You are annoying me
so much that my anger is like the arrow in
a drawn bow. I'll shoot it if you don't leave
my presence.]**

KENT: Let it fall rather, though the **fork**
invade

The region of my heart: be Kent unmannerly
135

When Lear is mad. What wouldst thou do, old
man?

Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to

Speak

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

When majesty falls to folly. Reserve thy
state;

And, in thy best consideration, check
140

This hideous rashness: answer my life my
judgment,

**[Let it fall. . . rashness: Go ahead and
shoot, even though the arrow will pierce
my heart. It is my duty to be annoying
when you do insane things. Do you think I
am afraid to speak up, that I will flatter you
by doing everything you command? I am
bound by honor to protest your actions
when they are foolish? Take time to
consider what you are doing. It is rash.]**

Thy youngest daughter does not love thee
least;

Nor are those empty-hearted whose low
sound

Reverbs no hollowness.

**[Nor are . . . hollowness: Cordelia's abrupt,
quiet manner does not mean she has no
heart.]**

LEAR: Kent, on thy life, no more. 145

KENT: My life I never held but as a pawn

To wage against thine enemies; nor fear to
lose it,

Thy safety being the motive.

LEAR: Out of my sight!

KENT: See better, Lear; and let me still
remain 150

The true blank of thine eye.

**[true blank: target; bull's-eye. Kent is
telling Lear to focus his attention on him,
for Kent is giving the king good advice.]**

LEAR: Now, by Apollo, —

**[Apollo: In Greek and Roman mythology,
the god of prophecy, music, poetry,
medicine, and the sun.]**

KENT: Now, by Apollo, king,

Thou swear'st thy gods in vain.

LEAR: O vassal! miscreant! [Laying his hand
on his sword. 155

[vassal: A subordinate; a slave.]

ALBANY AND CORNWALL: Dear sir,
forbear.

KENT: Do;

Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow



Upon the foul disease. Revoke thy gift;
Or, whilst I can vent clamour from my throat,
160

I'll tell thee thou dost evil.

[Kill . . . dost evil: Go ahead and kill me, the man who is trying to cure you of your mad behavior. Give the physician's fee to the disease that possesses you. Oh, please take back your bequests. If you don't, I'll condemn you as an evil man.]

LEAR: Hear me, recreant!

[recreant: Disloyal person; coward.]

On thine **allegiance**, hear me!

Since thou hast sought to make us break our
vow, —

Which we durst **[past of dare]** never yet, —
and, with strain'd pride 165

To come betwixt **[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;

170

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 **[in Roman mythology, the king of the gods]**

This shall not be revok'd. 175

[Since thou . . . revok'd: Because you are trying to make me cancel my promised bequests—and I have never gone back on my word—and because I cannot bear your prideful interference, I have decided to banish you from my kingdom. You have five days to gather provisions to sustain you. On the sixth day, you will leave. If you are ever discovered on any of my lands, you will be put to death. Leave me! This sentence will never be revoked.]

KENT: Fare thee well, king; sith **[since]** thus
thou wilt appear,

Freedom lives hence, and banishment is
here.

[To CORDELIA.] The gods to their dear
shelter take thee, maid,

That justly think'st, and hast most rightly
said!
[To REGAN and GONERIL.] And your large
speeches may your deeds approve,
180
That good effects may spring from words of
love.
Thus Kent, O princes! bids you all
adieu **[good-bye in French]**;
He'll shape his old course in a country new.
[Exit.]

Flourish. Re-enter GLOUCESTER, with
FRANCE, BURGUNDY, and attendants.

GLOUCESTER: Here's France and
Burgundy, my noble lord. 185
LEAR: My Lord of Burgundy,
We first address toward you, who with this
king
Hath rivall'd for our daughter **[Cordelia]**.
What, in the least,
Will you require in present
dower **[dowry]** with her,
Or cease your quest of love? 190
BURGUNDY: Most royal majesty,
I crave no more than hath your highness
offer'd,
Nor will you tender less.
LEAR: Right noble Burgundy,
When she was dear to us we did hold her
so, 195
But now her price is fall'n. **[Lear will not offer
a dowry.]** Sir, there she stands:
If aught **[anything]** within that little-seeming
substance,
Or all of it, with our displeasure piec'd,
And nothing more, may fitly like your
Grace,
She's there, and she is yours. 200
BURGUNDY: I know no answer.
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? 205
BURGUNDY: Pardon me, royal sir;
Election makes not up on such conditions.
**[Election . . . conditions: I cannot choose
her under such conditions.]**



LEAR: Then leave her, sir; for, by the power
that made me,
I tell you all her wealth.—[To FRANCE.] For
you, great king,
I would not from your love make such a
stray 210

To match you where I hate **[to offer you my
hateful daughter]**; therefore, beseech you
To avert your liking a more worthier way
Than on a wretch whom nature is ashamed
Almost to acknowledge hers.

FRANCE: This is most strange, 215
That she, who even but now was your best
object,

The argument of your praise, balm of your
age,

The best, the dearest, should in this
trice **[moment]** of time

Commit a thing so monstrous, to dismantle
So many folds of favour. Sure, her offence
220

Must be of such unnatural degree
That monsters it, or your fore-
vouch'd **[previously asserted]** affection

Fall into taint; which to believe of her,
Must be a faith that reason without miracle
Could never plant in me. 225

**[to believe . . . plant in me: I cannot believe
that she is so unworthy.]**

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

**[If for I . . . before I speak: Because I don't
like to preface my action with words meant
to flatter my listeners, I simply go ahead
and act before I speak.]**

It is no vicious blot nor other foulness,
230

No unchaste action, or dishonour'd step,
That hath depriv'd me of your grace and
favour,

**[It is no . . . favour: I have not done
anything vicious, foul, or unchaste that
has caused you to look down on me.]**

But even for want of that for which I am
richer,

A still-soliciting eye, and such a tongue
That I am glad I have not, though not to have
it 235

Hath lost me in your liking.

[But even . . . liking: Although I lack the things that would enhance my circumstances—an eye for riches and a smooth-talking tongue—I am glad that I don't have them even though their absence has lowered me in your esteem.]

LEAR: Better thou

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

FRANCE: Is it but this? a tardiness in nature

Which often leaves the history unspoke
240

That it intends to do? My Lord of Burgundy,
[Is it but . . . to do: Is that all that this is about: a tendency in her nature to speak plainly without telling the whole story behind her feelings?]

What say you to the lady? Love is not love
When it is mingled with regards that stand
Aloof from the entire point. Will you have her?

She is herself a dowry. **[She herself is great prize. There is no need for a dowry].**
245

BURGUNDY: Royal Lear,
Give but that portion which yourself
propos'd,
And here I take Cordelia by the hand,
Duchess of Burgundy.

LEAR: Nothing: I have sworn; I am firm.
250

BURGUNDY: I am sorry, then,
you **[Cordelia]** 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. 255

FRANCE: Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich,
being poor;
Most choice, forsaken; and most lov'd,
despis'd!

Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon:
Be it lawful I take up what's cast away.
Gods, gods! 'tis strange that from their cold'st
neglect 260

My love should kindle to inflam'd respect.

[Gods . . . respect: By the gods, it is strange that Cordelia's rejection by Lear and Burgundy has enkindled in me love



and respect for her.]

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
Shall buy this unpriz'd precious maid of me.

265

Bid them farewell, Cordelia, though unkind:
Thou lovest here, a better where to find.

[Thou . . . find: You lose her in England, but a better life awaits you in France.]

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

270

Without our grace, our love, our benison **[blessing]**.

Come, noble Burgundy. [Flourish. Exeunt
LEAR, BURGUNDY, CORNWALL, ALBANY,
GLOUCESTER, and attendants.

[Exeunt: The characters specified leave the stage.]

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 **[I know you for what you are, devious and greedy]**; 275

And like a sister am most loath to call
Your faults as they are nam'd. Use well our father:

To your professed bosoms I commit him:
But yet, alas! stood I within his grace,
I would prefer him to a better place.

280

[stood I . . . place: If I still stood in his good graces, I would take it upon myself to give him the best of care in his old age.]

So farewell to you both.

REGAN: Prescribe not us our duties.

[Prescribe . . . duties: Don't tell us how to care for him.]

GONERIL: Let your study

Be to content your lord, who hath receiv'd you

At fortune's alms; you have obedience scanted, 285

And well are worth the want that you have wanted.

[Let your . . . wanted: You should focus on



making your lord, the king of France, content. He has taken you in as a charity case. Because you have not obeyed your father, you don't deserve to receive anything from him.]

CORDELIA: Time shall unfold what plighted cunning hides;
Who covers faults, at last shame them derides.

[Time will reveal the deceit you hide in your heart. Whoever covers faults will eventually meet with shame.]

Well may you prosper!

FRANCE: Come, my fair Cordelia. [Exit FRANCE and CORDELIA. 290

GONERIL: Sister, it is not little I have to say of what most nearly appertains to us both. I think our father will hence **[leave; go forth]** 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 **[appears obvious; appears plain to see]**.

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

[yet he . . . himself: Yet he has never really known himself.]

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

295

[The best . . . with them: When he was at his best in his younger days, he was nevertheless rash. Advancing age has only worsened his faults. So now we must deal with a cranky, unpredictable old man.]

REGAN: Such unconstant starts **[tantrums]** are we like to have from him as this of Kent's banishment.

GONERIL: There is further compliment of leave-taking between France and him. Pray you, let us sit together: if our father carry authority with such dispositions as he bears,

this last surrender of his will but offend us.
[There is further . . . offend us: There is to be a sendoff ceremony for the French king when he departs. Let's sit down and discuss what has come to pass. If our father continues to use his kingly authority even though he has retired from the throne, he will make trouble for us.]
 REGAN: We shall further think on 't.
 GONERIL: We must do something, and i' the heat. [Exeunt.
[We must . . . heat: We must do something before our hot emotions cool.]
[Exeunt: Everyone leaves the stage.]

New York Times Best-Selling Books

Act 1, Scene 2

A hall in 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
 5

The curiosity of nations to deprive me,
 For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
 Lag of a brother? Why bastard? wherefore base?

When my dimensions are as well compact,
 My mind as generous, and my shape as true,
 10

As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us

[Thou, Nature . . . madam's issue: Nature, you are my goddess; you are the law that governs me, not the law made by men. Why should I be looked down upon by the law of men, which deprives me of my rights just because I was born twelve or fourteen months after my brother, Edgar? Why do they call me a bastard? Why do they say I am base when I have a mind and body that are the equal of any man born

within wedlock?]

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,

15

Go to the creating a whole tribe of **fops**,
Got 'tween asleep and wake? Well then,
**[Who in . . . wake: Because we illegitimate
children were conceived in a moment of
lustful passion, we have more fire and
ferocity in us than those dandies who were
conceived in a dull, tired marriage bed
when the husband and wife were half-
asleep.]**

Legitimate Edgar **[Edmund's brother, who
was born in wedlock and is therefore the
legal heir of his father's property]**, I must
have your land:

Our father's love is to **[is as much to]** the
bastard Edmund

As to the legitimate. Fine word, 'legitimate!'

20

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. 25

GLOUCESTER: Kent banished thus! And
France **[the ruler of France]** in
choler **[anger]** parted!

And the king gone to-night!
subscrib'd **[signed away]** his power!
Confin'd to exhibition **[confined to being a
figurehead king]**! All this done

Upon the gad **[whim; moment; foolish
action]**! Edmund, how now! what news?

EDMUND: So please your lordship, none.

[Putting up the letter. 30

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. 35

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 **[retain]** 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. 40

GLOUCESTER:

[reads from the letter] 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 enjoy half his revenue for ever, and live the beloved of your brother, Edgar.

[Meaning: It is not a good policy to revere the elderly so much. Such a policy keeps our inheritance from us until we ourselves are old and cannot enjoy it. To tell the truth, I am beginning to feel like a slave under the oppression of the elderly. They oppress us because we let them. Come to me to discuss this matter. If our father died, you would get half his estate and enjoy my undying fraternal love.]

—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 **[window]** of my closet **[room; private chamber]**.

GLOUCESTER: You know the character **[handwriting]** to be your brother's?

EDMUND: If the matter were good, my lord, I durst **[past of dare]** swear it were his; but, in respect of that, I would fain **[likely]** think it were not.

GLOUCESTER: It is his. 45

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 often heard him maintain it to be fit that, sons at perfect age, and fathers declined, 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 writ this to feel **[test]** my affection to your honour, and to no other pretence of danger.

50

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 **[auditory]** 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. **[I'm sure he is not.]**

GLOUCESTER: —to his father, that so tenderly and entirely loves him. Heaven and earth! Edmund, seek him out; wind me into him **[talk about me with him]**, I pray you: frame the business after your own wisdom. I would **unstate** myself to be in a due

resolution. 55

[unstate . . . resolution: Forfeit my status and property to find out what's going on]

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.

[These late . . . effects: The recent eclipses are a bad omen for us. True, men of learning offer reasons not to fear them. Nevertheless, unwelcome events always follow them. (There were eclipses of the sun and moon in the fall of 1605, at about the time that Shakespeare was preparing *King Lear*.)]

Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide: in cities, mutinies; in countries, **discord**; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked between son and father. This villain of mine **[Edgar]** comes under the prediction; there's son against father: the king falls from bias of nature **[behaves strangely]**; 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 **[foolishness; stupidity]** of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune,—often the surfeit **[excess]** of our own behaviour,—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 **[pronounced TRETCH erz: deceivers; cheaters; one given to treachery]** by spherical predominance **[by the influence of heavenly bodies]**, 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 [**star or constellation**], and my nativity was under ursa major [**star constellation; Great Bear in English**]; so that it follows I am rough and lecherous. 'Sfoot! [by the foot of Christ!] I should have been that I am had the **maidenliest** star in the **firmament** twinkled on my bastardizing. [**I would be the way I am regardless of the position or movement of the stars.**] Edgar—

Enter EDGAR.

and **pat** he comes, like the catastrophe of the old comedy [**like the ending of a comedy with a predictable outcome**]: my cue is villanous [**villainous**] melancholy [**I will now take on a mood of villainous melancholy**], with a sigh like **Tom o' Bedlam** [**madman from a London asylum**]. O, these eclipses do **portend** these divisions! Fa, sol, la, mi. [**Edmund apparently sings music notes.**] 60

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 with that?

EDMUND: I promise you the effects he writes of succeed unhappily; as of unnaturalness between the child and the parent; death, dearth [**food shortage; lack or need of something else**], dissolutions of ancient amities [**friendships**]; divisions in state; menaces and maledictions [**curses**] against king and nobles; needless diffidences [**diffidence: (1) distrust; (2) timidity; lack of self-confidence; hesitancy**], banishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, nuptial [**having to do with marriage**] breaches, and I know not what. EDGAR: How long have you been a sectary astronomical [**member of a sect of astrologers**]? 65

EDMUND: Come, come; when saw you my father last?

EDGAR: 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**? 70

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.

[Bethink . . . allay: Try to think how you may have offended him. He's angry with you. So stay away from him until he cools off. Right now, he is so angry that even if he struck you or injured you, he would still be angry.]

EDGAR: Some villain hath done me wrong.

EDMUND: That's my fear. I pray you have a continent **[restrained] forbearance** till the speed of his rage goes slower, and, as I say, retire with me to my lodging, from whence I will fitly bring you to hear my lord speak. Pray you, go; there's my key. If you do stir abroad, go armed.

EDGAR: Armed, brother! 75

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

EDGAR: Shall I hear from you anon **[soon]**?

EDMUND: I do serve you in this business. [Exit EDGAR.]

A credulous **[gullible; too quick to believe someone]** father, and a brother noble, Whose nature is so far from doing harms 80

That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty

My practices ride easy! I see the business. Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit **[scheming]**:

All with me 's **[me is]** meet **[suitable; acceptable]** that I can fashion fit. [Exit.]

Teaching Shakespeare: A

Handbook for Teachers

Act 1, Scene 3

A room in the DUKE OF ALBANY'S palace.
Enter GONERIL and OSWALD, her steward.

GONERIL: Did my father strike my
gentleman **[servant; attendant]** for
chiding **[reprimanding; scolding]** of his
fool **[court jester]**?

OSWALD: Ay, madam.

GONERIL: By day and night he wrongs me;
every hour 5

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:
10

If you come slack of former services,
**[If you . . . services: If you are slack in
serving him]**

You shall do well; the fault of it I'll answer.

OSWALD: He's coming, madam; I hear him.
[Horns within.]

[Horns within: Horns offstage]

GONERIL: Put on what weary negligence
you please,

You and your fellows; I'd have it come to
question: 15

If he distaste it, let him **[go]** to my sister,
Whose mind and mine, I know, in that are
one,

Not to be over-rul'd. Idle old man,
That still would manage those authorities
That he hath given away! Now, by my life,
20

Old fools are babes again, and must be
us'd **[handled]**

With checks as flatteries, when they are seen
abus'd.

**[Put on . . . abus'd: I want you and the
other servants to neglect him to the point
that he complains to me. Then I'll send him
to my sister, who thinks the way I do on
this matter—namely, that he should not be
allowed to overrule us. He's an idle old**

man who wants to hold on to the authority that he gave away to us. Because old fools become like children, they want to be flattered and pampered. But, like children, they must also be scolded and disciplined.]

Remember what I have said.

OSWALD: Well, madam.

GONERIL: And let his knights have colder **[unfriendly]** looks among you;
25

What grows of it **[what comes 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.]

[I would breed . . . course: I want your behavior to provoke him. When he complains, I'll tell him a thing or two about his own intolerable behavior. I'll write to my sister and warn her to act toward him as I do now.]

[Exeunt: Everyone leaves the stage.]

Act 1, Scene 4

A hall in the DUKE OF ALBANY'S palace.
Enter KENT, disguised.

KENT: If but as well I other accents borrow,
That can my speech diffuse, my good intent
May carry through itself to that full issue

5

For which I raz'd my likeness. Now, banish'd Kent,

If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemn'd,

So may it come, thy master, whom thou lov'st,

Shall find thee full of labours.

[If but . . . labours: If I can disguise my voice, my efforts to help the king will succeed—especially considering that I have already disguised my appearance. Perhaps the result of my dissembling will be that I will eventually regain the king's favor.]

Horns within. Enter LEAR, knights, and attendants. 10

LEAR: Let me not stay **[wait]** a **jot** for dinner. Go, get it ready. [Exit an attendant.] How now! what art thou?

KENT: A man, sir.

LEAR: What dost thou profess? What wouldst thou with us?

KENT: I do profess to be no less than I seem; to serve him truly that will put me in trust **[that will trust me]**; to love him that is honest; to converse with him that is wise, and says little; to fear judgment; to fight when I cannot choose; **and to eat no fish.**

LEAR: What art thou? 15

KENT: A very honest-hearted fellow, and as poor as the king.

LEAR: If thou be as poor for a subject as he is for a king, thou art poor enough. What wouldst thou?

KENT: Service.

LEAR: Whom wouldst thou serve?

KENT: You. 20

LEAR: Dost thou know me, fellow?

KENT: No, sir; but you have that in your **countenance** which I would **fain** call master. **[But you have the look of an authority figure.]**

LEAR: What's that?

KENT: Authority.

LEAR: What services canst thou do?

25

KENT: I can keep honest counsel **[secrets]**, ride, run, **mar** a curious tale in telling it, and deliver a plain message bluntly; that which ordinary men are fit for, I am qualified in, and the best of me is **diligence.**

LEAR: How old art thou?

KENT: Not so young, sir, to love a woman for singing **[to love a woman just because she sings well]**, nor so old to **dote** on her for any thing; I have years on my back[,] forty-eight.

LEAR: Follow me; thou shalt serve me: if I like thee no worse after dinner I will not part from thee yet. Dinner, ho! dinner! Where's my **knave**? my fool? Go you and call my fool hither. [Exit attendant.]

Enter OSWALD. 30

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

OSWALD: So please you,— [Exit.

LEAR: What says the fellow there? Call the
clotpoll **[blockhead; moron]** back. [Exit a
knight.] Where's my fool, ho? I think the
world's asleep. How now! where's that
mongrel?

Re-enter knight.

KNIGHT: He says, my lord, your daughter is
not well. 35

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.

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.

**[your highness . . . daughter: Your
highness does not receive the same lavish
affection that you were used to; there's a
great lessening of kindness toward you by
everyone.]**

LEAR: Ha! sayest thou so? 40

KNIGHT: I **beseech** you, pardon me, my lord,
if I be mistaken; for my duty cannot be silent
when I think your highness wronged.

LEAR: Thou but rememberest me of mine
own conception **[you remind me of what I
have already noticed]**: 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 [Cordelia's]
going into France, sir, the fool hath much
pined him away **[the fool has become
depressed]**.

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.

45

Re-enter OSWALD.

O! you sir, you, come you hither, sir. Who am I, sir?

OSWALD: My lady's **[Regan's]** father.

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

OSWALD: I am none of these, my lord; I beseech your pardon. 50

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.]

[base football player: Football (soccer) players were considered common and low.]

LEAR: I thank thee, fellow; thou servest me, and I'll love thee.

KENT: Come, sir, arise, away! I'll teach you differences **[a thing or two]**: away, away! If you will measure your **lubber's** length again, **tarry**; but away! Go to; have you wisdom? so. [Pushes OSWALD out. 55

[If you will . . . wisdom: If you will stand up and confront me again with your stupid presence, stay and suffer the consequences. Otherwise, get going. Are you smart enough to leave when you're not wanted?]

LEAR: Now, my friendly knave, I thank thee: there's earnest of **[money for]** thy service. [Gives KENT money.]

Enter fool.

FOOL: Let me hire him too: here's my coxcomb **[jester's cap]**. [Offers KENT his cap.]

LEAR: How now, my pretty knave! how dost thou?

FOOL: Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb. 60

KENT: Why, fool?

FOOL: Why? for taking one's part that's out of favour. Nay, an **[if]** 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 **[his]** daughters, and did

the third a blessing against his will: if thou follow him thou must needs wear my coxcomb. How now, nuncle [**uncle, referring to Lear**]! Would I had two coxcombs and two daughters!

LEAR: Why, my boy?

FOOL: If I gave them [**the daughters**] all my living [**all my money and property, as Lear did to Goneril and Regan**], I'd keep my coxcombs myself. There's mine; beg another of thy daughters.

LEAR: Take heed, sirrah; the whip. 65

FOOL: Truth's a dog must to kennel; he must be whipped out when Lady the brach may stand by the fire and stink.

[Truth's . . . stink: When I tell the truth, you, punish me as if I were your dog, Lady. Meanwhile, Lady gets to stand by the fireplace and stink.]

LEAR: A pestilent gall to me! **[You rub me the wrong way!]**

FOOL: [To KENT] Sirrah, I'll teach thee a speech **[poem]**.

LEAR: Do.

FOOL: Mark it, nuncle:— 70

Have more than thou showest,
Speak less than thou knowest,
Lend less than thou
owest **[own]**,

Ride more than thou
goest **[walk]**,

Learn more than thou
trowest **[know]**, 75

Set less than thou throwest **[in a game of dice, bet less than you can afford to lose]**

Leave thy drink and thy whore,
And keep in-a-door **[indoors]**,
And thou shalt have more **[more money]**

Than two tens to a score.

80

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?

[Then . . . nothing for 't: Then the poem resembles what an unpaid lawyer says. You gave me nothing for reciting it.]

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

FOOL: [To KENT.] Prithee, tell him, so much the rent of his land comes to: he will not believe a fool.

[Prithee . . . comes to: I pray thee, tell him that the rent of his land comes to nothing.]

LEAR: A bitter fool! 85

FOOL: Dost thou know the difference, my boy, between a bitter fool and a sweet fool?

LEAR: No, lad; teach me.

FOOL:

That lord that counsell'd thee
To give away thy land,
Come place him here by me,
90

Do thou for him stand **[you stand in for him]:**

The sweet and bitter fool
Will presently appear;

The one in **motley** here **[in my colorful jester clothes, I am the sweet fool],**

The other found out there **[you are the bitter one].** 95

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. **[What he says is not entirely foolish, 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. Nuncle, give me an egg, and I'll give thee two crowns.

[No, faith . . . snatching: No, in truth, lords and great men act the part of fools too. If I tried to have a monopoly on being a fool, they wouldn't allow me. They will not let me have foolishness all to myself. Instead, they snatch some of it.]

LEAR: What two crowns shall they be?
100

FOOL: Why, after I have cut the egg i' the middle and eat up the meat, the two crowns of the egg. **[Why, after I cut the egg in the middle and eat the whites, two golden crowns remain—the yolk cut in half.]** When thou **clovest** thy crown i' the middle, and gavest away both parts, thou **borest** thine ass on thy back o'er the dirt: thou hadst little wit in

thy bald crown when thou gavest thy golden one away. **[When you cut your kingdom in half and gave away both parts, you were just as foolhardy as the man who carries his donkey instead of riding it.]** If I speak like myself in this, let him be whipped that first finds it so. **[If I'm speaking the truth—which is my job as a jester—whip the man who thinks I'm a lying fool.]**

Fools had ne'er less grace in a year **[fools have had a hard time practicing their trade];**

For wise men are grown foppish **[for wise men are becoming foolish],**
And know not how their wits to wear **[and don't how to use their intelligence],**

Their manners are so apish **[because they go around imitating people like me].**

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 **[caregivers];** for when thou gavest them the rod and puttest down thine own breeches, 104

Then they for sudden joy did weep,
And I for sorrow sung,
That such a king should play bo-peep **[should play a child's game],**
And go the fools among **[and walk among the fools].**

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

LEAR: An you lie, sirrah, we'll have you whipped. 105

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 **[daughters].**

Enter GONERIL.

LEAR: How now, daughter! what makes that frontlet **[sour look; grimace; frown]** 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 **[a zero unaccompanied by a number before or after it, such as 20 or 0.6. In other words, Lear is nothing]**. 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 [\[perhaps a reference to Goneril as a mother/caregiver; see line 104\]](#); 110

He that keeps nor crust nor crumb,

Weary of all, shall want some.

[He that . . . some: He that gives away all his bread, weary of it, will eventually need some.]

That's a shealed **[shelled; having the husk or pod removed]** peascod. [Pointing to LEAR.]

GONERIL: Not only, sir, this your all-licens'd **[free to say or do anything]** fool, But other of your **insolent**

retinue **[attendants]** 115

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, 120

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,

125

Which else were shame, that then necessity

Will call **discreet** proceeding.

[I had though . . . proceeding: I thought that when I informed you of their behavior, you would correct it. But, no, what you say and do indicates that you tolerate their

behavior and even encourage it by your lack of action. True, censuring them might make them angry with you. Nevertheless, you should do your duty just the same.]

FOOL: For you trow **[know]**, nuncle,
The hedge-sparrow fed the cuckoo
so long,
That it had its head bit off by it
young. 130

**[The hedge- . . . young: The
hedge-sparrow fed the baby
cuckoo so long that, when the
cuckoo grew larger, it bit off the
sparrow's head.]**

So out went the candle, and we were left
darkling **[in the dark]**.

LEAR: Are you our daughter?

GONERIL: I would you would make use of
your good wisdom,

Where of I know you are fraught **[filled with;]**;
and put away

These dispositions which of late transform
you 135

From what you rightly are.

FOOL: May not an ass know when the cart
draws the horse? Whoop, Jug! I love thee.

**[May . . . horse: Even a dumb ass
knows when the cart pulls the horse.
In other words, the natural order is
reversed: Goneril is trying to boss
her father.]**

**[Whoop . . . thee: Nonsensical words,
which the fool utters from time to
time.]**

LEAR: Does any here know me? This is not
Lear:

Does Lear walk thus? speak thus? Where are
his eyes?

Either his notion weakens, his discernings
140

Are lethargied. Ha! waking? 'tis not so.

**[Does any . . . not so: Does anyone here
know who I am? I cannot be Lear. Lear
doesn't walk or speak this way. Where is
Lear's insight? Either his mind is slipping
or his judgment cannot function. Am I
awake? I don't think so.]**

Who is it that can tell me who I am?

FOOL: Lear's shadow.

LEAR: I would learn that; for, by the marks of
sovereignty, knowledge and reason, I should

be false persuaded I had daughters.
[I would learn . . . daughters: I would like to find out who I am. By all that I see and know, I don't even have daughters.]

FOOL: Which they will make an obedient father. 145

[Which . . . father: Daughters would make you obey them.]

LEAR: Your name, fair gentlewoman?

GONERIL: This admiration, sir, is much o' the favour

Of other your new pranks. I do beseech you

To understand my purposes aright:

[This admiration . . . aright: Calling me a fair gentlewoman is just one of your new pranks. But I do ask you to understand my intentions:]

As you are old and **reverend**, **[you]** should be wise. 150

Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires;

Men so disorder'd, so debosh'd [debauched—that is, morally corrupted], and bold,

That this our court, infected with their manners,

Shows **[looks]** like a riotous inn: epicurism and lust

[epicurism: Epicureanism, a devotion to pleasures of the senses]

Make it more like a **tavern** or a brothel 155

Than a grac'd palace. The shame itself doth speak

For instant remedy; be then desir'd

By her that else will take the thing she begs,

A little to disquantity your train;

And the remainder, that shall still depend, 160

To be such men as may besort your age, Which know themselves and you.

[be then . . . and you: Be then open to making changes, such as dismissing some of your rowdy knights. It's all right with me if you keep such older men as may fit in (*besort*, line 161) with your advancing age.]

LEAR: Darkness and devils!

Saddle my horses; call my train together.

Degenerate bastard! I'll not trouble thee: 165

Yet have I left a daughter.
 GONERIL: You strike my people, and your
 disorder'd rabble
 Make servants of their betters.

Enter ALBANY.

LEAR: Woe, that too late **repents;** 170

[To ALBANY.] O! sir, are you come?
 Is it your will? Speak, sir. Prepare my
 horses. **[Lear speaks the last sentence to
 servants.]**

Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,
 More hideous, when thou show'st thee in a
 child,
 Than the sea-monster. 175

ALBANY: Pray, sir, be patient.

LEAR: [To GONERIL.] Detested kite! thou
 liest:

My train are men of choice and rarest parts,
 That all particulars of duty know,
 And in the most exact regard support
 180

The worships of their name. O most small
 fault,
 How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!
 Which, like an engine, wrench'd my frame of
 nature

From the fix'd place, drew from my heart all
 love,
 And added to the gall. O Lear, Lear, Lear!
 185

Beat at this gate, that let thy folly in, [Striking
 his head.

And thy dear judgment out! Go, go, my
 people.

**[My train . . . judgment out: My knights are
 of the highest quality. They know well their
 duty and behave in a manner that
 preserves their good name. O, that small
 fault in Cordelia. How ugly it appeared in
 her. It drew all the love from my heart,
 embittered me, and changed me into a
 different man. Why did I let folly into my
 mind to replace good judgment?]**

ALBANY: My lord, I am guiltless, as I am
 ignorant

Of what hath mov'd **[upset]** you.

LEAR: It may be so, my lord. 190
 Hear, Nature, hear! dear goddess, hear!
 Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend

To make this creature **[Goneril]** fruitful!
 Into her womb convey sterility!
 Dry up in her the organs of
 increase **[reproduction]**, 195
 And from her derogate **[degraded]** body
 never spring
 A babe to honour her! If she must
 teem **[become pregnant; give birth]**,
 Create her child of spleen **[ill temper]**, that it
 may live
 And be a thwart disnatur'd **[perverse;**
unnatural] torment to her!
 Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth,
 200
 With cadent **[falling; trickling]** tears fret **[dig;**
cut] 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. 205
 ALBANY: Now, gods that we adore, whereof
 comes this?
 GONERIL: Never afflict yourself to know the
 cause;
 But let his disposition have that scope **[room;**
freedom; leeway]
 That dotage **[old age]** gives it.

Re-enter LEAR. 210

LEAR: What! fifty of my followers at a clap,
 Within a fortnight?
[What . . . fortnight: What! Have fifty of my
knights been dismissed in two weeks?]
 ALBANY: What's the matter, sir?
 LEAR: I'll tell thee. **[To GONERIL.]** Life and
 death! I am asham'd
 That thou hast power to shake my manhood
 thus, 215
 That these hot tears, which break from me
 perforce **[automatically; unavoidably]**,
 Should make thee worth them **[should make**
me cry for a worthless daughter like you].
 Blasts **[wind blasts]** and fogs upon thee!
 Th' untented **[untreated]** woundings of a
 father's curse
 Pierce every sense about thee! Old fond
 eyes,
 Beweep this cause again, I'll pluck ye out,

220

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

[Old fond . . . to this: If my eyes cry for you again, I'll pluck them out and cast them into my pool of tears to temper clay.]

Let it be so: I have another daughter,
Who, I am sure, is kind and comfortable:
When she shall hear this of thee, with her
nails

225

She'll flay **[scratch]** thy wolvisish visage **[face]**.
Thou shalt find

That I'll resume the shape **[demeanor; personality]** which thou dost think
I have cast off for ever; thou shalt, I warrant
thee. [Exeunt LEAR, KENT, and
attendants.

[Exeunt: The characters specified leave the stage.]

GONERIL: Do you mark that?

ALBANY: I cannot be so partial, Goneril,
230

To the great love I bear you. —

GONERIL: Pray you, content. **[All right, don't say anything.]** What, Oswald,
ho! **[Oswald, come in here.]**

[To the Fool.] You, sir, more knave than fool,
after **[follow]** your master.

FOOL: Nuncle Lear, nuncle Lear! tarry, and
take the fool with thee.

A fox, when one has caught her,
235

And such a daughter,
Should sure to the
slaughter **[should sure be slaughtered]**,
If my cap would buy a halter **[rope to tie up a person; hangman's rope]**;

So the fool follows after. [Exit.

GONERIL: This man hath had good counsel.
A hundred knights! 240

'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!

245

[This man . . . Oswald, I say: My father has received good advice (spoken sarcastically). We're supposed to tolerate a hundred knights around here so that they will back him up whenever we refuse to yield to his foolish fancies and complaints. Oswald! I said come in here.]

ALBANY: Well, you may fear too far. [You may be overreacting.]

GONERIL: Safer than trust too far. [It's better to overreact than to "over-trust" him.]

Let me still take away the harms I fear,
Not fear still to be taken: I know his heart.

[Let me . . . taken: I would rather take away the harms I fear than let them stay and control me.]

What he hath utter'd I have writ [written in a letter to] my sister; 250

If she sustain him and his hundred knights,
When I have show'd the unfitness,
— [showed his unfitness—]

Re-enter OSWALD.

How now, Oswald!

What! have you writ that letter to my sister?
255

OSWALD: Ay, madam.

GONERIL: Take you some company, and
away to horse:

Inform her full [completely] of my particular
fear;

And thereto add such reasons of your own
As may compact [explain] it more. Get you
gone, 260

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 attack'd for want of
wisdom

Than prais'd for harmful mildness. 265

[This milky . . . mildness: My husband, I do
not condemn you for your gentleness with
my father. But you do seem to lack the
wisdom to cope with him.]

ALBANY: How far your eyes may pierce I
cannot tell:

Striving to better, oft we mar what's well.

[How far . . . what's well: How deep your

own wisdom is I cannot tell. All I can say is that when we try to improve a situation we sometimes make it worse. It's human nature.]

GONERIL: Nay, then—

ALBANY: Well, well; the event. [Exeunt.

[Exeunt: Everyone leaves the stage.]

[Well . . . event: Well, let's wait to see how things turn out.]

Supplies for Teachers

Act 1, Scene 5

Court before the Duke of Albany's palace.
Enter LEAR, KENT in disguise, and Fool.

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. **[After my daughter reads what I have to say, don't answer any questions she may have.]** If your diligence be not speedy I shall be there before you.

KENT: I will not sleep, my lord, till I have delivered your letter. [Exit.

FOOL: If a man's brains were in 's **[in his]** heels, were 't **[were it]** not in danger of kibes **[inflammation and/or ulceration caused by exposure to cold and moisture]**? 5

LEAR: Ay, boy.

FOOL: Then, I prithee, be merry; thy wit shall not go slip-shod.

[Then . . . slip-shod: Then, I pray, be happy. Because you don't have any brains, you won't need slippers to protect them.]

LEAR: Ha, ha, ha!

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

[Shalt . . . tell: You shall see that your other daughter, Regan, will treat you kindly. True, she is just as crabby as her crabapple sister. But I know what I know.]

LEAR: What canst tell, boy? 10

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?

[She will . . . crab: She will taste just as sour as Goneril.]

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.

LEAR: I did her wrong,—

FOOL: Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell? 15

LEAR: No.

FOOL: Nor I neither; but I can tell why a snail has a house **[shell]**.

LEAR: Why?

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

[Why, to . . . case: Because his house is on his back, he will always have a home. He will never have to give it away to his daughters and leave himself homeless in the open air.]

LEAR: I will forget my nature. So kind a father! **[I will forget my nature as such a kind father.]** Be my horses ready? 20

FOOL: Thy asses are gone about 'em. **[Your attendants have gone to get them.]** The reason why the seven stars are no more than seven is a pretty reason.

[seven stars: The seven stars in the constellation Pleiades]

LEAR: Because they are not eight?

FOOL: Yes, indeed: thou wouldst make a good fool.

LEAR: To take it again perforce! Monster ingratitude!

[To take . . . ingratitude: I should consider taking back my kingdom by force! The monstrous ingratitude of children!]

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

25

LEAR: How's that?

FOOL: Thou shouldst not have been old before thou hadst been wise.

LEAR: O! let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven;

Keep me in temper; I would not be mad!

Enter gentleman. 30

How now! Are the horses ready?

GENTLEMAN: Ready, my lord.

LEAR: Come, boy.

FOOL: She that's a maid now, and laughs at my departure,

Shall not be a maid long, unless things be cut shorter. [Exeunt. 35

[She that's . . . shorter: A maiden who laughs because I am going with the king will not be a virgin very long unless penises be cut shorter.]

[Exeunt: Everyone leaves the stage.]

Act 2, Scene 1

A court within the castle of the EARL OF GLOUCESTER.

Enter EDMUND and CURAN, meeting.

EDMUND: Save thee **[a greeting]**, Curan.

Cur. And you, sir. I have been with your father **[Gloucester]**, and given him notice that the Duke of Cornwall and Regan his duchess will be here with him to-night.

EDMUND: How comes that? 5

Cur. Nay, I know not. You have heard of the news abroad? I mean the whispered ones, for they are yet but ear-kissing arguments **[just idle talk]**?

EDMUND: Not I: pray you, what are they?

Cur. Have you heard of no likely wars toward **[being planned]**, 'twixt **[between]** the Dukes of Cornwall and Albany?

EDMUND: Not a word.

Cur. You may do **[may hear about them]** then, in time. Fare you well, sir. [Exit. 10

EDMUND: The duke be here to-night! The better! best!

[The better . . . best: That's good news.]

This weaves itself perforce into my business.

My father hath set guard to take **[has arranged to arrest]** my brother;

And I have one thing, of a **queasy** question, Which I must act. Briefness and fortune, work! 15

[And I . . . work: And I have one thing, a bit daunting, to do. Luck and quick work will help me succeed.]

Brother, a word; descend: brother, I say!

[Brother . . . say: Hey, brother, come to the court. I want to speak with you.]

Enter EDGAR.

My father watches: O sir! fly **[leave]** this place;
Intelligence is given **[it's known]** where you are hid;

You have now the good advantage of the night. 20

Have you not spoken 'gainst the Duke of Cornwall?

He's coming hither **[here]**, 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. 25

[Have you . . . yourself: Did you happen to say anything that might upset the Duke of Cornwall? What about the Duke of Albany? Think.]

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 **[acquit—that is, perform]** you well. Yield;—come before my father. Light, ho! here! 30

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? 35

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 **[partner]**. 40

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? 45

**[Exeunt: The characters specified leave
the stage.]**

EDMUND: Persuade me to the murder of
your lordship;

But that I told him, the revenging gods
'Gainst parricides **[murders of fathers by
their children]** did all their thunders bend;
Spoke with how manifold and strong a
bond

The child was bound to the father; sir, in
fine, 50

Seeing how **loathly** opposite I stood
To his unnatural purpose, in
fell **[deadly]** motion,

With his prepared sword he charges home
My unprovided body, **lanc'd** mine arm:

But when he saw my best
alarum'd **[summoned; brought into
play]** spirits 55

Bold in the quarrel's right, rous'd to the
encounter,

Or whether gasted **[frightened]** by the noise I
made,

Full suddenly he fled.

GLOUCESTER: Let him fly far:

Not in this land shall he remain uncaught;
60

And found—dispatch. The noble duke my
master,

**[Let him . . . dispatch: He'd better run far. If
he remains in this land, he'll be caught and
executed.]**

My worthy arch and patron **[the Duke of
Cornwall]**, 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;
65

He that conceals him, death.

EDMUND: When I dissuaded him from his
intent,

And found him pight **[determined]** to do it,

with curst speech
 I threaten'd to discover him: he replied,
 'Thou unpossessing bastard! dost thou
 think, 70
[unpossessing: destined to have no inheritance (because he is illegitimate)]
 If I would stand against thee, would the
 reposal
 Of any trust, virtue, or worth, in thee
 Make thy words faith'd? No: what I should
 deny,—
 As this I would; ay, though thou didst
 produce
 My very character,—I'd turn it all 75
 To thy suggestion, plot, and damned
 practice:
[If I would . . . practice: If I stand against you, would anyone repose (put) any faith in you or your words? No, because I would deny everything, even if you produced evidence bearing my own handwriting (character, line 75). I'd say it was you who plotted the murder.]
 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.' 80
[And thou . . . seek: And you must believe the world is stupid if you think people wouldn't know that you stand to profit from my death. If I were killed, they would point the finger at you.]
 GLOUCESTER: Strong and
 fasten'd **[complete; confirmed]** villain!
 Would he deny **[that he wrote]** his letter? I
 never got him. [Tucket within.
[Tucket within: Trumpet blowing offstage]
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 85
 I will send far and near, that all the kingdom
 May have due note of him; and of my land,
 Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means
 To make thee capable **[qualified to be my heir]**.

 Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, and
 attendants. 90

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. 95

REGAN: What! did my father's godson seek
your life?

He whom my father nam'd? 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? 100

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 **[Gloucester's]** death,

To have the expense and waste of his
revenues. 105

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.
110

Edmund, I hear that you have shown your
father

A child-like office **[great courtesy and
loyalty]**.

EDMUND: 'Twas my duty, sir.

GLOUCESTER: He did **bewray** his practice
and receiv'd

**[bewray . . . practice: Expose Edgar's
plot. Bewray means betray as a synonym
for reveal, as in this sentence: The
criminal did not betray his guilt.]**

This hurt **[cut; wound]** you see, striving to
apprehend him. 115

CORNWALL: Is he pursu'd?

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, 120

[make your . . . you please. In your plan for apprehending him, you may use my power and authority to back you up.]

Whose virtue and obedience doth this instant

So much commend itself, you shall be ours **[you shall work for me]:**

Natures of such deep trust we shall much need;

You we first seize on.

EDMUND: I shall serve you, sir, 125

Truly, however else.

[I shall . . . else: I shall serve you, sir, in any way you wish.]

GLOUCESTER: For him I thank your Grace.

CORNWALL: You know not why we came to visit you,—

REGAN: Thus out of season, threading dark-ey'd night:

Occasions, noble Gloucester, of some prize,
130

Wherein we must have use of your advice.

[Thus out . . . advice: The reason we came to visit you out of season, finding our way through the darkness, is to get your advice on some important matters.]

Our father he hath writ, so hath our sister,
Of differences, which I best thought it fit
To answer from our home; the several
messengers

From hence attend dispatch. Our good old friend,
135

Lay comforts to your bosom, and bestow
Your needful counsel to our businesses,
Which craves the instant use.

[Our father. . . home: My father and my sister have both written letters to me about problems between them. Rather than answer the letters from home, I came here to get your advice on what to say. So please give it to us. We crave it immediately.]

GLOUCESTER: I serve you, madam.
Your Graces are right welcome. [Exeunt.

140

[Exeunt: Everyone leaves the stage.]

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Act 2, Scene 2

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?

5

KENT: I' the mire. **[In the mud]**

OSWALD: Prithee, if thou lovest me, tell me. **[Be so kind as to tell me where the stables are.]**

KENT: I love thee not.

OSWALD: Why, then I care not for thee.

[Oswald does not recognize Kent. They had had a previous confrontation (1.4.50-55)]

KENT: If I had thee in Lipsbury pinfold **[a dog pound]**, I would make thee care for me.

10

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 **[lower-class man who eats the meat scraps left by others]**; a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound, filthy, worsted-stocking knave; **[three-suited . . . knave: Lowly man of the servant class who has a small wardrobe, limited financial assets (a hundred pounds), and wears common worsted stockings instead of silk ones]**; a **lily-liver'd**, action-taking knave **[cowardly man who sues an enemy in court rather than fighting him]**; a whoreson, glass-gazing, superserviceable, finical rogue **[whoreson . . . rogue: Son of a whore who admires his image in a mirror, bows and scrapes to his master, and is finicky]**; one-trunk-inheriting slave **[person who inherited so little from his father that it can fit in one trunk]**; one that wouldst be a bawd **[pimp]**, in way of good service, and art

nothing but the composition of a knave, beggar, coward, **pandar** [**one who arranges illicit sexual encounters**], and the son and heir of a mongrel bitch [**female dog of mixed breed**]: one whom I will beat into clamorous whining if thou deniest the least syllable of thy addition [**description**].

OSWALD: Why, what a monstrous fellow art thou, thus to rail on one that is neither known of thee nor knows thee! 15

KENT: What a brazen-faced varlet [**villain**] art thou, to deny thou knowest me! Is it two days 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** [**a milquetoast; cowering weakling**] o' the moonshine of you. [Drawing his sword.] Draw, you whoreson, cullionly [**despicable**], barber-monger [**one who frequently goes to a barber to prettify himself**], draw.

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 [**take his vain daughter's**] part against the royalty of her father. Draw, you rogue, or I'll so **carbonado** your shanks: draw, you rascal; come your ways.

[carbonado: Score or cut open a piece of meat]

OSWALD: Help, ho! murder! help!

KENT: Strike, you slave; stand, rogue, stand; you neat [**dainty; fastidious**] slave, strike.

[Beating him. 20

OSWALD: Help, oh! murder! murder!

Enter EDMUND with his rapier [**two-edged thrusting sword**] drawn.

EDMUND: How now! What's the matter?

[Parting them.]

KENT: With you, goodman boy, if you please: come,

I'll flesh ye; come on, young master. 25

[With you . . . master: I'll fight with you, little man, if you please. Come on, I'll show you a thing or two.]

Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, GLOUCESTER, and servants.

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. 30

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.

[No marvel . . . thee: It's no wonder that you're so excited. You're such a coward that nature takes no credit for your existence. I think a tailor made you, judging from your showy clothes.]

CORNWALL: Thou art a strange fellow; a tailor make a man?

KENT: Ay, a tailor, sir: a stone-cutter or a painter could not have made him so ill **[poorly]**, though they had been but two hours o' **[in]** the trade. 35

CORNWALL: Speak yet, how grew your quarrel?

OSWALD: This ancient **[old] ruffian**, sir, whose life I have spar'd at suit of his grey beard,—

[at suit . . . beard: because of his advancing age]

KENT: Thou whoreson zed **[the letter z, at the end of the alphabet]**! thou unnecessary letter! My lord, if you will give me leave, I will tread this unbolted **[unrefined; low and coarse]** villain into mortar, and daub the wall of a jakes **[outhouse]** with him. Spare my grey beard, you wagtail **[strutting bird that wags its tail feathers]**?

CORNWALL: Peace, sirrah!

You beastly knave, know you no reverence? 40

KENT: Yes, sir; but anger hath a privilege **[a right to speak out]**.

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

45

Which are too intrinse t' unloose;
 smooth **[justify; encourage]** every passion
 That in the natures of their lords rebel;
**[oft bite . . . rebel: Often cut the holy cords
 of marriage by helping to provide their
 masters opportunities for adultery]**
 Bring oil to fire, snow to their colder moods;
 Renege, affirm, and turn their halcyon
 beaks

With every gale and vary of their masters,
 50

Knowing nought, like dogs, but following.
**[Bring oil . . . following: People like him
 pour oil on their masters' fire, excuse their
 masters' bad moods, say no or yes when it
 pleases their masters, and go along with
 every whim of their masters. Knowing
 nothing about what their masters are
 thinking, good or bad, they follow their
 masters anyway, like dogs.]**

A plague upon your epileptic visage!

Smile you my speeches, as I were a fool?

**[Are you smiling in derision at my words,
 as if I were a fool?]**

Goose, if I had you upon Sarum plain,

**[Sarum plain: Salisbury Plain, in the
 county of Wiltshire in southern England]**

I'd drive ye cackling home to Camelot **[home
 of King Arthur in Arthurian legends].**

55

CORNWALL: What! art thou mad, old
 fellow?

GLOUCESTER: How fell you out? say
 that. **[Tell me what started this quarrel
 between you and Oswald.]**

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

**[No contraries . . . knave: No enemies hold
 more hatred for each other than do I and
 that knave Oswald.]**

CORNWALL: Why dost thou call him knave?
 What is his fault? 60

KENT: His countenance likes me not. **[His
 face doesn't like me.]**

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

65

Before me at this instant.

CORNWALL: This is some fellow,
Who, having been prais'd for bluntness, doth
affect

A saucy roughness, and constrains the
garb

Quite from his nature: he cannot flatter, he,
70

An honest mind and plain, he must speak
truth:

An they will take it, so; if not, he's plain.

**[This is . . . he's plain: Although this fellow
has been praised for being straightforward
and blunt, he's going too far with his
rough demeanor and distortion of facts.
He won't flatter anyone, since he's honest
and plain. He must speak the truth.]**

These **[this]** kind of knaves I know, which in
this plainness

Harbour more craft and more corrupter
ends

Than twenty **silly-ducking** observants,
75

That stretch their duties nicely.

**[These kind of . . . nicely: This type of
person exhibits honesty and plainness on
the surface. But inside he's sly and crafty,
far more so than twenty flatterers who tell
you what you want to hear.]**

KENT: Sir, in good sooth **[truth]**, in sincere
verity **[truth]**,

Under the allowance of your grand aspect,
Whose influence, like the wreath of radiant
fire

On flickering Phoebus' front, — 80

**[like the . . . front: Like the fire of Phoebus
Apollo (the sun god in Greek mythology),
as he drives his golden chariot across the
sky]**

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.

**[To go out . . . to 't: By referring to
Phoebus, from Greek mythology, I was
trying not to speak so plainly, which you
don't like (lines 68-70). I must say that I am
not a flatterer who praises with fancy]**

words. He who spoke to you in a plain accent was a plain knave. But I won't be a knave even if you ask me to be one.]

CORNWALL: What was the offence you gave him?

OSWALD: I never gave him any:
It pleas'd the king his master very late
85

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
90

For him attempting who was self-subdu'd;
And, in the **fleshment** of this dread exploit,
Drew on me here again.

[It pleas'd . . . here again: When the king recently struck me after a misunderstanding between us, this fellow tripped me from behind to please the king. Then he insulted me and railed at me so fiercely that the king praised him even though I had subdued myself and did not retaliate. And, in reliving this episode, this fellow drew his sword on me.]

KENT: None of these rogues and cowards
But **Ajax** is their fool. 95

[None . . . fool: Kent sums up by saying that the "rogues and cowards" around him would make fools of brave men, such as Ajax, a hero in the Trojan War in ancient times. Cornwall, as a leader of men, thinks Kent is saying that people are making a fool out of him.]

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,
100

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, 105

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.

110

CORNWALL: This is a fellow of the self-same colour

Our sister speaks of. Come, bring away **[out]** 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 check him for 't: your purpos'd low correction

115

Is such as basest and
contemned'st **[scorned;
contemptible]** wretches

For pilferings **[minor thefts]** and most common trespasses

Are punish'd with: the king must take it ill,

That he, so slightly valu'd in his messenger,

Should have him thus restrain'd. 120

[the king must . . . restrain'd: The king will be angry that you are treating his messenger with so little respect.]

CORNWALL: I'll answer that. **[I'm not afraid to answer for this punishment.]**

REGAN: My sister may receive it much more worse

To have her gentleman **[Oswald]** abus'd, assaulted,

For following her affairs **[for doing her bidding; for running her errands]**. Put in his legs. [KENT is put in the stocks.

Come, my good lord, away. [Exeunt all but GLOUCESTER and KENT. 125

[Exeunt . . . Kent: Everyone leaves the stage except 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 **[ask for mercy]** for thee.

[rubb'd: Slowed down. Rub is a term used is the game of lawn bowls (bowling). A rubbed ball is one that swerves or slows

down after it rolls across a patch of uneven ground.]

KENT: Pray, do not, sir. I have watch'd and travell'd hard;

Some time I shall sleep out, the rest I'll whistle. 130

A good man's fortune may grow out at heels:

Give you good morrow!

[Pray . . . morrow: Please don't, sir. I have been awake for a long time, and I have endured hard travel. Thus, I welcome the opportunity to sleep while I'm in the stocks. When I'm not sleeping, I'll spend my time whistling. A man's good luck is destined to run out. I bid you good day!]

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 com'st 135

To the warm sun.

[Good king . . . sun: Good King Lear, you're showing us the truth in the old proverb that there comes a time in every man's life when he will emerge from the cool comfort of the heavens into the heat of a hot sun.]

[Gloucester takes out a letter to read.]

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, 140

[Approach . . . Cordelia: Sun, approach the earth so that your bright beams will enable me to read this letter. No one but the miserable can claim to see miracles. I know this letter is from Cordelia.]

Who hath most fortunately been inform'd
Of my obscured course; and shall find time
From this enormous state, seeking to give
Losses their remedies. All weary and o'er-
watch'd,

Take vantage, heavy eyes, not to behold 145

This shameful lodging.

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

[Who hath . . . wheel: Cordelia has been informed that I have disguised myself to serve the king. She says she will find time to remedy the enormous problems growing out of Lear's recent actions. I hope my weary eyes will take advantage of the opportunity for me to sleep so that they don't have to see me imprisoned in these stocks.]

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Act 2, Scene 3

A part of the **heath**.
Enter EDGAR.

EDGAR: I heard myself proclaim'd; **[I heard my name shouted]**

And by the happy **[found by chance; lucky]** hollow of a tree

Escap'd the hunt. No port is free; no place,
5

That guard, and most unusual vigilance,
Does not attend my taking. While I may
'scape

I will preserve myself; and am bethought
To take the basest and most poorest shape
That ever **penury**, in contempt of man,
10

Brought near to beast; my face I'll grime with
filth,

[No port . . . beast: Every place I go is under surveillance by vigilant pursuers who want to apprehend me. But as long as I can keep running, I may preserve myself. I think I will disguise myself as a beggar so poor and lowly that he isn't much better than a beast.]

Blanket my loins **[wear a loincloth]**,
elf **[tangle]** all my hair in knots,
And with presented nakedness
outface **[stand up to]**

The winds and persecutions of the sky.
The country gives me proof and precedent
15

Of Bedlam beggars, who with roaring
voices,
Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare
arms

Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary;
[The country . . . rosemary: Beggars from Bethlehem Hospital, the lunatic asylum in London, roam this country. They have roaring voices and they stick pins, nails, and other sharp objects into their bare arms. So, in my disguise, I will fit right in with them.]

And with this horrible object, from low farms,
 Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes, and mills, 20
 Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers,
 Enforce their charity. Poor **Turlygood!** poor Tom!

That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am.
 [Exit.

[And with this . . . nothing am: With their frightful appearance and voices, they intimidate farmers, villagers, shepherds, and others into giving them alms. These people have pity on poor Turlygood **[a name Edgar made up]** and poor Tom.

Act 2, Scene 4

Before GLOUCESTER'S castle. KENT in the stocks.
 Enter LEAR, fool, and gentleman.

LEAR: 'Tis strange that they should so depart from home,

And not send back my messenger.

['This strange . . . remove: It's strange that Regan and Cornwall should leave their home without sending back my messenger.]

GENTLEMAN: As I learn'd, 5
 The night before there was no purpose in them

Of this remove.

[As I . . . remove: As I found out, there was no apparent reason for them to leave home.]

KENT: Hail to thee, noble master!

LEAR: Ha!

Mak'st thou this shame **[being in stocks]** thy pastime? 10

KENT: No, my lord.

FOOL: Ha, ha! he wears cruel garters **[the part of the stocks clamping in his feet]**.
Horses are tied by the head, dogs and bears by the neck, monkeys by the loins, and men by the legs: when a man is over-lusty at legs, then he wears wooden nether-stocks.

[when a man . . . nether-stocks: When a man tends to wander with mischief in mind, he must be outfitted with wooden stockings—that is, he must be put in the stocks.]

LEAR: What's he that hath so much thy place mistook

To set thee here?

[What's he . . . here: Who mistook your intentions so much that he put you in stocks?]

KENT: It is both he and she, 15
Your son and daughter.

LEAR: No.

KENT: Yes.

LEAR: No, I say.

KENT: I say, yea. 20

LEAR: No, no; they would not.

KENT: Yes, they have.

LEAR: By Jupiter **[the Roman name for Zeus, the king of the Olympian gods in Greek mythology]**, I swear, no.

KENT: By Juno **[the Roman name for Hera, the queen of the Olympian gods in Greek mythology]**, I swear, ay.

LEAR: They durst not **[would not dare]** do 't; 25

They could not, would not do 't; 'tis worse than murder,

To do upon respect such violent outrage **[to disrespect a king's messenger so outrageously]**.

Resolve me, with all modest haste, which way

Thou mightst deserve, or they impose, this usage,

Coming from us. 30

[Resolve me . . . from us: Explain to me quickly what you did to deserve this humiliation or, if you did nothing offensive, what motivated them to impose it on you.]

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, there came a reeking
 post,
 Stew'd in his haste, half breathless, panting
 forth 35
 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;
**[there came . . . horse: A messenger came,
 stinking of sweat and nearly out of breath,
 who conveyed greetings and best wishes
 from Goneril to Regan and Cornwall. This
 messenger gave them letters, which they
 read before I received a response from the
 letters I delivered. Then they summoned
 attendants and mounted their horses.]**
 Commanded me to follow, and attend
 40
 The leisure of their answer; gave me cold
 looks:
 And meeting here the other messenger,
 Whose welcome, I perceiv'd, had poison'd
 mine,—
 Being the very fellow which of late
 Display'd so saucily against your highness,
 — 45
 Having more man than wit about me,—
 drew:
 He rais'd the house with loud and coward
 cries.
**[Commanded . . . cries: Regan and
 Cornwall commanded me to follow them
 and await their answer to the letters I
 delivered. They were cold toward me. After
 we arrived here, I ran into their steward,
 Oswald, the very fellow who recently
 insulted you (see 1.4.47-560).
 Remembering his treatment of you, I drew
 my sword on him and—coward that he is—
 cried out .]**
 Your son and daughter found this
 trespass **[my behavior]** worth
 The shame which here it suffers **[the shame
 which I suffer locked in these stocks]**.
 Winter's not gone yet, if the wild geese fly that
 way. **[There's plenty of winter left—that is,
 there's still plenty of trouble ahead.]**
 50 [

Fathers that wear rags

Do make their children blind,
 But fathers that bear bags
 Shall see their children kind.
 Fortune, that **arrant** whore, 55
 Ne'er turns the key to the poor.

[Fathers . . . poor: When a father wears rags, his children pay him no heed. But when he bears money bags, they lavish attention on him. Luck, that thoroughgoing whore, never opens doors for the poor.]

But for all this thou shalt have as many
 dolours **[sorrows or heartaches]** for thy
 daughters as thou canst tell in a year.

LEAR: O! how this mother swells up toward
 my heart;

[O! how . . . heart: O! how I am like a woman overcome with emotions]

Hysterica passio! down, thou climbing
 sorrow!

Thy element's below. Where is this
 daughter? 60

[Hysterica passio . . . below: Lear alludes to an affliction of women in which hysteria, or wild and uncontrollable emotions, arise from the womb, referred to in the phrase "thy element's below." Shakespeare's purpose is simply to point out that Lear is upset, like a woman with hysterica passio. It is interesting to note that *woman* was another name for hysterica passion.]

KENT: **[Your daughter is]** With the earl, sir:
 here within.

LEAR: Follow me not; stay here. [Exit.

GENTLEMAN: Made you no more offence
 than what you speak of?

KENT: None.

How chance the king comes with so small a
 number? 65

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

KENT: Why, fool?

We'll set thee to school to an ant, to teach
 thee there's no labouring i' the winter. **[We'll teach you what ants know: that there's no sense looking for food in winter, when there are no picnics or other outings.]**

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. [Even
 blind men can smell the stench of Lear's

headstrong behavior and problems with his daughters. 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. **[Don't hold on to a wheel running downhill, lest it break your neck. But follow a wheel going uphill.]** When a wise man gives thee better counsel, give me mine again **[give back my counsel]**: 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, 70
Will pack when it begins to rain,
And leave thee in the storm.

[That sir . . . the storm: The man who serves you only to fatten his purse and who pretends to be loyal to you will abandon you when it rains, leaving you to fend for yourself.]

But I will tarry; the fool will stay,
And let the wise man fly:
The knave turns fool that runs away;
75

The fool no knave, **perdy**.

[The knave . . . perdy: The knave who runs away turns into a fool. But a fool like me is no knave, by God. (*Perdy* derives from the French phrase *par dieu*, meaning *by God*.)]

KENT: Where learn'd you this, fool?

FOOL: Not i' the stocks, fool.

Re-enter LEAR, with GLOUCESTER.

LEAR: Deny to speak with me! They are sick!
they are **weary**, 80

They have travell'd hard to-night! **Mere fetches**,

The images of revolt and flying off.

Fetch me a better answer.

[Deny to . . . answer: How dare they deny to speak with me! They say they are sick and weary from traveling. I don't believe a word of it. They are rebelling against me and flying off the handle. Go get me a better answer from them.]

GLOUCESTER: My dear lord,
You know the fiery quality of the duke;
85

How unremovable and fix'd he is

In his own course.

LEAR: Vengeance! plague! death!
confusion!

Fiery! what quality? [[reference to line 85](#)]

Why, Gloucester, Gloucester,
I'd speak with the Duke of Cornwall and his
wife. 90

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

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

GLOUCESTER: Ay, my good lord.

LEAR: The king would speak with Cornwall;
the dear father

Would with his daughter speak, commands
her service: 95

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 100

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 indispos'd and sickly fit

For the sound man. Death on my state!

[Looking on KENT.] Wherefore 105

Should he sit here? This act persuades me

That this remotion of the duke and her

Is practice only. Give me my servant forth.

**[No, but . . . servant forth: No, wait a
minute. Maybe he really is not well. Illness
makes us neglect our duties. We are not
ourselves when nature makes the mind
suffer with the body. I'll wait rather than
giving in to my suspicion that these
apparently indisposed and sickly people
are really healthy. Curse my kingly power
and kingdom! Why should my servant (the
disguised Kent) have to sit here? This act
of humiliation against him convinces me
of their hostility toward me. Gloucester, I
want them to release my servant.]**

Go, tell the duke and's wife I'd speak with
them,

Now, presently: bid them come forth and hear
me, 110

Or at their chamber-door I'll beat the drum
Till it cry sleep to death.

GLOUCESTER: I would have all well
betwixt **[between]** you. [Exit.

LEAR: O, me! my heart, my rising heart! but,
down! **[O, my heart is beating so hard I feel
it in my throat. Down, heart!]**

FOOL: Cry to it, nuncle, as the
cockney **[lower-class resident of East
London]** did to the eels when she put 'em i'
the paste **[for pies]** alive; she knapped 'em o'
the coxcombs **[struck them on the
head]** with a stick, and cried, 'Down, wantons,
down!' 'Twas her brother that, in pure
kindness to his horse, buttered his hay.
115

Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, GLOUCESTER,
and servants.

LEAR: Good morrow to you both.

CORNWALL: Hail to your Grace! [KENT is
set at liberty.

REGAN: I am glad to see your highness.

LEAR: Regan, I think you are; I know what
reason 120

I have to think so: if thou shouldst not be
glad,

I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb,
Sepulchring an adult'ress.—[To KENT.] O!
are you free?

**[Regan, I think . . . you free: Regan, I think
you are glad to see me. Here's why. If you
weren't glad, I'd sever my association with
your dead mother. You see, she was an
adultress. O, Kent, I see that you're free.]**

Some other time for that. Beloved Regan,
Thy sister's naught **[a worthless woman; a
good-for-nothing]**: O Regan! she hath tied
125

Sharp-tooth'd unkindness, like a vulture,
here: [Points to his heart.

I can scarce speak to thee; thou'lt not
believe

With how deprav'd a quality—O Regan!

REGAN: I pray you, sir, take patience. I have
hope

You less know how to value her desert
130

Than she to scant her duty.

[I pray . . . duty: Please be patient, sir. I

don't believe she neglected her duty to you. Rather, I think you don't know how to appreciate her good qualities.]

LEAR: Say, how is that? **[What do you mean?]**

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, 135

'Tis on such ground, and to such wholesome end,

As clears her from all blame.

[if, sir . . . blame: If, sir, perchance she restrained the riotous behavior of your followers, it was to bring calm and peace. You can't blame her for doing that.]

LEAR: My curses on her!

REGAN: O, sir! you are old;

Nature in you stands on the very verge 140

Of her confine: you should be rul'd and led
By some discretion that discerns your state
Better than you yourself. Therefore I pray you

[Nature in . . . you yourself: You are trying to extend your abilities beyond the limits that your advanced age has imposed. You should be cared for by someone who better perceives the state of your mental and physical health.]

That to our sister you do make return;

Say, you have wrong'd her, sir. 145

LEAR: Ask her forgiveness?

Do you but mark how this becomes the house
[reflects on my royal authority]?

Dear daughter, I confess that I am old;

Age is unnecessary **[inconvenient; burdensome; worthless]**: on my knees I beg [Kneeling.

That you'll **vouchsafe** me raiment **[clothing]**,
bed, and food.' 150

REGAN: Good sir, no more; these are
unsightly tricks **[these pleas are below your dignity]**:

Return you to my sister.

LEAR: [Rising.] Never, Regan.

She hath **abated** me of **[has taken from me]** half my train;

Look'd black upon me; struck me with her tongue, 155

Most serpent-like, upon the very heart.
All the stor'd vengeance of heaven fall
On her ingrateful top **[head]**! Strike her young
bones,

You taking airs, with lameness!

**[Strike her . . . lameness: May diseases in
the air strike her with lameness!]**

CORNWALL: **Fie**, sir, fie! **[Come now, sir,
come now!]** 160

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 **[fall on her]** and blast her pride!

REGAN: O the blest gods! So will you wish
on me, 165

When the rash mood is on.

**[So will . . . is on: You will wish the same
for me when you're in a foul mood.]**

LEAR: No, Regan, thou shalt never have my
curse:

Thy tender-hefted **[gently made]** nature shall
not give

Thee o'er to harshness: her eyes are fierce,
but thine

Do comfort and not burn. 'Tis not in thee
170

To grudge **[begrudge me]** my pleasures, to
cut off my train **[chase away my knights and
attendants]**,

To bandy hasty words **[speak rudely to me]**,
to scant my sizes **[lessen my allowance]**,
And, in conclusion, to oppose the bolt **[lock
the door]**

Against my coming in: thou better know'st
The offices of nature, bond of childhood,
175

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 **[Good sir,
tell me what you're getting at].**

LEAR: Who put my man i' the stocks?
[Tucket within.] 180

**[Tucket within: Sounding of a trumpet
offstage.]**

CORNWALL: What trumpet's that?

REGAN: I know 't, my sister's; this approves
her letter,

[this . . . letter: Her arrival confirms what she said in her letter.]

That she would soon be here. Is your lady come?

Enter OSWALD.

LEAR: This is a slave, whose easy-borrow'd pride
185

Dwells in the fickle grace of her he follows.

[This . . . follows: This is a slave to the will of Goneril. He takes pride in serving her.]

Out, varlet **[villain]**, from my sight!

CORNWALL: What means your Grace?

LEAR: Who stock'd my servant? Regan, I have good hope

Thou didst not know on 't **[know about it]**.

Who comes here? O heavens, 190

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!

[O heavens . . . my part: O heavens, if you love old men, if you approve of obedience, if you yourselves are old, then take up my cause and send down someone to support me.]

[To GONERIL.] Art not asham'd to look upon this beard? 195

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.

[All's not . . . terms so: Not everything is an offense just because a foolish old man says so.]

LEAR: O sides! you are too tough; 200
Will you yet hold? How came my man i' the stocks?

[O sides . . . stocks: O, are the sides of my body strong enough to hold in my grief at the behavior of this daughter? Who put my man in the stocks?]

CORNWALL: I set him there, sir: but his own disorders

Deserv'd much less advancement.

[Deserv'd . . . advancement: Deserved a

more severe punishment]

LEAR: You! did you?

REGAN: I pray you, father, being weak, seem so. 205

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. 210

[I pray . . . entertainment: Please, father, you're weak and frail. Don't act like a younger and stronger man. Now then, you were supposed to stay with my sister for a month. So return with her to her home, dismissing half your knights, then you can come and stay with me. I can't host you now, for I am spending time away from home. Moreover, I am out of the provisions you require to maintain your comfort and well-being.]

LEAR: Return to her? and fifty men dismiss'd!

No, rather I **abjure** all roofs **[I won't stay with anybody]**, and choose

To wage against the **enmity** o' the air; **[to take my chances in the open air]**

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

215

[To be . . . with her: To live with the wolf and owl and face the harshness of poverty and deprivation. But to return with Goneril!]

Why, the hot-blooded France **[King of France]**, that dowerless took **[that accepted without a dowery]**

Our youngest born **[Cordelia]**, I could as well be brought

To kneel his throne, and, **squire**-like, pension beg

To keep base life **afoot**. Return with her!

[To kneel . . . afoot: To kneel before his throne and, like a humble squire, beg for a pension to keep me alive]

Persuade me rather to be slave and **sumpter** 220

To this detested **groom**. [Pointing at OSWALD.

[Persuade be . . . groom: Persuade me instead to be a slave and packhorse (sumpter, line 220) to this detested fellow Oswald, who is no more than a stableboy.]

GONERIL: At your choice, sir.

LEAR: I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad:

I will not trouble thee, my child; farewell.

We'll no more meet, no more see one another; 225

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 **[skin infection that exudes pus],**

In my corrupted blood. But I'll not chide thee; 230

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.

[But I'll . . . Jove: But I won't scold you.

Rather, I'll let shame come upon you in its own good time. I won't ask the gods to strike you with lightning. Nor will I tell tales about you to them.]

Mend when thou canst; be better at thy leisure: **[Mend your ways when you have time.]**

I can be patient; I can stay with Regan, 235

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 240

Must be content to think you old, and so—

But she knows what she does.

[Not altogether . . . she does: Not really. I was not expecting you to come at this time and have not prepared for your sojourn.

What you should do is listen to what Goneril says. We who are trying to be reasonable can only conclude that your distress is due to your advanced age, and so—. Well, Goneril knows what she is doing.]

LEAR: Is this well spoken! **[You can't mean**

what you're saying.]

REGAN: I dare **avouch** it, sir: what! fifty followers?

Is it not well? What should you need of more? 245

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.

[I dare . . . impossible: I do mean it. Why do you need more than fifty followers? Or even that many, considering the cost of hosting them and the uproar they cause. How, in one house, can so many people obey two commanders, you and Goneril? How can we expect them to remain peaceful? It's hard—almost impossible—to believe that everything will work out.]

GONERIL: Why might not you, my lord, receive attendance **[attention]** 250

From those that she calls servants, or from mine?

REGAN: Why not, my lord? If then they chanc'd to slack **[slight; offend; ignore]** you

We could control them. If you will come to me, —

For now I spy a danger, **[I see problems if you come with too many knights]**—I entreat you

To bring but five-and-twenty; to no more 255

Will I give place or notice.

LEAR: I gave you all—**[I gave you everything I have.]**

REGAN: And in good time you gave it. **[It was about time.]**

LEAR: Made you my guardians, my depositaries **[trustees]**,

But kept a reservation to be follow'd 260

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

[But kept . . . number: But made you promise to allow me to keep a hundred knights]

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

REGAN: And speak 't again, my lord; no

more with me. **[I'll repeat: no more than twenty-five.]**

LEAR: Those wicked creatures yet do look well-favour'd,
When others are more wicked; not being the worst 265

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.

[Those wicked . . . her love: Wicked creatures look good when compared with creatures who are even more wicked. Therefore, not being the most wicked of creatures is a state that deserves some praise. Goneril, I'll go with you. You appear to have twice as much love for me as Regan does.]

GONERIL: Hear me, my lord.

What need you five-and-twenty, ten, or five, 270

To follow in a house, where twice so many
Have a command to tend you?

[What need . . . tend you: Why do you need so many followers when I have a full staff to attend you?]

REGAN: What need one? **[Why do you need even one follower?]**

LEAR: O! reason not the need; our basest
beggars

Are in the poorest thing superfluous: 275

Allow not nature more than nature needs,
Man's life is cheap as beast's. Thou art a lady;

If only to go warm were gorgeous,
Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous
wear'st,

Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But, for true
need, — 280

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!

[O! Don't speak of need as a reason for keeping something. Even our lowliest beggars have things they don't really need. When you don't allow a man to have more than he needs—but permit him only the barest essentials—his life is no better

than an animal's. You are a lady who wears
gorgeous clothes. But do you need
gorgeous clothes to keep you warm? If
you want to focus on needs, well, what I
really need is patience. I am a poor old
man weighted down by grief and age.]

If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts
Against their father, fool me not so much

285

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,

**[If it be . . . cheeks: If it is the gods who are
stirring my daughters against me, I won't
take the abuse without fighting back.**

**When I am angry, women's weapons—
such as tears— won't defeat me.]**

I will have such revenges on you both

That all the world shall—I will do such things,

— 290

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

295

Or ere I'll weep. O fool! I shall go mad.

[Exeunt LEAR, GLOUCESTER, KENT, and
fool.]

[Or ere: Before.]

**[Exeunt: The characters specified leave
the stage.]**

CORNWALL: Let us withdraw **[go into the
house]**; 'twill be a storm. [Storm heard at a
distance.]

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,** 300

And must needs taste his folly.

**['Tis his . . . folly: It's his own fault that he
has put himself in this predicament. Now
he has to face the consequences of his
folly.]**

REGAN: For his particular, I'll receive him
gladly,

But not one follower.

[For his . . . follower: In this case, I'll gladly take him—without a single knight.]

GONERIL: So am I purpos'd. **[I am willing to do the same.]**

Where is my Lord of Gloucester? 305

CORNWALL: Follow'd the old man forth. He is return'd. **[He followed Lear for a while, then returned.]**

Re-enter GLOUCESTER.

GLOUCESTER: The king is in high rage.

CORNWALL: Whither **[where]** is he going?

GLOUCESTER: He calls to horse; but will I know not whither. 310

[He calls . . . whither: He called for his horse, but I don't know where he's going.]

CORNWALL: 'Tis best to give him way; he leads himself. **[Let him go. The only advice he takes is his own.]**

GONERIL: My lord, entreat him by no means to stay.

[My lord . . . stay: Gloucester, don't try to convince him to return.]

GLOUCESTER: Alack **[alas]**! the night comes on, and the bleak winds

Do sorely ruffle; for many miles about There's scarce a bush. 315

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 320

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

[He is attended . . . fear: He is accompanied by desperate men. What they may influence him to do—and keep in mind that he is apt to take bad advice—makes me fearful of what will happen next.]

CORNWALL: Shut up your doors, my lord; 'tis a wild night:

My Regan counsels well: come out o' the storm [Exeunt.

[Exeunt: Everyone leaves the stage.]

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Act 3, Scene 1

A heath.

A storm, with thunder and lightning. Enter KENT and a gentleman, meeting.

KENT: Who's here, beside **[besides]** foul weather?

GENTLEMAN: One minded like the weather, most **unquietly**.

[One . . . unquietly: One whose state of mind is stormy, like the weather.]

KENT: I know you. Where's the king?

5

GENTLEMAN: **Contending** with the **fretful** elements;

Bids the wind blow the earth into the sea,
Or swell the curled waters 'bove the main **[above the mainland]**,

That things might change or cease; tears his white hair,

Which the impetuous blasts, with eyeless rage, 10

Catch in their fury, and make nothing of;

[tear his . . . nothing of: Tears out his white hairs, which the wind—in blind rage—catch and blow away]

Strives in his little world of man to **out-scorn**

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

[Strives . . . rain: Tries to beat back the wind and rain]

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

[cub-drawn bear: Mother bear whose cubs have sucked her dry of milk]

[couch: Take shelter]

The lion and the belly-

pinched **[hungry]** wolf 15

Keep their fur dry, **unbonneted** he runs,

And bids what will take all.

[unbonneted . . . take all: Without a hat he runs and welcomes the end of the world.]

KENT: But who is with him?

GENTLEMAN: None but the fool, who labours to out-jest

His heart-struck injuries. 20

[who . . . injuries: Who tries to ease Lear's emotional pain by telling jokes]

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; 25

**[Sir, I . . . Cornwall: Sir, I think I know you
 and trust you. Therefore, I want to confide
 in you. There is division between Albany
 and Cornwall, although they have tried to
 cover it up through clever machination.]**
 Who have—as who have not, that their great
 stars
 Thron'd and set high—servants, who seem no
 less,
 Which are to France the spies and
 speculations
 Intelligent of our state; what hath been
 seen,
**[Who have . . . state: Who have servants
 spying for France]**
 Either in snuffs **[arguments]** and
 packings **[plots]** of the dukes, 30

**[Either in . . . dukes: Either in the
 arguments between the dukes or their
 plots against each other]**
 Or the hard rein which both of them have
 borne
 Against the old kind king; or something
 deeper,
 Whereof perchance these are but
furnishings;
**[something deeper . . . furnishings:
 Something deeper, suggested by these
 outward signs]**
 But, true it is, from France there comes a
 power
 Into this scatter'd kingdom; who already,
 35

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:
**[But, true . . . to you: Whatever the case, I
 can tell you that the French have scattered
 men in ports throughout our country in
 preparation for war. Now to you:]**
 If on my credit you dare build so far
 To make your speed to Dover, you shall find
 40

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 45

This office to you.

[If on my . . . office to you: If you believe me, go to Dover to tell the people that the king suffers great pain and sorrow and has good reason to complain about who is causing his tribulation. I come from a noble family and well know what I am doing when I offer this mission to you.]

GENTLEMAN: I will talk further with you.

KENT: No, do not.

For confirmation that I am much more
 Than my out-wall **[than what I appear to be]**,
 open this purse, and take 50

What it contains. If you shall see Cordelia,

—

As doubt 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!

[And she . . . know: And she will tell you who I am]

I will go seek the king. 55

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.]

[That, when . . . the other: That when we have found the king—you going one way, I going the other—the one who first sees the king will summon the other]

[Exeunt: Everyone leaves the stage.]

Act 3, Scene 2

Another part of the heath. Storm still.
 Enter LEAR and fool.

LEAR: Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks!
 rage! blow!

You cataracts **[waterfalls]** and

hurricanes [water spouts or hurricanes],
spout

Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd
the cocks [rooster figures topping
weathervanes on steeples]! 5

You sulphurous and thought-executing
fires,

**[thought-executing fires: Fires that burn
something with the speed of thought. It is
also possible—but probably not likely—
that this phrase refers to fires that burn a
person at the stake for expressing
heretical or otherwise unacceptable
thoughts.]**

Vaunt-couriers [forerunners] to oak-cleaving
thunderbolts [lightning bolts that split oak
trees],

Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking
thunder,

Strike flat the thick rotundity [roundness] o'
the world!

Crack nature's moulds [molds that shape
humans], all germens [seeds that sprout
into humans] spill at once 10

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.

**[court holy water (noun): Flattering words
that produce no result]**

LEAR: Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! spout,
rain!

Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my
daughters:

**[Nor . . . daughters: Rain, wind, thunder,
and fire—you are not like my horrible
daughters.]**

I tax not you, you elements, with
unkindness; 15

I never gave you kingdom, call'd you
children,

You owe me no subscription [homage;
submission; pledge of loyalty]: then, let
fall

Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your
slave,

A poor, infirm, weak, and despis'd old man.

But yet I call you servile ministers, 20

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.

[But yet . . . foul: Nevertheless, I think you have joined with my two evil daughters to ruin me. O, it is foul.]

FOOL:

He that has a house to put his head in
has a good head-piece **[mind; brain]**.

The cod-piece that will house

[cod-piece: Codpiece, a pouch with a flap at the crotch of tight pants worn by males. Inside the pouch is the penis.]

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. 25

[The cod-piece . . . glass: The man that houses his penis (engages in sexual relations) before he has a house to live in will become poor and attract lice. As a beggar, he will marry (attract) many lice. The man who pampers his toe but neglects his heart—that is, pampers his two evil daughters but neglects the good one in his heart—will develop a painful corn and suffer insomnia. Your daughters look at you as they would at a mirror and make faces that arouse your emotions.]

Enter KENT.

LEAR: No, I will be the pattern of all
patience;

I will say nothing.

KENT: Who's there?

FOOL: Marry, here's grace and a **cod-piece**;
that's a wise man and a fool. 30

[Marry . . . fool: By the Virgin Mary, this fellow is 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 **[terrify]** 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, 35
 Such groans of roaring wind and rain, I
 never
 Remember to have heard; man's nature
 cannot carry
 The affliction nor the fear.
**[man's nature . . . fear: Man's nature is not
 made to endure such fear and stress.]**
 LEAR: Let the great gods,
 That keep this dreadful pother **[commotion;
 disturbance]** o'er our heads, 40
 Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou
 wretch,
 That hast within thee **undivulged** crimes,
 Unwhipp'd of justice; hide thee, thou bloody
 hand;
 Thou **perjur'd**, and thou simular **[pretender;
 one who simulates]** of virtue
 That art incestuous; caitiff **[villain]**, to pieces
 shake, 45
**[Tremble . . . pieces shake: Tremble, you
 who committed three undivulged and
 unpunished crimes: murder, perjury, and
 incest. Villain, I hope you shake into
 pieces.]**
 That under covert and convenient seeming
 Hast practis'd on man's life **[wronged
 people; ruined lives]**; close pent-up guilts,
Rive your concealing continents, and cry
 These dreadful summoners grace. I am a
 man
 More sinn'd against than sinning. 50
**[close . . . sinning: Hidden guilts, break out
 of your concealment and beg mercy from
 the dreadful gods who storm down their
 wrath. As for me, I have sinned less than
 those who have sinned against me.]**
 KENT: Alack **[alas]**! bare-headed!
 Gracious my lord, hard by here is a
 hovel **[hut; shack]**;
 Some friendship **[protection]** will it lend you
 'gainst the **tempest**;
 Repose you there while I to this hard house,
 —
 More harder than the stone whereof 'tis rais'd,

— 55

Which even but now, demanding after you,
Denied me to come in, return and force
Their scanted courtesy.

**[Repose . . . rais'd: Take shelter in that
hovel while I go to the house where
Goneril and Reagan are staying. Earlier,
they refused to admit me. They are
hardheaded, harder even than the stone of
which the house is made. Nevertheless, I
will try to force them to open the door.]**

LEAR: My wits begin to turn **[I am going out
of my mind]**.

Come on, my boy **[fool]**. How dost, my boy?
Art cold? 60

I am cold myself. Where is this straw **[straw
hut; hovel]**, 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. 65

**[The art . . . yet for thee: When you are in
need, vile things like hovels become
precious. Come, take me to the hovel. You
poor fool, I feel sorry for you.]**

FOOL:

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

**[The dimwit must make-do with what
fortune brings him even if the rain falls
every day.]**

LEAR: True, my good boy. Come, bring us to
this hovel. [Exeunt LEAR and KENT.]

**[Exeunt: The characters specified leave
the stage.]**

FOOL: This is a brave night to cool **[satisfy
the hot passions of]** a courtesan.

**[courtesan: Courtesan, a prostitute or
mistress who usually serves men of
royalty or nobility.]**

I'll speak a prophecy ere **[before]** I go:

When priests are more in word than
matter; **[when priests sin while
preaching against sin]** 70

When brewers mar **[dilute]** their malt
with water;

When nobles are their tailors'

tutors **[young noblemen were very particular about the appearance of their apparel];**

No heretics burn'd, but **wenches'** suitors;

[No heretics . . . suitors: When no heretics burn at the stake, but lusty suitors of wayward young women suffer the burning pain of syphilis]
When every case in law is right **[just; fair];**

No squire in debt, nor no poor knight;
75

When **slanders** do not live in tongues;
Nor cutpurses come not to throngs;

[Nor . . . throngs: Nor pickpockets and other thieves prey on crowds]

When usurers tell their gold i' the field;
[When usurers . . . field: When moneylenders who charge interest count their profit before the public eye]

And **bawds** and whores do churches build;

Then shall the realm of Albion **[England]** 80

Come to great confusion **[turbulence; upheaval; ruin];**

Then comes the time, who lives to see 't,

That going shall be us'd with feet **[that feet will be the only means of travel, as in the time of cave men.]**

This prophecy Merlin **[fabled magician of the legendary King Arthur]** shall make; for I live before his time. [Exit.

Comment: According to Arthurian legend, Merlin composed verses predicting the end of the world. The fool imitates Merlin's practice. In the last line, Shakespeare (speaking through the fool) calls attention to a deliberate **anachronism**: that Lear and the fool lived many years before the birth of Merlin. The fool's prophecy is in keeping with the theme of the terrifying and destructive force of the storm.

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Act 3, Scene 3

A room in GLOUCESTER'S castle.
Enter GLOUCESTER and EDMUND.

GLOUCESTER: Alack, alack! Edmund, I like not this unnatural dealing. **[Alas, alas, Edmund. I don't like the frightful result of my dealings with Cornwall and Regan.]** When I desired their leave that I might pity him **[Lear]**, 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 **[Please let me speak without interruption]**. There is division between the dukes, and a worse matter than that. I have received a letter this night; 'tis dangerous to be spoken; I have locked the letter in my closet. These injuries the king now bears will be revenged home; there's part of a power **[an army]** already footed **[already landed in England]**; we must incline to **[support]** the king. I will seek him and **privily** relieve **[assist]** him; go you and maintain talk with the duke, that my charity be not of him perceived **[go talk with Cornwall to divert attention from my effort to help King Lear]**. If he ask for me, **[say that]** I am ill and gone to bed. If I die for it, as no less is threatened me, the king, my old master, must be relieved. **[I don't care if they carry out their threat to kill me; I must help the king.]** There is some strange thing toward **[in store; about to happen]**, Edmund; pray you, be careful. [Exit. 5

[Edmund is now alone on the stage talking to himself.]

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. 10

[This courtesy . . . doth fall: What you have told me I shall report to the Duke. I'll tell him, too, about the letter locked in the closet. You deserve such disloyalty, and I deserve what you lose. Younger men like me rise when old men like you fall.]

Act 3, Scene 4

The heath. Before a hovel.

Enter LEAR, KENT, and fool.

KENT: Here is the place, my lord; good my lord, enter:

The tyranny of the open night's too rough
For nature **[our bodies]** to endure. [Storm still. 5

LEAR: Let me alone.

KENT: Good my lord, enter here.

LEAR: Wilt break my heart?

KENT: I'd rather break mine own. Good my lord, enter.

LEAR: Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm 10

Invades us to the skin: so 'tis to thee;
But where the greater malady is fix'd,
The lesser is scarce felt. Thou'dst **shun** a bear;

But if thy flight lay toward the roaring sea,
Thou'dst meet the bear i' the mouth. When the mind's free 15

The body's delicate; the tempest in my mind

Doth from my senses take all feeling else
Save what beats there. **Filial** ingratitude!

[Thou think'st . . . ingratitude: You think it's terrible that this storm drenches us. But where there is a greater peril, the lesser one is hardly noticed. You would run from a bear. But if you escape only by jumping into a roaring sea, you would stand your ground and face the bear. When you have no worries on your mind, you focus your mind on any unpleasant sensations your body experiences. Right now I have a storm in my mind that commands all of my attention. That storm rains on me the igratitude of my daughters!]

Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand
For lifting food to 't? But I will punish home:
20

**[Is it . . . home: They are like the mouth
that bites the hand feeding it. But I will
punish them.]**

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;
25

No more of that.

**[O! that way . . . of that: O! If I concentrate
on the ingratitude of Goneril and Regan, I
will go insane. Let me stop thinking about
it. No more of that.]**

KENT: Good, my lord, enter here.

LEAR: Prithee, go in thyself; seek thine own
ease:

This tempest will not give me leave to
ponder

On things would hurt me more. But I'll go in.
30

**[This tempest . . . go in: This storm
prevents me from thinking about things
that disturb me. Nevertheless, I'll go in.]**

[To the Fool.] In, boy; go first. You houseless
poverty, — **[You homeless poor people, —]**

Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.

[Fool goes in.]

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed
sides, 35

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, 40

And show the heavens more just.

**[Take physic . . . more just: You who are
rich and powerful should remedy your
indifference to poor. Take time to expose
yourself to what wretches feel so that you
may realize how important it is to share
your wealth (**superflux**, line 40) with them.]**

In doing so, you will show that the world and the heavens care about them. (These lines—39-41—mark a turning point for Lear in that he shifts attention from his own suffering to the suffering of those around him.)]

EDGAR: [Within.] Fathom and half, fathom and half! Poor Tom! [The Fool runs out from the hovel.

[Fathom and half: A fathom was a measure to gauge sea depths. Since a fathom was equal to six feet, a *fathom and half* was equal to nine feet. Edgar—Gloucester's faithful son, who is disguised as "Poor Tom"—is grossly exaggerating the depth of the water in the hut to express his discomfort.]

FOOL: Come not in here, nuncle; here's a spirit.

Help me! help me!

KENT: Give me thy hand. Who's there?

45

FOOL: A spirit, a spirit: he says his name's poor Tom.

KENT: What art thou that dost grumble there i' the straw?

Come forth.

Enter EDGAR disguised as a madman.

EDGAR: Away! the foul fiend **[Satan]** follows me! 50

Through the sharp **hawthorn** blow the winds.

Hum! go to thy cold bed and warm thee.

LEAR: Didst thou give all **[all your possessions]** to thy two daughters?

And art thou come to this?

EDGAR: Who gives anything to poor Tom? whom the foul fiend hath led through fire and through flame, through ford and whirlpool, o'er **bog** and **quagmire**; that hath laid knives under his pillow, and **halts** 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.

[Who gives . . . traitor: Who gives anything to me, whom the devil has pursued through fire, rivers, and whirlpools and over bogs and quicksand? The devil has

put knives under my pillow, nooses in my church pew, poison next to my porridge. And he has made me chase my shadow while riding on horseback across narrow bridges. His purpose in all of this was to provide opportunities for me to kill myself.]

Bless thy **five wits!** Tom's a-cold. O! do de, do de, do de. Bless thee from whirlwinds, starblasting, 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. 55

[five wits: G. B. Harrison identified the five wits as "common wit, imagination, fantasy, estimation, and memory" (*Shakespeare: the Complete Works*. New York: Harcourt, 1952 (page 1163).]

LEAR: What! have his daughters brought him to this pass **[madness]**?

Couldst thou save nothing? Didst thou give them all **[all your possessions]**?

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

[Nay . . . shamed: No, he reserved a blanket with which to hide his nakedness and save onlookers from embarrassment.]

LEAR: Now all the plagues that in the **pendulous** air

Hang fated o'er men's faults light on thy daughters! 60

[Now . . . daughters: Now I hope that all the plagues suffered by evildoers will settle on your daughters.]

KENT: He hath no daughters, sir.

LEAR: Death, traitor! **[That's poppycock, you traitor!]** nothing could have subdu'd nature **[a man]**

To such a lowness, but his unkind daughters.

Is it the fashion that discarded fathers Should have thus little mercy on their flesh? 65

Judicious punishment! 'twas this flesh **begot**

Those **pelican** daughters.

[Judicious punishment: It is just for disloyal daughters to suffer plagues.]

[pelican: Bird of prey. Lear is saying his daughters prey on him.]

EDGAR: Pillicock **[obsolete word]**

for **penis**] sat on Pillicock-hill [**hill: female sex organ**]:

Halloo, halloo, loo, loo!

FOOL: This cold night will turn us all to fools and madmen. 70

EDGAR: Take heed o' the foul fiend [**devil**]. Obey thy parents; keep thy word justly; swear not; commit not with man's sworn spouse [**don't commit adultery**]; set not thy sweet heart on proud **array** [**suppress your desire to wear fancy clothes**]. Tom's a-cold.

LEAR: What hast thou been [**what was your occupation**]?

EDGAR: A servingman, proud in heart and mind; that curled my hair, wore gloves in my cap, served the lust of my mistress's heart, and did the act of darkness with her; swore as many oaths as I spake words, and broke them in the sweet face of heaven; one that slept in the contriving of lust, and waked to do it.

[A servingman . . . do it: I was a proud servant who curled his hair, wore the gloves of his mistress in his hat, and satisfied her lust. I made promises, then broke them. I dreamed of having sex and woke up to have it.]

Wine loved I deeply, dice dearly, and in woman out-**paramoured** the Turk [**and in lust outdid the Turkish ruler with a harem**]: 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 [**don't allow a woman to know what is in your heart**]: keep thy foot out of brothels, thy hand out of plackets [**petticoats**], thy pen from lenders' [**moneylenders'**] books, and **defy** the foul fiend. Still through the hawthorn blows the cold wind; says, "suum, mun ha no nonny" [**suum . . . nonny: nonsense words spoken by the wind**].

Dolphin [**imaginary horse**] my boy, my boy; sessa [**corruption of the French word cessez, meaning stop**] ! let him trot by. [Storm still.

LEAR: Why, thou wert better in thy grave than to answer with thy uncovered body this extremity of the skies. [**You'd be better off dead than to speak to the stormy skies.**] Is

man no more than this? **[Is a human so low a wretch as this man?]** Consider him well. Thou owest the worm no silk, the beast no **hide**, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume **[In your nakedness, you don't owe the creatures of nature anything for the clothes they provide—not the silkworm; not cattle, goats, or other animals that provide skin to make leather; not sheep that provide wool for garments; not the civet (catlike mammal that secretes a fluid used to make perfume)]**. Ha! here's three on 's are sophisticated; thou art the thing itself; **[Ha! We three (Lear, Kent, the fool) are cultured, noble, and wealthy compared to you. You are poverty and ignorance];** unaccommodated **[unsophisticated; uncivilized]** man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings **[clothes made from animal parts; clothes that animals "lent" to humans]!** 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 wide field were like an old **lecher's** heart; a small spark, all the rest on 's body cold **[a small spark in a cold body]**. Look! here comes a walking fire. 75

Enter GLOUCESTER with a torch

EDGAR: This is the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet **[scatterbrain; silly person; irresponsible person]**: he begins at curfew **[dusk; nightfall]**, and walks till the first cock **[till the rooster crows]**; he gives the **web and the pin**, squints the eye **[he gives you eyes diseases (the web and the pin) that make you squint]**, and makes the **harelip** **[makes you develop a harelip]**; **mildews** **[ruins; rots]** the white wheat, and hurts the poor creature of earth.

Swithold footed thrice the 'old;
[Saint Swithold three times crossed the wold (hilly open land)]
 He met the night-mare **[night spirit riding a horse; witch riding a horse]**,
 and her nine-fold **[nine children]**;
 Bid her alight **[asked her to dismount]**,
 And her troth plight **[and promised]**

good will],

And aroint **[begone; leave; go]** thee,
witch, aroint thee!

KENT: How fares your Grace?

LEAR: What's he? **[Lear points to Gloucester.]**

KENT: Who's there? What is 't you seek?

80

GLOUCESTER: What are you there? Your names?

EDGAR: Poor Tom; that eats the swimming frog; the toad, the tadpole, the wall-newt **[salamander]**, and the water; that in the fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats cow-dung for sallets **[salads]**; swallows the old rat and the ditch-dog **[dead dog found in a ditch]**; drinks, the green mantle **[scum]** of the standing pool; who is whipped from tithing to tithing **[from one place to another]**, and stock-punished **[put in stocks]**, and imprisoned; who hath had **[who in more prosperous days 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! **[name of a demon]** peace, thou fiend. 85

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, my lord, is grown so vile,

That it doth hate what gets **[begets]** it.

90

EDGAR: Poor Tom's a-cold.

GLOUCESTER: Go in **[my house]** with me. My duty cannot suffer

To obey in all your daughters' hard commands:

Though their injunction **[will; desire]** be to bar my doors,

And let this tyrannous night take hold upon you, 95

Yet have I ventur'd to come seek you out
And bring you where both fire and food is ready.

LEAR: First let me talk with this philosopher.

What is the cause of thunder?

KENT: Good my lord, take his offer; go into the house. 100

LEAR: I'll talk a word with this same learned Theban.

[Theban: Resident of the ancient Greek city of Thebes. Here, *Theban* refers to Edgar as if he were a Greek philosopher.]

What is your study?

EDGAR: How to prevent the fiend **[thwart the devil]**, and to kill vermin.

LEAR: Let me ask you one word in private.

KENT: **Importune** him once more to go, my lord; 105

His wits begin to unsettle.

[Importune . . . unsettle: Ask him once more to go with you to your house, my lord. He's beginning to go mad. Kent is speaking to Gloucester only.]

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!

[Ah! . . . man: Ah! Kent, you poor banished man, you said it would be this way.]

Thou sayst the king grows mad; I'll tell thee, friend, 110

I am almost mad myself. I had a son **[Edgar, disguised as Poor Tom]**,

Now outlaw'd from my blood; he sought my life **[he wanted to murder me]**,

But lately, very late; I lov'd him, friend,

No father his son dearer; true to tell thee,

[Storm continues.

The grief hath craz'd my wits. **[The grief that he caused me has made me a little mad.]**

What a night's this! 115

I do **beseech** your Grace,—

LEAR: O! cry you mercy, sir. **[Just be quiet a moment.]**

Noble philosopher, your company.

EDGAR: Tom's a-cold.

GLOUCESTER: In, fellow, there, into the hovel: keep thee warm. 120

LEAR: Come, let's in all.

KENT: This way, my lord.

LEAR: With him;

I will keep still with my philosopher.

[With him . . . philosopher: I'll enter the hovel and keep company with my philosopher, Poor Tom.]

KENT: Good my lord, soothe him; let him take the fellow. 125

[Good . . . fellow: It's all right, Gloucester. Soothe the king. And let him go inside with Poor Tom.]

GLOUCESTER: Take him you on. **[All right, Poor Tom can be with us.]**

KENT: Sirrah **[Edgar]**, come on; go along with us.

LEAR: Come, good Athenian.

GLOUCESTER: No words, no words: hush.

EDGAR: Child Rowland to the dark tower came, 130

[Child Rowland: Roland as a youth. Roland was a heroic knight in French literature who defended France against hostile forces. Although he was a real person (believed to have died in 778), he was romanticized and turned into a legend in stories about him.]

His word was still, Fie, foh, and fum,
I smell the blood of a British man. **[Exeunt. [Exeunt: Everyone leaves the stage.]**

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Act 3, Scene 5

A room in GLOUCESTER'S castle.
Enter CORNWALL and EDMUND.

CORNWALL: I will have my revenge ere **[before]** 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.

[How . . . think of: My lord, I fear to think of how I will be censured (criticized or condemned) for permitting my natural loyalty to my father to be overcome by loyalty to you.]

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 reproveable badness in himself.

5

[I now . . . in himself: I now perceive that your brother, Edgar, had some justification for seeking your father's death. For your father has enough badness in him to provoke attempts on his life.]

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!

[How malicious . . . detector: How unfortunate it is for me that my conscience compels me to expose my own father. This is the letter he spoke of. It proves that he is a spy for France. O heavens! I wish I had not been the one to detect his treason.]

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. **[Go tell your father that we plan to arrest him.]**

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. 10

[If I find . . . my blood: If I find my father doing service to the king, he will appear all the more guilty. (Edmund spoke this thought under his breath so that Cornwall could not hear him. However, he speaks the rest of the line to Cornwall.) I will persevere in my loyalty to you even though doing so will require me to act against my father.]

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

[Exeunt: Everyone leaves the stage.]

Act 3, Scene 6

A chamber in a farmhouse adjoining the castle.

Enter GLOUCESTER, LEAR, KENT, fool, and

EDGAR.

GLOUCESTER: Here **[this shelter]** is better than the open air; take it thankfully. I will piece out the comfort with what addition I can **[I will get things that will make you more comfortable]**: I will not be long from you.

KENT: All the power of his wits has given way to his impatience. **[Lear's mind has descended into madness, manifested here by 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.

5

[Frateretto . . . fiend: A devil named Frateretto tells me that the evil Roman emperor Nero (birth, AD 37; death, AD 68) is fishing in hell's lake of darkness. Pray, innocent fool, and beware of the foul fiends of hell.]

FOOL: Prithee, nuncle, tell me whether a madman be a gentleman or a **yeoman** **[farmer who works his own land; servant of a member of nobility or royalty; attendant]!**

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. **[No . . . before him: No, he's a yeoman with a gentleman as a son. Only a madman would allow his son to become a gentleman before he, the father, did.]**

LEAR: To have a thousand with red burning **spits**

Come hissing **[hissing]** in upon 'em,—
10

[O, to have a thousand devils with burning spits come hissing in upon my disloyal daughters]

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.

[He's mad . . . oath: If a man trusts that a wolf is tame, a horse is healthy, a young man's love is sincere, or that a whore means what she says, he's mad.]

LEAR: It shall be done; I will **arraign** them

straight.

[It shall . . . straight: I'll put my daughters on trial right now, even though they are absent.]

[To EDGAR.] Come, sit thou here, most learned justicer **[judge]**;

[To the Fool.] Thou, sapient **[wise]** sir, sit here. Now, you she foxes! 15

[she foxes: Lear compares his daughters to female foxes.]

EDGAR: Look, where he stands and glares! wantest thou eyes at trial, madam?

[Look . . . madam: Look, can't you see where the devil stands and glares? Don't you want to see what's happening at your trial?]

Come o'er the bourn **[creek; brook; stream]**, Bessy, to me,—

FOOL:

Her boat hath a leak **[she's in her menstrual period]**,

And she must not speak

Why she dares not come over to thee.

20

EDGAR: The foul fiend haunts poor Tom in the voice of a nightingale. Hopdance **[name of a devil]** cries in Tom's belly for two white herring. Croak not, black angel; I have no food for thee.

KENT: How do you, sir? Stand you not so amaz'd **[Don't stand there like a statue]**: Will you lie down and rest upon the cushions?

LEAR: I'll see their trial first. Bring in their evidence.

[To EDGAR.] Thou robed man of justice, take thy place; 25

[To the Fool.] And thou, his yoke-fellow of equity **[colleague of the courts; law partner]**,

Bench **[sit]** by his side. [To KENT.] You are o' the commission **[you are also commissioned as a judge]**,

Sit you too.

EDGAR: Let us deal justly.

Sleepest or wakest thou, jolly

shepherd? **[Jolly shepherd, are you asleep or awake? (The shepherd apparently is neglecting his duty to observe and guard the sheep.)]**

Thy sheep be in the corn **[Your sheep are in**

the cornfield];

And for one blast of thy minikin **[small; dainty]** mouth **[horn]**,

Thy sheep shall take no harm.

Purr! the cat is grey. 30

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

FOOL: Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril?

LEAR: She cannot deny it.

FOOL: Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint-stool **[wooden stool]**.

LEAR: And here's another **[Regan]**, whose warp'd looks proclaim 35

What store her heart is made on **[whose monstrous looks proclaim the evil in her heart]**. Stop her there!

Arms, arms, sword, fire! Corruption in the place **[There's disorder in the court]**!

False justicer, why hast thou let her 'scape **[escape]**?

EDGAR: Bless thy **five wits**!

KENT: O pity! Sir, where is the patience now 40

That you so oft have boasted to retain?

EDGAR: [Aside.] My tears begin to take his part so much,

They'll **mar** my counterfeiting.

[Speaking to himself so that no others can hear, Edgar says the tears he is crying for Lear might wash away his disguise.]

LEAR: The little dogs and all,

Tray, Blanch, and Sweet-heart, see, they bark at me. 45

EDGAR: Tom will throw his head at them. **[Tom will scare them away.]**

Avaunt **[begone; go away]**, you **curs**!

Be thy mouth or black or white,

Tooth that poisons if it bite;

[Tooth . . . bite: With teeth that wound if they bite]

Mastiff, greyhound, mongrel grim, 50

Hound or spaniel, brach **[female hound]** or lym **[dog on a leash; dog used to chase down wild boar]**

Or bobtail tike **[dog with a shortened tail]** or trundle-tail **[dog with a curled-up tail]**

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

55

**[For . . . are fled: For, simply by
nodding his head at the dogs, he will
make them jump up and run off.]**

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

**[horn: Vessel beggars used to store
drinks donated to them.]**

LEAR: Then let them anatomize **[cut
open]** Regan, see what breeds about her
heart. Is there any cause in nature that makes
these hard hearts? **[To EDGAR.]** You, sir, I
entertain you for one of my hundred; only I do
not like the fashion of your garments: you will
say, they are Persian attire; but let them be
changed.

**[You sir, I entertain . . . changed: You sir
can be one of my one hundred knights.
But I don't like your clothes. You will say
that they are fancy. But change them
nevertheless.]**

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

LEAR: Make no noise, make no noise; draw
the **[bed]** curtains: so, so, so. We'll go to
supper i' the morning: so, so, so.

FOOL: And I'll go to bed at noon. 60

Re-enter 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.

65

There is a litter ready; lay him in 't,
And drive toward 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,

70

Stand in assured loss. Take up, take up;

And follow me, that will to some provision
Give thee quick conduct.

KENT: Oppress'd nature sleeps **[The abused king sleeps]:**

This rest might yet have balm'd **[soothed]** thy
broken sinews **[stressed body]**, 75

Which, if convenience will not allow,
Stand in hard cure.— **[Which . . . cure: But if you can't continue sleeping now, you will probably continue to suffer stress.]** [To the fool.] Come, help to bear thy master;

Thou must not stay behind.

GLOUCESTER: Come, come, away. [Exeunt KENT, GLOUCESTER, and the fool, bearing away LEAR.]

[Exeunt: The characters specified leave the stage.]

EDGAR: When we our betters see bearing
our woes, 80

We scarcely think our miseries our foes.
Who alone suffers suffers most i' the mind ,
Leaving free things and happy shows
behind;

[When we . . . behind: When we see our betters enduring the same suffering that afflicts us, we think less of our own miseries. But the person who suffers alone experiences the greatest mental suffering as he recalls happy times.]

But then the mind much sufferance doth
o'erskip,

When grief hath mates, and bearing
fellowship. 85

How light and portable my pain seems now,
When that which makes me bend makes the
king bow;

[But then . . . king bow: But a man forgets about his suffering if he knows that others are suffering in the same way that he is. Misery loves company. Having company eases the pain, especially when the company is the king.]

He childed as I father'd! Tom, away!

[He childed . . . father'd: Lear suffered because of what his children did. I suffer because of what my father mistakenly thinks of me.]

Mark the high noises, and thyself **bewray**
When false opinion, whose wrong thought
defiles thee, 90

In thy just proof repeals and reconciles

thee.

What will hap more to-night, safe 'scape the king!

Lurk, lurk. [Exit.

[Mark . . . king (A passage in which Edgar as Poor Tom speaks to himself): Listen for the noises made by people chasing you. Reveal your true identity only when you can disprove false charges against you. Whatever else happens tonight, I hope the king escapes safely.]

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Act 3, Scene 7

A room in GLOUCESTER'S castle.

Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, GONERIL, EDMUND, and servants.

CORNWALL: Post speedily to my lord your husband **[Albany]**; show him this letter: the army of France is landed. Seek out the traitor Gloucester. [Exeunt some of the servants.

[Exeunt: The characters specified leave the stage.]

REGAN: Hang him instantly.

GONERIL: Pluck out his eyes. 5

CORNWALL: Leave him to my displeasure. Edmund, keep you our sister **[sister-in-law]** company: the revenges we are bound to take upon your traitorous father are not fit for your beholding. Advise the duke **[Albany]**, where you are going, to a most festinate **[speedy]** preparation **[for war]**: we are bound to the like. Our posts shall be swift and intelligent betwixt us. Farewell, dear sister: farewell, my Lord of Gloucester **[good-bye, Edmund, 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,
10

Hot questrists **[followers]** after him, met him at gate;

Who, with some other of the lord's

dependants,
Are gone with him toward Dover, where they
boast
To have well-armed friends.
CORNWALL: Get horses for your mistress.

15

GONERIL: Farewell, sweet lord, and sister.
CORNWALL: Edmund, farewell. [Exeunt
GONERIL, EDMUND, and OSWALD.

[Exeunt: The characters specified leave the stage.]

Go seek the traitor Gloucester,
Pinion him **[shackle him; bind his hands]** like a thief, bring him before us.

[Exeunt other servants.

[Exeunt: The characters specified leave the stage.]

Though well we may not pass upon his
life **[may not sentence him to death]**
Without the form of justice, yet our power

20

Shall do a courtesy to our wrath, which
men
May blame but not control. Who's there? The
traitor?

[yet our . . . control: But I'll use my power to gain revenge in some way. Men may blame me, but they won't control me.]

Re-enter servants, with GLOUCESTER.

REGAN: Ingrateful fox! 'tis he.

CORNWALL: Bind fast his corky **[dry and shriveled]** arms. 25

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 **[Bind him tightly]**. O
filthy traitor!

GLOUCESTER: Unmerciful lady as you are,
I'm none. 30

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, 35
 These hairs, which thou dost ravish from my chin,
 Will quicken **[come to life]**, 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? 40

REGAN: Be simple-answer'd, for we know the truth.

CORNWALL: And what confederacy **[relationship; conspiracy]** have you with the traitors
 Late footed in the kingdom?

REGAN: To whose hands have you sent the lunatic king?

Speak. 45

GLOUCESTER: I have a letter guessingly set down,

Which came from one that's of a neutral heart,

And not from one oppos'd.

[I have . . . oppos'd: I received a letter that speculated on the events involving England and France. But it came from a neutral observer, one who is not opposed to you.]

CORNWALL: Cunning.

REGAN: And false. 50

CORNWALL: Where hast thou sent the king?

GLOUCESTER: To Dover.

REGAN: Wherefore **[why]** to Dover? Wast thou not charg'd at peril **[Weren't you ordered at peril to]** —

CORNWALL: Wherefore to Dover? Let him answer that.

GLOUCESTER: I am tied to the stake, and I must stand the course. **[I am tied up and have no choice but to put up with you people.]** 55

REGAN: Wherefore to Dover?

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.

[Because . . . fangs: Because I did not want to see you, Regan, pluck out his

**eyes. Nor did I want to see Goneril sink her
boar-like teeth into his flesh.]**

The sea, with such a storm as his bare head
60

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

And quench'd the stelled fires;

**[The sea . . . fires: During the hellish storm
he endured bareheaded in the black night,
the sea would have pitied him and risen up
to extinguish the fire of stars casting dim
rays on his plight.]**

Yet, poor old heart, he help the heavens to
rain.

**[Yet . . . rain: Yet the poor old man cried
tears that helped the heavens to rain.]**

If wolves had at thy gate howl'd that
dern **[terrible]** time **[of the storm]**,

Thou shouldst have said, 'Good porter, turn
the key,' 65

All cruels else subscrib'd **[in spite of the
cruelty you unleash upon others]**: but I
shall see

The winged vengeance overtake such
children.

**[but I shall . . . children: But I shall see the
day when vengeance takes its toll on
Goneril and Regan.]**

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, 70

Give me some help! O cruel! O ye gods!

[GLOUCESTER'S eye put out.]

**REGAN: One side will mock another; the
other too. [One eye will mock the other, so
gouge out his other eye.]**

CORNWALL: If you see vengeance.—

FIRST SERVANT: Hold your hand, my
lord:

I have serv'd you ever since I was a child,
75

But better service have I never done you
Than now to bid you hold.

REGAN: How now, you dog! **[How dare
you, you dog!]**

FIRST SERVANT: If you did wear a beard
upon your chin,
I'd shake it on this quarrel. What do you
mean? 80

[If you . . . mean: If you had a beard, I'd pull it. What do you mean by treating Gloucester this way?]

CORNWALL: My villain! [Draws. **Calling the servant a villain, Cornwall draws his sword.**]

FIRST SERVANT: Nay then, come on, and take the chance of anger. [Draws. They fight. CORNWALL is wounded.]

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.]

85

CORNWALL: Lest it see more, prevent it. Out, vile jelly! **[Cornwall puts out his other eye.]**

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. 90

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 abus'd. 95

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 receiv'd a hurt. Follow me, lady.

Turn out that eyeless villain; throw this slave **[the dead servant]** 100

Upon the dunghill **[pit on a livestock farm for the storage of manure]**. 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.

[I'll never . . . good: If Cornwall gets off scot free, I'll feel free to commit any kind of wickedness.]

THIRD SERVANT: If she live long, 105
And, in the end, meet the old course of death,

Women will all turn monsters.

[If she . . . monsters: If she lives to an old age and dies of natural causes, then all women will turn into monsters if they want to extend their lifespan.]

SECOND SERVANT: Let's follow the old earl **[Gloucester]**, and get the Bedlam **[get the madman called Poor Tom]**

To lead him where he would: his roguish madness

Allows itself to any thing. 110

THIRD SERVANT: Go thou; I'll fetch some flax **[plant with healing properties]**, and whites of eggs,

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

[Exeunt severally: Everyone leaves the stage separately.]

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Act 4, Scene 1

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, 5

Stands still in **esperance**, lives not in fear:

[Yet better . . . fear: It's better that people scorn me openly than scorn me behind my back while flattering me in their presence. I may be the worst, the lowest, and the most dejected person in the world, but I still have hope (esperance, line 6) and do not live in fear.]

The lamentable change is from the best;
The worst returns to laughter. Welcome, then,

[The lamentable . . . laughter: The worst

kind of change is to go from being held in highest esteem to being held in lowest esteem—or from being the happiest mortal to the unhappiest. But when you reach your lowest ebb, laughter buoys you.]

Thou unsubstantial air that I embrace:

The wretch that thou hast blown unto the worst 10

Owes nothing to thy blasts. But who comes here?

[The wretch . . . blasts: I no longer fear the stormy air that has blown me down to my present state, for I am as low as I can go.]

Enter GLOUCESTER, led by an old man.

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

But that thy strange mutations make us hate thee,

Life would not yield to age. 15

[But that . . . age: If life did not afflict us with infirmities as the years pass, we would live on with fire and zest.]

OLD MAN: O my good lord!

I have been your tenant **[tenant farmer, who rents land]**, and your father's tenant,

These fourscore **[eighty]** years.

GLOUCESTER: Away, get thee away; good friend, be gone;

Thy comforts **[your kindness]** can do me no good at all; 20

Thee they may hurt.

OLD MAN: 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 25

Prove our commodities. Ah! dear son Edgar.

[Full oft . . . commodities: Frequently it has been observed that having all our faculties—healthy and unmarred—makes us feel safe. However, it has also been observed that having physical defects, such as my blindness, can awaken new powers in us.]

The food of thy abused father's wrath;

Might I but live to see thee in my touch,

I'd say I had eyes again.

[The food . . . again: I regret my false accusations against my son Edgar. If I could live long enough to see him in the touch of my hands, I would say I have eyes again.]

OLD MAN: How now! Who's there? 30

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.'

35

[And worse . . . 'This is the worst': So long as we have the wits to recognize our dire plight, which seems worse than ever before, things could actually be worse.]

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,

40

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. 45

[As flies . . . sport: To the gods, we are like flies that boys swat for sport.]

EDGAR: [Aside.] How should this be?

Bad is the trade that must play fool to
sorrow,

Angering itself and others.—[To

GLOUCESTER.] Bless thee, master!

[How should . . . master: What's happening? What should I do? I don't like the idea of pretending to be a foolish beggar to a sorrowful man.]

GLOUCESTER: Is that the naked fellow?

OLD MAN: Ay, my lord. 50

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. 55

**[Then, prithee . . . lead me: Then run off
and get some proper clothing for this poor
wretch, whom I'll ask to lead me to
Dover. You can meet up with us a mile or
two from here.]**

OLD MAN: Alack **[alas]**, 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.

**['Tis the . . . gone: It's typical of the times
we live in—that madmen lead the blind.
Now do what I ask. Or, if you wish, go off
and do what pleases you. In either case,
be off.]**

OLD MAN: I'll bring him the best
'parel **[apparel]** that I have, 60

Come on 't what will **[whatever happens,
good or ill]**. [Exit.

GLOUCESTER: Sirrah, naked fellow,—

EDGAR: Poor Tom's a-cold. [Aside.] I
cannot daub **[fake]** it further.

GLOUCESTER: Come hither, fellow.

EDGAR: [Aside.] And yet I must. Bless thy
sweet eyes, they bleed. 65

GLOUCESTER: Know'st thou the way to
Dover?

EDGAR: Both stile and gate, horse-way and
foot-path **[I know every landmark, road, and
footpath]**. Poor Tom hath been scared out of
his good wits: bless thee, good man's son,
from the foul fiend **[Satan]**! Five
fiends **[devils]** have been in **[have
possessed]** poor Tom at once; of lust, as
Obidicut; Hobbididance, prince of dumbness;
Mahu, of stealing; Modo, of murder; and
Flibbertigibbet, of mopping and
mowing **[mocking; making faces]**; 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! 70

**[Here, take . . . so still: Here, take the
money in this purse, you who have been**

**humbled beyond measure by the heavens.
You are happier because I am wretched. I
hope the heavens continue to deal out
justice in that way.]**

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? 75

**[Let the . . . enough: Let the man who has
an overabundance of wealth and who lusts
after women—a man who treats your
directions or commands with disdain and
who does not see the suffering around him
because he does not feel it—experience
the pain of corrective measures so that he
may share his wealth with the less
fortunate.]**

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 **[edge]** of it,

And I'll repair the misery thou dost bear **[I'll
reward you]** 80

With something rich about me; from that
place

I shall no leading need.

EDGAR: Give me thy arm:

Poor Tom shall lead thee. [Exeunt.

[Exeunt: Everyone leaves the stage.]

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Act 4, Scene 2

Before the DUKE OF 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
chang'd. 5

I told him of the **[French]** army that was
landed;

He smil'd at it: I told him you were coming;
His answer was, 'The worse' [she'll make
things worse]. Of Gloucester's treachery,
And of the loyal service of his son,
When I inform'd him, then he call'd me **sot**,

10

And told me I had turn'd the wrong side out:
What most he should dislike seems pleasant
to him;
What like, offensive.

**[Of Gloucester's . . . offensive: After I
informed him of Gloucester's treachery
and the loyal service of Edmund, he called
me a drunkard and said I had things all
wrong. What he should scorn seems
pleasant to him. What he should like
offends him.]**

GONERIL: [To EDMUND.] Then, shall you
go no further.

It is the cowish terror of his spirit 15
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;

**[Then, shall . . . brother: Then stop here,
Edmund. Don't go in. My husband is a
coward who refuses to undertake risk. He
thinks no one can condemn him for
something he didn't do. On our way here,
we talked about things we could do that
would be to our credit. What I want you to
do now, Edmund, is to go back to my
brother-in-law, Cornwall.]**

Hasten his **musters** and conduct his
powers:

I must change arms at home, and give the
distaff 20

Into my husband's **[Albany'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, 25

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

[Hasten . . . thee well: Assemble his

soldiers. Meanwhile, I'll change duties at home with my husband. He'll manage the women's chores, and I'll do the men's. This trusted servant (Oswald) will carry messages between us. Before long, if you are ready to serve me on your own behalf, you will receive orders from me. Wear this token as a symbol of our relationship. Don't speak. Instead, lower your head for a kiss. If this kiss could speak, it would elevate your spirits into the air. Think about what I say, and farewell.]

EDMUND: Yours in the ranks of death. **[I will serve you even if it means I must sacrifice my life.]**

GONERIL: My most dear Gloucester! [Exit EDMUND.]

[Gloucester: Goneril refers to Edmund as Gloucester, as if Edmund's father has already died and Edmund has inherited his father's title and property.]

O! the difference of man and man! 30

To thee a woman's services are due:

My fool usurps my bed.

[O! the . . . bed: O, the difference between you, Edmund—a real man—and my husband, Albany. You deserve my love and attention. Right now, a fool occupies my bed.]

OSWALD: Madam, here comes my lord.

[Exit.]

Enter ALBANY.

GONERIL: I have been worth the whistle. **[I see that you at long last are paying attention to me.]** 35

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; 40

She that herself will sliver and disbranch

From her material sap, perforce must wither

And come to deadly use.

[That nature . . . itself: That person who rejects his or her family origin cannot be trusted. She who will cut off the branch connecting her to her family tree will, like

the branch, wither and die.]

GONERIL: No more; the text is foolish. **[Say no more. Your words are foolish.]**

ALBANY: Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile; 45

Filths savour but themselves. **[Vile people appreciate only themselves.]** What have you done?

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

[Tigers . . . perform'd: You and Regan are tigers, not daughters. What have you done?]

A father, and a gracious aged man,
Whose **reverence** the head-lugg'd bear would lick,

Most barbarous, most degenerate! have you madded. 50

[A father . . . madded: You have driven mad a father, a gracious old man, whose hand even an ornery bear would lick. You are barbarous and degenerate!]

Could my good brother suffer you to do it?

A man, a prince, by him so benefited!

[Could . . . benefited: Could my good brother-in-law, Cornwall—who has benefited from the king's generosity—have allowed you to treat Lear as you have?]

If that the heavens do not their visible spirits

Send quickly down to tame these vile offences,

It will come, 55

Humanity must perforce prey on itself,

Like monsters of the deep.

[If that . . . deep: If the heavens do not immediately send down their wrath on you, it will come eventually. Humans who prey on other humans are evil; they are like monsters from the ocean depths.]

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** 60

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,
65

Whilst thou, a moral fool, sitt'st still, and
criest

'Alack! why does he so?'

**[Milk-liver'd . . . does he so: Coward! While
you turn the other cheek, you fail to see
the difference between receiving honor
and receiving backhanded blows. Only
fools pity villains who are punished before
they commit their crimes. Why aren't you
beating your war drum against France?
Even now, French armies are flying their
banners in England. Wearing plumed
helmets, the French soldiers threaten you.
Meanwhile, you simply sit there and
wonder why the French have come to
England.]**

ALBANY: See thyself, devil!

Proper deformity seems not in the fiend
So horrid as in woman. 70

**[See . . . woman: Look at yourself, devil!
Evil in a woman seems more horrifying
than evil in a demon from hell.]**

GONERIL: O vain fool!

ALBANY: Thou changed and self-cover'd
thing, for shame,

Be-monster not thy feature. Were 't my
fitness

**[Thou changed . . . feature: How shameful
it is that you have turned yourself into a
beast, making your features monstrous.]**

To let these hands obey my blood,
They are apt enough to dislocate and tear
75

Thy flesh and bones; howe'er thou art a
fiend,

A woman's shape doth shield thee.

GONERIL: Marry, your manhood.—Mew!

**[Marry . . . Mew: By the Virgin Mary, cast
off your useless manhood.]**

Enter a messenger.

ALBANY: What news? 80

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 eyes!

MESSENGER: A servant that he bred, thrill'd
with remorse **[filled with sympathy for Gloucester]**, 85

Oppos'd against the act, bending his sword
To his great master **[Cornwall]**; who, thereat
enrag'd,

Flew on him, and amongst them fell'd him
dead;

[Flew . . . dead: Attacked and killed the servant]

But not without that harmful stroke, which
since

Hath pluck'd him after. 90

[But not . . . after: But not without suffering a harmful stroke from the servant's sword. Cornwall later died.]

ALBANY: This shows you are above,
You justicers, that these our **nether** crimes
So speedily can venge! But, O poor
Gloucester!

[This shows . . . venge: His death shows that the heavens above rain down their just punishment for the crimes we commit in this lower world.]

Lost he his other eye?

MESSENGER: Both, both, my lord. 95
This letter, madam, craves a speedy
answer;

'Tis from your sister.

GONERIL: [Aside.] One way I like this
well;

But **[Regan]** being widow, and my
Gloucester **[Edmund]** with her,
May all the building in my fancy pluck
100

Upon my hateful life: another way,
This news is not so tart. [To messenger.] I'll
read and answer. [Exit.]

[One way . . . tart (Spoken to herself): In one respect, I like the fact that Cornwall is dead. But I don't like the idea that Regan, now a widow, is with Edmund. If they are attracted to each other, I can forget about building a new life with Edmund. In another respect, this news is not so bad.]

ALBANY: Where was his
son **[Edmund]** when they did take his
eyes?

MESSENGER: Come with my lady
hither. **[He was coming here with Regan.]**

ALBANY: He is not here. 105
 MESSENGER: No, my good lord; I met him back again.
 ALBANY: Knows he the wickedness? **[Does he know about the wickedness committed against old Gloucester, his father?]**
 MESSENGER: Ay, my good lord; 'twas he inform'd against him, **[it was Edmund who informed against his own father,]**
 And quit **[left]** the house on purpose that their punishment
 Might have the freer course. 110
 ALBANY: Gloucester **[old 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 knowest. [Exeunt.
[Exeunt: Everyone leaves the stage.]

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Act 4, Scene 3

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.

[Something . . . necessary: He remembered unfinished business in France, business so important that he had to return to his country.]

KENT: Who hath he left behind him general? 5

GENTLEMAN: The Marshal of France, Monsieur la Far.

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

[Did . . . grief: Did your letters to Queen Cordelia about developments in England cause her to grieve?]

GENTLEMAN: Ay, sir; she took them, read them in my presence;

And now and then an ample tear
 trill'd **[trickled]** down
 Her delicate cheek; it seem'd she was a
 queen 10
 Over her passion; who, most rebel-like,
 Sought to be king o'er her.
**[it seem'd . . . o'er her: It seemed she had
 control over her emotions, which—like
 rebels—tried to dominate her.]**
 KENT: O! then it **[the news in the
 letter]** mov'd her.
 GENTLEMAN: Not to a rage; patience and
 sorrow strove
 Who should express her goodliest. You have
 seen 15
 Sunshine and rain at once; her smiles and
 tears
 Were like a better way; those happy smilets
**[Not a rage . . . smilets: She was not in a
 rage. Patience vied with sorrow in her
 heart over which would reveal her best
 intentions. She was like a sunshower, but
 her smiles and tears were more beautiful.
 Those happy little smiles]**
 That play'd on her ripe lip seem'd not to
 know
 What guests were in her eyes; which parted
 thence,
 As pearls from diamonds dropp'd. In brief,
 20
**[What guests . . . dropp'd: That tears were
 in her eyes, tears that fell like pearls from
 diamonds.]**
 Sorrow would be a rarity most lov'd,
 If all could so become it.
 KENT: Made she no verbal question?
 GENTLEMAN: Faith, once or twice she
 heav'd the name of 'father'
 Pantingly forth, as if it press'd her heart;
 25
 Cried, 'Sisters! sisters! Shame of ladies!
 sisters!
 Kent! father! sisters! What, i' the storm? i' the
 night?
 Let pity not be believed!' ["This news is hard
 to believe."] There she shook
 The holy water from her heavenly eyes,
 And clamour-moisten'd, then away she
 started 30
**[clamour-moisten'd: Loud cries of sorrow
 brought on the tears that moistened**

Cordelia's cheeks.]

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? 35

**[The stars . . . issues: The stars above—
fate—govern what happens on earth. What
other way can we explain how a mother
and father produced such different
children—two that are devils and one that
is a saint.]**

GENTLEMAN: No.

KENT: Was this before the king
return'd? **[before the French king returned
home to conduct urgent business]**

GENTLEMAN: No, since.

KENT: Well, sir, the poor distress'd Lear's i'
the town,

Who sometime, in his better tune,
remembers 40

What we are come about, and by no means
Will yield to see his daughter.

**[Well . . . daughter: Well, sir, poor King
Lear is in Dover. Sometimes, when he
regains his senses, he remembers why he
traveled here. However, he has so far
refused to see Cordelia.]**

GENTLEMAN: Why, good sir?

KENT: A sovereign **[powerful;
overwhelming]** shame so

elbows **[overcomes]** him: his own
unkindness,

That stripp'd her from his benediction **[favor],**
turn'd **[banished]** her 45

To foreign casualties **[uncertain life in
foreign lands]**, 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 **[alas]!** poor
gentleman. 50

KENT: Of Albany's and Cornwall's
powers **[forces; armies]** 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 **[in my disguise]** wrap
 me up awhile; 55
 When I am known aright **[when I reveal my
 true identity]**, you shall not grieve
 Lending me this acquaintance. I pray you,
 go
 Along with me. [Exeunt.
[Exeunt: Everyone leaves the stage.]

Act 4, Scene 4

The French camp, near Dover.
 Enter with drum and colours **[flag]**,
 CORDELIA, physician, and soldiers.

CORDELIA: Alack [alas]! 'tis he **[Lear]**: why,
 he was met even now
 As mad as the vex'd sea; singing aloud;
 Crown'd with rank **fumiter and furrow**
 weeds, 5
 With burdocks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-
 flowers,
 Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow
[fumiter . . . Darnel: Types of weeds]
 In our sustaining corn. A century **[one
 hundred soldiers]** send forth;
 Search every acre in the high-grown field,
 And bring him to our eye. [Exit an officer.
 10

What can man's wisdom
 In the restoring his bereaved sense?
**[What can . . . sense: Is there any man with
 enough knowledge to restore his sanity?]**
 He that helps him take all my outward
 worth.

PHYSICIAN: There is means, madam;
 Our foster-nurse of nature is repose **[sleep;
 rest]**, 15

The which he lacks; that to provoke in him,
 Are many simples operative, whose power
 Will close the eye of anguish.
**[that to . . . anguish: There are many herbal
 preparations available that will put him to
 sleep.]**

CORDELIA: All bless'd secrets,
 All you unpublish'd virtues of the earth,
 20
 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.

[All bless'd . . . lead it: All of you blessed secrets of the earth—you herbs with virtues not widely known—let me rain my tears on you to spring you to life. Aid and cure my father in his distress. Physician, go get those herbs that will relieve my father's ungoverned rage before it kills him.]

Enter a messenger. 25

MESSENGER: News, madam;
The British powers **[troops]** are marching
hitherward **[here]**.

CORDELIA: 'Tis known before **[we have already been informed of approach]**; our
preparation stands
In expectation of them. O dear father!
It is thy business that I go about; **[I am acting on behalf of your welfare]** 30

Therefore great France
My mourning and important tears hath
pitied,
No blown ambition doth our arms incite,
But love, dear love, and our ag'd father's
right,
[Therefore . . . father's right: Because of my tears and pity for my father, the great King of France, my husband, ordered his armies to England. He does not want to conquer England; he simply wants to help my poor, aged father.]

Soon may I hear and see him! [Exeunt.
35

[Exeunt: Everyone leaves the stage.]

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Act 4, Scene 5

A room in Gloucester's castle.
Enter REGAN and OSWALD.

REGAN: But are my brother's
powers **[brother-in-law's troops]** set

forth?

OSWALD: Ay, madam.

REGAN: Himself **[Albany]** in person there?

5

OSWALD: Madam, with much ado:

Your sister is the better soldier.

REGAN: Lord Edmund spake not with your lord **[Albany]** at home?

OSWALD: No, madam.

REGAN: What might import **[what says]** my sister's letter to him? 10

OSWALD: I know not, lady.

REGAN: Faith, he is posted hence on serious matter.

It was great ignorance **[stupid]**,

Gloucester's **[old Gloucester's]** eyes being out,

To let him live; where he arrives he moves
All hearts against us. Edmund, I think, is gone, 15

In pity of his **[old Gloucester's]** misery, to dispatch **[end]**

His nighted **[blind]** life; moreover, to descry **[reconnoiter; find out]**

The strength o' the enemy.

OSWALD: I must needs **[I need to go]** after him, madam, with my letter.

REGAN: Our troops set forth to-morrow; stay with us, 20

The ways are dangerous.

OSWALD: I may not, madam;

My lady charg'd my duty in this business.

REGAN: Why should she write to Edmund?

Might not you

Transport her purposes by word?

Belike **[certainly; probably; likely]**, 25

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

30

She gave strange oeilliades **[amorous glances]** and most speaking looks

To noble Edmund. **I know you are of her**

bosom. [I know your are loyal to her and serve as a confidant.]

OSWALD: I, madam! **[You think I am that close to her?]**

REGAN: I speak in understanding; you are, I know 't:

Therefore I do advise you, take this note:

35

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.

[And more . . . gather more: It's better that Edmund marry me than marry Goneril. Think about it, and you'll reach the same conclusion.]

If you do find him, pray you, give him this **[give him this expression (perhaps a note, keepsake, or charm) of my affection for him]**

And when your mistress hears thus much **[hears about my feelings and intentions]** from you, 40

I pray desire her call her wisdom to her:

[I pray . . . to her: Please ask her to be reasonable.]

So, fare you well.

If you do chance to hear of that blind traitor,

Preferment falls on him that cuts him off **[on anyone who murders him]**.

OSWALD: Would I could meet him, madam: I would show 45

What party I do follow **[where my loyalties lie]**.

REGAN: Fare thee well. [Exeunt.

[Exeunt: Everyone leaves the stage.]

Act 4, Scene 6

The country near Dover.

Enter GLOUCESTER and EDGAR, dressed like a peasant.

GLOUCESTER: When shall I come to the top of that same hill? **[top of the cliff?]**

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

GLOUCESTER: Methinks the ground is even **[level]**. 5

EDGAR: Horrible steep:

Hark! do you hear the sea?

GLOUCESTER: No, truly.

EDGAR: Why, then your other senses grow imperfect

By your eyes' anguish. 10

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: Y'are much deceiv'd; in nothing am
I chang'd
But in my garments. 15
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 [**cast
one's eyes upon the sea far below**]
The crows and choughs [**crow-like
birds**] that wing the midway air 20
Show scarce so gross as beetles [**look
smaller than beetles from here**]; half way
down
Hangs one that gathers samphire [**plant with
tiny flowers; it grows along a seacoast**],
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 [**ship**] 25
Diminish'd to her cock [**diminished to a
small boat or lifeboat**], her cock a
buoy [**floating object**]
Almost too small for sight. The murmuring
surge,
That on the unnumber'd idle pebbles
chafes [**rages; causes friction; rubs**],
Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,
Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
30
Topple down headlong.
[**Lest . . . headlong: Lest my brain go
haywire, impairing my vision and causing
me to topple headlong off the cliff**]
GLOUCESTER: Set me where you stand.
EDGAR: Give me your hand; you are now
within a foot
Of the extreme verge [**edge**]: for all beneath
the moon
Would I not leap upright. 35
[**for all . . . upright: If you gave me
everything on earth, I would not move a
muscle.**]
GLOUCESTER: Let go my hand.

Here, friend, 's **[is]** another purse; in it a
jewel
Well worth a poor man's taking: fairies and
gods
Prosper it with thee! Go thou further off;
Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.

40

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.

**[Why I . . . cure it (spoken to himself): I
trifle with this old man because I want to
cure him of his suicidal despair.]**

GLOUCESTER: O you mighty gods!

45

This world I do renounce, and, in your
sights,

Shake patiently my great affliction off;

**[This world . . . off: I hereby renounce the
world and, with what I am about to do, rid
myself of my mental and physical pain.]**

If I could bear it longer, and not fall

To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,

My snuff **[candle wick of life]** and loathed
part of nature **[wrinkled old body]** should

50

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

Now, fellow, fare thee well. [He falls
forward.]

EDGAR: Gone, sir: farewell.

[Aside.] And yet I know not how conceit may
rob

The treasury of life when life itself 55

Yields to the theft; had he been where he
thought

By this had thought been past. Alive or
dead?

**[And yet . . . dead: Edgar tricked
Gloucester into believing that he was
standing on the edge of a cliff. In fact, he
was standing on the edge of an
embankment a few feet above the ground.
However, Edgar now worries that
Gloucester's imagination (*conceit*, line 54)
made him think he did fall a great distance
and suffer mortal injuries. He wonders
whether Gloucester is alive or dead.]**

[To GLOUCESTER.] Ho, you sir! friend! Hear
you, sir? speak!

Thus might he pass indeed **[maybe he did die]**; yet he revives **[but he's alive and recovering]**.

What are you, sir? 60

GLOUCESTER: Away and let me die.

EDGAR: Hadst thou been **ought** 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. 65

[Hadst thou . . . sound: Even if you had been a spider web, a feather, or simply air, you would have cracked like an egg after falling such a distance. But you breathe, have a body intact, do not bleed, and speak. You are in sound health.]

Ten masts at each make not the altitude

Which thou hast perpendicularly fell:

[Ten masts . . . fell: The length of ten ship masts laid end to end does not equal the height you fell.]

Thy life's a miracle. Speak yet again.

GLOUCESTER: But have I fallen or no?

EDGAR: From the dread summit of this chalky **bourn** **[cliff; boundary between land and a precipice]**. 70

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

[lark making a high-pitched sound]

Cannot be seen or heard: do but look up.

GLOUCESTER: Alack **[alas]**! I have no eyes.

Is wretchedness depriv'd that benefit

To end itself by death? 'Twas yet some

comfort, 75

When misery could beguile the tyrant's

rage,

And frustrate his proud will.

[Is wretchedness . . . death: Is a wretch like me deprived of the right to kill himself? It was a comfort to me when I thought I could overcome my misery by ending my life.]

EDGAR: Give me your arm:

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

GLOUCESTER: Too well, too well. 80

EDGAR: This is above all strangeness.

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

Which parted from you?

[Upon . . . from you: Who was that who walked away from you at the top of the cliff?]

GLOUCESTER: A poor unfortunate beggar.

EDGAR: As I stood here below methought his eyes 85

Were two full moons; he had a thousand noses,

Horns **whelk'd** and wav'd like the **enridged** sea:

[Horns . . . sea: Had horns resembling those of a sea snail. On the snail shell were ridges that reminded me of ocean waves.]

It was some fiend **[devil]**; therefore, thou happy father,

Think that the clearest gods, who make them honours

Of men's impossibilities, have preserv'd thee. 90

[therefore . . . thee: Therefore, it seems to me that the gods think you have great possibilities and, for that reason, decided to save your life.]

GLOUCESTER: I do remember now; henceforth **[from now on]** 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. 95

EDGAR: Bear free and patient thoughts. But who comes here?

Enter LEAR, fantastically dressed with flowers.

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

[The safer . . . thus: A sensible man would never dress himself that way.]

LEAR: No, they cannot touch me for

coining **[making fake coins]**; 100

I am the king himself.

EDGAR: O thou **side-piercing** sight!

[O . . . sight: Edgar expresses pity for Lear. It is possible that he is comparing Lear to Christ. On the cross, Christ was pierced in

the side with a spear.]

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.

[Nature's . . . give the word: Nature is superior to art in inflicting injury, including a *side-piercing* one. Here, soldier, is your money for being pressed into military service. Did you notice how that fellow handles a bow? He must be an amateur. Draw the bowstring back a yard, as measured by a maker and seller of clothing. Look, a mouse. But don't get excited. This piece of toasted cheese will attract and trap him. Now, then, I'm throwing down my gauntlet to announce my willingness to fight a giant. (A gauntlet was a glove usually overlaid with metal for protection in battle. Throwing down a gauntlet was a sign that one man challenged another man to a fight.) Bring forward the infantrymen carrying brown bills (halberds, weapons consisting of a spear-like shaft topped with an ax and a spike). O! There's a well-shot arrow. It struck its target. Tell me what the password is.]

EDGAR: Sweet **marjoram**.

LEAR: Pass. **[That's right. You may pass.]**

105

GLOUCESTER: I know that voice.

LEAR: Ha! Goneril, with a white beard! Ha, Regan? They flatter'd me like a dog, and told me I had white hairs in my beard ere **[before]** the black ones were there. **[They told me my white hairs signified wisdom.]** To say 'ay' and 'no' to everything I said! 'Ay' and 'no' too was no good divinity. **[They said yes or no to everything I said, but those were dishonest answers.]** When the rain came to wet me once and the wind to make me chatter, when the thunder would not peace **[cease]** at my bidding, there I found 'em **[there I discovered their evil natures]**, there I smelt 'em out **[there I**

smelled out their trickery]. Go to, they are not men o' their words: they told me I was everything; 'tis a lie, I am not **ague-proof** [**fever-proof**].

GLOUCESTER: The trick of that voice I do well remember:

Is 't not the king?

LEAR: Ay, every inch a king: 110

When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.

[When . . . quakes: When I stare at a subject, he shakes in fear.]

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 115

Does lecher in my sight.

Let copulation [**sexual relations**] thrive; for Gloucester's bastard son

Was kinder to his father than my daughters Got 'tween the lawful sheets.

[Got . . . sheets: Who were conceived in a lawful marriage bed]

To 't luxury, **pell-mell!** [**So go to it, you lustful ones, full speed ahead.**] For I lack soldiers. 120

Behold yound [**yonder**] **simpering** dame,

Whose face between her

forks [**legs**] **presageth** [**forecasts; indicates**] snow;

That minces virtue, and does shake the head

To hear of pleasure's name;

[Whose face . . . name: Lear says the woman's face pretends to reflect a cold or deadened sexual drive "between her forks," or legs. Because she wants to appear virtuous, she shakes a no with her head to sexual pleasure.]

The **fitchew** nor the soiled horse goes to 't 125

With a more riotous appetite.

Down from the waist they are **Centaurs**,

Though women all above:

[The fitchew . . . above: But no animals, such as the polecat (*fitchew*, line 125) and the horse, engage in sexual relations with a greater appetite than that woman does. Below their waist, such women are lustful.

Above their waist, they are virtuous.]

But to the girdle do the gods inherit,
Beneath is all the fiends': 130

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

**[But to . . . for thee: But we inherit virtue
only in the upper part of the body, above
the waist. Below the waist are devilry and
sin. Down there are hell, darkness, and a
smoky pit. Burning, scalding, stench,
consumption of the body are among the
horrors of hell. Give me some perfume or
love potion, good druggist, to sweeten my
dreams. There's your payment.]**

GLOUCESTER: O! let me kiss that hand!

LEAR: Let me wipe it first; it smells of
mortality.

GLOUCESTER: O ruin'd piece of nature!
This great world 135

Shall so **[likewise]** wear out to
nought **[nothing; ruin]**. Dost thou know
me?

LEAR: I remember thine eyes well enough.
Dost thou **squiny** at me? **[Do you look at me
like a prostitute who wants to seduce
me?]** No, do thy worst, blind Cupid; I'll not
love. Read thou this challenge [letter]; mark
but the penning **[handwriting]** of it.

GLOUCESTER: Were all the letters suns, I
could not see.

EDGAR: [Aside.] I would not take this from
report; it is,

And my heart breaks at it. 140

**[I would . . . at it: I would not believe what
I'm seeing if I had not witnessed it myself.
But what I am seeing is really taking place,
and my heart is breaking.]**

LEAR: Read.

GLOUCESTER: What! with the
case **[sockets]** of eyes?

LEAR: O, ho! are you there with me? No
eyes in your head, nor no money in your
purse? Your eyes are in a heavy case, your
purse in a light: yet you see how this world
goes. **[Lear is suggesting that Gloucester
wants to be paid to read the letter.]**

GLOUCESTER: I see it feelingly. **[I see it**

with my emotions and sense of touch.]

LEAR: What! art mad? A man may see how this world goes with no eyes. Look with thine ears: see how yond **[yonder]** justice rails upon yon simple thief. Hark, in thine ear: change places; and, handy-dandy, which is the justice, which is the thief? Thou hast seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar? 145

[see how yond . . . beggar: Listen to how a judge scolds a simple thief. If the judge changes places with the thief, could you tell them apart? Have you ever seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar?]

GLOUCESTER: Ay, sir.

LEAR: And the creature **[beggar]** run from the cur **[dog]**? There thou mightst behold the great image of authority; a dog's obey'd in office **[people obey a dog when it asserts its authority]**.

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
150

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

[Thou rascal . . . cozener: You supposed man of the church [beadle, line 148], stop lashing that whore. You yourself should be whipped for punishing her for the same offense that you commit. The greedy moneylender hangs the swindler—that is, one unprincipled man punishes another unprincipled man.]

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;

[Through tatter'd . . . hurtless breaks: It's easy to see the vices of a poor man through the openings in his ragged clothes. What I'm saying is that a poor man lacks the wealth and power to hide his wrongdoing. On the other hand, those who wear robes and furred gowns have the wherewithal to hide their faults. If you cover sin with gold, justice thinks the sin is virtue.]

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

155

[Arm it . . . pierce it: But if you dress sin in ragged clothes, a mere straw can pierce the clothes.]

None does offend, none, I say none; I'll able 'em **[I'll attest to that fact]:**

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; 160

Pull off my boots; harder, harder; so.

EDGAR: [Aside.] O! matter and **impertinency** mix'd;

Reason in madness!

[O! matter . . . madness (speaking to himself): O! His words mix wise and silly sayings. He has wisdom in his madness!]

LEAR: If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes;

I know thee well enough; thy name is

Gloucester: 165

Thou must be patient; we came crying hither:

Thou know'st the first time that we smell the air **[You know that when we are born]**

We waul **[wail]** and cry. I will preach to thee: mark.

GLOUCESTER: Alack! **[alas!]** alack the day!

LEAR: **When we are born, we cry that we are come** 170

To this great stage of fools [to this earth, which is nothing but a great stage of fools]. This a good block!

It were a delicate stratagem to shoe

A troop of horse with felt; I'll put it in proof,

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

Then, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill! 175

[This a good . . . kill: That's a good hat.

Why not cover horseshoes with felt? I'll put this idea to the test. And after I mount my horse, I'll clip-clop silently to my sons-in-law, then kill them!]

Enter gentleman, with attendants.

GENTLEMAN: O! here he is; lay hand upon

him **[restrain him]**. Sir,
Your most dear daughter—
LEAR: No rescue? What! a prisoner? I am
even
The natural fool of fortune. Use me well;
180
You shall have ransom. Let me have
surgeons;
I am cut to the brains.
**[No rescue . . . brains: Am I now a prisoner
with no hope of rescue? I always seem to
be a fool of ill fortune. Treat me well, and
you shall have a ransom. Now, I need
surgeons to repair my damaged brain.]**
GENTLEMAN: You shall have any thing.
LEAR: No seconds? All myself? **[Is there no
one to support me? Must I stand alone
against you?]**
Why this would make a man a man of salt,
185
To use his eyes for garden water-pots,
Ay, and laying autumn's dust.
**[Why this . . . dust: Why, this turn of events
would make a man cry salty tears to water
his garden and keep down the autumn
dust .]**
GENTLEMAN: Good sir,—
LEAR: I will die bravely as a bridegroom.
What!
**[I will . . . bridegroom: I will die bravely in
the same way that a bridegroom dies to
the world when he mates with his bride for
the first time.]**
I will be jovial: come, come; I am a king,
190
My masters, know you that?
GENTLEMAN: You are a royal one, and we
obey you.
LEAR: Then there's life in it. Nay, an you get
it, you shall get it by running. Sa, sa, sa, sa.
[Exit. Attendants follow.
**[Then there's . . . sa: Then my life goes on.
If you want me, you'll have to run after me.
Sa, sa, sa, sa.]**
GENTLEMAN: A sight most pitiful in the
meanest wretch,
Past speaking of in a king! Thou hast one
daughter, 195
Who redeems nature from the general
curse
Which twain have brought her to.

[A sight . . . her to: This sight would be most pitiful in the lowest of men. But in a king it is beyond description! You have a daughter (Cordelia) who thwarts the curse that her two sisters have brought upon the world.]

EDGAR: Hail, gentle sir!

GENTLEMAN: Sir, speed you: what's your will?

EDGAR: Do you hear aught **[anything]**, sir, of a battle toward **[about to be fought]**?

200

GENTLEMAN: Most sure and vulgar; every one hears that **[hears of it]**, Which can distinguish sound.

EDGAR: But, by your favour, How near's the other army?

GENTLEMAN: Near, and on speedy foot; the main **descry** 205

Stands on the hourly thought.

[the main . . . thought: We expect to see the main force of the enemy army any moment now.]

EDGAR: I thank you, sir: that's all.

GENTLEMAN: Though that the queen on special cause is here, Her army is mov'd on.

[Though that . . . on: The queen is here for a special reason, and her army is marching on.]

EDGAR: I thank you, sir. [Exit gentleman.

210

GLOUCESTER: You ever-gentle gods, take my breath from me:

Let not my worser spirit tempt me again
To die before you please!

[You . . . please: You ever-gentle gods, kill me before my spirit tempts me again to commit suicide!]

EDGAR: Well pray you, father **[pray well, old man]**.

GLOUCESTER: Now, good sir, what are you? 215

EDGAR: A most poor man, made tame to **[brought low by]** 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**.

[Who, by . . . bidding: By experiencing great

sorrow myself, I am full of pity for those who have also suffered. Give me your hand. I'll lead you to a safe place to bide your time.]

GLOUCESTER: Hearty thanks: 220

The bounty and the **benison** of heaven

To boot, and boot!

[The bounty . . . boot: I wish you the greatest bounty and blessing that heaven can bestow.]

Enter OSWALD.

OSWALD: A proclaim'd prize! Most happy!

That eyeless head of thine was first fram'd
flesh 225

To raise my fortunes. Thou old unhappy
traitor,

Briefly thyself remember: the sword is out
That must destroy thee.

[A proclaim'd . . . thee: Why, I've come upon the traitor Gloucester! He's a great prize. If I kill him, he will raise my fortunes. Gloucester, my sword is out to destroy you.]

GLOUCESTER: Now let thy friendly hand
Put strength enough to 't. [EDGAR
interposes. 230

[Now let . . . to 't: You're a friend, for you want to give me what I want: death. Put plenty of strength behind the thrust of your sword. Edgar steps between Gloucester and Oswald.]

OSWALD: Wherefore **[why]**, bold peasant,
Dar'st thou support a publish'd traitor?
Hence;

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

[Wherefore . . . Why, bold peasant, are you protecting a well-known traitor? You'd better get going lest the misfortune that infects him infects you too. Let go of his arm.]

EDGAR: Chill not let go, **zur**, without **vurther**
'casion. 235

[Chill . . . 'casion: Edgar, still disguised as a ragged beggar, speaks in a country dialect, saying he will not let go of Gloucester unless Oswald gives him a reasonable explanation for his command.]

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 **[If I could be talked to death by your threats]**, 'twould not ha' bin zo long as 'tis by a vortnight **[I would have died a fortnight (two weeks) ago]**. Nay, come not near th' old man; keep out, che vor ye **[I warn you]**, or ise **[I will]** try whether your **costard** **[literally, apple, but used here as a synonym for head]** or my **ballow** **[walking stick with a knob on the end; cudgel]** be the harder. Chill be plain with you. **[I mean what I say.]**

OSWALD: Out, dunghill!

EDGAR: Chill pick your teeth, **zur**. Come; no matter vor your **foins**. **[They fight and EDGAR knocks him down.]**

[Chill . . . foins: I'll knock out your teeth, sir. Come on. I don't care if you use your sword. (They fight, and Edgar strikes a mortal blow that knocks Oswald to the ground.)]

OSWALD: Slave, thou hast slain me. Villain, take my purse. 240

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 English party: O! untimely death.
[Dies.]

EDGAR: I know thee well: a serviceable villain; 245

As duteous to the vices of thy mistress **[Goneril]**

As badness would desire.

GLOUCESTER: What! is he dead?

EDGAR: Sit you down, father; rest you.

Let's see his pockets: these letters that he speaks of 250

May be my friends. He's dead; I am only sorry

He had no other death's-man **[no other man to kill him]**. Let us see:

Leave, gentle wax **[the wax seal on the letter]**; and, manners, blame us not:

To know our enemies' minds, we'd rip their hearts;

Their papers, is more lawful. 255

[To know . . . lawful: To know what our enemies are thinking, we would rip their

hearts if we had no other way to get information from them. But learning their intentions from letters is more civil.]

Edgar reads the letter.

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 gaol **[jail]**; from the loathed warmth whereof deliver me, and supply the place for your labour.

Your—wife, so I would say—

Affectionate servant,

Goneril.

[Let our . . . say— : Let's make sure we keep the promises we made to each other. You will have many opportunities to kill Albany at the right time and place. But if he returns as a conqueror, I will become a prisoner, and his bed will be my jail. Please deliver me from the loathed warmth of that bed and then take his place in that same bed.]

Your affectionate servant and future wife,

Goneril.

O undistinguish'd space **[space without limit]** of woman's will! 260
A plot upon her virtuous husband's life,
And the exchange my brother **[and replacing him with Edmund]**! 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 265
Of the death-practis'd duke. For him 'tis well
That of thy death and business I can tell.
[Here, in the sands . . . can tell: I'll rake

sand over the body of Oswald, the unholy messenger (*post unsanctified*, line 263) who served murderous lechers. When the time is right, I will show this letter to Albany. It's a good thing I found out about the plot against him.]

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:
270

So should my thoughts be sever'd from my griefs,
And woes by wrong imaginations lose
The knowledge of themselves. [Drums afar off.

[The king is . . . themselves: The king has lost his mind. I wish I could go mad too, but my senses keep me a sane man who feels his acute sorrows. If I were insane, my thoughts would not center on my griefs. Griefs do not register in the minds of the mad.]

EDGAR: Give me your hand:
Far off, methinks, I hear the beaten drum.
275

Come, father, I'll bestow you with a friend.
[Exeunt.

[Exeunt: Everyone leaves the stage.]

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Act 4, Scene 7

A tent in the French camp.
Enter CORDELIA, KENT, DOCTOR, and gentleman.

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. 5

[O thou . . . fail me: Good Kent, how can I live and work to be as good as you are? In the end, every attempt would fail me; my life would be too short to achieve such a lofty goal.]

KENT: To be acknowledg'd, madam, is o'erpaid [to be praised by you, madam, is

to be overpaid].

All my reports go with the modest truth,
Nor more nor clipp'd, but so.

[All my . . . but so: I prefer that all the reports about me tell the simple truth without exaggeration.]

CORDELIA: Be better suited:

These **weeds** are memories of those worser hours: 10

I prithee, put them off.

[Be better . . . off: Change into more appropriate clothes. These rags you wear as a disguise are a reminder of earlier troubles. Please remove them.]

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. 15

[Yet to . . . meet: I can't remove these rags just yet. To reveal myself now would give away the plot against our enemies. But I will take them off when the time right.]

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 **[cure this great madness which afflicts his abused nature!]**

The untun'd and jarring senses, O! wind up 20

Of this child-changed father!

[The untun'd . . . father: Restore his senses and change him back from a child to a 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 **[Is he arrayed in his royal garments]?**

25

Enter LEAR in his chair, carried by servants.

GENTLEMAN: Ay, madam; in the heaviness of sleep,

We put fresh garments on him.

DOCTOR: Be by, good madam, when we do awake him;

I doubt not of his temperance. 30

[I doubt . . . temperance: I believe he will remain calm.]

CORDELIA: Very well. [Music.

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 35

Have in thy reverence made!

[Restoration . . . made: I hope that kissing you will restore you to health and repair the injuries my sisters inflicted on you.]

KENT: Kind and dear princess!

CORDELIA: Had you not been their father,
these white flakes **[white hairs]**

Had challeng'd pity of them **[would have challenged them to pity you]**. Was this a face

To be expos'd against the warring winds?
40

To stand against the deep dread-bolted thunder?

In the most terrible and nimble stroke

Of quick cross lightning? to watch—poor

perdu! [poor lost man; poor hopeless man]

—

With this thin **helm [with thinning hair as your only protection against the storm?]**

Mine enemy's dog,

Though he had bit me, should have stood that night 45

Against my fire. And wast thou **fain**, poor father,

To **hovel** thee with swine and rogues
forlorn,

In short and musty straw? Alack, alack!

[Mine enemy's . . . alack: I would have taken in my enemy's dog, even if it had bitten me, and let him sit by the fireplace. And were you willing, poor father, to shelter yourself in a straw hut with swine and rogues? Alas, alas!]

'Tis wonder that thy life and wits at once

Had not concluded all. He wakes; speak to him. 50

['Tis wonder . . . all: It's a wonder that your ordeal didn't result in the loss of your life.]

DOCTOR: Madam, do you **[talk to him]**; 'tis

fittest.

CORDELIA: How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?

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

[You . . . grave: You do me wrong to bring me back from the dead;]

Thou art a soul in bliss **[heaven]**; but I am bound

Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears

55

Do **scald** like molten lead.

CORDELIA: Sir, do you know me?

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

CORDELIA: Still, still, far wide. [Speaking to the doctor, Cordelia says her father still has a troubled mind.]

DOCTOR: He's scarce awake; let him alone a-while. 60

LEAR: Where have I been? Where am I? Fair day-light? **[Is it day or night?]**

I am mightily abus'd. **[People mistreat me.]** I should even die with pity

To see another **[to see another person undergoing what I am]**. I know not what to say.

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

I feel this pin prick. Would I were assur'd

65

Of my condition!

CORDELIA: O! look upon me, sir,
And hold your hands in benediction **[in a blessing]** o'er me.

No, sir, you must not kneel.

LEAR: Pray, do not mock me: 70

I am a very foolish fond old man,

Fourscore and upward, not an hour more or less;

And, to deal plainly,

I fear I am not in my perfect mind.

Methinks I should know you and know this man **[Kent]**; 75

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 80

To be my child Cordelia.

CORDELIA: And so I am, I am.

LEAR: Be your tears wet? Yes, faith. I pray,
weep not:

If you have poison for me, I will drink it.

I know you do not love me; for your sisters

85

Have, as I do remember, done me wrong:

You have some cause, they have not.

**[If you have poison . . . have not: I deserve
no less than to be poisoned by you. I
wronged you even though you were
innocent, so there is no reason that you
should love me. Your sisters treated me
badly, but you did not. You have every
reason to hate me.]**

CORDELIA: No cause, no cause. **[I have no
cause to hate you.]**

LEAR: Am I in France?

KENT: In your own kingdom, sir. 90

LEAR: Do not abuse **[deceive]** 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 **[to make him try to understand the
time he has lost].**

Desire him to go in; trouble him no more

95

Till further settling **[till his mind settles and
he becomes more like his old self].**

CORDELIA: Will 't please your highness
walk?

LEAR: You must bear with me.

Pray you now, forget and forgive: I am old and
foolish. [Exeunt LEAR, CORDELIA, doctor,
and attendants.]

**[Exeunt: The characters specified leave
the stage.]**

GENTLEMAN: Holds it true, sir, that the Duke
of 100

Cornwall was so slain?

KENT: Most certain, sir.

GENTLEMAN: Who is conductor of his
people **[Who is commanding his
troops]?**

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 is still in disguise.]**

105

KENT: Report is changeable **[questionable]**.'Tis time to look about; the powers of the kingdom **[the English troops]** approach **apace**.GENTLEMAN: The arbitrement **[battle]** is like to be bloody. Fare you well, sir. [Exit.]KENT: My point and period will be thoroughly **wrought**,

Or well or ill, as this day's battle's fought.

[Exit.]

[My point . . . fought: My plans and my own safety will depend, for better or worse, on the outcome of today's fighting.][Shop Now at Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)**Act 5, Scene 1**

The British camp near Dover.

Enter, with drum and colours **[flag]**,
EDMUND, REGAN, officers, soldiers, and
others.EDMUND: Know of the duke if his last
purpose hold,Or whether since he is advis'd by **ought**

To change the course; he's full of alteration

5

And **self-reproving**; bring his constant
pleasure. [To an officer, who goes out.]**[Know of . . . pleasure: Find out whether the Duke of Albany's last decision remains in effect or whether he has changed his mind. He tends to vacillate, going back and forth on whether his decision is right or wrong. After you learn of his plans, come back and report them to me.]**REGAN: Our sister's man is certainly
miscarried.**[Our sister's . . . miscarried: I wonder what happened to Oswald, my sister's servant? Some setback must have prevented him from being here.]**

EDMUND: 'Tis to be doubted, madam.

['Tis . . . madam: I agree. I doubt that he will come.]

REGAN: Now, sweet lord,

You know the goodness I intend upon you:

10

Tell me, but truly, but then speak the truth,
Do you not love my sister?

EDMUND: In honour'd love. **[Yes, in an honorable way.]**

REGAN: But have you never found my
brother's way

To the **forefended** place? 15

[But have . . . place: But have you never found your way to the forbidden place, her bed?]

EDMUND: That thought abuses you. **[That thought is not worthy of you; that thought debases you.]**

REGAN: I am doubtful that you have been
conjunct

And bosom'd with her, as far as we call
hers.

[I am doubtful . . . hers: I'm just wondering whether you have been intimate with her.]

EDMUND: No, by mine honour, madam.

REGAN: I never shall **endure** her: dear my
lord, 20

Be not familiar with her.

EDMUND: Fear me not.

She and the duke her husband **[Goneril and her husband have arrived]!**

Enter with drums and colours, ALBANY,
GONERIL, and soldiers.

GONERIL: [Aside.] I had rather lose the
battle than that sister 25

Should loosen **[come between]** him **[Edmund]** and me.

ALBANY: Our very loving sister, well be-
met **[welcome]**.

Sir **[Edmund]**, this I heard, the king is come
to his daughter,

With others; whom the rigour of our state
Forc'd to cry out. Where I could not be
honest 30

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.

[the king is . . . oppose: King Lear has come to his daughter. Other Englishmen have come here as well. Their purpose is to protest the strictness with which I conduct the affairs of state. But I am

simply following common sense and the dictates of my conscience. I was never valiant—that is, successful—when I could not be honest and honorable. As for the business at hand, I strongly oppose the presence of French troops on English soil. I do so not because they support Lear or other Englishmen with just grievances against our government.]

EDMUND: Sir, you speak nobly. 35

REGAN: Why is this reason'd? **[Why are we wasting time talking on this subject?]**

GONERIL: Combine together 'gainst the enemy;

For these domestic and particular **broils**

Are not the question here.

[Combine . . . here: Let's unite our forces to fight the French. Domestic quarrels are not an issue here.]

ALBANY: Let's then determine 40

With the ancient of war on our proceeding.

[Let's . . . proceeding: Let's then confer with our ancients (experienced generals and other seasoned commanders) to determine how to proceed.]

EDMUND: I shall attend **[meet with]** you presently **[in a little while]** at your tent.

REGAN: Sister, you'll go with us **[Regan and Albany]?]**

GONERIL: No.

REGAN: 'Tis most convenient; pray you, go with us. 45

['Tis . . . with us: It would be best if you go with us. (Regan does not want Goneril to be alone, even for a few moments, with Edmund.)]

GONERIL: [Aside.] O, ho! I know the riddle **[know your deceptions]**. [Aloud.] I will go.

Enter EDGAR, disguised.

EDGAR: If e'er **[ever]** your Grace had speech with man so poor,
Hear me one word.

ALBANY: I'll overtake you. Speak. [Exeunt EDMUND, REGAN, GONERIL, officers, soldiers, and attendants. 50

[Exeunt: The characters specified leave the stage.]

[I'll overtake . . . Speak: As Edmund,

Regan, Goneril, and others leave, Albany tells them that he will catch up with them.]

EDGAR: Before you fight the battle,
ope **[open]** 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. **[Edgar found the
letter on Oswald. It tells of the plan to
murder Albany.]** If you miscarry, 55

Your business of the world hath so an end,
And machination ceases **[and all your plans
will be for naught]**. 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, 60

And I'll appear again.

ALBANY: Why, fare thee well: I will
o'erlook **[look over]** thy paper. [Exit
EDGAR.

Re-enter EDMUND.

EDMUND: The enemy's in view; draw up
your powers **[troops]**.

[Edmund gives Albany a message.]

Here is the guess of their true strength and
forces 65

By **diligent** discovery; but your haste
Is now urg'd on you.

ALBANY: We will greet the time. **[I'll be
ready to engage the enemy when the time
comes.]** [Exit.

EDMUND: To both these sisters have I sworn
my love;

Each jealous **[wary; suspicious]** of the other,
as the stung 70

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 **[Regan]**

Exasperates, makes mad her sister
Goneril;

And hardly shall I carry out my side **[and
hardly can I take Goneril]**, 75

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,
80

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.

[Now then . . . to debate: Now then, I'll use Albany to win the battle. Afterward, I'll let the sister who most wants to get rid of him devise a plan to kill him. As for the mercy he intends for Lear and Cordelia—that is, his plan to spare them from harm after the battle—I'll see that they never get a pardon. As a defender of the English state, I must stand strong. This is not a matter for debate.]

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Act 5, Scene 2

A field between the two camps.

Alarum within [battle sounds offstage].

Enter, with drum and colours **[flag]**, LEAR, CORDELIA, and their forces; and exeunt.

Enter EDGAR and GLOUCESTER.

[Exeunt: The characters specified leave the stage.]

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, 5

I'll bring you comfort.

[Here, father . . . thrive: Here, old man, let the shadow of this tree be your host (that is, let the shadow of this tree shelter you). Pray that our armies win the battle.]

GLOUCESTER: Grace go with you, sir! [Exit EDGAR.

Alarum; afterwards a retreat. Re-enter EDGAR.

EDGAR: Away, old man! give me thy hand:

away!

King Lear hath lost, he and his daughter
ta'en **[taken]**. 10

Give me thy hand; come on.

GLOUCESTER: No further, sir; a man may
rot even here.

EDGAR: What. In ill thoughts again? Men
must endure

Their going hence **[away from a place]**, even
as their coming hither **[to a
place]**: **[Meaning: Men cannot choose
when to die any more than they can
choose when to be born.]**

Ripeness is all **[We die when we are ripe for
death, although we don't know ahead of
time when we'll be ripe.]** Come on.

15

GLOUCESTER: And that's true too.

[Exeunt.]

[Exeunt: Everyone leaves the stage.]

Act 5, Scene 3

The British camp, near Dover.

Enter, in conquest, with drum and
colours **[flag]**, EDMUND; LEAR and
CORDELIA, prisoners; officers, soldiers, &c.

EDMUND: Some officers take them away:
good guard,

Until their greater pleasures first be known

That are to censure them. 5

**[Some officers . . . censure them: We need
some officers to take them away. Guard
them well until we decide what their
punishment will be.]**

CORDELIA: We are not the first
Who, with best meaning, have incurr'd the
worst.

**[We are . . . worst: We are not the first
persons whose best intentions produced
the worst outcome.]**

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? 10

**[For thee . . . sisters: I am cast down for
you, my oppressed father. I worry not for
myself but for you. If only I were involved, I**

would simply wait until bad luck (*Fortune's frown*, line 9) turns into good luck. Shall we not see Goneril and Regan?]

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 15

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 [upon us] the mystery of things,

As if we were God's spies: and we'll wear out, 20

In a wall'd prison, packs and sets of great ones

That ebb and flow by the moon.

[packs . . . moon: While great rulers and leaders come and go like the ebb and flow of the moon]

EDMUND: Take them away.

LEAR: Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,
The gods themselves throw incense. Have I caught thee? 25

[Upon . . . thee: The gods bless you, Cordelia, for all the sacrifices you have made. Have I embraced you?]

He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven,

And fire us hence like foxes. Wipe thine eyes;

[He that . . . foxes: Nothing can part us except a firebrand from heaven that chases us from our den like hunters chasing foxes.]

The gouters [venereal disease] shall devour them [anyone who parts us], flesh and fell [skin],

Ere [before] they shall make us weep: we'll see 'em starve first.

Come. [Exeunt LEAR and CORDELIA, guarded. 30

[Exeunt: The characters specified leave the stage.]

EDMUND: Come hither, captain; hark,

Take thou this note; [Giving a paper.] go
 follow them to prison:
 One step I have advanc'd thee; if thou dost
 As this instructs thee, thou dost make thy
 way
 To noble fortunes; know thou this, that men
 35

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.

[One step . . . other means: I have already promoted you. If you carry out my instructions faithfully, you will receive even greater rewards. Know this: that the times we live in require you to be stalwart and strong, like a sword, not tender-minded. Be aware that you may not question the wisdom of your task. Either say yes to it or find other means of livelihood.]

OFFICER: I'll do 't, my lord. 40

EDMUND: About it; and write happy when
 thou hast done.

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

[About . . . it down: Then go about your task. Be satisfied with your work when you complete the job. Begin without delay and follow the instructions I have written down.]

OFFICER: I cannot draw a cart nor eat dried
 oats;

If it be man's work I will do it. [Exit. 45

Flourish **[Music, usually played by trumpets, heralding the entrance of royals, nobles, or other important people]**. Enter
 ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN, officers, and
 attendants.

ALBANY: Sir, you have show'd to-day your
 valiant strain,
 And fortune led you well; you have the
 captives
 Who were the opposites of this day's strife;
[you have . . . strife: You have taken captives from the opposite side.]
 We do require them of you, so to use them

50

As we shall find their merits and our safety
May equally determine.

**[so to . . . determine: So that we may treat
them according to their merits without
jeopardizing our safety.]**

EDMUND: Sir, I thought it fit
To send the old and miserable king
To some **retention**, and appointed guard;

55

Whose age has charms in it, whose title
more,
To pluck the common bosom on his side,
And turn our impress'd lances in our eyes
Which do command them. With him I sent the
queen;

My reason all the same; and they are ready

60

To-morrow, or at further space, to appear
Where you shall hold your session. At this
time

**[Sir, I thought . . . session: Sir, I thought it
fit to imprison, under guard, the old and
miserable king. I was worried that his
supposed wisdom as an old man and his
royal title might be enough to lure
commoners, including citizens and
soldiers, to his cause. I sent his daughter
Cordelia, the Queen of France, with him to
prison. They are ready to appear tomorrow
or later for a public hearing.]**

We sweat and bleed; the friend hath lost his
friend,

And the best quarrels, in the heat, are
curs'd

By those that feel their sharpness; 65

The question of Cordelia and her father
Requires a fitter place.

**[We sweat . . . fitter place: Our men sweat
and bleed from the battle. Friend has lost
friend. Our suffering soldiers curse war
even though our cause was just in waging
it. We need a better place to decide what to
do with Cordelia and Lear.]**

ALBANY: Sir, by your patience,
I hold you but a subject of this war,
Not as a brother. 70

**[Sir . . . brother: Sir, I regard you as an
underling who should not give orders.]**

REGAN: That's as we list to grace him:

[That's . . . him: It's up to me to decide his

status.]

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,
75

And call itself your brother.

**[Methinks . . . brother: I think you should
have consulted me before you spoke so ill
of him. Consider that he led our troops
into battle and carried out my orders. I
think he deserves the right to be regarded
as your equal.]**

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

**[Not so . . . addition: You're so passionate
about this matter because you want us to
think you played a role in his success. The
truth is, he exalted himself on his own
merits. He doesn't need your praise, and
we don't need to hear how he represented
your "place and person" (line 74) on the
battlefield.]**

REGAN: In my rights, 80
By me invested, he **compeers** the best.

**[In my . . . best: I'm the one who invested
him with a battlefield commission. It was
in my name that he fought and earned the
right to be recognized as one of the best of
our soldiers.]**

GONERIL: That were the most, if he should
husband you. **[He would certainly be your
tool if he married you.]**

REGAN: Jesters do oft prove prophets.
**[Jesters . . . prophets: Your statement,
spoken in jest, could actually foretell
what's to come: the marriage of Edmund
and me.]**

GONERIL: Holla, holla! **[Hold up; not so
fast]**

That eye that told you so look'd but a-squint.
85

**[That eye . . . a-squint: That eye that told
you so must have distorted vision.]**

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
 90

My lord and master.

[Lady . . . master: Goneril, I'm not feeling well. If I were, I would thrash you verbally. Edmund, take my soldiers, prisoners, and inheritance. Do what you want with them—and with me—without any walls that limit your power. As the world is my witness, you are now my lord land master.]

GONERIL: Mean you to enjoy him? **[Are you planning to go to bed with him?]**

ALBANY: The let-alone lies not in your good will. **[Goneril, it is not within your rights to approve or disapprove of Regan's or Edmund's intentions.]**

EDMUND: Nor in thine, lord.

ALBANY: Half-blooded fellow, yes. **[Yes it is, you bastard.]** 95

REGAN: [To EDMUND.] Let the drum strike, and prove my title thine. **[Let the drum strike to signal a duel for me between you and a challenger.]**

ALBANY: Stay yet; hear reason. Edmund, I arrest thee

On capital treason **[offense punishable by execution]**; and, in thy arrest,
 This gilded serpent. [Pointing to GONERIL.]
 For your claim, fair sister **[fair sister-in-law, Regan],**

I bar it in the interest of my wife; 100
 'Tis she is sub-contracted **['tis she who is engaged]** to this lord,

And I, her husband, contradict your bans **[forbid you to marry Edmund].**

If you will marry, make your love to me,
 My lady is bespoke **[pledged to marry Edmund].**

GONERIL: An interlude! **[Nonsense! They must be putting on a play.]** 105

ALBANY: Thou art arm'd,
 Gloucester **[Edmund]**; let the trumpet sound
 :

If none appear to prove upon thy person
 Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons,
 There is my pledge; [Throws down a glove.]
 I'll prove it on thy heart,
 Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less

110

Than I have here proclaim'd thee.

[If none . . . thee: If no one appears to testify to your treasonous activities, I will challenge you to a duel. There, I throw down my glove. (Throwing down a glove was a sign that one man challenged another man to a fight. The glove—or gauntlet, as it was called—was often overlaid with metal for protection in battle. Some gauntlets were made of thick leather or fabric.)]

REGAN: Sick! O sick! **[O, I think I'm sick.]**

GONERIL: [Aside.] If not, I'll ne'er trust medicine. **[If you're not sick, Goneril says to herself, I'll never again put my trust in deadly potions. (Goneril apparently has given Regan a poisonous drink).]**

EDMUND: There's my exchange: [Throws down a glove.] **[By throwing down his gauntlet, Edmund accepts Albany's challenge.]** What in the world he is That names me traitor, villain-like he lies.

115

Call by thy trumpet: he that dares approach,

On him, on you, who not? I will maintain My truth and honour firmly.

[what in . . . firmly: Whoever calls me a traitor is a liar. Sound the trumpet. Anyone who dares to approach me will face my sword as I defend my honor.]

ALBANY: A **herald**, ho! **[Call forth a herald to read a proclamation.]**

EDMUND: A herald, ho! a herald! 120

ALBANY: Trust to thy single virtue; for thy soldiers,

All levied in my name, have in my name Took their discharge.

[Trust to . . . discharge: You must rely only on yourself. Your soldiers are gone.]

REGAN: My sickness grows upon me.

ALBANY: She is not well; convey her to my tent. [Exit REGAN, led. 125

Come hither, herald,

Enter a herald.

Let the trumpet sound,—
And read out this.

OFFICER: Sound, trumpet! [A trumpet

sounds. 130

HERALD: 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 at 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 **[offstage]**.

Enter EDGAR, armed, with a trumpet before him. 135

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? 140

EDGAR: Know, my name is lost;

By treason's tooth **bare-gnawn** and **canker-bit**:

[Know . . . canker-bit: Know that Edmund's treason gnawed away and ruined my good name.]

Yet am I noble as the adversary

I come to cope **[deal with]**.

ALBANY: Which is that adversary?

145

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

EDMUND: Himself: what sayst thou to him?

EDGAR: Draw thy sword,

That, if my speech offend a noble heart,

Thy arm may do thee justice; here is mine:

150

Behold, it is the privilege of mine honours,

My oath, and my profession: I protest,

[if my speech. . . profession: If I am wrongly accusing you, draw you sword and let it give you justice. Here is my sword, which represents my honor, my good word, and my profession as a knight.]

Maugre **[in spite of]** thy strength, youth, place **[rank]**, and eminence **[renown as a warrior]**,

Despite thy victor sword and fire-new

fortune,
Thy valour and thy heart, thou art a traitor,
155

[Despite . . . traitor: Despite your battlefield success, your good luck, your courage, and your high emotions, I declare that you are a traitor.]

False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father,

Conspirant 'gainst **[conspiring enemy of]** this high illustrious prince **[Albany]**,
And, from the extremest upward of thy head

To the descent and dust below thy foot,
A most toad-spotted **[poisonous]** traitor. Say thou 'No,' **[If you deny these charges]**

160

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 war-like, 165

And that thy tongue some say of breeding breathes **[and since you speak like someone with good breeding]**,

What safe and nicely I might well delay

By rule of knighthood, I **disdain** and **spurn**;

[What safe . . . spurn: What the rules of knighthood would allow me to do—refuse to fight a man whose name I do not know—I disdain and spurn.]

Back do I toss these treasons to thy head,
With the hell-hated lie o'erwhelm thy heart,

170

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.]

[Back do . . . for ever: I toss your accusations back to you. May your lies stop the beating of your heart. But what you say against me scarcely bruises me. Nevertheless, my sword shall silence your tongue.]

ALBANY: Save him, save him!

GONERIL: This is practice, Gloucester:

175

By the law of arms thou wast not bound to answer

An unknown opposite; thou art not

vanquish'd,

But cozen'd and beguil'd.

[This is . . . beguil'd: This is a trick, Edmund. By the laws of knighthood, you were not bound to fight a man not known to you. You are not conquered, but deceived and deluded.]

ALBANY: Shut your mouth, dame,
Or with this paper shall I stop it. Hold, sir;

180

Thou worse than any name, read thine own evil:

No tearing, lady; I perceive you know it.

[Gives the letter to EDMUND.

[Or with . . . you know it: Or with this letter I'll cover your mouth. You, Edmund—you who are more base than any other man—read of your evil in this letter. And don't tear up the letter, lady. I realize you know what's in it.]

GONERIL: Say, if I do, the laws are mine, not thine:

Who can arraign me for 't? [Exit.

[Say, if . . . for 't: What if I do tear it up? You can't arrest me. I'm the one who rules here.]

ALBANY: Most monstrous! 185

Know'st thou this paper?

[Most . . . paper: Most monstrous Edmund, do you recognize this letter?]

EDMUND: Ask me not what I know.

ALBANY: Go after her [Go after Goneril, who has exited (line 184)]: she's desperate; govern her. [Exit an officer.

EDMUND: What you have charg'd me with, that have I done,

And more, much more; the time will bring it out: 190

'Tis past, and so am I. But what art thou **[Edgar]**

That hast this fortune on me? **[who have brought me ill fortune by defeating me]**. If thou'rt noble,

I do forgive thee.

EDGAR: Let's exchange charity **[forgiveness]**.

I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund;
195

If more, the more thou hast wrong'd me.

[I am . . . wrong'd me: I have as much nobility in my blood as you do, Edmund. Maybe more. If I have more, you have wronged me.]

My name is Edgar, and thy father's son.
The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices

Make instruments to plague us:

[and of . . . plague us: And use our faults to plague us]

The dark and vicious place where thee he got
200

Cost him his eyes.

[The adultery he committed that resulted in your birth ultimately 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:
205

Let sorrow split my heart, if ever I

Did hate thee or thy father.

[Methought . . . father: I thought that the dignified way you carried yourself suggested you were of noble blood. I must embrace you. Let sorrow break my heart if I ever hated you or your father.]

EDGAR: Worthy prince, I know 't.

ALBANY: Where have you hid yourself?

How have you known the miseries of your father?
210

EDGAR: By nursing them, my lord.

List **[listen to]** a brief tale;

And, when 'tis told, O! that my heart would burst **[and when I've told the tale, my heart will surely break],**

The bloody proclamation to escape

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

That we the pain of death would hourly die
215

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,

heir precious stones new lost; became his
guide, 220

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

**[The bloody proclamation . . . from
despair: I ran off to escape the bloody
proclamation that condemned me to death
and to lose the pursuers following me so
near. O, because we value the sweetness
of life, we are willing to endure dire peril
every hour rather than face death. To
survive this ordeal, I disguised myself in
rags to assume the likeness of a lowly
beggar whom even dogs despised. In this
disguise, I happened upon my father, who
had bloody rings around his empty eye
sockets. I guided him along paths, begged
for him, and saved him from killing himself
out of despair.]**

Never,—O fault!—reveal'd myself unto him,
Until some half hour past, when I was
arm'd;

**[Never . . . arm'd: I never revealed my true
identity to him—and that was a fault—until
a half-hour ago, when I was wearing
armor.]**

Not sure, though hoping, of this good
success,

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

225

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.

**[Not sure . . . smilingly: Not sure whether I
was doing the right thing, but hoping for
success, I asked for his blessing. Then I
told him everything that happened to me
since the time I was condemned. But his
weak heart gave out because he could not
withstand either the joy of reuniting with
me or the grief of all that had come to
pass.]**

EDMUND: This speech of yours hath mov'd
me, 230

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 [**cry; break down**],

Hearing of this. 235

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.

[This would . . . extremity: This would have seemed to be a time to focus on love, not sorrow. Moreover, another account of sorrow would be going overboard. (But Edgar recites the account anyway, in the following lines.)]

Whilst I was big in clamour came there a
man, 240

Who, having seen me in my worst estate,
Shunn'd my **abhor**'d society; but then,
finding

Who 'twas that so endur'd, with his strong
arms

He fasten'd on my neck, and **bellow**'d out
As he'd burst heaven; threw him on my
father; 245

Told the most piteous tale of Lear and him
That ever ear receiv'd; which in recounting
His grief grew **puissant**, and the strings of
life

Began to crack: twice then the trumpet
sounded,

And there I left him tranc'd. 250

[Whilst I . . . him tranc'd: While I was bemoaning my fate, sobbing loudly, a man appeared. Seeing the rags I was wearing, he at first shunned me. But then, after finding out more about me, he threw his arms around my neck, cried out, and threw himself on my father (Gloucester). Then he told a piteous tale about himself and Lear. In telling the tale, he exhibited powerful grief. His heartstrings were beginning to break. After a trumpet sounded twice, I left this man, who was in a trance.]

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.

**[and did . . . slave: And served the king
with more duty and humility than a slave]**

Enter a gentleman, with a bloody knife.
255

GENTLEMAN: Help, help! O help!

EDGAR: What kind of help?

ALBANY: Speak, man.

EDGAR: What means that bloody knife?

GENTLEMAN: 'Tis hot, it smokes; 260
It came even from the heart of—O! she's
dead.

ALBANY: Who dead? speak, man.

GENTLEMAN: Your lady **[Goneril]**, sir, your
lady: and her sister **[Regan]**

By her **[Goneril]** is poison'd; she confesses
it.

EDMUND: I was contracted **[engaged]** to
them both: all three **[of us]** 265

Now marry in an instant.

**[all three . . . instant: Death will marry all
three of us]**

EDGAR: Here comes Kent.

ALBANY: Produce the bodies, be they alive
or dead:

This judgment of the heavens, that makes us
tremble,

Touches us not with pity. [Exit gentleman.
270

Enter KENT.

O! is this he?

The time will not allow the compliment
Which very manners urges.

KENT: I am come 275

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?

Seest thou this object, Kent? [The bodies of
GONERIL and REGAN are brought in.

280

KENT: Alack! why thus?

EDMUND: Yet Edmund was belov'd:

The one the other poison'd for my sake,
And after slew herself.

ALBANY: Even so. Cover their faces.

285

EDMUND: I pant for life **[I am dying]**: some

good I mean to do
 Despite of mine own nature **[my inclination to do evil]**. 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. 290
[for my . . . in time: For I have written an order to execute Lear and Cordelia]
 ALBANY: Run, run! O run!
 EDGAR: To whom, my lord? Who has the office? send
 Thy token of **reprieve**.
[To whom have you given the power of execution? Send to this person a sign proving that you are canceling the death sentence.]
 EDMUND: Well thought on: take my sword,
 Give it the captain. 295
 ALBANY: Haste thee, for thy life. [Exit EDGAR.
 EDMUND: He hath commission from my wife and me
 To hang Cordelia in the prison, and
 To lay the blame upon her own despair,
 That she fordid herself. 300
[He hath . . . fordid herself: The captain has orders to hang Cordelia in her place of confinement, then do whatever is necessary to make it look as if she killed herself.]
 ALBANY: The gods defend her! Bear him hence awhile. **[EDMUND is borne off.**

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

LEAR: Howl, howl, howl, howl! O! you are men of stones:
 Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so
 That heaven's vaults should crack. She's gone for ever. 305
 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.
[Howl . . . she lives: Howl, you men of stones. Cry for Cordelia. If I had your tongues and eyes, I would send up a

complaint that would make the vault of heaven crack. She's dead. But lend me a mirror to double-check whether a breath of life remains in her. If the mirror mists when held to her mouth, it means she still breathes.]

KENT: Is this the promis'd end? **[Is this the end of the world?]** 310

EDGAR: Or image of that horror? **[Or an image of the horror that's to come?]**

ALBANY: Fall and cease **[Is the whole world to end?]**

LEAR: This feather stirs **[from her breath]**; she lives! if it be so,

It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows

That ever I have felt. 315

KENT: [Kneeling.] O, my good master!

LEAR: Prithee, away.

EDGAR: 'Tis noble Kent, your friend.

LEAR: A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!

I might have sav'd her; now, she's gone for ever! 320

Cordelia, Cordelia! stay a little. Ha!

What is 't thou sayst? Her voice was ever soft,

Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman.

I kill'd the slave that was a hanging thee.

[I . . . hanging thee: I killed your executioner.]

Off. 'Tis true, my lord, he did. 325

LEAR: Did I not, fellow? **[I did, didn't I? How about that!]**

I have seen the day, with my good biting falchion **[short sword with a broad blade]**

I would have made them skip **[jump and dance]**: I am old now,

And these same crosses **[of old age]** spoil me. Who are you?

Mine eyes are not o' the best: I'll tell you straight. 330

KENT: If fortune brag of two she lov'd and hated,

One of them we behold **[I am the unlucky—or unfortunate—one]**.

LEAR: This is a dull sight. Are you not Kent?

KENT: The same,
Your servant Kent. Where is your servant

Caius **[the name Kent used while in disguise]**? 335

LEAR: He's a good fellow, I can tell you that;

He'll strike, and quickly too. He's dead and rotten.

KENT: No, my good lord; I am the very man —

LEAR: I'll see that straight **[I'll understand, but tell me more]**.

KENT: That, from your first of difference and decay, 340

Have follow'd your sad steps.

LEAR: You are welcome hither **[here]**.

KENT: Nor no man else **[no one else followed you as I did]**; all's cheerless, dark, and deadly:

Your eldest daughters have **fordone** themselves **[have brought about their own demises]**,

And desperately are dead. 345

LEAR: Ay, so I think.

ALBANY: He knows not what he says, and vain it is

That we present us to him.

[He knows . . . to him: I don't think he understands what he is saying. Therefore, it is useless to try to converse with him.]

EDGAR: Very bootless **[useless]**.

Enter an officer. 350

Off. 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 **[What . . . come: What comfort we can give the king to relieve his problems]**

Shall be applied: for us **[me]**, we **[I]** will resign, 355

During the life of this old majesty,
To him our absolute power: —[To EDGAR and KENT.] You, to your rights **[all your rights—including properties and titles—will be restored]**;

With boot **[gains; advantages; reparations; amends]** and such addition as your honours

Have more than merited. All friends shall taste

The wages of their virtue, and all foes
360

The cup of their deservings. O! see, see!

LEAR: And my poor fool **[my poor Cordelia]** 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 **[You will not come to me anymore]**,

Never, never, never, never, never! 365

Pray you, undo this button **[please undo this button for me]**: thank you, sir.

Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,

Look there, look there! [Dies. **[King Lear dies.]**

EDGAR: He faints!—my lord, my lord!

KENT: Break, heart; I prithee, break **[My heart breaks]**. 370

EDGAR: Look up, my lord **[spoken to Lear in an attempt to arouse him]**.

KENT: **Vex** not his ghost: O! let him pass; he hates him

That would upon the rack of this tough world

Stretch him out longer.

EDGAR: He is gone, indeed. 375

KENT: The wonder is he hath endur'd so long:

He but usurp'd his life **[he cheated death for a little extra time on earth]**.

ALBANY: Bear them from hence **[here]**. Our present business

Is general woe. [To KENT and EDGAR.]

Friends of my soul, you twain **[two]**

Rule in this realm, and the **gor'd** state sustain. 380

[and . . . sustain: And make sure our troubled country survives]

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

[I have . . . say no: The end of my life is near. King Lear calls out for me to join him. 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 **[has suffered the most]**: we that are young, 385

Shall never see so much **[so much suffering]**, nor live so long. [Exeunt, with a

dead march.
[Exeunt: Everyone leaves the stage.]

END

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