

# KING LEAR

*A line-by-line translation*

## Act 1, Scene 1

### Shakespeare

*Enter KENT, GLOUCESTER, and EDMUND*

**KENT**

I thought the king had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.

**GLOUCESTER**

It did always seem so to us. But now in the division of the kingdom, it appears not which of the dukes he values most, for equalities are so weighed that curiosity in neither can make choice of either's moiety.

**KENT**

[indicating EDMUND] Is not this your son, my lord?

**GLOUCESTER**

His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge. I have so often blushed to acknowledge him that now I am brazed to it.

**KENT**

I cannot conceive you.

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**KENT**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**EDMUND**

No, my lord.

**GLOUCESTER**

My lord of Kent. Remember him hereafter as my honorable friend.

**EDMUND**

My services to your lordship.

**KENT**

I must love you and sue to know you better.

**EDMUND**

Sir, I shall study deserving.

### Shakescleare Translation

*KENT, GLOUCESTER, and EDMUND enter.*

**KENT**

I thought the king liked the Duke of Albany more than the Duke of Cornwall.

**GLOUCESTER**

It always seemed like that to me, too. But now that he has divided the kingdom, no one can tell which duke he prefers the most. He's divided the kingdom so evenly that not even the closest scrutiny reveals any favoritism to either one.

**KENT**

[Pointing to EDMUND] Isn't this your son, my lord?

**GLOUCESTER**

Well, his education has certainly been at my expense. I used to be embarrassed to acknowledge him as my son, but I've done it so many times now that I can do it without blushing.

**KENT**

I can't conceive of what you mean by that.

**GLOUCESTER**

Well, sir, this young fellow's mother certainly could conceive—she conceived *him*. She got pregnant and had a son for her crib before she had a husband in her bed. Do you perceive a sin in this?

**KENT**

Well, I can't wish to undo the sin, since its result—your son—turned out so well.

**GLOUCESTER**

I also have a legitimate son, sir, a few years older than this one, though he's not more valuable to me than Edmund. This rascal Edmund may have come into this world somewhat rudely, and before he was meant to, but his mother was beautiful, we had a good time making him, and I must now acknowledge the bastard as my son.[To EDMUND] Do you know this noble gentleman, Edmund?

**EDMUND**

No, my lord.

**GLOUCESTER**

This is Lord Kent. Remember him from now on, as he is my honorable friend.

**EDMUND**

I'm at your service, my lord.

**KENT**

I sincerely look forward to knowing you better.

**EDMUND**

Sir, I'll try to earn your approval.

**GLOUCESTER**

30 He hath been out nine years, and away he shall again.

*Sennet.*

The king is coming.

*Enter one bearing a coronet, then King LEAR, then the Dukes of CORNWALL and ALBANY, next GONERIL, REGAN, CORDELIA, and attendants*

**LEAR**

Attend the lords of France and Burgundy, Gloucester.

**GLOUCESTER**

I shall, my lord.

*Exit GLOUCESTER*

**LEAR**

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

**GONERIL**

Sir, I do love you more than words can wield the matter,  
 55 Dearer than eyesight, space, and liberty,  
 Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare,  
 No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honor,  
 As much as child e'er loved or father found—  
 A love that makes breath poor and speech unable.  
 60 Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

**CORDELIA**

[Aside] What shall Cordelia speak? Love, and be silent.

**LEAR**

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

**REGAN**

70 Sir, I am made of that self mettle as my sister,  
 And prize me at her worth. In my true heart,  
 I find she names my very deed of love—  
 Only she comes too short, that I profess  
 Myself an enemy to all other joys,  
 75 Which the most precious square of sense possesses.  
 And find I am alone felicitate  
 In your dear highness' love.

**GLOUCESTER**

He's been abroad for nine years, and he's soon leaving again.

*A trumpet call announces the arrival of the king.*

The king is coming.

*A man enters bearing a crown, followed by KING LEAR; then the Dukes of CORNWALL and ALBANY; then GONERIL, REGAN, CORDELIA, and attendants.*

**LEAR**

Go attend to the rulers of France and Burgundy, Gloucester.

**GLOUCESTER**

I will, my lord.

*GLOUCESTER and EDMUND exit.*

**LEAR**

In the meantime I will discuss my more secret plan. Give me that map there. I now declare that I have divided my kingdom into three parts, which will be handed over to my sons-in-law. It's my firm intention to free myself from all worry and business in my old age, so that I can crawl unburdened towards death. To you, my son-in-law Cornwall, and to you, my equally loving son-in-law Albany, at this time I want to publicly announce what each of my daughters will inherit from me, so as to prevent quarreling after I die. The two great rulers of France and Burgundy—who are rivals in pursuing my youngest daughter Cordelia's love—have stayed at my court for a long time. And they will soon have their answer. Now tell me, my daughters, (since I'm about to give up my throne, my lands, and the worries and stress of being a ruler), tell me which one of you loves me the most. Then I can give my greatest gifts to the one who best deserves them. Goneril, my oldest, you speak first.

**GONERIL**

Sir, I love you more than words can express, more dearly than eyesight, space, and liberty, beyond all wealth, no matter how valuable or precious. I love you as much as life itself, and I love you with all my grace, health, beauty, and honor, as much as any daughter ever loved, or any father ever received. My love is so great that it makes my voice weak and my words fail. I love you beyond any comparison I could ever make.

**CORDELIA**

[To herself] What will I do when it's my turn to speak? I can only love, and be silent.

**LEAR**

[To GONERIL] I now give you all this land, from this line to that one, containing dark forests, fertile plains, bountiful rivers, and wide meadows. This land will forever belong to you and Albany's descendants. Now what does my second daughter, my dear Regan, Cornwall's wife, have to say?  
 Speak.

**REGAN**

Sir, I am made of the same materials as my sister, and I consider myself her equal in my love for you. Truly, she has described my feelings for you exactly—but she fell a little short. I reject any joy whatsoever except my love for you, which is everything I need in life, and I find that the only thing that makes me truly happy is your dear Highness's love.

**CORDELIA**

[Aside] Then poor Cordelia!  
And yet not so, since I am sure my love's  
80 More ponderous than my tongue.

**LEAR**

To thee and thine hereditary ever  
Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom,  
No less in space, validity, and pleasure  
Than that conferred on Goneril.— But now, our joy,  
85 Although our last and least, to whose young love  
The vines of France and milk of Burgundy  
Strive to be interested. What can you say to draw  
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

**CORDELIA**

Nothing, my lord.

**LEAR**

90 Nothing?

**CORDELIA**

Nothing.

**LEAR**

How? Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again.

**CORDELIA**

Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave  
My heart into my mouth. I love your majesty  
95 According to my bond, no more nor less.

**LEAR**

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

**CORDELIA**

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

**LEAR**

But goes thy heart with this?

**CORDELIA**

Ay, good my lord.

**LEAR**

110 So young and so untender?

**CORDELIA**

So young, my lord, and true.

**LEAR**

Let it be so. Thy truth then be thy dower.  
For by the sacred radiance of the sun,  
The mysteries of Hecate and the night,  
115 By all the operation of the orbs  
From whom we do exist and cease to be—  
Here I disclaim all my paternal care,  
Propinquity, and property of blood,  
And as a stranger to my heart and me  
120 Hold thee from this for ever. The barbarous Scythian,  
Or he that makes his generation messes  
To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom  
Be as well neighbored, pitied, and relieved

**CORDELIA**

[To herself] And now it's poor Cordelia's turn! And yet I'm not poor at all, since I know my love is weightier and more sincere than my words.

**LEAR**

[To REGAN] To you and your heirs I now give this large third of my fair kingdom, which is no less in area, value, or beauty than the land I gave to Goneril. But now for Cordelia, the joy of my life—though the youngest of my daughters—who has been courted so seriously by the rulers of fertile France and Burgundy. What can you tell me that will earn a larger portion of my kingdom than your sisters?

**CORDELIA**

Nothing, my lord.

**LEAR**

Nothing?

**CORDELIA**

Nothing.

**LEAR**

What is this? "Nothing" will earn you nothing. Speak again.

**CORDELIA**

I am unlucky, for I can't put my heart's emotions into words. I love your Majesty as a daughter should love her father, no more and no less.

**LEAR**

What is this, Cordelia? Fix your speech a little, or you may damage your future.

**CORDELIA**

My good lord, you fathered me, raised me, and loved me. In return, I am dutiful to you, as I should be. I obey you, love you, and honor you. Why do my sisters have husbands if they claim that they love only you? I hope that when I get married, my husband will take half of my love, and half of my care and sense of duty. Surely I'll never get married like my sisters are married—loving only their father.

**LEAR**

But do you really mean this?

**CORDELIA**

Yes, my good lord.

**LEAR**

So young and so heartless?

**CORDELIA**

So young, my lord, and honest.

**LEAR**

Then this is how it will be: your truth will be your only inheritance. For now I swear by the holy light of the sun, the mysteries of witchcraft<sup>1</sup> and the night, and by all the stars whose movements control our lives—I hereby disown you as my daughter. I give up all my duties as a father and dissolve all family ties between us. From now on you will be a stranger to me. Even a foreign barbarian<sup>2</sup> who eats his own children will be as close to my heart, pitied, and helped during difficult times as you were, my former daughter.

<sup>1</sup> In the original text, King Lear refers to Hecate, who was the ancient Greek goddess of the dark, and often associated with witchcraft.

<sup>2</sup> We see Lear in the original text referring to the Scythians—an ancient Near Eastern people whom the Greek historians considered barbarous.

As thou my sometime daughter.

**KENT**

125 Good my liege—

**LEAR**

Peace, Kent.  
Come not between the dragon and his wrath.  
I loved her most and thought to set my rest  
On her kind nursery. [To CORDELIA] Hence, and avoid my  
130 sight!—  
So be my grave my peace as here I give  
Her father's heart from her.— Call France. Who stirs?  
Call Burgundy.—

*Exeunt several attendants*

Cornwall and Albany,  
135 With my two daughters' dowers digest this third.  
Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her.  
I do invest you jointly with my power,  
Preeminence, and all the large effects  
That troop with majesty. Ourselves, by monthly course,  
140 With reservation of an hundred knights  
By you to be sustained, shall our abode  
Make with you by due turns. Only shall we retain  
The name, and all th' additions to a king.  
The sway, revenue, execution of the rest,  
145 Belovèd sons, be yours; which to confirm,  
This coronet part between you.  
[Gives CORNWALL and ALBANY the coronet]

**KENT**

Royal Lear,  
Whom I have ever honored as my king,  
150 Loved as my father, as my master followed,  
As my great patron thought on in my prayers—

**LEAR**

The bow is bent and drawn. Make from the shaft.

**KENT**

Let it fall rather, though the fork invade  
The region of my heart. Be Kent unmannerly  
155 When Lear is mad. What wouldest thou do, old man?  
Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak  
When power to flattery bows? To plainness honor's bound  
When majesty falls to folly. Reserve thy state,  
And in thy best consideration check  
160 This hideous rashness. Answer my life my judgment,  
Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least,  
Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound  
Reverbs no hollowness.

**LEAR**

Kent, on thy life, no more.

**KENT**

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

**LEAR**

Out of my sight!

**KENT**

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

**KENT**

But your Majesty—

**LEAR**

Quiet, Kent. Don't come between the dragon and its anger. I  
loved Cordelia most of all, and had hoped to spend my old  
age in her loving care.

[To CORDELIA] Now go away, and get out of my sight! I'll  
only have peace when I'm dead, now that I've decided to  
stop loving her.

[To his servants] Call the King of France. Will someone go?  
Call the Duke of Burgundy.

*Several attendants exit.*

Cornwall and Albany, you divide Cornelia's third of my  
kingdom between you. Let her marry her pride, which she  
calls "honesty." I now give the two of you all my power,  
privileges, and the riches that come with kingship. For  
myself I will keep an entourage of a hundred knights, and I  
will live with one of you one month, and the other the next  
month. I'll keep the title of king and its accompanying  
honors, but everything else—the power, responsibility, and  
income—is now yours, my beloved sons-in-law. To confirm  
this, take this crown and share it between you. [He gives  
CORNWALL and ALBANY the crown]

**KENT**

Royal Lear, I've always honored you as my king, loved you  
as my father, followed you as my master, and thanked you  
as my benefactor in my prayers—

**LEAR**

I've already bent my bow and taken aim. Get out of the way  
of the arrow.

**KENT**

Let it strike me, no matter what, even if the arrow strikes my  
heart. Kent must be rude when Lear is acting madly. What  
are you doing, old man? Do you think that loyal men will be  
afraid to speak when a king gives in to flattery? If I consider  
myself honorable, then I'm obligated to speak bluntly when  
majesty turns to foolishness. Use your best judgment and  
rethink this rash, horrible decision. I swear on my life that  
your youngest daughter doesn't love you the least—just  
because her words don't echo hollowly, it doesn't mean her  
heart is unloving.

**LEAR**

Kent, if you value your life, say nothing more.

**KENT**

I've never valued my life except as a tool you could use  
against your enemies. I don't fear to lose my life if it will  
help preserve your safety.

**LEAR**

Get out of my sight!

**KENT**

Lear, if it will help you see better, let me stay here and  
always be the target of your angry looks.

**LEAR**

Now, by Apollo—

**KENT**

Now, by Apollo, King,  
Thou swear'st thy gods in vain.

**LEAR**

O vassal! Miscreant!

**ALBANY, CORNWALL**

175 Dear sir, forbear!

**KENT**

Do, kill thy physician, and the fee bestow  
Upon thy foul disease. Revoke thy gift,  
Or whilst I can vent clamor from my throat,  
I'll tell thee thou dost evil.

**LEAR**

180 Hear me, recreant! On thine allegiance hear me.  
That thou hast sought to make us break our vows,  
Which we durst never yet, and with strained pride  
To come betwixt our sentence and our power,  
Which nor our nature nor our place can bear,  
185 Our potency made good, take thy reward:  
Five days we do allot thee for provision  
To shield thee from diseases of the world.  
And on the sixth to turn thy hated back  
Upon our kingdom. If on the next day following  
190 Thy banished trunk be found in our dominions,  
The moment is thy death. Away! By Jupiter,  
This shall not be revoked.

**KENT**

Why, fare thee well, King. Sith thus thou wilt appear,  
Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here.

195 [To CORDELIA]

The gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid,  
That justly think'st and hast most rightly said!

[To REGAN and GONERIL]

200 And your large speeches may your deeds approve,  
That good effects may spring from words of love.—  
Thus Kent, O princes, bids you all adieu.  
He'll shape his old course in a country new.

*Exit KENT*

*Flourish. Enter GLOUCESTER with the King of FRANCE, the Duke of BURGUNDY, and attendants*

**GLOUCESTER**

Here's France and Burgundy, my noble lord.

**LEAR**

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

**BURGUNDY**

Most royal majesty,  
210 I crave no more than hath your highness offered.  
Nor will you tender less.

**LEAR**

Right noble Burgundy,  
When she was dear to us we did hold her so,  
But now her price is fallen. Sir, there she stands.

**LEAR**

Now, I swear by Apollo 3 —

3 Apollo was the ancient Greek god of the sun, also associated with poetry and medicine, among other things.

**KENT**

You swear by Apollo, King? Now you're taking the names of the gods in vain.

**LEAR**

You peasant! Villain!

**ALBANY, CORNWALL**

Dear sir, please stop!

**KENT**

Go ahead, kill your doctor and pay the medical bill to your foul disease. Take back your gift to Albany and Cornwall, or as long as I can make a fuss, I'll keep telling you that you've done an evil thing.

**LEAR**

Listen to me, you traitor! If you still show me allegiance as my subject, hear me. You've tried to make me break my promise to Cornwall and Albany, and I've never broken a promise yet. You tried to overturn my sentence of judgment on Cordelia, and neither my personality nor my role as king can accept such disrespect of power. To prove my authority, here is the reward for your actions: you have five days to gather whatever you need to survive the misfortunes of the world. And on the sixth day you must turn your hated back on my kingdom. If your banished self is found here after that day, you will be immediately killed. Now go away! I swear by Jupiter 4 I'll never take back what I've promised to do.

4 Jupiter was the king of the gods in ancient Roman mythology.

**KENT**

Well, farewell then, King. Since this is how you insist on acting, freedom has left this kingdom and been replaced by banishment.

[To CORDELIA] Lady, may the gods shelter you, for you've thought with justice and spoken correctly.

[To REGAN and GONERIL] And may your actions live up to your grand words, so that we can see good deeds spring from words of love. And so Kent bids you all farewell, you princes. He'll go be his same old self in a new country.

*KENT exits.*

*Trumpets play. GLOUCESTER, the King of FRANCE, the Duke of BURGUNDY, and attendants enter.*

**GLOUCESTER**

The rulers of France and Burgundy are here, my noble lord.

**LEAR**

My lord of Burgundy, I'll address you first. You've been a rival to this king in pursuing my daughter. What is the least amount you will accept as her dowry 5 before you give up seeking her love?

5 In Shakespeare's time, a dowry was the money or property that a wife brought to her husband upon their marriage. This was often provided by the wife's father.

**BURGUNDY**

Your most royal Majesty, I want nothing more than what your Highness has already offered, and I know you won't offer less than that.

**LEAR**

Noble Burgundy, when my love for Cordelia was great, I considered her worth to be great too. But now her price has fallen. There she is, sir. If there's anything your Grace 6 like

6 "Your Grace" is a term used to address royalty and other high-

If aught within that little seeming substance,  
Or all of it, with our displeasure pieced  
And nothing more, may fitly like your grace,  
She's there, and she is yours.

**BURGUNDY**

I know no answer.

**LEAR**

220 Sir, will you, with those infirmities she owes—  
Unfriended, new adopted to our hate,  
Dowered with our curse and strangled with our oath—  
Take her or leave her?

**BURGUNDY**

Pardon me, royal sir.  
225 Election makes not up in 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  
230 To match you where I hate. Therefore beseech you  
T' avert your liking a more worthier way  
Than on a wretch whom Nature is ashamed  
Almost t' acknowledge hers.

**FRANCE**

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

**CORDELIA**

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

**LEAR**

Go to, go to. Better thou  
Hadst not been born than not t' have pleased me  
better.

**FRANCE**

Is it no more but this—a tardiness in nature  
260 Which often leaves the history unspoke  
That it intends to do?—My lord of Burgundy,  
What say you to the lady? Love's not love  
When it is mingled with regards that stands  
Aloof from th' entire point. Will you have her?  
265 She is herself a dowry.

**BURGUNDY**

[To LEAR] Royal King,  
Give but that portion which yourself proposed,  
And here I take Cordelia by the hand,  
Duchess of Burgundy.

about that small, worthless creature, who is now inseparable from my anger, then there she is—she's yours.

*ranking people. It is used much like "your Majesty" or "your Highness."*

**BURGUNDY**

I don't know what to say.

**LEAR**

Sir, now that you know her flaws—that she is friendless and just now hated by her father, and that her only dowry is my curse—will you take her or leave her?

**BURGUNDY**

Forgive me, royal sir. It's impossible to choose in such a situation.

**LEAR**

Then leave her, sir, for I swear to God that I've described to you all the value she has.

[To FRANCE] And you, great King: I would never want to alienate you by making you marry someone I hate. So please look elsewhere for a wife and forget this worthless girl, who can barely be called human.

**FRANCE**

This is very strange. How could Cordelia—who until just now was your favorite, the object of all your praise, your comfort in your old age, and your best and dearest—have done something so monstrous that she suddenly stripped away the many layers of your love and favor? Surely she must have committed an atrocious crime to make your formerly strong affection for her turn rotten. But it would take a miracle to make me believe that she could do something like that.

**CORDELIA**

[To LEAR] Please, your Majesty, I lack the glib art of flattery and empty words. When I want to do something, I just do it instead of talking about it. So let it be known that it wasn't because I committed an act of murder, lust, or dishonor that I lost your love and favor. It was because I lack a flattering tongue and a greedy eye. I'm a richer person even without these things. And I'm glad that I don't have them, although lacking them has lost me your love.

**LEAR**

Enough, go away. It would've been better for you to have never been born than to have displeased me like you did.

**FRANCE**

Is that all? You're banishing her because she has a quiet nature that makes her act without telling the world about her actions? My lord of Burgundy, what do you have to say to the lady? Love is not love when it mingles with irrelevant matters. Will you marry her? She is a valuable dowry in and of herself.

**BURGUNDY**

[To LEAR] Royal king, if you'll only give me the dowry that you offered me originally, then I'll marry Cordelia right away and make her the Duchess of Burgundy.

**LEAR**

270 Nothing. I have sworn. I am firm.

**BURGUNDY**

[To CORDELIA] I am sorry then. You have so lost a father  
That you must lose a husband.

**CORDELIA**

Peace be with Burgundy.  
275 Since that respects and fortunes are his love,  
I shall not be his wife.

**FRANCE**

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

**LEAR**

290 Thou hast her, France. Let her be thine, for we  
Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see  
That face of hers again. [To CORDELIA] Therefore be  
gone  
Without our grace, our love, our benison.—  
295 Come, noble Burgundy.

*Flourish*

*Exeunt all but FRANCE, GONERIL, REGAN, and CORDELIA*

**FRANCE**

Bid farewell to your sisters.

**CORDELIA**

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

**REGAN**

305 Prescribe not us our duty.

**GONERIL**

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

**CORDELIA**

310 Time shall unfold what plighted cunning hides,  
Who covers faults at last with shame derides.  
Well may you prosper.

**FRANCE**

Come, my fair Cordelia.

*Exeunt FRANCE and CORDELIA*

**LEAR**

I'll give nothing. I have sworn. I'll stand firm.

**BURGUNDY**

[To CORDELIA] I am sorry then. In losing the king as a father,  
you've also lost me as a husband.

**CORDELIA**

Peace be with you, Burgundy. Since your real love is money,  
I won't be your wife.

**FRANCE**

Fairest Cordelia—in being poor you have become most rich;  
in being abandoned you are valuable; and in being hated  
you are loved! I accept you and your virtues right away, if  
it's legal to pick up and keep something that has been cast  
away by another man. Gods, gods! It's strange that in  
treating you so coldly, they've fanned the flames of my love  
and made me respect you as well. King, your daughter  
without a dowry, whom you've rejected and thrown to me  
by chance, will now become the Queen of France and of my  
heart. No duke of watered-down Burgundy could buy this  
priceless, precious girl from me. Cordelia, bid them  
farewell, even though they've been unkind to you. You've  
lost your life here to find a better life elsewhere.

**LEAR**

You can take her, King of France. Let her be your wife, for  
she's no daughter of mine, and I'll never see that face of  
hers again.

[To CORDELIA] So go away, and leave without any love or  
blessing from me. Come, noble Burgundy.

*Trumpets play.*

*Everyone except the King of FRANCE, GONERIL, REGAN, and CORDELIA exits.*

**FRANCE**

Say goodbye to your sisters.

**CORDELIA**

Sisters, you jewels of our father's love, I leave you now with  
tears in my eyes. I know what you really are, but as a sister I  
am reluctant to criticize your faults and call them by their  
true names. Love our father and take care of him. I leave  
him to you who have claimed to love him so dearly. But, oh,  
I wish I were still in his favor, so I could recommend him to  
better caretakers. So farewell to you both.

**REGAN**

Don't tell us what our duty is.

**GONERIL**

You should focus on pleasing your lord and husband, who  
has accepted you out of charity. You have failed to be  
obedient to our father, and you deserve to lose the love that  
you yourself have lacked.

**CORDELIA**

Time will reveal what you're hiding under your cunning  
flattery. Those who cover their faults always end up being  
shamed by them. May you have prosperous lives.

**FRANCE**

Come along, my fair Cordelia.

*The King of FRANCE and CORDELIA exit.*

**GONERIL**

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

**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  
320 loved our sister most, and with what poor judgment he  
hath now cast her off appears too grossly.

**REGAN**

'Tis the infirmity of his age. Yet he hath ever but  
slenderly known himself.

**GONERIL**

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

**REGAN**

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

**GONERIL**

There is further compliment of leave-taking between  
France and him. Pray you, let's sit together. If our  
father carry authority with such dispositions as he  
bears, this last surrender of his will but offend us.

**REGAN**

335 We shall further think on 't.

**GONERIL**

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

*Exeunt*

**GONERIL**

Sister, I have much to say about things that concern us  
both. I think our father will leave tonight.

**REGAN**

Certainly, and he'll go to stay with you. Next month he'll  
stay with us.

**GONERIL**

I know you see how moody and fickle he's gotten in his old  
age, as we've both been observing him so closely. He  
always loved our sister the most, and his poor judgment in  
banishing her now seems obvious.

**REGAN**

It's the sickness of his old age. But even when he was  
younger, he never understood himself very well.

**GONERIL**

Even in the prime of his life he was impulsive. Now that he's  
old, we must deal not only with his deeply-rooted bad  
habits, but also with the unpredictable bad temper that  
comes with old age and senility.

**REGAN**

We're likely to see more unpredictable outbursts from him,  
like his banishment of Kent.

**GONERIL**

There is still going to be a farewell ceremony between the  
King of France and our father. Please, let's sit together and  
come up with a plan. If our father continues to wield his  
authority in such a fickle way, then his recent surrender to  
his passions will only hurt us.

**REGAN**

We must think more about it.

**GONERIL**

We have to do something, and should strike while the iron  
is hot.

*They exit.*

## Act 1, Scene 2

### Shakespeare

*Enter EDMUND the bastard, with a letter*

**EDMUND**

Thou, nature, art my goddess. To thy law  
My services are bound. Wherefore should I  
Stand in the plague of custom and permit  
The curiosity of nations to deprive me  
5 For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines  
Lag of a brother? Why "bastard?" Wherefore "base?"  
When my dimensions are as well compact,  
My mind as generous, and my shape as true  
As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us  
10 With "base," with "baseness," "bastardy," "base,"  
"base"—  
Who in the lusty stealth of nature take  
More composition and fierce quality

### Shakescleare Translation

EDMUND  enters with a letter.

 The original text refers to Edmund as "the bastard," highlighting the fact that he is the Earl of Gloucester's illegitimate son.

**EDMUND**

You, Nature, are my goddess, and I only serve the laws of  
nature. So why should I put up with the sick injustice of  
man-made social rules, which deprive me of rights just  
because I was born some twelve or fourteen months after  
my brother? Why call me a "bastard?" Why is a bastard  
inherently "worthless" when I'm as sound in my body and  
my mind as any legitimate child? Why do they call us  
"worthless," with "worthlessness," "bastard," "worthless,"  
"worthless?" We bastards were at least conceived in a  
moment of passionate, stealthy lust, and so we have a  
stronger and fiercer nature than those shallow fools who  
were conceived in a dull, stale, tired marriage bed, where  
half-asleep couples churn out whole tribes of children. Well

Than doth within a dull, stale, tirèd bed  
 Go to th' creating a whole tribe of fops  
 Got 'tween a sleep and wake? Well then,  
 Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land.  
 Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund  
 As to the legitimate.— Fine word, "legitimate!"—  
 20 Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed  
 And my invention thrive, Edmund the base  
 Shall top th' legitimate. I grow, I prosper.  
 Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

*Enter GLOUCESTER. EDMUND looks over his letter*

**GLOUCESTER**

Kent banished thus? And France in choler parted?  
 25 And the king gone tonight, prescribed his power  
 Confined to exhibition? All this done  
 Upon the gad?—Edmund, how now? What news?

**EDMUND**

*[pocketing the letter]* So please your lordship, none.

**GLOUCESTER**

Why so earnestly seek you to put up that letter?

**EDMUND**

30 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,  
 35 I shall not need spectacles.

**EDMUND**

I beseech you, sir, pardon me. It is a letter from my  
 brother that I have not all o'er-read. And for so much  
 as I have perused, I find it not fit for your  
 40 o'erlooking.

**GLOUCESTER**

Give me the letter, sir.

**EDMUND**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

*[taking the letter]* Let's see, let's see.

**EDMUND**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

*[reads]* "This policy and reverence of age makes the  
 world bitter to the best of our times, keeps our  
 fortunes from us till our oldness cannot relish them. I  
 50 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 forever, and live the  
 55 beloved of your brother,

then, legitimate brother Edgar, I must have your land. Our  
 father loves me just as much as he loves his legitimate son.  
 What a fine word, "legitimate!" Well, my legitimate brother,  
 if this letter succeeds and my plan goes well, Edmund the  
 worthless will triumph over Edgar the legitimate. I will  
 grow, I will prosper. Now, gods, stand up for the bastards!

*GLOUCESTER enters. EDMUND looks over his letter.*

**GLOUCESTER**

Has Kent really been banished like this? And the King of  
 France has gone away angry? And King Lear has left tonight,  
 having given up all his power except for some money and  
 his title? All this done on the spur of the moment? Edmund,  
 what's going on? What's the news?

**EDMUND**

*[Slipping the letter into his pocket]* There is no news, my  
 lord.

**GLOUCESTER**

Why are you being so secretive about that letter?

**EDMUND**

I don't have any news, my lord.

**GLOUCESTER**

What's that letter you were reading?

**EDMUND**

Nothing, my lord

**GLOUCESTER**

No? Why did you look so terrified and stuff it in your pocket  
 then? If it's nothing, then there's no need to hide it. Let's  
 see it. Come on, if it's nothing, I won't need my glasses to  
 read it.

**EDMUND**

Please sir, forgive me. It's a letter from my brother that I  
 haven't finished reading yet. And, judging by what I have  
 read, it's not fit for you to look over.

**GLOUCESTER**

Give me the letter, sir.

**EDMUND**

I see that I'll offend you whether I keep it or give it to you.  
 The only offensive thing is the content of the letter, as far as  
 I can understand it.

**GLOUCESTER**

*[Taking the letter]* Let's see, let's see.

**EDMUND**

I hope, for my brother's sake, that he wrote this just to test  
 my virtue.

**GLOUCESTER**

*[Reading]* "The craftiness of old men and society's custom  
 of treating them with reverence makes life bitter for those  
 of us in the prime of our lives, and keeps us from our  
 inheritance until we're too old to enjoy it. I begin to see a  
 kind of useless, foolish slavery in the oppressive power of  
 the elderly—and they only have this power because we  
 allow them to have it. Come visit me, so I can speak more  
 about this. If our father should happen to go to his eternal  
 rest, then you would enjoy half of his wealth forever, and

Edgar."  
Hum, conspiracy? "Sleep till I wake 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  
60 this to you? Who brought it?

**EDMUND**

It was not brought me, my lord. There's the cunning of  
it.  
I found it thrown in at the casement of my closet.

**GLOUCESTER**

You know the character to be your brother's?

**EDMUND**

65 If the matter were good, my lord, I durst swear it  
were his.  
But in respect of that, I would fain think it were not.

**GLOUCESTER**

It is his.

**EDMUND**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

Hath he never heretofore sounded you in this business?

**EDMUND**

Never, my lord. But I have heard him oft maintain it to  
be fit that, sons at perfect age and fathers declined,  
the father should be as ward to the son, and the son  
75 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**

80 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  
85 make a great gap in your own honor and shake in pieces  
the heart of his obedience. I dare pawn down my life for  
him that he hath wrote this to feel my affection to  
your honor and to no other pretense of danger.

**GLOUCESTER**

Think you so?

**EDMUND**

90 If your honor judge it meet, I will place you where you  
shall hear us confer of this and by an auricular  
assurance have your satisfaction—and that without any  
further delay than this very evening.

**GLOUCESTER**

He cannot be such a monster—

**EDMUND**

95 Nor is not, sure.

*live as my beloved brother.  
Edgar"*

Hmm, is this a conspiracy? "*If our father should happen to go to his eternal rest, then you would enjoy half of his wealth*"—my son Edgar said this? How could he have a hand that would write such things, and a heart and brain to think them up? When did this letter come to you? Who brought it?

**EDMUND**

It wasn't brought to me, my lord. That's what's cunning  
about it. I found it. It had been thrown through the window  
of my room.

**GLOUCESTER**

And you're sure this is your brother's handwriting?

**EDMUND**

My lord, if the letter's contents were good, I would swear  
that it was his handwriting. But because of what the letter  
does say, I would rather believe otherwise.

**GLOUCESTER**

It is his.

**EDMUND**

It is his handwriting, my lord. But I hope he didn't really  
mean what he said.

**GLOUCESTER**

Has he ever spoken to you about anything like this before?

**EDMUND**

Never, my lord. But I've often heard him argue that when  
sons reach full maturity and their fathers grow old and  
feeble, the son should take care of the father, and manage  
his money.

**GLOUCESTER**

Oh, the villain, the villain! That's the same opinion he  
expresses in the letter! The hateful villain! The unnatural,  
hateful, beastly villain—worse than a beast! Go, sir <sup>2</sup>, and  
find him. I'll arrest him. The abominable villain! Where is  
he?

. <sup>2</sup> Gloucester uses the term "sirrah" in the original text. The term of address is a variant of "sir," and demonstrates the speaker's superior social rank or overall authority.

**EDMUND**

I don't know, my lord. If you can, you should restrain your  
anger against my brother until you can find out exactly  
what his intentions are. That would be a safer course. For if  
you immediately act violently against him and are mistaken  
about his purpose, then it would damage your own honor  
and badly hurt his loyalty to you. I would dare to bet my life  
that he wrote this letter only to test my love for you, and he  
didn't actually mean anything dangerous.

**GLOUCESTER**

Do you think so?

**EDMUND**

If it would be acceptable to your sense of honor, I can hide  
you somewhere where you can hear us talking about the  
letter, and then you'll have the proof of your own hearing  
about his intentions. We can do it this very evening.

**GLOUCESTER**

He can't be such a monster—

**EDMUND**

I'm sure he isn't.

**GLOUCESTER**

To his father, that so tenderly and entirely loves him. Heaven and earth! Edmund, seek him out, wind me into him, I pray you. Frame the business after your own wisdom. I would unstate myself to be in a due resolution.

100

**EDMUND**

I will seek him, sir, presently, convey the business as I shall find means, and acquaint you withal.

**GLOUCESTER**

These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us. Though the wisdom of nature can reason it thus and thus, yet nature finds itself scourged by the sequent effects. Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide, in cities mutinies, in countries discord, in palaces treason, and the bond cracked 'twixt son and father. This villain of mine comes under the prediction—there's son against father. The king falls from bias of nature—there's father against child. We have seen the best of our time. Machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders follow us disquietly to our graves. Find out this villain, Edmund. It shall lose thee nothing. Do it carefully.—And the noble and true-hearted Kent banished, his offense honesty! 'Tis strange, strange.

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115

*Exit GLOUCESTER*

**EDMUND**

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

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125

130

*Enter EDGAR*

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

135

**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.

140

**EDGAR**

Do you busy yourself about that?

**EDMUND**

I promise you, the effects he writes of succeed unhappily — as of unnaturalness between the child and the parent, death, dearth, dissolutions of ancient

**GLOUCESTER**

—to his own father, who so tenderly and completely loves him. By heaven and earth! Edmund, go find him, and gain his confidence for my sake, please. Do whatever needs to be done, and use your own common sense. I would give up anything to relieve my doubts.

**EDMUND**

Sir, I'll find him immediately, and manage the business in the best way I can. Then I'll tell you everything.

**GLOUCESTER**

These recent eclipses of the sun and moon are evil omens for us. Though science can explain how they happen, they are still omens, and bad things always follow eclipses. Love loses its passion, friendships fall apart, brothers become enemies, riots break out in cities, civil wars begin, treason infiltrates palaces, and the bond between fathers and sons is broken. This villainous son of mine fits the prediction of the bad omens—that's son against father. The king goes against his former nature—that's father against child. The best part of our age has passed. Schemes, emptiness, treachery, and chaos will follow us loudly to our graves. Find out the truth about this villain, Edmund. It won't damage your reputation. Just do it carefully. And the noble and true-hearted Kent has been banished, for the crime of being honest! It's strange, strange.

*GLOUCESTER exits.*

**EDMUND**

This is the foolishness of the world, that when we are having bad luck—often because of our own excesses—we lay the blame for our disasters on the sun, the moon, and the stars, as if they forced us to be villains! As if we were fools because of the heavens' decree, or scoundrels, thieves, and traitors because of the influence of the planets, or drunkards, liars, and adulterers because the planets forced us to act that way. As if all our evil was the result of some divine compulsion! This is a good technique for avoiding blame, a trick by which a lustful man can blame his lechery on a star! My father slept with my mother under the influence of Draco, and I was born under the Big Dipper, so it naturally follows that I have a rude and lustful nature. *Good God!*<sup>3</sup> I would have turned out the way I am even if the most virginal star in the sky had twinkled over my conception. Edgar—

<sup>3</sup> In Shakespeare's time, "fut" or "sfoot"—referring to Christ's foot—was a strong oath.

*EDGAR enters.*

And here he comes, right on cue, like the neat ending of a clichéd comedy. My role is to be falsely sad, and sigh like a crazy beggar.<sup>4</sup> Oh, these eclipses are bad omens of such disasters! *Fa, sol, la, mi.*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In the original text, Edmund refers to Bedlam, a London hospital for the mentally ill that was founded in 1330.

<sup>5</sup> These are syllables assigned to musical notes to practice pitch in singing.

**EDGAR**

How's it going, brother Edmund? What are you thinking about so seriously?

**EDMUND**

Brother, I am thinking of a prediction I read about the other day. An astrologer wrote about what will follow these eclipses.

**EDGAR**

Are you really wasting your time with such things?

**EDMUND**

I promise you, the predictions he made keep getting worse—things like divisions among children and parents, death, famine, the breaking of old friendships, political

amities, divisions in state, menaces and maledictions against king and nobles, needless diffidences, banishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, nuptial breaches, and I know not what.

**EDGAR**

150 How long have you been a sectary astronomical?

**EDMUND**

Come, come. When saw you my father last?

**EDGAR**

Why, the night gone by.

**EDMUND**

Spake you with him?

**EDGAR**

Ay, two hours together.

**EDMUND**

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

**EDGAR**

None at all.

**EDMUND**

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

**EDGAR**

Some villain hath done me wrong.

**EDMUND**

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

**EDGAR**

Armed, brother?

**EDMUND**

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

**EDGAR**

Shall I hear from you anon?

**EDMUND**

175 I do serve you in this business.

*Exit EDGAR*

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

*Exit*

fighting, treason and threats against kings and nobles, baseless suspicions, the banishment of friends, the desertion of troops, adultery, and I don't even know what else.

**EDGAR**

How long have you been a follower of astrology?

**EDMUND**

Come now. When did you last see my father?

**EDGAR**

Why, just last night.

**EDMUND**

Did you speak with him?

**EDGAR**

Yes, we spent two hours together.

**EDMUND**

Did you part on good terms? Did he seem displeased with you, in either his words or in his expression?

**EDGAR**

Not at all.

**EDMUND**

Try to remember how you might have offended him. And let me advise you to avoid his presence until he has some time to let off his rage. At this moment his anger is so hot that even physically injuring you would hardly cool it down.

**EDGAR**

Some villain has told a malicious lie about me.

**EDMUND**

That's what I'm afraid of. But please, keep control of yourself until his rage slows down a little. And now come with me to my rooms, and at the right moment I'll bring you to hear my father speak. Please, go. There's my key. If you do go outside, arm yourself.

**EDGAR**

Arm myself, brother?

**EDMUND**

Brother, I'm giving you the best advice I can. Arm yourself. I would be lying if I said that our father had good intentions towards you. I've told you what I've seen and heard—but only vaguely. I've toned down the horrible reality. Now please, go.

**EDGAR**

Will I hear from you soon?

**EDMUND**

Everything I'm doing in this business is to help you.

*EDGAR exits.*

A gullible father, and a noble brother, whose nature is so innocent of evil that he suspects no evil. My plots will easily work on his foolish honesty. I see what I must do. If I can't have lands by birthright, then let me have them through cunning. Everything that I can shape to fit my own purposes is good for me.

*He exits.*

## Act 1, Scene 3

### Shakespeare

*Enter GONERIL and her steward OSWALD*

**GONERIL**

Did my father strike my gentleman  
For chiding of his fool?

**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,  
You shall do well. The fault of it I'll answer.

**OSWALD**

He's coming, madam. I hear him.

*Hunting horns within*

**GONERIL**

Put on what weary negligence you please,  
You and your fellow servants. I'll have it come to  
15 question.  
If he distaste it, let him to our sister,  
Whose mind and mine I know in that are one,  
Not to be overruled. Idle old man  
That still would manage those authorities  
20 That he hath given away! Now by my life,  
Old fools are babes again and must be used  
With checks as flatteries, when they are seen abused.  
Remember what I have said.

**OSWALD**

Very well, madam.

**GONERIL**

25 And let his knights have colder looks among you.  
What grows of it, no matter. Advise your fellows so.  
I would breed from hence occasions, and I shall,  
That I may speak. I'll write straight to my sister  
To hold my very course. Go, prepare for dinner.

*Exeunt severally*

### Shakescleare Translation

*GONERIL enters with her steward, OSWALD.*

**GONERIL**

Did my father strike one of my servants for scolding his  
fool?

**OSWALD**

Yes, madam.

**GONERIL**

He offends me constantly, day and night. Every hour he has  
an outburst, causing some new offense that makes  
everyone start fighting. I won't endure it anymore. His  
knights are getting unruly, and he himself criticizes us  
about every little thing. When he returns from hunting, I  
won't speak to him. Say that I'm sick. And if you do less  
than you used to do to serve the king, you'll be doing the  
right thing. I'll take the blame for it.

**OSWALD**

He's coming, madam. I hear him.

*Hunting horns play offstage.*

**GONERIL**

Now be as tired and neglectful as you desire, you and your  
fellow servants. I want to confront him about it. If he  
dislikes it, let him go to my sister. I know that she and I are  
of the same mind about this matter, and both of us will  
stand up to him. That foolish old man, who thinks he can  
still wield the power he's given away! I swear by my life, old  
fools become like babies again, and you have to discipline  
them instead of flatter them--especially when they're  
clearly misguided. Remember what I've said.

**OSWALD**

Very well, madam.

**GONERIL**

And be unfriendly to his knights as well. Don't worry about  
what might happen. Tell your fellow servants about this. I  
want confrontations to come from this, so I can scold my  
father. I'll write to my sister right away and tell her to do  
exactly as I do. Now go, prepare for dinner.

*They exit in opposite directions.*

## Act 1, Scene 4

### Shakespeare

*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  
For which I razed my likeness. Now, banished Kent,  
5 If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemned,  
So may it come thy master, whom thou lovest,  
Shall find thee full of labors.

### Shakescleare Translation

*KENT (in disguise) enters.*

**KENT**

If I can can disguise my voice as well as I've disguised my  
appearance, then I can carry out the plan for which I erased  
my true identity. Now, banished Kent, you can serve the  
master who condemned you. Hopefully it will work out so  
that my master, whom I love, will find me to be an excellent  
worker.

*Horns within. Enter LEAR with attendant knights*

**LEAR**

Let me not stay a jot for dinner. Go get it ready.

*Exit attendant*

*[To KENT] How now, what art thou?*

**KENT**

10 A man, sir.

**LEAR**

What dost thou profess? What wouldest thou with us?

**KENT**

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

**LEAR**

What art thou?

**KENT**

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

**LEAR**

If thou beest as poor for a subject as he's for a king, thou'rt poor enough. What wouldest thou?

**KENT**

Service.

**LEAR**

Who wouldest thou serve?

**KENT**

You.

**LEAR**

Dost thou know me, fellow?

**KENT**

25 No, sir. But you have that in your countenance which I would fain call master.

**LEAR**

What's that?

**KENT**

Authority.

**LEAR**

What services canst thou do?

**KENT**

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

**LEAR**

How old art thou?

**KENT**

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

*Horns play offstage. LEAR enters with his attendant knights.*

**LEAR**

Don't make me wait even a second for dinner. Go get it ready.

*An attendant exits.*

*[To KENT] Well now, who are you?*

**KENT**

A man, sir.

**LEAR**

What's your profession? What do you want with me?

**KENT**

I swear that I am just what I seem to be. I'll faithfully serve a master who puts his trust in me, I'll love those who are honorable, and I'll associate with those who are wise and don't say much. I fear God, fight when I have to, and don't eat fish.

**LEAR**

Who are you?

**KENT**

I'm a very honest-hearted fellow, and as poor as the king.

**LEAR**

If you're as a poor a subject as he is a king, then you're certainly poor enough. What do you want?

**KENT**

To serve.

**LEAR**

Whom do you want to serve?

**KENT**

You.

**LEAR**

Do you know me, fellow?

**KENT**

No, sir. But there's something in your face that makes me want to call you master.

**LEAR**

What's that in my face?

**KENT**

Authority.

**LEAR**

What services can you perform?

**KENT**

30 I can keep secrets, ride a horse, run, ruin an elaborate story by trying to tell it, and deliver a plain message bluntly. I'm qualified for anything that ordinary men can do. And the best part of me is that I'm hardworking.

**LEAR**

How old are you?

**KENT**

Sir, I'm not young enough to fall in love with a woman because she sings. But I'm not old enough to dote on a woman for any reason. I'm forty-eight years old.

**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.

40

*Exit attendant**Enter OSWALD the steward*

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

**OSWALD**

So please you—

*Exit OSWALD***LEAR**

What says the fellow there? Call the clotpoll back.

*Exit FIRST KNIGHT*

45 Where's my fool, ho? I think the world's asleep.

*Enter FIRST KNIGHT*

How now? Where's that mongrel?

**FIRST KNIGHT**

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

**LEAR**

Why came not the slave back to me when I called him?

**FIRST KNIGHT**

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

50

**LEAR**

He would not?

**FIRST 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.

55

**LEAR**

Ha! Sayest thou so?

**FIRST KNIGHT**

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

60

**LEAR**

Thou but rememberest me of mine own conception. I have perceived a most faint neglect of late, which I have rather blamed as mine own jealous curiosity than as a very pretense and purpose of unkindness. I will look further into 't. But where's my fool? I have not seen him this two days.

65

**FIRST KNIGHT**

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

**LEAR**

Follow me. You'll serve me. If I still like you after dinner, then I'll keep you around.

[To his attendants] Dinner, hey, dinner! Where's my fool?

[To KENT] You, go and call my fool to come here.

*An attendant exits.**OSWALD enters.*

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

**OSWALD**

Excuse me, I'm busy—

*OSWALD exits.***LEAR**

What did that fellow say? Call the blockhead back in here.

*The FIRST KNIGHT exits.*

Hey, where's my fool? It seems like the whole world's asleep.

*The FIRST KNIGHT enters.*

What's going on? Where's that mangy dog of a steward?

**FIRST KNIGHT**

My lord, he says that your daughter isn't feeling well.

**LEAR**

Why didn't that rascal come back to me when I called him?

**FIRST KNIGHT**

Sir, he answered me bluntly and said that he didn't want to.

**LEAR**

He didn't want to?

**FIRST KNIGHT**

My lord, I don't know what's the matter, but it seems to me that your Highness isn't being given the love and respect that you're used to. The duke himself, the servants, and your daughter all seem to share in this loss of respect towards you.

**LEAR**

What! Do you think so?

**FIRST KNIGHT**

My lord, I beg your pardon if I'm mistaken—but I can't be silent when I think your Highness is being wronged.

**LEAR**

No, you're just reminding me of what I've noticed as well. I've observed a lazy neglectfulness in my subjects lately. But I had blamed it on my own sensitivity, and didn't suspect that they were being deliberately disrespectful. I'll look into it further. But where's my fool? I haven't seen him these last two days.

**FIRST KNIGHT**

Sir, ever since my lady Cordelia has gone away to France, the fool has been sad and solitary.

**LEAR**

70 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 another attendant*

*Enter OSWALD*

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

**OSWALD**

My lady's father.

**LEAR**

75 "My lady's father?" My lord's knave, your whoreson dog! You slave, you cur!

**OSWALD**

I am none of these, my lord. I beseech your pardon.

**LEAR**

Do you bandy looks with me, you rascal?  
[He strikes OSWALD]

**OSWALD**

80 I'll not be stricken, my lord.

**KENT**

[tripping OSWALD]  
Nor tripped neither, you base football player.

**LEAR**

[To KENT] I thank thee, fellow. Thou servest me, and I'll love thee.

**KENT**

85 [To OSWALD] Come, sir, arise, away! I'll teach you differences. Away, away. If you will measure your lubber's length again, tarry. But away, go to. Have you wisdom? So.

*Exit OSWALD*

**LEAR**

Now, my friendly knave, I thank thee.

*Enter FOOL*

90 [gives KENT money] There's earnest of thy service.

**FOOL**

Let me hire him too.—Here's my coxcomb.  
[offers KENT his cap]

**LEAR**

How now, my pretty knave? How dost thou?

**FOOL**

[To KENT] Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb.

**LEAR**

95 Why, Fool?

**LEAR**

No more talking about that. I've noticed it too. Go and tell my daughter Goneril that I want to speak with her.

*An attendant exits.*

And you, go call my fool here.

*Another attendant exits.*

*OSWALD enters.*

Oh you, sir, you, come here, sir. Who am I, sir?

**OSWALD**

My lady's father.

**LEAR**

"My lady's father?" You wretch, you bastard dog! You rogue, you dog!

**OSWALD**

I'm not any of those things, my lord. I beg your pardon.

**LEAR**

Do you dare make a face at me, you villain? [He strikes OSWALD]

**OSWALD**

I will not be struck, my lord.

**KENT**

[Tripping OSWALD] Or tripped, you filthy football player .

 Soccer—or "football" in the original text—was considered to be a lower-class game in Shakespeare's time.

**LEAR**

[To KENT] I thank you, fellow. If you serve me like that, I'll love you.

**KENT**

[To OSWALD] Come on, sir. Get up and go away! I'll teach you to respect your superiors. Away, away. If you want to be tripped again, then stay here. If not, go on. Do you have any common sense? Then go.

*OSWALD exits.*

**LEAR**

Now, my friendly servant, I thank you.

*The FOOL enters.*

[Giving KENT money] There's a down payment for your service.

**FOOL**

Let me hire him too. Here's my fool's cap. [He offers KENT his cap]

**LEAR**

How are you, my clever fool? How are you doing?

**FOOL**

[To KENT] Sir, you had better take my cap.

**LEAR**

Why, Fool?

**FOOL**

Why? For taking one's part that's out of favor. Nay, an thou canst not smile as the wind sits, thou'l catch cold shortly. There, take my coxcomb. Why, this fellow has banished two on 's daughters, and did the third a blessing against his will. If thou follow him, thou must needs wear my coxcomb.— How now, nuncle? Would I had two coxcombs and two daughters.

100

**LEAR**

Why, my boy?

**FOOL**

If I gave them all my living, I'd keep my coxcombs myself.  
There's mine. Beg another of thy daughters.

105

**LEAR**

Take heed, sirrah—the whip.

**FOOL**

Truth's a dog that must to kennel. He must be whipped out, when Lady Brach may stand by th' fire and stink.

**LEAR**

110 A pestilent gall to me!

**FOOL**

Sirrah, I'll teach thee a speech.

**LEAR**

Do.

**FOOL**

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

115

120

**KENT**

This is nothing, Fool.

**FOOL**

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

125

**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.

130

**LEAR**

A bitter fool.

**FOOL**

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

**FOOL**

Why? For taking the side of this unpopular king. If you can't suck up to whoever has power, then you'll soon suffer for it. Here, take my fool's cap. Why, this fellow here has banished two of his daughters, and gave the third a blessing without meaning to <sup>2</sup>. If you're going to follow *him*, you're a fool, and so you should wear my cap.

*[To LEAR]* How's it going, uncle <sup>3</sup>? I wish I had two caps and two daughters.

<sup>2</sup> The Fool inverts how Lear has treated his daughters. He thus emphasizes how Goneril and Regan may have gained land, but aren't as blessed as Cordelia (the one who was actually banished).

<sup>3</sup> "Nuncle" in the original text—an abbreviated form of "mine uncle"—is the Fool's familiar term of address for Lear.

**LEAR**

Why, my boy?

**FOOL**

If I gave them everything I owned, then I'd keep the caps for myself, to show what a fool I was. Here's my fool's cap. Beg your daughters for another one.

**LEAR**

Be careful, boy—remember you can be whipped.

**FOOL**

Truth's a dog that must go to his kennel. He must be whipped and driven out of the house, while Lady Bitch can stay by the fire, stinking with lies.

**LEAR**

Constantly irritating me!

**FOOL**

Sir, I'll teach you a speech.

**LEAR**

Do.

**FOOL**

Listen closely, uncle. Have more than you show, speak less than you know, lend less than you own, ride more than you walk. Don't believe everything you hear. Don't bet everything on a throw of the dice. Leave your drink and your whore, and stay indoors, and you'll surely prosper.

**KENT**

That's nothing, Fool.

**FOOL**

Then it's like the speech of an unpaid lawyer—you gave me nothing for it, and you get what you pay for. Can't you make some use out of nothing, uncle?

**LEAR**

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

**FOOL**

*[To KENT]* Please, remind him that no land means no income. He won't believe a fool.

**LEAR**

What a bitter fool.

**FOOL**

My boy, do you know the difference between a bitter fool and a sweet fool?

**LEAR**

No, lad. Teach me.

**FOOL**

135 That lord that counseled thee  
To give away thy land,

Come place him here by me.  
Do thou for him stand.

The sweet and bitter fool

140 Will presently appear—  
The one in motley here,  
The other found out there.

**LEAR**

Dost thou call me fool, boy?

**FOOL**

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

**KENT**

This is not altogether fool, my lord.

**FOOL**

No, faith, lords and great men will not let me. If I  
had a monopoly out, they would have part on 't. And  
ladies too—they will not let me have all fool to

150 myself; they'll be snatching. Give me an egg, nuncle,  
and I'll give thee two crowns.

**LEAR**

What two crowns shall they be?

**FOOL**

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

160 [Sings]

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

**LEAR**

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

**FOOL**

I have used it, nuncle, ever since thou madest thy  
daughters thy mothers. For when thou gavest them the  
rod, and put'st down thine own breeches,

[Sings]

170 *Then they for sudden joy did weep  
And I for sorrow sung,  
That such a king should play bo-peep  
And go the fools among.*  
Prithee, nuncle, keep a schoolmaster that can teach thy  
fool to lie. I would fain learn to lie.

**LEAR**

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

**FOOL**

I marvel what kin thou and thy daughters are. They'll  
have me whipped for speaking true, thou'l have me  
whipped for lying, and sometimes I am whipped for  
180 holding my peace. I had rather be any kind o' thing than  
a fool. And yet I would not be thee, nuncle. Thou hast  
pared thy wit o' both sides and left nothing i' th'

**LEAR**

No, boy. Teach me.

**FOOL**

Bring me the lord who advised you to give away your land,  
and place him here by me. You stand in his place. The sweet  
and bitter fool will instantly appear—the sweet fool in  
jester's clothes here, and the bitter fool over there.

**LEAR**

Are you calling me a fool, boy?

**FOOL**

Well, you've given away all the other titles you were born  
with, so you might as well keep the title of "fool."

**KENT**

This fool's words aren't totally foolish, my lord.

**FOOL**

No, truly, lords and important men won't let me be totally  
foolish. If I had a monopoly on foolishness, they would  
insist that I share it. And ladies too—they won't ever let me  
be the biggest fool. They're always snatching away my role.  
Uncle, give me an egg, and I'll give you two crowns.

**LEAR**

What two crowns do you mean?

**FOOL**

Why—after I've cut the egg in half and eaten the whites, the  
yolk will be like two golden crowns. When you cut your  
crown and your kingdom in two and gave away both parts,  
you were carrying your donkey on your back and foolishly  
reversing the order of nature. You didn't have much wit in  
the bald crown of your head when you gave your golden  
crown away. If anyone thinks I'm speaking nonsense like a  
fool when I say this, let him be whipped.

[Singing]

*Fools have had a hard year,  
For wise men have grown foolish.  
They don't know how to use their wits,  
They can only stupidly imitate others.*

**LEAR**

When did you become so full of songs, boy?

**FOOL**

I've made a habit of singing, uncle, ever since you made  
your daughters into your mothers by giving them the switch  
and pulling down your own pants,

[Singing]

170 *Then they wept for sudden joy,  
And I sang for sorrow,  
That such a king should play a child's game  
And go about with fools for company.*  
Uncle, please hire a schoolteacher who can teach your fool  
to lie. I want to learn how to lie.

**LEAR**

If you lie, boy, then I'll have you whipped.

**FOOL**

I'm amazed at how alike you and your daughters are.  
They'll have me whipped for telling the truth, you'll have  
me whipped for lying, and sometimes I'm whipped for  
keeping quiet too. I wish I were anything but a fool. And yet  
I wouldn't want to be you, uncle. You've sliced off your wits

middle. Here comes one o' the parings.

*Enter GONERIL*

### LEAR

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

### FOOL

[To LEAR] Thou wast a pretty fellow when thou hadst no need to care for her frowning. Now thou art an O without a figure. I am better than thou art now. I am a fool.  
Thou art nothing.

190 [To GONERIL] Yes, forsooth, I will hold my tongue. So your face bids me, though you say nothing.  
Mum, mum,  
He that keeps nor crust nor crumb,  
Weary of all, shall want some.

195 [indicates LEAR] That's a shelled peascod.

### GONERIL

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

### FOOL

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

### LEAR

Are you our daughter?

### GONERIL

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

### FOOL

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

### LEAR

Does any here know me? Why, this is not Lear.  
Doth Lear walk thus? Speak thus? Where are his eyes?  
Either his notion weakens, or his discernings  
225 Are lethargied. Ha, sleeping or waking?  
Sure, 'tis not so.  
Who is it that can tell me who I am?

### FOOL

Lear's shadow.

on both sides of your brain, and left nothing in the middle.  
Here comes one of the slices.

*GONERIL enters.*

### LEAR

How are you, daughter? Why are you wearing such a frown?  
It seems like you've been frowning too much lately.

### FOOL

[To LEAR] You were a fine fellow back when you didn't need to care whether she was frowning or not. Now you're a zero without a digit in front of it to give it value. I'm better than you are now. I am a fool. You are nothing.

[To GONERIL] Yes, I will be quiet. That's what your face is commanding me to do, even though you don't say anything aloud. Mum, mum, he who gives away his crust and crumbs when he's weary of possessions, will soon want some back. [Pointing at LEAR] That's an empty pea pod right there.

### GONERIL

[To LEAR] Sir, not just your fool here--who is allowed to say whatever he wants--but others in your rude entourage keep complaining, fighting, and breaking out in foul and intolerable wildness. Sir, I had thought that if I told you about this disrespectful behavior you would find a sure solution to it. But now I'm worried because of what you yourself have said and done all too recently. I'm worried that you encourage this kind of behavior by allowing it to continue. If that's the case, then your actions won't escape punishment, and there will be some kind of payment required of you for the good of the kingdom. I realize that having to punish your knights will seem shameful to you, but it's necessary in this instance.

### FOOL

For you know, uncle, a sparrow raised a cuckoo in its nest for a long time, until the cuckoo grew up and the sparrow had its head bitten off by its own child. And so the candle went out, and we were all left in the dark.

### LEAR

Are you my daughter?

### GONERIL

Come now, sir. I wish you would use your wisdom--which I know you are well-provided with--to snap out of these fickle moods that you've been in lately, so you can return to your true self.

### FOOL

Even a fool can tell when everything's upside down and the cart is pulling the horse, can't he? Whoop, sweetheart! I love you!

### LEAR

Does anyone here know who I am? Why, I can't be Lear.  
Does Lear walk like this? Talk like this? Where are his eyes?  
Either his mind is getting weak or his senses are failing. Hey, am I awake? Surely not. Who can tell me who I am?

### FOOL

You are Lear's shadow.

**LEAR**

I would learn that. For by the marks  
230 Of sovereignty, knowledge, and reason,  
I should be false persuaded I had daughters.

**FOOL**

Which they will make an obedient father.

**LEAR**

[*To GONERIL*] Your name, fair gentlewoman?

**GONERIL**

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

**LEAR**

250 Darkness and devils!  
Saddle my horses. Call my train together.—  
Degenerate bastard, I'll not trouble thee.  
Yet have I left a daughter.

**GONERIL**

You strike my people, and your disordered rabble  
255 Make servants of their betters.

*Enter ALBANY*

**LEAR**

Woe that too late repents!—  
[*To ALBANY*] O sir, are you come?  
Is it your will? Speak, sir.—Prepare my horses.

*Exit attendant*

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

**ALBANY**

Pray, sir, be patient.

**LEAR**

[*To GONERIL*] Detested kite, thou liest!  
My train are men of choice and rarest parts  
265 That all particulars of duty know  
And in the most exact regard support  
The worships of their name. O most small fault,  
How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show,  
That, like an engine, wrenched my frame of nature  
270 From the fixed place, drew from heart all love,  
And added to the gall! O Lear, Lear, Lear!  
[*strikes his head*]  
Beat at this gate that let thy folly in  
And thy dear judgment out!—Go, go, my people.

**LEAR**

I want to learn who I am. The evidence given to me by my kingly nature, my knowledge, and my reason tries to falsely persuade me that I have daughters.

**FOOL**

Daughters who will turn you into an obedient father.

**LEAR**

[*To GONERIL*] What's your name, dear lady?

**GONERIL**

Sir, this pretended astonishment of yours seems very similar to your other recent pranks. Please try to understand my purpose. You are old and respected, so try to be wise too. You're keeping a hundred knights and squires here—men so disorderly, vulgar, and bold that our court has become infected with their manners and now seems like a cheap, rowdy inn. Their gluttony  and lust make this place feel more like a tavern or a brothel than an honored palace. It's so shameful that it requires immediate action. Therefore it's my desire—and if you won't do it when I ask politely, then I'll do it myself by force—that you reduce the number of knights in your entourage a little. Keep the ones who are older, who suit your advanced age, and who know their proper place—as well as yours.

 In the original text, Shakespeare alludes to Epicurus, an ancient Greek philosopher who emphasized the importance of pleasure.

**LEAR**

Darkness and devils!

[*To his attendants*] Saddle my horses. Call my knights together.

[*To GONERIL*] I won't trouble you any more, you worthless bastard. I still have one true daughter left.

**GONERIL**

You strike my servants, and your disorderly rabble of knights treats their superiors like servants.

*ALBANY enters.*

**LEAR**

[*To GONERIL*] You'll regret this, but by then it'll be too late!

[*To ALBANY*] Oh, sir, are you here? Have you come to me?  
Speak, sir.

[*To an attendant*] Prepare my horses.

*An attendant exits.*

Ingatitude is a cold-hearted devil, and it's always at its ugliest when it appears in an ungrateful child. It's more hideous than a sea monster!

**ALBANY**

Sir, please be patient.

**LEAR**

[*To GONERIL*] You hateful vulture, you lie! My knights are men of excellent qualities and accomplishments, and they perfectly do their duty and live up to their honorable reputation. Oh, how ugly did Cordelia's small flaw seem to me! And now it has tortured me and broken my body, sucking the love from my heart and replacing it with bitterness! Oh Lear, Lear, Lear! [*Striking himself on the head*] Let me beat at this gate that let precious wisdom go out and foolishness come in!

[*To his attendants*] Go, go, my people.

**ALBANY**

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

**LEAR**

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

*Exeunt LEAR, FOOL, KENT, FIRST KNIGHT and the other attendants*

**ALBANY**

Now gods that we adore, whereof comes this?

**GONERIL**

295 Never afflict yourself to know more of it,  
But let his disposition have that scope  
That dotage gives it.

*Enter LEAR and FOOL*

**LEAR**

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

**ALBANY**

300 What's the matter, sir?

**LEAR**

I'll tell thee.  
*[To GONERIL]* Life and death! I am ashamed  
That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus,  
That these hot tears which break from me perforce  
305 Should make thee worth them. Blasts and fogs upon thee!  
Th' untended woundings of a father's curse  
Pierce every sense about thee! Old fond eyes,  
Beweep this cause again, I'll pluck ye out  
And cast you, with the waters that you loose,  
310 To temper clay. Yea, is 't come to this?  
Ha? 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  
She'll flay thy wolvish visage. Thou shalt find  
315 That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think  
I have cast off for ever. Thou shalt, I warrant thee.

*Exit LEAR*

**GONERIL**

Do you mark that, my lord?

**ALBANY**

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

**GONERIL**

320 Pray you, content.  
Come, sire, no more.—What, Oswald, ho!

**ALBANY**

My lord, I'm innocent and ignorant of whatever it is that's  
angered you.

**LEAR**

That may be true, my lord. Now hear me, Nature, dear  
goddess, hear me! If you had intended for this woman to  
bear children, then change your purpose for her. Make her  
womb sterile, and dry it up so that no baby will ever emerge  
from her hateful body and honor her. But if she must give  
birth, then give her a spiteful child, so it might live to be a  
perverse, unnatural torment to her. May it give her wrinkles  
in her youth, and carve lines in her cheeks from so many  
falling tears. Turn all her motherly care and nurturing into  
mockery and hatred, so she may feel . . . so she may feel how  
an ungrateful child is sharper than a serpent's tooth.

*[To his attendants]* Now let's leave this place!

*LEAR, the FOOL, KENT, the FIRST KNIGHT, and the other  
attendant knights exit.*

**ALBANY**

By the gods, what caused all this?

**GONERIL**

Don't trouble yourself about it. Just let him be the foolish  
old man that he is in his senility.

*LEAR and the FOOL enter.*

**LEAR**

What, fifty of my knights dismissed at a clap of your hands?  
After only two weeks?

**ALBANY**

What's the matter, sir?

**LEAR**

I'll tell you.

*[To GONERIL]* By life and death! I'm ashamed that you have  
the power to upset me like this, and that these hot tears  
that spring forth against my will reveal that I care enough  
about you to shed them. May pain and sickness strike you!  
May you feel all the incurable pains a father's curse can  
inflict! If these old foolish eyes weep again because of you,  
I'll pluck them out and throw them to the ground so their  
wet tears can water the dirt. Has it really come to this? Has  
it? Then so be it. I have another daughter, who I'm sure is  
kind and hospitable. When she hears what you've done,  
she'll rip up your wolfish face with her fingernails. Then  
you'll find that I can again take up the power you thought I  
had cast off forever. I will, I promise you.

*LEAR exits.*

**GONERIL**

Did you hear all that, my lord?

**ALBANY**

Goneril, I can't be anything but biased in your favor  
because of my great love for you—

**GONERIL**

Please, be quiet and don't worry. No more protests, sir.

*[to FOOL]* You, sir, more knave than fool, after your master.

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

*Exit FOOL*

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

**ALBANY**  
Well, you may fear too far.

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

*Enter OSWALD the steward*

**OSWALD**  
Here, madam.

**GONERIL**  
How now, Oswald?  
345 What, have you writ that letter to my sister?

**OSWALD**  
Ay, madam.

**GONERIL**  
Take you some company, and away to horse.  
Inform her full of my particular fear,  
350 And thereto add such reasons of your own  
As may compact it more. Get you gone  
And hasten your return.

*Exit OSWALD*

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

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

**GONERIL**  
360 Nay, then—

*[To her servant]* Hey, Oswald, come here!

*[To the FOOL]* And you, sir, who are more a villain than a fool, run after your master.

**FOOL**  
Uncle Lear, uncle Lear, wait and take your fool with you. A fox, when you've caught her--and such a daughter--would certainly both be slaughtered. If my fool's cap is worth trading for a noose, so the fool follows you.

*The FOOL exits.*

**GONERIL**  
This man has had good advice—a hundred knights! Yes, it's safe and prudent to let him keep a hundred knights around, so that every time he has an outburst, a dream, a change of mood, a complaint, or something that upsets him, he has a hundred swords to back up his senile whims and violently force us to accept them!

*[To her servant]* Oswald, I say! Where is he?

**ALBANY**  
You might be overly nervous about this.

**GONERIL**  
It's better to be too nervous than too trusting. Let me always get rid of what frightens me, rather than risk being hurt by it. I've written to my sister and told her what he's said. If she welcomes him and his hundred knights after I've described his unwillingness to behave—

*OSWALD enters.*

**OSWALD**  
Here I am, madam.

**GONERIL**  
How are you, Oswald? Have you written that letter to my sister yet?

**OSWALD**  
Yes, madam.

**GONERIL**  
Then take some men with you and ride off to deliver it. Tell her about my specific fears, and add details of your own to back them up. Now get going, and hurry back.

*OSWALD exits.*

No, no, my lord, I'm not condemning your mild gentleness in dealing with my father. But—if you'll excuse me for saying so—you should be criticized much more for lacking wisdom than be praised for being misguidedly gentle.

**ALBANY**  
I can't tell how far ahead you can see, or how deeply you can perceive. But often we break something in trying to fix it.

**GONERIL**  
No, but then—

**ALBANY**

Well, well, th' event.

*Exeunt***ALBANY**

All right, all right. We'll see what happens.

*They exit.*

## Act 1, Scene 5

### Shakespeare

*Enter LEAR, KENT disguised, and FOOL***LEAR**

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

5

**KENT**

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

*Exit KENT***FOOL**

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

**LEAR**

10 Ay, boy.

**FOOL**

Then, I prithee, be merry. Thy wit shall ne'er go slipshod.

**LEAR**

Ha, ha, ha!

**FOOL**

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

**LEAR**

Why, what canst thou tell, my boy?

**FOOL**

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

**LEAR**

20 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**

25 Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell?

### Shakescleare Translation

*LEAR, The FOOL, and KENT (in disguise) enter.***LEAR**

[To KENT, giving him a letter] Go ahead of me to Gloucester, and give this letter to Regan. Don't tell her anything or answer her questions about the letter. If you don't go fast enough, I'll get there before you.

**KENT**

My lord, I won't sleep until I've delivered your letter.

*KENT exits.***FOOL**

If a man's brains were in his feet, wouldn't they be in danger of chilblains  ?

 "Kibes"--or chilblains--are painful, itching swellings on extremities like the toes, which occur after exposure to the cold.

**LEAR**

Yes, boy.

**FOOL**

Then please cheer up. Your brains won't ever have to wear slippers. Feet with brains would never make this useless journey.

**LEAR**

Ha, ha, ha!

**FOOL**

Your other daughter will treat you kindly, you'll see. Even though she and Goneril are as similar as two crabapples, I can still tell what I can tell.

**LEAR**

Why, what can you tell, my boy?

**FOOL**

That Regan will taste just like Goneril—both of them like sour crabapples. Can you tell me why a man's nose stands in the middle of his face?

**LEAR**

No.

**FOOL**

Why, to keep his eyes separated, so he can see whatever he can't sniff out.

**LEAR**

I did her wrong—

**FOOL**

Can you tell me how an oyster makes his shell?

**LEAR**

No.

**FOOL**

Nor I neither. But I can tell why a snail has a house.

**LEAR**

Why?

**FOOL**

Why, to put 's head in—not to give it away to his  
30 daughters and leave his horns without a case.

**LEAR**

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

**FOOL**

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

**LEAR**

35 Because they are not eight?

**FOOL**

Yes indeed. Thou wouldest make a good fool.

**LEAR**

To take 't again perforce—Monster ingratitude!

**FOOL**

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

**LEAR**

40 How's that?

**FOOL**

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

**LEAR**

O, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven!  
I would not be mad.

45 Keep me in temper. I would not be mad.

*Enter a GENTLEMAN*

How now? Are the horses ready?

**GENTLEMAN**

Ready, my lord.

**LEAR**

Come, boy.

*Exeunt LEAR and GENTLEMAN*

**FOOL**

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

*Exit*

**LEAR**

No.

**FOOL**

Me neither. But I can tell you why a snail carries its house.

**LEAR**

Why?

**FOOL**

Why, to keep himself dry. And then he can't give his house away to his daughters and leave himself without a place to go.

**LEAR**

*[To himself]* I will forget my fatherly feelings. I was such a kind father!

*[To FOOL]* Are my horses ready?

**FOOL**

Your attendant asses are getting them. There's a pretty reason why the constellation Pleiades has only seven stars.

**LEAR**

Because it doesn't have eight?

**FOOL**

Yes indeed. You would make a good fool.

**LEAR**

I could have taken back my kingdom by force. What monstrous ingratitude!

**FOOL**

Uncle, if you were my fool, I'd have you beaten for getting old before your time.

**LEAR**

How's that?

**FOOL**

You shouldn't have gotten old until you'd also gotten wise.

**LEAR**

Oh, don't let me go crazy, not crazy, sweet God! I don't want to go crazy. Keep me sane. I don't want to go crazy.

*A GENTLEMAN enters.*

Well, are the horses ready?

**GENTLEMAN**

Ready, my lord.

**LEAR**

Come on, boy.

*LEAR and the GENTLEMAN exit.*

**FOOL**

Any girl who laughs at my departure won't be a virgin for long—not unless men are all castrated.

*He exits.*

## Act 2, Scene 1

### Shakespeare

*Enter EDMUND the bastard and CURAN, severally*

**EDMUND**

Save thee, Curan.

**CURAN**

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

**EDMUND**

5 How comes that?

**CURAN**

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

**EDMUND**

Not I. Pray you, what are they?

**CURAN**

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

**EDMUND**

Not a word.

**CURAN**

You may do then in time. Fare you well, sir.

*Exit CURAN*

**EDMUND**

The duke be here tonight? The better—best!  
15 This weaves itself perforce into my business.  
My father hath set guard to take my brother.  
And I have one thing, of a queasy question,  
Which I must act. Briefness and fortune, work!—  
Brother, a word. Descend, brother, I say.

*Enter EDGAR*

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

**EDGAR**

I am sure on 't, not a word.

**EDMUND**

I hear my father coming. Pardon me.  
30 In cunning I must draw my sword upon you.  
Draw. Seem to defend yourself. Now quit you well.—  
[loudly] Yield! Come before my father. Light, ho! Here!  
[aside to EDGAR] Fly, brother, fly.  
[loudly]  
35 Torches, torches!  
[aside to EDGAR] So, farewell.

### Shakescleare Translation

*EDMUND and CURAN enter from different directions.*

**EDMUND**

Hello, Curan. God bless you.

**CURAN**

And you, sir. I've seen your father recently, and I told him that the Duke of Cornwall and the Duchess Regan will be staying here with him tonight.

**EDMUND**

Why is that?

**CURAN**

I don't know. Have you heard the news from abroad? I mean the whispered rumors, since that's all they are right now.

**EDMUND**

No, but please tell me. What are they?

**CURAN**

You haven't heard that there might be a war soon between the Dukes of Cornwall and Albany?

**EDMUND**

Not at all.

**CURAN**

You may soon. Farewell, sir.

*CURAN exits.*

**EDMUND**

The duke will be here tonight? This is even better—in fact, it's the very best! This can be woven into my plan. My father is waiting to catch Edgar in the act of plotting against him, and I still have one risky action to take. May swift action and good fortune make me succeed! Brother, could I have a word with you? Come down, brother, I say.

*EDGAR enters.*

My father is looking for you. Oh, sir, flee this place. Someone has spied out your hiding place. Leave now, while you have the cover of darkness. Have you said anything criticizing the Duke of Cornwall? He's coming here—rushing here tonight, and Regan is with him. Have you said anything against the Duke of Albany, his enemy? Consider carefully.

**EDGAR**

I'm sure of it, not a word.

**EDMUND**

I hear my father coming. Pardon me. We must pretend to fight now. Draw your sword. Pretend to defend yourself. Now play your role convincingly. [Loudly] Give up! I'll bring you before my father. Hey, bring in some light! Here!

[To EDGAR so that so only he can hear] Run, brother, run.

[Loudly] Torches, bring torches!

[To EDGAR, so that only he can hear] Farewell, then.

*Exit EDGAR*

Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion  
Of my more fierce endeavor.  
[cuts his own arm]  
40 I have seen drunkards  
Do more than this in sport.— Father, father!—  
Stop, stop!—No help?

*Enter GLOUCESTER and servants with torches***GLOUCESTER**

Now Edmund, where's the villain?

**EDMUND**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

But where is he?

**EDMUND**

Look, sir, I bleed.

**GLOUCESTER**

Where is the villain, Edmund?

**EDMUND**

50 Fled this way, sir, when by no means he could—

**GLOUCESTER**

Pursue him, ho! Go after.

*Exeunt some servants*

"By no means" what?

**EDMUND**

Persuade me to the murder of your lordship,  
But that I told him the revenging gods  
55 'Gainst parricides did all the thunder bend,  
Spoke with how manifold and strong a bond  
The child was bound to th' father. Sir, in fine,  
Seeing how loathly opposite I stood  
To his unnatural purpose, in fell motion,  
60 With his prepared sword he charges home  
My unprovided body, latched mine arm.  
And when he saw my best alarumed spirits,  
Bold in the quarrel's right, roused to the encounter,  
Or whether ghasted by the noise I made,  
65 Full suddenly he fled.

**GLOUCESTER**

Let him fly far.  
Not in this land shall he remain uncaught.  
And found—dispatch. The noble duke my master,  
My worthy arch and patron, comes tonight.  
70 By his authority I will proclaim it  
That he which finds him shall deserve our thanks,  
Bringing the murderous coward to the stake.  
He that conceals him, death.

**EDMUND**

When I dissuaded him from his intent,  
75 And found him pight to do it, with cursed speech  
I threatened to discover him. He replied,  
"Thou unpossessing bastard! Dost thou think  
If I would stand against thee, would the reposal  
Of any trust, virtue, or worth in thee  
80 Make thy words faid? No. What I should deny—  
As this I would, ay, though thou didst produce  
My very character—I'd turn it all

*EDGAR exits.*

[To himself] Some blood on me would give the impression  
that I fought more fiercely. [He cuts his own arm] I've seen  
drunkards do more than this as a joke.

[To GLOUCESTER] Father, father! Stop, stop! Will no one  
help me?

*GLOUCESTER enters with servants carrying torches.***GLOUCESTER**

Now, Edmund, where's the villain?

**EDMUND**

He was standing here in the dark with his sharp sword out,  
mumbling some wicked spells, asking the moon to give him  
good luck in his dark deeds—

**GLOUCESTER**

But where is he?

**EDMUND**

Look, sir, I'm bleeding.

**GLOUCESTER**

Where is the villain, Edmund?

**EDMUND**

He fled that way, sir, when he couldn't—

**GLOUCESTER**

After him, now! Go.

*Some servants exit.*

"When he couldn't" what?

**EDMUND**

When he couldn't persuade me to murder you, my lord. I  
told him that the angry gods unleash all their thunder on  
those who kill their fathers, and reminded him of the  
strong, sacred bond between a child and his father. Sir, in  
the end he saw how firmly opposed I was to his monstrous  
plan, and with a deadly thrust of his sword, he lunged at my  
unprotected body and pierced my arm. But when he saw  
my spirits rally and, as I prepared to fight, my boldness in  
defending my righteous cause, he suddenly ran away.  
Otherwise he was scared off by my shouting.

**GLOUCESTER**

Let him run far. He won't escape for long in this country.  
And once he's found, he'll be executed. The Duke of  
Cornwall, my noble master and patron, is coming tonight.  
I'll proclaim this by his authority: that whoever finds Edgar  
and helps bring the murderous coward to justice will be  
rewarded. And if anyone conceals Edgar, they will die.

**EDMUND**

When I tried to persuade him not to kill you, and found him  
still determined to do it, I angrily threatened to expose him.  
He replied, "You penniless bastard! Do you think that if I  
were to testify against you, anyone would put any trust,  
value, or worth in your words? You think they'd take your  
word over mine? No. I'd deny everything—yes, even if you  
produced evidence in my own handwriting—I'd turn it all  
against you, making it into evidence of your malice and  
treachery. And you must think people are stupid if you think

To thy suggestion, plot, and damnèd practice.  
And thou must make a dullard of the world,  
If they not thought the profits of my death  
Were very pregnant and potential spirits  
To make thee seek it."

85

*Tucket within***GLOUCESTER**

O strange and fastened villain!  
Would he deny his letter, said he? I never got him.—  
Hark, the duke's trumpets. I know not why he comes.  
All ports I'll bar. The villain shall not 'scape.  
The duke must grant me that. Besides, his picture  
I will send far and near, that all the kingdom  
May have the due note of him.— And of my land,  
Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means  
To make thee capable.

90

95

*Enter the Duke of CORNWALL, REGAN, and attendants***CORNWALL**

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

**REGAN**

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

100

**GLOUCESTER**

O madam, my old heart is cracked, it's cracked.

**REGAN**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**REGAN**

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

105

**GLOUCESTER**

I know not, madam. 'Tis too bad, too bad.

**EDMUND**

Yes, madam, he was of that consort.

**REGAN**

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

110

115

**CORNWALL**

Nor I, assure thee, Regan.—  
Edmund, I hear that you have shown your father  
A childlike office.

**EDMUND**

It was my duty, sir.

**GLOUCESTER**

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

120

they wouldn't realize everything you would gain if I were to die, and thereby realize that you have motive to try to frame me."

*Trumpets play offstage.***GLOUCESTER**

Oh, that monstrous, incurable villain! He would deny his letter, he said? Surely I never fathered him. Listen, there are the duke's trumpets. I don't know why he's come here. I'll shut the town gates and keep any ships from leaving our ports. The villain won't escape. The duke must agree with me about that. I'll also send his picture near and far, so that all the kingdom will be able to look for him. And about my lands, you loyal and loving boy, I'll find a way to make you my legitimate heir.

*The Duke of CORNWALL, REGAN, and attendants enter.***CORNWALL**

How are you, my noble friend? Ever since I came here-- which was only just recently--I've been hearing strange news.

**REGAN**

If it's true, no punishment could be harsh enough for the offender. How are you doing, my lord?

**GLOUCESTER**

Oh, madam, my old heart is broken, it's broken.

**REGAN**

What, did my father's godson really try to kill you? The one whom my father named--your son, Edgar?

**GLOUCESTER**

Oh, lady, lady, it's so shameful that I wish I could hide it

**REGAN**

Wasn't he a companion of those unruly knights who tend to my father?

**GLOUCESTER**

I don't know, madam. It's too bad, too bad.

**EDMUND**

Yes, madam, he was friendly with those knights.

**REGAN**

It's no surprise then that they had a bad influence on him. They must have put him up to killing his father, so they could loot the estate once Edgar inherited it. Just tonight I got a letter from my sister, telling me all about them—and warning me that if they should come to stay at my house, I shouldn't be there.

**CORNWALL**

I won't be there either, Regan, I assure you. Edmund, I hear that you have been a true and loving son to your father.

**EDMUND**

It was my duty, sir.

**GLOUCESTER**

He exposed Edgar's plans, and got this wound trying to stop him.

**CORNWALL**

Is he pursued?

**GLOUCESTER**

Ay, my good lord.

**CORNWALL**

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

**EDMUND**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

[to C<sup>R</sup>ONWALL] For him I thank your grace.

**CORNWALL**

You know not why we came to visit you—

**REGAN**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

145 I serve you, madam.  
Your graces are right welcome.

*Flourish. Exeunt*

**CORNWALL**

Is Edgar being pursued?

**GLOUCESTER**

Yes, my good lord.

**CORNWALL**

If he's caught, we won't have to worry about him ever causing trouble again. Use my power and authority however you like in order to help your cause. As for you, Edmund, your virtue and obedience have been clear throughout this whole affair, so you will serve me from now on. I need people as trustworthy as you are. You are the first one I'll employ.

**EDMUND**

I will serve you truly and faithfully sir, if nothing else.

**GLOUCESTER**

[to C<sup>R</sup>ONWALL] Your Grace, I thank you for honoring him like this.

**CORNWALL**

You don't know why we came to visit you—

**REGAN**

And why we came in this way, unexpectedly and traveling through the dark-eyed night. Noble Gloucester, there are some weighty matters that we could use your advice about. My father has written to me, and so has my sister, both of them describing an argument between them. I thought it would be best if I dealt with this away from my home, as the king might be on his way there. The messengers from Goneril and the king are here, waiting to be sent with a response. So, our good old friend, give us some badly needed advice about this business. We need to act immediately.

**GLOUCESTER**

I'm at your service, madam. Your Graces are welcome here.

*Trumpets play. They all exit.*

## Act 2, Scene 2

### Shakespeare

Enter KENT disguised and OSWALD the steward, severally

**OSWALD**

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

**KENT**

Ay.

**OSWALD**

Where may we set our horses?

**KENT**

I' th' mire.

**OSWALD**

5 Prithee, if thou lovest me, tell me.

### Shakescleare Translation

KENT (in disguise) and OSWALD enter from different directions.

**OSWALD**

Good morning to you, friend. Are a servant in this house?

**KENT**

Yes.

**OSWALD**

Where can we stable our horses?

**KENT**

In the swamp.

**OSWALD**

Please, my friend, tell me.

**KENT**

I love thee not.

**OSWALD**

Why, then, I care not for thee.

**KENT**

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

**OSWALD**

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

**KENT**

Fellow, I know thee.

**OSWALD**

What dost thou know me for?

**KENT**

A knave, a rascal, an eater of broken meats; a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound, 15 filthy, worsted-stocking knave; a lily-livered, action-taking knave; a whoreson, glass-gazing, super-serviceable finical rogue; one-trunk-inheriting slave; one that wouldest be a bawd in way of good service; and art nothing but the composition of a knave, beggar, coward, pander, and the son and heir of a 20 mongrel bitch; one whom I will beat into clamorous whining if thou deniest the least syllable of thy addition.

**OSWALD**

Why, what a monstrous fellow art thou, thus to rail on 25 one that is neither known of thee nor knows thee!

**KENT**

What a brazen-faced varlet art thou to deny thou knowest me! Is it two days ago since I tripped up thy heels and beat thee before the king? Draw, you rogue, for though it be night yet the moon shines. I'll make a 30 sop o' th' moonshine of you. [draws his sword] Draw, you whoreson cullionly barber-monger, 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 part against the 35 royalty of her father. Draw, you rogue, or I'll so carbonado your shanks. Draw, you rascal! Come your ways.

**OSWALD**

Help, ho! Murder! Help!

**KENT**

Strike, you slave. Stand, rogue. Stand, you neat slave, strike! [strikes OSWALD]

**OSWALD**

40 Help, ho! Murder, murder!

*Enter EDMUND the bastard with his rapier drawn, the Duke of CORNWALL, the Duchess REGAN, GLOUCESTER, and servants*

**EDMUND**

How now? What's the matter? Part.

**KENT**

I'm not your friend.

**OSWALD**

Well then. If you're going to be like that, I don't care for you either.

**KENT**

If I had you between my teeth, I'd make you care.

**OSWALD**

Why are you treating me like this? I don't know you.

**KENT**

But I know you, fellow.

**OSWALD**

What do you know about me then?

**KENT**

I know that you're a villain and a rascal; that you eat kitchen scraps; and that you're filthy, arrogant, shallow, and shameless. You're a cheapskate servant in dirty stockings; a cowardly villain who loves to sue people; a bastard; a narcissistic, effeminate rogue; and a villain with so few possessions, you could fit them all in one trunk. You'd play the pimp to please your masters. You're nothing but a combination of villain, beggar, coward, pimp, and the son and heir of a mangy bitch, and I'll beat you until you whine if you try to deny even a single one of my words.

**OSWALD**

What a monstrous fellow you are, that you would slander someone you don't know, and who doesn't know you!

**KENT**

And what a bold-faced servant you are to deny that you know me! Wasn't it just two days ago that I tripped you and beat you up in front of the king? Draw your sword, you scoundrel. It might be nighttime, but there's enough moonlight to fight by. I'll stab you so many times you can sop up the moonlight through your holes! [Drawing his sword] Draw, you villainous, preening son-of-a-bitch, draw!

**OSWALD**

Away with you! I want nothing to do with you.

**KENT**

Draw your sword, you rascal. You're here with a letter plotting against the king, and you take the side of that vain puppet Goneril against her royal father. Draw your sword, you scoundrel, or I'll slice you up like a hog. Draw, you rascal! Come on and fight!

**OSWALD**

Help, hey! Murder! Help!

**KENT**

Fight, you rogue. Stand still, scoundrel. Fight, you dainty villain, fight! [He strikes OSWALD]

**OSWALD**

Help, hey! Murder, murder!

*EDMUND enters with his sword drawn, followed by the Duke of CORNWALL, the Duchess REGAN, GLOUCESTER, and servants.*

**EDMUND**

What's going on? What's the matter? Stop fighting!

**KENT**

[to EDMUND] With you, goodman boy, if you please. Come, I'll flesh ye. Come on, young master.

**GLOUCESTER**

Weapons, arms? What's the matter here?

**CORNWALL**

45 Keep peace, upon your lives.  
He dies that strikes again. What is the matter?

**REGAN**

The messengers from our sister and the king.

**CORNWALL**

What is your difference? Speak.

**OSWALD**

I am scarce in breath, my lord.

**KENT**

50 No marvel, you have so bestirred your valor. You cowardly rascal, nature disclaims in thee. A tailor made thee.

**CORNWALL**

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

**KENT**

Ay, a tailor, sir. A stone-cutter or painter could not  
55 have made him so ill though they had been but two years  
o' th' trade.

**CORNWALL**

Speak yet. How grew your quarrel?

**OSWALD**

This ancient ruffian, sir, whose life I have spared at  
suit of his gray beard—

**KENT**

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

**CORNWALL**

Peace, sirrah!

65 You beastly knave, know you no reverence?

**KENT**

Yes, sir, but anger hath a privilege.

**CORNWALL**

Why art thou angry?

**KENT**

[To EDMUND] I'll take you on then, boy , if you like! Come on, I'll strike first. Come on, young master.

 In the original text, Kent uses the term "goodman"—a form of address for men of lower social rank—in order to insult Edmund.

**GLOUCESTER**

Swords out? What's the matter here?

**CORNWALL**

Calm down, I command you. The next person to strike again will die. What is the matter?

**REGAN**

These two are the messengers from my sister and the king.

**CORNWALL**

What are you fighting about? Speak.

**OSWALD**

I'm out of breath, my lord.

**KENT**

No wonder, with all your brave exertions. You cowardly rascal, Nature is ashamed to admit that she created you. A tailor made you .

 Kent is insulting Oswald by saying he is artificial—someone who was made (tailored) to "fit" his master rather than a true, natural person in his own right.

**CORNWALL**

You're a strange fellow. How could a tailor make a man?

**KENT**

Yes, a tailor, sir. A sculptor or a painter could never have made something that awful, even if they had only been practicing their craft for two years.

**CORNWALL**

But tell me: what are you fighting about?

**OSWALD**

This old ruffian, sir, whose life I spared because of my respect for the elderly—

**KENT**

[To OSWALD] You bastard, you're a "z," an unnecessary letter!

[To CORNWALL] My lord, if you'll allow me, I'll grind this coarse villain into powder and plaster the bathroom walls with him.

[To OSWALD] So you spared my life because I'm old, did you, you puppy?

**CORNWALL**

Quiet, sir! Don't you have any respect, you beast?

**KENT**

Yes, sir, but not when I'm angry.

**CORNWALL**

Why are you angry?

**KENT**

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

**CORNWALL**

Why, art thou mad, old fellow?

**GLOUCESTER**

[to KENT] How fell you out?  
Say that.

**KENT**

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

**CORNWALL**

Why dost thou call him "knave?" What's his offense?

**KENT**

His countenance likes me not.

**CORNWALL**

No more perchance does mine, nor his, nor hers.

**KENT**

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

**CORNWALL**

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

**KENT**

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

**CORNWALL**

What mean't 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  
110 a plain accent was a plain knave, which for my part I  
will not be, though I should win your displeasure to  
entreat me to 't.

**CORNWALL**

[to OSWALD] What was th' offense you gave him?

**KENT**

I'm angry that a dishonorable servant like this should wear a sword like a gentleman. Smiling scoundrels like him undo the holy bonds of love between people, gnawing like rats at knots that are too intricate to untie. They encourage only the worst parts of their masters' personality, bringing oil to the fire of their anger and snow to the coldness of their cruelty. They're like weathervanes, turning whichever way the wind is blowing, never taking a stand for anything true, and ignorantly following their masters like dogs.

[To OSWALD] Damn your ugly face! Are you smiling at my words like I'm a fool? You goose, if I found you on Salisbury Plain<sup>3</sup>, I'd send you cackling all the way back to Camelot.

<sup>3</sup> Here, Kent refers to an expanse of land north of Salisbury, and later to mythical King Arthur's court, Camelot.

**CORNWALL**

What, are you crazy, old man?

**GLOUCESTER**

[To KENT] How did this fight begin? Tell us that.

**KENT**

No two opposites could hate each other more than myself and that scoundrel.

**CORNWALL**

Why do you call him "scoundrel?" What crime has he committed?

**KENT**

I don't like his face.

**CORNWALL**

But perhaps you don't like mine either, or his, or hers.

**KENT**

Sir, it's my job to be honest, and I've seen better faces in my day than those I see standing on the shoulders around me right now.

**CORNWALL**

Look at this fellow, who gets praised for his honesty and then acts rude and insolent, using his "bluntness" as a cover for his cruelty. He cannot flatter, not he! He is honest and blunt, and so must speak the truth. And if people accept it, well and good. But if not, he's telling the truth and they just can't handle it! I know this kind of villain, whose honesty hides more cunning and corruption than twenty brown-nosed servants who can only bow and flatter.

**KENT**

Sir, truthfully, sincerely, if you'll give the approval of your magnificent face, which glows with the radiance of Phoebe<sup>4</sup>' forehead—

<sup>4</sup> Phoebe was another name for the ancient Greek god Apollo when he was identified with the sun.

**CORNWALL**

What do you mean by this?

**KENT**

I'm changing my manner of speech, since you disliked my plain words so much. Sir, I know that I'm no flatterer. If a man tricked you with plain language, then he's just a plain scoundrel. But I'm not like that, though it's tempting to try to anger you.

**CORNWALL**

[To OSWALD] How did you offend him?

**OSWALD**

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

**KENT**

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

**CORNWALL**

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

**KENT**

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

**CORNWALL**

135 Fetch forth the stocks!  
 As I have life and honor, 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**

140 Sir, being his knave, I will.

**CORNWALL**

This is a fellow of the selfsame color  
 Our sister speaks of.—Come, bring away the stocks!

*Stocks brought out*

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**CORNWALL**

I'll answer that.

**REGAN**

My sister may receive it much more worse  
 To have her gentleman abused, assaulted  
 155 For following her affairs.—Put in his legs.

*KENT is put in the stocks*

**OSWALD**

I never did. Recently his master the king felt like striking me because of a misunderstanding, and then this man here took the king's side, encouraging his anger, and tripped me from behind. When I was down on the ground he insulted me, slandered me, and built himself up so he would seem like a worthy man to the king. The king then praised him for his courage in assaulting me, even though I never tried to fight back at all. And just now, excited by remembering his last "mighty battle" with me, he drew his sword and attacked me again.

**KENT**

These sorts of cowardly villains always boast like Ajax 5.

5 In Greek mythology, the warrior Ajax, who fought at Troy, was a braggart.

**CORNWALL**

Bring out the stocks! 6 We'll teach you, you stubborn old rascal, you arrogant geezer.

6 The stocks were a punishment for criminals. They consisted of a wooden frame with holes for the ankles, and often the wrists as well. The offender would then be locked inside and left there to be publicly humiliated.

**KENT**

Sir, I'm too old to learn. Don't put me in the stocks. I serve the king, who sent me here to you. You'll be insulting my master's royal and personal honor if you put his messenger in the stocks.

**CORNWALL**

Bring the stocks! I swear on my life and honor, he'll be locked up until noon.

**REGAN**

Until noon? Until night, my lord--and all night too.

**KENT**

Why, madam, you wouldn't treat me so badly even if I was your father's dog.

**REGAN**

But you're his villainous servant, sir. So I will.

**CORNWALL**

This is exactly the kind of fellow your sister warned us about.—Come on, bring in the stocks!

*The stocks are brought out.*

**GLOUCESTER**

Let me ask you not to do this, your Grace. The man has done wrong, and the good king his master will punish him for it. But the kind of punishment you intend for him is more appropriate for petty thieves than for royal servants. His master, the king, will surely be insulted when he finds out that you value him so little, locking up and humiliating his messenger like this.

**CORNWALL**

I'll take responsibility for it.

**REGAN**

My sister may be more insulted to learn that her messenger was abused and assaulted just for following her orders.

*[To servants] Put his legs in the stocks.*

*KENT is put in the stocks.*

**CORNWALL**

[*To GLOUCESTER*] Come, my good lord, away.

*Exeunt all but GLOUCESTER and KENT*

**GLOUCESTER**

I am sorry for thee, friend. 'Tis the duke's pleasure,  
Whose disposition, all the world well knows,  
Will not be rubbed nor stopped. I'll entreat for thee.

**KENT**

160 Pray you do not, sir. I have watched and traveled hard.  
Some time I shall sleep out. The rest I'll whistle.  
A good man's fortune may grow out at heels.  
Give you good morrow.

**GLOUCESTER**

The duke's to blame in this. 'Twill be ill taken.

*Exit GLOUCESTER*

**KENT**

165 Good King, that must approve the common saw,  
Thou out of heaven's benediction comest  
To the warm sun.  
[*takes out a letter*]  
Approach, thou beacon to this underglobe,  
170 That by thy comfortable beams I may  
Peruse this letter. Nothing almost sees miracles  
But misery. I know 'tis from Cordelia,  
Who hath most fortunately been informed  
Of my obscurèd course and [*reads the letter*] "shall  
175 find time  
From this enormous state, seeking to give  
Losses their remedies." All weary and o'erwatched,  
Take vantage, heavy eyes, not to behold  
This shameful lodging.  
180 Fortune, good night. Smile once more. Turn thy wheel.  
[*sleeps*]

**CORNWALL**

[*To GLOUCESTER*] Come on, my good lord, let's go.

*Everyone except for GLOUCESTER and KENT exits.*

**GLOUCESTER**

I'm sorry for you, friend. It's what the duke wants, and everyone knows that he won't allow even the slightest opposition once he's made up his mind. But I'll try to persuade him to release you.

**KENT**

Please don't, sir. I've been awake and traveling for a long time. I can catch up on sleep while I'm locked up here, and I'll whistle for the rest of the time to entertain myself. Even good men can have their luck wear out. Have a good morning.

**GLOUCESTER**

The duke's to blame for this. The king won't be happy about it.

*GLOUCESTER exits.*

**KENT**

Good King Lear, you're just proving the old saying that everything goes from good to bad. [*He takes out a letter*] Rise, sun, and shine on me so I can read this letter. Only those who are miserable are granted miracles. I know that this letter is from Cordelia, who fortunately knows about my attempts to look after the king in this disguise. [*Reading the letter*] She says that she "will have time to fix things now that she's away from the monstrous state of affairs in this country." I'm exhausted, and I've been awake for far too long. I'll take advantage of my fatigue and shut my weary eyes, so I can't see my own humiliating situation. Good night, Fortune. Smile once more. Turn your wheel of fate. [*He falls asleep*]

## Act 2, Scene 3

### Shakespeare

*Enter EDGAR*

**EDGAR**

I heard myself proclaimed,  
And by the happy hollow of a tree  
Escaped the hunt. No port is free, no place  
That guard and most unusual vigilance  
5 Does not attend my taking. Whiles I may 'scape,  
I will preserve myself, and am bethought  
To take the basest and most poorest shape  
That ever penury in contempt of man  
Brought near to beast. My face I'll grime with filth,  
10 Blanket my loins, elf all my hair in knots,  
And with presented nakedness outface  
The winds and persecutions of the sky.  
The country gives me proof and precedent  
Of Bedlam beggars, who with roaring voices  
15 Strike in their numbed and mortified bare arms  
Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary,  
And with this horrible object from low farms,  
Poor pelting villages, sheepcotes, and mills,  
Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers,  
20 Enforce their charity. "Poor Turlygod!" "Poor Tom!"—

### Shakescleare Translation

*EDGAR enters.*

**EDGAR**

I heard myself declared an outlaw, and I was lucky to escape those hunting me by hiding in the trunk of a tree. No port or road is safe for me, and everywhere people are watching and waiting to arrest me. But I'll survive as long as I can avoid being captured. I've decided to disguise myself as the filthiest, lowliest beggar that was ever hated by man. I'll smear my face with dirt, wear a loincloth, make my hair tangled and knotted, and face the wind and bad weather almost naked. I've seen in this country beggars who come from insane asylums, who shriek and stab pins, skewers, nails, and sprigs of rosemary into their numb and deadened arms. With this horrible spectacle, along with their insane curses and occasional prayers, they force lowly farmers and poor villagers to give them alms. "Poor Turlygood!" "Poor Tom!"  they call themselves. That's at least something to be. I'm nothing when I'm known as Edgar.

 These are names of the kinds of beggars in whose image Edgar is disguising himself.

That's something yet. Edgar I nothing am.

*Exit*

*He exits.*

## Act 2, Scene 4

### Shakespeare

*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.

**GENTLEMAN**

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

5

**KENT**

[to *LEAR*] Hail to thee, noble master!

**LEAR**

Ha! Makest thou this shame thy pastime?

**KENT**

No, my lord.

**FOOL**

Ha, ha! Look, he wears cruel garters. Horses are tied  
10 by the heads, dogs and bears by the neck, monkeys by the  
loins, and men by the legs. When a man's over lusty at  
legs, then he wears wooden nether-stocks.

**LEAR**

[to *KENT*] What's he that hath so much thy place mistook  
To set thee here?

15 **KENT**

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

**LEAR**

No.

**KENT**

Yes.

**LEAR**

No, I say.

20 **KENT**

I say "Yea."

**LEAR**

No, no, they would not.

**KENT**

Yes, they have.

**LEAR**

By Jupiter, I swear "No."

**KENT**

By Juno, I swear "Ay."

### Shakescleare Translation

*KENT* is in the stocks. *LEAR*, the *FOOL*, and a *GENTLEMAN* enter.

**LEAR**

It's strange that Regan and Cornwall left their home without  
sending back my messenger.

**GENTLEMAN**

I heard that, as of last night, they had no intention of  
leaving and going to stay with Gloucester.

**KENT**

[To *LEAR*] Greetings to you, noble master!

**LEAR**

What! Are you in this humiliating position as a joke?

**KENT**

No, my lord.

**FOOL**

Ha, ha! Look, he's wearing wooden stockings. Horses are tied  
up by their heads, dogs and bears by their necks,  
monkeys by their waists, and men by their legs. When a  
man wants to run, then he must wear stockings like these.

**LEAR**

[To *KENT*] What man misunderstood your role as the king's  
messenger, and locked you up here?

**KENT**

It was a man and a woman: your son-in-law and daughter.

**LEAR**

No.

**KENT**

Yes.

**LEAR**

No, I say.

**KENT**

And I say "yes."

**LEAR**

No, no, they wouldn't.

**KENT**

Yes, they have.

**LEAR**

By Jupiter, I swear "no."

**KENT**

By Juno , I swear "yes."

 Juno was the ancient Roman queen of the gods, and wife to Jupiter.

**LEAR**

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

**KENT**

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

**FOOL**

50 Winter's not gone yet, if the wild geese fly that way.  
Fathers that wear rags  
Do make their children blind.  
But fathers that bear bags  
Shall see their children kind.  
55 Fortune, that arrant whore,  
Ne'er turns the key to th' poor.  
But for all this thou shalt have as many dolors for thy  
daughters as thou canst tell in a year.

**LEAR**

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

**KENT**

With the earl, sir, here within.

**LEAR**

Follow me not. Stay here.

*Exit LEAR*

**GENTLEMAN**

Made you no more offense but what you speak of?

**KENT**

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

**FOOL**

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

**KENT**

Why, Fool?

**FOOL**

70 We'll set thee to school to an ant to teach thee  
there's no laboring i' th' winter. All that follow their

**LEAR**

They wouldn't dare. They couldn't. They wouldn't. It's  
worse than murder to so violently humiliate a king like this.  
Tell me as quickly as you can what you did to deserve this  
punishment—or what made them abuse you like this—  
knowing that you were my messenger.

**KENT**

My lord, I arrived at your son-in-law and daughter's home  
and delivered your Highness's letter. But before I had risen  
from my respectful kneeling position, a stinking messenger  
arrived, out of breath and panting out greetings from his  
mistress Goneril. He didn't care at all about interrupting  
me, and he presented a letter from his lady, which they read  
immediately. Once they understood its contents, they  
summoned their servants and got on their horses to ride off  
straight away. They commanded me to follow them if I  
wanted the pleasure of getting their answer, and they  
glared at me coldly. Once we got here, I met that other  
messenger again, the rude one whom they welcomed while  
scorning me—and he was the very same fellow who was so  
insolent to you recently, your Highness. I had more anger  
than intelligence in me, so I drew my sword against him. He  
then woke up the whole house with his loud and cowardly  
cries. Your son-in-law and daughter decided that my error  
deserves this punishment of being locked so shamefully in  
the stocks here.

**FOOL**

If your daughter Regan and Cornwall are acting like that,  
then your troubles aren't over yet. Fathers who wear rags  
make their children blind to their needs. But fathers with  
bags of gold make their children kind. Fortune, that fickle  
whore, never opens the door to the poor. But despite all  
this, your daughters will give you as many dollars—or  
maybe sorrows—as you can count in a whole year.

**LEAR**

*[To himself]* Oh, how this hysteria  swells up and  
squeezes my heart! Panic, stay back, you choking sorrow.  
You belong in my stomach, not in my head.

*[To KENT]* Where is this daughter of mine?

 *Hysteria was regarded as a traditionally female disease, thought to be caused by a womb wandering up towards the throat. It produced the kind of suffocating feeling that Lear experiences here.*

**KENT**

With the earl, sir, inside the castle.

**LEAR**

Don't follow me. Stay here.

*LEAR exits.*

**GENTLEMAN**

Did you really not commit any worse crime than what you  
told the king?

**KENT**

I committed no crime at all. Why did the king come with  
such a small entourage of knights?

**FOOL**

If they had put you in the stocks for asking that question,  
you would've deserved it.

**KENT**

Why, Fool?

**FOOL**

You should learn from the ant that there's no use in working  
in the winter—no one will work for a master who can't pay

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

80 That sir which serves and seeks for gain,  
And follows but for form,  
Will pack when it begins to rain  
And leave thee in the storm.  
But I will tarry. The fool will stay.

85 And let the wise man fly.  
The knave turns fool that runs away;  
The fool, no knave, perdie.

**KENT**

Where learned you this, Fool?

**FOOL**

Not i' th' stocks, fool.

*Enter LEAR and GLOUCESTER*

**LEAR**

90 Deny to speak with me? They are sick? They are weary?  
They have traveled all the night?—mere fetches, ay!  
The images of revolt and flying off.  
Fetch me a better answer.

**GLOUCESTER**

My dear lord,  
95 You know the fiery quality of the duke,  
How unremoveable and fixed he is  
In his own course.

**LEAR**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

Well, my good lord, I have informed them so.

**LEAR**

"Informed them?" Dost thou understand me, man?

**GLOUCESTER**

Ay, my good lord.

**LEAR**

The king would speak with Cornwall. The dear father  
105 Would with his daughter speak, commands, tends service.  
Are they "informed" of this? My breath and blood!  
"Fiery?" The "fiery" duke? Tell the hot duke that Lear—  
No, but not yet. Maybe he is not well.  
Infirmity doth still neglect all office  
110 Whereto our health is bound. We are not ourselves  
When nature, being oppressed, commands the mind  
To suffer with the body. I'll forbear,  
And am fallen out with my more headier will  
To take the indisposed and sickly fit  
115 For the sound man.  
*[notices KENT again]*  
Death on my state! Wherefore  
Should he sit here? This act persuades me  
That this remotion of the duke and her  
120 Is practice only. Give me my servant forth.  
Go tell the duke and his wife I'd speak with them—  
Now, presently. Bid them come forth and hear me,  
Or at their chamber door I'll beat the drum  
Till it cry sleep to death.

them. Everyone but the blind can see that the king has fallen on bad luck, and even the blind can smell his decaying fortunes. If a huge wheel goes rolling down a hill, don't try to cling to it, or else you'll break your neck. But if you see a wheel going up the hill, let it pull you up after it. When a wise man gives you better advice than this, give me my advice back. I'm a fool dispensing advice, so I want only scoundrels taking it. The man who works only for profit, and puts on a show of loyalty, will pack up when it starts to rain and leave you in the storm. But I will stay. The fool will stay. And let the wise man flee. The servant who runs away becomes a fool, but this fool is no scoundrel, so help me God.

**KENT**

Where did you learn all this, Fool?

**FOOL**

Not in the stocks, fool.

*LEAR and GLOUCESTER enter.*

**LEAR**

They refuse to speak with me? They're sick? They're weary?  
They've traveled all night? These are just excuses! These are  
the signs of rebellion and desertion. Go back and bring me  
a better answer.

**GLOUCESTER**

My dear lord, you know the duke's fiery, stubborn nature,  
and how unshakeable he is once he's made a decision.

**LEAR**

Vengeance, plague, death, and destruction! "Fiery?" What  
"stubborn nature?" Why, Gloucester, Gloucester, I want to  
speak with the Duke of Cornwall and his wife.

**GLOUCESTER**

Well, my good lord, I've informed them of that.

**LEAR**

"Informed them?" Do you understand me, man?

**GLOUCESTER**

Yes, my good lord.

**LEAR**

The king wants to speak with Cornwall. The dear father  
wants to speak with his daughter. He commands that she  
attend to him. Are they "informed" of this? By my breath  
and blood! "Fiery?" The "fiery" duke? Well tell that hot-  
headed duke that Lear . . . But no, not yet. Maybe he's sick.  
Sickness can make us forget the duties that we owe when  
we're healthy. We're not ourselves when illness makes our  
minds suffer along with our bodies. I'll restrain my rage, and  
fight against my fickle temper, which makes me want to  
judge a sick man like a healthy one. *[He notices KENT again]*  
A curse on my kingship! Why should Kent be locked  
up here? His punishment persuades me that the duke and  
Regan's refusal to see me is just trickery. Have my servant  
released. Go tell the duke and his wife that I will speak with  
them—now, immediately. Tell them to come out and listen  
to me, or else I'll beat a drum outside their bedroom door  
until they have to wake up.

**GLOUCESTER**

125 I would have all well betwixt you.

*Exit GLOUCESTER*

**LEAR**

O me, my heart, my rising heart! But down.

**FOOL**

Cry to it, nuncle, as the cockney did to the eels when  
she put 'em i' th' paste alive. She knapped 'em o' th'  
coxcombs with a stick and cried, "Down, wantons, down!"  
130 'Twas her brother that, in pure kindness to his horse,  
buttered his hay.

*Enter the Duke of CORNWALL, REGAN, GLOUCESTER, and servants*

**LEAR**

Good Morrow to you both.

**CORNWALL**

Hail to your grace.

*KENT here set at liberty*

**REGAN**

I am glad to see your highness.

**LEAR**

135 Regan, I think you are. I know what reason  
I have to think so: if thou shouldst not be glad,  
I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb,  
Sepulchring an adulteress.  
[to KENT] Oh, are you free?

140 Some other time for that.

*Exit KENT*

Belovèd Regan,  
Thy sister's naught. O Regan, she hath tied  
Sharp-toothed unkindness, like a vulture, here.  
[indicates his heart]

145 I can scarce speak to thee. Thou'l not believe  
With how depraved a quality— O Regan!

**REGAN**

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

**LEAR**

150 Say, how is that?

**REGAN**

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

**LEAR**

My curses on her!

**REGAN**

O sir, you are old.  
Nature in you stands on the very verge  
Of his confine. You should be ruled and led  
160 By some discretion that discerns your state  
Better than you yourself. Therefore I pray you  
That to our sister you do make return.

**GLOUCESTER**

I want there to be peace between you.

*GLOUCESTER exits.*

**LEAR**

Oh, my heart, my hysterical rising heart! But stay down,  
heart.

**FOOL**

Good, uncle, yell at your heart like the housewife who  
yelled at the live eels she was putting in her pie. She hit  
them on their heads with a stick and cried, "Down, you  
naughty things, stay down!" And her brother wanted to be  
kind to his horse, so he buttered its hay .

 This is another example of well-meaning foolishness, as horses won't eat grease.

*The Duke of CORNWALL, REGAN, GLOUCESTER, and servants enter.*

**LEAR**

Good morning to you both.

**CORNWALL**

Greetings to your Grace.

*KENT is set free.*

**REGAN**

I am glad to see your Highness.

**LEAR**

I believe you are glad, Regan. And I know why I believe you:  
if you weren't glad to see me, then I'd divorce your dead  
mother, since you would be a bastard—no true daughter of  
mine—and I would know she had committed adultery.

[To KENT] Oh, are you free? We'll talk later.

*KENT exits.*

Beloved Regan, your sister Goneril is worthless and wicked.  
Oh, Regan, she's torn me apart with her sharp unkindness,  
like a vulture, right here. [He points to his heart] I can hardly  
speak about it. You won't believe how horribly—Oh, Regan!

**REGAN**

Please, sir, calm down. I think it's more likely that you don't  
know how to value her good qualities than that she would  
neglect her duties to you.

**LEAR**

What do you mean by that?

**REGAN**

I can't believe that my sister would fail in her obligations at  
all. Sir, if she happened to restrain the rowdiness of your  
knights, then she must have had a good enough reason for  
it that she's free from all blame.

**LEAR**

My curses on her!

**REGAN**

Oh, sir, you are old. You're at the very edge of your allotted  
lifespan. You should let yourself be ruled and led by  
someone who understands you better than you can  
understand yourself. So please go back to my sister's house.  
Admit that you've wronged her, sir.

Say you have wronged her, sir.

**LEAR**

Ask her forgiveness?

165 Do you but mark how this becomes the house?—  
[kneels] “Dear daughter, I confess that I am old.  
Age is unnecessary. On my knees I beg  
That you’ll vouchsafe me raiment, bed, and food.”

**REGAN**

Good sir, no more. These are unsightly tricks.

170 Return you to my sister.

**LEAR**

[rising] Never, Regan.

She hath abated me of half my train,  
Looked black upon me, struck me with her tongue,  
Most serpentlike, upon the very heart.  
175 All the stored vengeance of heaven fall  
On her ingrateful top! Strike her young bones,  
You taking airs, with lameness!

**CORNWALL**

Fie, sir, fie!

**LEAR**

You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames  
180 Into her scornful eyes! Infect her beauty,  
You fen-sucked fogs drawn by the powerful sun,  
To fall and blister!

**REGAN**

O the blessed gods!  
So will you wish on me when the rash mood is on.

**LEAR**

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

**REGAN**

Good sir, to the purpose.

**LEAR**

Who put my man i’ th’ stocks?

*Tucket within*

**CORNWALL**

What trumpet’s that?

*Enter OSWALD the steward*

**REGAN**

200 I know ’t—my sister’s. This approves her letter  
That she would soon be here. [to OSWALD]  
Is your lady come?

**LEAR**

This is a slave whose easy borrowed pride  
Dwells in the fickle grace of her he follows.—  
205 Out, varlet, from my sight!

**LEAR**

I should ask her forgiveness? Do you understand how that would shame our royal family’s honor? [He kneels] “Dear daughter, I confess that I am old. Old people are unnecessary. On my knees I beg you to give me clothes, a bed, and food.”

**REGAN**

Stop this, good sir. These are shameful antics. Go back to my sister.

**LEAR**

[Standing up] Never, Regan. She’s dismissed half of my knights, glared at me evilly, and struck me in the heart with her venomous insults. May all the anger of heaven strike her ungrateful head! May she get sick with infectious airs, and may her young limbs go lame!

**CORNWALL**

Stop, sir! Shame on you!

**LEAR**

May lightning strike her in her scornful eyes! May swampy, poisonous fog blister her face and ruin her beauty!

**REGAN**

Oh, by the blessed gods! You’ll aim the same curses at me if the mood strikes you.

**LEAR**

No, Regan, I’ll never curse you. Your tender nature will never turn harsh and cruel. Her eyes are fierce and vicious, but yours are comforting. You would never deny me my pleasures, dismiss my knights, thoughtlessly insult me, reduce my privileges, or lock the door against me. You know better than she does the natural duties of a child to a parent, the politeness and love that comes with gratitude. You haven’t forgotten your half of the kingdom that I gave you.

**REGAN**

Good sir, get to the point.

**LEAR**

Who put my messenger in the stocks?

*A trumpet plays offstage.*

**CORNWALL**

What’s that trumpet?

*OSWALD enters.*

**REGAN**

I know it—it’s my sister’s. This is just what her letter said, that she would be here soon.

[To OSWALD] Has your lady arrived?

**LEAR**

This is the villain whose cheap arrogance comes from his position as a steward to that fickle Goneril.

[To OSWALD] Out, you wretch, get out of my sight!

**CORNWALL**

What means your grace?

*Enter GONERIL*

**LEAR**

Who stocked my servant? Regan, I have good hope  
 Thou didst not know on 't.—Who comes here? O heavens,  
 If you do love old men, if your sweet sway  
 Allow obedience, if yourselves are old,  
 Make it your cause. Send down, and take my part!  
 [to GONERIL] Art not ashamed to look upon this beard?—  
 O Regan, wilt thou take her by the hand?

210

**GONERIL**

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

215

**LEAR**

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

**CORNWALL**

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

220

**LEAR**

You! Did you?

**REGAN**

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

225

**LEAR**

Return to her, and fifty men dismissed?  
 No, rather I abjure all roofs, and choose  
 To be a comrade with the wolf and owl—  
 To wage against the enmity o' th' air—  
 Necessity's sharp pinch! Return with her?  
 Why, the hot-blooded France that dowerless took  
 Our youngest born—I could as well be brought  
 To knee his throne, and, squirelike, pension beg  
 To keep base life afoot. Return with her?  
 Persuade me rather to be slave and sumpter  
 To this detested groom. [indicates OSWALD]

230

**GONERIL**

At your choice, sir.

**LEAR**

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

245

250

**CORNWALL**

What do you mean, your Grace?

*GONERIL enters.*

**LEAR**

Who put my servant in the stocks? Regan, I hope you didn't  
 know anything about it. Who's coming? Oh, gods, if you  
 love old men and approve of children being obedient to  
 their parents—if you yourselves are old—then take my side.  
 Hurl down a lightning bolt for my cause!

[To GONERIL] Aren't you ashamed to look at me, after  
 you've abused me so badly in my old age?

[To REGAN] Oh, Regan, are you really taking her by the  
 hand?

**GONERIL**

Why shouldn't she take me by the hand, sir? What crime  
 have I committed? Just because a senile old man calls  
 something an insult doesn't mean it is one.

**LEAR**

Oh, how can my ribs contain my grieving heart? Why don't  
 they burst? How did my messenger come to be put in the  
 stocks?

**CORNWALL**

I put him there, sir. But his disorderly behavior deserved a  
 worse punishment.

**LEAR**

You! You did this?

**REGAN**

Please, father, you are weak. Stop pretending to be strong.  
 Dismiss half your knights and go back to stay with my sister  
 for the rest of the month. Then you can stay with me the  
 next month. I'm away from home right now, so I can't  
 provide you with the hospitality you deserve.

**LEAR**

Return to her, and dismiss fifty knights? No, I would rather  
 refuse to live under any roof at all, and choose to live as a  
 comrade of the wolf and the owl—fighting against the  
 harshness of the open air, and living with the sharp pinch of  
 poverty! Return with her? Why, it would be better for me to  
 visit the hot-blooded King of France—who took my  
 youngest daughter without a dowry—kneel before his  
 throne, and beg like a servant that he should give me a  
 pension to support my worthless life. Return with her? I'd  
 rather be a scoundrel and a packhorse to this detestable  
 stablehand here! [He points to OSWALD]

**GONERIL**

Do any of that if you want to, sir.

**LEAR**

No, please, daughter, don't make me go crazy. I won't  
 bother you, my child. Farewell. We'll never meet or see each  
 other again. But you're still my child, my daughter, my flesh  
 and blood—or rather you're a disease that's in my flesh,  
 which is still technically my "flesh and blood." You're a  
 pimple, a sore, a raised tumor corrupting my blood. But I  
 won't criticize you. Shame will come to you when it decides  
 to. I won't encourage it now. I won't ask the gods to smite  
 you with lightning, or complain about you to them. Mend  
 your ways if you can. Better yourself at your leisure. I can be  
 patient. I can stay with Regan, along with my hundred  
 knights.

**REGAN**

Not altogether so, sir.  
 255 I looked not for you yet, nor am provided  
 For your fit welcome. Give ear, sir, to my sister.  
 For those that mingle reason with your passion  
 Must be content to think you old, and so—  
 But she knows what she does.

**LEAR**

260 Is this well spoken now?

**REGAN**

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

**GONERIL**

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

**REGAN**

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

**LEAR**

I gave you all—

**REGAN**

275 And in good time you gave it.

**LEAR**

Made you my guardians, my depositaries,  
 But kept a reservation to be followed  
 With such a number. What, must I come to you  
 With five and twenty, Regan? Said you so?

**REGAN**

280 And speak 't again, my lord. No more with me.

**LEAR**

Those wicked creatures yet do look well favored  
 When others are more wicked. Not being the worst  
 Stands in some rank of praise.  
 [to GONERIL] I'll go with thee.  
 285 Thy fifty yet doth double five and twenty,  
 And thou art twice her love.

**GONERIL**

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

**REGAN**

What need one?

**REGAN**

Not quite, sir. I wasn't expecting your arrival, and I'm not ready to take care of you. Listen to what my sister is saying, sir. We're trying to mix some reason in with your passionate anger, even though we realize that you're old. But Goneril knows what she's doing.

**LEAR**

Do you really mean what you've just said?

**REGAN**

I'll dare to say yes, sir. What, fifty knights? Isn't that enough for you? Why should you need more—or even that many—since fifty knights are expensive and dangerous to keep? How can many people serve two masters and still be at peace under one roof? It's hard, almost impossible.

**GONERIL**

Why can't you let yourself be attended by Regan's servants, or mine?

**REGAN**

Why not, my lord? Then if they happened to neglect you, we could control them. But now that I think about how dangerous fifty knights are, I must say that if you come to stay with me, please bring only twenty-five along with you. I won't house or acknowledge any more than that.

**LEAR**

I gave you everything—

**REGAN**

And you took your time in giving it.

**LEAR**

I made you the protectors and trustees of my kingdom, on the condition that I could keep a hundred knights for myself. So why should I have to come to you with only twenty-five, Regan? Is that what you said?

**REGAN**

Yes, and I'll say it again, my lord. I'll accept no more than twenty-five.

**LEAR**

Wicked people start to look better when others become even more wicked. Not being the worst daughter deserves a little praise, I suppose.

[To GONERIL] I'll go with you. Your fifty is still twice her twenty-five, so you must love me twice as much as she does.

**GONERIL**

Hear me, my lord. Why do you need twenty-five, or ten, or even five to follow you, when you'll be in a house with twice that many servants to take care of you?

**REGAN**

Why do you need even one?

**LEAR**

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

*Storm and tempest*

I have full cause of weeping, but this heart  
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws,  
Or ere I'll weep.— O Fool, I shall go mad!

*Exeunt LEAR, GENTLEMAN, FOOL, and GLOUCESTER*

**CORNWALL**

315 Let us withdraw. 'Twill be a storm.

**REGAN**

This house is little. The old man and his people  
Cannot be well bestowed.

**GONERIL**

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

**REGAN**

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

**GONERIL**

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

**CORNWALL**

Followed the old man forth. He is returned.

*Enter GLOUCESTER*

**GLOUCESTER**

325 The king is in high rage.

**CORNWALL**

Whither is he going?

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**CORNWALL**

'Tis best to give him way. He leads himself.

**GONERIL**

[to GLOUCESTER] My lord, entreat him by no means to  
stay.

**LEAR**

Oh, don't be so logical about needs! Even the poorest beggars have at least something they don't need. If you only allow people to have what they need to survive, then a man's life becomes as cheap as an animal's. You are a fashionable lady. If you dressed only to stay warm, then you wouldn't need the gorgeous clothes you're wearing, as they hardly keep you warm at all. But as for my true needs—may the heavens give me endurance, the endurance that I need. You see me here, you gods, a poor old man, as wretched in his grief as he is in his frailty. If it's you who inspire these daughters to turn against their father, then at least don't make me such a fool as to take their insolence without protesting. Give me noble anger, and don't let any womanly

tears stain my man's cheeks! No, you unnatural hags, I'll have such a revenge on you both that the whole world will . . . I'll do such things . . . I don't know what things I'll do yet, but they will be terrible. You think I'll weep? No, I won't weep.

 In Shakespeare's time, a man who expressed emotions was considered to be highly effeminate.

*A storm begins.*

I have good reason to weep, but my heart will break into a hundred thousand pieces before I'll let myself weep. Oh, Fool, I'll go crazy!

*LEAR, the GENTLEMAN, the FOOL, and GLOUCESTER exit.*

**CORNWALL**

Let's go inside. There will be a storm.

**REGAN**

This house is small. We can't properly shelter the old man and his followers here.

**GONERIL**

That's his own fault. He has deprived himself of sleep, and must taste the results of his foolishness.

**REGAN**

I'll be happy to keep him in my house, but I won't house a single one of his followers.

**GONERIL**

And I'll do the same. Where is the lord of Gloucester?

**CORNWALL**

He followed the old man. But now he's coming back.

*GLOUCESTER enters.*

**GLOUCESTER**

The king is enraged.

**CORNWALL**

Where is he going?

**GLOUCESTER**

He called for his horse, but I don't know where he intends to ride.

**CORNWALL**

It's best to just let him go. He'll only allow himself to be lead by himself.

**GONERIL**

[to GLOUCESTER] My lord, don't try to convince him to stay.

**GLOUCESTER**

Alack, the night comes on, and the high winds  
Do sorely ruffle. For many miles about  
There's scarce a bush.

**REGAN**

O sir, to wilful men,  
The injuries that they themselves procure  
Must be their schoolmasters. Shut up your doors.  
He is attended with a desperate train.  
And what they may incense him to, being apt  
To have his ear abused, wisdom bids fear.

**CORNWALL**

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

*Exeunt***GLOUCESTER**

Alas, night is falling, and the high winds are blowing angrily.  
There's hardly a bush for many miles around. He won't  
have any shelter at all.

**REGAN**

Oh, sir, willful men only learn their lessons from the injuries  
they get in their foolishness. Shut your doors. His  
attendants are violent men, and I'm afraid of what they  
might encourage him to do, especially since he can be  
deceived so easily.

**CORNWALL**

Shut your doors, my lord. It's a wild night. My sister Regan's  
advice is good. Come in out of the storm.

*They all exit.*

## Act 3, Scene 1

**Shakespeare**

*Storm still. Enter KENT disguised and GENTLEMAN, severally*

**KENT**

Who's there, besides foul weather?

**GENTLEMAN**

One minded like the weather, most unquietly.

**KENT**

I know you. Where's the king?

**GENTLEMAN**

Contending with the fretful elements.  
5 Bids the winds blow the earth into the sea  
Or swell the curlèd water 'bove the main,  
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.  
Strives in his little world of man to outscorn  
The to-and-fro-conflicting wind and rain.  
This night—wherein the cub-drawn bear would couch,  
The lion and the belly-pinchèd wolf,  
15 Keep their fur dry—unbonneted he runs,  
And bids what will take all.

**KENT**

But who is with him?

**GENTLEMAN**

None but the fool, who labors to outjest  
His heart-struck injuries.

**KENT**

20 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 covered  
With mutual cunning, 'twixt Albany and Cornwall,  
25 Who have—as who have not that their great stars  
Throned and set high?—servants, who seem no less,  
Which are to France the spies and speculations  
Intelligent of our state. What hath been seen,  
Either in snuffs and packings of the dukes,  
30 Or the hard rein which both of them hath borne

**Shakescleare Translation**

*The storm continues. KENT (in disguise) and the GENTLEMAN enter from different directions.*

**KENT**

Who's there, besides bad weather?

**GENTLEMAN**

One whose mood is like the weather—very troubled.

**KENT**

I know you. Where's the king?

**GENTLEMAN**

Out struggling with the elements. He cries out for the winds  
to blow the earth into the sea, or make the sea's waves  
flood the land, that all life might end or change forever. He  
tears at his white hair, which the fierce winds blow about  
disdainfully, blind in their fury. He is just a small mortal  
against the elements, but he's trying to be even angrier and  
wilder than the rain and winds blowing back and forth. On a  
night like this, when even hungry bears, lions, and wolves  
would hide in their dens—he runs about bareheaded,  
calling for the world to end.

**KENT**

But who is with him?

**GENTLEMAN**

Only the fool, who tries to soothe the wounds in the king's  
heart with his joking.

**KENT**

Sir, I know you, and based on what I know about you, I will  
dare to trust you with an important job. There is a feud  
growing between Albany and Cornwall, though they've  
cleverly hidden it so far. Like other rulers given power by  
destiny, Albany and Cornwall both have some servants who  
seem to be loyal to them, but who are actually French spies  
and scouts gathering intelligence against our country. The  
spies have noticed something—the quarrels and intrigues  
of the dukes, or their harsh treatment of the kind old king,  
or something deeper, which is perhaps the root of both  
those problems. But it's true. There are already French

Against the old kind king, or something deeper,  
Whereof perchance these are but furnishings—  
But true it is. From France there comes a power  
Into this scattered kingdom, who already,  
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.  
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.

**GENTLEMAN**

I will talk further with you.

**KENT**

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

**GENTLEMAN**

Give me your hand. Have you no more to say?

**KENT**

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

*Exeunt severally*

troops entering this divided kingdom. They are aware of our negligence and have secretly occupied some of our best ports. And they're almost at the point of declaring open war. But this is where you come in. If you trust me enough to hurry to Dover, you'll find some people there who will be very grateful if you'll deliver an accurate report of the monstrous and maddening sorrow of the king's suffering. I am a gentleman of noble blood, and I know what I'm doing in offering this task to you.

**GENTLEMAN**

I'll need to discuss it further before I can give you an answer.

**KENT**

[Giving the GENTLEMAN a purse and a ring] No, don't. To confirm that I'm much more than I seem from my outward appearance, open this purse and take the money inside. If you see Cordelia—which you can be sure that you will—show her this ring. And she will tell you who I really am. A curse on this storm! I will go and find the king.

**GENTLEMAN**

Let me shake your hand. Do you have anything else to say?

**KENT**

Only a few words, but they're more important than all the rest. Once we've found the king—you go that way, and I'll go this way—the first one to see him should shout to the other.

*They exit in opposite directions.*

## Act 3, Scene 2

**Shakespeare**

*Storm still. Enter LEAR and FOOL*

**LEAR**

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow!  
You cataracts and hurricanes, spout  
Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks!  
You sulfurous and thought-executing fires,  
5 Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,  
Sing my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,  
Smite flat the thick rotundity o' th' world,  
Crack nature's molds, all germens spill at once  
That make ingrateful man!

**FOOL**

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

**LEAR**

Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! Spout, rain!  
15 Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire are my daughters.  
I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness.

**Shakescleare Translation**

*The storm continues. LEAR and the FOOL enter.*

**LEAR**

Blow, winds, until your cheeks crack! Rage on, storm! You whirlwinds and tornadoes, pour out water until you've drenched the steeples of our churches and drowned their weathervanes! You sulfurous and deadly lightning--herald of the mighty thunderbolts that split oak trees--sing the white hair on my head! And you, thunder that shakes everything, crush the spherical world flat, and crack open the molds from which nature forms humans, and spill all the seeds that grow up to become ungrateful mankind!

**FOOL**

Oh, uncle, encountering false holy water (like flattering courtier's speeches) in a dry house is better than being outside getting soaked by rainwater. Please, uncle, let's go inside and ask your daughters to forgive you. This stormy night has no pity for either wise men or fools.

**LEAR**

Rumble your belly, thunder! Spit, fire! Pour down, rain! The rain, wind, thunder, and fire are not my daughters. I don't blame you, you elements of the storm, for being unkind. I

I never gave you kingdom, called you children.  
You owe me no subscription. Why then, let fall  
Your horrible pleasure. Here I stand, your slave—  
20 A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man.  
But yet I call you servile ministers,  
That will with two pernicious daughters joined  
Your high engendered battles 'gainst a head  
So old and white as this. Oh, ho! 'Tis foul.

**FOOL**

25 He that has a house to put 's head in has a good  
headpiece.  
The codpiece that will house  
Before the head has any—  
The head and he shall louse.  
30 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.  
35 For there was never yet fair woman but she made mouths  
in a glass.

*Enter KENT disguised*

**LEAR**

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

**KENT**

Who's there?

**FOOL**

40 Marry, here's grace and a codpiece—that's a wise man  
and a fool.

**KENT**

[to LEAR] Alas, sir, are you here? Things that love  
night  
Love not such nights as these. The wrathful skies  
45 Gallow the very wanderers of the dark  
And make them keep their caves. Since I was man,  
Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,  
Such groans of roaring wind and rain I never  
Remember to have heard. Man's nature cannot carry  
50 Th' affliction nor the fear.

**LEAR**

Let the great gods  
That keep this dreadful pudder o'er our heads  
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch  
That hast within thee undivulgèd crimes  
55 Unwhipped of justice. Hide thee, thou bloody hand,  
Thou perjured, and thou simular man of virtue  
That art incestuous. Caitiff, to pieces shake,  
That under covert and convenient seeming  
Hast practiced on man's life. Close pent-up guilts,  
60 Rive your concealing continents and cry  
These dreadful summoners grace. I am a man  
More sinned against than sinning.

**KENT**

Alack, bareheaded?  
Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel.  
65 Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the tempest.  
Repose you there, while I to this hard house—  
More harder than the stones whereof 'tis raised,  
Which even but now, demanding after you,  
Denied me to come in—return, and force  
70 Their scantled courtesy.

never gave you a kingdom or called you my children. You don't owe me obedience. So be as horrible as you want to. Here I stand, your slave—a poor, sick, weak, and hated old man. But I can still accuse you of joining forces with my two wicked daughters, and using your heavenly powers to strike my old, white head. Oh! It's foul!

**FOOL**

Whoever has a house to cover his head has a good hat.  
If a man finds housing for his genitals 1 before he finds  
housing for his head—he'll end up poor and lice-infested.  
So whores have "married" many men by giving them  
housing. The man who values his toe more than he values  
his heart will always have corns to complain of, and be kept  
awake at night. For there's never been a pretty woman who  
didn't practice making pretty faces in the mirror.

 **The Fool** uses the word "codpiece" as a metonym for genitals. In Shakespeare's time, men wore codpieces—pouches which covered the genitals and were attached on the front of their breeches.

*KENT (in disguise) enters.*

**LEAR**

No, I will act like a model of patience. I will say nothing.

**KENT**

Who's there?

**FOOL**

By God 2, here's majesty and genitalia—that is, a wise  
man and a fool.

 **In the original text, the Fool uses the term "marry"—an Elizabethan oath which derives from the Virgin Mary's name.**

**KENT**

[To LEAR] Alas, sir, are you here? Even creatures of the night  
avoid nights like this. These angry skies frighten even the  
bats and make them keep to their caves. Never in my whole  
life have I seen or heard such fiery lightning, such bursts of  
horrible thunder, and such groans of roaring wind and rain.  
Human nature cannot bear all this danger and fear.

**LEAR**

May the great gods who stirred up this commotion in the  
sky find and crush their enemies tonight 3. Tremble in  
fear, you wretched people who have committed secret  
crimes and gone unpunished by justice. Hide yourselves,  
you bloody-handed murderers, you perjurers, you men who  
seem to be virtuous but really practice incest. Tremble until  
you fall to pieces, you villains who have plotted against  
human lives in secret. Let all your secret, pent-up guilts  
burst from their hiding places, and beg for mercy from the  
dreadful gods who summoned such a storm. I am a man  
who has been sinned against more than he has sinned.

 **Lear** believes the storm has come as punishment for those who wronged him. Thus, the gods' enemies are also Lear's enemies.

**KENT**

Alas, you're not even wearing a hat or hood? My gracious  
lord, there is a cow shed nearby. It will lend you some  
protection from this storm. Go there and rest, while I ask for  
help at the house where your heartless daughters are  
staying—those daughters who are more heartless than the  
stones the house is made of. Just now I went there and  
asked about you, but they wouldn't let me in. But now I'll  
return and force them to be courteous.

**LEAR**

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

**FOOL**

[sings]  
*He that has and a little tiny wit—  
 With heigh-ho, the wind and the rain—  
 Must make content with his fortunes fit,  
 For the rain it raineth every day.*  
 85

**LEAR**

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

*Exeunt LEAR and KENT*

**FOOL**

This is a brave night to cool a courtesan.  
 I'll speak a prophecy ere I go.  
 When priests are more in word than matter,  
 90 When brewers mar their malt with water,  
 When nobles are their tailors' tutors,  
 No heretics burned but wenches' suitors,  
 When every case in law is right,  
 No squire in debt nor no poor knight,  
 95 When slanders do not live in tongues,  
 Nor cutpurses come not to throns,  
 When usurers tell their gold i' th' field,  
 And bawds and whores do churches build—  
 Then shall the realm of Albion  
 100 Come to great confusion.  
 Then comes the time, who lives to see 't,  
 That going shall be used with feet.  
 This prophecy Merlin shall make, for I live before his  
 time.

*Exit*

**LEAR**

I begin to see things differently.

[To the FOOL] Come on, my boy. How are you, my boy? Are  
 you cold? I am cold myself.

[To KENT] Where is this cow shed you spoke of, my fellow?  
 It's strange how in a time of need even a worthless thing  
 can become precious. Come, bring me to this shed. My poor  
 fool, part of my heart still feels sorry for you.

**FOOL**

[Singing]  
*The man with even a tiny bit of wit—  
 With hey, ho, the wind and the rain—  
 Must learn to take what he can get,  
 For the rain it rains every day.*

**LEAR**

True, my good boy. Come, bring us to this cow shed.

*LEAR and KENT exit.*

**FOOL**

Such a night would cool even a prostitute's hot lust. I'll  
 deliver a prophecy before I go: when priests don't practice  
 what they preach; when brewers dilute their beer with  
 water; when noblemen follow fashion more closely than  
 their tailors do; when the only heretics being burned are  
 faithless lovers, who burn with venereal disease; when  
 every law case is just; when no servants or knights are in  
 debt; when tongues don't slander each other, and  
 pickpockets don't steal from crowds; when moneylenders  
 have nothing to hide; and pimps and whores build  
 churches—then the kingdom of England will come to ruin.  
 Then those who live to see that day will stroll around on  
 foot. This is a prophecy Merlin will make, because I live  
 before his time. 4

4 Merlin was the wizard at the legendary court of King Arthur. He was said to make prophecies through rhymes similar to the one the Fool makes here. This play is set in a time period before Merlin was supposed to have existed.

*He exits.*

## Act 3, Scene 3

### Shakespeare

*Enter GLOUCESTER and EDMUND the bastard, with lights*

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**EDMUND**

Most savage and unnatural!

**GLOUCESTER**

Go to, say you nothing. There's a division betwixt the  
 dukes. And a worse matter than that: I have received a  
 10 letter this night. 'Tis dangerous to be spoken. I have  
 locked the letter in my closet. These injuries the king  
 now bears will be revenged home. There's part of a power  
 already footed. We must incline to the king. I will  
 look him and privily relieve him. Go you and maintain

### Shakescleare Translation

*GLOUCESTER and EDMUND enter, carrying torches.*

**GLOUCESTER**

Alas, alas, Edmund, I don't like this horrible business. When  
 I asked the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall if I could help the  
 king and give him shelter, they took away my command of  
 my own house and ordered me to never speak of him, lobby  
 on his behalf, or help him in any way, or else I should suffer  
 their permanent anger.

**EDMUND**

How savage and unnatural!

**GLOUCESTER**

Oh well, say nothing about this. There is a quarrel between  
 the two dukes. And there's worse news than that: I received  
 a letter tonight. It's dangerous to discuss. I've locked the  
 letter in my bedroom. The injuries done to the king will be  
 thoroughly avenged. Armed forces have already landed. We  
 must side with the king. I will find him and secretly help  
 him. You go and talk to the duke, so he won't notice that I'm

talk with the duke, that my charity be not of him perceived. If he ask for me, I am ill and gone to bed. Though I die for it—as no less is threatened me—the king my old master must be relieved. There is some strange thing toward, Edmund. Pray you, be careful.

*Exit GLOUCESTER*

**EDMUND**

- 20 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*

helping the king. If he asks for me, say that I'm ill and have gone to bed. Even if I must die for it—as they've threatened—I must help the king, my old master. There is something strange coming, Edmund. Please, be careful.

*GLOUCESTER exits.*

**EDMUND**

I'll tell the duke right now about this forbidden kindness to the king, and about that letter too. Betraying my father is something that will get me a reward: it will win me everything my father will lose—which is everything he has. The young will rise when the old fall.

*He exits.*

## Act 3, Scene 4

### Shakespeare

*Enter LEAR, KENT disguised, and FOOL*

**KENT**

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

*Storm still*

**LEAR**

Let me alone.

**KENT**

- 5 Good my lord, enter here.

**LEAR**

Wilt break my heart?

**KENT**

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

**LEAR**

- Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm  
Invades us to the skin. So 'tis to thee.  
10 But where the greater malady is fixed  
The lesser is scarce felt. Thou'dst shun a bear,  
But if thy flight lay toward the raging sea,  
Thou'dst meet the bear i' th' mouth. When the mind's  
free,  
15 The body's delicate. The tempest in my mind  
Doth from my senses take all feeling else  
Save what beats there—filial ingratitude.  
Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand  
For lifting food to 't? But I will punish home.  
20 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—  
Oh, that way madness lies. Let me shun that.  
25 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

### Shakescleare Translation

*LEAR, KENT (in disguise), and the FOOL enter.*

**KENT**

Here's the place, my lord. Please go in, my lord. Tonight's storm is too rough for human nature to endure.

*The storm continues.*

**LEAR**

Leave me alone.

**KENT**

My good lord, please enter the shed.

**LEAR**

Do you want to break my heart?

**KENT**

I would rather break my own than yours. My good lord, please go in.

**LEAR**

You think it's bad that this angry storm soaks us to the skin. So it seems to *you*. But a large pain makes a small pain feel insignificant. You would run from a bear, but if the only way to run was into the raging sea, then you'd turn and face the bear head-on. When the mind is untroubled, the body is sensitive. The storm in my mind keeps me from noticing anything but the thing that tortures me—my ungrateful children. Isn't their ingratitude like the mouth biting the hand that feeds it? I will punish them thoroughly. No, I won't weep anymore. To shut me out on a night like this! But pour on, rain, I will endure. On a night like this! Oh Regan, Goneril, your kind old father, whose generous heart gave you everything . . . But no, that path leads to insanity. Let me avoid such thoughts. No more of that.

**KENT**

My good lord, please go inside.

**LEAR**

Please, go in yourself. Seek your own comfort. This storm keeps me from thinking thoughts that would hurt me even

On things would hurt me more. But I'll go in.  
 30 [to FOOL] In, boy. Go first. You houseless poverty—  
 Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.

*Exit FOOL*

Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,  
 That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,  
 How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,  
 35 Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you  
 From seasons such as these? Oh, 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.

**EDGAR**

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

*Enter FOOL*

**FOOL**

Come not in here, nuncle. Here's a spirit. Help me,  
 help me!

**KENT**

Give me thy hand. Who's there?

**FOOL**

45 A spirit, a spirit. He says his name's Poor Tom.

**KENT**

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

*Enter EDGAR disguised*

**EDGAR**

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

**LEAR**

Didst thou give all to thy two daughters, and art thou  
 come to this?

**EDGAR**

Who gives any thing to Poor Tom, whom the foul fiend  
 hath led through fire and through flame, through ford  
 55 and whirlpool, o'er bog and quagmire; that hath laid  
 knives under his pillow and halters in his pew, set  
 ratsbane by his porridge, made him proud of heart to  
 ride on a bay trotting-horse over four-inched bridges to  
 course his own shadow for a traitor? Bless thy five  
 60 wits. Tom's a-cold. Oh, do-de, do-de, do-de. Bless thee  
 from whirlwinds, star-blasting, and taking! Do Poor Tom  
 some charity, whom the foul fiend vexes. There could I  
 have him now—and there—and there again—and there.

*Storm still*

**LEAR**

What, has his daughters brought him to this pass?—  
 65 Couldst thou save nothing? Wouldst thou give 'em all?

more. But I'll go in.

[To the FOOL] Go in, boy. You go first. Oh, you poor  
 homeless people . . . No, you go in. I'll pray, and then I'll  
 sleep.

*The FOOL exits.*

Poor homeless wretches, wherever you are, suffering  
 through this pitiless storm—with no roof over your heads,  
 no fat on your ribs, and only rags for clothing: how will you  
 defend yourselves against such weather? Oh, when I was  
 king I should have done more for you! Cure yourself, men  
 who live in luxury. Expose yourself to feel what the poor  
 and homeless feel, so you can give them the surplus wealth  
 you don't need, and make the world a more just place.

**EDGAR**

[From inside the cow shed] The water's nine feet deep, nine  
 feet deep! Poor Tom!

*The FOOL enters.*

**FOOL**

Don't come in here, uncle—there's a ghost in here. Help me,  
 help me!

**KENT**

Give me your hand. Who's there?

**FOOL**

A ghost, a ghost. He says his name's Poor Tom.

**KENT**

Who are you, grumbling in the straw in there? Come out.

*EDGAR (in disguise) enters.*

**EDGAR**

Keep away! The devil follows me! The cold wind blows  
 through the sharp hawthorn trees. Hum! Go to your cold  
 beds and warm yourselves up.

**LEAR**

Did you give everything to your two daughters, and end up  
 like this?

**EDGAR**

Who gives anything to Poor Tom? The devil has led him  
 through fire and through flame, through rivers and  
 whirlpools, over bogs and swamps. The devil's put knives  
 under his pillow and nooses in his church pew, set rat  
 poison near his soup and made him race his horse over  
 narrow bridges to hunt his shadow like a traitor—all in an  
 effort to get Poor Tom to kill himself. Bless your five senses.  
 Tom's cold. Oh, do-de, do-de, do-de. May God protect you  
 from whirlwinds, evil fates, and bewitchment! Be kind to  
 Poor Tom, who is tormented by the devil. I could catch him  
 there now—and there—and there again—and there!

*The storm continues.*

**LEAR**

What, have his daughters reduced him to this miserable  
 state?

[To EDGAR] Could you keep nothing for yourself? Did you  
 give them everything?

**FOOL**

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

**LEAR**

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

**KENT**

**70** He hath no daughters, sir.

**LEAR**

Death, traitor! Nothing could have subdued nature To such a lowness but his unkind daughters. Is it the fashion that discarded fathers Should have thus little mercy on their flesh? **75** Judicious punishment! 'Twas this flesh begot Those pelican daughters.

**EDGAR**

Pillicock sat on Pillicock hill. Alow, alow, loo, loo!

**FOOL**

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

**EDGAR**

**80** Take heed o' th' foul fiend. Obey thy parents, keep thy word's justice, swear not, commit not with man's sworn spouse, set not thy sweet heart on proud array. Tom's a cold.

**LEAR**

What hast thou been?

**EDGAR**

**85** A servingman, proud in heart and mind, that curled my hair, wore gloves in my cap, served the lust of my mistress' heart and did the act of darkness with her, swore as many oaths as I spake words and broke them in the sweet face of heaven—one that slept in the contriving of lust and waked to do it. Wine loved I deeply, dice dearly, and in woman outparamoured the Turk. False of heart, light of ear, bloody of hand—hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in prey. Let not the creaking of shoes nor the rustling of silks betray thy poor heart to woman. **90** Keep thy foot out of brothels, thy hand out of plackets, thy pen from lenders' books, and defy the foul fiend. Still through the hawthorn blows the cold wind, says, "Suum, mun, nonny." Dauphin my boy, my boy, cessez. Let him trot by.

*Storm still*

**LEAR**

**100** Why, thou wert better in thy grave than to answer with thy uncovered body this extremity of the skies.—Is man no more than this? Consider him well.— Thou owest the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha! Here's three on 's are sophisticated. Thou art the thing itself. Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art.—Off, off, you lendings! Come. Unbutton here. *[tears at his clothes]*

**FOOL**

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

**FOOL**

No, he kept a blanket for himself, or else he'd be naked and we'd be ashamed to look at him.

**LEAR**

Then may your daughters be struck by all the plagues that hover in the air, controlling the fates of sinners!

**KENT**

He doesn't have any daughters, sir.

**LEAR**

Death to you—you're a traitor for saying that! Nothing could have degraded him like this except for unkind daughters. Is this the current style, that the bodies of neglected fathers should get so little pity? That's a fitting punishment! Because it was from my body that I fathered those bloodsucking daughters.

**EDGAR**

**Pillicock** sat on Pillicock hill. Alow, alow, loo, loo!

 This is a quote from an old rhyme. "Pillicock" is both a term of endearment and baby talk for penis.

**FOOL**

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

**EDGAR**

Beware the devil. Obey your parents; keep your word; don't use God's name in vain; don't commit adultery; and don't covet luxurious clothing. Tom's cold.

**LEAR**

What were you before you became like this?

**EDGAR**

I was a servant, proud in my heart and my mind. I curled my hair; carried tokens of my lovers; served my mistress's lust and slept with her; swore as many oaths as I spoke words; and broke them all without shame. I went to sleep planning lustful acts and woke up to do them. I loved wine deeply and gambling dearly, and I had more lovers than a sultan has in his harem. My heart was false, my ears were quick to hear gossip, and my hands were violent. I was as lazy as a hog, as stealthy as a fox, as greedy as a wolf, as crazy as a dog, and as violent as a lion. Don't ever let your heart be seduced by a woman. Keep your feet out of brothels and your hands away from skirts, stay out of debt, and defy the devil. The cold wind still blows through the hawthorne trees, saying "Suum, mun, nonny." The devil my boy, my boy, stop that. Let him trot on by.

*The storm continues.*

**LEAR**

Why, you'd be better off dead than to face this violent storm with only your naked body. Is this all a man is? Look at him.

*[To EDGAR] You don't owe the silkworm for silk, the cow for leather, the sheep for wool, or the civet cat for perfume. Ha! The three of us are fake and shallow compared to you. You are the thing itself. A man without the trappings of civilization is just a poor, naked, two-legged animal like you. Off, off with my clothing. Come, let me unbutton this. [He tears at his own clothes]*

**FOOL**

Please, uncle, calm down. It's a bad night for swimming. On a night like this a little fire in a barren field would be like the heart of a lustful old man—a small spark in a cold body. *[GLOUCESTER enters with a torch]* Look, here comes a walking fire.

**EDGAR**

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

115 St. Withold footed thrice the 'old.  
He met the nightmare and her ninefold,  
Bid her alight,  
And her troth plight.  
And aroint thee, witch, aroint thee!

**KENT**

How fares your grace?

**LEAR**

[indicating GLOUCESTER] What's he?

**KENT**

120 Who's there? What is 't you seek?

**GLOUCESTER**

What are you there? Your names?

**EDGAR**

Poor Tom, that eats the swimming frog, the toad, the tadpole, the wall newt, and the water; that in the fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats cow dung for salads, swallows the old rat and the ditch-dog, drinks the green mantle of the standing pool; who is whipped from tithing to tithing and stocked, punished and imprisoned; who hath had three suits to his back, six shirts to his body,

130 135 Horse to ride and weapon to wear.

But mice and rats and such small deer

Have been Tom's food for seven long year.

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

**GLOUCESTER**

[to LEAR] What, hath your grace no better company?

**EDGAR**

140 The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman. Modo he's called, and Mahu.

**GLOUCESTER**

[To LEAR] Our flesh and blood, my lord, is grown so vile

That it doth hate what gets it.

**EDGAR**

145 Poor Tom's a-cold.

**GLOUCESTER**

Go in with me. My duty cannot suffer  
To obey in all your daughters' hard commands.  
Though their injunction be to bar my doors  
And let this tyrannous night take hold upon you,

150 Yet have I ventured to come seek you out

And bring you where both fire and food is ready.

**LEAR**

First let me talk with this philosopher.—

[to EDGAR] What is the cause of thunder?

**KENT**

155 [to LEAR] Good my lord, take his offer. Go into the house with him.

**EDGAR**

That is the devil Flibbertigibbet  . He wakes up at nightfall and walks around until midnight. He makes eyes squint from cataracts, makes cleft lips, rots the ripe wheat, and hurts the poor creatures of the earth. Saint Withold walked the field three times. He met a demon and her nine offspring, told her to fly away, and made her swear to never return. And begone, witch, begone!

 *Flibbertigibbet-like Smulkin, Modo, and Mahu in the next few lines—is the name of a devil. These names were derived from Samuel Harsnett's book, Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures, published in 1603.*

**KENT**

How are you feeling, your Grace?

**LEAR**

[Pointing to GLOUCESTER] Who's he?

**KENT**

Who's there? What is it you want?

**GLOUCESTER**

Who are you? What are your names?

**EDGAR**

Poor Tom, who eats frogs, toads, tadpoles, lizards, and newts. When his heart is furious and the devil rages, Tom eats cow dung for salads, swallows old rats and dead dogs, and drinks the green pond scum. Tom is whipped in every town and put in the stocks, punished and imprisoned, but Tom once was a servant with three suits and six shirts. And a horse to ride and a sword to wear. But mice and rats and deer have been Tom's food for seven long years. Beware the devil who follows me. Quiet, Smulkin. Quiet, you devil!

**GLOUCESTER**

[To LEAR] What, don't you have any better companions than this, your Grace?

**EDGAR**

The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman. He's called Modo and Mahu.

**GLOUCESTER**

[To LEAR] My lord, our children have grown so wicked that they hate the parents who made them.

**EDGAR**

Poor Tom is cold.

**GLOUCESTER**

Come back to my house with me. My duty to you wouldn't allow me to obey all your daughters' harsh commands. They ordered me to shut my doors and let this brutal night have its way with you. But instead I've come here to find you and bring you to a place where there's both food and fire.

**LEAR**

First let me talk with this philosopher.

[To EDGAR] What is the cause of thunder?

**KENT**

[To LEAR] My good lord, take his offer and go back to the house with him.

**LEAR**

I'll talk a word with this same learnèd Theban.—  
What is your study?

**EDGAR**

How to prevent the fiend and to kill vermin.

**LEAR**

Let me ask you one word in private.

*LEAR and EDGAR talk aside*

**KENT**

160 *[aside to GLOUCESTER]* Importune him once more to go, my lord.  
His wits begin t' unsettle.

**GLOUCESTER**

Canst thou blame him?

*Storm still*

His daughters seek his death. Ah, that good Kent—  
He said it would be thus, poor banished man.  
Thou say'st the king grows mad. I'll tell thee, friend,  
I am almost mad myself. I had a son,  
Now outlawed from my blood. He sought my life,  
But lately, very late. I loved him, friend—  
170 No father his son dearer. Truth to tell thee,  
The grief hath crazed my wits. What a night's this!  
*[to LEAR]* I do beseech your grace—

**LEAR**

O, cry your mercy, sir.—  
*[to EDGAR]* Noble philosopher, your company.

**EDGAR**

175 Tom's a-cold.

**GLOUCESTER**

In, fellow. There, into th' hovel. Keep thee warm.

**LEAR**

Come let's in all.

**KENT**

This way, my lord.

**LEAR**

*[indicating EDGAR]*  
180 With him!  
I will keep still with my philosopher.

**KENT**

*[to GLOUCESTER]* Good my lord, soothe him. Let him take  
the fellow.

**GLOUCESTER**

Take him you on.

**KENT**

185 *[to EDGAR]* Sirrah, come on. Go along with us.

**LEAR**

Come, good Athenian.

**GLOUCESTER**

No words, no words. Hush.

**LEAR**

First I'll talk with this Greek scholar here.

*[To EDGAR]* What is your field of study?

**EDGAR**

How to resist the devil and kill rats.

**LEAR**

Let me ask you something in private.

*LEAR and EDGAR talk privately.*

**KENT**

*[To GLOUCESTER so that only he can hear]* Ask him again to  
go with you, my lord. He's beginning to go crazy.

**GLOUCESTER**

Can you blame him?

*The storm continues.*

His daughters want him dead. Ah, that good Kent—he  
predicted that it would be like this, the poor banished man.  
You say the king is going crazy. I'll tell you, friend, I have  
almost gone crazy myself. I had a son, but I've now  
disowned him. He tried to kill me just recently, very  
recently. I loved him, friend. No father ever loved his son  
more than I did. To tell you the truth, the grief has almost  
made me crazy. What a night this is!

*[To LEAR]* Please, your Grace—

**LEAR**

Oh, I beg your pardon, sir.

*[To EDGAR]* Noble philosopher, speak with me.

**EDGAR**

Tom's cold.

**GLOUCESTER**

Then go in, man. There, into the cow shed. Keep yourself  
warm.

**LEAR**

Let's all go in.

**KENT**

No, come this way, my lord.

**LEAR**

*[Pointing to EDGAR]* I'll go with him! I want to stay with my  
philosopher.

**KENT**

*[To GLOUCESTER]* My good lord, let's humor him. Let him  
take that man with him.

**GLOUCESTER**

Bring him with you, then.

**KENT**

*[To EDGAR]* Sir, come on. Come along with us.

**LEAR**

Come, good philosopher.

**GLOUCESTER**

Quiet, quiet. Hush.

**EDGAR**

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

190

*Exeunt***EDGAR**

The young knight Roland <sup>3</sup> came to the dark tower. His motto was always "Fee, fie, fo, fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman."

<sup>3</sup> Edgar, disguised as Poor Tom, mixes the characters of Roland (hero of the Charlemagne legends) with that of the giant in Jack and the Beanstalk.

*They all exit.*

## Act 3, Scene 5

**Shakespeare***Enter CORNWALL and EDMUND***CORNWALL**

I will have my revenge ere I depart his house.

**EDMUND**

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

**CORNWALL**

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

**EDMUND**

How malicious is my fortune, that I must repent to be just! [giving CORNWALL a letter] This is the letter which he spoke of, which approves him an intelligent party to the advantages of France. O heavens, that this treason were not, or not I the detector!

**CORNWALL**

Go with me to the duchess.

**EDMUND**

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

**CORNWALL**

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

**EDMUND**

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

**CORNWALL**

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

*Exeunt***Shakescleare Translation***CORNWALL and EDMUND enter.***CORNWALL**

I'll have my revenge on Gloucester before I leave his house.

**EDMUND**

My lord, I'm somewhat afraid of how I might be criticized for letting my loyalty to you overcome my natural bond to my father.

**CORNWALL**

I now realize that it wasn't just your brother's evil nature that made him try to kill your father. Even though killing one's father is evil, Gloucester would be getting what he deserved.

**EDMUND**

How evil is my fate, that I must apologize for doing the right thing! [Giving CORNWALL a letter] This is the letter he was talking about, which confirms that he was a spy and informer for France. Oh God, I wish that this treason had never happened, or that I hadn't been the one to discover it!

**CORNWALL**

Come with me to see the duchess.

**EDMUND**

If the contents of this letter are true, then you have a lot to deal with.

**CORNWALL**

True or false, this letter has made you the Earl of Gloucester. Find out where your father is, so we can be ready to arrest him.

**EDMUND**

[To himself] If I find my father helping the king, it will confirm his guilt even more.

[To CORNWALL] I'll remain loyal to you, even though it conflicts with my duty to my father.

**CORNWALL**

I'll put my trust in you, and you'll find me a better father than Gloucester was.

*They exit.*

## Act 3, Scene 6

**Shakespeare****Shakescleare Translation**

Enter GLOUCESTER, LEAR, KENT disguised, FOOL, and EDGAR disguised

### GLOUCESTER

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

### KENT

All the power of his wits have given way to his impatience.  
The gods reward your kindness!

*Exit GLOUCESTER*

### EDGAR

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

### FOOL

10 Prithee, nuncle, tell me whether a madman be a gentleman or a yeoman?

### LEAR

A king, a king!

### FOOL

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

### LEAR

To have a thousand with red burning spits  
Come hissing in upon 'em!

### 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.

### LEAR

It shall be done. I will arraign them straight.  
*[to EDGAR]* Come, sit thou here, most learnèd justicer.  
*[to FOOL]* Thou, sapient sir, sit here.—Now, you she-foxes—

### EDGAR

25 Look, where he stands and glares!—Want'st thou eyes at trial, madam?  
*[sings]*  
*Come o'er the bourn, Bessy, to me—*

### FOOL

*[sings]*  
30 *Her boat hath a leak,*  
*And she must not speak*  
*Why she dares not come over to thee.*

### EDGAR

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

GLOUCESTER, LEAR, KENT (in disguise), the FOOL, and EDGAR (in disguise) enter.

### GLOUCESTER

It's better in this shed than out in the open air. Be grateful for the shelter. I'll make you more comfortable in whatever way I can. I won't be gone long.

### KENT

His passionate rage is driving him crazy. May the gods reward your kindness!

*GLOUCESTER exits.*

### EDGAR

The devil Frateretto calls out to me. He says that the Roman emperor Nero is a fisherman in Hell's lake of darkness. Pray, innocent Fool, and beware the devil.

### FOOL

Please, uncle, tell me whether this madman is a gentleman or an average man?

### LEAR

He's a king, a king!

### FOOL

No, he must be an average man with a gentleman for a son—since an average man would be crazy to let his son become a gentleman before he became a gentleman himself.

### LEAR

May a thousand hissing devils strike those daughters of mine with their red burning pitchforks!

### EDGAR

The devil bites my back.

### FOOL

A man would be crazy to trust a wolf's tameness, a horse's health, a boy's love, or a whore's promise.

### LEAR

I will do it. I'll put my daughters on trial right away.

*[To EDGAR]* Come, sit here, our excellent judge.

*[To the FOOL]* And you, wise sir, sit here. Now, you she-foxes—

### EDGAR

Look, see the devil standing and glaring at me! Do you want spectators at your trial, madam?

*[Singing]*  
*Come over the brook, Bessy, to me—*

### FOOL

*[Singing]*  
*Her boat has a leak,*  
*And she must not speak*  
*About why she can't come over to see you.*

### EDGAR

The devil haunts Poor Tom by singing like a nightingale. That devil Hoppedance grumbles in Tom's belly, crying for two fish to eat. Stop rumbling, you black angel. I don't have any food for you.

**KENT**

[to LEAR] How do you, sir? Stand you not so amazed. Will you lie down and rest upon the cushions?

**LEAR**

I'll see their trial first. Bring in the evidence.  
[to EDGAR] Thou robēd man of justice, take thy place.  
[to FOOL] And thou, his yoke-fellow of equity, Bench by his side. [to KENT] You are o' th' commission. Sit you too.

**EDGAR**

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

**LEAR**

Arraign her first. 'Tis Goneril. I here take my oath before this honorable assembly, she kicked the poor king her father.

**FOOL**

Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril?

**LEAR**

She cannot deny it.

**FOOL**

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

**LEAR**

And here's another, whose warped looks proclaim What store her heart is made on. Stop her there!  
[60] Arms, arms, sword, fire, corruption in the place! False justicer, why hast thou let her 'scape?

**EDGAR**

Bless thy five wits.

**KENT**

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

**EDGAR**

[aside] My tears begin to take his part so much, They'll mar my counterfeiting.

**LEAR**

The little dogs and all, Tray, Blanch, and Sweetheart—see, they bark at me.

**EDGAR**

Tom will throw his head at them.—Avaunt, you curs!  
[70] Be thy mouth or black or white, Tooth that poisons if it bite, Mastiff, greyhound, mongrel grim, Hound or spaniel, brach or him, Bobtail tyke or trundle-tail—  
[75] Tom will make them weep and wail, For with throwing thus my head, Dogs leap the hatch, and all are fled. Do-de, de-de. Cessez! Come, march to wakes and fairs

**KENT**

[To LEAR] How are you, sir? Don't look so bewildered. Will you lie down and rest on the pillows?

**LEAR**

I want to see their trial first. Bring in the witnesses against them.

[To EDGAR] Take your place, you judge in your robe.

[To the FOOL] And you, his partner in justice, sit by his side.

[To KENT] You are allowed to be a judge as well. Sit down, too.

**EDGAR**

Let's deliver a fair trial.  
[Singing]  
*Are you asleep or awake, happy shepherd?  
Your sheep are in the cornfield.  
And if you blow your horn with your sweet little mouth  
Your sheep will come to no harm.  
Purr the Cat is a gray devil.*

**LEAR**

Let's put Goneril on trial first. Here she is. I swear before this honorable assembly that she kicked her father, the poor king.

**FOOL**

Come here, mistress. Is your name Goneril?

**LEAR**

She cannot deny it.

**FOOL**

Forgive me, madam, I thought you were a stool .

 The Fool is making fun of the fact that Goneril isn't actually there, and depending on the staging Lear may in fact be addressing a stool.

**LEAR**

And here's Regan, whose twisted face shows what her heart is made of. Stop her there! Guards, catch her! Swords, fire, bribery in the courtroom! You false judge, why did you let her escape?

**EDGAR**

God bless your five senses.

**KENT**

[To LEAR] How tragic! Sir, where is the self-control now, which you used to boast so much about?

**EDGAR**

[To himself] I feel so sorry for him that I'm afraid I'll cry and ruin my disguise.

**LEAR**

Even the little dogs, Tray, Blanch, and Sweetheart—see, they're barking at me.

**EDGAR**

Tom will threaten them. Begone, you mangy dogs! Whether your mouth is black or white, with teeth that poison when they bite; whether mastiff, greyhound, or mean mutt, hound or spaniel, bitch or bloodhound, short-tail mutt or long-tail dog—Tom will make you weep and wail. When I threaten like this, dogs run out the door, and all are gone. Do-de, de-de. Stop! Come, run off to festivals and fairs and market towns. Poor Tom, your begging bowl is empty.

and market towns. Poor Tom, thy horn is dry.

### LEAR

80 Then let them anatomize Regan. See what breeds about her heart. Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts? *[to EDGAR]* You, sir, I entertain you for one of my hundred. Only I do not like the fashion of your garments. You will say they are Persian attire, but let them be changed.

### KENT

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

### LEAR

Make no noise, make no noise. Draw the curtains—so, so, so. We'll go to supper i' th' morning. So, so, so.  
*[sleeps]*

### FOOL

90 And I'll go to bed at noon.

*Enter GLOUCESTER*

### GLOUCESTER

*[to KENT]* Come hither, friend. Where is the king my master?

### KENT

Here, sir, but trouble him not. His wits are gone.

### GLOUCESTER

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

### KENT

Oppressèd nature sleeps.—  
105 This rest might yet have balm'd thy broken sinews,  
Which, if convenience will not allow,  
Stand in hard cure.  
*[to FOOL]*  
Come, help to bear thy master.  
110 Thou must not stay behind.

### GLOUCESTER

Come, come, away.

*Exeunt all but EDGAR*

### EDGAR

When we our betters see bearing our woes,  
We scarcely think our miseries our foes.  
Who alone suffers, suffers most i' th' mind,  
115 Leaving free things and happy shows behind.  
But then the mind much sufferance doth o'erskip  
When grief hath mates and bearing fellowship.  
How light and portable my pain seems now  
When that which makes me bend makes the king bow.  
120 He childed as I fathered. Tom, away!  
Mark the high noises and thyself bewray  
When false opinion, whose wrong thought defiles thee,  
In thy just proof repeals and reconciles thee.  
What will hap more tonight, safe 'scape the king!

### LEAR

Now let them dissect Regan. Study her heart well. Is there any natural reason for such a hard heart?

*[To EDGAR]* You, sir, I'll keep you as one of my hundred knights. Only I don't like the style of your clothes. You'll probably say that they're elegant and exotic, but change them anyway.

### KENT

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

### LEAR

Make no noise, make no noise. Close the bed curtains—like that, like that, like that. We'll have dinner in the morning. So, so, so. *[He falls asleep]*

### FOOL

And I'll go to bed at noon.

*GLOUCESTER enters.*

### GLOUCESTER

*[To KENT]* Come here, friend. Where is the king, my master?

### KENT

He's here, sir, but don't disturb him. He's lost his mind.

### GLOUCESTER

Good friend, please pick him up. I've overheard that there are people plotting to kill him. I have a carriage ready for him. Put him in it and drive towards Dover, friend. There you'll find hospitality and protection. Pick up your master. If you delay even half an hour he'll surely be killed, along with you and anyone else who offers to defend him. Get him, get him and follow me, and I'll quickly lead you to get some supplies.

### KENT

His suffering drives him to sleep.

*[To the sleeping LEAR]* This rest might have been able to soothe your shattered nerves. But, if there's no other convenient chance to sleep, your nerves aren't likely to be cured.

*[To the FOOL]* Come, help to carry your master. You mustn't stay behind.

### GLOUCESTER

Come on, come on, let's go.

*Everyone except EDGAR exits.*

### EDGAR

When we see our superiors suffering the same woes that we suffer, we can almost forget our own misery. Whoever suffers alone suffers the most, and loses his carefree nature and happy memories. But when grief is shared with friends and companions, the mind can rise above suffering. My pain seems light and easy to endure now that I can see the king bearing my same sorrow. He found the same cruelty in his children that I found in my father. Tom, let's go! We'll keep an eye on the situation, and you can reveal your true identity once you are proven innocent to the public. That will reconcile you with those who accuse you. Whatever else might happen tonight, may the king escape safely! Now, lurk out of sight, Tom, lurk.

Lurk, lurk.

*Exit*

*He exits.*

## Act 3, Scene 7

### Shakespeare

*Enter CORNWALL, and REGAN, and GONERIL, and EDMUND the bastard, and servants*

**CORNWALL**

[*to GONERIL*] Post speedily to my lord your husband. Show him this letter. The army of France is landed.  
—Seek out the traitor Gloucester.

*Exeunt some servants*

**REGAN**

Hang him instantly.

**GONERIL**

5 Pluck out his eyes.

**CORNWALL**

Leave him to my displeasure.— Edmund, keep you our sister company. The revenges we are bound to take upon your traitorous father are not fit for your beholding. Advise the duke where you are going, to a most festinate preparation. We are bound to the like. Our posts shall be swift and intelligent betwixt us.— Farewell, dear sister. [*to EDMUND*] Farewell, my lord of Gloucester.

*Enter OSWALD the steward*

How now? Where's the king?

**OSWALD**

My lord of Gloucester hath conveyed him hence. 15 Some five or six and thirty of his knights, Hot questrists after him, met him at gate, Who with some other of the lord's dependants Are gone with him towards Dover, where they boast To have well-armèd friends.

**CORNWALL**

20 Get horses for your mistress.

*Exit OSWALD*

**GONERIL**

Farewell, sweet lord, and sister.

**CORNWALL**

Edmund, farewell.

*Exeunt GONERIL and EDMUND the bastard*

Go seek the traitor Gloucester.  
Pinion him like a thief, bring him before us.

*Exeunt some servants*

### Shakescleare Translation

*CORNWALL, REGAN, GONERIL, EDMUND, and servants enter.*

**CORNWALL**

[*To GONERIL*] Ride quickly to your husband. Show him this letter. The French army has landed.

[*To servants*] Find the traitor Gloucester.

*Some servants exit.*

**REGAN**

Hang him at once.

**GONERIL**

Pluck out his eyes.

**CORNWALL**

Leave him to my displeasure.

[*To EDMUND*] Edmund, you go with my sister-in-law Goneril. The punishment I am obligated to inflict on your father isn't fit for you to see. Tell the Duke of Albany to prepare himself immediately for war. We are committed to doing the same. Our messengers will keep us both well-informed.

[*To GONERIL*] Farewell, dear sister-in-law.

[*To EDMUND*] Farewell, my lord of Gloucester.

*OSWALD enters.*

What's going on? Where's the king?

**OSWALD**

The lord of Gloucester has helped him escape. Thirty-five or thirty-six of his knights found him and met him at the gate. Along with some of Gloucester's servants, they've all gone with him to Dover, where they claim to have well-armed friends.

**CORNWALL**

Prepare the horses for your mistress.

*OSWALD exits.*

**GONERIL**

Farewell, sweet lord, and you, sister.

**CORNWALL**

Edmund, farewell.

*GONERIL and EDMUND exit.*

Go find the traitor Gloucester. Tie his arms like a thief and bring him to me.

*Some servants exit.*

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

*Enter GLOUCESTER, brought in by two or three servants*

**REGAN**

Ingrateful fox, 'tis he.

**CORNWALL**

30 Bind fast his corky arms.

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**CORNWALL**

Bind him, I say.

*Servants bind GLOUCESTER*

**REGAN**

Hard, hard. O filthy traitor!

**GLOUCESTER**

35 Unmerciful lady as you are, I'm none.

**CORNWALL**

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

*REGAN plucks GLOUCESTER's beard*

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**REGAN**

So white, and such a traitor?

**GLOUCESTER**

40 Naughty lady,  
These hairs which thou dost ravish from my chin  
Will quicken and accuse thee. I am your host.  
With robbers' hands my hospitable favors  
You should not ruffle thus. What will you do?

**CORNWALL**

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

**REGAN**

Be simple-answered, for we know the truth.

**CORNWALL**

And what confederacy have you with the traitors  
Late footed in the kingdom?

**REGAN**

To whose hands  
50 You have sent the lunatic king. Speak.

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**CORNWALL**

Cunning.

Though I cannot condemn him to death without a trial, I  
can still use my power to express my anger against him  
somehow. Some men might blame me for this, but they  
won't dare oppose me. Who's there? The traitor?

*GLOUCESTER enters, brought in by two or three servants.*

**REGAN**

The ungrateful fox! That's him.

**CORNWALL**

Tie up his withered arms.

**GLOUCESTER**

What do you mean by this, your Graces? My friends,  
remember that you are my guests in this house. Don't  
abuse your host, friends.

**CORNWALL**

Tie him up, I say.

*Servants tie up GLOUCESTER.*

**REGAN**

Bind him tighter, tighter. Oh, the filthy traitor!

**GLOUCESTER**

I'm no traitor, you merciless lady.

**CORNWALL**

Tie him to this chair. Villain, you'll see—

*REGAN pulls GLOUCESTER's beard.*

**GLOUCESTER**

By the kind gods, it's disgraceful for you to pull my beard.

**REGAN**

So old and venerable, and still such a traitor?

**GLOUCESTER**

Wicked lady, these white hairs you tear from my chin will  
come to life and accuse you. I am your host. You should not  
be grabbing at your host's face with your robbers' hands.  
What are you doing?

**CORNWALL**

Come, sir, what letters have you gotten from France lately?

**REGAN**

Be honest, because we already know the truth.

**CORNWALL**

And what is your relationship with the traitors who have  
landed in our kingdom recently?

**REGAN**

The ones to whom you've sent the insane king. Speak.

**GLOUCESTER**

I have a letter that only speculates about what's going on. It  
came from a neutral person, not someone opposed to you.

**CORNWALL**

A cunning answer.

**REGAN**

55 And false.

**CORNWALL**

Where hast thou sent the king?

**GLOUCESTER**

To Dover.

**REGAN**

Wherefore to Dover? Wast thou not charged at peril—

**CORNWALL**

Wherefore to Dover?—Let him first answer that.

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**REGAN**

Wherefore to Dover, sir?

**GLOUCESTER**

Because I would not see thy cruel nails  
Pluck out his poor old eyes, nor thy fierce sister  
In his anointed flesh stick boarish fangs.  
65 The sea, with such a storm as his bare head  
In hell-black night endured, would have buoyed up,  
And quenched the stellèd fires.  
Yet poor old heart, he holp the heavens to rain.  
If wolves had at thy gate howled that stern time,  
70 Thou shouldst have said, "Good porter, turn the key,"  
All cruel's else subscribed. But I shall see  
The wingèd vengeance overtake such children.

**CORNWALL**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

75 He that will think to live till he be old,  
Give me some help!

*CORNWALL plucks out one of GLOUCESTER's eyes and stamps on it*

O cruel! O you gods!

**REGAN**

One side will mock another—th' other too.

**CORNWALL**

If you see vengeance—

**FIRST SERVANT**

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

**REGAN**

How now, you dog?

**FIRST SERVANT**

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

**REGAN**

What do you mean?

**CORNWALL**

My villain!

**REGAN**

And a false one.

**CORNWALL**

Where have you sent the king?

**GLOUCESTER**

To Dover.

**REGAN**

Why to Dover? Weren't you commanded, under penalty of death—

**CORNWALL**

Why to Dover?—Let him answer first.

**GLOUCESTER**

I'm backed into a corner now, but I must go on.

**REGAN**

Why to Dover, sir?

**GLOUCESTER**

Because I didn't want to watch your cruel fingernails pluck out his poor old eyes, or see your vicious sister sink her fangs into his kingly flesh. You made him endure a storm so terrible that if it had occurred at sea, the waves would have risen up to extinguish the stars' fires. But the poor old man just added to the rain with his tears. If wolves had been howling at your gate during that storm, you would have said, "Good doorman, let them in." Even the cruelest being would have given in to pity in such a situation, but you did not. I will see vengeance swoop down on you from heaven, you cruel children.

**CORNWALL**

No, you won't "see" anything. Servants, hold his chair. I'm going to put my foot on his eyes.

**GLOUCESTER**

If any man hopes to grow old someday, let him help me!

*CORNWALL plucks out one of GLOUCESTER's eyes and stamps on it.*

Oh, cruel! Oh, you gods!

**REGAN**

Now his face is crooked—do the other eye too.

**CORNWALL**

If you ever "see" vengeance—

**FIRST SERVANT**

Stop this, my lord! I've served you ever since I was a child.  
But I've never done you a better service than by now telling you to stop.

**REGAN**

What's this, you dog?

**FIRST SERVANT**

If you had a beard, lady, I'd pull it and spit in your face for this cause.

**REGAN**

What do you think you're doing?

**CORNWALL**

One of my own servants!

**FIRST SERVANT**

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

*FIRST SERVANT and CORNWALL draw and fight. CORNWALL is wounded*

**REGAN**

90 *[to another servant]*

Give me thy sword.—A peasant stand up thus?  
*[takes a sword, runs at FIRST SERVANT behind, and kills him]*

**FIRST SERVANT**

95 Oh, I am slain!—My lord, you have one eye left  
 To see some mischief on him. Oh!  
*[dies]*

**CORNWALL**

Lest it see more, prevent it. Out, vile jelly!  
*[plucks out GLOUCESTER's other eye]*  
 Where is thy luster now?

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**REGAN**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**REGAN**

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

*Exeunt some servants with GLOUCESTER*

*[to CORNWALL] How is 't, my lord? How look you?*

**CORNWALL**

I have received a hurt. Follow me, lady.—  
 Turn out that eyeless villain. Throw this slave  
 Upon the dunghill.— Regan, I bleed apace.  
 115 Untimely comes this hurt. Give me your arm.

*Exit CORNWALL with REGAN*

**SECOND SERVANT**

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

**THIRD SERVANT**

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

**SECOND SERVANT**

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

**FIRST SERVANT**

Come on then, let's fight—take your chances against me.

*The FIRST SERVANT and CORNWALL draw their swords and  
 fight. CORNWALL is wounded.*

**REGAN**

*[To another servant]* Give me your sword. Is a peasant really  
 standing up like this? *[She takes a sword, runs at the FIRST  
 SERVANT, and stabs him in the back, killing him]*

**FIRST SERVANT**

Oh, I've been murdered!

*[To GLOUCESTER] My lord, you still have one eye left to see  
 that I've injured him at least. Oh! *[He dies]**

**CORNWALL**

Then we'll have to prevent it from seeing more. Come out,  
 you worthless jelly! *[He plucks out GLOUCESTER's other  
 eye]* Where is your sparkle now?

**GLOUCESTER**

All is dark and comfortless. Where's my son Edmund?  
 Edmund, let your love for your father inspire you to avenge  
 this horrible act!

**REGAN**

Enough, you treacherous villain! You call for a son who  
 hates you. It was Edmund who revealed your treason to us.  
 He is too good to have any pity for you.

**GLOUCESTER**

Oh, my stupidity! Then Edgar has been slandered. Kind  
 gods, forgive me for that, and let him prosper!

**REGAN**

Go throw him out at the gates, and let him smell his way to  
 Dover.

*Some servants exit with GLOUCESTER.*

*[To CORNWALL] What is it, my lord? How do you feel?*

**CORNWALL**

I've been wounded. Follow me, lady.

*[To servants] Throw out that eyeless villain. And throw this  
 treacherous servant onto the manure pit.*

*[To REGAN] Regan, I'm bleeding badly. This is a bad time for  
 such an injury. Give me your arm.*

*CORNWALL exits with REGAN.*

**SECOND SERVANT**

If our wicked master escapes justice, I'll stop caring about  
 whether anything I do is wicked.

**THIRD SERVANT**

And if Regan lives a long life and dies a natural death, then  
 women might as well all become monsters.

**SECOND SERVANT**

Let's follow the old earl, and get that crazy Tom to lead him  
 where he wants to go. He's a homeless madman, so he can  
 get away with anything.

**THIRD SERVANT**

Go thou. I'll fetch some flax and whites of eggs  
To apply to his bleeding face. Now heaven help him!

125

*Exeunt severally*

**THIRD SERVANT**

Go then. I'll get some cloth and egg whites to apply to his bleeding face. Now heaven help him!

*They exit in different directions.*

**Act 4, Scene 1****Shakespeare**

*Enter EDGAR diguised*

**EDGAR**

Yet better thus, and known to be contemned,  
Than still contemned and flattered. To be worst,  
The lowest and most dejected thing of fortune  
Stands still in esperance, lives not in fear.  
5 The lamentable change is from the best;  
The worst returns to laughter. Welcome, then,  
Thou unsubstantial air that I embrace!  
The wretch that thou hast blown unto the worst  
Owes nothing to thy blasts.

*Enter GLOUCESTER led by an OLD MAN*

10 But who comes here?  
My father, poorly led? World, world, O world!  
But that thy strange mutations make us hate thee,  
Life would not yield to age.

**OLD MAN**

*[to GLOUCESTER]* O my good lord,  
I have been your tenant and your father's tenant these fourscore years.

**GLOUCESTER**

Away, get thee away. Good friend, be gone.  
Thy comforts can do me no good at all.  
Thee they may hurt.

20 OLD MAN  
Alack, sir, you cannot see your way.

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**OLD MAN**

How now? Who's there?

**EDGAR**

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

**OLD MAN**

*[to GLOUCESTER]*  
'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."

**Shakescleare Translation**

*EDGAR (in disguise) enters.*

**EDGAR**

I'm still better off like this—as a beggar who is openly hated—than when I was a nobleman who was flattered to my face and hated in secret. Even the worst, lowliest, and most dejected creatures still have a little hope for better things, and live without fear of getting worse. The worst kind of change is when good luck goes bad—but such a change can make us laugh at fortune's tricks. I welcome, then, these winds of change and freedom! I've hit the bottom, so I have nothing more to fear from bad luck.

*GLOUCESTER enters, led by an OLD MAN.*

But who's that coming? My father, accompanied only by one poor peasant? Oh world, world, world! If the strange twists of fortune didn't make life hateful, we would never age and die.

**OLD MAN**

*[To GLOUCESTER]* Oh, my good lord, I have been your tenant and your father's tenant for these last eighty years.

**GLOUCESTER**

Away, go away. Leave me, good friend. Your help can't do me any good, and it might put you in danger.

**OLD MAN**

But you cannot see where you're going, sir.

**GLOUCESTER**

I have nowhere to go, so I don't need eyes to see my path. And even when I could see, I followed the wrong path. It's often the case that when we are prosperous we get overconfident. But being deprived of something teaches us humility and is actually beneficial. Oh my dear son Edgar, the object of your deceived father's anger, if I might live to touch your face again, that would be as good as getting my eyes back!

**OLD MAN**

What's that? Who's there?

**EDGAR**

*[To himself]* Oh gods! Who can ever say, "It can't get any worse?" I'm worse off now than I ever was before.

**OLD MAN**

*[To GLOUCESTER]* It's poor crazy Tom.

**EDGAR**

*[To himself]* And things might get worse still. As long as we are able to say "this is the worst," then it's not the worst yet.

**OLD MAN**

35 [to EDGAR] Fellow, where goest?

**GLOUCESTER**

Is it a beggarman?

**OLD MAN**

Madman and beggar too.

**GLOUCESTER**

He has some reason, else he could not beg.  
I' th' 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 th' gods.  
45 They kill us for their sport.

**EDGAR**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

50 Is that the naked fellow?

**OLD MAN**

Ay, my lord.

**GLOUCESTER**

Then prithee, get thee gone. If for my sake  
Thou wilt o'ertake us hence a mile or twain  
I' th' way toward Dover, do it for ancient love.  
55 And bring some covering for this naked soul,  
Which I'll entreat to lead me.

**OLD MAN**

Alack, sir, he is mad.

**GLOUCESTER**

'Tis the time's plague when madmen lead the blind.  
Do as I bid thee. Or rather, do thy pleasure.  
60 Above the rest, be gone.

**OLD MAN**

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

*Exit OLD MAN*

**GLOUCESTER**

Sirrah, naked fellow—

**EDGAR**

Poor Tom's a-cold.  
65 [aside] I cannot daub it further.

**GLOUCESTER**

Come hither, fellow.

**EDGAR**

[aside] And yet I must.—Bless thy sweet eyes, they  
bleed.

**GLOUCESTER**

Know'st thou the way to Dover?

**OLD MAN**

[To EDGAR] Where are you going, fellow?

**GLOUCESTER**

Is it a beggar?

**OLD MAN**

He's both a madman and a beggar.

**GLOUCESTER**

He must still have some sanity, or else he couldn't beg. I  
saw a man like that in last night's storm, and he made me  
think of how insignificant humans are. He reminded me of  
my son, though at the time my son was my enemy. Now I  
know better. To the gods, we are like flies killed for fun by  
undisciplined boys.

**EDGAR**

[To himself] How can this be? It's a bad business to have to  
keep playing the fool in the face of my father's sorrow. I'm  
only distressing myself and him.

[To GLOUCESTER] Bless you, master!

**GLOUCESTER**

Is that the naked fellow?

**OLD MAN**

Yes, my lord.

**GLOUCESTER**

Then please go. If you're willing to do me a favor—for the  
sake of our long and loyal relationship—then catch up with  
us a mile or two down the road towards Dover. And bring  
some clothes for this naked beggar. I'll ask him to lead me.

**OLD MAN**

But alas, sir, he's crazy.

**GLOUCESTER**

It's the sickness of our times that madmen must lead the  
blind. Do as I tell you. Or rather, do whatever you want. But  
above all, leave this place.

**OLD MAN**

I'll bring him the best clothes that I have, come what may.

*The OLD MAN exits.*

**GLOUCESTER**

Sir, naked fellow—

**EDGAR**

Poor Tom's cold.

[To himself] I can't continue this charade.

**GLOUCESTER**

Come here, man.

**EDGAR**

[To himself] And yet I must.

[To GLOUCESTER] Bless your sweet eyes. They're bleeding.

**GLOUCESTER**

Do you know the way to Dover?

**EDGAR**

Both stile and gate, horseway and footpath. Poor Tom hath been scared out of his good wits. Bless thee, goodman's son, from the foul fiend! Five fiends have been in poor Tom at once: of lust, as Obidicut; Hobbididence, prince of dumbness; Mahu, of stealing; Modo, of murder; Flibbertigibbet, of mopping and mowing, who since possesses chambermaids and waiting-women. So bless thee, master.

**GLOUCESTER**

*[Giving EDGAR a purse]*

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

**EDGAR**

Ay, master.

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**EDGAR**

Give me thy arm.  
Poor Tom shall lead thee.

*Exeunt*

**EDGAR**

I know every step of the way—post and gate, horse path and footpath. Poor Tom has been scared out of his wits. Bless you, friend, and avoid the devil! Five devils have possessed poor Tom all at once: Obidicut, the devil of lust; Hobbididence, the devil of muteness; Mahu, the devil of stealing; Modo, the devil of murder; and Flibbertigibbet, the devil of making mocking faces, who possesses many chambermaids and serving ladies lately. So bless you, master.

**GLOUCESTER**

*[Giving EDGAR a purse]* Here, take this purse, you who have been humbled by all the plagues of heaven. My misery makes yours seem less wretched. God, let it always be this way. Let the spoiled and glutinous man—who makes the laws serve his own desires, and won't see the misery around him because he doesn't feel it himself—let him feel your anger, you gods. The even distribution of wealth should rid us of excess luxuries, and then each man might have enough to live. Do you know Dover?

**EDGAR**

Yes, master.

**GLOUCESTER**

There is a cliff there, whose high and bending head leans precariously over the deep sea. Bring me to the very edge of it, and I'll repay you for your troubles with something valuable on my person. Once I'm there I won't need to be led anymore.

**EDGAR**

Give me your arm. Poor Tom will lead you.

*They exit.*

## Act 4, Scene 2

### Shakespeare

*Enter GONERIL and EDMUND the bastard*

**GONERIL**

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

*Enter OSWALD*

Now, where's your master?

**OSWALD**

Madam, within—but never man so changed.  
I told him of the army that was landed.  
He smiled at it. I told him you were coming.  
His answer was "The worse." Of Gloucester's treachery  
And of the loyal service of his son,  
When I informed him, then he called me "sot,"  
And told me I had turned the wrong side out.  
What most he should dislike seems pleasant to him;  
What like, offensive.

### Shakescleare Translation

*GONERIL and EDMUND enter.*

**GONERIL**

Welcome, my lord. I'm surprised that my bland husband  
hasn't met us on the way.

*OSWALD enters.*

*[To OSWALD] Now, where's your master?*

**OSWALD**

He's inside, madam. But you've never seen a man so changed. I told him that the French army had landed, and he smiled at the news. I told him that you were coming, and he answered with "too bad." When I told him about Gloucester's treachery and his son Edmund's loyal service, he called me "fool," and told me I had it backwards. The things he ought to dislike seem pleasant to him, and what should be good news offends him.

**GONERIL***[to EDMUND]*

Then shall you go no further.

- 15 It is the cowish terror of his spirit  
 That dares not undertake. He'll not feel wrongs  
 Which tie him to an answer. Our wishes on the way  
 May prove effects. Back, Edmund, to my brother.  
 Hasten his musters and conduct his powers.  
 20 I must change names at home, and give the distaff  
 Into my husband's hands. This trusty servant  
 Shall pass between us. Ere long you are like to hear—  
 If you dare venture in your own behalf—  
 A mistress's command. Wear this. Spare speech.  
 25 Decline your head. This kiss, if it durst speak,  
 Would stretch thy spirits up into the air.  
*[kisses EDMUND]* Conceive, and fare thee well.

**EDMUND**

Yours in the ranks of death.

**GONERIL**

My most dear Gloucester!

*Exit EDMUND*

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

**OSWALD**

Madam, here comes my lord.

*Exit OSWALD**Enter ALBANY***GONERIL**

I have been worth the whistle.

**ALBANY**

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

**GONERIL**

No more. The text is foolish.

**ALBANY**

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

**GONERIL**

- Milk-livered man  
 That bear'st a cheek for blows, a head for wrongs—  
 Who hast not in thy brows an eye discerning  
 60 Thine honor from thy suffering; that not know'st  
 Fools do those villains pity who are punished  
 Ere they have done their mischief. Where's thy drum?

**GONERIL**

*[To EDMUND]* Then you shouldn't come any further. It's my husband's cowardly terror that keeps him from taking risks. He'll ignore insults that should require him to retaliate. But what you and I talked about on the way here—our desire for each other—may soon be realized. Edmund, go back to my brother-in-law Cornwall. Help gather his troops and lead his armies. When I get home I will change roles with Albany, and thus make my husband play the housewife. This trusty servant Oswald can carry messages between us. If you trust yourself to ask, you will soon be likely to hear my command as both Duchess and as your lover. Wear this for me. *[She gives him a favor]* *[A]* Don't speak. Bend down to me. If this kiss could speak, it would encourage you to do great things. *[She kisses EDMUND]* I hope you understand. Farewell.

 A favor was a small token-- sometimes a scarf, badge, or ribbon-- given to indicate support.

**EDMUND**

I'm your servant until death.

**GONERIL**

My dearest Gloucester!

*EDMUND exits.*

Oh, how different two men can be! You deserve my services as a woman, Edmund. My foolish husband still thinks he possesses me.

**OSWALD**

Madam, here comes my lord.

*OSWALD exits.**ALBANY enters.***GONERIL**

So I'm finally worth your time.

**ALBANY**

Oh Goneril, you aren't worth the dust that the rude wind blows in your face. I fear your nature. I can't trust anyone who condemns her own father. A woman who cuts herself off from her family is like a branch that tries to break away from the tree that gave it life—she must wither and come to ruin.

**GONERIL**

No more of that. Your sermon is stupid.

**ALBANY**

Wisdom and goodness seem vile to vile people. To the filthy everything seems filthy. What have you done? You two tigers—not daughters—what wicked deeds have you done? You barbarous degenerates, you've driven your father crazy. He once was a gracious old man whom even an angry bear would respect. How could my good brother-in-law allow you to do it, when he himself was given his power by the king? If the heavens don't send down avenging angels to punish these terrible crimes, then the end will come: humanity must turn on itself, all of us destroying each other like monsters from the deep.

**GONERIL**

You cowardly man, you always turn the other cheek and let abuse rain down on your head. You can't tell the difference between restraining yourself and being taken advantage of. You don't realize that only fools pity villains like Gloucester, whom we punish before they can commit their crimes. Where's your war drum? The King of France spreads his

France spreads his banners in our noiseless land,  
With plumèd helm thy state begins to threat,  
Whiles thou, a moral fool, sits still and cries,  
"Alack, why does he so?"

**ALBANY**

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

**GONERIL**

70 O vain fool!

**ALBANY**

Thou changèd and self-covered thing, for shame!  
Bemonster not thy feature. Were 't my fitness  
To let these hands obey my blood,  
They are apt enough to dislocate and tear  
75 Thy flesh and bones. Howe'er thou art a fiend,  
A woman's shape doth shield thee.

**GONERIL**

Marry, your manhood, mew!

*Enter FIRST MESSENGER*

**ALBANY**

What news?

**FIRST MESSENGER**

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

**ALBANY**

Gloucester's eyes?

**FIRST MESSENGER**

A servant that he bred, thrilled with remorse,  
Opposed against the act, bending his sword  
85 To his great master; who thereat enraged  
Flew on him and amongst them felled him dead—  
But not without that harmful stroke, which since  
Hath plucked him after.

**ALBANY**

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

**FIRST MESSENGER**

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

**GONERIL**

*[aside]*  
One way I like this well.  
But being widow, and my Gloucester with her,  
May all the building in my fancy pluck  
100 Upon my hateful life. Another way  
The news is not so tart.— I'll read and answer.

*Exit GONERIL*

**ALBANY**

Where was his son when they did take his eyes?

banners in our peaceful country and your kingdom is at risk of war. But all you do is sit here, you moralizing fool, and complain, "Alas, why is he doing that?"

**ALBANY**

Look at yourself, devil! Moral deformity is expected in devils, so it doesn't seem as horrible in them as it does when it appears in a woman.

**GONERIL**

Oh useless fool!

**ALBANY**

Shame on you, you warped and false creature! Don't make faces at me and express your inner monstrous nature. If I could allow my hands to do what my heart desires, I would rip you in two. But even if you are a devil, I won't hurt a woman.

**GONERIL**

What a man you are, meowing like a kitten!

*The FIRST MESSENGER enters.*

**ALBANY**

What's the news?

**FIRST MESSENGER**

Oh, my lord, the Duke of Cornwall's dead. He was killed by his servant as he was about to gouge out Gloucester's other eye.

**ALBANY**

Gloucester's eyes?

**FIRST MESSENGER**

A servant of his own house was moved by pity to oppose Cornwall's actions. He drew his sword against his great master, who became enraged and attacked and killed the servant—but not before he had received the wound that killed him afterward.

**ALBANY**

This shows that there *is* justice in heaven. It's proved by the fact that these earthly crimes are punished so quickly! But oh, poor Gloucester. Did he lose his other eye?

**FIRST MESSENGER**

Both, both, my lord.

*[To GONERIL]* This letter, madam, demands an immediate answer. It's from your sister.

**GONERIL**

*[To herself]* In a way I'm glad that Cornwall's dead. But now that Regan is a widow, and my Edmund <sup>2</sup> is with her, then Edmund might choose her over me. Then all my fantasies will crumble and I'll have to continue this hateful life. But in another way, the news is not so tragic.

*[To FIRST MESSENGER and ALBANY]* I'll go read the letter and answer it.

*GONERIL exits.*

<sup>2</sup> In the original text, Goneril refers to Edmund by his title as Gloucester's heir.

**ALBANY**

Where was Gloucester's son Edmund when they took out his father's eyes?

**FIRST MESSENGER**

Come with my lady hither.

**ALBANY**

He is not here.

**FIRST MESSENGER**

105 No, my good lord. I met him back again.

**ALBANY**

Knows he the wickedness?

**FIRST MESSENGER**

Ay, my good lord. 'Twas he informed against him,  
And quit the house on purpose that their punishment  
Might have the freer course.

**ALBANY**

110 Gloucester, I live  
To thank thee for the love thou showed'st the king,  
And to revenge thine eyes.—Come hither, friend.  
Tell me what more thou know'st.

*Exeunt*

**FIRST MESSENGER**

He was riding here with my lady.

**ALBANY**

But he's not here.

**FIRST MESSENGER**

No, my good lord. I met him on his way back.

**ALBANY**

Does he know about all this wickedness?

**FIRST MESSENGER**

Yes, my lord. He was the one who informed against his  
father, and left the house so that they could punish  
Gloucester fully without worrying about Edmund's feelings.

**ALBANY**

Gloucester, I will live to thank you for the love you showed  
the king, and I'll avenge your eyes.

*[To FIRST MESSENGER] Come here, friend. Tell me what else  
you know.*

*They exit.*

## Act 4, Scene 3

### Shakespeare

*Enter KENT disguised and 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  
5 kingdom so much fear and danger that his personal return  
was most required and necessary.

**KENT**

Who hath he left behind him general?

**GENTLEMAN**

The Marshal of France, Monsieur la Far.

**KENT**

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

**GENTLEMAN**

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

**KENT**

O, then it moved her?

**GENTLEMAN**

Not to a rage. Patience and sorrow strove  
Who should express her goodliest. You have seen  
Sunshine and rain at once—her smiles and tears  
20 Were like a better way. Those happy smilts  
That played on her ripe lip seemed not to know

### Shakescleare Translation

*KENT (in disguise) and the GENTLEMAN enter.*

**KENT**

Do you know why the King of France went back home so  
suddenly?

**GENTLEMAN**

He left something unfinished in his kingdom, which he  
remembered after arriving here. It was important and  
dangerous enough that he had to return in person to deal  
with it.

**KENT**

Who has he left behind as his general?

**GENTLEMAN**

The Marshal of France, Monsieur la Far.

**KENT**

Did the letters you delivered cause Queen Cordelia to show  
any grief?

**GENTLEMAN**

Yes, sir. She took them and read them in my presence, and  
now and then a large tear would trickle down her delicate  
cheek. It seemed that she was able to control her deepest  
emotions, even though they tried to overcome her.

**KENT**

Oh, then the news moved her?

**GENTLEMAN**

Not to any burst of passion. She seemed to struggle  
between patience and sorrow, deciding which would best  
express her feelings. You've seen how it can rain while the  
sun is still shining—her smiles and tears were like that, but  
even more beautiful. The little smiles on her lips seemed

What guests were in her eyes, which parted thence  
As pearls from diamonds dropped. In brief,  
Sorrow would be a rarity most beloved  
If all could so become it.

25

**KENT**

Made she no verbal question?

**GENTLEMAN**

Faith, once or twice she heaved the name of "father"  
Pantingly forth as if it pressed her heart,  
Cried, "Sisters, sisters! Shame of ladies, sisters!  
30 Kent, father, sisters! What, i' th' storm, i' th'  
night?  
Let pity not be believed." There she shook  
The holy water from her heavenly eyes,  
And clamor moistened. Then away she started  
35 To deal with grief alone.

**KENT**

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

**GENTLEMAN**

40 No.

**KENT**

Was this before the king returned?

**GENTLEMAN**

No, since.

**KENT**

Well, sir, the poor distressed Lear's i' th' town,  
Who sometime in his better tune remembers  
45 What we are come about, and by no means  
Will yield to see his daughter.

**GENTLEMAN**

Why, good sir?

**KENT**

A sovereign shame so elbows him. His own unkindness  
That stripped her from his benediction turned her  
50 To foreign casualties, gave her dear rights  
To his dog-hearted daughters. These things sting  
His mind so venomously that burning shame  
Detains him from Cordelia.

**GENTLEMAN**

Alack, poor gentleman!

**KENT**

55 Of Albany's and Cornwall's powers you heard not?

**GENTLEMAN**

'Tis so. They are afoot.

**KENT**

Well, sir, I'll bring you to our master Lear  
And leave you to attend him. Some dear cause  
Will in concealment wrap me up awhile.  
60 When I am known aright you shall not grieve  
Lending me this acquaintance. I pray you, go  
Along with me.

*Exeunt*

oblivious to her tears, which dropped like pearls from her diamond eyes. In short, sorrow would be a precious thing if everyone were as lovely in their sorrow as Cordelia was.

**KENT**

Did she ask anything out loud?

**GENTLEMAN**

Well, once or twice she sighed the name "father," as if the word were pressing on her heart. And once she cried out, "Sister, sisters! You most shameful of all ladies, sisters! Kent, father, sisters! What, in a storm, in the middle of the night? No false shows of pity can be trusted!" And then she shook the holy tears from her heavenly eyes, and went off to deal with her grief alone.

**KENT**

It's the stars, the stars above us who decide our fates.  
Otherwise one couple couldn't have children so different  
from each other as Cordelia and her sisters are. Have you spoken to her since then?

**GENTLEMAN**

No.

**KENT**

Was this before the King of France returned home?

**GENTLEMAN**

No, after that.

**KENT**

Well, sir, the poor distressed Lear is in Dover. When he's in his right mind, he remembers why we're here, and he refuses to see his daughter Cordelia.

**GENTLEMAN**

Why, good sir?

**KENT**

He is pained by a powerful sense of shame. He remembers how unkind he was to her; and how he stripped her of his blessing and turned her out to take her chances in a foreign land, and then gave her share of the kingdom to her two hard-hearted sisters. These things sting his mind so venomously that a burning shame keeps him from going to see Cordelia.

**GENTLEMAN**

Alas, the poor gentleman!

**KENT**

Have you heard anything about Albany and Cornwall's troops?

**GENTLEMAN**

Yes. They're on the march.

**KENT**

Well, sir, I'll bring you to our master Lear, and leave you to attend to him. I have some important business that will force me to disguise myself again for a while. When my true identity is revealed, you won't regret helping me like this. Please, come along with me.

*They exit.*

## Act 4, Scene 4

### Shakespeare

*Enter, with drum and colors, CORDELIA, DOCTOR, and soldiers*

**CORDELIA**

Alack, 'tis he. Why, he was met even now  
As mad as the vexed sea, singing aloud,  
Crowned with rank fumiter and furrow-weeds,  
With burdocks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flowers,  
5 Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow  
In our sustaining corn.— A century send forth.  
Search every acre in the high-grown field,  
And bring him to our eye.

*Exit some soldiers*

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

**DOCTOR**

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

**CORDELIA**

All blessed secrets,  
All you unpublished virtues of the earth,  
Spring with my tears. Be aidant and remediate  
20 In the good man's distress. Seek, seek for him,  
Lest his ungoverned rage dissolve the life  
That wants the means to lead it.

*Enter SECOND MESSENGER*

**SECOND MESSENGER**

News, madam.  
The British powers are marching hitherward.

**CORDELIA**

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

*Exeunt*

### Shakescleare Translation

*CORDELIA enters with a DOCTOR, along with soldiers carrying drums and banners.*

**CORDELIA**

Alas, it's the king. Why, just recently he was seen acting as crazy as the stormy sea, singing out loud and wearing a crown of thick weeds--burdock, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo, and all the weeds that struggle against our life-sustaining wheat.

*[To soldiers] Send out a hundred soldiers to find him. Search every acre of the overgrown fields, and bring him here for me to see.*

*Some soldiers exit.*

What can human medical knowledge do to restore his sanity? Whoever helps him can have all my material wealth.

**DOCTOR**

It is possible, madam. Rest is the best thing to comfort human nature, and rest is the thing Lear hasn't had. But there are many medicinal herbs that will help him to forget his anguish and to sleep for a while.

**CORDELIA**

Then, you precious herbs--you secret healing plants of the earth--may you grow as fast as my tears fall, and heal the good old man's distress. Now go, go find those herbs for him, before his overwhelming anger uses up all his life and energy.

*A SECOND MESSENGER enters.*

**SECOND MESSENGER**

I have news, madam. The British troops are marching this way.

**CORDELIA**

We already knew this. Our troops are ready to receive them. Oh, dear father, I'm doing all this for you. This is why the great King of France listened to and pitied my persistent and pleading tears. It wasn't inflated ambition that made us invade England, but love—dear love!—and my old father's abused rights. Hopefully I will hear him and see him soon.

*They all exit.*

## Act 4, Scene 5

### Shakespeare

*Enter REGAN and the steward OSWALD*

**REGAN**

But are my brother's powers set forth?

### Shakescleare Translation

*REGAN and OSWALD enter.*

**REGAN**

But have my brother-in-law Albany's troops been sent forward?

**OSWALD**

Ay, madam.

**REGAN**

Himself in person there?

**OSWALD**

Madam, with much ado.

5 Your sister is the better soldier.

**REGAN**

Lord Edmund spake not with your lord at home?

**OSWALD**

No, madam.

**REGAN**

What might import my sister's letter to him?

**OSWALD**

I know not, lady.

**REGAN**

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

**OSWALD**

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

**REGAN**

Our troops set forth tomorrow. Stay with us.  
The ways are dangerous.

**OSWALD**

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

**REGAN**

Why should she write to Edmund? Might not you  
Transport her purposes by word? Belike  
Some things—I know not what. I'll love thee much.  
25 Let me unseal the letter.

**OSWALD**

Madam, I had rather—

**REGAN**

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

**OSWALD**

I, madam?

**REGAN**

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

**OSWALD**

Yes, madam.

**REGAN**

Is he there in person?

**OSWALD**

Yes, madam, and making a big fuss. Your sister Goneril is  
the better soldier of the two.

**REGAN**

Did Lord Edmund speak with your lord at home?

**OSWALD**

No, madam.

**REGAN**

What did my sister's letter to him say?

**OSWALD**

I don't know, lady.

**REGAN**

Well, he hurried away on some serious business. It was  
foolishness to let Gloucester live after plucking out his eyes.  
Wherever he goes, everyone pities him and turns against us.  
I think Edmund left to put his father out of his misery and  
end his sightless life—and also to spy out the strength of  
the enemy army.

**OSWALD**

I must go after him with my letter, madam.

**REGAN**

Our troops will set out tomorrow. Stay with us. The roads  
are dangerous.

**OSWALD**

I can't, madam. My lady ordered me to carry out her  
instructions.

**REGAN**

Why should she write to Edmund? Couldn't you just deliver  
her message verbally? Perhaps it's . . . I don't know what. I'll  
make it worth your while if you let me unseal that letter.

**OSWALD**

Madam, I'd rather—

**REGAN**

I know your lady Goneril does not love her husband Albany.  
I'm sure of that. And when she was here recently she was  
giving strange, loving glances and significant looks to the  
noble Edmund. I know you're in her confidence.

**OSWALD**

I, madam?

**REGAN**

I'm sure about this. She trusts you, I know it. So I advise you  
to take note of what I'm about to tell you. My husband is  
dead. Edmund and I have talked, and it's more appropriate  
for him to marry me than to marry Goneril. You can draw  
your own conclusions from that. If you do find Edmund,  
please give him this. [She gives Oswald a favor] And when  
you talk to your mistress about all of this, please tell her to  
come to her senses. So farewell. If you happen to hear  
anything about that blind traitor Gloucester, there will be a  
reward for anyone who cuts his life short.

**OSWALD**

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

**REGAN**

45 Fare thee well.

*Exeunt severally*

**OSWALD**

I wish I could meet him, madam. Then I would prove where  
my loyalties lie.

**REGAN**

Farewell.

*They exit in different directions.*

## Act 4, Scene 6

### Shakespeare

*Enter GLOUCESTER, and EDGAR disguised in peasant clothing*

**GLOUCESTER**

When shall we come to th' top of that same hill?

**EDGAR**

You do climb up it now. Look how we labor.

**GLOUCESTER**

Methinks the ground is even.

**EDGAR**

Horrible steep.  
5 Hark, do you hear the sea?

**GLOUCESTER**

No, truly.

**EDGAR**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

So may it be indeed.  
10 Methinks thy voice is altered, and thou speak'st  
In better phrase and matter than thou didst.

**EDGAR**

You're much deceived. In nothing am I changed  
But in my garments.

**GLOUCESTER**

Methinks you're better spoken.

**EDGAR**

15 Come on, sir. Here's the place. Stand still. How  
fearful  
And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!  
The crows and choughs that wing the midway air  
Show scarce so gross as beetles. Halfway down  
20 Hangs one that gathers samphire—dreadful trade!  
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.  
The fishermen that walk upon the beach  
Appear like mice. And yon tall anchoring bark,  
Diminished to her cock, her cock a buoy  
25 Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge  
That on th' unnumbered idle pebbles chafes  
Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more  
Lest my brain turn and the deficient sight  
Topple down headlong.

**GLOUCESTER**

30 Set me where you stand.

### Shakescleare Translation

*GLOUCESTER and EDGAR (now disguised in peasant's clothes) enter.*

**GLOUCESTER**

When will we come to the top of that cliff?

**EDGAR**

You're climbing up it now. See how we sweat and pant?

**GLOUCESTER**

The ground seems flat to me.

**EDGAR**

It's horribly steep. Listen, do you hear the sea?

**GLOUCESTER**

No, to be honest.

**EDGAR**

Well then, your other senses must have been injured by the  
trauma of losing your eyes.

**GLOUCESTER**

It might be so. It seems that your voice has changed, and  
you speak more eloquently than you did before.

**EDGAR**

You're mistaken. The only thing I've changed is my clothes.

**GLOUCESTER**

I think you're speak better now.

**EDGAR**

Come on, sir. Here's the place. Stand still. How terrifying  
and dizzy it is to look down so far! The crows and  
jackdaws flying below look smaller than beetles. Halfway  
down there's someone clinging to the cliff and gathering  
herbs—what a dreadful job! He looks tiny to me from up  
here. The fishermen walking on the beach below look like  
mice. And that tall ship anchored over there seems as small  
as its lifeboat, and its lifeboat seems as small as a tiny buoy  
that's almost too small to see. You can't even hear the  
waves crashing against the rocks from up here. I can't look  
anymore, or else my head will spin and I'll fall headfirst  
from the edge.

**GLOUCESTER**

Lead me to where you stand.

**EDGAR**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

Let go my hand.  
35 [gives EDGAR another purse]  
Here, friend, 's another purse, in it a jewel  
Well worth a poor man's taking. Fairies and gods  
Prosper it with thee! Go thou farther off.  
Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.

**EDGAR**

40 Now fare you well, good sir.

**GLOUCESTER**

With all my heart.

*EDGAR moves aside*

**EDGAR**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

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

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

**GLOUCESTER**

60 Away, and let me die.

**EDGAR**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

But have I fall'n, or no?

**EDGAR**

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

**EDGAR**

Give me your hand. You're now within a foot of the extreme  
edge. I wouldn't jump up and down here for anything under  
the sun.

**GLOUCESTER**

Let go of my hand. [He gives EDGAR another purse] Here,  
friend, here's another purse, and in it there's a jewel any  
poor man would be glad to have. May the fairies and gods  
make your wealth increase! Go further away from here. Bid  
me farewell, and let me hear you leaving.

**EDGAR**

Now farewell, good sir.

**GLOUCESTER**

With all my heart.

*EDGAR moves aside.*

**EDGAR**

[To himself] I'm toying with his despair to try and cure him  
of it.

**GLOUCESTER**

Oh you mighty gods! [He kneels] I renounce this world, and  
in your sight, I shake off my great troubles and afflictions. If  
I could bear my troubles any longer—and not rebel against  
your inevitable will—then my useless life would end up  
burning itself out. If Edgar lives, then bless him!

[To EDGAR] Now, fellow, farewell. [He falls]

**EDGAR**

Gone, sir. Farewell.

[To himself] I don't know whether a man's imagination can  
kill him, especially if he's so willing to die. If he had been  
where he thought he was, he'd be dead by now. But is he  
alive or dead?

[To GLOUCESTER, disguising his voice] Hey you, sir, friend!  
Can you hear me, sir? Speak.

[To himself] Maybe he died after all. But he's waking up.

[To GLOUCESTER, disguising his voice] Who are you, sir?

**GLOUCESTER**

Go away, and let me die.

**EDGAR**

Even if you were made of only thread, feathers, and air, you  
should've shattered like an egg after falling as far as you  
did. But you're breathing; your flesh is solid; you're not  
bleeding; you can speak. You are unbroken. Ten ship masts  
laying end to end couldn't measure the height you just fell  
from. Your life is a miracle. Speak again.

**GLOUCESTER**

But have I fallen or not?

**EDGAR**

You fell from the dreadful top of this chalky cliff. Look up at  
the height. The shrill-sounding lark up there can't be seen  
or heard. Just look up.

**GLOUCESTER**

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

75

**EDGAR**

Give me your arm.  
Up—so. How is 't? Feel you your legs? You stand.

**GLOUCESTER**

80 Too well, too well.

**EDGAR**

This is above all strangeness.  
Upon the crown o' th' cliff, what thing was that  
Which parted from you?

**GLOUCESTER**

A poor unfortunate beggar.

**EDGAR**

85 As I stood here below, methought his eyes  
Were two full moons. He had a thousand noses,  
Horns whelked and waved like the enraged sea.  
It was some fiend. Therefore, thou happy father,  
Think that the clearest gods, who make them honors  
90 Of men's impossibilities, have preserved thee.

90

**GLOUCESTER**

I do remember now. Henceforth I'll bear  
Affliction till it do cry out itself,  
"Enough, enough," and die. That thing you speak of,  
I took it for a man. Often 'twould say,  
95 "The fiend, the fiend!" He led me to that place.

95

**EDGAR**

Bear free and patient thoughts.

*Enter LEAR, mad*

But who comes here?  
The safer sense will ne'er accommodate  
His master thus.

**LEAR**

100 No, they cannot touch me for coining. I am the king  
himself.

**EDGAR**

*[aside]* O thou side-piercing sight!

**LEAR**

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

105

**EDGAR**

110 Sweet marjoram.

**LEAR**

Pass.

**GLOUCESTER**

I know that voice.

**GLOUCESTER**

Alas, I have no eyes. Are wretched men now not even  
allowed to kill themselves? It used to be some small  
comfort when someone in misery could cheat death's plan  
and frustrate its proud will.

**EDGAR**

Give me your arm. Up—there you go. How do you feel? Can  
you feel your legs? You're standing.

**GLOUCESTER**

Too well, too well.

**EDGAR**

This is stranger than strange. When you were up on the  
edge of the cliff, what was that thing I saw leaving you?

**GLOUCESTER**

A poor unfortunate beggar.

**EDGAR**

From down here it looked like his eyes were two full moons.  
He had a thousand noses, and horns twisted and wavy like  
a stormy sea. It was some devil. You fortunate old man, you  
must realize that the purest gods have saved your life. They  
perform miracles like this to win the respect and worship of  
humans.

**GLOUCESTER**

I remember now. From now on, I'll bear my misery until the  
misery itself cries out, "Enough, enough!" and dies. That  
devil you speak of—I thought it was a man. He would often  
say, "The devil, the devil!" He led me to that place.

**EDGAR**

Think carefree and peaceful thoughts.

*LEAR--insane and wearing wild flowers--enters.*

But who's that coming? A sane mind would never let its  
master dress like this.

**LEAR**

No, they can't punish me for counterfeiting coins. I am the  
king himself.

**EDGAR**

*[To himself]* Oh, what a heartbreakin sight!

**LEAR**

Nature is better than art in that respect. There's your  
enlistment money, recruit. That fellow handles his bow like  
a scarecrow. Draw the bowstring back farther, to the length  
of a tailor's yard. Look, look, a mouse! Quiet, quiet, this  
piece of toasted cheese will catch him. There's my  
challenge. I'll prove my case by fighting a giant. Bring up  
the foot soldiers. Oh, well shot, arrow. Right in the bull's  
eye, in the bull's eye! Woosh! What's the password?

**EDGAR**

Sweet marjoram.

**LEAR**

That's it. You can pass.

**GLOUCESTER**

I know that voice.

**LEAR**

Ha! Goneril with a white beard? Ha, Regan? They flattered me like a dog and told me I had white hairs in my beard ere the black ones were there. To say "Ay" and "No" to everything that I said "Ay" and "No" to was no good divinity. When the rain came to wet me once, and the wind to make me chatter, when the thunder would not peace at my bidding—there I found 'em, there I smelt 'em out. Go to, they are not men o' their words. They told me I was everything. 'Tis a lie, I am not ague-proof.

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**LEAR**

Ay, every inch a king!  
125 When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.  
I pardon that man's life. What was thy cause?  
Adultery?  
Thou shalt not die. Die for adultery? No.  
The wren goes to 't, and the small gilded fly  
130 Does lecher in my sight.  
Let copulation thrive, for Gloucester's bastard son  
Was kinder to his father than my daughters  
Got 'tween the lawful sheets. To 't, luxury, pell-mell!  
For I lack soldiers. Behold yond simpering dame,  
135 Whose face between her forks presages snow;  
That minces virtue and does shake the head  
To hear of pleasure's name.  
The fitchew, nor the soiled horse, goes to 't  
With a more riotous appetite.  
140 Down from the waist they are centaurs,  
Though women all above.  
But to the girdle do the gods inherit.  
Beneath is all the fiends'; there's hell, there's  
darkness,  
145 There's the sulphurous pit—burning, scalding,  
Stench, consumption! Fie, fie, fie, pah, pah!  
Give me an ounce of civet, good apothecary,  
To sweeten my imagination.  
There's money for thee.

**GLOUCESTER**

150 O, let me kiss that hand!

**LEAR**

Let me wipe it first. It smells of mortality.

**GLOUCESTER**

O ruined piece of nature! This great world  
Shall so wear out to naught. Dost thou know me?

**LEAR**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**EDGAR**

*[aside]* I would not take this from report. It is,  
And my heart breaks at it.

**LEAR**

160 Read.

**GLOUCESTER**

What, with the case of eyes?

**LEAR**

Ha! Goneril with a white beard? Ha, Regan? They flattered me like a dog would, and told me that I had wisdom before I had old age. To say "yes" and "no" to everything that I said "yes" and "no" to was insincere and sinful. When the rain came to soak me, and the wind to make me shiver, and the thunder wouldn't stop at my command—then I realized the truth about them. Then I sniffed them out. They aren't honest. They told me I was everything—but I'm not immune to illness.

**GLOUCESTER**

Something about that voice is familiar to me. Is it the king?

**LEAR**

Yes, every inch a king! When I glare, see how my subjects tremble. I pardon that man's life. What was your crime? Adultery? You won't have to die. Die for adultery? No. The birds do it, and the flies copulate right in front of me. Let there be more copulation, in fact, for Gloucester's bastard son was kinder to him than my daughters--conceived on a marriage bed--have been to me. Go ahead, lust, rage on! For I need more soldiers. Look at that simpering woman over there—her stiff bonnet makes her look frigid and heartless. She coyly pretends to be virtuous and blushes at the word "sex," but really she's hornier than a stallion. From the waist down women are lecherous centaurs, though they're chaste up above. God only gets the woman down to her belt—below that belongs to the devil. That part is hell, darkness, the lake of fire—burning, scalding, stench, sickness! Shame, shame, shame, ah, ah! Give me a strong perfume to sweeten my imagination, good pharmacist. There's some money for you.

**GLOUCESTER**

Oh, let me kiss that hand!

**LEAR**

Let me wipe it first. It smells of death.

**GLOUCESTER**

Oh, you ruined masterpiece of nature! This great world will end up the same way, worn down to nothing. Do you know me?

**LEAR**

I remember your eyes well enough. Are you squinting at  
me? No, do your worst, blind Cupid. I'll never love again.  
Read this letter. Just notice the handwriting.

**GLOUCESTER**

Even if every word was a sun, I couldn't see a single one.

**EDGAR**

*[To himself]* I wouldn't believe this scene if I weren't seeing it myself. And my heart breaks at the sight of it.

**LEAR**

Read it.

**GLOUCESTER**

How, with my emptyeye sockets?

**LEAR**

Oh ho, are you there with me? No eyes in your head, nor no money in your purse? Your eyes are in a heavy case, your purse in a light. Yet you see how this world goes.

**GLOUCESTER**

165 I see it feelingly.

**LEAR**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

Ay, sir.

**LEAR**

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

175 Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand.  
Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back.  
Thou hotly lust'st to use her in that kind  
For which thou whipp'st her. The usurer hangs the cozener.  
180 Through tattered clothes great vices do appear;  
Robes and furred gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,  
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks.  
Arm it in rags, a pigmy's straw does pierce it.  
None does offend—none, I say, none. I'll able 'em.  
185 Take that of me, my friend, who have the power  
To seal th' accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes,  
And like a scurvy politician seem  
To see the things thou dost not. Now, now, now, now,  
Pull off my boots. Harder, harder. So.

**EDGAR**

190 [aside] O matter and impertinency mixed! Reason in madness!

**LEAR**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

Alack, alack the day!

**LEAR**

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

*Enter GENTLEMAN with two others*

**GENTLEMAN**

Oh, here he is. Lay hand upon him.—Sir,  
205 Your most dear daughter—

**LEAR**

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

**LEAR**

Oh, ha, is that the way things are? You won't have eyes in your head until there's money in your purse? Your eyes are in a bad way and your purse is empty, but you see how this world works.

**GLOUCESTER**

I see by feeling.

**LEAR**

What, are you crazy? A man can see how this world works without needing eyes. Look with your ears. See how that judge condemns an ordinary thief. But listen: if you have them switch places, do you think you could tell the difference between the judge and the thief? Have you seen a farmer's dog bark at a beggar?

**GLOUCESTER**

Yes, sir.

**LEAR**

And the man run from the mutt? There you can see the great image of authority: even a dog is obeyed when it's in power. You rascally officer, restrain your bloody hands! Why are you whipping that whore? Whip your own back instead. You lust after her and long to use her for the same crime you're whipping her for. The loanshark hangs the cheater. It's easy to see sins through tattered clothes, but rich robes and gowns hide everything. Cover up a sin with gold, and the mighty sword of justice can't touch it. But dress a sin in rags, and even a piece of straw can pierce it. No one is a criminal—no one, I say, no one. I'll pardon them all. Take that from me, my friend. I have the power to stop the prosecutors' lips. Get yourself some glass eyes, and pretend to see things you can't—like a corrupt politician. Now, now, now, now, pull off my boots. Harder, harder. Like that.

**EDGAR**

[To himself] Oh sense and nonsense mixed! Reason in madness!

**LEAR**

If you're going to cry over my bad luck, then take my eyes too. I know you well enough. Your name is Gloucester. You must be patient. I came here crying. You know that when we first smell the air as newborns we wail and cry. I'll preach to you. Listen to me.

**GLOUCESTER**

Alas, how awful!

**LEAR**

When we're born, we cry because we've arrived at this great stage of fools. I like your hat. It's a clever strategy to make horseshoes out of felt. I'll put it to the test. And when I've sneaked up on those sons-in-law of mine, then I'll kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!

*The GENTLEMAN and two others enter.*

**GENTLEMAN**

[To the other gentlemen] Oh, here's the king. Grab him.

[To LEAR] Sir, your most dear daughter—

**LEAR**

No rescue for me? What, I'm a prisoner? I was born to be the fool of fate. Treat me well. You'll get your ransom. Let me have a doctor. I'm wounded in the brain.

I am cut to th' brains.

**GENTLEMAN**

210 You shall have anything.

**LEAR**

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

**GENTLEMAN**

215 Good sir—

**LEAR**

I will die bravely, like a smug bridegroom.  
What, I will be jovial. Come, come.  
I am a king, my masters, know you that?

**GENTLEMAN**

You are a royal one, and we obey you.

**LEAR**

220 Then there's life in 't. Come, an if you get it, you  
shall get it by running. Sa, sa, sa, sa.

*Exit LEAR running, followed by two gentlemen*

**GENTLEMAN**

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

**EDGAR**

Hail, gentle sir.

**GENTLEMAN**

Sir, speed you. What's your will?

**EDGAR**

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

**GENTLEMAN**

230 Most sure and vulgar. Everyone hears that  
That can distinguish sound.

**EDGAR**

But, by your favor,  
How near's the other army?

**GENTLEMAN**

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

**EDGAR**

235 I thank you, sir. That's all.

**GENTLEMAN**

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

**EDGAR**

I thank you, sir.

*Exit GENTLEMAN*

**GLOUCESTER**

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

**GENTLEMAN**

You'll have anything you want.

**LEAR**

No one will support me? I'm by myself? Why, this loneliness  
could reduce a man to nothing but salty tears. He could use  
his eyes to water his garden, yes, and to tamp down the  
dust of autumn.

**GENTLEMAN**

Good sir—

**LEAR**

I'll die bravely, like a smug bridegroom  . Well, I'll be jolly.  
Come, come. My gentlemen, I'm a king—did you know that?

 Lear is punning here: "die" was a euphemism for "orgasm," and "bravely" could also mean "well-dressed."

**GENTLEMAN**

You are a royal one, and we obey you.

**LEAR**

Then there's still hope left. Come on—if you're going to get  
me, you'll have to catch me running! Sa, sa, sa, sa!

*LEAR exits running, followed by two gentlemen.*

**GENTLEMAN**

Such a sight would be pitiful even in the lowliest beggar,  
but it's unbearable in a king. He still has one daughter good  
enough to redeem the evil of the other two.

**EDGAR**

Hello, noble sir.

**GENTLEMAN**

God bless you, sir. What can I do for you?

**EDGAR**

Sir, do you know anything about an impending battle?

**GENTLEMAN**

Surely, it's common knowledge. Everyone who can hear has  
heard about it.

**EDGAR**

But, please, how near is the enemy army?

**GENTLEMAN**

Near, and approaching quickly. The main force is expected  
to arrive soon.

**EDGAR**

I thank you, sir. That's all.

**GENTLEMAN**

The queen is here for a special reason, but her army has  
moved on.

**EDGAR**

I thank you, sir.

*The GENTLEMAN exits.*

**GLOUCESTER**

Oh, you gentle gods: please take my life. Don't let me be  
tempted to suicide again. I will die when it's your will.

**EDGAR**

Well pray you, father.

**GLOUCESTER**

Now, good sir, what are you?

**EDGAR**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

Hearty thanks.  
The bounty and the benison of heaven  
250 To boot and boot.

*Enter OSWALD the steward*

**OSWALD**

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

**GLOUCESTER**

Now let thy friendly hand  
Put strength enough to 't.

*EDGAR interferes*

**OSWALD**

Wherefore, bold peasant,  
Darest thou support a published traitor? Hence,  
260 Lest that th' infection of his fortune take  
Like hold on thee. Let go his arm.

**EDGAR**

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

**OSWALD**

Let go, slave, or thou diest!

**EDGAR**

Good gentleman, go your gait, and let poor volk pass.  
265 An 'chud ha' bin zwaggered out of my life, 'twould not  
ha' bin zo long as 'tis by a vortnight. Nay, come not  
near th' old man. Keep out, che vor' ye, or I'se try  
whether your costard or my ballow be the harder. 'Chill  
be plain with you.

**OSWALD**

270 Out, dunghill!

**EDGAR**

'Chill pick your teeth, zir. Come, no matter vor your  
foins.

*EDGAR and OSWALD fight*

**OSWALD**

[falling] Slave, thou hast slain me. Villain, take my  
purse.  
275 If ever thou wilt thrive, bury my body.  
And give the letters which thou find'st about me  
To Edmund, Earl of Gloucester. Seek him out  
Upon the British party. O untimely death! [dies]

**EDGAR**

You pray well, old man .

 In the original text, "father" is used as a term of address to indicate respect towards an older man. Edgar will use it later in this scene to address Lear.

**GLOUCESTER**

Now, good sir, who are you?

**EDGAR**

I'm a poor man who's been humbled by bad fortune. The profound sadness of my experience has made me more able to pity others. Give me your hand, and I'll lead you to a resting place.

**GLOUCESTER**

I thank you heartily. And in addition to my thanks, may heaven grant you blessings and prosperity.

*OSWALD enters.*

**OSWALD**

Look, a wanted man with a bounty on his life! What good luck for me! That eyeless head of yours was created just to make me rich. You old unlucky traitor, say your prayers and prepare to die. The sword that will destroy you is ready to strike.

**GLOUCESTER**

Then may your hand strike surely—I welcome the blow.

*EDGAR steps in between GLOUCESTER and OSWALD.*

**OSWALD**

How dare you support this well-known traitor, you bold peasant? Get away, before his bad luck infects you too. Let go of his arm.

**EDGAR**

[Speaking in a country accent] I won't let go sir, not without a better reason than that.

**OSWALD**

Let go, villain, or you die!

**EDGAR**

[Speaking in a country accent] Good gentleman, walk away and let us poor folks pass by. If bullying like yours could kill me, I would have died at just two weeks old. No, don't come near the old man. Keep away, I'm warning you, or I'll find out which is harder: your head or my club.

**OSWALD**

Out of my way, you pile of dung!

**EDGAR**

[In a country accent] I'll knock your teeth out, sir. Come on, I'm not afraid of your sword!

*EDGAR and OSWALD fight.*

**OSWALD**

[Falling] You scoundrel, you've killed me! Villain, take my purse. If you have any decency, then bury my body. And deliver the letters I'm carrying to Edmund, Earl of Gloucester. Find him in the British camp. Oh, untimely death! [He dies]

**EDGAR**

I know thee well—a serviceable villain,  
280 As duteous to the vices of thy mistress  
As badness would desire.

**GLOUCESTER**

What, is he dead?

**EDGAR**

Sit you down, father. Rest you.  
Let's see these pockets. The letters that he speaks of  
285 May be my friends. He's dead. I am only sorry  
He had no other death's-man. Let us see.  
[takes letters out of OSWALD's pocket and opens them]  
Leave, gentle wax, and, manners, blame us not.  
To know our enemies' minds, we rip their hearts.  
290 Their papers is more lawful.  
[reads]  
"Let our reciprocal vows be remembered. You have many  
opportunities to cut him off. If your will want not,  
time and place will be fruitfully offered. There is  
295 nothing done if he return the conqueror. Then am I the  
prisoner and his bed my gaol, from the loathed warmth  
whereof deliver me, and supply the place for your labor.  
Your—wife, so I would say—affectionate servant,  
Goneril."  
300 O indistinguished space of woman's will!  
A plot upon her virtuous husband's life,  
And the exchange my brother!—Here in the sands  
Thee I'll rake up, the post unsanctified  
Of murderous lechers. And in the mature time  
305 With this ungracious paper strike the sight  
Of the death-practiced duke. For him 'tis well  
That of thy death and business I can tell.

**GLOUCESTER**

The king is mad. How stiff is my vile sense,  
That I stand up and have ingenious feeling  
310 Of my huge sorrows. Better I were distract—  
So should my thoughts be severed from my griefs,  
And woes by wrong imaginations lose  
The knowledge of themselves.

*Drum afar off*

**EDGAR**

Give me your hand.  
315 Far off methinks I hear the beaten drum.  
Come, father, I'll bestow you with a friend.

*Exeunt*

**EDGAR**

[In his normal voice] I know you well—a hardworking  
villain, and always obedient to your mistress' evil desires.

**GLOUCESTER**

What, is he dead?

**EDGAR**

Sit down, old man. Rest. Let's see what's in these pockets.  
The letters he spoke of might help me. He's dead. I'm just  
sorry that I had to be the executioner. Let's see. [He takes  
letters out of OSWALD's pocket and opens them] Off you go,  
you wax seal. And, good manners--don't blame me for  
opening these letters. We kill our enemies to learn their  
secrets; reading their mail is a lesser evil. [He reads] "Don't  
forget the vows we made to each other. You have many  
chances to cut off Albany's life. If your will is strong enough,  
you'll have lots of opportunities to do it. Nothing will be  
accomplished if he returns as the victor. Then I'll be his  
prisoner again, and his bed will be my prison. Free me from  
his hateful presence, and as a reward for your work you can  
take his place. Signed, your—I wish I could say  
'wife'—affectionate servant,  
Goneril."

Oh, there is no limit to a woman's appetite! To plot against  
her virtuous husband's life, and replace him with my  
brother!

[To OSWALD's body] I'll bury you here in a shallow grave,  
you unholy messenger for lustful murderers. And when the  
time is ripe, I'll show this wicked letter to the duke whose  
life is being plotted against. It's a good thing for him that I  
can tell him about your death and the business of your  
letter.

**GLOUCESTER**

The king is insane, but my own unwanted sanity is too  
stubborn—I still have the senses to perceive my own great  
sorrow. It would be better if I went crazy. Then my thoughts  
would be free from grief, and my hallucinations would  
make me forget my suffering.

*Drums are played offstage.*

**EDGAR**

Give me your hand. I think I hear drums in the distance.  
Come, old man, and I'll take you to stay with a friend.

*They exit.*

## Act 4, Scene 7

### Shakespeare

Enter CORDELIA, KENT disguised, GENTLEMAN, and DOCTOR

**CORDELIA**

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

**KENT**

To be acknowledged, madam, is o'erpaid.  
5 All my reports go with the modest truth,  
Nor more, nor clipped, but so.

### Shakescleare Translation

CORDELIA, KENT (in disguise), the GENTLEMAN, and the DOCTOR enter.

**CORDELIA**

Oh, good Kent, what can I do that will ever live up to your  
goodness? I won't live long enough to succeed, and all my  
attempts will fail.

**KENT**

Madam, to be thanked by you is too much payment. All that  
I've reported about the king is the truth—not exaggerated or  
understated, but just as it happened.

**CORDELIA**

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

**KENT**

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

**CORDELIA**

Then be 't so, my good lord.—  
15 How does the king?

**DOCTOR**

Madam, sleeps still.

**CORDELIA**

O you kind gods,  
Cure this great breach in his abusèd nature,  
Th' untuned and jarring senses, O, wind up,  
20 Of this child-changèd father!

**DOCTOR**

So please your majesty  
That we may wake the king? He hath slept long.

**CORDELIA**

Be governed by your knowledge, and proceed  
I' th' sway of your own will. Is he arrayed?

*Enter LEAR asleep in a chair carried by servants*

**GENTLEMAN**

25 Ay, madam. In the heaviness of his sleep  
We put fresh garments on him.

**DOCTOR**

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

**CORDELIA**

Very well.

**DOCTOR**

30 Please you, draw near.—Louder the music there!

**CORDELIA**

[kisses LEAR] O my dear father, restoration hang  
Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss  
Repair those violent harms that my two sisters  
Have in thy reverence made!

**KENT**

35 Kind and dear princess!

**CORDELIA**

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

**CORDELIA**

Change into better clothes. These rags are memories of bad times that are now in the past. Please, take them off.

**KENT**

I'm sorry, dear madam, but revealing myself now would ruin my plans. The favor I beg of you is that you pretend not to know me until the time is right.

**CORDELIA**

Then I'll do that, my good lord.

*[To the DOCTOR] How is the king doing?*

**DOCTOR**

Madam, he's still sleeping.

**CORDELIA**

Oh, you kind gods: heal the great wound in his suffering mind, and re-tune his discordant senses! Heal this father driven crazy by his children !

 Here, Cordelia could also mean that Lear, in his senility, has been changed, and now acts like a child.

**DOCTOR**

Would it please your Majesty if we woke up the king? He's slept a long time.

**CORDELIA**

Do whatever your medical expertise tells you to, and go ahead as you see fit. Is he dressed?

*Servants carry in LEAR, who is asleep in a chair.*

**GENTLEMAN**

Yes, madam. We put fresh clothes on him while he was sleeping deeply.

**DOCTOR**

Good madam, stay close by when we wake him up. I'm sure he'll stay calm.

**CORDELIA**

Very well.

**DOCTOR**

Please, come closer. Play the music louder!

**CORDELIA**

*[She kisses LEAR]* Oh, my dear father, may my lips heal and restore you, and may this kiss repair those violent wounds that my two sisters have inflicted on your revered spirit!

**KENT**

Kind and dear princess!

**CORDELIA**

Even if you hadn't been their father, these white locks of hair should have made them pity you. Is this a face that ought to endure the violent winds, or stand against the dreadful thunder and the terrible, zigzagged lightning? To stand guard all night—poor lonely sentry!—with only your thinning hair as a helmet? Even if my enemy's meanest dog had bit me, I still would have let it stay inside by my fireplace on that night. And, poor father, were you glad to find shelter with pigs and beggars on a bed of musty straw? Alas, alas! It's a wonder that your life and your sanity didn't end all at once. He's waking up. Speak to him.

**DOCTOR**

Madam, do you. 'Tis fittest.

**CORDELIA**

50 How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?

**LEAR**

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

**CORDELIA**

55 Sir, do you know me?

**LEAR**

You are a spirit, I know. Where did you die?

**CORDELIA**

*[aside to DOCTOR]* Still, still far wide!

**DOCTOR**

He's scarce awake. Let him alone awhile.

**LEAR**

Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?  
60 I am mighty abused. I should ev'n die with pity  
To see another thus. I know not what to say.  
I will not swear these are my hands. Let's see.  
I feel this pinprick. Would I were assured  
Of my condition.

**CORDELIA**

65 *[kneels]*  
O, look upon me, sir,  
And hold your hands in benediction o'er me.  
No, sir, you must not kneel.

**LEAR**

Pray, do not mock me.  
70 I am a very foolish fond old man,  
Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less.  
And to deal plainly  
I fear I am not in my perfect mind.  
Methinks I should know you, and know this man.  
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.

**CORDELIA**

No cause, no cause.

**LEAR**

Am I in France?

**KENT**

In your own kingdom, sir.

**DOCTOR**

Madam, you speak first. That's most appropriate.

**CORDELIA**

How are you, my royal lord? How is your Majesty doing?

**LEAR**

You do me wrong to take me out of the grave. You are a soul  
in heaven, but I am chained to a wheel of fire, tormented  
endlessly, and even my tears burn me like molten lead.

**CORDELIA**

Sir, do you know me?

**LEAR**

You are a spirit, I know. Where did you die?

**CORDELIA**

*[To the DOCTOR so that only he can hear]* He's still far from  
sanity!

**DOCTOR**

He's barely awake. Let's leave him alone for a while.

**LEAR**

Where have I been? Where am I? Is it daytime? I have been  
greatly deceived. I would even die of pity to see someone  
else in my situation. I don't know what to say. I can't even  
promise that these are my hands. Let's see. I feel this  
pinprick. I wish I could be sure of my condition.

**CORDELIA**

*[Kneeling]* Oh, look at me, sir. Hold your hands over me,  
and give me your blessing. No, sir, you must not kneel.

**LEAR**

Please do not mock me. I am a very foolish, silly old man,  
more than eighty years old, not an hour more or less. And to  
put it plainly, I fear that I'm not in my right mind. I think I  
should recognize you, and this man too. *[He points at KENT]* But I'm still doubtful, for I have no idea where I am,  
and I can't remember where I got these clothes. I don't  
know where I slept last night either. Do not laugh at me, but  
I swear I think this lady is my child, Cordelia.

**CORDELIA**

And so I am, I am.

**LEAR**

Are your tears real? Yes, it's really happening. Please, don't  
cry. If you have poison for me, I'll drink it. I know you don't  
love me, for your sisters have done me wrong, if I remember  
correctly. And they don't even have a good reason to hate  
me, but you do.

**CORDELIA**

No reason, no reason.

**LEAR**

Am I in France?

**KENT**

You're in your own kingdom, sir.

**LEAR**

90 Do not abuse me.

**DOCTOR**

Be comforted, good madam. The great rage,  
You see, is killed in him. And yet it is danger  
To make him even o'er the time he has lost.  
Desire him to go in. Trouble him no more  
95 Till further settling.

**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. Manent KENT and GENTLEMAN.*

**GENTLEMAN**

100 Holds it true, sir, that the Duke of Cornwall was so slain?

**KENT**

Most certain, sir.

**GENTLEMAN**

Who is conductor of his people?

**KENT**

As 'tis said, the bastard son of Gloucester.

**GENTLEMAN**

105 They say Edgar, his banished son, is with the Earl of Kent in Germany.

**KENT**

Report is changeable. Tis time to look about. The powers of the kingdom approach apace.

**GENTLEMAN**

The arbitrement is like to be bloody. Fare you well, sir.

*Exit GENTLEMAN*

**KENT**

My point and period will be throughly wrought,  
Or well or ill, as this day's battle's fought.

*Exit*

**LEAR**

Don't trick me.

**DOCTOR**

Be comforted, good madam. You see how his great frenzy is now over. But it's dangerous to make him try to fill in the blank spaces of his memory. Ask him to go inside. Don't trouble him further until his mind is more settled.

**CORDELIA**

Would it please your Highness to walk?

**LEAR**

You must bear with me. Please, forget and forgive. I am old and foolish.

*Everyone except KENT and the GENTLEMAN exits.*

**GENTLEMAN**

Sir, is it true that the Duke of Cornwall was killed?

**KENT**

Very true, sir.

**GENTLEMAN**

Who is leading his men now?

**KENT**

They say it's Gloucester's bastard son.

**GENTLEMAN**

I've heard that Edgar, Gloucester's banished son, is with the Earl of Kent in Germany.

**KENT**

Rumors are unreliable. It's time to be on our guard. The British army is approaching.

**GENTLEMAN**

The battle will most likely be a bloody one. Farewell, sir.

*The GENTLEMAN exits.*

**KENT**

For better or for worse, my life and my plans completely depend on how today's battle ends.

*He exits.*

## Act 5, Scene 1

### Shakespeare

Enter with drum and colors EDMUND, REGAN, gentlemen, and soldiers

### EDMUND

[To a gentleman] Know of the duke if his last purpose hold,  
Or whether since he is advised by aught  
To change the course. He's full of alteration  
5 And self-reproving. Bring his constant pleasure.

*Exit gentleman*

### Shakescleare Translation

EDMUND, REGAN, gentlemen, and soldiers enter with drums and banners.

### EDMUND

[To a gentleman] Find out if the Duke of Albany plans to stick to his most recent plan, or if something has changed his mind. He's very fickle and always second-guessing himself. Bring me a report of his final decision.

*A gentleman exits.*

**REGAN**

Our sister's man is certainly miscarried.

**EDMUND**

'Tis to be doubted, madam.

**REGAN**

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

**EDMUND**

In honored love.

**REGAN**

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

**EDMUND**

15 That thought abuses you.

**REGAN**

I am doubtful that you have been conjunct  
And bosomed with her as far as we call hers.

**EDMUND**

No, by mine honor, 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!

*Enter with drum and colors ALBANY and GONERIL, with troops*

**GONERIL**

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

**ALBANY**

25 Our very loving sister, well be-met.  
Sir, this I hear: the king is come to his daughter,  
With others whom the rigor of our state  
Forced to cry out. Where I could not be honest  
I never yet was valiant. For this business,  
30 It touches us as France invades our land,  
Not bolds the king, with others whom I fear  
Most just and heavy causes make oppose.

**EDMUND**

Sir, you speak nobly.

**REGAN**

Why is this reasoned?

**GONERIL**

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

**ALBANY**

Let's then determine with the ancient of war  
On our proceedings.

**EDMUND**

40 I shall attend you presently at your tent.

**REGAN**

My sister's messenger Oswald must have had an accident.

**EDMUND**

That outcome is to be feared, madam.

**REGAN**

Now, sweet lord, you know that I intend to honor you with  
my hand in marriage. But tell me truly—be honest  
now—don't you love my sister Goneril?

**EDMUND**

With an honorable love.

**REGAN**

But have you never taken my brother-in-law's place in her  
bed?

**EDMUND**

Such a question only insults yourself.

**REGAN**

I'm suspicious that you have been both her ally and her  
lover, and are now hers.

**EDMUND**

No, madam. I swear by my honor.

**REGAN**

I won't be able to stand it if she takes you from me. My dear  
lord, don't be intimate with her.

**EDMUND**

Don't worry about me. Now she and the duke her husband  
are here!

*ALBANY, GONERIL, and soldiers enter with drums and  
banners.*

**GONERIL**

*[To herself]* I would rather lose this battle than let that sister  
of mine come between Edmund and me.

**ALBANY**

Good to see you, Regan, my loving sister-in-law.

*[To Edmund]* Sir, I hear that the king has joined his daughter  
Cordelia, along with others who have rebelled against the  
harshness of our rule. I can't be brave if the cause I'm  
fighting for isn't honorable. This business concerns me only  
because the French have invaded our land. I don't care  
whether the French support King Lear or others who I'm  
afraid have good reason to oppose us.

**EDMUND**

Sir, you speak nobly.

**REGAN**

Why are we discussing this?

**GONERIL**

We must unite against the enemy. These domestic and  
personal quarrels are not the issue here.

**ALBANY**

Then let's meet with our experienced officers and  
determine how to proceed.

**EDMUND**

I'll meet you at your tent right away.

**REGAN**

Sister, you'll go with us?

**GONERIL**

No.

**REGAN**

'Tis most convenient. Pray you, go with us.

**GONERIL**

*[aside]* Oh ho, I know the riddle.—I will go.

*Enter EDGAR disguised*

**EDGAR**

45 *[to ALBANY]* If e'er your grace had speech with man so poor,  
Hear me one word.

**ALBANY**

*[To EDMUND, REGAN, and GONERIL]*  
I'll overtake you.—

*Exeunt all but ALBANY and EDGAR*

50 Speak.

**EDGAR**

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

**ALBANY**

Stay till I have read the letter.

**EDGAR**

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

**ALBANY**

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

*Exit EDGAR*

*Enter EDMUND*

**EDMUND**

The enemy's in view. Draw up your powers.  
65 *[gives ALBANY a document]*  
Here is the guess of their true strength and forces  
By diligent discovery, but your haste  
Is now urged on you.

**ALBANY**

We will greet the time.

*Exit ALBANY*

**EDMUND**

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

**REGAN**

Sister, will you come with us?

**GONERIL**

No.

**REGAN**

It would be best if you did. Please, come with us.

**GONERIL**

*[To herself]* Oh, ha! I know what she's doing: trying to keep me away from Edmund.

*[To the others]* All right, I'll go.

*EDGAR (still disguised as a peasant) enters.*

**EDGAR**

*[To ALBANY]* If your Grace would ever stoop to speak with a man as poor as I am, then hear what I have to say.

**ALBANY**

*[To EDMUND, REGAN, and GONERIL]* I'll catch up with you.

*Everyone exits except for ALBANY and EDGAR.*

*[To EDGAR]* Tell me.

**EDGAR**

*[Giving ALBANY a letter]* Before you fight the battle, open this letter. If you are victorious, then blow your trumpet to signal to me. I seem wretched now, but I can produce a champion who will defend my claims. If you die in battle, then your business in this world will be over, and the plot against your life will be over as well. Good luck to you.

**ALBANY**

Stay until I've read the letter.

**EDGAR**

I was ordered not to do that. When the time comes, all you have to do is blow a horn, and I'll appear again.

**ALBANY**

Well, farewell then. I'll read your letter.

*EDGAR exits.*

*EDMUND enters.*

**EDMUND**

The enemy's in sight. Prepare your troops. *[He gives ALBANY a document]* Here is an estimate of the enemy's true strength and weaponry, drawn up by our diligent scouts. But hurry now, please.

**ALBANY**

We will be ready for the occasion.

*ALBANY exits.*

**EDMUND**

I've pledged my love to both of these sisters now. And they're each suspicious of the other, as if they were both poisonous snakes. Which of them will I pick? Both? One? Or neither? I can't be happy with either one of them as long as

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

*Exit*

the other remains alive. If I married the widowed Regan, it would drive Goneril crazy. But it would be difficult to carry out my plan with Goneril while her husband's still alive. Now then, I'll use Albany's authority and power to win this battle. And when it's over, let Goneril figure out how to get rid of him. Albany intends to be merciful to Lear and Cordelia, but if I win the battle and they become my prisoners, they won't live long enough to see his pardon. My position requires actions, not words.

*He exits.*

## Act 5, Scene 2

### Shakespeare

*Alarum within. Enter with drum and colors the powers of France over the stage, and CORDELIA with her father LEAR in her hand. And exeunt*

*Enter EDGAR disguised and GLOUCESTER*

#### EDGAR

Here, father, take the shadow of this tree  
 For your good host. Pray that the right may thrive.  
 If ever I return to you again,  
 I'll bring you comfort.

#### GLOUCESTER

5 Grace go with you, sir.

*Exit EDGAR*

*Alarum and retreat within*

*Enter EDGAR*

#### EDGAR

Away, old man. Give me thy hand. Away!  
 King Lear hath lost, he and his daughter ta'en.  
 Give me thy hand. Come on.

#### GLOUCESTER

No further, sir. A man may rot even here.

#### EDGAR

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

#### GLOUCESTER

And that's true too.

*Exeunt*

### Shakescleare Translation

*Trumpets play to signal a call to arms. CORDELIA enters, leading LEAR by the hand and accompanied by drums, banners, and French troops. They cross the stage and exit.*

*EDGAR (in disguise) and GLOUCESTER enter.*

#### EDGAR

Here, old man, use the shadow of this tree for shelter. Pray that the right side will win this battle. If I ever return to you again, I'll bring you good news.

#### GLOUCESTER

May God go with you, sir.

*EDGAR exits.*

*Trumpets play to signal the army's retreat.*

*EDGAR enters.*

#### EDGAR

Let's go, old man. Give me your hand. Now! King Lear has been defeated, and he and his daughter are captured. Give me your hand. Come on.

#### GLOUCESTER

I can't go any further, sir. I might as well die here as anywhere else.

#### EDGAR

What, are you feeling depressed again? We cannot choose our deaths any more than we can choose our births. We must ripen before we decay. Come on.

#### GLOUCESTER

And that's true too.

*They exit.*

## Act 5, Scene 3

### Shakespeare

*Enter in conquest with drum and colors EDMUND, with LEAR and CORDELIA as prisoners, and FIRST CAPTAIN with soldiers*

### Shakescleare Translation

*EDMUND, victorious, enters with drums and banners. LEAR and CORDELIA enter as prisoners, led by the FIRST CAPTAIN and soldiers.*

**EDMUND**

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

**CORDELIA**

*[to LEAR]*

5 We are not the first  
Who with best meaning have incurred the worst.  
For thee, oppressed King, I am cast down.  
Myself could else outfrown false fortune's frown.  
Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?

**LEAR**

10 No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison.  
We two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage.  
When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down  
And ask of thee forgiveness. So we'll live,  
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh  
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 the mystery of things  
As if we were God's spies. And we'll wear out  
20 In a walled prison packs and sects of great ones  
That ebb and flow by the moon.

**EDMUND**

Take them away.

**LEAR**

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

*Exeunt LEAR and CORDELIA, led by soldiers*

**EDMUND**

Come hither, captain. Hark.  
*[gives FIRST CAPTAIN a document]*  
Take thou this note. Go follow them to prison.  
One step I have advanced thee. If thou dost  
35 As this instructs thee, thou dost make thy way  
To noble fortunes. Know thou this: that men  
Are as the time is. To be tender-minded  
Does not become a sword. Thy great employment  
Will not bear question. Either say thou'l do 't,  
40 Or thrive by other means.

**FIRST CAPTAIN**

I'll do 't, my lord.

**EDMUND**

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

**FIRST CAPTAIN**

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

*Exit FIRST CAPTAIN*

*Flourish. Enter the Duke of ALBANY, the two ladies GONERIL and REGAN, a SECOND CAPTAIN, and soldiers*

**EDMUND**

Have some officers take them away. Guard them carefully  
until we know what punishment has been decided for  
them.

**CORDELIA**

*[To LEAR]* We're not the first ones to have made things  
worse with only the best of intentions. I'm unhappy for your  
sake, poor, oppressed King. If it were me alone in this  
situation, I could be defiant in the face of bad luck. Should  
we see your daughters, my sisters?

**LEAR**

No, no, no, no! Come, let's go to prison. We two will sing like  
birds in a cage. When you ask me for my blessing, I'll kneel  
down and ask you for your forgiveness. So we'll live, and  
pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh at trivial  
matters, and listen to courtiers gossiping, and talk to them  
too—we'll find out who's winning and who's losing, who's in  
and who's out. And we'll ponder the mysteries of life as if  
we were God's spies sent to observe the world. And in our  
walled prison we'll outlast all the politicians and rulers  
whose power comes and goes like the tide.

**EDMUND**

Take them away.

**LEAR**

Even the gods should celebrate the sacrifices you've made  
for me, my Cordelia. Are we really together again? Now it  
would take divine lightning bolt to separate us, like a fire to  
drive foxes out of their den. Wipe your eyes. Our enemies  
will waste away with age before they can make us cry again.  
We'll watch them starve before that. Come.

*LEAR and CORDELIA exit, led by soldiers.*

**EDMUND**

Come here, captain. Listen. *[He gives the FIRST CAPTAIN a document]* Take this note. Follow them to prison. I've  
already gotten you promoted once. If you follow these  
instructions, you'll be well rewarded. Know this: we must  
adapt ourselves to these harsh times. A soldier can't afford  
to be tender-hearted. There can be no discussion about this  
assignment. Say you'll do it, or else you can find a different  
job.

**FIRST CAPTAIN**

I'll do it, my lord.

**EDMUND**

Then go to it, and feel fortunate that you've been given  
such a high-paying task. Go immediately, I say, and do  
exactly what I've written.

**FIRST CAPTAIN**

I can't do a horse's work, pulling a cart or eating dried oats.  
But if it's man's work, then I'll do it.

*The FIRST CAPTAIN exits.*

*Trumpets play. The Duke of ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN, a SECOND CAPTAIN, and soldiers enter.*

**ALBANY**

[*To EDMUND*] Sir, you have shown today your valiant strain,  
And fortune led you well. You have the captives  
50 That were the opposites of this day's strife.  
I do require them of you, so to use them  
As we shall find their merits and our safety  
May equally determine.

**EDMUND**

Sir, I thought it fit  
55 To send the old and miserable king  
To some retention and appointed guard—  
Whose age has charms in it, whose title more—  
To pluck the common bosom on his side,  
An turn our impressed lances in our eyes  
60 Which do command them. With him I sent the queen,  
My reason all the same, and they are ready  
Tomorrow or at further space t' appear  
Where you shall hold your session. At this time  
We sweat and bleed. The friend hath lost his friend,  
65 And the best quarrels, in the heat, are cursed  
By those that feel their sharpness.  
The question of Cordelia and her father  
Requires a fitter place.

**ALBANY**

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

**REGAN**

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

**GONERIL**

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

**REGAN**

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

**ALBANY**

That were the most if he should  
husband you.

**REGAN**

85 Jesters do oft prove prophets.

**GONERIL**

Holla, holla!  
That eye that told you so looked but askwint.

**REGAN**

Lady, I am not well, else I should answer  
From a full-flowing stomach.  
90 [*To EDMUND*] General,  
Take thou my soldiers, prisoners, patrimony.  
Dispose of them, of me. The walls is thine.  
Witness the world that I create thee here  
My lord and master.

**GONERIL**

95 Mean you to enjoy him then?

**ALBANY**

[*To EDMUND*] Sir, today you've shown your courageous lineage, and luck has been on your side. You've captured the leaders of our opposition. I need to take custody of them now, to treat them according to their honor and do what is best for our kingdom's safety.

**EDMUND**

Sir, I thought it would be best if I sent the old, miserable king to a prison cell with a guard. Lear's old age and his title have the power to make common folk take his side, and he could even make our drafted soldiers turn against us. I sent his daughter Queen Cordelia along with him, for the same reason. They're ready to appear whenever you want to hold your trial for them, tomorrow or at some future point. Right now we are all sweating and bleeding. Friends have lost friends, and soldiers will curse even the best of causes in the heat of battle. We need to find a more appropriate place where we can make sure Cordelia and her father have a fair trial.

**ALBANY**

By your leave, sir: you are my subordinate in waging this war, not my equal.

**REGAN**

That's for me to decide. I think you should have asked for my opinion before speaking to him like that. He led our armies, and acted as my proxy in battle. His close connection to me means that he might as well consider himself your equal.

**GONERIL**

Not so fast. He has distinguished himself with his own merits more than any honors you've conferred upon him.

**REGAN**

I'm the one who invested my authority in him, and with it he proved his merit.

**ALBANY**

If he married you, that investment would be complete.

**REGAN**

You joke, but it might come true.

**GONERIL**

Hey, hey! You're squinting with jealousy and can't see straight.

**REGAN**

Lady, I'm not feeling well, or else I would answer you with my full temper.

[*To EDMUND*] General, take my soldiers, my prisoners, and my inheritance. Do whatever you want with them, and with me. You have conquered the fortress of my heart. Let the world be my witness that I hereby make you my lord and master.

**GONERIL**

Are you going to sleep with him right now?

**ALBANY**

The let-alone lies not in your good will.

**EDMUND**

Nor in thine, lord.

**ALBANY**

Half-blooded fellow, yes.

**REGAN**

*[to EDMUND]* Let the drum strike and prove my title  
thine.

100

**ALBANY**

Stay yet. Hear reason.—Edmund, I arrest thee  
On capital treason, and in thine attaint  
This gilded serpent. *[indicates GONERIL]*  
*[to REGAN]* For your claim, fair sister,  
I bar it in the interest of my wife.  
'Tis she is subcontracted to this lord.  
And I, her husband, contradict your banns.  
If you will marry, make your loves to me,  
My lady is bespoken.

105

**GONERIL**

110 An interlude!

**ALBANY**

Thou art armed, Gloucester. Let the trumpet sound.  
If none appear to prove upon thy person  
Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons,  
There is my pledge. *[throws down his glove]*  
115 I'll make it on thy heart,  
Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less  
Than I have here proclaimed thee.

115

**REGAN**

Sick, oh, sick!

**GONERIL**

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

**EDMUND**

120

*[throwing down his glove]*  
There's my exchange. What in the world he is  
That names me traitor, villainlike he lies.  
Call by thy trumpet. He that dares approach,  
On him—on you, who not?—I will maintain  
125 My truth and honor firmly.

125

**ALBANY**

A herald, ho!

**EDMUND**

A herald, ho, a herald!

*Enter a HERALD*

**ALBANY**

*[to EDMUND]* Trust to thy single virtue, for thy  
soldiers,  
130 All levied in my name, have in my name  
Took their discharge.

130

**REGAN**

My sickness grows upon me.

**ALBANY**

She is not well. Convey her to my tent.

*Exit REGAN, led*

**ALBANY**

*[To GONERIL]* It's not in your power to prevent it.

**EDMUND**

Nor is it in yours, lord.

**ALBANY**

Yes it is, you illegitimate fellow.

**REGAN**

*[To EDMUND]* Let the drums beat, and fight anyone who  
challenges your right to me.

**ALBANY**

Wait, and listen to reason.—Edmund, I now arrest you for  
capital treason, and as an accessory to your treason I arrest  
this snake of a woman. *[He points to GONERIL]*

*[To REGAN]* But, my fair sister-in-law, as for your claim to  
him, I veto your engagement on my wife's behalf. She's the  
one who is already engaged to Edmund. If you want to get  
married, then start wooing me. My lady is already spoken  
for.

**GONERIL**

What a ridiculous story!

**ALBANY**

You have a sword, Gloucester . Let the trumpets sound. If  
no one appears to challenge you and prove that you are a  
hideous traitor, then I'll do it myself. *[He throws down his  
glove as a challenge]* I make this promise on your life: I  
won't eat again until I prove that you're just as guilty as I  
say you are.

 As Goneril did in Act 4, Scene 2,  
Albany here uses Edmund's title as  
heir to Gloucester to address him, in  
place of his first name.

**REGAN**

Oh, I feel sick, sick!

**GONERIL**

*[To herself]* If she's not sick, I'll never trust poison again.

**EDMUND**

*[Throwing down his glove]* I accept your challenge.  
Whoever calls me a traitor is a villainous liar. Blow your  
trumpet. I'll fight to firmly prove my truth and honor to  
anyone who dares approach—you, or anyone else.

**ALBANY**

Hey, a herald !

 A herald was a person who read  
official announcements aloud.

**EDMUND**

A herald, hey, a herald!

*A HERALD enters.*

**ALBANY**

*[To EDMUND]* Trust in your own unaided strength now, for  
your soldiers were all drafted in my name. And in my name  
they have been discharged.

**REGAN**

I can feel my sickness growing.

**ALBANY**

She is not well. Take her to my tent.

*Soldiers help REGAN exit.*

135 Come hither, herald.—Let the trumpet sound,—  
And read out this. [gives the HERALD a document]

**SECOND CAPTAIN**  
Sound, trumpet!

*A trumpet sounds*

**HERALD**  
[reads]  
“If any man of quality or degree within the lists of  
the army will maintain upon Edmund, supposed Earl of  
Gloucester, that he is a manifold traitor, let him  
140 appear by the third sound of the trumpet. He is bold in  
his defense.”

*First trumpet*

**HERALD**  
Again!

*Second trumpet*

**HERALD**  
Again!

*Third trumpet Trumpet answers within Enter EDGAR, at the third sound, armed, a trumpet before him*

**ALBANY**  
145 [to HERALD] Ask him his purposes, why he appears  
Upon this call o' th' trumpet.

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

**EDGAR**  
150 O, know, my name is lost.  
By treason's tooth bare-gnawn and canker-bit.  
Yet am I noble as the adversary  
I come to cope withal.

**ALBANY**  
Which is that adversary?

**EDGAR**  
155 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. [draws his sword] Here is  
160 mine.  
Behold: it is the privilege of mine honors,  
My oath, and my profession. I protest—  
Maugre thy strength, youth, place, and eminence,  
Despite thy victor sword and fire-new fortune,  
165 Thy valor and thy heart—thou art a traitor,  
False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father,  
Conspirant 'gainst this high illustrious prince,  
And from th' extremest upward of thy head  
To the descent and dust below thy foot  
170 A most toad-spotted traitor. Say thou “No,”  
This sword, this arm, and my best spirits are bent  
To prove upon thy heart, whereto I speak,  
Thou liest.

Come here, herald.—Let the trumpet sound!—Read this. [He gives the HERALD a document]

**SECOND CAPTAIN**  
Blow the trumpet!

*A trumpet sounds.*

**HERALD**  
[Reading] “If any honorable man of the army will accuse  
Edmund, the supposed Earl of Gloucester, of being a traitor,  
then let him appear by the third sound of the trumpet.  
Edmund is willing to fight in his own defense.”

*The first trumpet sounds.*

**HERALD**  
Again!

*The second trumpet sounds.*

**HERALD**  
Again!

*The third trumpet sounds. Another trumpet answers  
offstage. EDGAR enters at the third trumpet's sound, in  
armor and wearing a sword.*

**ALBANY**  
[To the HERALD] Ask him what he wants, and why he's  
stepping forward at this call of the trumpet.

**HERALD**  
Who are you? What is your name and your rank? And why  
do you step forward now?

**EDGAR**  
Know this: my name has been lost to a traitorous worm. But  
I am as noble as the opponent I've come to fight.

**ALBANY**  
And which opponent is that?

**EDGAR**  
Who speaks for Edmund, Earl of Gloucester?

**EDMUND**  
I speak for myself. What do you have to say to me?

**EDGAR**  
Draw your sword. If I offend your noble heart with my  
words, then you can take your revenge with your sword.  
Here is mine. [He draws his sword] Look: it is the symbol of  
my honor, my vows, and my privilege as a knight. I now  
solemnly declare that—despite your strength, youth, rank,  
and power; and despite your recent victory, newly-minted  
fortune, courage, and bravery—you are a traitor. You have  
betrayed your gods, your brother, and your father, and  
you've conspired against this noble, glorious duke. From  
the top of your head to the soles of your feet you are a  
filthy, tainted traitor. If you disagree with me, then I'm  
ready to use my sword, my arm, and my courage to prove  
that you are a liar.

**EDMUND**

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

*Alarums EDMUND and EDGAR fight EDMUND falls*

**ALBANY**

Save him, save him!

**GONERIL**

185 This is practice, Gloucester.  
 By th' law of arms thou wast not bound to answer  
 An unknown opposite. Thou art not vanquished,  
 But cozened and beguiled.

**ALBANY**

Shut your mouth, dame,  
 190 Or with this paper shall I stop it.—Hold, sir,  
*[gives the letter to EDMUND]*  
 Thou worse than any name, read thine own evil.—  
*[to GONERIL]* Nay, no tearing, lady. I perceive you know  
 it.

**GONERIL**

195 Say, if I do? The laws are mine, not thine.  
 Who can arraign me for 't?

**ALBANY**

Most monstrous, oh!  
*[to EDMUND]* Know'st thou this paper?

**EDMUND**

Ask me not what I know.

*Exit GONERIL*

**ALBANY**

200 Go after her. She's desperate. Govern her.

*Exit a soldier*

**EDMUND**

What you have charged me with, that have I done—  
 And more, much more. The time will bring it out.  
 'Tis past, and so am I.  
*[to EDGAR]*  
 205 But what art thou  
 That hast this fortune on me? If thou'ret noble,  
 I do forgive thee.

**EDGAR**

Let's exchange charity.  
 I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund.  
 210 If more, the more thou'st 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.  
 The dark and vicious place where thee he got  
 Cost him his eyes.

**EDMUND**

Thou'st spoken right. 'Tis true.  
 The wheel is come full circle. I am here.

**EDMUND**

Prudence would suggest that I ask your name first. But  
 since you look so noble and knightly—and since your  
 speech implies that you are of a high rank—I will disdain the  
 rules of knighthood that say I can refuse to fight a man I  
 don't know. I toss your accusations of treason back at your  
 own head, and your hateful lies back at your heart. They  
 hardly hurt you now, but I'll follow them with my sword and  
 embed the word "traitor" in your heart forever. Trumpets,  
 blow!

*Trumpets play. EDMUND and EDGAR fight. EDMUND falls.*

**ALBANY**

Save him, save him!

**GONERIL**

This was trickery, Gloucester. By the laws of dueling you  
 didn't have to fight an unknown opponent. You haven't  
 been conquered—only cheated and deceived.

**ALBANY**

Shut your mouth, woman, or I'll plug it up with this paper.  
 Look, sir. *[He gives the letter to EDMUND]* Read your own  
 evil, you who are worse than any words could describe.

*[To GONERIL]* No, don't tear it, lady. I think you know what  
 it says.

**GONERIL**

And what if I do? I make the laws, not you. Who can  
 prosecute me for it?

**ALBANY**

Oh, how monstrous!

*[To EDMUND]* Do you know what this letter is?

**EDMUND**

Do not ask me what I know.

*GONERIL exits.*

**ALBANY**

Go after her. She's desperate. Restraine her.

*A soldier exits.*

**EDMUND**

I have done all the things you've accused me of—and more,  
 much more. You'll find out the rest in due time. But now it's  
 over, and so am I.

*[To EDGAR]* But who are you who defeated me? If you're a  
 nobleman, I forgive you.

**EDGAR**

Let's exchange forgiveness. I am no less noble than you are,  
 Edmund. And if I'm more noble, then you've wronged me  
 all the more. My name is Edgar, and I'm your father's son.  
 The gods are just, and use the sins we commit in giving  
 ourselves pleasure as a means of making instruments to  
 torment us. The adultery he committed created you, and  
 cost him his eyes.

**EDMUND**

You've spoken rightly. It's true. The wheel of fortune has  
 come full circle. Here I am on the bottom again.

**ALBANY**

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

**EDGAR**

Worthy prince, I know 't.

**ALBANY**

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

**EDGAR**

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

**EDMUND**

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

**ALBANY**

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

**EDGAR**

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

**ALBANY**

265 But who was this?

**EDGAR**

Kent, sir, the banished Kent, who in disguise  
Followed his enemy king and did him service  
Improper for a slave.

*Enter SECOND KNIGHT with a bloody knife*

**SECOND KNIGHT**

Help, help, O, help!

**ALBANY**

I could tell that you were noble even by the way you  
walked. Let me hug you. I swear that I never hated you or  
your father.

**EDGAR**

Worthy prince, I know.

**ALBANY**

Where have you been hiding yourself? How do you know  
about your father's suffering?

**EDGAR**

By nursing him through it, my lord. Listen to my brief tale,  
and when it's over, oh, may my heart burst! To escape the  
proclamation condemning me to death, I disguised myself  
in the rags of a crazy beggar, making myself a creature  
scorned even by dogs. Oh, how sweet life must be, that we  
prefer the pain of slowly dying to death itself! In this  
disguise I met my father with his bloody eye sockets--his  
precious eyes recently lost--and I became his guide. I led  
him, begged for him, and saved him from despair. I  
never—oh, what a mistake!—revealed myself to him until  
just half an hour ago, when I was in my armor. I hoped for a  
successful outcome to the battle, but I still decided to ask  
for my father's blessing, and I told him the whole story of  
my journey. But his cracked heart was too weak to support  
such extremes of joy and grief at once, and it gave out.

**EDMUND**

Your words have moved me, and may end up doing some  
good. But continue. You look like you have something more  
to say.

**ALBANY**

If there's anything more sorrowful to add, then keep it to  
yourself. I'm already about to lose myself to tears from  
hearing this much.

**EDGAR**

This might have seemed like a fitting end for a sad story.  
But if I go on I must add to what is already too much, and  
reach a new extremity of sorrow. While I was crying loudly  
over my father, a man came in. He had seen me in my  
beggar's clothes and shunned me earlier, but when he  
found out who I was, he wrapped his strong arms around  
my neck and cried as if he was trying to burst heaven. He  
then threw himself on my father and told the saddest story  
that was ever heard about Lear and him. And as he told the  
story his grief overcame him and his heart-strings began to  
break. Then I heard the trumpets blow twice, and I left him  
in a trance.

**ALBANY**

But who was this man?

**EDGAR**

Kent, sir. It was the banished Kent, who disguised himself  
and followed his hostile king--serving him with tasks too  
menial for even a slave.

*The SECOND KNIGHT enters with a bloody knife.*

**SECOND KNIGHT**

Help, help, oh, help!

**EDGAR**

270 What kind of help?

**ALBANY**

Speak, man.

**EDGAR**

What means that bloody knife?

**SECOND KNIGHT**

'Tis hot, it smokes.  
It came even from the heart of—oh, she's dead!

**ALBANY**

275 Who dead? Speak, man.

**SECOND KNIGHT**

Your lady, sir, your lady. And her sister  
By her is poisoned. She confesses it.

**EDMUND**

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

**EDGAR**

280 Here comes Kent.

**ALBANY**

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

*Exit SECOND KNIGHT*

*Enter KENT*

Oh, is this he?

285 The time will not allow the compliment  
Which very manners urges.

**KENT**

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

**ALBANY**

290 Great thing of us forgot!—  
Speak, Edmund, where's the king? And where's Cordelia?—

*REGAN's and GONERIL's corpses are brought out*

Seest thou this object, Kent?

**KENT**

Alack, why thus?

**EDMUND**

Yet Edmund was beloved.  
295 The one the other poisoned for my sake,  
And after slew herself.

**ALBANY**

Even so.—Cover their faces.

**EDMUND**

I pant for life. Some good I mean to do  
Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send—  
300 Be brief in it—to th' castle, for my writ  
Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia.  
Nay, send in time!

**EDGAR**

What kind of help?

**ALBANY**

Speak, man!

**EDGAR**

What does that bloody knife mean?

**SECOND KNIGHT**

It's hot, it's still smoking with life blood. It was just removed  
from the heart of—oh, she's dead!

**ALBANY**

Who's dead? Speak, man.

**SECOND KNIGHT**

Your wife Goneril, sir, your wife. And she poisoned her sister  
Regan, who's now dead too. She confessed it.

**EDMUND**

I was engaged to them both. We three will now be united in  
death.

**EDGAR**

Here comes Kent.

**ALBANY**

Bring the bodies here, whether they're alive or dead. The  
judgment of the gods makes us tremble, but it doesn't  
make us pity these deaths.

*The SECOND KNIGHT exits.*

*KENT enters.*

Oh, is this him? There's no time for the greetings that good  
manners require.

**KENT**

I am here to say goodnight forever to my king and master. Is  
he not here?

**ALBANY**

What a thing for us to forget! Speak, Edmund, where's the  
king? And where's Cordelia?

*REGAN and GONERIL's corpses are brought out.*

Do you see this spectacle, Kent?

**KENT**

Alas, why has this happened?

**EDMUND**

Despite everything, Edmund was beloved. One sister  
poisoned the other for my sake, and then killed herself.

**ALBANY**

It seems so. Cover their faces.

**EDMUND**

These are my last breaths. I want to do a little good despite  
my nature. Go quickly—be speedy about it—to the castle.  
For I've ordered the executions of Lear and Cordelia. Hurry,  
send someone now!

**ALBANY**

Run, run, O, run!

**EDGAR**

To who, my lord?—Who hath the office? Send  
305 Thy token of reprieve.

**Edmund**

Well thought on. Take my sword. The captain—  
Give it the captain.

**ALBANY**

Haste thee for thy life.

*Exit a soldier*

**EDMUND**

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

**ALBANY**

The gods defend her!—bear him hence awhile.

*Exit soldiers with EDMUND*

*Enter LEAR with CORDELIA in his arms, a THIRD KNIGHT following*

**LEAR**

Howl, howl, howl, howl! Oh, you are men of stones.  
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so  
315 That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone forever.  
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,  
320 Why then, she lives.

**KENT**

Is this the promised end?

**EDGAR**

Or image of that horror?

**ALBANY**

Fall and cease.

**LEAR**

This feather stirs. She lives. If it be so,  
It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows  
325 That ever I have felt.

**KENT**

O my good master!

**LEAR**

Prithee, away.

**EDGAR**

'Tis noble Kent, your friend.

**LEAR**

A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!  
I might have saved her. Now she's gone for ever.—  
Cordelia, Cordelia, stay a little. Ha?  
What is 't thou say'st?— Her voice was ever soft,  
Gentle and low, an excellent thing in woman.—  
335 I killed the slave that was a-hanging thee.

**ALBANY**

Run, run, oh, run!

**EDGAR**

Where should we run, my lord? Who has the orders to kill  
them? Send something to prove that you've changed your  
commands.

**Edmund**

Good idea. Take my sword. The captain—give it to the  
captain.

**ALBANY**

Run as if your life depended on it.

*A soldier exits.*

**EDMUND**

Your wife and I ordered the captain to hang Cordelia in the  
prison and lay the blame on her own despair, making it look  
like she killed herself.

**ALBANY**

May the gods protect her!

*[To soldiers] Carry him away for now.*

*Soldiers exit with EDMUND.*

*LEAR enters with CORDELIA in his arms, followed by a  
THIRD KNIGHT.*

**LEAR**

Howl, howl, howl, howl! Oh, you are men of stone! If I had  
your eyes to weep and your tongues to cry out, I'd use them  
until the sky itself cracked. She's gone forever. But I know  
how to tell when someone is dead and when they're alive.  
She's as dead as the senseless ground. Bring me a mirror. If  
her breath makes a mist on the glass, then she's still alive.

**KENT**

Is this the end of the world?

**EDGAR**

Or a reflection of that final horror?

**ALBANY**

Let the world collapse and end!

**LEAR**

This feather moved with her breath. She lives. If it's true,  
then it will make up for all the sorrows I've ever felt.

**KENT**

Oh my good master!

**LEAR**

Please, go away.

**EDGAR**

It's noble Kent, your friend.

**LEAR**

A plague on you, you're all murderers and traitors! I could  
have saved her. Now she's gone forever.

*[To CORDELIA's body] Cordelia, Cordelia, stay a little while.  
What? What are you saying?*

*[To the others]* Her voice was always so soft, gentle, and low--an excellent thing in a woman.

*[To CORDELIA's body]* I killed the scum who was hanging you.

### THIRD KNIGHT

It's true, my lords, he did.

### LEAR

Did I not, fellow?  
I have seen the day with my good biting falchion  
I would have made them skip. I am old now,

340 And these same crosses spoil me. *[to KENT]* Who are you?  
Mine eyes are not o' th' best, I'll tell you straight.

### KENT

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

### LEAR

This a dull sight.  
345 Are you not Kent?

### KENT

The same. Your servant Kent.  
Where is your servant Caius?

### LEAR

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

### KENT

350 No, my good lord. I am the very man—

### LEAR

I'll see that straight.

### KENT

That from your first of difference and decay  
Have followed your sad steps.

### LEAR

You're welcome hither.

### KENT

355 Nor no man else. All's cheerless, dark, and deadly.  
Your eldest daughters have fordone themselves,  
And desperately are dead.

### LEAR

Ay, so I think.

### ALBANY

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

*Enter THIRD MESSENGER*

*A THIRD MESSENGER enters.*

### EDGAR

Very bootless.

### THIRD MESSENGER

Edmund is dead, my lord.

### ALBANY

That's but a trifle here.—  
You lords and noble friends, know our intent.

365 What comfort to this great decay may come

### EDGAR

It's pointless.

### THIRD MESSENGER

Edmund is dead, my lord.

### ALBANY

That's just a drop in this ocean of sorrow. You lords and noble friends, hear what I intend to do. We must try to bring as much comfort as we can amid this great destruction. And

Shall be applied. For us, we will resign  
During the life of this old majesty  
To him our absolute power.  
370 [to EDGAR and KENT] You, to your rights  
With boot, and such addition as your honors  
Have more than merited.— All friends shall taste  
The wages of their virtue, and all foes  
The cup of their deservings. O, see, see!

**LEAR**

And my poor fool is hanged.—No, no, no life?  
375 Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,  
And thou no breath at all? Oh, thou'lt come no more,  
Never, never, never, never.—  
Pray you, undo this button. Thank you, sir.  
Do you see this? Look on her. Look, her lips.  
380 Look there, look there. O, O, O, O.  
[dies]

**EDGAR**

He faints!—My lord, my lord!

**KENT**

Break, heart. I prithee, break!

**EDGAR**

[to LEAR] Look up, my lord.

**KENT**

385 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**

Oh, he is gone indeed.

**KENT**

The wonder is he hath endured so long.  
390 He but usurped his life.

**ALBANY**

Bear them from hence. Our present business  
Is to general woe.  
[to KENT and EDGAR] Friends of my soul, you twain  
Rule in this realm, and the gored state sustain.

**KENT**

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

**EDGAR**

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

*Exeunt with a dead march*

as for me, I will surrender my power to the old king, that he should have absolute authority for the rest of his life.

[To EDGAR and KENT] And you will get back your rightful property and titles, along with rewards and distinctions that you have more than earned. All my friends will taste the rewards of their virtue, and all my enemies will drink from the cup of punishment that they deserve. Oh, look, look!

**LEAR**

And my poor child was hanged.

[To CORDELIA's body] No, no, no life left in you? Why should a dog, a horse, or a rat have life, but you have none at all? Oh, you'll never come to me again, never, never, never, never.

[To the others] Please, undo this button. Thank you, sir. Do you see this? Look at her. Look, her lips. Look there, look there. Oh, oh, oh, oh. [He dies]

**EDGAR**

He faints!

[To LEAR] My lord, my lord!

**KENT**

Break, heart. Please, break!

**EDGAR**

[To LEAR] Look up, my lord.

**KENT**

Don't disturb his departing spirit. Oh, let him pass on. He would hate anyone who made him linger in this torturous world any longer.

**EDGAR**

Oh, he is dead indeed.

**KENT**

It's a wonder that he endured for so long. He was only living on borrowed time.

**ALBANY**

Carry them away from here. Our business is now to grieve.

[To KENT and EDGAR] My dear friends, you two should rule this kingdom and keep the wounded country alive.

**KENT**

I have a journey to make soon, sir. My master calls me on to following him to the next life, and I cannot say no.

**EDGAR**

We must bear the weight of this sad day, and say what we feel, not what we ought to say. The oldest has suffered the most. We who are young will never see as much as he has seen, or live so long.

*They exit in a funeral march.*

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