

# *King Lear*

By William Shakespeare

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## Characters in the Play

LEAR, king of Britain  
GONERIL, Lear's eldest daughter  
DUKE OF ALBANY, her husband  
OSWALD, her steward

REGAN, Lear's second daughter  
DUKE OF CORNWALL, her husband

CORDELIA, Lear's youngest daughter  
KING OF FRANCE, her suitor and then husband  
DUKE OF BURGUNDY, her suitor

EARL OF KENT

FOOL

EARL OF GLOUCESTER  
EDGAR, his elder son  
EDMUND, his younger and illegitimate son  
CURAN, gentleman of Gloucester's household  
OLD MAN, a tenant of Gloucester's

KNIGHT, serving Lear

GENTLEMEN  
Three SERVANTS

MESSENGERS

DOCTOR

CAPTAINS

HERALD

Knights in Lear's train, Servants, Officers, Soldiers, Attendants, Gentlemen

## *ACT 1*

Scene 1

*Enter Kent, Gloucester, and Edmund.*

KENT Is this your son?

GLOUCESTER His breeding, hath been my charge. This fellow's mother grew round-wombed and had, a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her bed.

KENT I cannot wish the fault undone,

GLOUCESTER I have a son, by order of law, some year elder than this, yet the whoreson must be acknowledged.—Do you know this noble, Edmund?

EDMUND No

GLOUCESTER lord of Kent. Remember him as my honorable friend.

GLOUCESTER He's been away nine years, and he's going out again. (*Sennet.*) The King is coming.

*Enter King Lear, Cornwall, Albany, Goneril, Regan, Cordelia, and Attendants.*

LEAR

Attend the lords of France and Burgundy, Gloucester.

GLOUCESTER I shall.

*He exits.*

LEAR

Give me the map.

*He is handed a map.*

we have divided

our kingdom,

To younger strengths. Cornwall

And you, Albany,

We will publish

Our daughters' dowers, that future strife

May be prevented.

France and Burgundy,

Rivals in our youngest daughter's love,

Here are to be answered. Tell me, my

daughters—

Which of you love us most,

That our largest bounty may extend

Goneril,

speak first.  
GONERIL  
I love you more than word can wield A love that makes breath poor,  
Beyond all manner I love you.  
CORDELIA, *aside*  
What shall Cordelia speak?  
LEAR, *pointing to the map*  
From this line to this,  
With forests and rivers and meads,  
To thine and Albany's issue  
    Regan, Speak.  
REGAN  
In my true heart, I find  
She names my love;  
Only she comes too short,  
And find I am alone felicitate  
In your love.  
CORDELIA, *aside* I am sure my love's  
More ponderous than my tongue.  
LEAR  
To thee  
Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom,  
—Now, our joy,  
Our last, what can you say to draw  
A third more opulent than your sisters'? .  
CORDELIA Nothing,  
LEAR Nothing?  
CORDELIA Nothing.  
LEAR  
Nothing will come of nothing.  
CORDELIA  
I cannot heave  
My heart into my mouth. I love you  
According to my bond.  
LEAR  
Cordelia, Mend your speech a little,  
    you mar your fortunes.  
CORDELIA Good my lord,  
You begot me, bred me, loved me.  
I return those duties as are right fit.  
Why have my sisters husbands if they say  
They love you all? I shall never marry like my sisters,  
To love my father all.

LEAR goes thy heart with this?  
CORDELIA Ay,  
LEAR so untender?  
CORDELIA So true.  
LEAR  
Thy truth, be thy dower,  
For by the sun,  
    I disclaim all paternal care, and blood,  
And as a stranger to my heart and me.  
my sometime daughter,  
KENT my liege—  
LEAR Peace, Kent.  
*To Cordelia.* Hence and avoid  
my sight!—  
Cornwall and  
Albany, my real sons, I'll divide Cordelia's portion between you, and I will stay with  
    Goneril, keeping only 100 knights for myself, sustained and loved by you.

KENT Royal Lear,  
Reserve thy state,  
check  
This hideous rashness. Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least,  
LEAR Kent, no.  
KENT Thy safety being motive.  
LEAR Out of my sight!  
KENT  
See better, Lear, let me remain  
LEAR  
Hear me. Thou hast sought to break our vows—  
take thy reward:  
Five days we allot thee for provision  
And on the sixth turn thy hated back  
If on the tenth day you are found in our dominions,  
The moment is your death. away!  
KENT  
Fare thee well, king.

*He exits.*

*Flourish. Enter Gloucester with France, and Burgundy,  
and Attendants.*

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

LEAR My lord of Burgundy, What is the least you require in dower with her?

BURGUNDY Most royal Majesty,  
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.  
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, *to Lear* Royal king,  
Give but that portion which yourself proposed,  
And here I take Cordelia by the hand,  
Duchess of Burgundy.

LEAR Nothing. I have sworn. I am firm.

BURGUNDY, *to Cordelia*

I am sorry.

FRANCE Fairest Cordelia, My love should kindle  
to inflamed respect.—

Thy dowerless daughter, king, thrown to my chance,  
Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France.

LEAR Thou hast her, France.  
*To Cordelia.* Therefore begone  
Without our grace, our love.

*Flourish. All but France, Cordelia,  
Goneril, and Regan exit.*

FRANCE Come, my fair Cordelia.

*France and Cordelia exit.*

GONERIL It is not little I have to say. I think our  
father will hence tonight.

REGAN: With you; next month  
with us.

GONERIL He always loved our sister most, and with  
poor judgment he cast her off

REGAN 'Tis the the infirmity of his age.

GONERIL The best of his time hath been  
rash. Then must we look from his age to the unruly waywardness  
that infirm years bring with them.

REGAN We shall further think of it.

*They exit.*

Scene 2

*Enter Edmund, the Bastard.*

EDMUND

For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines  
Lag of a brother? why "bastard"? My dimensions are as well compact,  
My mind as generous and my shape as true  
As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us  
With "base," with "baseness," "bastardy,"  
Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land.  
Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund  
As to th' legitimate.  
If this letter speed  
And my invention thrive, Edmund the base  
Shall top th' legitimate.

*Enter Gloucester.*

GLOUCESTER

Kent banished thus? And France in choler parted?  
And the King gone tonight, prescribed his power,  
Confined to exhibition? All this done  
Upon the gad?—Edmund, what news?

EDMUND So please your Lordship, none. *He puts a  
paper in his pocket.*

GLOUCESTER Why so earnestly seek you to put up that  
letter?

EDMUND It is a letter from my brother that I have not all o'erread;  
and I find it not fit for your o'erlooking.

GLOUCESTER Give me the letter, sir.

*Edmund gives him the paper.*

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

GLOUCESTER (*reads*) *This policy and reverence of age  
keeps our fortunes from us till our oldness cannot relish  
them. 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 beloved of your brother.*

*Edgar.*

Conspiracy? My son Edgar! Had  
he a hand to write this?

EDMUND If the matter were good, my lord, I durst  
swear it were his; but, I would fain think it were not.  
It is his hand, my lord. and I have heard him oft

maintain that the father should be as ward to the son, and the son manage his revenue.

GLOUCESTER O villain! Where is he?

EDMUND I do not well know, my lord. it shall please you to suspend your indignation against my brother where, if you violently proceed against him, mistaking his purpose, it would make a gap in your own honor and shake in pieces the heart of his obedience. He hath writ this to feel my affection to your Honor, and to no other pretense of danger.

GLOUCESTER Think you so?

EDMUND I will place you where you shall hear us confer of this, this very evening.

GLOUCESTER He cannot be such a monster. To his father, that so tenderly and entirely loves him! Edmund, seek him out.

EDMUND I will seek him, sir.

GLOUCESTER These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us.. This villain of mine comes under the prediction: there's son against father.

*He exits.*

EDMUND This is the excellent foppery of the world, that when we are sick in fortune (often the surfeits of our own behavior) we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and stars. An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition on the charge of a star! Edgar—

*Enter Edgar.*

and pat he comes like the catastrophe of the old comedy. My cue is villainous melancholy.—O, these eclipses do portend these divisions.

EDMUND When saw you my father last?

EDGAR The night gone by.

EDMUND Spake you with him?

EDGAR Ay, two hours together.

EDMUND Parted you in good terms? Found you no displeasure in him by word nor countenance?

EDGAR None at all.

EDMUND Bethink yourself wherein you may have offended him, and at my entreaty forbear his presence until some little time hath qualified the heat

of his displeasure, which at this instant so rageth in him that with the mischief of your person it would scarcely allay.

EDGAR Some villain hath done me wrong.

EDMUND That's my fear. Till the speed of his rage goes slower, retire with me to my lodging. There's my key. Go armed.

I advise you to the best.

I have told you what I have seen and heard, but nothing like the image and horror of it.

*Edgar exits*

He suspects none; on whose foolish honesty My practices ride easy. I see the business. Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit. All with me's meet that I can fashion fit.

*He exits.*

### Scene 3

*Enter Goneril and Oswald, her Steward.*

GONERIL

By day and night he wrongs me.

When he returns from hunting,

I will not speak with him. Say I am sick.

OSWALD He's coming.

GONERIL

Put on what weary negligence you please,

You and your fellows.

If he distaste it, let him to my sister,

Whose mind and mine I know in that are one,

Not to be overruled.

Remember what I have said.

OSWALD Well, madam.

GONERIL I'll write straight to my sister to hold my very course.

*They exit in different directions.*

### Scene 4

*Enter Kent in disguise.*

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,  
If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemned,  
So may it come thy master shall find thee full of labors.

*Horns within. Enter Lear, Knights, and Attendants.*

LEAR How now, what art thou?

KENT A man, sir.

LEAR What wouldst thou with us?

KENT To serve him truly that will put me in trust

LEAR What art thou?

KENT A very honest fellow, and as poor as the King.

LEAR Who wouldst thou serve?

KENT You.

LEAR What services canst do?

KENT I can keep honest counsel, ride, run, mar a  
curious tale in telling it, and deliver a plain message  
bluntly; and the best of me is diligence.

LEAR Follow me. Thou shalt serve me.

*An Attendant exits.*

Where's my daughter?

*Enter Knight again.*

KNIGHT Your daughter is not well. My lord  
There's a great abatement of kindness appears as  
well in the general dependents as in the Duke  
himself also, and your daughter.

I beseech you pardon me, my lord, if I be  
mistaken, I think your Highness wronged.

LEAR Thou but remembrest me

I have perceived a most faint neglect of late,  
which I have rather blamed as mine own jealous  
curiosity. I will look further into 't.

Go you and tell my daughter I would speak with her.

*An Attendant exits.*

*Enter Fool.*

*He offers Kent his cap.*

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

FOOL

*To Kent.* Nay, an thou canst not smile as the  
wind sits, thou 'lt catch cold shortly. 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.

FOOL Mark it, nuncle:

Have more than thou showest.

Speak less than thou knowest,

Lend less than thou owest,

Ride more than thou goest,

Learn more than thou trowest,

Set less than thou throwest;

Leave thy drink and thy whore

And keep in-a-door,

And thou shalt have more

Than two tens to a score.

'tis like the breath of an unfee'd lawyer.

You gave me nothing for 't.—Can you make no use  
of nothing, nuncle?

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

FOOL, *to Kent* Prithee tell him, so much the rent of his  
land comes to.

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

LEAR Dost thou call me "fool,"?

FOOL All thy other titles thou hast given away.

Faith, lords and great men will not let me. When thou  
clovest thy crown i' th' middle and gav'st away  
both parts, thou bor'st thine ass on thy back o'er  
the dirt. Thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown  
when thou gav'st thy golden one away.

I marvel what kin thou and thy daughters are.

They'll have me whipped for speaking true, whipped for lying,  
whipped for holding my peace. Thou hast pared thy wit o'  
both sides and left nothing i' th' middle. Here comes one o' the  
parings.

*Enter Goneril.*

LEAR  
What makes that frontlet on?  
Methinks you are too much of late i' th' frown.  
GONERIL  
I would you would make use of your good wisdom,  
Where of I know you are fraught, and put away  
These dispositions which of late transport you  
From what you rightly are.

LEAR  
I would learn that, for, by the marks of  
sovereignty,  
Knowledge, and reason, I should be false persuaded  
I had daughters.

FOOL Which they will make an obedient father.

LEAR Your name, fair gentlewoman?

GONERIL

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,

That this our court shows like a riotous inn.

Disquantity your train,

And the remainders that shall still depend

To be such men as may besort your age,

Which know themselves and you.

LEAR

Yet have I left a daughter.

*Enter Albany.*

Prepare my horses.

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

*to Goneril*

My train are men of choice and rarest parts.

O most small fault, which wrenched my frame of nature  
Drew from my heart all love and added to the gall!

*He strikes his head.*

Into her womb convey sterility.  
Create her child of spleen, that it may live  
And be a thwart disnatured torment to her.

*Lear and the rest of his train exit.*

*Enter Lear and the Fool.*

LEAR

What, fifty of my followers at a clap?

Within a fortnight

*To Goneril.* Life and death! I am  
ashamed

That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus.

Bewep this cause again, I'll pluck you out

And cast you, with the waters that you loose,

To temper clay.

I have another daughter

Who, I am sure, is kind and comfortable.

When she shall hear this of thee,

She'll flay thy wolvisish visage.

*He exits.*

GONERIL Do you mark that?

GONERIL

A hundred knights!

'Tis politic and safe to let him keep

At point a hundred knights!

ALBANY Well, you may fear too far.

GONERIL Safer than trust too far.

What he hath uttered I have writ my sister.

*Enter Oswald, the Steward.*

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,

And thereto add such reasons of your own

As may compact it more.

*They exit.*

Scene 5

*Enter Lear, Kent in disguise, Gentleman, and Fool.*

LEAR, *to Kent* Go you before to Gloucester with these letters. If your diligence be not speedy, I shall be there afore you.

KENT I will not sleep, till I have delivered your letter. *He exits.*

FOOL Shalt see thy other daughter will use thee kindly

LEAR I did her wrong.

I will forget my nature. So kind a father!

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 How's that?

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

LEAR O, sweet heaven!

Keep me in temper. I would not be mad!

*Enter Gentleman.*

How now, are the horses ready?

GENTLEMAN Ready, my lord.

LEAR Come, boy.

*They exit.*

**ACT 2**

Scene 1

*Enter Edmund, the Bastard and Curan, severally.*

EDMUND Save thee, Curan.

CURAN And you, sir. I have notice that the Duke of Cornwall and Regan his duchess will be here this night.

EDMUND How comes that?

CURAN Nay, I know not. You have heard of the whispered news likely wars toward 'twixt the dukes of Cornwall and Albany?

EDMUND Not a word.

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

*He exits.*

EDMUND

The Duke be here tonight? The better, best.

This weaves itself perforce into my business.

My father hath set guard to take my brother,  
And I have one thing of a queasy question  
Which I must act. Briefness and fortune work!—  
Brother, a word. Descend. Brother, I say!

*Enter Edgar.*

My father watches. O sir, fly this place!

Intelligence is given where you are hid.

You have now the good advantage of the night.

Have you nothing said

Upon his party 'gainst the Duke of Albany?

EDGAR Not a word.

EDMUND

I hear my father coming.

In cunning I must draw my sword upon you.

Draw. Seem to defend yourself. Now, quit you well. *They draw.*

Yield! Come before my father! Light, ho, here!

*Aside to Edgar.* Fly, brother.

*Edgar exits.*

Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion

Of my more fierce endeavor.

*He wounds his arm.*

Father, father!

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

GLOUCESTER But where is he?

EDMUND

Look, sir, I bleed.

GLOUCESTER Where is the villain, Edmund?

EDMUND

Fled this way, sir

GLOUCESTER

Pursue him, ho! Go after. *Servants exit.*

EDMUND

Seeing how loathly opposite I stood

To his unnatural purpose, in fell motion

With his preparèd sword he charges home  
lanced mine arm;  
Suddenly he fled.  
GLOUCESTER Let him fly far!  
Not in this land shall he remain uncaught,  
The noble duke my master, comes tonight.  
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.  
GLOUCESTER

*Tucket within.*

Hark, the Duke's trumpets.  
The villain shall not 'scape.  
The Duke must grant me that. Besides, his picture  
I will send far and near, that all the kingdom  
May have due note of him. And of my land,  
Loyal and natural boy, I'll make thee capable.

*Enter Cornwall, Regan, and Attendants.*

CORNWALL  
How now, my noble friend? Since I came hither,  
I have heard strange news.  
REGAN  
If it be true, all vengeance comes too short  
Which can pursue th' offender. How dost, my lord?  
GLOUCESTER  
O madam, my old heart is cracked  
REGAN  
Did my father's godson seek your life?  
Your Edgar?  
Was he not companion with the riotous knights  
That tended upon my father?  
EDMUND  
Yes, madam, he was  
REGAN  
He were ill affected.  
I have 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.  
CORNWALL Nor I, assure thee, Regan.—

Edmund, I hear that you have shown your father  
A childlike office.  
EDMUND It was my duty, sir.  
CORNWALL  
Make your own purpose,  
How in my strength you please.—For you, Edmund,  
you shall be ours.  
Natures of such deep trust we shall much need.  
You we first seize on.  
EDMUND I shall serve you, sir,  
GLOUCESTER For him I thank your Grace.  
REGAN  
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. Our good old friend,  
Lay comforts to your bosom and bestow  
Your needful counsel to our businesses,  
Which craves the instant use.  
GLOUCESTER I serve you, madam.  
Your Graces are right welcome.

*Flourish. They exit.*

Scene 2

*Enter Kent in disguise 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.  
KENT If I had thee in Lipsbury pifold, I would make  
thee care for me.  
OSWALD Why dost thou use me thus? I know thee not.  
KENT Fellow, I know thee.  
OSWALD What dost thou know me for?  
KENT Filthy worsted-stocking knave; one-trunk-inheriting  
slave; one that wouldst be a bawd in way of good  
service, whom I will beat into clamorous whining.  
OSWALD What a monstrous fellow art thou to rail on one  
that is neither known of thee nor knows thee!

KENT What a brazen-faced varlet art thou to deny thou knowest me! Is it two days ago since I tripped up thy heels and beat thee before the King? *He draws his sword.* Draw, you rogue! You come with letters against the King and take Vanity the puppet's part against the royalty of her father. I'll so carbonado your shanks! *He beats Oswald.*

OSWALD Help, ho! Murder, murder!

*Enter Bastard Edmund, with his rapier drawn, Cornwall, Regan, Gloucester, Servants.*

EDMUND How now, what's the matter? Part!

GLOUCESTER Weapons? Arms? What's the matter here?

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

REGAN The messengers from our sister and the King.

CORNWALL Speak yet, how grew your quarrel?

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

KENT Thou whoreson zed, thou unnecessary letter!

CORNWALL Peace, sirrah!

You beastly knave, know you no reverence?

KENT

Yes, sir, but anger hath a privilege.

CORNWALL Why art thou angry?

KENT

That such a slave as this should wear a sword,  
Who wears no honesty. Such smiling rogues as these,

A plague upon your epileptic visage!

Smile you my speeches, as I were a fool?

CORNWALL What, art thou mad, old fellow?

GLOUCESTER How fell you out? Say that.

KENT

No contraries hold more antipathy

Than I and such a knave.

CORNWALL

Why dost thou call him “knave”? What is his fault?

KENT His countenance likes me not.

CORNWALL

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

KENT

Sir, 'tis my occupation to be plain:

I have seen better faces in my time

Than stands on any shoulder that I see

Before me at this instant.

CORNWALL This is some fellow

Who, having been praised for bluntness, doth affect

A saucy roughness and constrains the garb

Quite from his nature. He cannot flatter, he.

An honest mind and plain, he must speak truth!

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

These kind of knaves I know, which in this plainness

Harbor more craft and more corrupter ends

Than twenty silly-ducking observants

That stretch their duties nicely.

KENT

Sir, in good faith, in sincere verity,

Under th' allowance of your great aspect,

Whose influence, like the wreath of radiant fire

On flick'ring Phoebus' front—

CORNWALL What mean'st by this?

KENT To go out of my dialect, which you discommend

so much. I know, sir, I am no flatterer. He that

beguiled you in a plain accent was a plain knave,

which for my part I will not be, though I should

win your displeasure to entreat me to 't.

CORNWALL, *to Oswald* What was th' offense you gave him?

OSWALD I never gave him any.

It pleased the King his master very late

To strike at me, upon his misconstruction;

When he, compact, and flattering his displeasure,

Tripped me behind; being down, insulted, railed,

And put upon him such a deal of man

That worthied him, got praises of the King

For him attempting who was self-subdued;

And in the fleshment of this dread exploit,

Drew on me here again.

KENT None of these rogues and cowards

But Ajax is their fool.

CORNWALL Fetch forth the stocks.—

You stubborn ancient knave, you reverent braggart,

We'll teach you.

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

CORNWALL  
Fetch forth the stocks.—As I have life and 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 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  
Will check him for 't. Your purposed low correction  
Is such as basest and contemned'st wretches  
For pilf'rings and most common trespasses  
Are punished with. The King must take it ill  
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  
For following her affairs.—Put in his legs.

*Kent is put in the stocks.*

CORNWALL Come, my good lord, away.

*All but Gloucester and Kent exit.*

GLOUCESTER  
I am sorry for thee, friend.

KENT  
Pray, 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.

*He exits.*

KENT  
Good king, that must approve the common saw,  
Thou out of heaven's benediction com'st  
To the warm sun.

*He takes out a paper.*

Approach, thou beacon to this under globe,  
That by thy comfortable beams I may  
Peruse this letter. Nothing almost sees miracles  
But misery. I know 'tis from Cordelia,  
Who hath most fortunately been informed  
Of my obscurèd course, and shall 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.  
Fortune, good night. Smile once more; turn thy  
wheel.

*Sleeps.*

Scene 3  
*Enter Edgar.*

EDGAR  
I will preserve myself, and am bethought  
To take the basest and most poorest shape  
That ever penury in contempt of man  
Brought near to beast. "Edgar" I nothing am.

*He exits.*

Scene 4  
*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.

Mak'st thou this shame thy pastime?

KENT No, my lord.

LEAR

What's he that hath so much thy place mistook

To set thee here?

KENT It is both he and she,

Your son and daughter.

LEAR No.

KENT Yes.

LEAR No, I say.

KENT I say yea.

LEAR 'Tis worse than  
murder

FOOL But, for all this, thou shalt have as many dolours for  
thy daughters as thou canst tell in a year.

LEAR

O, how this mother swells up toward my heart!

*Hysterica passio*, down, thou climbing sorrow!

Where is this daughter?

KENT

How chance the King comes with so small a number?

FOOL 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.

*Enter Lear and Gloucester.*

LEAR

Deny to speak with me? They are sick? They are  
weary?

They have traveled all the night? Mere fetches,

The images of revolt and flying off.

Fetch me a better answer.

GLOUCESTER My dear lord,

You know the fiery quality of the Duke,

How unremovable and fixed he is

In his own course.

LEAR

I'd speak with the Duke of Cornwall and his wife.

GLOUCESTER

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

LEAR

"Informed them"?

GLOUCESTER Ay, my good lord.

LEAR

The King would speak with Cornwall. The dear  
father

Would with his daughter speak, commands, tends  
service.

Should he sit here? This act persuades me

That this remotion of the Duke and her

Is practice only. Give me my servant forth.

Go tell the Duke and 's wife I'd speak with them.

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

*He exits.*

LEAR

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

*Enter Cornwall, Regan, Gloucester, 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

Regan, I think you are. I know what reason

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

REGAN

I pray you, sir, take patience.

LEAR 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

As clears her from all blame.

LEAR My curses on her.

REGAN O sir, you are old.

Say you have wronged her.

LEAR Ask her forgiveness?

*He 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.

LEAR, *rising* Never, Regan.

LEAR

No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse.

Thy tender-hefted nature shall not give

Thee o'er to harshness.

LEAR

Who put my man i' th' stocks?

CORNWALL What trumpet's that?

REGAN

I know 't—my sister's. This approves her letter,

That she would soon be here.

*Enter Oswald, the Steward.*

LEAR

This is a slave whose easy-borrowed pride

Dwells in the fickle grace of her he follows.—

Out, varlet, from my sight!

CORNWALL What means your Grace?

LEAR

Who stocked my servant? Regan, I have good hope

Thou didst not know on 't.

*Enter Goneril.*

*To Goneril.* Art not ashamed to look upon this beard? *Regan takes Goneril's hand.*

O Regan, will you take her by the hand?

GONERIL

Why not by th' hand, sir? How have I offended?

LEAR How came my man i' th' stocks?

CORNWALL

I set him there, sir, but his own disorders

Deserved much less advancement.

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,

LEAR

Return to her? And fifty men dismissed?

No!

*He indicates Oswald.*

GONERIL At your choice, sir.

LEAR

I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad.

I will not trouble thee, my child. Farewell.

We'll no more meet, no more see one another.

REGAN

Not altogether so. I looked not for you yet, nor am

provided for your fit welcome. What, fifty followers?

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

GONERIL

Why might not you, my lord, receive attendance

From those that she calls servants, or from mine?

REGAN

Why not, my lord? If then they chanced to slack you,

We could control them. I entreat you

To bring but five-and-twenty.

LEAR I gave you all—

REGAN And in good time you gave it.

LEAR

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

No more.

LEAR

Thy fifty yet doth double five-and-twenty,

And thou art twice her love.

GONERIL Hear me, my lord.

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

To follow in a house where twice so many

Have a command to tend you?

REGAN What need one?

LEAR

Against their father, fool me not so much

To bear it tamely.

No, I'll not weep.

I have full cause of weeping, but this heart

Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws

*Storm and tempest.*

Or ere I'll weep.—O Fool, I shall go mad!

*Lear, Kent, and Fool exit  
with Gloucester and the Gentleman.*

GONERIL

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

REGAN

But not one follower.

*Enter Gloucester.*

GLOUCESTER The King is in high rage.

CORNWALL

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

GONERIL, *to Gloucester*

My lord, entreat him by no means to stay.

GLOUCESTER

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

CORNWALL

'Tis a wild night.

Come out o' th' storm.

*They exit.*

### **ACT 3**

#### Scene 1

*Storm still. Enter Kent in disguise, and a 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;  
Which the impetuous blasts with eyeless rage  
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.

KENT But who is with him?

GENTLEMAN

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

KENT Sir, I do know you

And dare upon the warrant of my note

There is division, although as yet the face of it is covered  
With mutual cunning, 'twixt Albany and Cornwall,

Or the hard rein which both of them hath borne  
Against the old kind king, or something deeper,

GENTLEMAN

I will talk further with you.

KENT No, do not.

Open this purse and take  
What it contains.

*Kent hands him a purse and a ring.*

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!

I will go seek the King.

GENTLEMAN

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

*They exit separately.*

#### Scene 2

*Storm still. Enter Lear and Fool.*

LEAR

Blow winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow!

Crack nature's molds, all germens spill at once

That makes ingrateful man.

FOOL

Ask thy daughters' blessing. Here's a night  
pities neither wise men nor fools.

LEAR

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

I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness.

I never gave you kingdom, called you children;  
Then let fall your horrible pleasure. Here I stand  
your slave, a poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man.  
LEAR  
No, I will be the pattern of all patience.  
I will say nothing.

*Enter Kent in disguise.*

KENT Who's there?  
FOOL  
That's a wise man and a fool.  
KENT  
Alas, sir, are you here? 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  
Th' affliction nor the fear.  
LEAR  
I am a man more sinned against than sinning.  
KENT  
Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel.  
Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the tempest.  
LEAR My wits begin to turn.—  
How dost, my boy? Art cold?  
I am cold myself.  
Poor Fool and knave, I have one part in my heart  
That's sorry yet for thee.

*Lear and Kent exit.*

FOOL This is a brave night to cool a courtesan. I'll  
speak a prophecy ere I go:  
Then shall the realm of Albion  
Come to great confusion;  
Then comes the time, who lives to see 't,  
That going shall be used with feet.  
This prophecy Merlin shall make, for I live before  
his time.

*He exits.*

Scene 3

*Enter Gloucester and Edmund.*

GLOUCESTER I like not this unnatural dealing. When  
I desired their leave that I might pity him, they took from  
me the use of mine own house, charged me on pain of perpetual  
displeasure neither to speak of him, entreat for  
him, or any way sustain him.

EDMUND Most savage and unnatural.

GLOUCESTER Go to; say you nothing. There is division  
between the dukes, and a worse matter than that. I  
have received a letter this night; 'tis dangerous to  
be spoken; I have locked the letter in my closet.  
These injuries the King now bears will be revenged  
home; there is part of a power already footed. If he  
ask for me, I am ill and gone to bed. If I die for it, as  
no less is threatened me, the King my old master  
must be relieved.

*He exits.*

EDMUND

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

*He exits.*

Scene 4

*Enter Lear, Kent in disguise, and Fool.*

KENT

Here is the place, my lord.

*Storm still.*

LEAR Let me alone.

LEAR

Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm  
Invades us to the skin. So 'tis to thee.  
But where the greater malady is fixed,  
The lesser is scarce felt. When the mind's free,  
The body's delicate. This tempest in my mind  
Doth from my senses take all feeling else  
Save what beats there. Filial ingratitude!  
But I will punish home.  
O Regan, Goneril, that way madness lies. Let me shun  
that; No more of that.

LEAR

This tempest will not give me leave to ponder  
On things would hurt me more.

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,  
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,  
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,  
Your looped and windowed raggedness defend  
you  
O, I have ta'en  
Too little care of this. Take physic, pomp.  
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,  
That thou may'st shake the superflux to them  
And show the heavens more just.

*Enter Fool.*

*Enter Edgar in disguise.*

EDGAR Away. The foul fiend follows me. Go to  
thy cold bed and warm thee.

Who gives anything to Poor Tom, whom the  
foul fiend hath led through fire and through flame,  
through ford and whirlpool, o'er bog and quagmire;  
that hath laid knives under his pillow and  
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? Do Poor Tom  
some charity, whom the foul fiend vexes.

FOOL He reserved a blanket, else we had been all  
shamed.

LEAR  
Nothing could have subdued nature  
To such a lowness but his unkind daughters.  
Is it the fashion that discarded fathers  
Should have thus little mercy on their flesh?  
Judicious punishment!

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

EDGAR 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

*Fool exits.*

proud array.

LEAR What hast thou been?

EDGAR 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;  
False of heart,  
light of ear, bloody of hand; hog in sloth, fox in  
stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in madness, lion in  
prey. Still through the hawthorn blows the cold wind;  
says suum, mun, nonny. Dolphin my boy, boy, sessa!  
Let him trot by.

*Storm still.*

LEAR Thou wert better in a grave than to answer with  
thy uncovered body this extremity of the skies.—Is  
man no more than this? Thou art the thing itself;  
unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare,  
forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings!  
Come, unbutton here.

*Tearing off his clothes.*

*Enter Gloucester, with a torch.*

EDGAR This is the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet. He begins  
at curfew and walks till the first cock and  
hurts the poor creature of earth.

KENT How fares your Grace?

GLOUCESTER What are you there? Your names?

EDGAR Poor Tom, stocked, punished, and imprisoned;  
Beware my follower. Peace, Smulkin! Peace, thou  
fiend!

GLOUCESTER, *to Lear*

What, hath your Grace no better company?

EDGAR 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.

GLOUCESTER, *to Lear*

I ventured to come seek you out

And bring you where both fire and food is ready.  
LEAR, *To Edgar*  
First let me talk with this philosopher.

*They talk aside.*

GLOUCESTER  
His daughters seek his death. poor banished man.  
Thou sayest 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  
I loved him, friend,  
The grief hath crazed my wits.  
LEAR O, cry you mercy, sir.  
*To Edgar.* Noble philosopher, your company.  
LEAR Come, good Athenian.

*Storm still.*

*Enter Lear, Edgar in disguise, and Fool.*

FOOL tell me whether a madman be a  
gentleman or a yeoman.  
LEAR 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. the  
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 learned  
justice.

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

EDGAR Look where he stands and glares!—Want'st  
thou eyes at trial, madam?

*Sings. Come o'er the burn, Bessy, to me—*

FOOL *sings*  
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.

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 their evidence.  
*To Edgar.* Thou robèd man of justice, take thy  
place,

*Gloucester exits.*

*They exit.*

Scene 5

*Enter Cornwall, and Edmund with a paper.*

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 awork by a reprovable  
badness in himself.

EDMUND How malicious is my fortune that I must  
repent to be just! This is the letter he spoke of,  
which approves him an intelligent party to France. O heavens,  
that this treason were not, or not I the detector.

CORNWALL Go with me. Seek out where thy father is, that he  
may be ready for our apprehension.

EDMUND, *aside* If I find him comforting the King, it  
will stuff his suspicion more fully.—I will persevere  
in my course of loyalty, though the conflict be sore  
between that and my blood.

CORNWALL thou shalt  
find a dearer father in my love.

*They exit*

Scene 6

*Enter Kent in disguise, and Gloucester.*

*To Fool.* And thou, his yokefellow 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, 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!

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 you so oft have boasted to retain?

EDGAR, *aside*

My tears begin to take his part so much

They 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!

Be thy mouth or black or white,

Tooth that poisons if it bite,

Mastiff, greyhound, mongrel grim,

Hound or spaniel, brach, or lym,

Bobtail tike, or trundle-tail,

Tom will make him weep and wail;

For, with throwing thus my head,

Dogs leapt the hatch, and all are fled.

Do de, de, de. Sessa! Come, march to wakes  
and fairs and market towns. Poor Tom, thy horn  
is dry.

LEAR Then let them anatomize Regan; see what breeds  
about her heart. Is there any cause in nature that  
make these hard hearts? *To Edgar.* You, sir, I  
entertain for one of my hundred; only I do not like  
the fashion of your garments. You will say they are  
Persian, but let them be changed.

KENT

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

LEAR, *lying down* Make no noise, make no noise.

Draw the curtains. So, so, we'll go to supper i' th'  
morning.

FOOL 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 toward Dover, friend, where thou shalt  
meet

Both welcome and protection. Take up thy master.

If thou shouldst dally half an hour, his life,

With thine and all that offer to defend him,

Stand in assurèd loss. Take up, take up,

And follow me, that will to some provision

Give thee quick conduct.

KENT Oppressèd nature sleeps.

This rest might yet have balmed thy broken sinews,

Which, if convenience will not allow,

Stand in hard cure. *To the Fool.* Come, help to  
bear thy master.

Thou must not stay behind.

GLOUCESTER Come, come away.

*All but Edgar exit, carrying Lear.*

EDGAR

When we our betters see bearing our woes,

We scarcely think our miseries our foes.

Who alone suffers suffers most i' th' mind,  
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!  
He childed as I fathered. Tom, away.  
Mark the high noises, and thyself bewray  
When false opinion, whose wrong thoughts defile  
thee,  
In thy just proof repeals and reconciles thee.  
What will hap more tonight, safe 'scape the King!  
Lurk, lurk.

*He exits.*

Scene 7

*Enter Cornwall, Regan, Goneril, Edmund, the Bastard,  
and Servants.*

CORNWALL, *to Goneril* Post speedily to my lord your  
husband. Show him this letter. *He gives her a  
paper.* The army of France is landed.—Seek out  
the traitor Gloucester.

*Some Servants exit.*

REGAN Hang him instantly.

GONERIL Pluck out his eyes.

CORNWALL Leave him to my displeasure.—Edmund,  
keep you our sister company. The revenges we are  
bound to take upon your traitorous father are not  
fit for your beholding. Advise the Duke, where you  
are going, to a most festinate preparation; we are  
bound to the like. Our posts shall be swift and  
intelligent betwixt us.—Farewell, dear sister.—  
Farewell, my lord of Gloucester.

*Enter Oswald, the Steward.*

How now? Where's the King?

OSWALD

My lord of Gloucester hath conveyed him hence.  
Some five- or six-and-thirty of his knights,

Hot questrists after him, met him at gate,  
Who, with some other of the lord's dependents,  
Are gone with him toward Dover, where they boast  
To have well-armèd friends.  
CORNWALL Get horses for your mistress.

*Oswald exits.*

GONERIL Farewell, sweet lord, and sister.

CORNWALL

Edmund, farewell.

*Goneril and Edmund exit.*

Go seek the traitor Gloucester.

Pinion him like a thief; bring him before us.

*Some Servants exit.*

Though well we may not pass upon his life  
Without the form of justice, yet our power  
Shall do a court'sy to our wrath, which men  
May blame but not control.

*Enter Gloucester and Servants.*

Who's there? The  
traitor?

REGAN Ingrateful fox! 'Tis he.

CORNWALL Bind fast his corky arms.

GLOUCESTER

What means your Graces? Good my friends,  
consider

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

CORNWALL

Bind him, I say.

REGAN Hard, hard. O filthy traitor!

GLOUCESTER

Unmerciful lady as you are, I'm none.

CORNWALL

To this chair bind him.

*Servants bind Gloucester.*

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 Naughty lady,

These hairs which thou dost ravish from my chin  
Will quicken and accuse thee. I am your host;  
With robber's hands my hospitable favors  
You should not ruffle thus. What will you do?

CORNWALL

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

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.

REGAN And false.

CORNWALL Where hast thou sent the King?

GLOUCESTER To Dover.

REGAN

Wherefore to Dover? Wast thou not charged at  
peril— 65

CORNWALL

Wherefore to Dover? Let him answer that.

GLOUCESTER

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

REGAN Wherefore to Dover?

GLOUCESTER

Because I would not see thy cruel nails

Pluck out his poor old eyes, nor thy fierce sister

In his anointed flesh stick boarish fangs.

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 help the heavens to rain.

If wolves had at thy gate howled that stern time,

Thou shouldst have said "Good porter, turn the  
key."

All cruels else subscribe. 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

He that will think to live till he be old,

Give me some help!

*As Servants hold the chair, Cornwall forces out  
one of Gloucester's eyes.*

O cruel! O you gods!

REGAN

One side will mock another. Th' other too.

CORNWALL

If you see vengeance—

FIRST SERVANT Hold your hand,  
my lord.

I have served you ever since I was a child,

But better service have I never done you

Than now to bid you hold.

REGAN How now, you dog?

FIRST SERVANT

If you did wear a beard upon your chin,

I'd shake it on this quarrel. What do you mean?

CORNWALL My villain?

*Draw and fight.*

FIRST SERVANT

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

REGAN, *to an Attendant*

Give me thy sword. A peasant stand up thus?

*She takes a sword and runs  
at him behind; kills him.*

FIRST SERVANT

O, I am slain! My lord, you have one eye left

To see some mischief on him. O!

*He dies.*

CORNWALL

Lest it see more, prevent it. Out, vile jelly!

*Forcing out Gloucester's other eye.*

Where is thy luster now?

GLOUCESTER

All dark and comfortless! Where's my son  
Edmund?—

Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature

To quit this horrid act.

REGAN Out, treacherous villain!

Thou call'st on him that hates thee. It was he

That made the overture of thy treasons to us,  
Who is too good to pity thee.

GLOUCESTER

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

REGAN

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

*Some Servants exit with Gloucester.*

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

CORNWALL

I have received a hurt. Follow me, lady.—  
Turn out that eyeless villain. Throw this slave  
Upon the dunghill.—Regan, I bleed apace.  
Untimely comes this hurt. Give me your arm.

*Cornwall and Regan exit.*

SECOND SERVANT

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

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

SECOND SERVANT

Let's follow the old earl and get the Bedlam  
To lead him where he would. His roguish madness  
Allows itself to anything.

THIRD SERVANT

Go thou. I'll fetch some flax and whites of eggs  
To apply to his bleeding face. Now heaven help him!

*They exit.*

## **ACT 4**

### Scene 1

*Enter Edgar in disguise.*

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.  
The lamentable change is from the best;

The worst returns to laughter. Welcome, then,  
Thou unsubstantial air that I embrace.  
The wretch that thou hast blown unto the worst  
Owes nothing to thy blasts. But who comes here?

*Enter Gloucester and an old man.*

My father, poorly led? World, world, O world,  
But that thy strange mutations make us hate thee,  
Life would not yield to age.

OLD MAN

O my good lord, I have been your tenant  
And your father's tenant these fourscore years.

GLOUCESTER

Away, get thee away. Good friend, begone.  
Thy comforts can do me no good at all;  
Thee they may hurt.

OLD MAN You cannot see your way.

GLOUCESTER

I have no way and therefore want no eyes.  
I stumbled when I saw. Full oft 'tis seen  
Our means secure us, and our mere defects  
Prove our commodities. O dear son Edgar,  
The food of thy abused father's wrath,  
Might I but live to see thee in my touch,  
I'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"?  
I am worse than e'er I was.

OLD MAN 'Tis poor mad Tom.

EDGAR, *aside*

And worse I may be yet. The worst is not  
So long as we can say "This is the worst."

OLD MAN

Fellow, where goest?

GLOUCESTER Is it a beggar-man?

OLD MAN Madman and beggar too.

GLOUCESTER

He has some reason, else he could not beg.  
I' th' last night's storm, I such a fellow saw,  
Which made me think a man a worm. My son  
Came then into my mind, and yet my mind

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

As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods;  
They kill us for their sport.

EDGAR, *aside* How should this be?

Bad is the trade that must play fool to sorrow,  
Ang'ring itself and others.—Bless thee, master.

GLOUCESTER

Is that the naked fellow?

OLD MAN Ay, my lord.

GLOUCESTER

Then, prithee, get thee away. If for my sake  
Thou wilt o'ertake us hence a mile or twain  
I' th' way toward Dover, do it for ancient love,  
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.

Above the rest, begone.

OLD MAN

I'll bring him the best 'parel that I have,  
Come on 't what will.

GLOUCESTER Sirrah, naked fellow—

EDGAR

Poor Tom's a-cold. *Aside.* I cannot daub it further.

GLOUCESTER Come hither, fellow.

EDGAR, *aside*

And yet I must.—Bless thy sweet eyes, they bleed.

GLOUCESTER Know'st thou the way to Dover?

EDGAR Both stile and gate, horseway and footpath.

Poor Tom hath been scared out of his good wits.

Bless thee, good man's son, from the foul fiend.

Five fiends have been in Poor Tom at once: of lust,  
as Obidicut; Hobbidance, 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 him money*

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 does 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.

*They exit.*

## Scene 2

*Enter Goneril and Edmund, the Bastard.*

GONERIL

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

*Enter Oswald, the Steward.*

OSWALD

Madam, 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.

GONERIL, *to Edmund* Then shall you go no further.

It is the cowish terror of his spirit,

That dares not undertake. He'll not feel wrongs

Which tie him to an answer. Our wishes on the way

*He exits.*

May prove effects. Back, Edmund, to my brother.  
Hasten his musters and conduct his powers.  
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.

Decline your head. *She kisses him.* This kiss  
Would stretch thy spirits up into the air.  
fare thee well.

EDMUND

Yours in the ranks of death.

GONERIL My most dear  
Gloucester!

O, the difference of man and man!  
To thee a woman's services are due;  
My fool usurps my body.

OSWALD Madam, here comes my lord.

*Enter Albany.*

GONERIL

I have been worth the whistle.

ALBANY O Goneril,

You are not worth the dust which the rude wind  
Blows in your face. I fear your disposition.

That nature which contemns its origin

Cannot be bordered certain in itself.

She that herself will sliver and disbranch

From her material sap perforce must wither

And come to deadly use.

GONERIL No more. The text is foolish.

ALBANY

Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile.

Filths savor but themselves. What have you done?

Tigers, not daughters, what have you performed?

A father, and a gracious aged man,

Who even the head-lugged bear would lick,

Most barbarous, degenerate, have you madded.

Could my good brother suffer you to do it?

A man, a prince, by him so benefited!

*She gives him a favor.*

*He exits.*

*He exits.*

If that the heavens do not their visible spirits  
Send quickly down to tame these vile offenses,  
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

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?

France spreads in our noiseless land,

thy state begins to threat,

Whilst 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 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 tear

Thy flesh and bones. But a woman's shape doth shield thee.

*Enter a Messenger.*

What news?

MESSENGER

O, my good lord, the Duke of Cornwall's dead,

Slain by his servant, going to put out

The other eye of Gloucester.

ALBANY Gloucester's eyes?

MESSENGER

A servant that he bred, thrilled with remorse,

Opposed against the act, bending his sword

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,

You justicers, that these our nether crimes

So speedily can venge. But, O poor Gloucester,

Lost he his other eye?  
MESSENGER Both, my lord.—  
This letter, madam, craves a speedy answer.

'Tis from your sister.  
GONERIL, *aside* One way I like this well.  
But being widow and my Gloucester with her  
May all the building in my fancy pluck  
Upon my hateful life. Another way  
The news is not so tart.—I'll read, and answer.

ALBANY  
Where was his son when they did take his eyes?

MESSENGER  
Come with my lady hither.

ALBANY He is not here.

MESSENGER

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

ALBANY Knows he the wickedness?

MESSENGER

Ay, my good lord. 'Twas he informed against him  
And quit the house on purpose, that their punishment  
Might have the freer course.

ALBANY Gloucester, I live

To thank thee for the love thou show'd'st the King,

And to revenge thine eyes.—Come hither, friend.

Tell me what more thou know'st.

*Giving her a paper.*

*She exits.*

*They exit.*

### Scene 3

*Enter Kent in disguise and a Gentleman.*

KENT Why the King of France is so suddenly gone  
back know you no reason?

GENTLEMAN Something he left imperfect in the state  
that his personal return was most required and  
necessary.

KENT Who hath he left behind him general?

GENTLEMAN The Marshal of France, Monsieur La Far.

KENT Did your letters pierce the Queen to any demonstration  
of grief?

GENTLEMAN

Ay, sir, she took them, read them in my

presence,  
And now and then an ample tear trilled down  
Her delicate cheek.

KENT O, then it moved her.

GENTLEMAN

Not to a rage. Patience and sorrow strove  
Who should express her goodliest.

KENT Made she no verbal question?

GENTLEMAN

Once or twice she heaved the name "father"  
Pantingly forth, as if it pressed her heart;

Cried "Sisters, shame of ladies!

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,

To deal with grief alone.

KENT It is the stars.

The stars above us govern our conditions,

You spoke not with her since?

GENTLEMAN 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

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 detains him from Cordelia.

GENTLEMAN Alack, poor gentleman!

KENT

Of Albany's and Cornwall's powers you heard not?

GENTLEMAN 'Tis so. They are afoot.

KENT

Well, sir, I'll bring you to our master Lear

And leave you to attend him. Some dear cause

Will in concealment wrap me up awhile.

When I am known aright, you shall not grieve

Lending me this acquaintance. I pray you, go

Along with me.

Scene 4

*Enter with Drum and Colors, Cordelia, Doctor,  
Gentlemen, and Soldiers.*

CORDELIA

Alack, as mad as the sea, singing aloud,

DOCTOR Their is hope for him.

*Enter Messenger.*

MESSENGER News, madam.

The British powers are marching here.

CORDELIA We are prepared for them. I'm excited to see my father.

*They exit.*

Scene 5

*Enter Regan and Oswald, the Steward.*

REGAN

are my brother's powers set forth?

OSWALD Ay

REGAN

Edmund spake not with your lord at home?

OSWALD No,.

REGAN

What might import my sister's letter to him?

OSWALD I know not, lady.

REGAN

Edmund is posted hence on serious matter.

It was great ignorance, Gloucester's eyes being out,

To let him live. Where he arrives he moves

hearts against us. Edmund, is gone, to dispatch

His nighted life;

OSWALD

I must after him, madam, my letter.

REGAN

Stay with us.

OSWALD I may not,

REGAN

Why should she write to Edmund? I know not what. I'll love thee much—

*They exit.*

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 here,

She gave speaking looks

To Edmund. I speak in understanding. I advise you take this note:

My lord is dead; Edmund and I have talked,

And more convenient is he for my hand

Than for your lady's. If you find him,, give him this,

And when your mistress hears, tell her to call her wisdom to her.

So, fare you well.

*They exit.*

Scene 6

*Enter Gloucester and Edgar dressed as a peasant.*

GLOUCESTER

When shall I come to th' top of the hill?

EDGAR

You climb up it now.. Give me your hand.

You are now within a foot of th' verge.

GLOUCESTER .

Bid me farewell, *He kneels.*

O you mighty gods! This world I do renounce,

If Edgar live, O, bless him!—

Now, fellow, fare thee well.

*He falls.*

EDGAR Friend, hear you—What are you, sir?

GLOUCESTER Away, and let me die.

EDGAR thou dost breathe,

Ten masts make the altitude

Which thou fell. Thy life's a miracle.

GLOUCESTER But have I fall'n or no?

EDGAR From the summit, do but look up.

GLOUCESTER I have no eyes.

*Enter Lear.*

LEAR I am the King.

GLOUCESTER Let me kiss that hand!

LEAR

If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes.  
I know thee well enough; thy name is Gloucester.  
Thou must be patient. We came crying hither;  
Thou know'st the first time that we smell the air  
We wawl and cry. I will preach to thee. Mark.  
When we are born, we cry that we are come  
To this great stage of fools.—This' a good block.  
It were a delicate stratagem to shoe

*Enter a Gentleman and Attendants.*

GENTLEMAN, *noticing Lear*

O, here he is. *To an Attendant.* Lay hand upon  
him.—Sir,

Your most dear daughter—

LEAR

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

GENTLEMAN 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 waterpots,  
Ay, and laying autumn's dust.

I will die bravely like a smug bridegroom. What?

I will be jovial. Come, come, I am a king,

Masters, know you that?

GENTLEMAN

You are a royal one, and we obey you.

LEAR Then there's life in 't. Come, an you get it, you  
shall get it by running. Sa, sa, sa, sa.

*The King exits running pursued by Attendants.*

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  
Which twain have brought her to.

EDGAR Hail, gentle sir.

GENTLEMAN Sir, speed you. What's your will?

EDGAR

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

GENTLEMAN

Most sure and vulgar. Everyone hears that,  
Which can distinguish sound.

EDGAR But, by your favor,  
How near's the other army?

GENTLEMAN

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

EDGAR I thank you, sir. That's all.

GENTLEMAN

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

EDGAR I thank you, sir.

*Gentleman exits.*

GLOUCESTER

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

EDGAR Well pray you, father.

GLOUCESTER Now, good sir, what are you?

EDGAR

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

*He takes Gloucester's hand.*

GLOUCESTER Hearty thanks.

The bounty and the benison of heaven

To boot, and boot.

*Enter Oswald, the Steward.*

OSWALD, *drawing his sword*

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  
That must destroy thee.

GLOUCESTER Now let thy friendly hand  
Put strength enough to 't.

*Edgar steps between Gloucester and Oswald.*

OSWALD Wherefore, bold peasant,  
Dar'st thou support a published traitor? Hence,  
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. Chill be plain with you.

OSWALD Out, dunghill.

EDGAR Chill pick your teeth, zir. Come, no matter vor  
your foins.

*They fight.*

OSWALD, *falling*

Slave, thou hast slain me Bury my body,  
And give the letters which thou find'st about me  
To Edmund, Earl of Gloucester. Seek him out  
Upon the English party. O, untimely death!

*He dies*

EDGAR

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

EDGAR Sit you down, father; rest you.

Let's see the letters he speaks of

May be my friends. He's dead; I am only sorry  
He had no other deathsman. Let us see.

*He opens a letter.*

Leave, gentle wax, and, manners, blame us not.

To know our enemies' minds, we rip their hearts.

Their papers is more lawful.

*Reads the letter.*

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

*Your (wife, so I would say) affectionate servant,  
and, for you, her own for venture,*

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

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

Of my huge sorrows! Better I were distract.

So should my thoughts be severed from my griefs,

And woes lose knowledge of themselves.

*Drum afar off.*

EDGAR I hear the beaten drum.

Come, father, I'll bestow you with a friend.

*They exit.*

Scene 7

*Enter Cordelia, Kent in disguise, Doctor, and  
Gentleman.*

CORDELIA

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

KENT

To be acknowledged, madam, is o'erpaid.

All my reports go with the modest truth,

Nor more, nor clipped, but so.

CORDELIA Be better suited.

These weeds are memories of those worsèr hours.

I prithee put them off.

KENT 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.—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,

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 in a chair carried by Servants.*

GENTLEMAN

Ay, madam. In the heaviness of sleep,  
We put fresh garments on him.

DOCTOR

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

CORDELIA Very well.

DOCTOR

Please you, draw near.—Louder the music there.

CORDELIA, *kissing 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 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 jarring winds?  
To stand against the deep dread-bolted thunder,  
In the most terrible and nimble stroke  
Of quick cross-lightning? To hovel thee with swine and rogues forlorn  
In short and musty straw? Alack,  
'Tis wonder that thy life and wits at once  
Had not concluded all.—He wakes.

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

CORDELIA Sir, do you know me?

LEAR You are a spirit, I know.

Where have I been? Where am I? I am mightily abused;  
I will not swear these are my hands. Let's see.  
I feel this pinprick. Would I were assured  
Of my condition!

CORDELIA O, look upon me, sir,  
And hold your hand in benediction o'er me.

No, sir, you must not kneel.

LEAR Pray do not mock:

I am a very foolish fond old man,  
I fear I am not in my perfect mind.

Methinks I should know you and know this man,  
Yet I am doubtful, nor I know not  
Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me,  
For, as I am a man, I think this lady  
To be my child Cordelia.

CORDELIA, *weeping* And so I am; I am.

LEAR

Be your tears wet? Yes, faith. I pray, weep not.  
If you have poison for me, I will drink it.

I know you do not love me, for your sisters  
Have, as I do remember, done me wrong.

You have some cause; they have not.

CORDELIA No cause.

LEAR 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  
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. *They exit. Kent and Gentleman remain.*

GENTLEMAN Holds it true, sir, that the Duke of Cornwall  
was so slain?

KENT Most certain, sir.

GENTLEMAN Who is conductor of his people?

KENT As 'tis said, the bastard son of Gloucester.

GENTLEMAN They say Edgar, his banished son, is with  
the Earl of Kent in Germany.

KENT Report is changeable. 'Tis time to look about.

The powers of the kingdom approach apace.

GENTLEMAN The arbitrament is like to be bloody. Fare  
you well, sir.

KENT My point and period will be thoroughly wrought,  
Or well, or ill, as this day's battle's fought.

*He exits.*

*He exits.*

## ACT 5

### Scene 1

*Enter, with Drum and Colors, Edmund, Regan,  
Gentlemen, and Soldiers.*

EDMUND, *to a Gentleman*

Know of the Duke if his last purpose hold.

*A Gentleman exits.*

REGAN

Do you not love my sister?

EDMUND In honored love.

REGAN

I am doubtful that you have been conjunct  
And bosomed with her as far as we call hers.  
Be not familiar with her.

EDMUND

Fear me not. She and the Duke, her husband.

*Enter, with Drum and Colors, Albany, Goneril, Soldiers.*

GONERIL, *aside*

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

ALBANY

The King is come to his daughter,  
With others whom the rigor of our state  
Forced to cry out. Where I could not be honest,  
I never yet was valiant. For this business,  
It touches us as France invades our land.

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

ALBANY Let's then determine

With th' ancient of war on our proceeding.

EDMUND I shall attend you presently at your tent.

REGAN Sister, you'll go with us?

GONERIL No.

REGAN 'Tis most convenient. Pray, go with us.

GONERIL, *aside*

Oho, I know the riddle.—I will go.

*They begin to exit.*

*Enter Edgar dressed as a peasant.*

*Both the armies exit.*

EDGAR, *giving him a paper*

Before you fight the battle, ope this letter.

If you have victory, let the trumpet sound  
For him that brought it. Wretched though I seem,  
I can produce a champion that will prove  
What is avouchèd there. If you miscarry,  
Your business of the world hath so an end,  
And machination ceases.

*He exits.*

ALBANY

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

*Enter Edmund.*

EDMUND

The enemy's in view. Draw up your powers.

*Giving him a paper.*

Here is the guess of their true strength and forces  
By diligent discovery.

*He exits.*

EDMUND

To both these sisters have I sworn my love,  
Each jealous of the other as the stung  
Are of the adder. Neither can be enjoyed  
If both remain alive. Now, then, we'll use  
His countenance for the battle, which, being done,  
Let her who would be rid of him devise  
His speedy taking off. As for the mercy  
Which he intends to Lear and to Cordelia,  
The battle done and they within our power,  
Shall never see his pardon, for my state  
Stands on me to defend, not to debate.

*He exits.*

Scene 2

*Alarum within. Enter, with Drum and Colors, Lear, Cordelia, and Soldiers, over the stage, and exit. Enter Edgar and Gloucester.*

EDGAR  
Here, father, take the shadow of this tree  
For your good host.

*Edgar exits.  
Alarum and Retreat within.*

*Enter Edgar.*

EDGAR  
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  
Men must endure  
Their going hence even as their coming hither.  
Ripeness is all..

*They exit.*

Scene 3

*Enter in conquest, with Drum and Colors, Edmund; Lear and Cordelia as prisoners; Soldiers, Captain.*

EDMUND  
Some officers take them away. Good guard  
Until their greater pleasures first be known  
That are to censure them.  
CORDELIA, *to Lear*  
Myself could else outfrown false Fortune's frown.  
Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?

LEAR  
No. Come, let's away to prison.  
We two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage.  
I'll kneel down  
And ask of thee forgiveness.

EDMUND Take them away.

LEAR My Cordelia,

The gods themselves throw incense. Have I caught thee?  
He that parts us shall bring a brand from heaven  
And fire us hence like foxes. We'll see 'em starved first.

*Lear and Cordelia exit, with Soldiers.*

EDMUND

*Handing Captain a paper.*

Take thou this note. Go follow them to prison.  
One step I have advanced thee. If thou dost  
As this instructs thee, thou dost make thy way  
To noble fortunes.

CAPTAIN I'll do 't, my lord.

EDMUND

About it, and write "happy" when th' hast done.j

CAPTAIN

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

*Captain exits.*

*Flourish. Enter Albany, Goneril, Regan, Soldiers and a Captain.*

ALBANY, *to Edmund*

Sir, you have showed today your valiant strain,  
And Fortune led you well. You have the captives  
Who 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  
To send the old and miserable king  
To some retention and appointed guard,  
Whose age had charms in it, whose title more,  
To pluck the common bosom on his side. With him I sent the  
Queen. The question of Cordelia and her father  
Requires a fitter place.

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

REGAN

Methinks our pleasure might have been demanded  
Ere you had spoke so far. He led our powers,  
Bore the commission of my place and person,

The which immediacy may well stand up  
And call itself your brother.

GONERIL

In his own grace he doth exalt himself  
More than in your addition.

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

GONERIL

That eye that told you so looked but asquint.

REGAN

Lady, I am not well, else I should answer  
From a full-flowing stomach. *To Edmund.*  
Take thou my soldiers, prisoners, patrimony.  
Dispose of them, of me.

GONERIL Mean you to enjoy him?

ALBANY

The let-alone lies not in your goodwill.

EDMUND

Nor in thine, lord.

ALBANY Half-blooded fellow, yes.

REGAN, *to Edmund*

Let the drum strike, and prove my title thine.

ALBANY

Edmund, I arrest thee

On capital treason; and, in thine attain, t  
This gilded serpent.—For your claim, fair  
sister,

I bar it in the interest of my wife.

Thou art armed, Gloucester.

If none appear to prove upon thy person

Thy treasons,

There is my pledge.

*He throws down a glove.*

REGAN Sick, O, sick!

GONERIL, *aside* If not, I'll ne'er trust medicine.

EDMUND

There's my exchange.

*He throws down a glove.*

What in the world he is

That names me traitor, villain-like he lies.

I will maintain

My truth and honor firmly.

ALBANY

A herald, ho!

REGAN My sickness grows upon me.

ALBANY

She is not well. Convey her to my tent.

*Regan is helped to exit.*

*Enter a Herald.*

Let the trumpet sound,

And read out this.

*He hands the Herald a paper.*

*A trumpet sounds.*

HERALD *reads.*

*If any man of quality or degree will maintain upon Edmund, that he is a manifold  
traitor, let him*

*appear by the third sound of the trumpet.*

*First trumpet sounds.*

HERALD Again!

*Second trumpet sounds.*

HERALD Again!

*Third trumpet sounds.*

*Trumpet answers within.*

*Enter Edgar armed.*

EDGAR Know my name is lost,

By treason's tooth bare-gnawn and canker-bit.

Yet am I noble as the adversary

I come to cope.

Draw thy sword.

Here is mine.

*He draws his sword.*

Behold, it is my privilege, the privilege of mine  
honors,

My oath, and my profession. Thou art a traitor,

False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father,

Say thou "no,"

This sword, this arm, and my best spirits are bent

To prove upon thy heart, whereto I speak,

Thou liest.

EDMUND In wisdom I should ask thy name,

But since thy outside looks so fair and warlike,

And that thy tongue some say of breeding breathes,

What safe and nicely I might well delay

By rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn.

Back do I toss these treasons to thy head,

This sword of mine shall give them instant way,

Where they shall rest forever.

*He draws his sword. Alarums. Fights.*

*Edmund falls, wounded.*

GONERIL This is practice, Gloucester.  
By th' law of war, thou wast not bound to answer  
An unknown opposite.

ALBANY Shut your mouth, dame,  
Or with this paper shall I stopple it.—Hold, sir.—  
Thou worse than any name, read thine own evil.  
No tearing, lady. I perceive you know it.

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

*She exits.*

ALBANY Go after her, she's desperate. Govern her.

EDMUND, *to Edgar*

What you have charged me with, that have I done,  
And more, much more.

But what art thou  
That hast this fortune on me? If thou 'rt noble,  
I do forgive thee.

EDGAR Let's exchange charity.  
I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund.

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  
The wheel is come full circle.

ALBANY, *to Edgar*  
Let sorrow split my heart if ever I  
Did hate thee or thy father!

EDGAR  
The bloody proclamation to escape  
That followed me so near taught me to shift  
Into a madman's rags and in this habit  
Met I my father with his bleeding rings,  
Their precious stones new lost; became his guide.  
Never revealed myself until some half hour past,  
when I was armed. I asked his blessing, and from first to last  
Told him our pilgrimage. But his flawed heart  
'Twi'xt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,

*A Soldier exits.*

Burst smilingly. Whilst I was big in clamor, came there in a man  
Who, having seen me in my worst estate,  
Shunned my abhorred society; but then, finding  
Who 'twas that so endured. His grief grew puissant.

ALBANY But who was this?

EDGAR  
Kent, sir, who in disguise  
Followed his enemy king and did him service  
Improper for a slave.

*Enter a Gentleman with a bloody knife.*

EDGAR What means this bloody knife?

GENTLEMAN It came even from the heart  
Of—O, she's dead!

ALBANY Who dead? Speak, man.

GENTLEMAN  
Your lady, sir, your lady. And her sister  
By her is poisoned. She confesses it.

EDMUND  
I was contracted to them both. All three  
Now marry in an instant.

*Enter Kent.*

ALBANY  
This judgment of the heavens, that makes us tremble,  
Touches us not with pity.  
Speak, Edmund, where's the King? And Cordelia?

*Goneril and Regan's bodies brought out*

EDMUND  
I pant for life. Some good I mean to do  
Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send—  
to th' castle, for my writ is on the life of Lear,  
and on Cordelia. Nay, send in time.  
Take my sword. Give it the Captain.

*The Soldier exits with Edmund's sword.*

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

*Edmund is carried off.*

*Enter Lear with Cordelia in his arms,  
followed by a Gentleman.*

LEAR

O, you are men of stones!  
She's gone forever. Lend me a looking glass.  
If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,  
This feather stirs. She lives. If it be so,  
It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows  
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 forever.—  
I killed the slave that was a-hanging thee. *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 is a dull sight. Are you not Kent?

KENT The same,

Your servant Kent. Where is your servant Caius?

LEAR He's a good fellow, I can tell you that.  
He's dead and rotten.

KENT

No, my good lord, I am the very man  
That from your first of difference and decay  
Have followed your sad steps.

LEAR You are welcome  
hither.

ALBANY He knows not what he says,  
and vain is it that we present us to him.

*Enter a Messenger.*

MESSENGER Edmund is dead, my lord.

ALBANY That's but a trifle here.—

What comfort to this great decay may come  
Shall be applied. For us, we will resign

To him our absolute power. All friends shall taste

The wages of their virtue, and all foes

The cup of their deservings. O, see!

LEAR And my poor fool is hanged.

Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,  
And thou no breath at all? Look on her lips, look there!

*He dies.*

EDGAR Look up, my lord.

KENT

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

The wonder is he hath endured so long.

He but usurped his life.

ALBANY

*To Edgar and Kent.* Friends of my  
soul, you twain

Rule in this realm, and the gored state sustain.

KENT

I have a journey, sir, shortly to go;

My master calls me. I must not say no.

EDGAR Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.

The oldest hath borne most; we that are young  
Shall never see so much nor live so long.

*They exit with a dead march.*