
King Lear



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In *King Lear*, Shakespeare pushes to its limit the hypothesis of a malign or at least indifferent universe in which human life is meaningless and brutal. Few plays other than *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* approach *King Lear* in evoking the wretchedness of human existence, and even they cannot match the devastating spectacle of the Earl of Gloucester blinded or Cordelia dead in Lear's arms. The responses of the chief characters are correspondingly searing. "Is man no more than this?" rages Lear. "Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art" (3.4.101–7). Life he calls a "great stage of fools," an endless torment: "the first time that we smell the air / We wawl and cry" (4.6.179–83). Gloucester's despair takes the form of accusing the gods of gleeful malice toward humanity: "As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods; / They kill us for their sport" (4.1.36–7). Gloucester's ministering son Edgar can offer him no greater consolation than stoic resolve: "Men must endure / Their going hence, even as their coming hither; / Ripeness is all" (5.2.9–11). These statements need not be read as choric expressions of meaning for the play as a whole, but they do attest to the depth of suffering. In no other Shakespearean play does injustice appear to triumph so ferociously, for so long, and with such impunity. Will the heavens countenance this reign of injustice on earth? Retribution is late in coming and is not certainly the work of the heavens themselves. For, at the last, we must confront the wanton death of the innocent Cordelia—a death no longer willed even by the villain who arranged her execution. "Is this the promised end?" (5.3.268) asks the Earl of Kent, stressing the unparalleled horror of the catastrophe.

Throughout its earlier history, the ancient story of King Lear had always ended happily. In the popular folktale of Cinderella, to which the legend of Lear's daughters bears a significant resemblance, the youngest and virtuous daughter triumphs over her two older wicked sisters and is married to her princely wooer. Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c. 1136), the ear-

liest known version of the Lear story, records that, after Lear is overthrown by his sons-in-law (more than by his daughters), he is restored to his throne by the intervention of the French King and is allowed to enjoy his kingdom and Cordelia's love until his natural death. (Cordelia, as his successor, is later dethroned and murdered by her wicked nephews, but that is another story.) Sixteenth-century Tudor versions of the Lear story with which Shakespeare was familiar—John Higgins's account in *The First Part of the Mirror for Magistrates* (1574), Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles* (1587), Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, 2.10.27–32, and a play called *The True Chronicle History of King Leir* (by 1594, published 1605)—all retain the happy ending. The tragic pattern may have been suggested instead by Shakespeare's probable source for the Gloucester-Edgar-Edmund plot, Sir Philip Sidney's *Arcadia*, 2.10, in which the Paphlagonian King is the victim of filial ingratitude and deceit.

Yet even Shakespeare's authority was not sufficient to put down the craving for a happy resolution. Nahum Tate's adaptation (1681), which banished the Fool as indecorous for a tragedy and united Edgar and Cordelia in marriage, placing Lear once again on his throne, held the English stage for about 150 years. David Garrick restored some of Shakespeare's lines, and Edmund Kean restored the tragic ending, but it was not until 1838 that *King Lear* was again performed more or less as the dramatist wrote it. One of Shakespeare's editors, Dr. Samuel Johnson, evidently spoke for most eighteenth-century audiences when he confessed that he could hardly bring himself to read Shakespeare's text. Cordelia's slaughter violated that age's longing for "poetic justice." Her death implied a wanton universe and so counseled philosophic despair. Today, Shakespeare's relentless honesty and refusal to accept easy answers convince us that he was right to defy the conventions of his source, though no doubt we, too, distort the play to conform with our supposed toughness of vision.

Shakespeare evidently wrote *King Lear* some time before it was performed at court in December of 1606, probably in 1605 and certainly no earlier than 1603–1604; Edgar's speeches as Tom o' Bedlam contain references to Samuel Harsnett's *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*, which was registered for publication in March of 1603. Thus, *King Lear* was probably written between *Othello* (c. 1603–1604) and *Macbeth* (c. 1606–1607), when Shakespeare was at the height of his literary power in the writing of tragedies.

When we look at the play in formal terms, we are apt to be struck first by its complex double plot. Nowhere else in Shakespearean tragedy do we find anything approaching the rich orchestration of the double plotting in *King Lear*. The links and parallels between the two plots are established on a narrative level early in the play and continue to the end. King Lear misjudges his children and disinherits his loving daughter Cordelia in favor of her duplicitous sisters, whereas Gloucester falls prey to Edmund's deceptions and disinherits his loyal son Edgar; Lear is turned out into the storm by his false daughters, while Gloucester is branded as a traitor by Edmund and deprived of his eyesight; Lear in his madness realizes his fault against Cordelia, while the blind Gloucester "sees" at last the truth about Edgar; and both fathers are cared for by their loving children and are belatedly reconciled to them, but then die brokenhearted. As recent criticism has noted, these narrative parallels are not especially significant in themselves; we are moved, not by the mere repetition of events, but by the enlargement of tragic vision that results from the counterpointing of two such actions. When we see juxtaposed to each other two scenes of trial, Lear's mad arraignment of the absent Goneril and Regan and then the cruel imposition of the mere "form of justice" on the pinioned Gloucester (3.6 and 3.7), we begin to measure the extent to which justice and injustice are inverted by cruelty. When at last the two old men come together, during the storm scenes and especially at Dover, the sad comfort they derive from sharing the wreckage of their lives calls forth piercing eloquence against the stench of mortality. The sight is "most pitiful in the meanest wretch, / Past speaking of in a king" (4.6.204–5).

The play's double structure suggests another duality central to *King Lear*: an opposition of parable and realism, in which "divided and distinguished worlds" are bound together for instructive contrast. (These terms are Maynard Mack's, in his *King Lear in Our Time*, 1965.) To a remarkable degree, this play derives its story from folklore and legend, with many of the wondrous and implausible circumstances of popular romance. A prose rendition might almost begin, "Once upon a time there was a king who had three daughters . . ." Yet Shakespeare arouses romantic expectation only to crush it by aborting the conventional happy ending, setting up a dramatic tension between an idealized world of make-

believe and the actual world of disappointed hopes. We are aware of artifice and convention, and yet are deeply moved by the "truth" of suffering, love, and hatred. The characters pull us two ways at once; we regard them as types with universalized characteristics—a king and father, his cruel daughters, his loving daughter, and the like—and yet we scrutinize them for psychological motivation because they seem so real and individual.

This duality appears in both the central and the secondary characters. The King of France is in part a hero out of romance, who makes selfless choices and rescues the heroine Cordelia from her distress; yet his motive must also be appraised in the context of a bitter struggle for power. Why does he leave the English court "in choler," and why does he return to England with an army? Is it only to aid his wife and her beleaguered father, or is he negotiating for military advantage? Certainly, a French invasion of England on behalf of Lear complicates the issues of loyalty for the well-meaning Duke of Albany (and perhaps as well for an English Renaissance audience, with its habitual mistrust of the French). The dual focus of the play invites conflicting interpretation. Similarly, Edgar is presented to us on the one hand as the traduced victim in a starkly pessimistic story, dominated by his rationalistic brother, Edmund, who scoffs at religion and undertakes to manipulate those around him for personal gain; on the other hand, Edgar's story grows increasingly improbable as he undertakes a series of disguises and emerges finally as an anonymous champion of chivalry, challenging his brother in the lists like a knight-errant out of Arthurian romance. Edgar's motives are hard to follow. Is he the hero of a fabulous story whose disguises and contriving of illusions for his father are simply part of that storytelling tradition, or is he, in more realistic terms, a man whose disguises are a defensive mask and whose elaborate contrivances defeat themselves? Edmund, his brother, is no less complex. Onstage today he is usually interpreted as smooth and plausible, well-motivated by his father's condescending attitude and by the arbitrariness of the law that has excluded him from legitimacy and inheritance. Yet parable elevates Edmund into something monstrous. He becomes an embodiment of gleeful villainy, like Iago in *Othello*, malignantly evil simply because the evil that is in the universe must find a human form through which to express itself. Edmund's belated attempt to do some good adds to our difficulties in appraising his character, but the restless power of the dual conception supplies a vitality not to be found in pure fable or in realistic literature.

What we see then in Edmund and in others is the union of the universal and the particular, making *King Lear* at once parable and compellingly real. The parable or folktale element is prominent at the beginning of the play and focuses attention on the archetypal situations with which the story is concerned: rivalry between sib-

lings, fear of parental rejection, and, at the same time, parental fear of children's callousness. The "unrealistic" contrast between Cordelia and her wicked sisters, or between Edgar and Edmund, is something we accept as a convention of storytelling, because it expresses vividly the psychic truth of rivalry between brothers and sisters. We identify with Cordelia and Edgar as virtuous children whose worth is misjudged, and who are losing to wicked siblings the contest for parental approval. (In folklore, the rejecting parent is usually a stepparent, which signifies our conviction that he or she is not a true parent at all.) Similarly, we accept as a meaningful convention of storytelling the equally "unrealistic" device by which Lear tests the love of his daughters. Like any parent, he wishes to be loved and appreciated in response to the kindnesses he has performed. The tension between fathers and their marriageable daughters is a recurrent pattern in Shakespeare's late plays, as in *Othello* (in which Brabantio accuses Desdemona of deceiving and deserting him), in *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, and *The Winter's Tale*, and in *The Tempest*, in which the pattern is best resolved. In *King Lear*, Shakespeare explores the inherently explosive situation of an imperious father who, having provided for his children and having grown old, assumes he has a right to expect that those children will express their love and gratitude by looking after him.

The difficulty is that the parable of Lear and his children presents two contrasting viewpoints—that of the unappreciated child and that of the unwanted aging parent. Tragic misunderstanding is inevitable, and it outweighs the question of assessing blame. From Lear's point of view, Cordelia's silence is a truculent scanting of obedience. What he has devised is, after all, only a prearranged formality, with Cordelia to receive the richest third of England. Cannot such a ceremony be answered with the conventional hyperbole of courtly language, to which the King's ear is attuned? Don't parents have a right to be verbally reassured of their children's love? How can children be so laconic about such a precious matter? For her part, however, Cordelia senses that Lear is demanding love as payment for his parental kindness, quid pro quo. Genuine love ought rather to be selfless, as the King of France tells the Duke of Burgundy: "Love's not love / When it is mingled with regards that stands / Aloof from th'entire point" (1.1.242–4). Is Cordelia being asked to prefer Lear before her own husband-to-be? Is this the price she must pay for her upbringing? Lear's ego seems fully capable of demanding this sacrifice from his daughters, especially from his favorite, Cordelia; he has given them his whole kingdom, now let them care for him as befits his royal rank and patriarchal role. The "second childishness" of his old age brings with it a self-centered longing to monopolize the lives of his children and to be a child again. Besides, as king, Lear has long grown accustomed to flattery and absolute obedience. Goneril

and Regan are content to flatter and promise obedience, knowing they will turn him out once he has relinquished his authority. Cordelia refuses to lie in this fashion, but she also will not yield to Lear's implicit request for her undivided affection. Part of her must be loyal to her own husband and her children, in the natural cycle of the generations. "When I shall wed, / That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry / Half my love with him, half my care and duty" (1.1.100–2). Marriage will not prevent her from obeying, loving, and honoring her father as is fit but will establish for her a new priority. To Lear, as to other fathers contemplating a daughter's marriage in late Shakespearean plays, this savors of desertion.

Lear is sadly deficient in self-knowledge. As Regan dryly observes, "he hath ever but slenderly known himself" (1.1.296–7) and has grown ever more changeable and imperious with age. By dividing his kingdom in three, ostensibly so that "future strife / May be prevented now" (lines 44–5), he instead sets in motion a civil war and French invasion. His intention of putting aside his regal authority while still retaining "The name and all th'addition to a king" (line 136) perhaps betrays a lack of comprehension of the realities of power, although Lear may also have plausible political reasons for what he does, in view of the restive ambitions of the Dukes of Cornwall, Albany, and Burgundy. In any case, he welcomes poisoned flattery but interprets well-intended criticism, whether from Cordelia or Kent, as treason. These failures in no sense justify what Lear's ungrateful children do to him; as he later says, just before going mad, "I am a man / More sinned against than sinning" (3.2.59–60). His failures are, however, tokens of his worldly insolence, for which he must fall. The process is a painful one, but, since it brings self-discovery, it is not without its compensations. Indeed, a central paradox of the play is that by no other way could Lear have learned what human suffering and need are all about.

Lear's Fool is instrumental in elucidating this paradox. The Fool offers Lear advice in palatable form as mere foolery or entertainment and thus obtains a hearing when Kent and Cordelia have been angrily dismissed. Beneath this seemingly innocent jibes, however, are plain warnings of the looming disaster Lear blindly refuses to acknowledge. The Fool knows, as indeed any fool could tell, that Goneril and Regan are remorseless and unnatural. The real fool, therefore, is Lear himself, for having placed himself in their power. In a paradox familiar to Renaissance audiences—as in Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly*, Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, and Shakespeare's own earlier *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*—folly and wisdom exchange places. By a similar inversion of logic, the Fool offers his coxcomb to the Earl of Kent for siding with Lear in his exile, "for taking one's part that's out of favor" (1.4.97). Worldly wisdom suggests that we serve those whose fortunes are on the rise, as the obsequious and servile Oswald does.

Indeed, the sinister progress of the first half of the play seems to confirm the Fool's contention that kindness and love are a sure way to exile and poverty. "Let go thy hold when a great wheel runs down a hill lest it break thy neck with following; but the great one that goes upward, let him draw thee after" (2.4.70–3). Yet the Fool resolves to ignore his own sardonic advice; "I would have none but knaves follow it, since a fool gives it" (lines 74–5). Beneath his mocking, the Fool expresses the deeper truth that it is better to be a "fool" and suffer than to win on the cynical world's terms. The greatest fools truly are those who prosper through cruelty and become hardened in sin. As the Fool puts it, deriving a seemingly contrary lesson from Lear's rejection of Cordelia: "Why, this fellow has banished two on 's daughters and did the third a blessing against his will" (1.4.99–101).

These inversions find a parallel in Christian teaching, although the play is nominally pagan in setting. (The lack of explicit Christian reference may be in part the result of a parliamentary order in 1606 banning references to "God" onstage as blasphemous.) Christianity does not hold a monopoly on the idea that one must lose the world in order to win a better world, but its expressions of that idea were plentifully available to Shakespeare: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (the Sermon on the Mount); "Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven" (Matthew 19:21); "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree" (Luke 1:52). Cordelia's vision of genuine love is of this exalted spiritual order. She is, as the King of France extols her, "most rich being poor, / Most choice, forsaken, and most loved, despised" (1.1.254–5). This is the sense in which Lear has bestowed on her an unintended blessing, by exiling her from a worldly prosperity that is inherently pernicious. Now, with poetic fitness, Lear must learn the same lesson himself. He does so, paradoxically, at the very moment he goes mad, parting ways with the conventional truths of the corrupted world. "My wits begin to turn," he says (3.2.67), and then speaks his first kind words to the Fool, who is his companion in the storm. Lear senses companionship with a fellow mortal who is cold and outcast as he is. In his madness, he perceives both the worth of this insight and the need for suffering to attain it: "The art of our necessities is strange, / And can make vile things precious" (lines 70–1). Misery teaches Lear things he never could know as king about other "Poor naked wretches" who "bide the pelting of this pitiless storm." How are such poor persons to be fed and clothed? "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 / And show the heavens more just" (3.4.28–36). This vision of perfect justice is visionary and utopian, utterly mad, in fact, but it is also spiritual wisdom dearly bought.

Gloucester learns a similar truth and expresses it in much the same way. Like Lear, he has driven into exile a virtuous child and has placed himself in the power of the wicked. Enlightenment comes only through suffering. Just as Lear achieves spiritual wisdom when he goes mad, Gloucester achieves spiritual vision when he is physically blinded. His eyes having been ground out by the heel of Cornwall's boot, Gloucester asks for Edmund only to learn that Edmund has betrayed him in return for siding with Lear in the approaching civil war. Gloucester's response, however, is not to accuse Edmund of treachery but to beg forgiveness of the wronged Edgar. No longer does Gloucester need eyes to see this truth: "I stumbled when I saw." Although the discovery is shattering, Gloucester perceives, as does Lear, that adversity is paradoxically of some benefit, since prosperity had previously caused him to be so spiritually blind. "Full oft 'tis seen / Our means secure us, and our mere defects / Prove our commodities" (4.1.19–21). And this realization leads him, as it does Lear, to express a longing for utopian social justice in which arrogant men will be humbled and the poor raised up by redistributed wealth. "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 pow'r quickly! / So distribution should undo excess / And each man have enough" (lines 65–70).

To say that Lear and Gloucester learn something precious is not, however, to deny that they are also devastated and broken by their savage humiliation. Indeed, Gloucester is driven to a despairing attempt at suicide, and Lear remains obsessed with the rotten stench of his own mortality, "bound / Upon a wheel of fire" (4.7.47–8). Every decent value that we like to associate with civilization is grotesquely inverted during the storm scenes. Justice, for example, is portrayed in two sharply contrasting scenes: the mere "form of justice" by which Cornwall condemns Gloucester for treason (3.7.26) and the earnestly playacted trial by which the mad Lear arraigns Goneril and Regan of filial ingratitude (3.6). The appearance and the reality of justice have exchanged places, as have folly and wisdom or blindness and seeing. The trial of Gloucester is outwardly correct, for Cornwall possesses the legal authority to try his subjects and at least goes through the motions of interrogating his prisoner. The outcome is, however, cruelly predetermined. In the playacting trial concurrently taking place in a wretched hovel, the outward appearance of justice is pathetically absurd. Here, justice on earth is personified by a madman (Lear), Edgar disguised as another madman (Tom o' Bedlam), and a Fool, of whom the latter two are addressed by Lear as "Thou robèd man of justice" and "thou, his yokefellow of equity" (lines 36–7). They are caught up in a pastime of illusion, using a footstool to represent Lear's ungrateful daughters. Yet true justice is here and not inside the manor house.

Similar contrasts invert the values of loyalty, obedience, and family bonds. Edmund becomes, in the language of the villains, the “loyal” son whose loyalty is demonstrated by turning on his own “traitorous” father. Cornwall becomes a new father to Edmund (“thou shalt find a dearer father in my love,” 3.5.25–6). Conversely, a servant who tries to restrain Cornwall from blinding Gloucester is, in Regan’s eyes, monstrously insubordinate. “A peasant stand up thus?” (3.7.83). Personal and sexual relationships betray signs of the universal malaise. The explicitly sexual ties in the play, notably those of Goneril, Regan, and Edmund, are grossly carnal and lead to jealousy and murder, while in Cordelia’s wifely role the sensual is underplayed. The relationships we are invited to cherish—those of Cordelia, Kent, the Fool, and Gloucester to King Lear, and Edgar to Gloucester—are filial or are characterized by loyal service, both of which are pointedly nonsexual. Nowhere do we find an embodiment of love that is both sensual and spiritual, as in Desdemona in *Othello* or Hermione in *The Winter’s Tale*. The Fool’s and Tom o’ Bedlam’s (i.e., Edgar’s) gibes about codpieces and plackets (3.2.27–40, 3.4.96) anticipate Lear’s towering indictment of carnality, in which his fear of woman’s insatiable appetite and his revulsion at her body “Down from the waist” (“there is the sulfurous pit, burning, scalding, stench, consumption. Fie, fie, fie! Pah, pah!”) combine with a destructive self-hatred (4.6.124–30).

All these inversions and polarizations are subsumed in the inversion of the word “natural.” Edmund is the “natural” son of Gloucester, meaning literally that he is illegitimate. Figuratively, he therefore represents a violation of traditional moral order. In appearance he is smooth and plausible, but in reality he is an archdeceiver like the Vice in a morality play, a superb actor who boasts to the audience in soliloquy of his protean villainy. “Nature” is Edmund’s goddess, and by this he means something like a naturalistic universe in which the race goes to the swiftest and in which conscience, morality, and religion are empty myths. Whereas Lear invokes Nature as a goddess who will punish ungrateful daughters and defend rejected fathers (1.4.274–88) and whereas Gloucester believes in a cosmic correspondence between eclipses of the moon or sun and mutinous discords among people (1.2.106–17), Edmund scoffs at all such metaphysical speculations. He spurns, in other words, the Boethian conception of a divine harmony uniting the cosmos and humankind, with humankind at the center of the universe. As a rationalist, Edmund echoes Jacobean disruptions of the older world order in politics and religion as well as in science. He is Machiavellian, an atheist, and Epicurean—everything inimical to traditional Elizabethan ideals of order. To him, “natural” means precisely what Lear and Gloucester call “unnatural.”

His creed provides the play with its supreme test. Which definition of “natural” is true? Does heaven exist,

and will it let Edmund and the other villainous persons get away with their evil? The question is frequently asked, but the answers are ambiguous. “If you do love old men,” Lear implores the gods, “if your sweet sway / Allow obedience, if you yourselves are old, / Make it your cause” (2.4.191–3). His exhortations mount into frenzied rant, until finally the heavens do send down a terrible storm—on Lear himself. Witnesses agree that the absence of divine order in the universe would have the gravest consequences. “If that the heavens do not their visible spirits / Send quickly down to tame these vile offenses,” says Albany of Lear’s ordeal, “It will come, / Humanity must perforce prey on itself, / Like monsters of the deep” (4.2.47–51). And Cornwall’s servants (in a passage missing from the Folio text) have perceived earlier the dire implications of their masters’ evil deeds. “I’ll never care what wickedness I do, / If this man come to good,” says one, and his fellow agrees: “If she [Regan] live long, / And in the end meet the old course of death, / Women will all turn monsters” (3.7.102–5). Yet these servants do, in fact, obey their own best instincts, turning on Cornwall and ministering to Gloucester despite danger to themselves. Similarly, Albany abandons his mild attempts to conciliate his domineering wife and instead uses his power for good. Cordelia’s ability to forgive and cherish her father, and Edgar’s comparable ministering to Gloucester, give the lie to Edmund’s “natural” or amoral view of humanity; a few people, at least, are capable of charity, even when it does not serve their own material self-interest. Conversely, the play suggests that villainy will at last destroy itself, and not simply because the gods are just; Albany’s hopeful insistence that “This shows you are above, / You justicers” (4.2.79–80) may be a little more than wishful thinking, to be undercut by some fresh disaster, but at least the insatiable ambitions of Edmund, Goneril, Regan, Cornwall, and Oswald do lead to their violent deaths. Edmund’s belated attempt to save the life of Cordelia, though unsuccessful, suggests that this intelligent villain has at last begun to understand the great flaw in his naturalistic creed and to see that, like Goneril and Regan, he has been consumed by his own lust.

Even with such reassurances that villainy will eventually undo itself, the devastation at the end of *King Lear* is so appalling that our questions about justice remain finally unanswered. To ask the question “Who must pay for Lear’s self-knowledge?” is to remind ourselves that women must often die in Shakespeare’s tragedies so that men may learn, and to perceive even further that, in the absurdist world of *Lear*, the Cartesian logic of cause and effect and poetic justice simply will not account for all that we long to understand. As Roland Barthes well expresses the matter in an essay on Racine, “tragedy is only a means of reclaiming human unhappiness, of subsuming it, thus justifying it under the form of necessity, or wisdom, and purification.” Tragedy cannot explain away the death of

Cordelia and the heartbreak of her father. The last tableau is a vision of doomsday, with Cordelia strangled, Lear broken and dying, and the “gored state” in such disarray that we cannot be sure what restoration can occur. The very question of political order is dwarfed by the enormity of the personal disaster of Lear and Cordelia. No one wishes longer life for the King: “He hates him / That would upon the rack of this tough world / Stretch him out longer.” He is dead; “The wonder is he hath endured so long” (5.3.319–26). Lear’s view of life’s terrible corruption, pronounced in his madness, seems confirmed in his end. Perhaps the only way in which this tragedy can reclaim so much unhappiness is to suggest that, given the incurable badness of the world, we can at least choose whether to attempt to be like Cordelia and Edgar (knowing what the price may be for such courage) or to settle for being our worst selves, like Edmund, Goneril, and Regan. Overwhelmed as we are by the testimonial before us of humankind’s vicious capacity for self-destruction, we are stirred nonetheless by the ability of some men and women to confront their fearful destiny with probity and stoic renunciation, adhering to what they believe to be good and expecting Fortune to give them absolutely nothing. The power of love, though learned too late to avert catastrophe, is at last discovered in its very defeat.

King Lear has become a fable for our times, on stage, in film and television, and in fictional adaptations in novel form. The role of Lear has been a compelling one for so many great Shakespearean actors, including Philip Kemble, Henry Irving, Edwin Forrest, John Gielgud, Donald Wolfit, Donald Sinden, Brian Cox, Michael Gambon, Robert Stephens, and John Wood. Peter Brook’s film version of 1970, based on a stage production of 1962, with Paul Scofield as Lear, did much to equate the play’s bleak vision with that of our modern existential world. Stimulated by Jan Kott’s *Shakespeare Our Contemporary* (translated 1964), a post-World War II apocalyptic interpretation of Shakespeare from the perspective of an ideologically embattled eastern Europe, Brook unfolds a narrative of unrelieved disillusionment. The medium of film enables him to show what it would be like, for example, to have a hundred knights and all their followers descend on Albany’s castle at the same time, demanding to be fed and quarreling with the servants of Goneril and Albany; the din and confusion are overwhelming, to such an extent that one can see Goneril’s point in wanting to cut back on the King’s retinue. A barren, wintry landscape adds visual reinforcement to the savage energies of family and dynastic conflict. Grigori Kozintsev’s film of 1971, the work of a great Soviet director, sees the larger movements of the play in Marxist terms as the dialectical imperatives of political and social history; again, the medium of film makes it possible for Kozintsev to do what the stage can-

not do, deploy huge casts of anonymous soldiers and workers as both victims and movers of social change. Laurence Olivier’s performance of Lear for Granada Television (directed by Michael Elliott, 1983, Granada Video, 1984) came at the very end of Olivier’s life, as his climactic and final role; his interpretation is deeply enhanced by one’s perception that the actor is literally dying of cancer. Olivier, weakened but determined, had to be helped through the rigors of the screening, with the result that his Lear is tender, vulnerable, frail, though capable of the outbursts of rage that often come with advanced age. His *King Lear* is about the approach of death. Akira Kurosawa, in his epic *Ran* (1985), chose a more radical adaptation, that of telling a story of a Japanese warlord and his three sons, one of them (like Cordelia) dear but misunderstood, the others treacherous. One of their wives (the Lady Kaede) turns out to be another Edmund, Goneril, Regan, and Lady Macbeth all combined in one, fiercely and murderously determined that her husband succeed by whatever means possible. Kurosawa’s vision of evil in the human heart is meant to be terrifying, and it is. The Royal National Theatre production of *King Lear* won several awards for Best Actor (Ian Holm as Lear) and Best Director (Richard Eyre), and is available on video from the BBC and Mobil Masterpiece Theatre (1998). In fiction, Jane Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres* (1991) features a similar transposition, in this case to a midwestern American farm run by an aging farmer who transfers his land to his daughters and then sinks into alcoholism and insanity as two daughters squabble over their inheritance and end up losing everything, including their husbands, while their sister Caroline (Cordelia), unwilling to take part in the dividing of the farm, tries unsuccessfully as a lawyer to have the property restored to her father. Edward Bond’s stage play called *Lear* (1971) accentuated *King Lear*’s already formidable bleakness by adding to its cruelty and violence; in it, war became a never-ending cycle of repression and escalating oppression. In these varied reworkings, we see the remarkable malleability of *King Lear* as an endlessly fascinating subject for new historicist, cultural materialist, deconstructive, and feminist readings that open up topics of misogyny and patriarchy, political ideologies, and philosophical pessimism.

King Lear exists in two early texts, the quarto of 1608 and the considerably changed Folio version of 1623. Similar disparities appear in *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Henry IV Part II*, and a number of other plays, but the problem is especially acute in *King Lear*. Shakespeare must have had a hand in the revisions that led to the Folio text. It contains new material. At the same time, the quarto text contains passages not found in the Folio. The revisions may have resulted from a number of circumstances: cutting for performance (the play as it stands in

either version is too long to have been produced in its entirety on the Jacobean stage), censorship, errors in transcription, and still more. The Folio version does alter some matters especially having to do with the French invasion; characters like Albany appear in a different light. The very ending is changed as to which characters speak the concluding lines.

Given these factors, many editions today present two or even three texts for the reader, or mark the text with brackets and other indicators of textual variation. This edition does not do so, though the textual notes do indicate the differences that occur. The reasons for choosing to present here the more traditional composite or eclectic text are these: *King Lear*'s textual variations between quarto and Folio are more extensive than in some other plays, but are not always different in kind, so that it is a distortion to treat this play alone as a multiple-text play.

To choose either quarto or Folio is to lose important material that is unquestionably Shakespeare's. To print two or even three versions is to add pages to an already weighty collection. And the presentation of multiple texts, or of a single text that is flagged with bracketed markers, also imposes on the reader a task of sorting out a complex and uncertain textual history that, however important ultimately in studying Shakespeare as a writer and as a reviser, is perhaps best left to subsequent investigation in a full-scale critical edition after one has absorbed the greatness of this play as a piece of writing for the theater. The present composite *King Lear*, based on the Folio text but including the 300 or so lines found only in the first quarto along with some quarto readings where the Folio version seems less textually reliable, is in a sense a compromise, but it is one that seems well suited to the purposes of this present edition.

King Lear



[Dramatis Personae]

KING LEAR
GONERIL, } *Lear's daughters*
REGAN, }
CORDELIA, }
DUKE OF ALBANY, *Goneril's husband*
DUKE OF CORNWALL, *Regan's husband*
KING OF FRANCE, *Cordelia's suitor and husband*
DUKE OF BURGUNDY, *suitor to Cordelia*

EARL OF KENT, *later disguised as Caius*
EARL OF GLOUCESTER
EDGAR, *Gloucester's son and heir, later disguised as poor Tom*
EDMUND, *Gloucester's bastard son*

OSWALD, *Goneril's steward*
A KNIGHT *serving King Lear*
Lear's FOOL
CURAN, *in Gloucester's household*
GENTLEMEN
Three SERVANTS
OLD MAN, *a tenant of Gloucester*
Three MESSENGERS
A GENTLEMAN *attending Cordelia as a Doctor*
Two CAPTAINS
HERALD

Knights, Gentlemen, Attendants, Servants, Officers, Soldiers, Trumpeters

SCENE: Britain]

1.1

Enter Kent, Gloucester, and Edmund.

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

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

KENT Is not this your son, my lord?

GLOUCESTER His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge. I have so often blushed to acknowledge him that now I am brazed to't.

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 a son, sir, by order of law, some year elder 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.

GLOUCESTER He hath been out nine years, and away he shall again. The King is coming.

Sennet. Enter [one bearing a coronet, then] King Lear, Cornwall, Albany, Goneril, Regan, Cordelia, and attendants.

LEAR

Attend the lords of France and Burgundy, Gloucester.

GLOUCESTER I shall, my liege. *Exit.*

1.1. Location: King Lear's palace.

1 affected favored 2 Albany i.e., Scotland 5-7 equalities . . . moiety the shares balance so equally that close scrutiny cannot find advantage in either's portion. 9 breeding raising, care. charge expense. 11 brazed hardened 12 conceive understand. (But Gloucester puns in the sense of "become pregnant.") 16 fault (1) sin (2) loss of scent by the hounds. 17 issue (1) result (2) offspring 18 proper (1) excellent (2) handsome. 19 by order of law legitimate 19-20 some year about a year 20-1 account estimation. 21 knave young fellow. (Not said disapprovingly, though the word is ironic.) something somewhat 24 whoreson low fellow; suggesting baseness, but (like *knave* above) used with affectionate condescension 29 services duty 30 sue petition, beg 31 study deserving strive to be worthy (of your esteem). 32 out i.e., abroad, absent 33.1 *Sennet* trumpet signal heralding a procession. *one . . . then* (This direction is from the quarto. The *coronet* is perhaps intended for Cordelia or her betrothed. A coronet signifies nobility below the rank of king.) 34 Attend Wait upon, usher ceremoniously

LEAR

Meantime we shall express our darker purpose. Give me the map there. [*He takes a map.*] 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,

And you, our no less loving son of Albany, We have this hour a constant will to publish Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife May be prevented now. The princes, France and Burgundy,

Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love, Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn And here are to be answered. Tell me, my daughters—

Since now we will divest us both of rule, Interest of territory, cares of state— Which of you shall we say doth love us most, That we our largest bounty may extend Where nature doth with merit challenge? Goneril, Our eldest born, speak first.

GONERIL

Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter, Dearer than 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. Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

CORDELIA [*aside*]

What shall Cordelia speak? Love and be silent.

LEAR [*indicating on map*]

Of all these bounds, even from this line to this, With shadowy forests and with champains riched, 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

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 Which the most precious square of sense possesses,

36 we, our (The royal plural; also in lines 37-44, etc.) darker purpose undeclared intention. 38 fast firm 43 constant . . . publish firm resolve to proclaim 44 several individual 50 Interest of right or title to, possession of 53 Where . . . challenge where both natural affection and merit claim our bounty as its due. 56 space, and liberty possession of land, and freedom of action 59 found i.e., found himself to be loved 60 breath . . . unable utterance impoverished and speech inadequate. 64 shadowy shady. champains riched fertile plains 65 plenteous . . . meads abundant rivers bordered with wide meadows 69 that self mettle that same spirited temperament 70 prize . . . worth value myself as her equal (in love for you). (Prize suggests "price.") 71 names . . . love describes my love in action 72 that in that 74 Which . . . possesses which the most delicately sensitive part of my nature can enjoy

And find I am alone felicitate
In your dear Highness' love.
CORDELIA [*aside*] Then poor Cordelia!
And yet not so, since I am sure my love's
More 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.—Now, our joy,
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 Nothing?
CORDELIA Nothing.
LEAR
Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again.
CORDELIA
Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth. I love Your Majesty
According to my bond, 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
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
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, my good lord.
LEAR So young, and so untender?
CORDELIA So young, my lord, and true.
LEAR
Let it be so! Thy truth then be thy dower!
For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,
The mysteries of Hecate and the night,
By all the operation of the orbs
From whom we do exist and cease to be,
Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
Propinquity, and property of blood,
And as a stranger to my heart and me

75 Hold thee from this forever. The barbarous Scythian, 116
Or he that makes his generation messes 117
To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom
Be as well neighbored, pitied, and relieved 119
78 As thou my sometime daughter.
KENT Good my liege— 120
LEAR Peace, Kent!
Come not between the dragon and his wrath.
81 I loved her most, and thought to set my rest 123
On her kind nursery. [*To Cordelia*] Hence, and avoid
83 my sight!— 124
84 So be my grave my peace, as here I give 125
85 M Her father's heart from her. Call France. Who stirs? 126
E Call Burgundy. [*Exit one.*]
L Cornwall and Albany,
H With my two daughters' dowers digest the third. 128
O Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her. 129
R I do invest you jointly with my power,
O Preeminence, and all the large effects 131
R That troop with majesty. Ourself by monthly course, 132
N With reservation of an hundred knights 133
, By you to be sustained, shall our abode
93 Make with you by due turns. Only we shall retain
The name and all th'addition to a king. 136
, The sway, revenue, execution of the rest, 137
Belovèd sons, be yours, which to confirm,
This coronet part between you.
KENT Royal Lear, 139
M Whom I have ever honored as my king,
97 I Loved as my father, as my master followed,
As my great patron thought on in my prayers—
100 L
101 H The bow is bent and drawn. Make from the shaft. 143
KENT
A Let it fall rather, though the fork invade 144
E The region of my heart. Be Kent unmannerly
E When Lear is mad. What wouldst thou do, old man?
L Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak
L When power to flattery bows?
To plainness honor's bound 149
When majesty falls to folly. Reserve thy state, 150
7 And in thy best consideration check 151
2 This hideous rashness. Answer my life my judgment, 152
0

75 *felicitate* made happy 78 *ponderous* weighty 81 *validity* value.
pleasure pleasing features 83 *least* youngest 84 *vines* vineyards.
milk pastures (?) 85 *be interested* be affiliated, establish a claim, be
admitted as to a privilege. *draw* win 93 *bond* filial obligation
97 *right fit* proper and fitting 100 *all* exclusively, and with all of
themselves. *Haply* Perhaps, with luck 101 *plight* pledge in mar-
riage 110 *mysteries* secret rites. *Hecate* goddess of witchcraft and
the moon 111 *operation* influence. *orbs* planets and stars
112 *From whom* under whose influence 114 *Propinquity* ... *blood*
close kinship, and rights and duties entailed in blood ties

110 116 *this* this time forth. *Scythian* (Scythians were famous in antiq-
111 uity for savagery.) 117 *makes* ... *messes* makes meals of his chil-
112 dren or parents 119 *neighbored* helped in a neighborly way
120 *sometime* former 123 *set my rest* rely wholly. (A phrase from a
game of cards, meaning "to stake all.") 124 *nursery* nursing, care.
114 *avoid* get out of 125 *So* ... *peace*, as As I hope to rest peacefully in
my grave 126 *Who stirs?* i.e., Jump to it; don't just stand there.
128 *digest* assimilate, incorporate 129 *Let* ... *her* Let pride, which
she calls plain speaking, be her dowry and get her a husband.
131 *effects* outward shows 132 *troop with* accompany, serve.
Ourself (The royal "we.") 133 *With reservation* of reserving to
myself the right to be attended by 136 *th'addition* the honors and
prerogatives 137 *sway* sovereign authority 139 *coronet* (Perhaps
Lear gestures toward this coronet that was to have symbolized
Cordelia's dowry and marriage, hands it to his sons-in-law, or actu-
ally attempts to divide it.) 143 *Make from* Get out of the way of
144 *fall* strike. *fork* barbed head of an arrow 149 *To* ... *bound*
Loyalty demands frankness 150 *Reserve thy state* Retain your royal
authority 151 *And* ... *check* and with wise deliberation restrain
152 *Answer* ... *judgment* I wager my life on my judgment that

	Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least, Nor are those emptyhearted whose low sounds Reverb no hollowness.			He'll shape his old course in a country new. <i>Exit.</i> 190	
LEAR	Kent, on thy life, no more.	155		<i>Flourish. Enter Gloucester, with France and Burgundy; attendants.</i>	
KENT	My life I never held but as a pawn To wage against thine enemies, nor fear to lose it, Thy safety being motive.	156 157	GLOUCESTER	Here's France and Burgundy, my noble lord.	
LEAR	Out of my sight!	158	LEAR	My lord of Burgundy, We first address toward 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?	193 194
KENT	See better, Lear, and let me still remain The true blank of thine eye.		BURGUNDY	Most royal Majesty, I crave no more than hath Your Highness offered, Nor will you tender less.	
LEAR	Now, by Apollo—		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.	198 199 201 202 203
KENT	Now, by Apollo, King, Thou swear'st thy gods in vain.		BURGUNDY	I know no answer.	
LEAR	Oh, vassal! Miscreant! [<i>Laying his hand on his sword.</i>]		LEAR	Will you, with those infirmities she owes, Unfriended, new-adopted to our hate, Dowered with our curse and strangered with our oath, Take her, or leave her?	205 207
ALBANY, CORNWALL	Dear sir, forbear.		BURGUNDY	Pardon me, royal sir. Election makes not up in such conditions.	209
KENT	Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow Upon the foul disease. Revoke thy gift, Or whilst I can vent clamor from my throat I'll tell thee thou dost evil.		LEAR	Then leave her, sir, for by the power that made me, I tell you all her wealth. [<i>To France</i>] For you, great King, I would not from your love make such a stray 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.	211 212 213 214
LEAR	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, Our potency made good, take thy reward. Five days we do allot thee for provision To shield thee from disasters of the world, And on the sixth to turn thy hated back Upon our kingdom. If on the tenth day following Thy banished trunk be found in our dominions, The moment is thy death. Away! By Jupiter, This shall not be revoked.	170 171 172 173 174 175	FRANCE	This is most strange, That she whom even but now was your best object, The argument of your praise, balm of your age, The best, the dearest, should in this trice of time Commit a thing so monstrous to dismantle So many folds of favor. Sure her offense Must be of such unnatural degree That monsters it, or your forevouched affection Fall into taint, which to believe of her	218 219 220 223 224
KENT	Fare thee well, King. Sith thus thou wilt appear, Freedom lives hence and banishment is here. [<i>To Cordelia</i>] The gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid, That justly think'st and hast most rightly said! [<i>To Regan and Goneril</i>] 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.	183 187			

155 **Reverb no hollowness** do not reverberate like a hollow drum, insincerely. 156–7 **My . . . wage** I never regarded my life other than as a pledge to hazard in warfare 158 **motive** that which prompts me to act. 160 **The true . . . eye** i.e., the means to enable you to see better. (*Blank* means “the white center of the target,” or, “the true direct aim,” as in “point-blank,” traveling in a straight line.) 164 **vassal** i.e., wretch. **Miscreant** (Literally, infidel, heretic; hence, villain, rascal.) 170 **recreant** traitor 171 **That** In that, since 172 **strained** excessive 173 **To . . . power** i.e., to block my power to command and judge 174 **Which . . . place** which neither my temperament nor my office as king 175 **Our . . . good** my power enacted, demonstrated 180 **trunk** body 183 **Sith** Since 187 **your . . . approve** may your deeds confirm your speeches with their vast claims

190 **shape . . . course** follow his traditional plainspoken ways 190.1 *Flourish* trumpet fanfare used for the entrance or exit of important persons 193 **address** address myself 194 **rivaled** competed. **in the least** at the lowest 198 **tender** offer 199 **so** i.e., *dear*, beloved and valued at a high price 201 **little-seeming substance** one who seems substantial but whose substance is, in fact, little, or, one who refuses to flatter 202 **pieced** added, joined 203 **like** please 205 **owes** owns 207 **strangered** disowned 209 **Election . . . conditions** No choice is possible under such conditions. 211 **tell you** (1) inform you of (2) enumerate for you. **For** As for 212 **make such a stray** stray so far 213 **To** as to. **beseech** I beseech 214 **T'avert your liking** to turn your affections 218 **argument** theme 219 **trice** moment 220 **to as to** 223 **monsters** it makes it monstrous 223–4 **or . . . taint** or else the affection for her you have hitherto affirmed must fall into suspicion

- Must be a faith that reason without miracle
Should never plant in me.
- CORDELIA I yet beseech Your Majesty—
If for I want that glib and oily art
To speak and purpose not, since what I well intend
I'll do't before I speak—that you make known
It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,
No unchaste action or 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
That I am glad I have not, though not to have it
Hath lost me in your liking.
- LEAR Better thou
Hadst not been born than not t'have pleased me better.
- FRANCE
Is it but this? A tardiness in nature
Which often leaves the history unspoke
That it intends to do?—My lord of Burgundy,
What say you to the lady? Love's not love
When it is mingled with regards that stands
Aloof from th'entire point. Will you have her?
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.
- LEAR
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!
Since that respects of fortune 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,
Be it lawful I take up what's cast away.
[*He takes her hand.*]
Gods, gods! 'Tis strange that from their cold'st neglect
My love should kindle to inflamed respect.—
Thy dowerless daughter, King, thrown to my chance,
Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France.
Not all the dukes of wat'rish Burgundy
Can buy this unprized precious maid of me.—
Bid them farewell, Cordelia, though unkind.
Thou lovest here, a better where to find.
- LEAR
Thou hast her, France. Let her be thine, for we
Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see
That face of hers again. Therefore begone
Without our grace, our love, our benison.
Come, noble Burgundy.
*Flourish. Exeunt [all but France, Goneril, Regan,
and Cordelia].*
- FRANCE Bid farewell to your sisters.
- CORDELIA
Ye 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
Your faults as they are named. Love well our father.
To your professèd bosoms I commit him.
But yet, alas, stood I within his grace,
I would prefer him to a better place.
So, farewell to you both.
- REGAN
Prescribe not us our 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
Time shall unfold what plighted cunning hides;
Who covers faults, at last shame them derides.
Well may you prosper!
- FRANCE Come, my fair Cordelia.
Exeunt France and Cordelia.
- GONERIL Sister, it is not little I have to say of what most
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 loved our sister most, and with what poor
judgment he hath now cast her off appears too grossly.
- REGAN 'Tis the infirmity of his age. Yet he hath ever
but slenderly known himself.
- GONERIL The best and soundest of his time hath been
but rash. Then must we look from his age to receive
not alone the imperfections of long-ingrafted condi-
tion, but therewithal the unruly waywardness that in-
firm and choleric years bring with them.
- REGAN Such unconstant starts are we like to have from
him as this of Kent's banishment.

228 for I want because I lack 229 purpose not not intend to do what I say 231 foulness immorality 234 for which for lack of which 235 still-soliciting ever begging 240 history tale, narrative 243–4 regards . . . point irrelevant considerations. 252 Since . . . fortune Since concern for wealth and position 257 Be it lawful if it be lawful that 258 from . . . neglect out of the cold neglect of the gods 259 inflamed respect ardent regard. 260 chance lot 262 wat'rish (1) well-watered with rivers (2) feeble, watery 263 unprized not appreciated. (With perhaps a sense also of "priceless.") 264 though unkind though they have behaved unnaturally. 265 here this place. where place elsewhere

269 benison blessing. 272 washed tear-washed 274 like a sister i.e., because I am your sister 275 as . . . named by their true names. 276 professèd bosoms publicly avowed love 278 prefer advance, recommend 282 At . . . alms as a pittance or dole from Fortune. 283 And well . . . wanted i.e., and well deserve to be without the dowry and the parental affection that you have both lacked and flouted. 284–5 Time . . . derides Time will bring to light what cunning attempts to conceal as if in the folds of a cloak; those who hide their faults may do so for a while, but in time they will be shamed and derided. 295 grossly obviously. 298–9 The best . . . rash Even in the prime of his life, he was stormy and unpredictable. 300–1 long-ingrafted condition long-implanted habit 301 therewithal added thereto 303 unconstant starts impulsive outbursts. like likely

GONERIL There is further compliment of leave-taking 305
 between France and him. Pray you, let us hit together. 306
 If our father carry authority with such disposition as 307
 he bears, this last surrender of his will but offend us. 308
 REGAN We shall further think of it.
 GONERIL We must do something, and i'th' heat. 310
Exeunt.



1.2

Enter Bastard [Edmund, with a letter].

EDMUND
 Thou, Nature, art my goddess; to thy law
 My services are bound. Wherefore should I
 Stand in the plague of custom and permit
 The curiosity of nations to deprive me,
 For that I am some twelve or fourteen 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
 With base? With baseness? Bastardy? Base, base?
 Who in the lusty stealth of nature take
 More composition and fierce quality
 Than doth within a dull, stale, tirèd bed
 Go to th' creating a whole tribe of fops
 Got 'tween asleep and wake? Well, then,
 Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land.
 Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund
 As to th' legitimate. Fine word, "legitimate"
 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.

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, how now? What news?
 EDMUND So please Your Lordship, none.
[Putting up the letter.]

305 **compliment** ceremony 306 **hit** agree 307–8 **If . . . offend us** If our father continues to boss us around with his accustomed imperiousness, this most recent display of willfulness will do us nothing but harm. 310 **i'th' heat** i.e., while the iron is hot.

1.2. Location: The Earl of Gloucester's house.

1 **Nature** i.e., the sanction that governs the material world through mechanistic amoral forces 3 **Stand . . . custom** submit to the vexatious injustice of convention 4 **The curiosity of nations** arbitrary social gradations 5 **For that** because. **moonshines** months 6 **Lag** of lagging behind 7 **dimensions** proportions. **compact** knit together, fitted 8 **generous** noble, refined 9 **honest** chaste 11–12 **Who . . . quality** Whose begetting in the sexual act both requires and engenders a fuller mixture and more energetic force 14 **fops** fools 15 **Got** begotten 19 **speed** succeed, prosper 20 **invention thrive** scheme prosper 24 **tonight** last night. **Prescribed** Limited 25 **exhibition** an allowance, pension. 26 **Upon the gad** suddenly, as if pricked by a gad or spur.

GLOUCESTER Why so earnestly seek you to put up that letter?
 EDMUND I know no news, my lord.
 GLOUCESTER What paper were you reading?
 EDMUND Nothing, my lord.
 GLOUCESTER No? What needed then that terrible dis- 33
 patch of it into your pocket? The quality of nothing 34
 hath not such need to hide itself. Let's see. Come, if it
 be nothing I shall not need spectacles.
 EDMUND I beseech you, sir, pardon me. It is a letter
 from my brother, that I have not all o'erread; and for 38
 so much as I have perused, I find it not fit for your
 o'erlooking. 40
 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. 43
 GLOUCESTER Let's see, let's see.
[Edmund gives the letter.]
 EDMUND I hope for my brother's justification he wrote
 this but as an essay or taste of my virtue. 46
 GLOUCESTER *(reads)* "This policy and reverence of age
 makes the world bitter to the best of our times, keeps
 our fortunes from us till our oldness cannot relish
 them. I begin to find an idle and fond bondage in the
 oppression of aged tyranny, who sways not as it hath
 power but as it is suffered. Come to me, that of this I
 may speak more. If our father would sleep till I waked
 him, you should enjoy half his revenue forever and live
 the beloved of your brother, Edgar." 49
 Hum! Conspiracy! "Sleep till I waked him, you should
 enjoy half his revenue." My son Edgar! Had he
 a hand to write this? A heart and brain to breed it
 in? When came you to this? Who brought it? 59
 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. 62
 GLOUCESTER You know the character to be your
 brother's? 63
 EDMUND If the matter were good, my lord, I durst
 swear it were his; but in respect of that I would fain
 think it were not. 66
 GLOUCESTER It is his.
 EDMUND It is his hand, my lord, but I hope his heart is
 not in the contents.
 GLOUCESTER Has he never before 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 manage his revenue. 74
 75

33–4 **terrible dispatch** fearful quick disposal 38 **for as for** 40 **o'er-**
looking perusal. 43 **to blame** (The Folio reading, "too blame," "too
 blameworthy to be shown," may be correct.) 46 **essay or taste** essay,
 test 47 **policy and reverence** of policy of reverencing 48 **the best . . .**
times the best years of our lives, i.e., our youth 50 **idle and fond**
 useless and foolish 51 **who sways** which rules 52 **suffered** permit-
 ted. 59 **to this** upon this (letter). 61 **casement** window 62 **closet**
 private room. 63 **character** handwriting 65 **matter** contents 66 **in**
. . . that considering what the contents are. **fain** gladly 74 **fit** fit-
 ting, appropriate. **perfect age** full maturity 75 **declined** having
 become feeble

GLOUCESTER Oh, villain, villain! His very opinion in the letter! Abhorred villain! Unnatural, detested, brutish villain! Worse than brutish! Go, sirrah, seek him. I'll apprehend him. Abominable villain! Where is he?

EDMUND I do not well know, my lord. If it shall please you to suspend your indignation against my brother till you can derive from him better testimony of his intent, you should run a certain course; where, if you violently proceed against him, mistaking his purpose, it would 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 writ this to feel my affection to Your Honor, and to no other pretense of danger.

GLOUCESTER Think you so?

EDMUND 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 Nor is not, sure.

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

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

GLOUCESTER These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us. Though the wisdom of nature can reason it thus and thus, yet nature finds itself scourged by the sequent effects. Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide; in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked twixt son and father. This villain of mine comes under the prediction; there's son against father. The King falls from bias of nature; there's father against child. We have seen the best of our time. Machinations, hollownness, 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 truehearted Kent banished! His offense, honesty! 'Tis strange. *Exit.*

EDMUND This is the excellent foppery of the world, that 121

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, as if we were villains on necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion, knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance, drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence, and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on. An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition on 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. Fut, I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing. Edgar—

Enter Edgar.

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

EDGAR How now, brother Edmund, what serious contemplation are you in?

EDMUND I am thinking, brother, of a prediction I read this other day, what should follow these eclipses.

EDGAR Do you busy yourself with that?

EDMUND I promise you, the effects he writes of succeed unhappily, as of unnaturalness between the child and the parent, death, dearth, dissolutions of ancient amities, divisions in state, menaces and maledictions against king and nobles, needless diffidences, banishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, nuptial breaches, and I know not what.

EDGAR How long have you been a sectary astronomical?

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

EDGAR 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.

77 villain vile wretch, diabolical schemer 78 Abhorred Abhorrent. detested hated and hateful 79 sirrah (Form of address used to inferiors or children.) 84 run a certain course proceed with safety and certainty. where whereas 87–8 pawn down stake 88 feel feel out 89–90 pretense of danger dangerous purpose. 92 meet fitting, proper 93–4 by an . . . satisfaction satisfy yourself as to the truth by what you hear 100 wind me into him insinuate yourself into his confidence. (Me is used colloquially.) Frame Arrange 101 after your own wisdom as you think best. 101–2 I would . . . resolution I would give up my wealth and rank to know the truth, have my doubts resolved. 103 presently immediately. convey manage 105 withal therewith. 106 late recent 107 the wisdom of nature natural science 109 sequent effects i.e., devastating consequences. 114 bias of nature natural inclination 118 lose thee nothing i.e., earn you a reward. 121 foppery foolishness

122–3 surfeits . . . behavior consequences of our own overindulgence 124 on by 126 treachers traitors. spherical predominance astrological determinism, because a certain planet was ascendant at the hour of our birth 129 divine supernatural 130 goatish lecherous 130–1 on the charge to the responsibility 131–2 compounded . . . Dragon's tail had sex with my mother under the constellation Draco (not one of the regular signs of the zodiac), or under the descending point at which the moon's orbit intersects with the ecliptic or apparent orbit of the sun (when an eclipse might occur) 133 Ursa Major the big bear or dipper—not one of the regular signs of the zodiac 134 Fut i.e., 'Sfoot, by Christ's foot. that what 137 pat on cue. catastrophe conclusion, resolution (of a play) 139 Tom o' Bedlam a lunatic patient of Bethlehem Hospital in London turned out to beg for his bread. 140 divisions social and family conflicts. (But with a musical sense also of florid variations on a theme, thus prompting Edmund's singing.) 144 this other day the other day 146 promise assure 146–7 succeed unhappily follow unluckily 150 needless diffidences groundless distrust of others 151 dissipation of cohorts breaking up of military companies, large-scale desertions 153–4 sectary astronomical believer in astrology. 160 countenance demeanor.

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. 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. [*He gives a key.*] If you do stir abroad, go armed.

EDGAR Armed, brother?

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

EDGAR Shall I hear from you anon?

EDMUND

I do serve you in this business. *Exit [Edgar].*
A credulous father and a brother noble,
Whose nature is so far from doing harms
That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty
My 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. *Exit.*



1.3

Enter Goneril, and [Oswald, her] steward.

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 He flashes into one gross crime or other That sets us all at odds. I'll not endure it. His knights grow riotous, and himself upbraids us On every trifle. When he returns from hunting I will not speak with him. Say I am sick. If you come slack of former services You shall do well; the fault of it I'll answer.

[*Horns within.*]

OSWALD He's coming, madam. I hear him.

GONERIL

Put on what weary negligence you please,
You and your fellows. I'd have it come to question.
If he distaste it, let him to my sister,

163 forbear his presence avoid meeting him 164 qualified moderated 166 with . . . person with the harmful effect of your presence; or, even if there were injury done to you 167 allay be allayed. 169–70 have . . . forbearance keep a wary distance 172 fitly at a fit time. my lord our father 177 meaning intention 178 but faintly only with a faint impression 179 image and horror horrid reality 186 practices plots. the business i.e., how my plots should proceed. 187 wit cleverness. 188 meet justifiable. fit to my purpose.

1.3. Location: The Duke of Albany's palace.

5 crime offense 10 come slack fall short 11 answer be answerable for. 14 come to question be made an issue. 15 distaste dislike

Whose mind and mine, I know, in that are one,
Not to be overruled. Idle old man,
That still would manage those authorities
That he hath given away! Now, by my life,
Old fools are babes again, and must be used
With checks as flatteries, when they are seen abused.
Remember what I have said.

OSWALD Well, madam.

GONERIL

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



1.4

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,
If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemned,
So may it come thy master, whom thou lov'st,
Shall find thee full of labors.

Horns within. Enter Lear, [Knights,] and attendants.

LEAR Let me not stay a jot for dinner. Go get it ready.
[*Exit an Attendant.*]

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

KENT A man, sir.

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

KENT I do profess to be no less than I seem: to serve him truly that will put me in trust, 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.

17 Idle Foolish 18 manage those authorities exercise those prerogatives 21 With . . . abused with rebukes in place of flattering attentiveness, when such flattery is seen to be taken advantage of.

26 occasions opportunities for taking offense 27 speak speak bluntly. straight immediately

1.4. Location: The Duke of Albany's palace still. The sense of time is virtually continuous.

1 as well i.e., as well as I have disguised myself by means of costume 2 diffuse render confused or indistinct 3–4 May . . . likeness may achieve the desired result for which I scraped off my beard and erased my outward appearance. 6 come come to pass that 8 stay wait 8.1 Attendant (This attendant may be a knight; certainly the one who speaks at line 50 is a knight.) 11 What . . . profess? What is your special calling? (But Kent puns in his answer on *profess* meaning to "claim.") 15 honest honorable. converse associate 16 judgment i.e., God's judgment. choose i.e., choose but to fight 17 eat no fish i.e., eat a manly diet (?), be a good Protestant (?).

LEAR If thou be'st as poor for a subject as he's for a king, thou'rt poor enough. What wouldst thou?
 KENT Service.
 LEAR Who wouldst thou serve?
 KENT You.
 LEAR Dost thou know me, fellow?
 KENT 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 do?
 KENT I can keep honest counsel, ride, run, mar a curious tale in telling it, and deliver a plain message bluntly. That which ordinary men are fit for I am qualified in, and the best of me is diligence.
 LEAR How old art thou?
 KENT 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.
 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.

[Enter steward [Oswald].]

You! You, sirrah, where's my daughter?
 OSWALD So please you—
 LEAR What says the fellow there? Call the clodpoll back.
 Where's my fool, ho? I think the world's asleep.

[Enter Knight.]

How now? Where's that mongrel?
 KNIGHT He says, my lord, your daughter is not well.
 LEAR Why came not the slave back to me when I called him?
 KNIGHT Sir, he answered me in the roundest manner, he would not.
 LEAR He would not?
 KNIGHT My lord, I know not what the matter is, but to my judgment Your Highness is not entertained with that ceremonious affection as you were wont. There's a great abatement of kindness appears as well in the general dependents as in the Duke himself also and your daughter.
 LEAR Ha? Say'st thou so?
 KNIGHT I beseech you, pardon me, my lord, if I be mistaken, for my duty cannot be silent when I think Your Highness wronged.
 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

27 countenance face and bearing 32 keep honest counsel respect confidences 32–3 curious ornate, elaborate 37 to love as to love 46 clodpoll blockhead 53 roundest bluntest 57 entertained treated 60 general dependents servants generally 66 rememberest remind 66–7 conception idea, thought 67 faint halfhearted 68–9 jealous curiosity overscrupulous regard for matters of etiquette

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.
 KNIGHT Since my young lady's going into France, sir, the Fool hath much pined away.
 LEAR No more of that. I have noted it well. Go you and tell my daughter I would speak with her. *[Exit one.]*
 Go you call hither my fool. *[Exit one.]*

Enter steward [Oswald].

Oh, you, sir, you, come you hither, sir. Who am I, sir?
 OSWALD My lady's father.
 LEAR "My lady's father"? My lord's knave! You whore-son 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?
 OSWALD I'll not be stricken, my lord.
 KENT Nor tripped neither, you base football player.
 LEAR I thank thee, fellow. Thou serv'st me, and I'll love thee.
 KENT Come, sir, arise, away! I'll teach you differences. Away, away! If you will measure your lubber's length again, tarry; but away! Go to. Have you wisdom? So.
 LEAR Now, my friendly knave, I thank thee. There's earnest of thy service.

Enter Fool.

FOOL Let me hire him too. Here's my coxcomb.
 LEAR How now, my pretty knave, how dost thou?
 FOOL *[to Kent]* Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb.
 KENT 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'lt catch cold shortly. There, take my coxcomb. Why, this fellow has banished two on 's daughters and did the third a blessing against his will. If thou follow him, thou must needs wear my coxcomb.—How now, nuncle?
 LEAR Why, my boy?

69 very pretense true intention 71 this these 83 bandy looks exchange glances (in such a way as to imply that Oswald and Lear are social equals) 84 stricken struck 85 football (A raucous street game played by the lower classes.) 88 differences distinctions in rank 89–90 If . . . again i.e., If you want to be laid out flat again, you clumsy ox 90 Go to (An expression of impatience or anger.) Have you wisdom? i.e., Wise up. 92 earnest of a first payment for 93 coxcomb fool's cap, crested with a red comb. 95 you were best you had better 98–9 an . . . shortly i.e., if you can't play along with those in power, you'll find yourself out in the cold. 100 banished (Paradoxically, by giving Goneril and Regan his kingdom, Lear has lost them, given them power over him.) on 's of his 101 blessing i.e., bestowing Cordelia on France and saving her from the curse of insolent prosperity 102 nuncle (Contraction of "mine uncle," the Fool's way of addressing Lear.)

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

LEAR Take heed, sirrah—the whip.

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

LEAR A pestilent gall to me!

FOOL Sirrah, I'll teach thee a speech.

LEAR Do.

FOOL Mark it, nuncle:

Have more than thou showest,

Speak less than thou knowest,

Lend less than thou owest,

Ride more than thou goest,

Learn more than thou trowest,

Set less than thou throwest;

Leave thy drink and thy whore,

And keep in-a-door,

And thou shalt have more

Than two tens to a score.

KENT This is nothing, Fool.

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

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

FOOL [*to Kent*] Prithce, tell him; so much the rent of his
land comes to. He will not believe a fool.

LEAR A bitter fool!

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

LEAR No, lad. Teach me.

FOOL

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

Will presently appear:

The one in motley here,

The other found out there.

105 living property 105–6 keep my coxcombs (as proof of my folly)
106–7 beg . . . daughters i.e., beg for the coxcomb that you deserve for
dealing with your daughters as you did. 110 Brach bitch hound
(here likened to Goneril and Regan, who have been given favored
places despite their reeking of dishonest flattery) 112 gall irritation,
bitterness—literally, a painful swelling, or bile. (Lear is stung by the
Fool's gibe because it is so true.) 116 Have . . . showest don't dis-
play your wealth ostentatiously 118 owest own 119 goest i.e., on
foot. (Travel unostentatiously on horseback, not afoot.) 120 Learn
i.e., listen to. trowest believe 121 Set . . . throwest don't stake
everything on a single throw 123 in-a-door indoors, at home
124–5 And . . . score and you will do better than break even (since a
score equals two tens, or twenty). 127 'tis . . . lawyer i.e., it is free—
and useless—advice. (Lawyers, being proverbially mercenary, would
not give good advice unless paid well.) 132–3 so . . . to (Because
Lear has given away his land, he can collect no rent.) 134 bitter
satirical 141 Do . . . stand take his place. 143 presently immedi-
ately 144 motley the parti-colored dress of the professional fool.
(The Fool identifies himself as the sweet fool, Lear as the bitter fool
who counseled himself to give away his kingdom.) 145 found out
there discovered there. (The Fool points at Lear.)

LEAR Dost thou call me fool, boy?

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

KENT This is not altogether fool, my lord.

FOOL No, faith, lords and great men will not let me; if
I had a monopoly out, they would have part on't. And
ladies too, they will not let me have all the fool to my-
self; they'll be snatching. Nuncle, give me an egg 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 the meat, the two crowns of the egg. 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. If I speak like myself in
this, let him be whipped that first finds it so.

[Sings.] "Fools had ne'er less grace in a year,

For wise men are grown foppish

And know not how their wits to wear,

Their manners are so apish."

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

FOOL I have used it, nuncle, e'er since thou mad'st thy
daughters thy mothers; for when thou gav'st them the
rod and putt'st down thine own breeches,

[Sings] "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."

Prithce, 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'lt
have me whipped for lying, and sometimes I am
whipped for holding my peace. I had rather be any
kind o' thing than a fool. And yet I would not be thee,
nuncle. Thou hast pared thy wit o' both sides and left
nothing i'th' middle. Here comes one o' th' parings.

Enter Goneril.

LEAR

How now, daughter? What makes that frontlet on? 186
You are too much of late i'th' frown.

150 No . . . let me i.e., Great persons at court will not let me monopo-
lize folly; I am not *altogether* fool in the sense of being "all the fool
there is" 151 a monopoly out a corner on the market. (The granting
of monopolies was a common abuse under King James and Queen
Elizabeth.) on't of it. 153 snatching seizing their share (including
sexual pleasure). 156–7 and eat . . . meat and have eaten the edible
part 159 bor'st . . . dirt i.e., bore the ass instead of letting the ass
bear you. 161–2 If . . . so If I speak like a fool in saying this, let the
first person to discover the truth of this be whipped (since in this cor-
rupt world those who speak truth are punished for doing so).
163–6 "Fools . . . apish" "Fools have never been so out of favor, for
wise men foppishly trade places with the fools and no longer know
how to show off their wit to advantage, they have grown so foolish
in their manners." 169 used practiced 174 bo-peep (A child's
game.) 178 An If 186 What . . . on? What is that frown doing on
your forehead?

FOOL Thou wast a pretty fellow when thou hadst no need to care for her frowning; now thou art an O without a figure. I am better than thou art now; I am a fool, thou art nothing. [*To Goneril*] Yes, forsooth, I will hold my tongue; so your face bids me, though you say nothing.

Mum, mum,

He that keeps nor crust nor crumb,

Weary of all, shall want some.

[*Pointing to Lear*] That's a shelled peascod.

GONERIL

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

FOOL For you know, nuncle,

"The hedge sparrow fed the cuckoo so long

That it had it head bit off by it young."

So, out went the candle, and we were left darkling.

LEAR [*to Goneril*] Are you our daughter?

GONERIL

I would you would make use of your good wisdom,
Whereof I know you are fraught, and put away
These dispositions which of late transport you
From what you rightly are.

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

LEAR

Does any here know me? This is not Lear.
Does Lear walk thus, speak thus? Where are his eyes?
Either his notion weakens, or his discernings
Are lethargied—Ha! Waking? 'Tis not so.
Who is it that can tell me who I am?

189-90 O without a figure zero, cipher of no value unless preceded by a digit. 195-6 He . . . some i.e., That person who, having grown weary of his possessions, gives all away, will find himself in need of part of what is gone. 196 want lack 197 shelled peascod shelled pea pod, empty of its contents. 198 all-licensed allowed to speak or act as he pleases 200 carp find fault 201 rank gross, excessive 203 safe certain 204 too late all too recently 205 put it on encourage it 206 allowance approval 207-11 nor . . . proceeding nor would the punishments lie dormant which, out of care for the common welfare, might prove unpleasant to you—proceedings that the stern necessity of the times will regard as prudent even if under normal circumstances they might seem shameful. 213 cuckoo a bird that lays its eggs in other birds' nests 214 it head its head. it young i.e., the young cuckoo. (A cautionary fable about ungrateful children.) 215 darkling in the dark. 218 fraught freighted, provided 219 dispositions inclinations, moods 221-2 May . . . horse? i.e., May not even a fool see that matters are backwards when a daughter lectures her father? 222 Jug i.e., Joan. (The origin of this phrase is uncertain.) 225 notion intellectual power 225-6 or his . . . lethargied or his faculties are asleep 226 Waking? i.e., Am I really awake?

FOOL Lear's shadow.

LEAR

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

FOOL Which they will make an obedient father.

LEAR Your name, fair gentlewoman?

GONERIL

This admiration, sir, is much o'th' savor
Of other your new pranks. I do beseech you
To understand my purposes aright.

ME Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires,
Men so disordered, so debauched and bold
That this our court, infected with their manners,
Shows like a riotous inn. Epicurism and lust
Makes it more like a tavern or a brothel
Than a graced palace. The shame itself doth speak
For instant remedy. Be then desired,
By her that else will take the thing she begs,
A little to disquantity your train,
And the remainders that shall still depend
To be such men as may besort your age,
Which know themselves and you.

LEAR Darkness and devils!
Saddle my horses! Call my train together! [*Exit one.*]
Degenerate bastard, I'll not trouble thee.

ME Yet have I left a daughter.

GONERIL

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

Enter Albany.

LEAR

Woe, that too late repents!—Oh, sir, are you come?
Is it your will? Speak, sir.—Prepare my horses.

[*Exit one.*]

ME Ingratitude, 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!

ME My train are men of choice and rarest parts,
That all particulars of duty know

And in the most exact regard support
The worship of their name. Oh, most small fault,

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229 that i.e., who I am. marks of sovereignty outward and visible evidence of being king 230-1 I should . . . daughters i.e., all these outward signs of sanity and status would seem to suggest (falsely) that I am the king who had obedient daughters. 232 Which Whom 234 admiration (guise of) wonderment 235 other other of 237 should i.e., you should 239 Men . . . bold men so disorderly, so depraved and impudent 241 Shows appears. Epicurism Excess, hedonism 243 graced dignified 244 desired requested 246 disquantity your train diminish the number of your attendants 247 the remainders . . . depend those who remain to attend you 248 besort befit 249 Which . . . you servants who have proper self-knowledge and an awareness of how they should serve you. 250 train retinue 255 Woe, that Woe to the person who 261 kite bird of prey 262 parts qualities 264-5 And . . . name and with utter scrupulousness may uphold the honor of their reputation.

How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show!		To temper clay. Yea, is't come to this?	303
Which, like an engine, wrenched my frame of nature	267	Ha! Let it be so. I have another daughter,	
From the fixed place, drew from my heart all love,	268	Who, I am sure, is kind and comfortable.	305
And added to the gall. Oh, Lear, Lear, Lear!	269	When she shall hear this of thee, with her nails	
Beat at this gate [<i>striking his head</i>] that let thy folly in		She'll flay thy wolfish visage. Thou shalt find	
And thy dear judgment out!—Go, go, my people.	271	That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think	308
	[<i>Exeunt some.</i>]	I have cast off forever.	<i>Exit.</i>
ALBANY		GONERIL [<i>to Albany</i>] Do you mark that?	309
My lord, I am guiltless as I am ignorant		ALBANY	
Of what hath moved you.		I cannot be so partial, Goneril,	
LEAR	It may be so, my lord.—	To the great love I bear you—	311
Hear, Nature, hear! Dear goddess, hear!		GONERIL	
Suspend thy purpose if thou didst intend		Pray you, content.—What, Oswald, ho!	
To make this creature fruitful!		[<i>To the Fool</i>] You, sir, more knave than fool, after your	
Into her womb convey sterility;		master.	
Dry up in her the organs of increase,		FOOL Nuncle Lear, nuncle Lear! Tarry, take the Fool	314
And from her derogate body never spring	279	with thee.	315
A babe to honor her! If she must teem,	280	A fox, when one has caught her,	
Create her child of spleen, that it may live	281	And such a daughter	
And be a thwart disnatured torment to her!	282	Should sure to the slaughter,	318
Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth,		If my cap would buy a halter.	319
With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks,	284	So the Fool follows after.	<i>Exit.</i>
Turn all her mother's pains and benefits	285	GONERIL	
To laughter and contempt, that she may feel		This man hath had good counsel. A hundred knights?	321
How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is		'Tis politic and safe to let him keep	322
To have a thankless child! Away, away!		At point a hundred knights—yes, that on every	
<i>Exit [with Kent and the rest of Lear's followers].</i>		dream,	323
ALBANY		Each buzz, each fancy, each complaint, dislike,	324
Now, gods that we adore, whereof comes this?		He may enguard his dotage with their powers	325
GONERIL		And hold our lives in mercy.—Oswald, I say!	326
Never afflict yourself to know more of it,	290	ALBANY Well, you may fear too far.	327
But let his disposition have that scope	291	GONERIL Safer than trust too far.	
As dotage gives it.	292	Let me still take away the harms I fear,	329
<i>Enter Lear.</i>		Not fear still to be taken. I know his heart.	330
LEAR		What he hath uttered I have writ my sister.	
What, fifty of my followers at a clap?		If she sustain him and his hundred knights	
Within a fortnight?		When I have showed th'unfitness—	
ALBANY	What's the matter, sir?	<i>Enter steward [Oswald].</i>	
LEAR		How now, Oswald?	
I'll tell thee. [<i>To Goneril</i>] Life and death! I am ashamed		What, have you writ that letter to my sister?	
That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus,		OSWALD Ay, madam.	
That these hot tears, which break from me perforce,		GONERIL	
Should make thee worth them. Blasts and fogs upon		Take you some company and away to horse.	
thee!	298	Inform her full of my particular fear,	
Th'untented woundings of a father's curse	299	And thereto add such reasons of your own	
Pierce every sense about thee! Old fond eyes,	300	As may compact it more. Get you gone,	339
BewEEP this cause again, I'll pluck ye out	301		
And cast you, with the waters that you loose,	302		

267–8 Which . . . place which, like a powerful mechanical contrivance, wrenched my natural affection away from where it belonged 269 gall bitterness. 271 dear precious 279 derogate debased 280 teem produce offspring 281 spleen violent ill nature 282 thwart disnatured obstinate, perverse, and unnatural, unfilial 284 cadent cascading. fret wear away 285 benefits pleasures of motherhood 290 Never . . . know Don't distress yourself by seeking to know 291 disposition humor, mood 292 As that 298 Should . . . them should seem to suggest that you are worth a king's tears. Blasts and fogs Infectious blights and disease-bearing fogs 299 untented too deep to be probed and cleansed 300 fond foolish 301 BewEEP if you weep for 302 loose let loose (in tears)

303 To temper clay to mix with earth. (Lear threatens to cast both his eyes and their tears to the ground.) 305 comfortable comforting. 308 the shape i.e., the kingship 309 Do . . . that? i.e., Did you hear his threat to resume royal power? 311 To because of 314–15 take . . . thee (1) take me with you (2) take the name "fool" with you. (A stock phrase of taunting farewell.) 318 Should sure should certainly be sent 319 halter (1) rope for leading an animal (2) hangman's noose. 321 This . . . counsel (Said sarcastically.) 322 politic prudent. (Said ironically.) 323 At point armed and ready. dream i.e., imagined wrong 324 buzz idle rumor 325 enguard protect 326 in mercy at his mercy. 327 fear too far overestimate the danger. 329 still take away always remove 330 Not . . . taken rather than dwell continually in the fear of being taken prisoner by such harms. 339 compact confirm

And hasten your return. [Exit Oswald.]

No, no, my lord,

This milky gentleness and course of yours

Though I condemn not, yet, under pardon,

You're much more attacked 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 Nay, then—

ALBANY Well, well, th'event.

Exeunt.



1.5

Enter Lear, Kent [disguised as Caius], and Fool.

LEAR [giving a letter to Kent] 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.

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

Exit.

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

LEAR Ay, boy.

FOOL Then, I prithee, be merry. Thy wit shall not 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 What canst tell, 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 No.

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

LEAR I did her wrong.

FOOL Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell?

LEAR No.

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

LEAR Why?

341 milky . . . course effeminate and gentle way 342 under pardon if you'll excuse my saying so 343 attacked taken to task for, blamed 344 harmful mildness mildness that causes harm. 345 pierce i.e., see into matters 348 th'event i.e., time will tell.

1.5. Location: Before Albany's palace.

1 Gloucester i.e., the place in Gloucestershire 2 these letters this letter. 3 demand inquiry 4 out of prompted by 8-9 were't . . . kibes? wouldn't his brains be in danger of that common affliction of the heel called chilblains? 11-12 Thy wit . . . slipshod i.e., Your brains would have no need for slippers to avoid chafing the chilblains, since you have no brains. (Anyone who journeys to Regan in hopes of kind treatment is utterly brainless.) 14 Shalt Thou shalt. kindly (1) with filial kindness (2) according to her own nature 15 crab crab apple 20 on 's of his 22 of either side 's on either side of his 24 her i.e., Cordelia

FOOL Why, to put 's head in, not to give it away to his 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 Because they are not eight.

FOOL Yes, indeed. Thou wouldst 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 How's that?

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

LEAR

Oh, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven!

Keep me in temper; I would not be mad!

[Enter Gentleman.]

How now, are the horses ready?

GENTLEMAN Ready, my lord.

LEAR Come, boy. [Exeunt Lear and Gentleman.]

FOOL

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

Exit.

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2.1

Enter Bastard [Edmund] 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 How comes that?

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

EDMUND Not I. Pray you, what are they?

CURAN Have you heard of no likely wars toward twixt the Dukes of Cornwall and Albany?

EDMUND Not a word.

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

Exit.

30-1 Why, to . . . case i.e., The snail's head and horns are undangered with its case or shell; Lear, conversely, has given away his crown to his daughters, leaving his brows unadorned and vulnerable. (With a suggestion too of the cuckold's horned head, as though Lear's victimization had a sexual dimension.) 32 nature natural affection. (Compare line 14 and note.) 34 Thy . . . 'em i.e., Your servants (who labor like asses in your service) have gone about readying the horses. 35 seven stars Pleiades 39 To take't . . . perforce! i.e., To think that Goneril would forcibly take back again the privileges guaranteed to me! (Or perhaps Lear is meditating an armed restoration of his monarchy.) 46 temper mental equilibrium 51 things i.e., penises. cut shorter (A bawdy joke addressed to the audience.)

2.1. Location: The Earl of Gloucester's house.

0.1 severally separately. 1 Save God save 7 abroad going the rounds. ones i.e., the news, regarded as plural 8 ear-kissing arguments lightly whispered topics. 10 toward impending

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

EDGAR

I am sure on't, not a word.

EDMUND

I hear my father coming. Pardon me;
In cunning I must draw my sword upon you.
Draw. Seem to defend yourself. Now, quit you well.—
[*They draw.*]
Yield! Come before my father!—Light, ho, here!—
Fly, brother.—Torches, torches!—So, farewell.

Exit Edgar.

Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion
Of my more fierce endeavor. I have seen drunkards
Do more than this in sport. [*He wounds himself in the
arm.*] Father, father!
Stop, stop! No help?

Enter Gloucester, and servants with torches.

GLOUCESTER

Now, Edmund, where's the villain?

EDMUND

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

GLOUCESTER

But where is he?

EDMUND

Look, sir, I bleed.

GLOUCESTER

Where is the villain, Edmund?

EDMUND

Fled this way, sir. When by no means he could—

GLOUCESTER Pursue him, ho! Go after.

[*Exeunt some servants.*]

By no means what?

EDMUND

Persuade me to the murder of Your Lordship,
But that I told him the revenging gods

14 **The better! Best!** So much the better; in fact, the best that could happen! 17 **queasy question** matter not for queasy stomachs 18 **Briefness and fortune** Expeditionist dispatch and good luck 24 **i'th' haste** in great haste 26 **Upon his party** i.e., recklessly on Cornwall's behalf (? It would be dangerous to speak on either side.) 27 **Advise yourself** Consider your situation. **on't** of it 30 **quit you** defend, acquit yourself 31–2 **Yield . . . farewell** (Edmund speaks loudly as though trying to arrest Edgar, calls for others to help, and privately bids Edgar to flee.) 33–4 **beget . . . endeavor** create an impression of my having fought fiercely. 39 **stand 's** stand his, act as his 44 **that** when

'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
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 th' encounter,
Or whether ghasted by the noise I made,
Full suddenly he fled.

GLOUCESTER

Let him fly far.

Not in this land shall he remain uncaught;
And found—dispatch. The noble Duke my master,
My worthy arch and patron, comes 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.

EDMUND

When I dissuaded him from his intent
And found him pight to do it, with curst 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
Make thy words faithed? No. What I should deny—
As this I would, ay, though thou didst produce
My very character—I'd turn it all
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."

GLOUCESTER

Oh, strange and fastened villain!

Would he deny his letter, said he?
I never got him. *Tucket within.*
Hark, the Duke's trumpets! I know not why he comes.
All ports I'll bar; the villain shall not scape.
The Duke must grant me that. Besides, his picture
I will send far and near, that all the kingdom
May have due note of him; and of my land,

45 **bend** aim 47 **in fine** in conclusion 48 **loathly opposite** loathingly opposed 49 **fell motion** deadly thrust 50 **prepared** unsheathed and ready. **home** to the very heart 51 **unprovided** unprotected. **latched** nicked, lanced 52 **best alarumed** thoroughly aroused to action, as by a trumpet 53 **quarrel's right** justice of the cause 54 **ghasted** frightened 55 **Let him fly far** i.e., Any fleeing, no matter how far, will be in vain. 57 **dispatch** i.e., that will be the end for him. 58 **arch and patron** chief patron 61 **to the stake** i.e., to reckoning 64 **pight** determined. **curst** angry 65 **discover** expose 66 **unpossessing** unable to inherit, beggarly 67 **reposal** placing 69 **faithed** believed. **What** That which, whatever 71 **character** written testimony, handwriting. **turn** attribute 72 **suggestion** instigation. **practice** scheming 73–6 **And . . . seek** it and you must think everyone slow-witted indeed not to suppose that they would see how the profits to be gained by my death would be fertile and potent tempters to make you seek my death. 76 **strange and fastened** unnatural and hardened 78 **got** begot. **s.d.** *Tucket* series of notes on the trumpet, here indicating Cornwall's arrival 80 **ports** seaports, or gateways 81 **picture** description

Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means
To make thee capable.

Enter Cornwall, Regan, and attendants.

CORNWALL

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

REGAN

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

GLOUCESTER

Oh 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

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

REGAN

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

GLOUCESTER

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

EDMUND

Yes, madam, he was of that consort.

REGAN

No marvel, then, though he were ill affected.
'Tis they have put him on the old man's death,
To have 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.

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 [to Cornwall]

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

CORNWALL Is he pursued?

GLOUCESTER Ay, my good lord.

CORNWALL

If he be taken, he shall never more
Be 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;
You we first seize on.

EDMUND

I shall serve you, sir,

Truly, however else.

GLOUCESTER For him I thank Your Grace.

84 natural (1) prompted by natural feelings of loyalty and affection (2) bastard **85 capable** legally able to become the inheritor. **97 consort** crew. **98 though** if. **ill affected** ill-disposed, disloyal. **99 put him on** incited him to **100 th'expense and spoil** the squandering **106 childlike** filial **107 bewray his practice** expose his (Edgar's) plot **108 apprehend** arrest **112–13 Make . . . please** Go about achieving your purpose, making free use of my authority and resources. **113 For** As for **118 however else** above all else.

84 CORNWALL

85 You know not why we came to visit you—

REGAN

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

122

125

126

127

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GLOUCESTER

I serve you, madam.

130

Your Graces are right welcome. *Flourish. Exeunt.*

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2.2

*Enter Kent [disguised as Caius] and steward
[Oswald], severally.*

OSWALD Good dawning to thee, friend. Art of this house? 1

97 KENT Ay.

OSWALD Where may we set our horses?

98 KENT I'th' mire.

99 OSWALD Prithee, if thou lov'st me, tell me.

6

100 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. 9

10

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

KENT Fellow, I know thee.

12

OSWALD What dost thou know me for?

KENT A knave, a rascal, an eater of broken meats; a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound, filthy worsted-stocking knave; a lily-livered, action-taking, whoreson, glass-gazing, superserviceable, finical rogue; one-trunk-inheriting slave; one that wouldst be a bawd in way of good service, and art nothing but the composition of a knave, beggar, coward, pander, and the son and heir of a

112 **122 poise** weight **125 differences** quarrels. **which** which letters
113 **126 from our home** while still at our palace in Cornwall. **127 attend**
10 dispatch wait to be dispatched. **130 the instant use** immediate attention.

7.2.2 Location: Before Gloucester's house.

0.2 severally at separate doors. **1 dawning** (It is not yet day.) **6 if thou lov'st me** i.e., if you bear good will toward me. (But Kent deliberately takes the phrase in its literal, not courtly, sense.) **9 in Lipsbury pinfold** i.e., within the pinfold of the lips, between my teeth. (A pinfold is a pound for stray animals.) **10 care for** i.e., be wary of. (Playing on *care not for*, "do not like," in line 8.) **12 I know thee** i.e., I know you for what you are. (Playing on *know thee not*, "am unacquainted with you," in line 11.) **14 broken meats** scraps of food (such as were passed out to the most lowly) **15–16 three-suited . . . knave** i.e., a steward of a household, with an allowance of three suits a year and a comfortable income of one hundred pounds, dressed in dirty wool stockings appropriate to the servant class **16–19 a lily-livered . . . slave** a cowardly, litigious, insufferable, self-inflated, officious, foppish rogue, whose personal property all fits into one trunk **19–20 bawd . . . service** i.e., pimp or pander as a way of providing whatever is wanted **20 composition** compound

- mongrel bitch; one whom I will beat into clamorous whining if thou deny'st the least syllable of thy addition. 23
- OSWALD Why, what a monstrous fellow art thou thus to rail on one that is neither known of thee nor knows thee! 24
- KENT What a brazen-faced varlet art thou to deny thou knowest me! Is it two days since I tripped up thy heels and beat thee before the King? Draw, you rogue, for though it be night, yet the moon shines. I'll make a sop o'th' moonshine of you, you whoreson, cullionly barbermonger. Draw! [He brandishes his sword.] 32
- OSWALD Away! I have nothing to do with thee. 33
- KENT Draw, you rascal! You come with letters against the King, and take Vanity the puppet's part against the royalty of her father. Draw, you rogue, or I'll so carbonado your shanks—draw, you rascal! Come your ways. 36
- OSWALD Help, ho! Murder! Help! 37
- KENT Strike, you slave! Stand, rogue, stand, you neat slave, strike! [He beats him.] 38
- OSWALD Help, ho! Murder! Murder! 39
- Enter Bastard [Edmund, with his rapier drawn], Cornwall, Regan, Gloucester, servants.*
- EDMUND How now, what's the matter? Part! 40
- KENT With you, goodman boy, an you please! Come, I'll flesh ye. Come on, young master. 41
- GLOUCESTER Weapons? Arms? What's the matter here? 42
- CORNWALL Keep peace, upon your lives! [Kent and Oswald are parted.] He dies that strikes again. What is the matter? 43
- REGAN The messengers from our sister and the King. 44
- CORNWALL What's your difference? Speak. 45
- OSWALD I am scarce in breath, my lord. 46
- KENT No marvel, you have so bestirred your valor. You cowardly rascal, nature disclaims in thee. A tailor made thee. 47
- CORNWALL Thou art a strange fellow. A tailor make a man? 48
- KENT A tailor, sir. A stonecutter or a painter could not have made him so ill, though they had been but two years o'th' trade. 49
- CORNWALL Speak yet, how grew your quarrel? 50
- OSWALD This ancient ruffian, sir, whose life I have spared at suit of his gray beard— 51
- KENT Thou whoreson zed! Thou unnecessary letter!— 65
- My lord, if you'll 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? 66
- CORNWALL Peace, sirrah! 67
- You beastly knave, know you no reverence? 68
- KENT Yes, sir, but anger hath a privilege. 69
- CORNWALL Why art thou angry? 70
- KENT That such a slave as this should wear a sword, Who wears no honesty. Such smiling rogues as these, Like rats, oft bite the holy cords atwain Which are too intrinse t'unloose; smooth every passion That in the natures of their lords rebel, Bring oil to fire, snow to their colder moods, Renege, affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks With every gale and vary of their masters, Knowing 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, I'd drive ye cackling home to Camelot. 75
- CORNWALL What, art thou mad, old fellow? 76
- GLOUCESTER How fell you out? Say that. 77
- KENT No contraries hold more antipathy Than I and such a knave. 78
- CORNWALL Why dost thou call him knave? What is his fault? 79
- KENT His countenance likes me not. 80
- CORNWALL No more, perchance, does mine, nor his, nor hers. 81
- 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. 82
- CORNWALL This is some fellow Who, having been praised for bluntness, doth affect 97

23–4 **thy addition** the titles I've given you. 32 **sop o'th' moonshine** something so perforated that it will soak up moonshine as a sop (floating piece of toast) soaks up liquor 32–3 **cullionly barbermonger** base frequenter of barber shops, fop. (*Cullion* originally meant "testicle.") 36 **Vanity . . . part** i.e., the part of Goneril (here personified as a character in a morality play) 38 **carbonado** cut crosswise, like meat for broiling 38–9 **Come your ways** Come on. 41 **neat** (1) foppish (2) calllike. (*Neat* means "horned cattle.") 44 **matter** i.e., trouble. (But Kent takes the meaning "cause for quarrel.") 45 **With you** I'll fight with you; my quarrel is with you. **goodman boy** (A contemptuous epithet, a title of mock respect, addressed seemingly to Edmund.) **an** if 46 **flesh** initiate into combat 52 **difference** quarrel. 55 **disclaims** in disowns

65 **zed** the letter z (regarded as unnecessary and often not included in dictionaries of the time). 66–7 **unbolted** unsifted; hence, coarse 67 **daub** plaster. **jakes** privy 68 **wagtail** i.e., bird wagging its tail feathers in pert obsequiousness. 75 **holy cords** sacred bonds of loyalty and order 76 **intrinse** intricate, tightly knotted. **smooth** flatter, humor 77 **rebel** rebel against reason 78 **Bring . . . moods** flatteringly fuel the flame of their masters' angry passions, while similarly exacerbating their downward mood swings 79 **Renege, affirm** nay-say one moment (when their lords are in a denying mood) and serve as yes-men the next. **halcyon beaks** (The halcyon or kingfisher, if hung up, would supposedly turn its beak into the wind.) 80 **gale and vary** shifting wind 81 **following** fawning and flattery. 82 **epileptic** i.e., trembling and pale with fright and distorted with a grin 83 **Smile you** Do you smile at. **as** as if 84–5 **Goose . . . Camelot** (The reference is obscure, but the general sense is that Kent, if given space and opportunity, would send Oswald packing like a cackling goose. Camelot, the legendary seat of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table, was thought to have been in the general vicinity of Salisbury, Sarum, and Gloucester.) 91 **likes** pleases 97 **affect** adopt the style of

KENT

Good King, that must approve the common saw, 163
 Thou out of heaven's benediction com'st
 To the warm sun! [He takes out a letter.]
 Approach, thou beacon to this under globe, 166
 That by thy comfortable beams I may 167
 Peruse this letter. Nothing almost sees miracles 168
 But misery. I know 'tis from Cordelia, 169
 Who hath most fortunately been informed
 Of my obscured course, "and shall find time
 From this enormous state, seeking to give
 Losses their remedies." All weary and o'erwatched, 173
 Take vantage, heavy eyes, not to behold 174
 This shameful lodging. 175
 Fortune, good night. Smile once more; turn thy wheel! 176
 [He sleeps.]



[2.3]

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
 Does not attend my taking. Whiles I may scape
 I will preserve myself, and am bethought
 To take the basest and most poorest shape
 That ever penury, in contempt of man,
 Brought near to beast. My face I'll grime with filth,
 Blanket my loins, elf all my hairs 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
 Strike in their numbèd and mortifièd arms
 Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary;
 And with this horrible object, from low farms,

163 **approve** prove true. **saw** proverb (i.e., "To run out of God's blessing into the warm sun," meaning "to go from better to worse," from a state of bliss into the pitiless world. Kent sees Lear as heading for trouble.) 166 **beacon** . . . **globe** i.e., the sun. (Daylight is coming soon.) 167 **comfortable** comforting 168–9 **Nothing** . . . **misery** Scarcely anything can make one appreciate miracles like being in a state of misery; to the miserable, any relief seems miraculous. 171 **obscured** disguised 171–3 "**and shall** . . . **remedies**" i.e., "and who, in the fullness of time, will bring relief from the monstrous state of affairs under which we suffer, seeking to remedy what has been destroyed." (The passage may be corrupt. Kent may be reading from his letter.) 173 **o'erwatched** exhausted with staying awake 174 **vantage** advantage (of sleep) 175 **lodging** i.e., the stocks. 176 **wheel** (Since Kent is at the bottom of Fortune's wheel, any turning should improve his situation.)

2.3. Location: Scene continues. Kent is dozing in the stocks.

2 **happy** luckily found 3 **port** (See 2.1.80 and note.) 4 **That** in which 5 **attend my taking** lie in wait to capture me. 6 **bethought** resolved 8 **in** . . . **man** in order to show how contemptible humankind is 10 **elf** tangle into elflocks 11 **presented** exposed to view, displayed 13 **proof** example 14 **Bedlam** (See the note to 1.2.139.) 15 **Strike** stick. **mortifièd** deadened 16 **wooden pricks** skewers 17 **object** spectacle. **low** lowly

Poor pelting villages, sheepcotes, and mills, 18
 Sometimes with lunatic bans, sometimes with prayers, 19
 Enforce their charity. Poor Turlygod! Poor Tom! 20
 That's something yet. Edgar I nothing am. *Exit.* 21



[2.4]

Enter Lear, Fool, and Gentleman.

LEAR

'Tis strange that they should so depart from home 1
 And not send back my messenger.

GENTLEMAN

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

KENT

Hail to thee, noble master! 4

LEAR Ha?

Mak'st thou this shame thy pastime?

KENT

No, my lord.

FOOL

Ha, ha, he wears cruel garters. Horses are tied by 7
 the heads, dogs and bears by th' neck, monkeys by
 th' loins, and men by th' legs. When a man's over- 9
 lusty at legs, then he wears wooden netherstocks. 10

LEAR

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

KENT

It is both he and she: 12
 Your son and daughter.

LEAR

No.

KENT

Yes.

LEAR

No, I say.

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.

LEAR

They durst not do't!
 They could not, would not do't. 'Tis worse than
 murder

To do upon respect such violent outrage. 23

Resolve me with all modest haste which way 24

Thou mightst deserve, or they impose, this usage,
 Coming from us.

18 **pelting** paltry 19 **bans** curses 20 **Enforce their charity** manage to beg something. **Poor** . . . **Tom** (Edgar practices the begging role he is about to adopt. Beggars were known as "poor Toms.")

Turlygod (Meaning unknown.) 21 **That's** . . . **am** There's some kind of existence for me as poor Tom. I am Edgar no longer.

2.4. Location: Scene continues before Gloucester's house. Kent still dozing in the stocks.

1 **they** Cornwall and Regan 4 **remove** change of residence. 7 **creul** (1) unkind (2) crewel (compare the quarto spelling, "crewell"), a thin yarn of which hose were made 9–10 **overlusty at legs** given to running away, or overly active sexually 10 **netherstocks** stockings.

12 **To** as to 23 **upon respect** i.e., against my officers (who deserve respect) 24 **Resolve** Enlighten. **modest** moderate

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,
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 meiny, straight took horse,
Commanded me to follow and attend
The leisure of their answer, gave me cold looks;
And meeting here the other messenger,
Whose welcome, I perceived, had poisoned mine—
Being the very fellow which of late
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 Winter's not gone yet if the wild geese fly that way.

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

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

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

KENT With the Earl, sir, here within.

LEAR Follow me not. Stay here.

Exit.

GENTLEMAN

Made you no more offense but what you speak of?

KENT None.

How chance the King comes with so small a number?

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

KENT Why, Fool?

FOOL We'll set thee to school to an ant to teach thee there's no laboring i'th' winter. All that follow their noses are led by their eyes but blind men, and there's not a nose among twenty but can smell him that's stinking. Let go thy hold when a great wheel runs down a hill lest it break thy neck with following; but the great one that goes upward, let him draw thee after. When a wise man gives thee better counsel, give me mine again. I would have none but knaves follow it, since a fool gives it.

That sir which serves and seeks for gain,

And follows but for form,

Will pack when it begins to rain

And leave thee in the storm.

But I will tarry; the fool will stay,

And let the wise man fly.

The knave turns fool that runs away;

The fool no knave, pardie.

Enter Lear and Gloucester.

KENT Where learned you this, Fool?

FOOL Not i'th' stocks, fool.

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

Vengeance! Plague! Death! Confusion!

Fiery? What quality? Why, Gloucester, Gloucester,

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

GLOUCESTER

Well, my good lord, I have 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

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—

No, but not yet. Maybe he is not well.

Infirmity doth still neglect all office

Whereto our health is bound; we are not ourselves

26 **their home** (Kent and Oswald went first to Cornwall's palace after leaving Albany's palace.) 27 **commend** deliver 28–9 **from . . . kneeling** from the kneeling posture that showed my duty 29 **reeking** steaming (with heat of travel) 30 **Stewed** i.e., thoroughly heated, soaked 32 **spite of intermission** in disregard of interrupting me, or, in spite of the interruptions caused by his being out of breath 33 **presently** instantly. **on** on the basis of 34 **meiny** retinue of servants, household 40 **Displayed so saucily** behaved so insolently 41 **more man than wit** more courage than good sense 45–6 **Winter's . . . way** i.e., The signs still point to continued and worsening fortune; the wild geese are still flying south. 48 **blind** i.e., indifferent to their father's needs 49 **bags** i.e., of gold 52 **turns the key** opens the door 53 **dolours** griefs. (With pun on "dollars," English word for an Austrian or Spanish coin.) **for** (1) on account of (2) in exchange for 54 **tell** (1) relate (2) count 55, 56 **mother, *Hysterica passio*** i.e., hysteria, giving the sensation of choking or suffocating 57 **element's** proper place is. (Hysteria, from the Greek *hysteria*, womb, was thought to be produced by vapors ascending from the uterus or abdomen.) 62 **chance** chances it 63 **An If**

66–7 **We'll . . . winter** i.e., Just as the ant knows not to labor in the winter, the wise man knows not to labor for one whose fortunes are fallen. 67–70 **All . . . stinking** i.e., One who is out of favor can be easily detected (he smells of misfortune) and so is easily avoided by timeservers. 78 **pack** be off 82 **The knave . . . away** i.e., Deserting one's master is the greatest folly 83 **pardie** *par Dieu* (French), "by God." 87 **fetches** pretexts, dodges 88 **images** signs. **flying off** desertion. 93 **Confusion!** Destruction! 100 **tends** attends, waits for 101 **My . . . blood!** i.e., By my very life. (An oath.) 104–5 **Infirmity . . . bound** Sickness always prompts us to neglect all duties which in good health we are bound to perform

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 For the sound man. [<i>Looking at Kent</i>] Death on my state! Wherefore 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, Or at their chamber door I'll beat the drum Till it cry sleep to death.	108 109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117	REGAN I pray you, sir, take patience. I have hope You less know how to value her desert Than she to scant her duty.	137 138 139
GLOUCESTER I would have all well betwixt you. <i>Exit.</i>		LEAR Say? How is that?	139
LEAR Oh, me, my heart, my rising heart! But down!		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.	
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, wan- tons, down!" 'Twas her brother that, in pure kindness to his horse, buttered his hay.	120 121 122 123 124	LEAR My curses on her!	
<i>Enter Cornwall, Regan, Gloucester, [and] servants.</i>		REGAN Oh, sir, you are old; Nature in you stands on the very verge Of his confine. You should be ruled and led By some discretion that discerns your state Better than you yourself. Therefore, I pray you, That to our sister you do make return. Say you have wronged her.	147 148 149
LEAR Good morrow to you both.		LEAR Ask her forgiveness?	
CORNWALL Hail to Your Grace!		Do you but mark how this becomes the house: [<i>Kneeling</i>] "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."	153
<i>Kent here set at liberty.</i>		REGAN Good sir, no more. These are unsightly tricks. Return you to my sister.	
REGAN I am glad to see Your Highness.		LEAR [<i>rising</i>] 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. All the stored vengeance of heaven fall On her ingrateful top! Strike her young bones, You taking airs, with lameness!	159 163
LEAR Regan, I think you are. I know what reason I have to think so. If thou shouldst not be glad, I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb, Sepulch'ring an adultriss. [<i>To Kent</i>] Oh, are you free? Some other time for that.—Belovèd Regan, Thy sister's naught. Oh, Regan, she hath tied Sharp-toothed unkindness, like a vulture, here. [<i>He lays his hand on his heart.</i>] I can scarce speak to thee. Thou'lt not believe With how depraved a quality—Oh, Regan!	130 131 132 133 134 135 136	CORNWALL Fie, sir, fie!	164
		LEAR You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames Into her scornful eyes! Infect her beauty, You fen-sucked fogs drawn by the powerful sun To fall and blister!	167 168
		REGAN O the blest gods! So will you wish on me When the rash mood is on.	
		LEAR 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,	172
<p>108–10 And . . . man and now disapprove of my more impetuous will in having rashly supposed that those who are indisposed and sickly were in sound health. 110 Death . . . state! (A common oath, here ironically appropriate to a king whose royal authority is dying.) 112 remotion removal, inaccessibility 113 practice deception. forth out of the stocks. 115 presently at once. 117 cry sleep to death i.e., puts an end to sleep by the noise. 120 cockney i.e., a Londoner, ignorant of ways of cooking eels 121 paste pastry pie. knapped rapped 122 coxcombs heads 122–3 wantons playful creatures, sexy rogues. (A term of affectionate abuse. The cockney wife is trying to coax and wheedle the eels into laying down their lives for the making of the pastry pie—a plea that is about as ineffectual as Lear's imploring his rising heart to subside.) 123–4 'Twas . . . hay (Another city ignorance; the act is well intended, but horses do not like greasy hay. As with Lear, good intentions are not enough. The <i>brother</i> is related to the cockney wife in that they are both misguidedly tenderhearted.) 130–1 I would . . . adultriss i.e., I would cease to honor your dead mother's tomb, since it would surely contain the dead body of an adultriss. (Only such a fantasy of illegitimacy could explain to Lear filial ingratitude of the monstrous sort that now confronts him.) 133 naught wicked. 136 quality disposition</p>			
<p>137–9 I have . . . duty I trust this is more a matter of your undervaluing her merit than of her falling slack in her duty to you. 139 Say? Come again? 147–8 Nature . . . confine i.e., Your life has almost completed its allotted scope. 149 By . . . state by some discreet person who understands your situation and condition 153 becomes the house suits domestic decorum and the royal family line. (Said with bitter irony.) 159 abated deprived 163 ingrateful top ungrateful head. 164 taking infectious 167 fen-sucked (It was supposed that the sun sucked up poisons from fens or marshes.) 168 To fall and blister to fall upon her and blister her beauty. 172 tender-hafted gentle. (Literally, set in a tender <i>haft</i>, i.e., handle or frame.)</p>			

	To bandy hasty words, to scant my sizes, And, in conclusion, to oppose the bolt Against my coming in. Thou better know'st The offices of nature, bond of childhood, Effects of courtesy, dues of gratitude. Thy half o'th' kingdom hast thou not forgot, Wherein I thee endowed.	176 177	I am now from home, and out of that provision Which shall be needful for your entertainment.	206 207
REGAN	Good sir, to th' purpose.	182		
LEAR	Who put my man i'th' stocks? <i>Tucket within.</i>		LEAR Return to her? And fifty men dismissed?	
CORNWALL	What trumpet's that?		179 180 No! Rather I abjure all roofs, and choose To wage against the enmity o'th' air, To be a comrade with the wolf and owl— Necessity's sharp pinch. Return with her?	210
REGAN	I know't—my sister's. This approves her letter, That she would soon be here.	184	Why, the hot-blooded France, that dowerless took Our youngest born—I could as well be brought To kneel his throne and, squirelike, pension beg To keep base life afoot. Return with her?	213
	<i>Enter steward [Oswald].</i>		M Persuade me rather to be slave and sumpter To this detested groom. <i>[He points to Oswald.]</i>	217
	Is your lady come?		E GONERIL At your choice, sir.	
LEAR	This is a slave, whose easy-borrowed pride Dwells in the fickle grace of her he follows.— Out, varlet, from my sight!	186 187	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.	
CORNWALL	What means Your Grace?	188	H 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 embossèd carbuncle In my corrupted blood. But I'll not chide thee; Let shame come when it will, I do not call it.	225
LEAR	Who stocked my servant? Regan, I have good hope Thou didst not know on't.		R 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.	227 228 229
	<i>Enter Goneril.</i>		N M I C H A E LEAR Is this well spoken?	
	Who comes here? O heavens, If you do love old men, if your sweet sway Allow obedience, if you yourselves are old, Make it your cause; send down, and take my part! <i>[To Goneril]</i> Art not ashamed to look upon this beard? <i>[Goneril and Regan join hands.]</i>	192 194	REGAN Not altogether so. 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.	234 236 237
GONERIL	Oh, Regan, will you take her by the hand?			
	Why not by th' hand, sir? How have I offended? All's not offense that indiscretion finds And dotage terms so.	197	LEAR Is this well spoken?	
LEAR	O sides, you are too tough!	198	REGAN I dare avouch it, sir. What, fifty followers? Is it not well? What should you need of more? Yea, or so many, sith that both charge and danger Speak 'gainst so great a number? How in one house Should many people under two commands Hold amity? 'Tis hard, almost impossible.	239 241
CORNWALL	Will you yet hold?—How came my man i'th' stocks?		7 2 GONERIL Why might not you, my lord, receive attendance From those that she calls servants, or from mine?	
	I set him there, sir; but his own disorders Deserved much less advancement.		7 REGAN Why not, my lord? If then they chanced to slack ye, We could control them. If you will come to me—	247 248
LEAR	You? Did you?	201	U For now I spy a danger—I entreat 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.	202		

176 bandy volley, exchange. scant my sizes diminish my allowances 177 oppose the bolt lock the door 179 The offices . . . childhood the natural duties and filial obligations due to parents 180 Effects outward manifestations 182 to th' purpose get to the point. 184 approves confirms 186 easy-borrowed easily put on 187 grace favor 188 varlet worthless fellow 192 Allow approve, sanction 194 beard (A sign of age and presumed entitlement to respect.) 197–8 All's . . . so Not everything that the poor judgment and dotage of old age deem offensive is actually so. 198 sides i.e., sides of the chest (stretched by the swelling heart) 201 much less advancement far less honor, i.e., far worse treatment. 202 seem so i.e., don't act as if you were strong.

206 from away from 207 entertainment proper reception. 210 wage wage war 213 hot-blooded spirited, youthful; choleric 215 knee fall on my knees before 217 sumpter packhorse; hence, drudge 225 embossèd swollen, tumid 227 call summon 228 the thunder-bearer i.e., Jove 229 high-judging judging from on high 234 looked not for did not expect 236–7 For . . . old for those who dispassionately consider your intemperate outbursts must conclude that you are old 239 avouch vouch for 241 sith that since. charge expense 247 slack neglect 248 control correct

To bring but five-and-twenty. To no more
Will I give place or notice.

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

251 **place or notice** houseroom or recognition. 253 **depositaries** trustees 254 **kept a reservation** reserved a right 258 **well-favored** attractive, fair of feature 260 **Stands . . . praise** achieves, by necessity, some relative deserving of praise. 264 **follow** be your attendants 266 **reason not** do not dispassionately analyze 266–7 **Our . . . superfluous** Even our most destitute beggars have some wretched possessions beyond what they absolutely need. 268 **Allow not** If you do not allow. **needs** i.e., to survive 270–2 **If . . . warm** If fashions in clothes were determined only by the need for warmth, this natural standard wouldn't justify the rich robes you wear to be gorgeous—which don't serve well for warmth in any case. 277–8 **fool . . . To** do not make me so foolish as to 287 **flaws** fragments

Or ere I'll weep. Oh, Fool, I shall go mad! 288
Exeunt [Lear, Gloucester, Kent, Gentleman, and Fool].

CORNWALL
Let us withdraw. 'Twill be a storm.

REGAN
This house is little. The old man and 's people 291
Cannot be well bestowed.

GONERIL
'Tis his own blame hath put himself from rest, 292
And must needs taste his folly. 293

REGAN
For his particular, I'll receive him gladly, 294
But not one follower.

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

CORNWALL
Followed the old man forth.
Enter Gloucester.

He is returned.

GLOUCESTER
The King is in high rage.

CORNWALL
Whither is he going?

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

CORNWALL
'Tis best to give him way. He leads himself. 300

GONERIL [*to Gloucester*]
My lord, entreat him by no means to stay. 301

GLOUCESTER
Alack, the night comes on, and the bleak winds 303
Do sorely ruffle. For many miles about
There's scarce a bush.

REGAN
Oh, sir, to willful 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 308
To have his ear abused, wisdom bids fear. 309

CORNWALL
Shut up your doors, my lord; 'tis a wild night.
My Regan counsels well. Come out o'th' storm.
Exeunt.



3.1

*Storm still. Enter Kent [disguised as Caius]
and a Gentleman, severally.*

KENT Who's there, besides foul weather?

288 **Or ere** before 291 **bestowed** lodged. 292 **blame** fault. **hath** that he has, or, that has. **from rest** i.e., out of the house; also, lacking peace of mind 293 **taste** experience 294 **For his particular** As for him individually 300 **give . . . himself** give him his own way. He is guided only by his own willfulness. 301 **entreat . . . means** by no means entreat him 303 **ruffle** bluster. 308–9 **being . . . abused** (he) being inclined to hearken to wild counsel
3.1. **Location:** An open place in Gloucestershire.
0.2 **severally** at separate doors.

GENTLEMAN

One minded like the weather, most unquietly.

KENT I know you. Where's the King?

GENTLEMAN

Contending with the fretful elements;
 Bids the wind blow the earth into the sea
 Or swell the curled waters 'bove the main,
 That things might change or cease; tears his white hair,
 Which the impetuous blasts with eyeless rage
 Catch in their fury and make nothing of;
 Strives in his little world of man to outstern
 The to-and-fro-conflicting wind and rain.
 This night, wherein the cub-drawn bear would couch,
 The lion and the belly-pinched wolf
 Keep their fur dry, unbonneted he runs
 And bids what will take all.

KENT But who is with him?

GENTLEMAN

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

KENT Sir, I do know you,
 And dare upon the warrant of my note
 Commend a dear thing to you. There is division,
 Although as yet the face of it is covered
 With mutual cunning, twixt Albany and Cornwall;
 Who have—as who have not, that their great stars
 Throned and set high?—servants, who seem no less,
 Which are to France the spies and speculations
 Intelligent of our state. What hath been seen,
 Either in snuffs and packings of the dukes,
 Or the hard rein which both of them hath borne
 Against the old kind King, or something deeper,
 Whereof perchance these are but furnishings—
 But true it is, from France there comes a power
 Into this scattered kingdom, who already,
 Wise in our negligence, have secret feet
 In some of our best ports and are at point
 To show their open banner. Now to you:
 If on my credit you dare build so far
 To make your speed to Dover, you shall find
 Some that will thank you, making just report
 Of how unnatural and bemadding sorrow
 The King hath cause to plain.
 I am a gentleman of blood and breeding,

6 main mainland 7 things all things 9 make nothing of blow
 about contemptuously 10 little world of man i.e., microcosm,
 which is an epitome of the macrocosm or universe 12 cub-drawn
 famished, with udders sucked dry (and hence ravenous). couch lie
 close in its den 15 bids . . . all (A cry of desperate defiance; "take
 all" is the cry of a gambler in staking his last.) 16 outjest exorcise or
 relieve by jesting 17 heart-struck injuries injuries that strike to the
 very heart. 18–19 And . . . to you and dare, on the strength of what I
 know about you, entrust a precious undertaking to you. 22–3 as . . .
 high as who does not, among those whom a mighty destiny has
 enthroned on high 23 no less i.e., no other than servants 24 specu-
 lations scouts, spies 25 Intelligent of supplying intelligence perti-
 nent to 26 snuffs and packings resentments and intrigues 27–8 Or
 . . . King or the harsh reining in they both have inflicted on King Lear
 29 furnishings outward shows 30 power army 31 scattered
 divided 32 Wise in taking advantage of. feet footholds 33 at
 point ready 35 credit trustworthiness. so far so far as 37 making
 just report for making an accurate report 39 plain complain.
 40 blood and breeding good family and education

And from some knowledge and assurance offer 41
 This office to you. 42

GENTLEMAN

I will talk further with you.

KENT

No, do not.

For confirmation that I am much more 45
 Than my outwall, open this purse and take
 What it contains. [He gives a purse and a ring.] If you
 shall see Cordelia—

As fear not but you shall—show her this ring, 47
 And she will tell you who that fellow is 48
 That yet you do not know. Fie on this storm!

M I will go seek the King.

GENTLEMAN

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

L

Few words, but, to effect, more than all yet: 52
 That when we have found the King—in which your
 pain 53

H

That way, I'll this—he that first lights on him 54

O

Holla the other. Exeunt [separately].

R

N



'3.2

Storm still. Enter Lear and Fool.

M

LEAR

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow!
 You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout 2
 Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the
 cocks! 3

C

You sulfurous and thought-executing fires,
 Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
 Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
 Strike flat the thick rotundity o' th' world!
 Crack nature's molds, all germens spill at once 8
 That makes ingrateful man!

L

FOOL

Oh, nuncle, court holy water in a dry house is bet- 10
 ter than this rainwater out o' door. Good nuncle, in,
 ask thy daughters blessing. Here's a night pities 12
 neither wise men nor fools.

7

2

LEAR

Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! Spout, rain!
 Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire are my daughters. 15
 I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;
 I never gave you kingdom, called you children. 16
 You owe me no subscription. Then let fall 18

B

U

41 assurance confidence, certainty 42 office assignment 45 out-
 wall exterior appearance 47 fear not but be assured that 48 fellow
 i.e., Kent 52 to effect in their consequences 53–4 in which . . . this
 in which task, you search in that direction while I go this way
 3.2. Location: An open place, as before.
 2 hurricanoes waterspouts 3 drenched drowned. cocks weather-
 cocks. 4 thought-executing fires lightning that acts with the quick-
 ness of thought 5 Vaunt-couriers forerunners 8 Crack . . . at once
 Crack the molds in which nature makes all life; destroy all seeds at
 once 10 court holy water flattery 12 ask . . . blessing (For Lear to
 do so would be to acknowledge their authority.) 15 Nor Neither
 16 tax accuse. with of 18 subscription allegiance.

- Your horrible pleasure. Here I stand your slave,
A poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man.
But yet I call you servile ministers,
That will with two pernicious daughters join
Your high-engendered battles 'gainst a head
So old and white as this. Oho! 'Tis foul.
- FOOL 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;
So beggars marry many.
The man that makes his toe
What he his heart should make
Shall of a corn cry woe,
And turn his sleep to wake.
For there was never yet fair woman but she made
mouths in a glass.
- LEAR
No, I will be the pattern of all patience;
I will say nothing.
Enter Kent, [disguised as Caius].
- KENT Who's there?
FOOL Marry, here's grace and a codpiece; that's a wise
man and a fool.
- KENT
Alas, sir, are you here? Things that love night
Love not such nights as these. The wrathful skies
Gallow the very wanderers of the dark
And make them keep their caves. Since I was man,
Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,
Such groans of roaring wind and rain I never
Remember to have heard. Man's nature cannot carry
Th'affliction nor the fear.
- LEAR Let the great gods,
That keep this dreadful pother o'er our heads,
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulged crimes
Unwhipped of justice! Hide thee, thou bloody hand,
Thou perjured, and thou simular of virtue
That art incestuous! Caitiff, to pieces shake,
That under covert and convenient seeming
- Has practiced on man's life! Close pent-up guilts,
Rive your concealing continents and cry
These dreadful summoners grace! I am a man
More sinned against than sinning.
- 23 KENT Alack, bareheaded?
Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel;
Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the tempest.
Repose you there while I to this hard house—
More harder than the stones whereof 'tis raised,
Which even but now, demanding after you,
Denied me to come in—return and force
Their scanted courtesy.
- 31 LEAR My wits begin to turn.
Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy? Art cold?
I am cold myself.—Where is this straw, my fellow?
The art of our necessities is strange,
And can make vile things precious. Come, your
hovel.—
Poor fool and knave, I have one part in my heart
That's sorry yet for thee.
- FOOL [sings]
"He that has and a little tiny wit,
With heigh-ho, the wind and the rain,
Must make content with his fortunes fit,
Though the rain it raineth every day."
- LEAR
True, boy.—Come, bring us to this hovel.
Exit [with 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;
When brewers mar their malt with water;
When nobles are their tailors' tutors,
No heretics burned but wenches' suitors,
Then shall the realm of Albion
Come to great confusion.

When every case in law is right,
No squire in debt, nor no poor knight;
When slanders do not live in tongues,
Nor cutpurses come not to throngs;

21 ministers agents 23 high-engendered battles battalions engendered in the heavens 26 headpiece (1) helmetlike covering for the head (2) head for common sense. 27–30 The codpiece . . . many i.e., A man who houses his genitals in a sexual embrace before he has a roof over his head can expect the lice-infested penury of a penniless marriage. (The *codpiece* is a covering for the genitals worn by men with their close-fitting hose; here representing the genitals themselves.) 31–4 The man . . . wake i.e., Anyone who unwisely places his affection on base things will be afflicted with sorrow and sleeplessness. (The *corn* is a bunion on the toe.) 35–6 made . . . glass practiced making attractive faces in a mirror. 40 Marry (An oath, originally "by the Virgin Mary.") grace royal grace. codpiece (Often prominent in the Fool's costume.) 44 Gallow . . . dark frighten the very wild beasts of the night 45 keep occupy, remain inside 48 carry endure 49 Th'affliction the physical affliction 50 pother hubbub, turmoil 54 simular pretender 55 Caitiff Wretch 56 convenient seeming deception fitted to the purpose

57 practiced on plotted against 57–9 Close . . . grace! O you secret and buried consciousnesses of guilt, burst open the hiding places that conceal you, and pray for mercy! (*Summoners* are the officers who cited offenders to appear before ecclesiastical courts.) 65 Which i.e., the occupants of which. demanding I inquiring 67 scanted stinted 74–7 "He . . . day" (Derived from the popular song that Feste sings in *Twelfth Night*, 5.1.389 ff.) 79 This . . . courtesan i.e., This night is stormy enough to cool even the lust of a courtesan. (*Brave* means "fine, excellent.") 81 When priests . . . matter i.e., When priests do not practice what they preach. (This and the next three lines satirize the present state of affairs.) 82 mar adulterate 83 are . . . tutors can instruct their own tailors about fashion 84 No heretics . . . suitors i.e., when the prevailing heresy is lechery (a heresy, in other words, against love rather than against true religion), punished by burning not at the stake but by means of venereal infection 85 realm of Albion kingdom of England. (The Fool is parodying a pseudo-Chaucerian prophetic verse.) 87 right just. (This and the next five lines offer a utopian vision of justice and charity that will never be realized in this corrupted world.) 89 When slanders . . . tongues when no tongues speak slanders

When usurers tell their gold i'th' field,
And bawds and whores do churches build,
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.*



3.3

Enter Gloucester and Edmund [with lights].

GLOUCESTER Alack, alack, Edmund, 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. We must incline to the King. I will look him and privily relieve him. Go you and maintain talk with the Duke, that my charity be not of him perceived. If he ask for me, I am ill and gone to bed. If I die for't, as no less is threatened me, the King my old master must be relieved. There is strange things toward, Edmund. Pray you, be careful. *Exit.*

EDMUND

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



3.4

Enter Lear, Kent [disguised as Caius], and Fool.

KENT

Here is the place, my lord. Good my lord, enter.

91 tell count. i'th' field i.e., openly, without fear 93 who whoever
94 That . . . feet that walking will be done on foot. (A comical anticlimax: Nothing will have been changed; don't expect these utopian dreams to have materialized.) 95 Merlin (A great wizard of the court of King Arthur, who came after Lear. The Fool's comical inversion ends his song on a note of paradox and impossibility.)

3.3. Location: Gloucester's house.

3 pity be merciful to, relieve 8 Go to i.e., No more of that 11 closet private chamber. 12 home thoroughly 13 power armed force. footed landed. 13–14 incline to side with 14 look look for 16 of by 19 toward impending 21 courtesy forbid thee kindness (to Lear) which you were forbidden to show 23–4 This . . . all i.e., This betraying by me of my father is something he has brought on himself, and will surely confer upon me the earldom of Gloucester and all his wealth.

3.4. Location: An open place. Before a hovel.

91 The tyranny of the open night's too rough
For nature to endure. *Storm still.*

93 LEAR Let me alone. 3

94 KENT

Good my lord, enter here.

95 LEAR Wilt break my heart? 4

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,
But where the greater malady is fixed 8

ME The lesser is scarce felt. Thou'dst shun a bear,
But if thy flight lay toward the roaring sea
Thou'dst meet the bear i'th' mouth. When the mind's
free, 11

LE The body's delicate. This tempest in my mind
Doth from my senses take all feeling else
Save what beats there. Filial ingratitude! 12

HO Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand 15

RN For lifting food to't? But I will punish home. 16

N 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? Oh, Regan, Goneril,
Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all— 20

14 Oh, that way madness lies; let me shun that!
No more of that.

16 KENT Good my lord, enter here.

LEAR Prithee, go in thyself; seek thine own ease.
This tempest will not give me leave to ponder 24

19 On things would hurt me more. But I'll go in.
[To the Fool] In, boy; go first. You houseless poverty— 25

21 Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.
Exit [Fool into the hovel].

23 A Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm, 29

24 E How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you 30

L From seasons such as these? Oh, I have ta'en
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp; 33

7 Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them 35

2 And show the heavens more just.
EDGAR [within] Fathom and half, fathom and half! 37

0 Poor Tom!

7 Enter Fool [from the hovel].

B 3 nature human nature 4 Wilt . . . heart? i.e., Do you want to relieve
my physical wants and thereby force me to remember my daughters' 8

U ingratitude? 8 fixed lodged, implanted 11 i'th' mouth i.e., head-
on. free free of anxiety 12 The body's delicate i.e., the body's
important needs can assert themselves. 15 as as if 16 home 33

fully. 20 frank liberal 24 will . . . leave i.e., keeps me too preoccupied
25 things would things (such as filial ingratitude) that would
29 bide endure 30 unfed sides i.e., lean ribs 31 looped and win-
dowed full of openings like windows and loopholes 33 Take
physic, pomp Cure yourself, O distempered great ones 35 super-
flux superfluity. (With suggestion of flux, "bodily discharge," intro-
duced by physic, "purgative," in line 33.) 37 Fathom and half (A
sailor's cry while taking soundings, hence appropriate to a deluge.)

FOOL Come not in here, nuncle; here's a spirit. Help me, help me!

KENT Give me thy hand. Who's there?

FOOL A spirit, a spirit! He says his name's poor Tom.

KENT

What art thou that dost grumble there i'th' straw? 43
Come forth.

Enter Edgar [disguised as a madman].

EDGAR Away! The foul fiend follows me! Through the 45
sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind. Hum! Go to thy 46
bed and warm thee.

LEAR Didst thou give all to thy daughters? And art 47
thou come to this?

EDGAR Who gives anything to poor Tom? Whom the 48
foul fiend hath led through fire and through flame, 49
through ford and whirlpool, o'er bog and quagmire; 50
that hath laid knives under his pillow and halts in 51
his pew, set ratsbane by his porridge, made him 52
proud of heart to ride on a bay trotting horse over 53
four-inched bridges to course his own shadow for a 54
traitor. Bless thy five wits! Tom's a-cold. Oh, do de, 55
do de, do de. Bless thee from whirlwinds, star-blast- 56
ing, and taking! Do poor Tom some charity, whom the 57
foul fiend vexes. There could I have him now—and 58
there—and there again—and there. *Storm still.* 59

LEAR

Has his daughters brought him to this pass?— 60
Couldst thou save nothing? Wouldst thou give 'em 61
all?

FOOL Nay, he reserved a blanket, else we had been all 62
shamed. 63

LEAR

Now, all the plagues that in the pendulous air 64
Hang fated o'er men's faults light on thy daughters! 65

KENT He hath no daughters, sir. 66

LEAR

Death, traitor! Nothing could have subdued nature 67
To such a lowness but his unkind daughters. 68
Is it the fashion that discarded fathers 69
Should have thus little mercy on their flesh? 70
Judicious punishment! 'Twas this flesh begot 71
Those pelican daughters. 72

43 grumble mutter, mumble 45 Away! Keep away! 45–6 Through . . . wind (Possibly a line from a ballad.) 53–4 that hath . . . porridge (The fiend has laid in poor Tom's way tempting means to despairing suicide, the most damnable of sins: knives under his pillow when he is asleep, nooses in his church pew when he should be at prayer, and rat poison set beside his soup when he should eat.) 54–7 made him . . . traitor (The next temptation is a prideful act of great bravado that would be impossible without the devil's aid: riding a horse over bridges only four inches wide in pursuit of one's own shadow.) 57 five wits (Either the five physical senses—sight, hearing, etc.—or the five faculties of the mind: common wit, imagination, fantasy, estimation, and memory.) 58–9 star-blasting being blighted by influence of the stars 59 taking infection, evil influence, enchantment. 60 There (Perhaps he slaps at lice and other vermin as if they were devils.) 62 pass miserable plight. 64 reserved a blanket kept a wrap (for his nakedness) 66 pendulous suspended, overhanging 67 fated having the power of fate 72 have . . . flesh i.e., punish themselves, as Edgar has done (probably with pins and thorns stuck in his flesh). 73 Judicious Appropriate to the crime 74 pelican greedy. (Young pelicans supposedly smote their parents and fed on the blood of their mothers' breasts.)

EDGAR Pillicock sat on Pillicock Hill. Alow, alow, loo, 75
loo!

FOOL This cold night will turn us all to fools and mad- 76
men. 77

EDGAR Take heed o'th' foul fiend. Obey thy parents; 78
keep thy word's justice; swear not; commit not with 80
man's sworn spouse; set not thy sweet heart on proud
array. Tom's a-cold.

LEAR What hast thou been?

EDGAR A servingman, proud in heart and mind, that 84
curled my hair, wore gloves in my cap, served the lust 85
of my mistress' heart, and did the act of darkness with
her; swore as many oaths as I spake words, and broke
them in the sweet face of heaven. One that slept in the
contriving of lust and waked to do it. Wine loved I
deeply, dice dearly, and in woman out-paramoured 90
the Turk. False of heart, light of ear, bloody of hand; 91
hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in
madness, lion in prey. Let not the creaking of shoes 93
nor the rustling of silks betray thy poor heart to 94
woman. Keep thy foot out of brothels, thy hand out of
plackets, thy pen from lenders' books, and defy the 96
foul fiend. Still through the hawthorn blows the cold
wind; says suum, mun, nonny. Dolphin my boy, boy, 98
sessa! Let him trot by. *Storm still.* 99

LEAR Thou wert better in a grave than to answer with 100
thy uncovered body this extremity of the skies. Is man 102
no more than this? Consider him well. Thou ow'st the 103
worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool,
the cat no perfume. Ha! Here's three on 's are sophis- 104
ticated; thou art the thing itself. Unaccommodated 105
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.*] 106

FOOL Prithee, nuncle, be contented; 'tis a naughty night 107
to swim in. Now a little fire in a wild field were like 110
an old lecher's heart—a small spark, all the rest on 's 111
body cold.

Enter Gloucester, with a torch.

Look, here comes a walking fire.

75 Pillicock (From an old rhyme, suggested by the sound of *pelican*. *Pillicock* in nursery rhyme seems to have been a euphemism for penis; *Pillicock Hill*, for the Mount of Venus.) 80 justice integrity. commit not i.e., do not commit adultery. (Edgar's mad homily contains fragments of the Ten Commandments.) 84 servingman either a "servant" in the language of courtly love or an ambitious servant in a household 85 gloves i.e., my mistress's favors 90–1 out-paramoured the Turk outdid the Sultan in keeping mistresses. 91 light of ear i.e., listening intently for information that can be used criminally 93 prey preying. 93–4 creaking . . . silks (Telltale noises of lovers in a secret assignation.) 96 plackets slits in skirts or petticoats. thy pen . . . books i.e., do not sign a contract for a loan 98 suum . . . nonny (Imitative of the wind?) Dolphin my boy (A slang phrase or bit of song?) 99 sessa i.e., away, cease (?). 102–4 Thou . . . perfume Stripped of your finery, you are not indebted to the silkworm for silk, cattle for hide, the sheep for wool, or the civet cat for the perfume derived from its anal pouch. 104–5 Here . . . itself The three of us here (Kent, the Fool, and Lear) are decked out in the sophistication of supposedly civilized society; you (Edgar) are the unadorned, natural essence, the natural man. 105 Unaccommodated Unfurnished with the trappings of civilization, such as clothing 109 naughty bad, nasty 110 wild barren, uncultivated 111 on 's of his

EDGAR This is the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet! He begins 114
at curfew and walks till the first cock; he gives the web 115
and the pin, squinny the eye and makes the harelip, 116
mildews the white wheat, and hurts the poor creature 117
of earth.

Swithold footed thrice the 'old; 119
He met the nightmare and her ninefold; 120
Bid her alight,
And her troth plight,
And aroint thee, witch, aroint thee! 123

KENT How fares Your Grace?

LEAR What's he?

KENT Who's there? What is't you seek?

GLOUCESTER What are you there? Your names?

EDGAR Poor Tom, that eats the swimming frog, the 129
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 132
pool; who is whipped from tithing to tithing and 133
stock-punished and imprisoned; who hath had three 134
suits to his back, six shirts to his body, 135
Horse to ride, and weapon to wear;
But mice and rats and such small deer 137
Have been Tom's food for seven long year.

Beware my follower. Peace, Smulkin! Peace, thou fiend! 139

GLOUCESTER

What, hath Your Grace no better company?

EDGAR The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman. Modo 141
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 Poor Tom's a-cold.

GLOUCESTER

Go in with me. My duty cannot suffer
T'obey in all your daughters' hard commands.
Though their injunction be to bar my doors
And let this tyrannous night take hold upon you,

114 Flibbertigibbet (A devil from Elizabethan folklore whose name appears in Samuel Harsnett's *Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*, 1603, and elsewhere.) **114–15 He . . . cock** He walks from nightfall till dawn **115–16 web and the pin** cataract of the eye **116 squinny** squints **117 white** ripening, ready for harvest **119 Swithold** Saint Withold, an Anglo-Saxon exorcist, who here provides defense against the *nightmare*, or demon thought to afflict sleepers, by commanding the nightmare to *alight*, i.e., stop riding over the sleeper, and *plight* her *troth*, i.e., vow true faith, promise to do no harm. (Or, an error for *Swithin*.) **footed . . . 'old** thrice traversed the wold (tract of hilly upland) **120 ninefold** nine offspring. (With possible pun on *fold*, *foal*.) **123 aroint thee** begone **129 water** water newt **132 ditch-dog** dead dog in a ditch. **mantle** scum. **standing** stagnant **133 from . . . to tithing** from one ward or parish to another **134 stock-punished** placed in the stocks **134–5 three suits** (Like the menial servant at 2.2.15.) **137 deer** animals **139 follower** familiar, attendant devil. **Smulkin** a devil's name (in Samuel Harsnett's *Declaration*, as are *Modo* and *Mahu* in lines 141–2). **141 The Prince of Darkness** The devil **143–4 Our . . . gets it** (1) Children have become so hardened in sin that they hate their parents (2) Life is so intolerable that humans cry out at having been born. **146 suffer** permit me **147 in all** in all matters

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

Good my lord,

Take his offer. Go into th' house.

LEAR

I'll talk a word with this same learned Theban. 155

[To Edgar] What is your study? 156

EDGAR

How to prevent the fiend, and to kill vermin. 157

LEAR

Let me ask you one word in private.

[Lear and Edgar talk apart.]

M

KENT [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 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 165

But lately, very late. I loved him, friend,

No father his son dearer. True to tell thee,

The grief hath crazed my wits. What a night's this!—

I do beseech Your Grace—

LEAR

Oh, cry you mercy, sir.

170

M

[To Edgar] Noble philosopher, your company.

EDGAR

Tom's a-cold.

GLOUCESTER

[to Edgar]

In, fellow, there, in th' hovel. Keep thee warm. 143

LEAR

[starting toward the hovel]

Come, let's in all. 144

KENT

This way, my lord.

LEAR

With him!

E

I will keep still with my philosopher.

KENT

[to Gloucester]

Good my lord, soothe him. Let him take the fellow. 176

GLOUCESTER

[to Kent] Take you him on. 177

KENT

[to Edgar]

Sirrah, come on. Go along with us.

LEAR

Come, good Athenian. 179

GLOUCESTER

No words, no words! Hush.

EDGAR

Child Rowland to the dark tower came;

His word was still, "Fie, foh, and fum," 181

I smell the blood of a British man." 182

7

Exeunt. 183

B

U



155 Theban i.e., one deeply versed in "philosophy" or natural science. **156 study** special competence. **157 prevent** thwart **165 outlawed . . . blood** disowned, disinherited, and legally outlawed **170 cry you mercy** I beg your pardon **176 soothe** humor **177 Take . . . on** i.e., Go on ahead with Edgar. **179 Athenian** i.e., philosopher. **181 Child Rowland**, etc. (Probably a fragment of a ballad about the hero of the Charlemagne legends. A *child* is a candidate for knighthood.) **182 word** watchword **182–3 "Fie . . . man"** (This is essentially what the Giant says in "Jack, the Giant Killer.")

3.5

Enter Cornwall and Edmund [with a letter].

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 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 the advantages of France. Oh, heavens! That this treason were not, or not I the detector!

CORNWALL Go with me to the Duchess.

EDMUND If the matter of this paper be certain, you have mighty business in hand.

CORNWALL True or false, it hath made thee Earl of Gloucester. Seek out where thy father is, that he may be ready for our apprehension.

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

CORNWALL I will lay trust upon thee, and thou shalt find a dearer father in my love. *Exeunt.*



3.6

Enter Kent [disguised as Caius] and Gloucester.

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].

Enter Lear, Edgar [as poor Tom], and Fool.

3.5. Location: Gloucester's house.

3 censured judged. nature attachment to family 4 something fears somewhat frightens 7 his his father's 8–9 but . . . himself but the promptings of self-worth stimulated by the reprehensible badness of the Earl of Gloucester. 10–11 How . . . just! i.e., How cruel of fate to oblige me to be upright and loyal by betraying my own father! 11–13 which . . . France which proves him to be a spy on behalf of the French. 20 for our apprehension for our arresting of him. 21 If . . . comforting If I find Gloucester giving aid and comfort to 22 his suspicion suspicion of him 24 blood family loyalty, filial instincts.

3.6. Location: Within a building on Gloucester's estate, near or adjoining his house, or part of the house itself. See 3.4.146–54. Cushions are provided, and stools.

2 piece eke 5 impatience rage, inability to endure more.

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

FOOL Prithee, nuncle, tell me whether a madman be a gentleman or a yeoman?

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 learned justicer.
[To the 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 rob'd man of justice, take thy place;

[To the Fool] And thou, his yokefellow of equity,

6 Frateretto (Another of the fiends from Harsnett.) 6–7 Nero is an angler (Chaucer's "Monk's Tale," lines 2474–5, tells how Nero fished in the Tiber with nets of gold thread; in Rabelais, 2.30, Nero is described as a hurdy-gurdy player and Trajan an angler for frogs in the underworld.) 7 innocent simpleton, fool (i.e., the Fool) 10 yeoman property owner below the rank of gentleman. (The Fool's bitter jest in lines 12–14 is that such a man might go mad to see his son advanced over him.) 16 hissing hissing. (Lear imagines his wicked daughters suffering torments in hell or being attacked by enemies.) 17 bites (i.e., in the shape of a louse) 18–19 tameness . . . health (Wolves are untamable, and horses are prone to disease.) 20 arraign them (Lear now imagines the trial of his cruel daughters.) 21 justicer judge, justice. 22 sapient wise 23 he (Probably one of Edgar's devils, or, Lear.) 23–4 Want'st . . . trial Do you lack spectators at your trial? or, Can't you see who's looking at you? 25 "Come . . . me" (First line of a ballad by William Birche, 1558. A burn is a brook. The Fool makes a ribald reply, in which the leaky boat suggests the woman's easy virtue or perhaps her menstrual period.) 30 nightingale (Edgar pretends to take the Fool's singing for that of a fiend disguised as a nightingale.) Hoppedance (Harsnett mentions "Hoherdance.") 31 white unsmoked (contrasted with black angel, a demon). Croak (Refers to the rumbling in Edgar's stomach, denoting hunger.) 33 amazed bewildered. 35 their evidence the witnesses against them. 36 rob'd man i.e., Edgar, with his blanket 37 yokefellow of equity partner in the law

- Bench by his side. [*To Kent*] You are o'th' commission; 38
 Sit you, too. [*They sit.*]
 EDGAR Let us deal justly. [*He 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
 Oh, 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 63
 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 leap the hatch, and all are fled.
 Do de, de, de. Sessa! Come, march to wakes and fairs
 and market towns. Poor Tom, thy horn is dry.
 LEAR Then let them anatomize Regan; see what breeds 75
 about her heart. Is there any cause in nature that makes
 these hard hearts? [*To Edgar*] You, sir, I entertain 77
- for one of my hundred; only I do not like the fashion of
 your garments. You will say they are Persian; but let 79
 them be changed.
 KENT
 Now, good my lord, lie here and rest awhile.
 LEAR [*lying on cushions*] Make no noise, make no
 noise. Draw the curtains. So, so. We'll go to supper 83
 i'th' morning. [*He sleeps.*]
 FOOL And I'll go to bed at noon.
Enter Gloucester.
 GLOUCESTER [*to Kent*]
 M Come hither, friend. Where is the King my master?
 E KENT
 Here, sir, but trouble him not; his wits are gone.
 L GLOUCESTER
 Good friend, I prithee, take him in thy arms.
 H I have o'erheard a plot of death upon him. 89
 O There is a litter ready; lay him in't
 R And drive toward Dover, friend, where thou shalt
 N 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, 95
 , And follow me, that will to some provision 96
 Give thee quick conduct.
 KENT Opressèd nature sleeps. 97
 M This rest might yet have balmed thy broken sinews, 98
 I Which, if convenience will not allow, 99
 C Stand in hard cure. [*To the Fool*] Come, help to bear thy 100
 H master.
 A Thou must not stay behind. [*They pick up Lear.*]
 E GLOUCESTER Come, come, away! 101
 E Exeunt [*all but Edgar*].
 EDGAR
 E When we our betters see bearing our woes, 102
 We scarcely think our miseries our foes. 103
 L Who alone suffers suffers most i'th' mind, 104
 Leaving free things and happy shows behind; 105
 But then the mind much sufferance doth o'erskip 106
 7 When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship. 107
 2 How light and portable my pain seems now, 108
 0 When that which makes me bend makes the King
 7 bow—
 He childed as I fathered. Tom, away! 110

38 **Bench** take your place on the bench. o'th' **commission** one commissioned to be a justice 42 **corn** grainfield 43–4 **And . . . harm** i.e., one shout from your dainty (*minikin*) mouth can recall the sheep from the grainfield and thus save them from dangerous overeating. 45 **Purr the cat** (A devil or familiar from Harsnett; see the note for 3.4.114. *Purr* may be the sound the familiar makes.) 47 **kicked** who kicked 51 **joint stool** low stool made by a joiner, or maker of furniture with joined parts. (Proverbially, the phrase "I took . . . stool" meant "I beg your pardon for failing to notice you." The reference is also presumably to a real stool onstage.) 52 **another** i.e., Regan 53 **store** abundance, material. on of. 54 **Corruption in the place!** i.e., There is iniquity or bribery in this court! 63 **throw his head at** i.e., threaten 65 **or black** either black 68 **brach or lym** bitch-hound or bloodhound 69 **Bobtail . . . trundle-tail** mongrel dog with a docked or bobbed tail, or one that is curly-tailed 72 **hatch** lower half of a divided door 73 **Sessa** i.e., Away, cease. **wakes** parish festivals 74 **horn** horn-bottle, used by beggars to drink from and to beg for alms 75 **anatomize** dissect 77 **entertain** take into my service

79 **Persian** (Lear madly asks if Edgar's wretched blanket is a rich Persian fabric.) 83 **curtains** bedcurtains. (They presumably exist only in Lear's mad imagination.) 89 **upon** against 95 **Stand . . . loss** will assuredly be lost. 96 **provision** supplies, or, means of providing for safety 97 **conduct** guidance. 98 **balmed** soothed, healed. **sinews** nerves 99 **convenience** circumstances 100 **Stand . . . cure** will be hard to cure. 102 **our woes** woes like ours 103 **We . . . foes** we almost forget our own miseries (since we see how human suffering afflicts even the great). 104–7 **Who . . . fellowship** Anyone who has no companionship in suffering undergoes the mental anguish of forgetting entirely the carefree ways and happy scenes that were once enjoyed, whereas fellowship in grief enables the mind to rise above such suffering. (I.e., Misery loves company.) 108 **portable** bearable, endurable 110 **He . . . fathered** he suffering cruelty from his children as I from my father.

Mark the high noises, and thyself bewray 111
 When false opinion, whose wrong thoughts defile
 thee, 112
 In thy just proof repeals and reconciles thee. 113
 What will hap more tonight, safe scape the King! 114
 Lurk, lurk. [Exit.] 115



3.7

*Enter Cornwall, Regan, Goneril, Bastard
 [Edmund], and Servants.*

CORNWALL [to Goneril] Post speedily to my lord your hus-
 band; show him this letter. [He gives a letter.] The army
 of France is landed.—Seek out the traitor Gloucester.
 [Exeunt some Servants.]

REGAN Hang him instantly.
 GONERIL Pluck out his eyes.

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

Enter steward [Oswald].

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. [Exit Oswald.]

GONERIL Farewell, sweet lord, and sister.

CORNWALL
 Edmund, farewell. *Exeunt [Goneril and Edmund].*
 Go seek the traitor Gloucester.
 Pinion him like a thief; bring him before us.
 [Exeunt Servants.]

Though well we may not pass upon his life
 Without the form of justice, yet our power

111–13 Mark . . . thee Observe what is being said about those in high
 places or about great events, and reveal your identity only when the
 general opinion that now slanders you, at length establishing your
 innocence, recalls you from banishment and restores you to favor.

114 What . . . King! Whatever else happens tonight, may the King
 escape safely! 115 Lurk Keep out of sight

3.7. Location: Gloucester's house.

1 Post speedily Hurry 7 sister sister-in-law, Goneril 8 bound
 intending; obliged 9 the Duke Albany 10 festinate hasty. are
 bound intend, are committed 11 posts messengers. intelligent
 serviceable in bearing information, knowledgeable 12–13 my . . .
 Gloucester i.e., Edmund, the recipient now of his father's forfeited
 estate and title. (Two lines later, Oswald uses the same title to refer to
 Edmund's father.) 16 his Lear's 17 questrists after him searchers
 for Lear 18 the lord's i.e., Gloucester's 25 pass upon his life pass
 the death sentence upon him

Shall do a court'sy to our wrath, which men 27
 May blame but not control.

Enter Gloucester, and Servants [leading him].

Who's there? The traitor?

REGAN Ingrateful fox! 'Tis he.

CORNWALL Bind fast his corky arms. 30

GLOUCESTER

What means Your Graces? Good my friends, consider
 You are my guests. Do me no foul play, friends.

CORNWALL

Bind him, I say. [Servants bind him.]

REGAN

Hard, hard. Oh, filthy traitor!

GLOUCESTER

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

Naughty lady, 38

These hairs which thou dost ravish from my chin

Will quicken and accuse thee. I am your host. 40

With robbers' hands my hospitable favors

You should not ruffle thus. What will you do? 42

CORNWALL

Come, sir, what letters had you late from France? 43

REGAN

Be simple-answered, for we know the truth. 44

CORNWALL

And what confederacy have you with the traitors
 Late footed in the kingdom?

REGAN

To whose hands 46

You have sent the lunatic King. Speak.

GLOUCESTER

I have a letter guessingly set down, 48

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— 55

CORNWALL

Wherefore to Dover? Let him answer that.

GLOUCESTER

I am tied to th' stake, and I must stand the course. 57

27 do a court'sy i.e., bow before, yield precedence 30 corky with-
 ered with age 38 white white-haired, venerable. Naughty Wicked
 40 quicken come to life 41–2 With . . . thus You should not roughly
 handle my welcoming face with your hands as though you were rob-
 bers. 43 late lately 44 simple-answered straightforward in your
 answers 46 Late footed recently landed 48 guessingly set down
 conjecturally written 55 charged at peril commanded on peril of
 your life 57 tied to th' stake i.e., like a bear to be baited with dogs.
 the course the dogs' attack.

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 rash 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 dern 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!
[*Servants hold the chair as Cornwall grinds
out one of Gloucester's eyes with his boot.*]
Oh, cruel! O you gods!

REGAN

One side will mock another. Th'other too.

CORNWALL [*to Gloucester*]

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 [*to Regan*]

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

CORNWALL My villain?

[*He draws his sword.*]

FIRST SERVANT [*drawing*]

Nay, then, come on, and take the chance of anger.
[*They fight. Cornwall is wounded.*]

REGAN [*to another Servant*]

Give me thy sword. A peasant stand up thus?
[*She takes a sword and runs at him behind.*]

FIRST SERVANT

Oh, I am slain! My lord, you have one eye left
To see some mischief on him. Oh! [*He dies.*]

CORNWALL

Lest it see more, prevent it. Out, vile jelly!
[*He puts out Gloucester's other eye.*]

61 anointed consecrated with holy oil. **rash** slash, stick
63–4 would . . . fires would have swelled high enough, like a wave-
lifted buoy, to quench the stars. (*Stellèd* means "starry" or "fixed.")
65 help helped **66 dern** dire, dread **67 turn the key** i.e., let them
in. **68 All . . . subscribe** All other cruel creatures would show for-
giveness except you; this cruelty is unparalleled. **69 The wingèd
Vengeance** the swift vengeance of the avenging angel of divine wrath
72 will think hopes **80 I'd . . . quarrel** i.e., I'd pull your beard in
vehement defiance in this cause. **What do you mean?** i.e., What are
you thinking of, what do you think you're doing? (Said perhaps to
Cornwall.) **81 villain** servant, bondman. (Cornwall's question
implies, "How dare you do such a thing?") **82 the chance of anger**
the risks of an angry encounter. **83.1 She . . . behind** (This stage
direction appears in the quarto.) **85 mischief** injury

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

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

REGAN [*to a Servant*]

Go thrust him out at gates and let him smell
His way to Dover. *Exit [a Servant] 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.
Exeunt [Cornwall, supported by Regan].

SECOND SERVANT

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

THIRD SERVANT

If she live long,

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

SECOND SERVANT

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

THIRD SERVANT

Go thou. I'll fetch some flax and whites of eggs
To apply to his bleeding face. Now, heaven help him!
Exeunt [with the body].



4.1

Enter Edgar [as poor Tom].

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.

B

89 nature i.e., filial love **90 quit** requite. **Out** (An exclamation of
anger or impatience.) **92 overture** disclosure **94 abused** wronged.
97 How look you? How is it with you? **104 old** customary, natural
106 Bedlam i.e., lunatic discharged from the insane asylum and
licensed to beg **107–8 His . . . anything** His being a madman and
derelict allows him to do anything we ask. **110.1 Exeunt** (At some
point after lines 99–100, the body of the slain First Servant must
be removed.)

4.1. Location: An open place.

1–2 Yet . . . flattered It is better to be openly despised as a beggar than
continually despised behind one's back and flattered to one's face.

3 dejected cast down **4 Stands . . . fear** gives one some cause for
hope, having nothing to fear (since everything is already lost).

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, and an Old Man [leading him].

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

Oh, 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 [*to Edgar*]

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;

5 They kill us for their sport.

6 EDGAR [*aside*]

How should this be?

37

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

38

39

GLOUCESTER

Is that the naked fellow?

OLD MAN

Ay, my lord.

9 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,
And bring some covering for this naked soul,
Which I'll entreat to lead me.

42

11

12

43

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.

46

48

OLD MAN

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

Exit.

GLOUCESTER

Sirrah, naked fellow—

50

20 EDGAR

21

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

51

22 GLOUCESTER

Come hither, fellow.

23 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;
Hobbididance, 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!

58

59

60

61

GLOUCESTER [*giving a purse*]

Here, take this purse, thou whom the heavens'
plagues

31

Have humbled to all strokes. That I am wretched

64

Makes thee the happier. Heavens, deal so still!

Let the superfluous and lust-dieted man,

66

36

7

2

0

7

B

U

37 **How . . . be?** i.e., How can he have suffered so much, changed so much? 38–9 **Bad . . . others** It's a bad business to have to play the fool to my sorrowing father, vexing myself and others (with this delay in revealing my true identity). 42 **o'ertake us** catch up to us (after you have found clothing for Tom o' Bedlam) 43 **ancient love** i.e., the mutually trusting relationship of master and tenant that you and I have long enjoyed 46 **'Tis the time's plague** It well expresses the spreading sickness of our present state 48 **the rest all** 50 **Come . . . will** whatever comes of this as regards myself. 51 **I . . . further** i.e., I cannot keep up this pretense any longer. (Literally, "I cannot plaster up the wall.") 58–60 **Obidicut . . . Flibbertigibbet** (Fiends borrowed, as before in 3.4.114 and 139–42, from Harsnett.) 60–1 **mopping and mowing** making grimaces and mouths 61 **since** ever since then 64 **Have . . . strokes** have brought so low as to bear every blow of Fortune. 66 **superfluous and lust-dieted** immoderately gluttonous and luxuriously fed

5–6 **The lamentable . . . laughter** Any change from the best is grievous, just as any change from the worst is bound to be for the better. 9 **Owes nothing** can pay no more, is free of obligation 11–12 **But . . . age** If it were not for your hateful inconstancy, we would never be reconciled to old age and death. 20–1 **Our . . . commodities** Our prosperity makes us proudly overconfident, whereas the sheer afflictions we suffer prove beneficial (by teaching us humility). 22 **The . . . wrath** on whom thy deceived father's wrath fed, the object of his anger. 23 **in** by means of 27–8 **The worst . . . worst** So long as we can speak and act and delude ourselves with false hopes, our fortunes can, in fact, grow worse. 31 **reason** sanity 36 **wanton** childishly cruel

That slaves your ordinance, that will not see
Because he does not feel, feel your pow'r 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.*



4.2

Enter Goneril [and] Bastard [Edmund].

GONERIL

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

[Enter] steward [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.

GONERIL *[to Edmund]* Then shall you go no further.

It is the cowish terror of his spirit,
That dares not undertake. He'll not feel wrongs
Which tie him to an answer. Our wishes on the way
May prove effects. Back, Edmund, to my brother;
Hasten his musters and conduct his powers.
I must change names at home and give the distaff

67 That . . . ordinance who enslaves your divine ordinances to his own corrupt will **67–8 that . . . feel** who is resistant to spiritual insight because, not having suffered himself, he lacks the sympathy of fellow feeling **72 bending** overhanging **73 in . . . deep** i.e., into the sea below, which is confined by its shores. **76 about me** on my person.

4.2. Location: Before the Duke of Albany's palace.

1 Welcome (Goneril, who has just arrived home from Gloucestershire escorted by Edmund, bids him brief welcome before he must return.)

2 Not met has not met **8 sot** fool **12 cowish** cowardly **13 undertake** venture. **13–14 He'll . . . answer** He will ignore insults that, if he took notice, would oblige him to respond, to fight. **14–15 Our . . . effects** The hopes we discussed on our journey here (presumably concerning the supplanting of Albany by Edmund) may come to pass. **15 brother** brother-in-law, Cornwall **16 musters** assembling of troops. **powers** armed forces. **17 change names** i.e., exchange the roles of master and mistress of the household, and exchange the insignia of man and woman: the sword and the *distaff*. **distaff** spinning staff, symbolizing the wife's role

67 Into my husband's hands. This trusty servant
68 Shall pass between us. Ere long you are like to hear, 19
If you dare venture in your own behalf,
A mistress's command. Wear this; spare speech. 21

[She gives him a favor.]

Decline your head. *[She kisses him.]* This kiss, if it durst
72 speak,

73 Would stretch thy spirits up into the air.

Conceive, and fare thee well. 24

EDMUND

76 Yours in the ranks of death. *Exit.*

GONERIL

M My most dear Gloucester!

E Oh, the difference of man and man!

To thee a woman's services are due;

My fool usurps my body. 28

L OSWALD Madam, here comes my lord. *[Exit.]* 29

Enter Albany.

GONERIL

O I have been worth the whistling.

1 ALBANY Oh, Goneril, 30

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. 32

2 She that herself will sliver and disbranch 33

From her material sap perforce must wither 34

And come to deadly use. 35

M GONERIL No more. The text is foolish. 36

I ALBANY

Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile;

Filths savor but themselves. What have you done? 37

8 Tigers, not daughters, what have you performed? 38

A father, and a gracious aged man,

Whose reverence even the head-lugged bear would

lick, 39

E Most barbarous, most degenerate, have you madded. 40

12 Could my good brother suffer you to do it? 41

13 A man, a prince, by him so benefited? 42

14 If that the heavens do not their visible spirits 43

Send quickly down to tame these vile offenses,

It will come, 44

16 Humanity must perforce prey on itself, 45

17 Like monsters of the deep.

2 GONERIL Milk-livered man, 51

0

7 **19 like likely** **21 mistress's** (With sexual double meaning.) **24 Con-**

ceive Understand, take my meaning. (With sexual double entendre,

continuing from *stretch thy spirits* in the previous line and continued in

death, line 25, and *a woman's services*, line 27.) **28 My fool . . . body** i.e.,

my husband claims possession of me but is unfitted to do so. **29 s.d.**

Exit (Oswald could exit later with Goneril, at line 88.) **30 worth the**

whistling i.e., worth the attentions of men. (Alludes to the proverb, "it

is a poor dog that is not worth the whistling.") **32 fear your disposi-**

tion mistrust your nature **33 contemns** spurns **34 bordered certain**

safely restrained, kept within bounds **35 sliver** tear off **36 material**

sap nourishing substance, the stock from which she grew **37 to**

deadly use to a bad end, to a destructive purpose. **38 The text** i.e., on

which you have been preaching **40 savor but themselves** hunger

only for that which is filthy. **43 head-lugged** dragged by the head (or

by the ring in its nose) and infuriated **44 madded** driven mad.

45 brother brother-in-law (Cornwall) **47 If that** If. **visible mani-**

fest **51 Milk-livered** White-livered, cowardly

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 his banners in our noiseless land,
 With plumed helm 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 Oh, 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
 Thy flesh and bones. Howe'er thou art a fiend,
 A woman's shape doth shield thee.

GONERIL Marry, your manhood! Mew!

Enter a Messenger.

ALBANY What news?

MESSENGER
 Oh, 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,

53–4 **discerning** . . . **suffering** able to tell the difference between an insult to your honor and something you should tolerate 54–6 **that not** . . . **mischief** you who fail to understand that only fools like yourself are so tenderhearted as to pity villains (like Gloucester, Lear, and Cordelia) who are apprehended and punished before they have committed a crime. 56 **Where's thy drum?** Where is your military preparedness? 57 **noiseless** peaceful, unprepared for war 58 **thy state** . . . **threat** (France) begins to threaten your kingdom 59 **moral** moralizing 60 **"Alack . . . so?"** (An utterly ineffectual response to invasion.) 61–2 **Proper . . . woman** The deformity that is appropriate in a fiend's features is even uglier in a woman's (since it is so at variance with her nominally feminine appearance). 63–4 **Thou . . . feature** i.e., You creature whose transformation into a fiend now overwhelms your womanliness, do not, however evil you are, take on the outward form of a monster or fiend. 64 **Were't my fitness** If it were suitable for me 65 **blood** passion 66 **apt** ready 67 **Howe'er . . . fiend** However much you may be a fiend in reality 68 **shield** (Since I, as a gentleman, cannot lay violent hands on a lady.) 69 **Mew** (An exclamation of disgust, a derisive catcall: You speak of manhood in shielding me as a woman. Some manhood!) 74 **bred** kept in his household. 75 **thrilled with remorse** deeply moved with pity 75 **Opposed** opposed himself 75–6 **bending** . . . **To** directing his sword against 77 **amongst them** together with the others (?) in their midst (?) out of their number (?) 79 **after** along (to death).

You justicers, that these our nether crimes
 So speedily can venge! But, oh, poor Gloucester!
 Lost he his other eye?

MESSENGER Both, both, my lord.—
 This letter, madam, craves a speedy answer;
 'Tis from your sister. [He gives her a letter.]

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

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

MESSENGER Come with my lady hither.

ALBANY He is not here.

MESSENGER No, my good lord. I met him back again.
 ALBANY Knows he the wickedness?

MESSENGER Ay, my good lord. 'Twas he 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'dst the King
 And to revenge thine eyes.—Come hither, friend.
 Tell me what more thou know'st. *Exeunt.*



4.[3]

Enter Kent [disguised] 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,
 which since his coming forth is thought of, which im-
 ports to the kingdom so much fear and danger that his
 personal return was most required and necessary.

KENT Who hath he left behind him general?

GENTLEMAN The Marshal of France, Monsieur la Far.

KENT Did your letters pierce the Queen to any demon-
 stration 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

80 **justicers** (heavenly) judges. **nether** i.e., committed here below, on earth 84 **One way** (i.e., because Edmund is now Duke of Gloucester, and Cornwall, a dangerous rival for the throne, is dead) 85–7 **But . . . life** but she being now a widow, and Edmund in her company, may pull down my imagined happiness (of having the entire kingdom with Edmund), leaving my hopes in ruins. 88 **tart** bitter, sour. (See line 84 and note.) 89 **his son** Edmund. **his** Gloucester's. 91 **back again** on the way back (from Albany's palace). 95 **Gloucester** The old Earl of Gloucester

4.3. Location: The French camp near Dover.

3 **imperfect in the state** unsettled in state affairs 4–5 **imports** por-
 tends 12 **trilled** trickled

Over her passion, who, most rebel-like,
Sought to be king o'er her.

KENT Oh, then it moved her?

GENTLEMAN
Not to a rage. Patience and sorrow strove
Who should express her goodliest. You have seen
Sunshine and rain at once. Her smiles and tears
Were like a better way; those happy smilets
That played on her ripe lip seemed not to know
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.

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!
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,
Else one self mate and make could not beget
Such different issues. 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
That stripped her from his benediction, turned her
To foreign casualties, gave her dear rights
To his dog-hearted daughters—these things sting
His mind so venomously that burning shame
Detains him from Cordelia.

14 who which 17 Who . . . goodliest which of the two could portray her best. 19 like a better way better than that, though similar 20–1 seemed . . . eyes seemed oblivious of her tears 23 a rarity i.e., a precious thing, like a jewel 24 If . . . it i.e., if all persons were as attractive in sorrow as she. 25 verbal i.e., as distinguished from her tears and looks 26 heaved breathed out with difficulty 30 Let . . . believed! i.e., Let no show of pity be trusted (since they are proved to be so false)! 32 clamor-moistened i.e., her outcry of grief assuaged by tears. started i.e., went 34 conditions characters 35 Else . . . make otherwise, one couple (husband and wife) 36 issues off-spring. 38 before . . . returned before the King of France returned to his kingdom. 40 better tune more composed state of mind 42 yield consent 43 sovereign overruling. elbows him i.e., prods his memory, jostles him, thrusts him back 44 turned her turned her out 45 foreign casualties chances of fortune abroad 48 Detains him from holds him back from seeing

14 GENTLEMAN Alack, poor gentleman!

KENT Of Albany's and Cornwall's powers you heard not? 50

GENTLEMAN 'Tis so. They are afoot. 51

KENT

17 Well, sir, I'll bring you to our master Lear
And leave you to attend him. Some dear cause 53
Will in concealment wrap me up awhile.
19 When I am known aright, you shall not grieve 55
20 Lending me this acquaintance. I pray you, go 56
21 Along with me. Exeunt.

23 ♣

24 4.[4]

25

26 Enter, with drum and colors, Cordelia,
Gentleman, 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, 3
With hardocks, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo-flowers, 4
Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow 5
In our sustaining corn. A century send forth! 6
Search every acre in the high-grown field
And bring him to our eye. [Exit a soldier or soldiers.]
What can man's wisdom 8

M He that helps him take all my outward worth. 10

GENTLEMAN There is means, madam.
Our foster nurse of nature is repose,
The which he lacks. That to provoke in him 13
Are many simples operative, whose power 14
Will close the eye of anguish.

CORDELIA All blest secrets,
All you unpublished virtues of the earth, 16
Spring with my tears! Be aidant and remediate 17
In the good man's distress! Seek, seek for him,
Lest his ungoverned rage dissolve the life 19
That wants the means to lead it.

Enter Messenger.

7 MESSENGER News, madam. 20
2 The British powers are marching hitherward. 21

50 powers troops, armies 51 afoot on the march. 53 dear cause important purpose 55–6 grieve . . . acquaintance regret having made my acquaintance.

4.4. Location: The French camp.

0.2 Gentleman (The quarto specifies "Doctor" here and at line 11.)
3 fumiter fumitory, a weed or herb. furrow weeds weeds growing in plowed furrows 4 hardocks probably burdock, a coarse weedy plant. cuckoo-flowers flowers of late spring, when the cuckoo is heard 5 Darnel weed of the grass kind. idle worthless 6 sustaining corn sustenance-giving grain. A century (Literally, a troop of one hundred men.) 8 What . . . wisdom i.e., What medical knowledge can accomplish 10 outward material 13 That to provoke To induce that 14 Are . . . operative many herbal remedies are efficacious; or, there are many effective remedies. (Simples are prepared from a single herb.) 16 unpublished virtues little-known benign herbs 17 Spring grow. aidant and remediate helpful and remedial 19 rage frenzy 20 That . . . lead it that lacks the means to live sanely. 21 powers armies

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.
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.*



4.[5]

Enter Regan and steward [Oswald].

REGAN But are my brother's powers set forth?

OSWALD Ay, madam.

REGAN Himself in person there?

OSWALD Madam, with much ado.

Your sister is the better soldier.

REGAN

Lord Edmund spake not with your lord at home?

OSWALD No, madam.

REGAN

What might import my sister's letters to him?

OSWALD I know not, lady.

REGAN

Faith, he is posted hence on serious matter.

It was great ignorance, Gloucester's eyes being out,
To let him live. Where he arrives he moves
All hearts against us. Edmund, I think, is gone,
In pity of his misery, to dispatch
His nighted life; moreover to descry
The strength o'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

I may not, madam.

My lady charged my duty in this business.

REGAN

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

OSWALD

Madam, I had rather—

REGAN

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

OSWALD I, madam?

26 importuned importunate 27 blown swollen

4.5. Location; Gloucester's house.

1 my brother's powers Albany's forces 4 with much ado after much
fuss and persuasion. 8 import bear as their purport, express 10 is
posted has hurried 11 ignorance error, folly 14 his Gloucester's
15 nighted benighted, blinded. descry spy out 20 charged my
duty laid great stress on my obedience 22 Belike It may be 26 late
recently 27 ocellades amorous glances 28 of her bosom in her con-
fidence.

REGAN

I speak in understanding; y'are, I know't. 30
Therefore I do advise you, take this note: 31
My lord is dead; Edmund and I have talked, 32
And more convenient is he for my hand 33
Than for your lady's. You may gather more. 34
If you do find him, pray you, give him this; 35
And when your mistress hears thus much from you, 36
I pray, desire her call her wisdom to her. 37
So, fare you well.
If you do chance to hear of that blind traitor,
Preferment falls on him that cuts him off. 40

M E L H O R N

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

REGAN

Fare thee well.

Exeunt [separately].



4.[6]

*Enter Gloucester, and Edgar [in peasant's clothes,
leading his father].*

8 GLOUCESTER

When shall I come to th' top of that same hill? 1

EDGAR

You do climb up it now. Look how we labor.

11 GLOUCESTER

Methinks the ground is even.

EDGAR

Horrible steep.

14

Hark, do you hear the sea?

15 GLOUCESTER

No, truly.

EDGAR

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

GLOUCESTER

So may it be, indeed.

Methinks thy voice is 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.

22 EDGAR

Come on, sir, here's the place. Stand still. How fearful
And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!

The crows and choughs that wing the midway air 13

Show scarce so gross as beetles. Halfway down 14

Hangs one that gathers samphire—dreadful trade! 15

Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.

The fishermen that walk upon the beach

30 y'are you are 31 take this note take note of this 32 have talked
have come to an understanding 33 convenient fitting 34 gather
more infer what I am trying to suggest. 35 this i.e., this information,
or a love token, or possibly a letter (though only one letter, Goneril's,
is found on his dead body at 4.6.262) 36 thus much what I have told
you 37 call . . . to her recall herself to her senses. 40 Preferment
advancement

4.6. Location: Open place near Dover.

1 that same hill i.e., the cliff we talked about (4.1.72–4). 13 choughs
jackdaws. midway halfway down 14 gross large 15 samphire (A
herb used in pickling.)

- Appear like mice, and yond tall anchoring bark
Diminished to her cock; her cock, a buoy
Almost too small for sight. The murmuring surge,
That on th'unnumbered idle pebble chafes,
Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more,
Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
Topple down headlong.
- GLOUCESTER Set me where you stand.
- EDGAR
Give me your hand. You are now within a foot
Of th'extreme verge. For all beneath the moon
Would I not leap upright.
- GLOUCESTER Let go my hand.
Here, friend, 's another purse; in it a jewel
Well worth a poor man's taking. [*He gives a purse.*]
Fairies and gods
Prosper it with thee! Go thou further off.
Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.
- EDGAR [*moving away*]
Now fare ye well, good sir.
- GLOUCESTER With all my heart.
- EDGAR [*aside*]
Why I do trifle thus with his despair
Is done to cure it.
- GLOUCESTER [*knelling*] O you mighty gods!
This world I do renounce, and in your sights
Shake patiently my great affliction off.
If I could bear it longer and not fall
To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,
My snuff and loathed part of nature should
Burn itself out. If Edgar live, oh, bless him!
Now, fellow, fare thee well. [*He falls forward.*]
- EDGAR Gone, sir. Farewell.—
And yet I know not how conceit may rob
The treasury of life, when life itself
Yields to the theft. Had he been where he thought,
By this had thought been past. Alive or dead?—
Ho, you, sir! Friend! Hear you, sir! Speak!—
Thus might he pass indeed; yet he revives.—
What are you, sir?
- GLOUCESTER Away, and let me die.
- EDGAR
Hadst thou been aught but gossamer, feathers, air,
So many fathom down precipitating,
Thou'dst shivered like an egg; but thou dost breathe,
Hast heavy substance, bleed'st not, speak'st, art
sound.
- 18 Ten masts at each make not the altitude 53
19 Which thou hast perpendicularly fell.
Thy life's a miracle. Speak yet again.
21 GLOUCESTER But have I fall'n or no?
EDGAR
23 From the dread summit of this chalky bourn. 57
Look up aheight; the shrill-gorged lark so far 58
24 Cannot be seen or heard. Do but look up.
GLOUCESTER Alack, I have no eyes.
Is wretchedness deprived that benefit
26 To end itself by death? 'Twas yet some comfort
When misery could beguile the tyrant's rage 63
27 M And frustrate his proud will.
EDGAR Give me your arm. [*He lifts him up.*]
29 L Up—so. How is't? Feel you your legs? You stand.
30 GLOUCESTER
H Too well, too well.
EDGAR This is above all strangeness.
O Upon the crown o'th' cliff what thing was that
R Which parted from you?
GLOUCESTER A poor unfortunate beggar.
N EDGAR
As I stood here below, methought his eyes
, Were two full moons; he had a thousand noses,
Horns whelked and waved like the enridgèd sea. 71
It was some fiend. Therefore, thou happy father, 72
Think that the clearest gods, who make them honors 73
38 M Of men's impossibilities, have preserved thee. 74
39 I GLOUCESTER
I do remember now. Henceforth I'll bear
C Affliction till it do cry out itself 76
H "Enough, enough," and die. That thing you speak of, 77
42 A I took it for a man; often 'twould say
E "The fiend, the fiend." He led me to that place.
44 EDGAR
45 Bear free and patient thoughts.
47 L Enter Lear [*mad, fantastically dressed with wild flowers*].
48 But who comes here? 80
7 The safer sense will ne'er accommodate 81
2 LEAR His master thus. 82
0 No, they cannot touch me for coining. I am the 83
EDGAR King himself. 84
52 Oh, thou side-piercing sight! 85

18 bark small sailing vessel 19 Diminished . . . cock reduced to the size of her cockboat, small ship's boat 21 th'unnumbered idle pebble innumerable, randomly shifting, pebbles 23–4 Lest . . . headlong lest I become dizzy, and my failing sight topple me headlong. 26 For . . . moon i.e., For the whole world 27 upright i.e., up and down, much less forward. 29–30 Fairies . . . thee! May the fairies and gods cause this to multiply in your possession! 38 To quarrel with into rebellion against. opposeless irresistible 39 snuff i.e., useless residue. (Literally, the smoking wick of a candle.) of nature i.e., of my life 42 conceit imagination 44 Yields consents 45 By this by this time 47 pass die 48 What Who. (Edgar now speaks in a new voice, differing from that of "poor Tom" and also from the "altered" voice he used at the start of this scene; see lines 7–10.) 52 heavy substance the substance of the flesh

53 at each end to end 57 bourn limit, boundary (i.e., the edge of the sea). 58 aheight on high. shrill-gorged shrill-throated 63 beguile outwit 71 whelked twisted, convoluted. enridgèd furrowed (by the wind) 72 happy father lucky old man 73 clearest purest, most righteous 73–4 who . . . impossibilities who win our awe and reverence by doing things impossible to men 76–7 till . . . die i.e., until affliction itself has had enough, or until I die. 80 free i.e., free from despair 81–2 The safer . . . thus i.e., A person in his right senses would never dress himself in such a fashion. (His master is the owner of the safer sense or sane mind. His means "its.") 83–4 they . . . himself they cannot prosecute me for minting coins. As king, I enjoy the exclusive royal prerogative for doing so. (Lear goes on to discuss his need for money to pay his imaginary soldiers.) 85 side-piercing heartrending. (With a suggestion of Christ's suffering on the cross.)

LEAR Nature's above art in that respect. There's your
press money. That fellow handles his bow like a crow-
keeper. Draw me a clothier's yard. Look, look, a
mouse! Peace, peace; this piece of toasted cheese will
do't. There's my gauntlet; I'll prove it on a giant. Bring
up the brown bills. Oh, well flown, bird! I'th' clout,
i'th' clout—hewgh! Give the word.

EDGAR Sweet marjoram.

LEAR Pass.

GLOUCESTER I know that voice.

LEAR Ha! Goneril with a white beard? They flattered
me like a dog and told me I had white hairs in my
beard ere the black ones were there. To say ay and
no to 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.
When I do stare, see how the subject quakes.
I pardon that man's life. What was thy cause?
Adultery?
Thou shalt not die. Die for adultery? No.
The wren goes to't, and the small gilded fly
Does lecher in my sight.
Let copulation thrive; for Gloucester's bastard son
Was kinder to his father than my daughters
Got 'tween the lawful sheets.
To't, luxury, pell-mell, for I lack soldiers.
Behold yond simpering dame,
Whose face between her forks presages snow,
That minces virtue and does shake the head
To hear of pleasure's name;
The fitchew nor the soiled horse goes to't

86 **Nature's . . . respect** Real life can offer more heart-piercing examples than art. 87 **press money** enlistment bonus. 87–8 **crowkeeper** laborer hired to scare away the crows. 88 **Draw . . . yard** i.e., Draw your bow to the full length of the arrow, a cloth-yard long. 90 **do't** i.e., capture the mouse, an imagined enemy. **gauntlet** armored glove thrown down as a challenge. **prove it on** maintain it against 91 **brown bills** soldiers carrying pikes (painted brown), or the pikes themselves. **well flown, bird** (Lear uses the language of hawking to describe the flight of an arrow.) **clout** target, bull's-eye 92 **hewgh** (The arrow's noise.) **word** password. 93 **Sweet marjoram** (A herb used to cure madness.) 97 **like a dog** as a dog fawns 97–8 **told . . . there** i.e., told me I had the white-haired wisdom of old age before I had even attained the manliness of a beard. 98–100 **To . . . divinity** i.e., To agree flatteringly with everything I said was not good theology, since the Bible teaches us to "let your yea be yea and your nay, nay" (James 5:12; see also Matthew 5:37 and 2 Cor. 1:18). 100–3 **When . . . out** i.e., Suffering wet, cold, and storm have taught me about the frailty of the human condition. 103 **Go to** (An expression of impatience.) 105 **ague-proof** immune against illness (literally, fever). 106 **trick** peculiar characteristic 109 **cause** offense. 117 **luxury** lechery 119 **Whose . . . snow** whose frosty countenance seems to suggest frigidity between her legs 120 **minces** affects, mimics 121 **of pleasure's name** the very name of pleasure 122 **The fitchew . . . to't** neither the polecat nor the well-pastured horse indulges in sexual pleasure

With a more riotous appetite.

Down from the waist they're centaurs,
Though women all above.

But to the girdle do the gods inherit;
Beneath is all the fiends'.

There's hell, there's darkness, there is the sulfurous pit,
burning, scalding, stench, consumption. Fie, fie, fie!
Pah, pah! Give me an ounce of civet, good apothecary,
sweeten my imagination. There's money for thee.

GLOUCESTER Oh, let me kiss that hand!

LEAR Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality.

GLOUCESTER

Oh, 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 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.

EDGAR [*aside*]

I would not take this from report. It is,
And my heart breaks at it.

LEAR Read.

GLOUCESTER What, with the case of eyes?

LEAR Oho, are you there with me? No eyes in your
head, nor no money in your purse? Your eyes are in a
heavy case, your purse in a light, yet you see how this
world goes.

GLOUCESTER I see it feelingly.

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

GLOUCESTER Ay, sir.

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

Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!

Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back;
Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind

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

124 **centaurs** fabulous creatures with the head, trunk, and arms of a man joined to the body and legs of a horse 126 **But Only**. **girdle** waist. **inherit** have possession 130 **civet** musk perfume 134 **piece** (1) fragment (2) masterpiece 134–5 **This . . . naught** Even so will the whole universe come to an apocalyptic end. 137 **squint** squint 141 **take** believe, credit. **It is** It is taking place, incredibly enough 144 **case** mere sockets 145 **are . . . me?** is that your meaning, the point you are making? 147 **heavy case** sad plight. (With pun on *case* in line 144.) 149 **feelingly** (1) by touch (2) keenly, painfully. 152 **simple** of humble station 153 **handy-dandy** take your choice of hands (as in a well-known child's game) 157 **creature** poor fellow 158–9 **a dog's . . . office** i.e., even curish power commands submission. 160 **beadle** parish officer, responsible for giving whippings 162 **kind way** 163 **The usurer . . . cozener** The moneylender (who can buy out justice) hangs the con man.

- Through tattered clothes small vices do appear; 164
 Robes and furred gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold, 165
 And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks; 166
 Arm it in rags, a pygmy's straw does pierce it.
 None does offend, none, I say, none. I'll able 'em. 168
 Take that of me, my friend, who have the power 169
 To seal th'accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes,
 And like a scurvy politician seem 170
 To see the things thou dost not. Now, now, now, now! 171
 Pull off my boots. Harder, harder! So. 172
- EDGAR [*aside*]
 Oh, matter and impertinency mixed, 174
 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.
 Thou know'st the first time that we smell the air
 We wawl and cry. I will preach to thee. Mark.
- GLOUCESTER Alack, alack the day!
- LEAR
 When we are born, we cry that we are come
 To this great stage of fools.—This' a good block.
 It were a delicate stratagem to shoe
 A troop of horse with felt. I'll put 't in proof,
 And when I have stol'n upon these son-in-laws,
 Then, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!
- Enter a Gentleman [with attendants].*
- GENTLEMAN
 Oh, here he is. 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 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, 199
 Masters, know you that? 200
- GENTLEMAN
 You are a royal one, and we obey you.
- LEAR Then there's life in't. Come, an you get it, you 202
 shall get it by running. Sa, sa, sa, sa. 203
Exit [running, followed by attendants].
- GENTLEMAN
 A sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch,
 Past speaking of in a king! Thou hast one daughter
 Who redeems nature from the general curse 206
 Which twain have brought her to. 207
- EDGAR Hail, gentle sir. 208
- GENTLEMAN Sir, speed you. What's your will? 209
- EDGAR
 Do you hear aught, sir, of a battle toward?
- GENTLEMAN
 Most sure and vulgar. Everyone hears that
 Which can distinguish sound. 211
- EDGAR But, by your favor, 212
 How near's the other army?
- GENTLEMAN
 Near and on speedy foot. The main descry 214
 Stands on the hourly thought. 215
- EDGAR I thank you, sir; that's all.
- GENTLEMAN
 Though that the Queen on special cause is here, 217
 Her army is moved on.
- EDGAR I thank you, sir.
Exit [Gentleman].
- GLOUCESTER
 You ever-gentle gods, take my breath from me;
 Let not my worser spirit tempt me again 220
 To die before you please!
- EDGAR Well pray you, father. 222
- GLOUCESTER Now, good sir, what are you? 223
- EDGAR
 A most poor man, made tame to fortune's blows, 224
 Who, by the art of known and feeling sorrows, 225
 Am pregnant to good pity. Give me your hand. 226
 I'll lead you to some bidding. [*He offers his arm.*]
- GLOUCESTER Hearty thanks. 227

164–5 Through . . . all i.e., Beggars' small vices are apparent for all to see; rich folk, in expensive clothes, succeed in hiding a great deal.

165 Plate Arm in plate armor 166 hurtless breaks splinters harmlessly 168 able empower, give warrant to 169 Take . . . me (1) Learn that from me (2) Take that protection from me 170–2 Get . . . dost not If Gloucester were to fit himself out with spectacles (or perhaps with glass eyeballs, though they are not mentioned elsewhere until later in the seventeenth century), he would look wise like a hypocritical politician. 174 matter and impertinency sense and nonsense 183 This' This is. block mold for a felt hat. (Lear may refer to the weeds strewn in his hair, which he removes as though doffing a hat before preaching a sermon.) 184 delicate subtle 185 felt i.e., padding to deaden the sound of the footfall. in proof to the test 191 natural fool born plaything 193 cut wounded 194 seconds supporters. 195 of salt of salt tears 198 bravely (1) courageously (2) splendidly attired. smug trimly dressed. (*Bridegroom* continues the punning sexual suggestion of *die bravely*, "have sex successfully.")

199 jovial (1) Jovialike, majestic (2) jolly. 200 Masters good sirs 202 life i.e., hope still. an if 203 Sa . . . sa (A hunting cry.) 206 general curse fallen condition of the human race 207 twain (1) Goneril and Regan (2) Adam and Eve 208 gentle noble 209 speed you Godspeed, may God prosper you. 210 toward imminent. 211 vulgar in everyone's mouth, generally known. 212 Which who 214–15 The main . . . thought The full view of the main body is expected any hour now. 217 Though that Although. on special cause for a special reason, i.e., to minister to Lear 220 worsen spirit bad angel, or ill thoughts 222 father (A term of respect to older men, as also in lines 72, 259, and 290, though with ironic double meaning throughout the scene.) 223 what who. (Again, Edgar alters his voice to personate a new stranger assisting Gloucester. See line 48, above, and note.) 224 tame submissive 225 known and feeling personally experienced and heartfelt 226 pregnant prone 227 bidding abode.

The bounty and the benison of heaven To boot, and boot!	228	To know our enemies' minds we rip their hearts; Their papers is more lawful. (<i>Reads the letter.</i>)	
<i>Enter steward [Oswald].</i>		"Let our reciprocal vows be remembered. You have many opportunities to cut him off; if your will want not, time and place will be fruitfully offered. There is nothing done if he return the conqueror. Then am I the prisoner, and his bed my 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, Goneril." Oh, 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. <i>[Exit with the body.]</i>	267 268 269 270 271 272 274 275
OSWALD A proclaimed prize! Most happy! <i>[He draws his sword.]</i>	229		
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.	230 231 232		
GLOUCESTER Now let thy friendly hand Put strength enough to't. <i>[Edgar intervenes.]</i>	233		
OSWALD Wherefore, bold peasant, Durst thou support a published traitor? Hence, Lest that th' infection of his fortune take Like hold on thee. Let go his arm.	235 236 237		
EDGAR 'Chill not let go, zir, without vurther 'cagion.	238		
OSWALD Let go, slave, or thou diest!			
EDGAR Good gentleman, go your gait, and let poor volk pass. An 'chud ha' bin zwaggered out of my life, 'twould not ha' bin zo long as 'tis by a vortnight. Nay, come not near th' old man; keep out, 'che vor ye, or Ise try whether your costard or my ballow be the harder. 'Chill be plain with you.	240 241 242 243 244		
OSWALD Out, dunghill!			
EDGAR 'Chill pick your teeth, zir. Come, no matter vor your foins. <i>[They fight. Edgar fells him with his cudgel.]</i>	248		
OSWALD Slave, thou hast slain me. Villain, take my purse. If ever thou wilt thrive, bury my body And give the letters which thou find'st about me To Edmund, Earl of Gloucester. Seek him out Upon the English party. Oh, untimely death! Death!	249 250 251 252 253		
EDGAR <i>[He dies.]</i>			
I know thee well: a serviceable villain, As duteous to the vices of thy mistress As badness would desire.	255		
GLOUCESTER What, is he dead?			
EDGAR Sit you down, father. Rest you. <i>[Gloucester sits.]</i> Let's see these pockets; the letters that he speaks of May be my friends. He's dead; I am only sorry He had no other deathsman. Let us see. <i>[He finds a letter and opens it.]</i> Leave, gentle wax, and, manners, blame us not.	262 263		

228–9 The bounty . . . and boot! In addition to my thanks, I wish you the bounty and blessings of heaven. 229 proclaimed prize one with a price on his head. happy fortunate. 230 framed flesh born 232 thyself remember i.e., say your prayers. 233 friendly i.e., welcome, since I desire death 235 published proclaimed 236 Lest that lest 237 Like similar 238 'Chill I will. (Literally, a contraction of *Ich will*. Edgar adopts Somerset dialect, a stage convention regularly used for peasants.) vurther 'cagion further occasion. 240 go your gait go your own way 241 An 'chud If I could. zwaggered swagged, bullied 242 'twould . . . vortnight it (my life) wouldn't have lasted a fortnight. 243 'che vor ye I warrant you 244 Ise I shall. costard head. (Literally, an apple.) ballow cudgel 248 foins thrusts. 249 Villain Serf 251 letters letter. (See 4.5.35 and note.) about me upon my person 253 Upon on. party side. 255 serviceable officious 262 deathsman executioner. 263 Leave By your leave. wax wax seal on the letter

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 by wrong imaginations lose The knowledge of themselves. <i>Drum afar off.</i> <i>[Enter Edgar.]</i>	283 284 285 287
EDGAR Give me your hand. Far off, methinks, I hear the beaten drum. Come, father, I'll bestow you with a friend. <i>Exeunt, [Edgar leading his father].</i>	290



4.7

Enter Cordelia, Kent [dressed still in his disguise costume], 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.	3
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267 him Albany 267–8 want not is not lacking 268 fruitfully plentifully and with results 268–9 There is nothing done i.e., We will have accomplished nothing 271 supply fill 271–2 for your labor (1) as recompense for your efforts (2) as a place for your amorous labors. 274 and for . . . venture and one ready to venture her own fortunes for your sake 275 indistinguished . . . will limitless and incalculable expanse of woman's appetite. 278 rake up cover up. post unsanctified unholy messenger 279 in . . . time when the time is ripe 280 ungracious wicked. strike blast 281 Of . . . well of Albany, whose death is plotted. It's a good thing for him 283 How . . . sense How obstinate is my deplorable sanity and power of sensation 284 ingenious conscious. (Gloucester laments that he remains sane and hence fully conscious of his troubles, unlike Lear.) 285 distract distracted, crazy 287 wrong imaginations delusions 290 bestow lodge. (At the scene's end, Edgar leads off Gloucester; presumably, at line 282 or else here, he must also dispose of Oswald's body in the trapdoor or by lugging it offstage.)

4.7. Location: The French camp.

0.2 Gentleman ("Doctor" in Q.) 3 every . . . me every attempt (to match your goodness) will fall short.

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 worser 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. [*To the Gentleman*] How
does the King?

GENTLEMAN Madam, sleeps still.

CORDELIA O you kind gods,
Cure this great breach in his abusèd nature!
Th'untuned and jarring senses, oh, wind up
Of this child-changèd father!

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

CORDELIA Very well. [*Music.*]

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

CORDELIA [*kissing him*]
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 warring winds?
To stand against the deep dread-bolted thunder
In the most terrible and nimble stroke

5 All my reports go All my reports (of my service as Caius to Lear) conform 6 Nor . . . clipped i.e., neither more nor less. suited dressed. 7 weeds garments. memories remembrances 9 Yet . . . intent to reveal my true identity now would alter my carefully made plan. 10 My . . . it The favor I seek is. know acknowledge 11 meet appropriate. 16 wind up tune (as by tightening the slackened string of an instrument) 17 child-changèd changed by children's cruelty 21 I'th' sway under the direction 25 temperance self-control, calm behavior. 30 reverence venerable condition 31 Had you Even if you had. flakes locks of hair 32 Did challenge would have demanded 34 deep bass-voiced. dread-bolted furnished with the dreadful thunderbolt

Of quick cross lightning? To watch—poor perdu!—
With this thin helm? Mine enemy's dog,
Though he had bit me, should have stood that night
Against my fire; and wast thou fain, poor father,
To hovel thee with swine and rogues forlorn
In short and musty straw? Alack, alack!
'Tis wonder that thy life and wits at once
Had not concluded all.—He wakes! Speak to him.

GENTLEMAN Madam, do you; 'tis fittest.

CORDELIA
How does my royal lord? How fares Your Majesty?

LEAR
M You do me wrong to take me out o'th' grave.
E Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
L Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
L Do scald like molten lead.

CORDELIA Sir, do you know me?

LEAR
H You are a spirit, I know. Where did you die?

CORDELIA Still, still, far wide!

GENTLEMAN
He's scarce awake. Let him alone awhile.

LEAR
N Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?
, I am mightily 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 prick. Would I were assured
M Of my condition!

CORDELIA [*kneeling*] Oh, look upon me, sir,
I And hold your hands in benediction o'er me.
C [*He attempts to kneel.*]

LEAR
H No, sir, you must not kneel.
A Pray, do not mock me.
A I am a very foolish fond old man,
E Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less;
E And, to deal plainly,
L I fear I am not in my perfect mind.
L Methinks I should know you, and know this man,
66 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
7 Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me,
2 For, as I am a man, I think this lady
34 To be my child Cordelia.

CORDELIA [*weeping*] And so I am, I am.

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

36 cross zigzag. watch stay awake (like a sentry on duty). perdu lost one; a sentinel placed in a position of peculiar danger. 37 helm helmet, i.e., scanty hair. 39 Against before, in front of. fain constrained 40 rogues forlorn abandoned vagabonds 41 short broken up and hence uncomfortable 43 concluded all come to an end altogether. 48 wheel of fire (A hellish torment for the eternally damned.) that so that 51 wide wide of the mark, wandering. 54 abused confused, deluded. 55 thus i.e., thus confused, bewildered. 61 fond in my dotage 66 mainly entirely

CORDELIA No cause, no cause.

LEAR Am I in France?

KENT In your own kingdom, sir.

LEAR Do not abuse me.

GENTLEMAN

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.

Exeunt [all but Kent and Gentleman].

GENTLEMAN Holds it true, sir, that the Duke of Corn-
wall 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. *[Exit.]*

KENT

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



5.1

*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
And self-reproving. Bring his constant pleasure.

[Exit Gentleman.]

REGAN

Our sister's man is certainly miscarried.

81 abuse deceive. (Or perhaps Lear feels hurt by the reminder of his having divided the kingdom.) **82 rage** frenzy **84 even o'er** fill in, go over in his mind **86 settling** composing of his mind. **87 walk** withdraw. **91 Holds it true** Is it still held to be true **94 conductor** leader, general **98 look about** be wary, take stock of the situation **99 powers of the kingdom** British armies (marching against the French invaders) **100 arbitrament** decision by arms, decisive encounter **102 My . . . wrought** i.e., The conclusion of my destiny (literally, the full stop at the end of my life's sentence) will be thoroughly shaped **103 Or either. as** according as

5.1. Location: The British camp near Dover.

1 Know Inquire. **last purpose hold** most recent intention (to fight) remains firm **2 since** since then. **advised by aught** persuaded by any consideration **3 alteration** vacillation **4 constant pleasure** settled decision. **5 man** i.e., Oswald. **miscarried** lost, perished.

EDMUND

'Tis to be doubted, madam.

REGAN

Now, sweet lord,

81 You know the goodness I intend upon you.

Tell me, but truly—but then speak the truth—

82 Do you not love my sister?

EDMUND

In honored love.

84 REGAN

But have you never found my brother's way

To the forfended place?

86 EDMUND That thought abuses you.

87 REGAN

I am doubtful that you have been conjunct

And bosomed with her, as far as we call hers.

88 EDMUND No, by mine honor, madam.

REGAN

I never shall endure her. Dear my lord,

Be not familiar with her.

94 EDMUND

Fear me not.—She and the Duke her husband!

*Enter, with drum and colors, Albany, Goneril,
[and] soldiers.*

GONERIL *[aside]*

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

ALBANY *[to Regan]*

Our very loving sister, well bemet.

[To Edmund] Sir, this I heard: 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,

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

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.

6 doubted feared **7 intend** intend to confer **9 honored** honorable
11 forfended forbidden (by the commandment against adultery)

12 abuses degrades, wrongs **13–14 I . . . hers** I fear that you have
been sexually intimate with her to the fullest extent possible.

17 familiar intimate **18 Fear me not** Don't worry about me on that
score. **21 bemet** met. **23 rigor of our state** harshness of our rule

24 cry out rebel. **Where** In a case where. **honest** honorable

25 For As for **26 touches us as** concerns us insofar as **27–8 Not . . .**
oppose not because the matter emboldens the King and others who, I

fear, are driven into opposition by just and weighty grievances.

30 Why . . . reasoned? i.e., Why are we arguing about reasons for
fighting, instead of fighting? **32 particular broils** private quarrels

34 th'ancient of war the veteran officers

REGAN

'Tis most convenient. Pray, go with us.

GONERIL [*aside*]

Oho, I know the riddle.—I will go.

[*As they are going out, enter Edgar [disguised].*]EDGAR [*to Albany*]If e'er Your Grace had speech with man so poor,
Hear me one word.ALBANY [*to the others*] I'll overtake you.*Exeunt both the armies.*
Speak.EDGAR [*giving 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,
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 I was forbid it.

When time shall serve, let but the herald cry
And I'll appear again. *Exit [Edgar].*

ALBANY

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

Enter Edmund.

EDMUND

The enemy's in view. Draw up your powers.
[*He offers Albany a paper.*]
Here is the guess of their true strength and forces
By diligent discovery; but your haste
Is now urged on you.ALBANY We will greet the time. *Exit.*

EDMUND

To both these sisters have I sworn my love,
Each jealous of the other as the stung
Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?
Both? One? Or neither? Neither can be enjoyed
If both remain alive. To take the widow
Exasperates, makes mad her sister Goneril,
And hardly shall I carry out my side,
Her husband being alive. Now then, we'll use
His countenance for the battle, which being done,
Let her who would be rid of him devise
His speedy taking off. As for the mercy
Which he intends to Lear and to Cordelia,
The battle done and they within our power,

38 **convenient** proper, fitting. 39 **I know the riddle** i.e., I understand the reason for Regan's enigmatic demand that I accompany her, which is that she wants to keep me away from Edmund. 42 **this letter** i.e., Goneril's letter to Edmund found on Oswald's body. 43 **sound** sound a summons 45 **prove** i.e., in trial by combat 46 **avouchèd** affirmed. **miscarry** lose the battle and die 48 **machination** plotting (against your life) 53 **o'erlook** peruse 55 **guess** estimate 56 **discovery** reconnoitering 57 **We ... time** We will be ready for whatever happens. 59 **jealous** suspicious 64 **carry ... side** carry out my end of the bargain in our *reciprocal vows* (4.6.266) 66 **countenance** backing, authority of his name 68 **taking off** killing.

Shall never see his pardon, for my state
Stands on me to defend, not to debate.

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Exit.

5.2

*Alarum within. Enter, with drum and colors, Lear, Cordelia, and soldiers, over the stage; and exeunt.**Enter Edgar and Gloucester.*

EDGAR

42 Here, father, take the shadow of this tree 1
43 For your good host. Pray that the right may thrive. 2
45 If ever I return to you again,
46 I'll bring you comfort.

46 GLOUCESTER Grace go with you, sir! 4
Exit [Edgar].

48 *Alarum and retreat within. Enter Edgar.*

EDGAR

48 Away, old man! Give me thy hand. Away!
King Lear hath lost, he and his daughter ta'en.
, Give me thy hand. Come on.

53 GLOUCESTER
No further, sir. A man may rot even here.

EDGAR

53 What, in ill thoughts again? Men must endure
Their going hence, even as their coming hither;
Ripeness is all. Come on.
55 GLOUCESTER And that's true too. 11
56 *Exeunt.*

GLOUCESTER



5.3

59 *Enter, in conquest, with drum and colors, Edmund; Lear and Cordelia, as prisoners; soldiers, Captain.*

EDMUND

7 Some officers take them away. Good guard 1
64 Until their greater pleasures first be known 2
2 That are to censure them.
66 CORDELIA [*to Lear*] We are not the first 3
0 Who with best meaning have incurred the worst. 4
68 For thee, oppressed King, I am cast down;
7 Myself could else outfrown false Fortune's frown.
B Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters? 7
U

71 Shall they shall 71–2 my state ... debate my position depends upon maintenance by forceful action, not by talk.

5.2. Location: The battlefield.

0.1 Alarum trumpet call to arms 1 father i.e., reverend old man 2 host shelterer. 4.2 retreat trumpet signal for withdrawal

11 Ripeness (Humans shouldn't die before their time, just as fruit doesn't fall until it's ripe.)

5.3. Location: The British camp.

1 Good guard Guard them well 2 their greater pleasures the wishes of those in command 3 censure judge 4 meaning intentions

7 Shall ... sisters? i.e., Aren't we even allowed to speak to Goneril and Regan before they order to prison their own father and sister?

LEAR

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
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
Talk of court news; and we'll talk with them too—
Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out—
And take upon 's the mystery of things,
As if we were God's spies; and we'll wear out,
In a walled prison, packs and sects of great ones,
That ebb and flow by th' moon.

EDMUND

Take them away.

LEAR

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

EDMUND

Come hither, Captain. Hark.

Take thou this note. [*He gives a paper.*] Go follow them
to prison.

One step I have advanced thee; if thou dost
As this instructs thee, thou dost make thy way
To noble fortunes. Know thou this: that men
Are as the time is. To be tender-minded
Does not become a sword. Thy great employment
Will not bear question; either say thou'lt do't
Or thrive by other means.

CAPTAIN

I'll do't, my lord.

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

Mark, I say, instantly, and carry it so
As I have set it down.

CAPTAIN

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

*Flourish. Enter Albany, Goneril, Regan, [another
Captain, and] soldiers.*

13 gilded butterflies i.e., gaily dressed courtiers and other ephemeral types, or perhaps actual butterflies **16 take upon 's** assume the burden of, or profess to understand **17 God's spies** i.e., detached observers surveying the deeds of humanity from an eternal vantage point. **wear out** outlast **18–19 packs . . . moon** i.e., followers and cliques attached to persons of high station, whose fortunes change erratically and constantly. **21 The gods . . . incense** (The gods make offerings to Cordelia instead of receiving them.) **22–3 He . . . foxes** i.e., Nothing short of a firebrand from heaven will ever part us again. (Firebrands were used to smoke foxes from their lairs; compare also Samson's use of firebrands tied to the tails of foxes in order to punish the Philistines for denying him his wife, in Judges 15:4–5.) **24–5 The good . . . weep** i.e., the years will be good to us and will utterly foil our enemies' attempts to make us sorrowful as long as we are together (?). **32 Are . . . is** i.e., must adapt themselves to stern exigencies. **33 become a sword** i.e., suit a warrior. **34 bear question** admit of discussion **36 write "happy"** call yourself fortunate. **th' thou** **37 carry it** carry it out

ALBANY

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.

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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
And turn our impressed lances in our eyes
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,
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.

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ALBANY

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

REGAN

That's as we list to grace him.

Methinks our pleasure might have been demanded
Ere you had spoke so far. He led our powers,
Bore the commission of my place and person,
The which immediacy may well stand up
And call itself your brother.

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GONERIL

Not so hot!

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

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REGAN

In my rights,

By me invested, he compeers the best.

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GONERIL

That were the most if he should husband you.

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REGAN

Jesters do oft prove prophets.

GONERIL

Holla, holla!

That eye that told you so looked but asquint.

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REGAN

Lady, I am not well, else I should answer
From a full-flowing stomach. [*To Edmund*] General,

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43 opposites enemies **49 retention** confinement **50–3 Whose . . . them** whose advanced age had magic in it, and whose title as king had even more, to win the sympathy of the commoners and turn against us the weapons of those very troops whom we impressed into service. (*In our eyes* may suggest retaliation for the blinding of Gloucester.) **55 space** interval of time **58–9 And . . . sharpness** and even the best of causes, at this moment when the passions of battle have not cooled, are viewed with hatred by those who have suffered the painful consequences. (Edmund pretends to worry that Lear and Cordelia would not receive a fair trial.) **61 by your patience** if you please **62 subject** of subordinate in **63 list** please **64 pleasure** wish. **demanded** asked about **67 immediacy** nearness of connection **70 your addition** the titles you confer. **71 compeers** is equal with **72 That . . . most** That investiture would be most complete **73 prove** turn out to be **74 asquint** (Jealousy proverbially makes the eye look *asquint*, "furtively, suspiciously.") **76 full-flowing stomach** full tide of angry rejoinder.

- 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 Mean you to enjoy him?
- ALBANY The let-alone lies not in your good will.
- EDMUND Nor in thine, lord.
- ALBANY Half-blooded fellow, yes.
- REGAN [to Edmund] Let the drum strike and prove my title thine.
- ALBANY Stay yet; hear reason. Edmund, I arrest thee
On capital treason; and, in thy attaint
This gilded serpent. [Pointing to Goneril] 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.
- GONERIL 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. [He throws down a glove.] I'll make
it on thy heart,
Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less
Than I have here proclaimed thee.
- REGAN Sick, oh, sick!
- GONERIL [aside] If not, I'll ne'er trust medicine.
- EDMUND [throwing down a glove] There's my exchange. What in the world he is
That names me traitor, villain-like he lies.
Call by the trumpet. He that dares approach,
On him, on you—who not?—I will maintain
My truth and honor firmly.
- ALBANY A herald, ho!
- EDMUND A herald, ho, a herald!
- Enter a Herald.
- ALBANY [to Edmund] Trust to thy single virtue; for thy soldiers,
All levied in my name, have in my name
Took their discharge.
- REGAN My sickness grows upon me.
- 77 ALBANY [to Soldiers]
78 She is not well. Convey her to my tent.
[Exit Regan, supported.]
Come hither, herald. Let the trumpet sound,
And read out this. [He gives a paper.]
CAPTAIN Sound, trumpet! A trumpet sounds.
81 HERALD (reads) "If any man of quality or degree within 113
the lists of the army will maintain upon Edmund, sup- 114
posed Earl of Gloucester, that he is a manifold traitor,
82 let him appear by the third sound of the trumpet. He
is bold in his defense."
EDMUND Sound! First trumpet.
HERALD Again! Second trumpet.
HERALD Again! Third trumpet.
85 Trumpet answers within.
Enter Edgar, armed, [with a trumpeter before
him].
ALBANY
89 Ask him his purposes, why he appears
90 Upon this call o'th' trumpet.
HERALD What are you? 122
91 Your name, your quality, and why you answer
This present summons?
EDGAR Know my name is lost,
By treason's tooth bare-gnawn and canker-bit. 125
Yet am I noble as the adversary
I come to cope.
95 ALBANY Which is that adversary? 127
96 EDGAR
What's he that speaks for Edmund, Earl of
Gloucester?
99 EDMUND
Himself. What say'st thou to him?
100 EDGAR Draw thy sword,
That, if my speech offend a noble heart,
Thy arm may do thee justice. Here is mine.
[He draws his sword.]
L Behold, it is the privilege of mine honors, 132
My oath, and my profession. I protest, 133
Maugre thy strength, place, youth, and eminence, 134
Despite thy victor sword and fire-new fortune, 135
7 Thy valor, and thy heart, thou art a traitor— 136
2 False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father,
Conspirant 'gainst this high-illustrious prince,
106 And from th'extremest upward of thy head 139
To the descent and dust below thy foot 140
7 A most toad-spotted traitor. Say thou no, 141
B This sword, this arm, and my best spirits are bent 142
U To prove upon thy heart, whereto I speak,
Thou liest.

77 **patrimony** inheritance 78 **the walls is thine** i.e., the citadel of my heart and body surrenders completely to you. 81 **let-alone** preventing, denying 82 **Half-blooded** Only partly of noble blood, bastard 85 **in thy attaint** i.e., as partner in your corruption and as one who has (unwittingly) provided the *attaint* or impeachment against you 89 **banns** public announcement of a proposed marriage. 90 **make . . . me** i.e., sue to me for permission 91 **An interlude!** A play; i.e., you are being melodramatic, or, what a farce this is! 95 **make prove** 96 **in nothing less** in no respect less guilty 99 **medicine** i.e., poison. 100 **What** Whoever 106 **single virtue** unaided prowess

113 **quality or degree** noble birth or rank. (Also in line 123.) 114 **lists** roster 122 **What** Who 125 **canker-bit** eaten as by the caterpillar. 127 **cope** encounter. 132 **of mine honors** i.e., of my knighthood 133 **profession** i.e., knighthood. 134 **Maugre** in spite of 135 **victor** victorious. **fire-new** newly minted 136 **heart** courage 139 **upward** top 140 **descent** lowest extreme 141 **toad-spotted** venomous, or having spots of infamy. **Say thou** If you say 142 **bent** prepared

- EDMUND In wisdom I should ask thy name. 144
 But since thy outside looks so fair and warlike,
 And that thy tongue some say of breeding breathes, 146
 What safe and nicely I might well delay 147
 By rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn. 148
 Back do I toss those treasons to thy head, 149
 With the hell-hated lie o'erwhelm thy heart, 150
 Which—for they yet glance by and scarcely bruise— 151
 This sword of mine shall give them instant way, 152
 Where they shall rest forever.—Trumpets, speak! 153
[He draws.] Alarums. Fight. [Edmund falls.]
- ALBANY *[to Edgar]*
 Save him, save him!
- GONERIL 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, 157
 Or with this paper shall I stopple it.—Hold, sir.
 Thou worse than any name, read thine own evil. 158
[He shows the letter.]
- GONERIL *[To Goneril]* 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?
- ALBANY Most monstrous! Oh!
 Know'st thou this paper?
- GONERIL Ask me not what I know. 159
Exit.
- ALBANY
 Go after her. She's desperate; govern her. 164
[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. But what art thou
 That hast this fortune on me? If thou'rt noble,
 I do forgive thee.
- EDGAR Let's exchange charity.
 I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund;
 If more, the more th' hast 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
- EDMUND Cost him his eyes.
 Th' hast spoken right. 'Tis true.
 The wheel is come full circle; I am here. 177
- ALBANY *[to Edgar]*
 Methought thy very gait did prophesy
 A royal nobleness. I must embrace thee. *[They embrace.]*
- EDGAR Let sorrow split my heart if ever I
 Did hate thee or thy father!
- ALBANY Worthy prince, I know't.
 Where have you hid yourself?
 How have you known the miseries of your father?
- EDGAR
 By nursing them, my lord. List a brief tale, 185
 And when 'tis told, oh, that my heart would burst!
 The bloody proclamation to escape 187
 That followed me so near—oh, our lives' sweetness, 188
 That we the pain of death would hourly die 189
 Rather than die at once!—taught me to shift 190
 Into a madman's rags, t'assume a semblance
 That very dogs disdained; and in this habit 192
 Met I my father with his bleeding rings,
 Their precious stones new lost; became his guide, 194
 Led him, begged for him, saved him from despair;
 Never—oh, fault!—revealed myself unto him
 Until some half hour past, when I was armed.
 Not sure, though hoping, of this good success, 198
 I asked his blessing, and from first to last
 Told him our pilgrimage. But his flawed heart— 200
 Alack, too weak the conflict to support—
 Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,
 Burst smilingly.
- EDMUND This speech of yours hath moved me,
 And shall perchance do good. But speak you on;
 You look as you had something more to say.
- ALBANY
 If there be more, more woeful, hold it in,
 For I am almost ready to dissolve, 207
 Hearing of this.
- EDGAR This would have seemed a period 208
 To such as love not sorrow; but another, 209
 To amplify too much, would make much more 210
 And top extremity. Whilst I 211
 Was big in clamor, came there in a man 212
 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

144 wisdom prudence 146 say smack, taste, indication 147 safe and nicely prudently and punctiliously 148 I . . . spurn i.e., I disdain to insist on my right to refuse combat with one of lower rank. 149 treasons . . . head i.e., accusations of treason in your teeth 150 hell-hated hated as hell is hated 151 Which . . . bruise i.e., which charges of treason—since as yet they merely glance off my armor and do no harm 152 give . . . way provide them an immediate pathway (to your heart) 153 Where . . . forever i.e., my victory in trial by combat will prove forever that the charges of treason apply to you. 154 Save Spare. (Albany wishes to spare Edmund's life so that he may confess and be found guilty.) 155 practice trickery, or (said sardonically) astute management 157 cozened tricked 158 stopple stop up. Hold, sir (Addressed to Edgar or, more probably, Edmund.) 164 govern restrain 168 fortune on victory over 169 charity forgiveness (for Edmund's wickedness toward Edgar and Edgar's having slain Edmund). 171 th' hast thou hast 173 pleasant pleasurable 175 got begot

177 The wheel . . . here (Alludes both to the wheel of fortune and to the idea of a completed circle whereby crime meets its appropriate punishment. Edmund sees that everything has at last come around to where it began.) 185 List Listen to 187 The . . . escape In order to escape the death-threatening proclamation 188–90 oh . . . at once! oh, the perversity of our attachment to our lives' sweetness, that we prefer to suffer continually the fear of death rather than die at once and be done with it! 192 habit garb 193 rings sockets 194 stones i.e., eyeballs 198 success outcome 200 flawed cracked 207 dissolve i.e., in tears 208 a period the limit 209–11 but . . . extremity i.e., but another sorrowful circumstance, adding to what is already too much, would increase it and exceed the limit. 212 big in clamor loud in my lamenting

- As he'd burst heaven, threw him on my father,
Told the most piteous tale of Lear and him
That ever ear received, which in recounting
His grief grew puissant, and the strings of life
Began to crack. Twice then the trumpets sounded,
And there I left him tranced.
- ALBANY But who was this?
EDGAR Kent, sir, the banished Kent, who in disguise
Followed his enemy king and did him service
Improper for a slave.
- Enter a Gentleman [with a bloody knife].*
- GENTLEMAN Help, help, oh, help!
EDGAR What kind of help?
ALBANY Speak, man.
EDGAR What means this bloody knife?
GENTLEMAN 'Tis hot, it smokes.
It came even from the heart of—Oh, 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.
- EDGAR Here comes Kent.
- Enter Kent.*
- ALBANY Produce the bodies, be they alive or dead.
[Exit Gentleman.]
This judgment of the heavens, that makes us tremble,
Touches us not with pity.—Oh, is this he?
[To Kent] The time will not allow the compliment
Which very manners urges.
- KENT I am come
To bid my king and master aye good night.
Is he not here?
- ALBANY Great thing of us forgot!
Speak, Edmund, where's the King? And where's
Cordelia?
Goneril and Regan's bodies [are] brought out.
See'st thou this object, Kent?
- KENT Alack, why thus?
EDMUND Yet Edmund was beloved.
The one the other poisoned for my sake
And after slew herself.
- ALBANY Even so. Cover their faces.
- 217 As as if. threw . . . father threw himself on my father's body
220 His i.e., Kent's. puissant powerful. strings of life heartstrings
222 tranced entranced, senseless. 224 his enemy king i.e., the king
who had rejected and banished him 227 smokes steams. 237 com-
pliment ceremony 238 Which . . . urges which common courtesy
requires. 239 aye good night farewell forever. (Kent believes he
himself is near death, his heartstrings having begun to crack.)
242 object sight
- 217 EDMUND I pant for life. Some good I mean to do,
Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send—
220 Be brief in it—to th' castle, for my writ
Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia.
Nay, send in time.
- 222 ALBANY Run, run, oh, run!
EDGAR To who, my lord? Who has the office? [To Edmund]
224 Send
Thy token of reprieve. 253
EDMUND Well thought on. Take my sword. The captain!
M Give it the Captain.
E EDGAR Haste thee, for thy life.
[Exit one with Edmund's sword.]
- L EDMUND He hath commission from thy wife and me
H To hang Cordelia in the prison and
O To lay the blame upon her own despair,
260 That she fordid herself. 260
R ALBANY The gods defend her! Bear him hence awhile.
N [Edmund is borne off.]
Enter Lear, with Cordelia in his arms; [Captain].
- ' LEAR Howl, howl, howl! Oh, you are men of stones!
M Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so
I That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone forever.
I I know when one is dead and when one lives;
C She's dead as earth. Lend me a looking glass;
H If that her breath will mist or stain the stone, 267
Why, then she lives.
- KENT Is this the promised end? 268
A EDGAR Or image of that horror?
E ALBANY Fall and cease! 269
LEAR
- L This feather stirs; she lives! If it be so,
239 It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows
That ever I have felt.
- 7 KENT [kneeling] O my good master!
LEAR
- 2 Prithee, away.
EDGAR 'Tis noble Kent, your friend.
- 242 O LEAR A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!
7 I might have saved her; now she's gone forever!
B Cordelia, Cordelia! Stay a little. Ha?
U What is't thou say'st? Her voice was ever soft,
Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman.
I killed the slave that was a-hanging thee.
- CAPTAIN 'Tis true, my lords, he did.
LEAR Did I not, fellow?

253 office commission. 260 fordid destroyed 267 stone crystal or
polished stone of which the mirror is made 268 Is . . . end? (Kent
may mean "Is this what all our hopes have come to?" Edgar replies
by invoking the Last Judgment.) 269 image representation. Fall
and cease! i.e., Let all things cease to be!

I have seen the day, with my good biting falchion
I would have made them skip. I am old now,
And these same crosses spoil me.—Who are you?
Mine eyes are not o’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’ll strike, and quickly too. He’s dead and rotten.

KENT

No, my good lord, I am the very man—

LEAR

I’ll see that straight.

KENT

That from your first of difference and decay
Have followed your sad steps—

LEAR

You are welcome hither.

KENT

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 is it
That we present us to him.

EDGAR

Very bootless.

Enter a Messenger.

MESSENGER Edmund is dead, my lord.

ALBANY That’s but a trifle here.

You lords and noble friends, know our intent:
What comfort to this great decay may come

281 *falchion* light sword 283 *crosses spoil me* adversities take away my strength. 284 *I’ll . . . straight* I’ll recognize you in a moment. 285–6 *If . . . behold* If Fortune were to brag of two persons whom she has subjected to the greatest fall from her favor into her hatred, Lear would have to be one of them. 287 *This . . . sight* i.e., My vision is clouding, or, this is a dismal spectacle. 288 *Caius* (Kent’s disguise name.) 292 *see that straight* attend to that in a moment. 293 *from . . . decay* from the beginning of your quarrel (with Cordelia) to your decline of fortune 295 *Nor . . . else* No, not I nor anyone else, or, I am the *very man* (line 291), him and no one else. 296 *fordone* destroyed 297 *desperately* in despair 299 *bootless* in vain. 303 *What . . . come* i.e., whatever means of comforting this ruined king and state of affairs may present themselves

281

Shall be applied. For us, we will resign,
During the life of this old majesty,

283

To him our absolute power; [*to Edgar and Kent*] you, to
your rights,

284

With boot and such addition as your honors

285

Have more than merited. All friends shall taste

286

The wages of their virtue, and all foes

The cup of their deservings.—Oh, see, see!

LEAR

And my poor fool is hanged! No, no, no life?

287

Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,

288

And thou no breath at all? Thou’lt come no more,

Never, never, never, never, never!

Pray you, undo this button. Thank you, sir.

Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,

Look there, look there!

He dies.

292

EDGAR

He faints.—My lord, my lord!

KENT

293

Break, heart, I prithee, break!

EDGAR

Look up, my lord.

KENT

Vex not his ghost. Oh, let him pass! He hates him

295

That would upon the rack of this tough world

296

Stretch him out longer.

EDGAR

He is gone indeed.

297

KENT

The wonder is he hath endured so long.

He but usurped his life.

ALBANY

299

Bear them from hence. Our present business

Is general woe. [*To Kent and Edgar*] Friends of my soul,
you twain

Rule in this realm, and the gored state sustain.

KENT

I have a journey, sir, shortly to go.

303

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

Shall never see so much nor live so long.

332

Exeunt, with a dead march.

304 *For As for* 307 *With . . . honors* with advantage and such further distinctions or titles as your honorable conduct in this war

311 *poor fool* i.e., Cordelia. (*Fool* is here a term of endearment.)

319 *ghost* departing spirit. 320 *rack* torture rack. (With suggestion,

in the Folio and quarto spelling, “wracke,” of shipwreck, disaster.)

327 *journey* i.e., to another world, to death 332.1 *Exeunt* (Presumably the dead bodies are borne out in procession.)