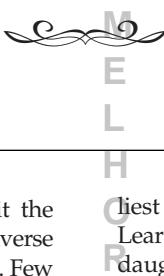

King Lear



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 chorric 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 pre-arranged 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 his 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 Grenada 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.

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King Lear
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[*Dramatis Personae*

KING LEAR	
GONERIL,	
REGAN,	} <i>Lear's daughters</i>
CORDELIA,	
DUKE OF ALBANY,	<i>Goneril's husband</i>
DUKE OF CORNWALL,	<i>Regan's husband</i>
KING OF FRANCE,	<i>Cordelia's suitor and husband</i>
DUKE OF BURGUNDY,	<i>suitors to Cordelia</i>
EARL OF KENT,	<i>later disguised as Caius</i>
EARL OF GLOUCESTER	
EDGAR,	<i>Gloucester's son and heir, later disguised as poor Tom</i>
EDMUND,	<i>Gloucester's bastard son</i>
SCENE: <i>Britain</i>]	
2	<i>Oswald, Goneril's steward</i>
3	<i>A KNIGHT serving King Lear</i>
4	<i>Lear's FOOL</i>
5	<i>CURAN, in Gloucester's household</i>
6	<i>GENTLEMEN</i>
7	<i>Three SERVANTS</i>
8	<i>OLD MAN, a tenant of Gloucester</i>
9	<i>Three MESSENGERS</i>
10	<i>A GENTLEMAN attending Cordelia as a Doctor</i>
11	<i>Two CAPTAINS</i>
12	<i>HERALD</i>
13	<i>Knights, Gentlemen, Attendants, Servants, Officers, Soldiers, Trumpeters</i>

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 bas-tardy, 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. 36

Give me the map there. [He takes a map.] Know that we have divided

1 In three our kingdom; and 'tis our fast intent 38
2 To shake all cares and business from our age,
3 Conferring them on younger strengths while we
4 Unburdened crawl toward death. Our son of
5 Cornwall,
6 And you, our no less loving son of Albany,
7 We have this hour a constant will to publish
8 Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife
9 May be prevented now. The princes, France and
10 Burgundy,

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

15 Since now we will divest us both of rule,
16 Interest of territory, cares of state—

17 Which of you shall we say doth love us most,
18 That we our largest bounty may extend

19 Where nature doth with merit challenge? Goneril,
20 Our eldest born, speak first.

GONERIL

Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter,
Dearer than eyesight, space, and liberty,

21 Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare,
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honor;

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

23 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,

24 With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads,
25 We make thee lady. To thine and Albany's issue

26 Be this perpetual.—What says our second daughter,
27 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

28 I find she names my very deed of love;
29 Only she comes too short, that I profess

30 Myself an enemy to all other joys
31 Which the most precious square of sense possesses,

32 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 **felicitate** made happy 78 **ponderous** weighty 81 **validity** value.
80 **pleasure** pleasing features 83 **least** youngest 84 **vines** vineyards.
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 marriage 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

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
As thou my sometime daughter.
78 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 Her father's heart from her. Call France. Who stirs? 126
Call Burgundy. [Exit one.]
M E Cornwall and Albany,
L H With my two daughters' dowers digest the third. 128
O R Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her. 129
O N I do invest you jointly with my power,
H O Preeminence, and all the large effects 131
R N That troop with majesty. Ourself by monthly course, 132
H O With reservation of an hundred knights 133
R N By you to be sustained, shall our abode
93 Make with you by due turns. Only we shall retain
H O The name and all th'addition to a king. 136
R N The sway, revenue, execution of the rest, 137
H O Belovèd sons, be yours, which to confirm,
R N This coronet part between you.
KENT Royal Lear, 139
97 Whom I have ever honored as my king,
H O Loved as my father, as my master followed,
R N As my great patron thought on in my prayers—
L EAR The bow is bent and drawn. Make from the shaft. 143
KENT Let it fall rather, though the fork invade 144
H O The region of my heart. Be Kent unmannerly
R N When Lear is mad. What wouldst thou do, old man?
L E Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak
H O When power to flattery bows?
R N To plainness honor's bound 149
L E When majesty falls to folly. Reserve thy state, 150
H O And in thy best consideration check 151
R N This hideous rashness. Answer my life my judgment, 152
72 110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134 135 136 137 138 139 140 141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149 150 151 152
116 **this** this time forth. **Scythian** (Scythians were famous in antiquity for savagery.) 117 **makes . . . messes** makes meals of his children 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. **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.
133 **Ourself** (The royal "we.") 134 **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 actually 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.	155	He'll shape his old course in a country new. <i>Exit.</i> 190
LEAR	Kent, on thy life, no more.		<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	Here's France and Burgundy, my noble lord.
LEAR	Out of my sight!	157	LEAR My lord of Burgundy,
KENT		158	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?
LEAR	See better, Lear, and let me still remain The true blank of thine eye.	160	BURGUNDY Most royal Majesty, I crave no more than hath Your Highness offered, Nor will you tender less.
KENT		164	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.
LEAR	Now, by Apollo—	170	BURGUNDY I know no answer.
KENT	Now, by Apollo, King,	171	LEAR Will you, with those infirmities she owes, Unfriended, new-adopted to our hate, Dowered with our curse and strangered with our
	Thou swear'st thy gods in vain.	172	oath,
LEAR	Oh, vassal! Miscreant!	173	Take her, or leave her?
	[<i>Laying his hand on his sword.</i>]	174	BURGUNDY Pardon me, royal sir.
ALBANY, CORNWALL	Dear sir, forbear.	175	180 Election makes not up in such conditions.
KENT			LEAR Then leave her, sir, for by the power that made me, I tell you all her wealth. [To France] For you, great King,
	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.	181	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.
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.	183	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
KENT	Fare thee well, King. Sith thus thou wilt appear, Freedom lives hence and banishment is here. [To Cordelia] The gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid,	187	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 forevouch'd affection
	That justly think'st and hast most rightly said! [To Regan and Goneril] And your large speeches may your deeds approve,	188	Fall into taint, which to believe of her
	That good effects may spring from words of love. Thus Kent, O princes, bids you all adieu.	190	190 shape . . . course follow his traditional plainspoken ways 191 <i>Flourish</i> 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 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

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

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.

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 . . . for-
tune 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

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. 269

231 Come, noble Burgundy.
235 *Flourish. Exeunt [all but France, Goneril, Regan,
and Cordelia].*

FRANCE Bid farewell to your sisters.

CORDELIA Ye jewels of our father, with washed eyes 272
Cordelia leaves you. I know you what you are,
And like a sister am most loath to call 274
Your faults as they are named. Love well our father. 275
To your professèd bosoms I commit him. 276
But yet, alas, stood I within his grace,
I would prefer him to a better place. 278
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, 282
And well are worth the want that you have wanted. 283

CORDELIA Time shall unfold what plighted cunning hides; 284
Who covers faults, at last shame them derides. 285
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. 295

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 298
but rash. Then must we look from his age to receive 299
not alone the imperfections of long-ingrained condi- 300
tion, but therewithal the unruly waywardness that in- 301
firm and choleric years bring with them.

REGAN Such unconstant starts are we like to have from 303
him as this of Kent's banishment.

B 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 cun-
ning 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-
ingrained 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 'twen 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 dispatch of it into your pocket? The quality of nothing hath not such need to hide itself. Let's see. Come, if it be nothing I shall not need spectacles.

EDMUND I beseech you, sir, pardon me. It is a letter from my brother, that I have not all o'erread; and for so much as I have perused, I find it not fit for your o'erlooking.

GLOUCESTER Give me the letter, sir.

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

GLOUCESTER 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.

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." 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?

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

GLOUCESTER You know the character to be your brother's?

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

GLOUCESTER It is his.

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

GLOUCESTER 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.

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 assay, 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 permitted. 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 fitting, 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 unstake 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 scoured by the sequent effects. Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide; in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked twixt son and father. This villain of mine comes under the prediction; there's son against father. The King falls from bias of nature; there's father against child. We have seen the best of our time. Machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders follow us disquietly to our graves. Find out this villain, Edmund; it shall lose thee nothing. Do it carefully. And the noble and truehearted Kent banished! His offense, honesty! 'Tis strange. *Exit.*

EDMUND This is the excellent foppery of the world, that

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 fit 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

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.

200 122–3 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 . . .

132 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 ¹⁶³ until some little time hath qualified the heat of his ¹⁶⁴ displeasure, which at this instant so rageth in him that with the mischief of your person it would scarcely ¹⁶⁶ allay. ¹⁶⁷

EDGAR Some villain hath done me wrong.

EDMUND That's my fear. I pray you, have a continent ¹⁶⁹ forbearance till the speed of his rage goes slower; and, ¹⁷⁰ as I say, retire with me to my lodging, from whence I will fitly bring you to hear my lord speak. Pray ye, go! ¹⁷² 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 ¹⁷⁷ have told you what I have seen and heard, but faintly, ¹⁷⁸ nothing like the image and horror of it. Pray you, ¹⁷⁹ away.

EDGAR Shall I hear from you anon?

EDMUND I do serve you in this business. ¹⁸⁰ 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 ¹⁸⁶ My practices ride easy. I see the business. Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit. ¹⁸⁷ All with me's meet that I can fashion fit. ¹⁸⁸ 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, ¹⁷
Not to be overruled. Idle old man, ¹⁸
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. ²¹
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, ²⁶
That I may speak. I'll write straight to my sister ²⁷
To hold my very course. Prepare for dinner. *Exeunt.*



1.4

Enter Kent [disguised].

KENT If but as well I other accents borrow ¹
That can my speech diffuse, my good intent ²
May carry through itself to that full issue ³
For which I razed my likeness. Now, banished Kent, ⁴
If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemned,
So may it come thy master, whom thou lov'st, ⁶
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. ⁸
[Exit an Attendant.]

[To Kent] How now, what art thou?

KENT A man, sir.
LEAR What dost thou profess? What wouldst thou with ¹¹ 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, ¹⁵ and to eat no fish. ¹⁶

LEAR What art thou?

KENT A very honest-hearted fellow, and as poor as the King. ¹⁷

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. [Exit one.]

Enter steward [Oswald].

You! You, sirrah, where's my daughter?
 OSWALD So please you— *Exit.*
 LEAR What says the fellow there? Call the clodpoll back. [Exit a knight.] 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. 71

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 whoreson dog, you slave, you cur!

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

LEAR Do you bandy looks with me, you rascal? 83
 [He strikes Oswald.]

OSWALD I'll not be stricken, my lord. 84

KENT Nor tripped neither, you base football player. 85
 [He trips up Oswald's heels.]

LEAR I thank thee, fellow. Thou serv'st me, and I'll love thee. 86

KENT Come, sir, arise, away! I'll teach you differences. 88
 Away, away! If you will measure your lubber's length 89
 again, tarry; but away! Go to. Have you wisdom? So. 90
 [He pushes Oswald out.]

LEAR Now, my friendly knave, I thank thee. There's earnest of thy service. [He gives Kent money.] 92

Enter Fool.

FOOL Let me hire him too. Here's my coxcomb. 93
 [Offering Kent his cap.]

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

FOOL [to Kent] Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb. 95

KENT Why, Fool?

FOOL Why? For taking one's part that's out of favor. 98
 Nay, an thou canst not smile as the wind sits, thou'l catch cold shortly. There, take my coxcomb. Why, this fellow has banished two on 's daughters and did the third a blessing against his will. If thou follow him, thou must needs wear my coxcomb.—How now, nuncle? 101
 7 Would I had two coxcombs and two daughters. 102

60 LEAR Why, my boy?

20
7

⁶⁶ 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.) ⁹¹ 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.) ¹⁰¹ on 's of his ¹⁰² 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 105 coxcombs myself. There's mine; beg another of thy 106 daughters. 107

LEAR Take heed, sirrah—the whip.

FOOL Truth's a dog must to kennel. He must be 108 whipped out, when the Lady Brach may stand by th' 110 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 127 gave me nothing for't. Can you make no use of nothing, nuncle?

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

FOOL [to Kent] Prithee, tell him; so much the rent of his 132 land comes to. He will not believe a fool.

LEAR A bitter fool!

FOOL Dost know the difference, my boy, between a 134 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 gibes because it is so true.) 116 **Have . . . showest** don't display your wealth ostentatiously 118 **owest own** 119 **goest** i.e., on foot. (Travel unostentatiously on horseback, not afoot.) 120 **Learn** i.e., listen to. 121 **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** immediately 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 150 I had a monopoly out, they would have part on't. And 151 ladies too, they will not let me have all the fool to myself; they'll be snatching. Nuncle, give me an egg and 153 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 156 up the meat, the two crowns of the egg. When thou 157 clovest thy crown i'th' middle and gav'st away both parts, thou bor'st thine ass on thy back o'er the dirt. 159

Thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown when thou 161 gav'st thy golden one away. If I speak like myself in 162 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 164
And know not how their wits to wear, 165
Their manners are so apish." 166

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 169 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 174
And go the fools among."

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

LEAR An you lie, sirrah, we'll have you whipped. 178

FOOL I marvel what kin thou and thy daughters are. They'll have me whipped for speaking true, thou'll 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 monopolize 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 corrupt 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
195 This admiration, sir, is much o'th' savor
196 Of other your new pranks. I do beseech you
197 To understand my purposes aright.
198 As you are old and reverend, should be wise.
199 Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires,
200 Men so disordered, so debauched and bold
201 That this our court, infected with their manners,
202 Shows like a riotous inn. Epicurism and lust
203 Makes it more like a tavern or a brothel
204 Than a graced palace. The shame itself doth speak
205 For instant remedy. Be then desired,
206 By her that else will take the thing she begs,
207 A little to disquantity your train,
208 And the remainders that shall still depend
209 To be such men as may besort your age,
210 Which know themselves and you.

211 LEAR Darkness and devils! 249
212 Saddle my horses! Call my train together! [Exit one.] 250
213 Degenerate bastard, I'll not trouble thee.
214 Yet have I left a daughter.

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

Enter Albany.

LEAR
217 Woe, that too late repents!—Oh, sir, are you come? 255
218 Is it your will? Speak, sir.—Prepare my horses.
219 [Exit one.]

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

ALBANY
223 Pray, sir, be patient.
LEAR [to Goneril] Detested kite, thou liest! 261
224 My train are men of choice and rarest parts,
225 That all particulars of duty know
226 And in the most exact regard support
227 The worships of their name. Oh, most small fault,

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 [striking his head] that let thy folly in		She'll flay thy wolvish 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.	
ALBANY		<i>Exit.</i>	
My lord, I am guiltless as I am ignorant		GONERIL [<i>to Albany</i>] Do you mark that?	309
Of what hath moved you.		ALBANY	
LEAR	It may be so, my lord.—	I cannot be so partial, Goneril,	
Hear, Nature, hear! Dear goddess, hear!		To the great love I bear you—	311
Suspend thy purpose if thou didst intend		GONERIL	
To make this creature fruitful!		Pray you, content.—What, Oswald, ho!	
Into her womb convey sterility;		[<i>To the Fool</i>] You, sir, more knave than fool, after your	
Dry up in her the organs of increase,		master.	
And from her derivate body never spring		FOOL Nuncle Lear, nuncle Lear! Tarry, take the Fool	314
A babe to honor her! If she must teem,		with thee.	315
Create her child of spleen, that it may live		279 A fox, when one has caught her,	
And be a thwart disnatured torment to her!		280 And such a daughter	
Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth,		282 Should sure to the slaughter,	318
With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks,		283 If my cap would buy a halter.	319
Turn all her mother's pains and benefits		284 So the Fool follows after.	
To laughter and contempt, that she may feel		<i>Exit.</i>	
How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is		GONERIL	
To have a thankless child! Away, away!		This man hath had good counsel. A hundred knights?	321
<i>Exit [with Kent and the rest of Lear's followers].</i>		Tis politic and safe to let him keep	322
ALBANY	Now, gods that we adore, whereof comes this?	At point a hundred knights—yes, that on every	
GONERIL	Never afflict yourself to know more of it,	dream,	323
But let his disposition have that scope		Each buzz, each fancy, each complaint, dislike,	324
As dotage gives it.		He may enguard his dotage with their powers	325
<i>Enter Lear.</i>		And hold our lives in mercy.—Oswald, I say!	326
LEAR	What, fifty of my followers at a clap?	ALBANY Well, you may fear too far.	327
	Within a fortnight?	GONERIL Safer than trust too far.	
ALBANY	What's the matter, sir?	292 Let me still take away the harms I fear,	329
LEAR	I'll tell thee. [<i>To Goneril</i>] Life and death! I am ashamed	293 Not fear still to be taken. I know his heart.	330
	That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus,	294 What he hath uttered I have writ my sister.	
	That these hot tears, which break from me perforce,	295 If she sustain him and his hundred knights	
	Should make thee worth them. Blasts and fogs upon	296 When I have showed th'unfitness—	
	thee!	<i>Enter steward [Oswald].</i>	
	Th'untended woundings of a father's curse	How now, Oswald?	
	Pierce every sense about thee! Old fond eyes,	What, have you writ that letter to my sister?	
	Beweep this cause again, I'll pluck ye out	OSWALD Ay, madam.	
	And cast you, with the waters that you loose,	GONERIL	
		Take you some company and away to horse.	
267-8 Which . . . place which, like a powerful mechanical con-		Inform her full of my particular fear,	
trivance, wrenched my natural affection away from where it		And thereto add such reasons of your own	
belonged 269 gall bitterness. 271 dear precious 279 derivate		As may compact it more. Get you gone,	339
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 untended 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 attasked for want of wisdom
Than praised for harmful mildness.

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

GONERIL Nay, then—

ALBANY Well, well, th' event.

Exeunt. 348

◆

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?

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. 51

◆

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. 8

341 milky . . . course effeminate and gentle way 342 under pardon if you'll excuse my saying so 343 attasked 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.

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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. 8

30–1 Why, to . . . case i.e., The snail's head and horns are unendangered 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 Expedited 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

14 'Gainst parricides did all the thunder bend, 45
Spoke with how manifold and strong a bond
The child was bound to th' father; sir, in fine, 47
Seeing how loathly opposite I stood 48
To his unnatural purpose, in fell motion 49
With his prepared sword he charges home 50
My unprovided body, latched mine arm; 51
And when he saw my best alarumed spirits, 52
Bold in the quarrel's right, roused to th'encounter, 53
Or whether ghasted by the noise I made, 54
Full suddenly he fled.

GLOUCESTER Let him fly far. 55

Not in this land shall he remain uncaught;
And found—dispatch. The noble Duke my master, 57

My worthy arch and patron, comes tonight. 58

24 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130 131 132 133 134 135 136 137 138 139 140 141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149 150 151 152 153 154 155 156 157 158 159 160 161 162 163 164 165 166 167 168 169 170 171 172 173 174 175 176 177 178 179 180 181 182 183 184 185 186 187 188 189 190 191 192 193 194 195 196 197 198 199 200 201 202 203 204 205 206 207 208 209 210 211 212 213 214 215 216 217 218 219 220 221 222 223 224 225 226 227 228 229 230 231 232 233 234 235 236 237 238 239 240 241 242 243 244 245 246 247 248 249 250 251 252 253 254 255 256 257 258 259 260 261 262 263 264 265 266 267 268 269 270 271 272 273 274 275 276 277 278 279 280 281 282 283 284 285 286 287 288 289 290 291 292 293 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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 GLOUCESTER I serve you, madam. 130

126 E Your Graces are right welcome. 127 *Flourish. Exeunt.*



2.2

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

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

KENT Ay.

OSWALD Where may we set our horses?

98 KENT I'th' mire.

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

100 KENT I love thee not.

OSWALD Why then, I care not for thee.

101 KENT If I had thee in Lipsbury pinfold, I would make 9
thee care for me.

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

103 KENT Fellow, I know thee. 12

104 OSWALD What dost thou know me for?

105 KENT A knave, a rascal, an eater of broken meats; 14
106 a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, 15
107 hundred-pound, filthy worsted-stocking knave; a 16
108 lily-livered, action-taking, whoreson, glass-gazing, 17
superserviceable, finical rogue; one-trunk-inheriting 18
slave; one that wouldst be a bawd in way of good ser- 19
vice, and art nothing but the composition of a knave, 20
beggar, coward, pander, and the son and heir of a

7

112 222 **poise weight** 125 **differences** quarrels. **which** which letters
113 126 **from our home** while still at our palace in Cornwall. 127 **attend**
0 **dispatch** wait to be dispatched. 130 **the instant use** immediate
attention.

7.2. 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 Lips-**

bury 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-infatuated, 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! 38

KENT Strike, you slave! Stand, rogue, stand, you neat slave, strike! [He beats him.] 41

OSWALD Help, ho! Murder! Murder! 42

Enter Bastard [Edmund, with his rapier drawn], Cornwall, Regan, Gloucester, servants.

EDMUND How now, what's the matter? Part! 44

KENT With you, goodman boy, an you please! Come, I'll flesh ye. Come on, young master. 45

GLoucester Weapons? Arms? What's the matter here? 46

CORNWALL Keep peace, upon your lives! [Kent and Oswald are parted.] He dies that strikes again. What is the matter? 47

REGAN The messengers from our sister and the King. 48

CORNWALL What's your difference? Speak. 49

OSWALD I am scarce in breath, my lord. 50

KENT No marvel, you have so bestirred your valor. You cowardly rascal, nature disclaims in thee. A tailor made thee. 51

CORNWALL Thou art a strange fellow. A tailor make a man? 52

KENT A tailor, sir. A stonemason or a painter could not have made him so ill, though they had been but two years o' th' trade. 53

CORNWALL Speak yet, how grew your quarrel? 54

OSWALD This ancient ruffian, sir, whose life I have spared at suit of his gray beard— 55

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) calflike. (*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

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, 71

Who wears no honesty. Such smiling rogues as these, 72

Like rats, oft bite the holy cords awtain 73

Which are too intrinse t'unloose; smooth every 74

passion 75

That in the natures of their lords rebel, 76

Bring oil to fire, snow to their colder moods, 77

Renege, affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks 78

With every gale and vary of their masters, 79

Knowing naught, like dogs, but following.— 80

A plague upon your epileptic visage! 81

Smile you my speeches, as I were a fool? 82

Goose, an I had you upon Sarum plain, 83

I'd drive ye cackling home to Camelot. 84

CORNWALL What, art thou mad, old fellow? 85

GLoucester How fell you out? Say that. 86

KENT No contraries hold more antipathy 87

Than I and such a knave. 88

CORNWALL Why dost thou call him knave? What is his fault? 89

KENT His countenance likes me not. 90

CORNWALL No more, perchance, does mine, nor his, nor hers. 91

KENT Sir, 'tis my occupation to be plain: 92

I have seen better faces in my time 93

Than stands on any shoulder that I see 94

Before me at this instant. 95

CORNWALL This is some fellow 96

Who, having been praised for bluntness, doth affect 97

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** flattery, 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** naysay 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

A saucy roughness, and constrains the garb Quite from his nature. He cannot flatter, he; An honest mind and plain, he must speak truth! An they will take't, so; if not, he's plain. These kind of knaves I know, which in this plainness Harbor more craft and more corrupter ends Than twenty silly-ducking observants That stretch their duties nicely.	98 99 100 101 102 103 104 105	You stubborn, ancient knave, you reverend braggart, 128 We'll teach you.
KENT		KENT Sir, I am too old to learn. Call not your stocks for me. I serve the King, On whose employment I was sent to you. You shall do small respect, show too bold malice Against the grace and person of my master, Stocking his messenger.
CORNWALL	106 107 108	CORNWALL Fetch forth the stocks! As I have life and honor, There shall he sit till noon.
KENT	109	REGAN Till noon? Till night, my lord, and all night too.
CORNWALL	110	M E L H O R N , M I C H A L E G L O U C E S T E R Why, madam, if I were your father's dog You should not use me so.
KENT	111	REGAN Sir, being his knave, I will.
CORNWALL	112	CORNWALL This is a fellow of the selfsame color Our sister speaks of.—Come, bring away the stocks!
KENT	113	141
OSWALD	114	142 Stocks brought out.
CORNWALL	115	GLOUCESTER Let me beseech Your Grace not to do so.
KENT	116	His fault is much, and the good King his master Will check him for't. Your purposed low correction
CORNWALL	117	143 Is such as basest and contemned'st wretches 144 For pilferings and most common trespasses 145 Are punished with. The King must take it ill 146 That he, so slightly valued in his messenger, Should have him thus restrained.
CORNWALL	118	CORNWALL I'll answer that.
REGAN	119	REGAN My sister may receive it much more worse
CORNWALL	120	To have her gentleman abused, assaulted, For following her affairs. Put in his legs.
KENT	121	[<i>Kent is put in the stocks.</i>]
CORNWALL	122	E Come, my good lord, away. Exeunt [all but Gloucester and Kent].
REGAN	123	GLOUCESTER I am sorry for thee, friend. 'Tis the Duke's pleasure, Whose disposition, all the world well knows, Will not be rubbed nor stopped. I'll entreat for thee.
CORNWALL	124	7 KENT 157
KENT	125	2 Pray, do not, sir. I have watched and traveled hard.
CORNWALL	126	2 Some time I shall sleep out; the rest I'll whistle.
KENT	127	0 A good man's fortune may grow out at heels.
CORNWALL	128	7 GLOUCESTER 160 Give you good morrow!
KENT	129	B The Duke's to blame in this. 'Twill be ill taken. Exit.
CORNWALL	130	U
KENT	131	
REGAN	132	
CORNWALL	133	
KENT	134	
CORNWALL	135	
KENT	136	
CORNWALL	137	
KENT	138	
CORNWALL	139	
KENT	140	
CORNWALL	141	
KENT	142	
CORNWALL	143	
KENT	144	
CORNWALL	145	
KENT	146	
CORNWALL	147	
KENT	148	
CORNWALL	149	
KENT	150	
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CORNWALL	153	
KENT	154	
CORNWALL	155	
KENT	156	
CORNWALL	157	
KENT	158	
CORNWALL	159	
KENT	160	
CORNWALL	161	

98–9 **constrains . . . nature** i.e., distorts plainness quite from its true purpose so that it becomes instead a way of deceiving the listener.
 99 **He . . . he** He professes to be one who abhors the use of flattering speech. (Said sardonically.) 101 **An . . . plain** If people will take his rudeness, fine; if not, his excuse is that he speaks plain truth.
 104–5 **Than . . . nicely** than twenty foolishly bowing, obsequious courtiers who outdo themselves in the punctilious performance of their courtly duties. 106 **Sir, in good faith** (Kent assumes the wordy mannerisms of courtly flattery.) 107 **th'allowance** the approval. **aspect** (1) countenance (2) astrological position 108 **influence** astrological power 109 **Phoebus' front** i.e., the sun's forehead 111–14 **He . . . to't** The man who used plain speech to you craftily (see lines 102–5) and thereby taught you to suspect plain speakers of being deceitful was in fact a plain rascal, which part I will not play, much as it would please me to incur your displeasure if speaking thus would have that effect. (Kent would prefer to displease Cornwall, since Cornwell is pleased only by flatterers, and Kent has assumed until now that plain speech was the best way to offend, but he now argues mockingly that he can no longer speak plainly, since his honest utterance would be interpreted as duplicity.) 117 **late** recently 118 **upon his misconstruction** as a result of the King's misunderstanding (me) 119 **When . . . displeasure** whereupon Kent, in cahoots with the King and his party, and wishing to gratify the King's anger at me 120 **being down, insulted** when I was down, he exulted over me 121–2 **And put . . . him** and acted with a bravado that earned him an accolade 123 **For . . . self-subdued** for assailing one (i.e., myself) who chose not to resist 124 **And . . . exploit** and, in the excitement of his first success in this fearless deed. (Said ironically.) 126–7 **None . . . fool** i.e., You never find any rogues and cowards of this sort who do not outdo the blustering Ajax in their boasting.

128 **reverend** (because old) 133 **grace** sovereignty, royal grace
 139 **should** would 140 **being** since you are 141 **color** complexion, character
 142 **away** along 145 **check** rebuke, correct 146 **contemned'st** most despised 150 **answer** be answerable for
 157 **rubbed** hindered, obstructed. (A term from bowls.)
 158 **watched** gone sleepless 160 **A . . . heels** i.e., Even good men suffer decline in fortune at times. (To be out at heels is literally to be threadbare, coming through one's stockings.) 161 **Give you** i.e., God give you

KENT

Good King, that must approve the common saw,
Thou out of heaven's benediction com'st
To the warm sun! [He takes out a letter.]

Approach, thou beacon to this under globe,
That by thy comfortable beams I may
Peruse this letter. Nothing almost sees miracles
But misery. I know 'tis from Cordelia,
Who hath most fortunately been informed
Of my obscurèd course, "and shall find time
From this enormous state, seeking to give
Losses their remedies." All weary and o'erwatched,
Take vantage, heavy eyes, not to behold
This shameful lodging.
Fortune, good night. Smile once more; turn thy wheel!
[He sleeps.]

163 166 167 168 169 171 172 173 174 175 176

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

18 19 20 21



[2.4]

Enter Lear, Fool, and Gentleman.

LEAR

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

1

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
the heads, dogs and bears by th' neck, monkeys by
th' loins, and men by th' legs. When a man's over-
lusty at legs, then he wears wooden netherstocks.

7

LEAR

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

KENT

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

12

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

2

To do upon respect such violent outrage.

3

Resolve me with all modest haste which way

4

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

7

2

0

7

B

U

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 cruel
(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

[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. Whilst 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 numbed and mortified 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 **obscure** 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. mortified deadened 16 wooden pricks
skewers 17 object spectacle. low lowly

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 dolors 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?

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** **dolors** 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 *hystera*, womb, was thought to be produced by vapors ascending from the uterus or abdomen.) **62** **chance** chances it **63** **An If**

26 **FOOL** We'll set thee to school to an ant to teach thee **66**
27 there's no laboring i'th' winter. All that follow their **67**
28 noses are led by their eyes but blind men, and there's **68**
29 not a nose among twenty but can smell him that's **69**
30 stinking. Let go thy hold when a great wheel runs **70**
 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.

32 That sir which serves and seeks for gain,
33 And follows but for form,
34 Will pack when it begins to rain **78**
35 And leave thee in the storm.
36 But I will tarry; the fool will stay,
37 And let the wise man fly.
38 The knave turns fool that runs away; **82**
39 The fool no knave, pardie. **83**

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LEAR *Enter Lear and Gloucester.*
46 **KENT** Where learned you this, Fool?
47 **FOOL** Not i'th' stocks, fool.
48 **LEAR** Deny to speak with me? They are sick? They are
49 weary?
50 They have traveled all the night? Mere fetches,
51 The images of revolt and flying off. **87**
52 Fetch me a better answer. **88**

53 **GLoucester** My dear lord,
54 You know the fiery quality of the Duke,
55 How unremovable and fixed he is
56 In his own course.

57 **LEAR** Vengeance! Plague! Death! Confusion! **93**
58 Fiery? What quality? Why, Gloucester, Gloucester,
59 I'd speak with the Duke of Cornwall and his wife.
60 **GLoucester** Well, my good lord, I have informed them so.
61 **LEAR** Informed them? Dost thou understand me, man?
62 **GLoucester** Ay, my good lord.

63 **LEAR** The King would speak with Cornwall. The dear father
64 Would with his daughter speak, commands, tends
65 service. **100**
66 Are they informed of this? My breath and blood! **101**
67 Fiery? The fiery Duke? Tell the hot Duke that—
68 No, but not yet. Maybe he is not well.
69 Infirmity doth still neglect all office **104**
70 Whereto our health is bound; we are not ourselves **105**

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** pretenses, 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. [Looking at Kent] 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.

1384 GLOUCESTER I would have all well betwixt you. *Exit.*

1385 LEAR Oh, me, my heart, my rising heart! But down!

1386 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.

1387 Enter Cornwall, Regan, Gloucester, [and]
servants.

1388 LEAR Good morrow to you both.

1389 CORNWALL Hail to Your Grace!

Kent here set at liberty.

1390 REGAN I am glad to see Your Highness.

1391 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 adulteress. [To Kent] 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.

[He lays his hand on his heart.]

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

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 *brother* is related to the cockney wife in that
they are both misguidedly tenderhearted.) 130–1 **I would . . . adul-
tress** i.e., I would cease to honor your dead mother's tomb, since it
would surely contain the dead body of an adulteress. (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

REGAN

I pray you, sir, take patience. I have hope
137
You less know how to value her desert
138
Than she to scant her duty.

139 LEAR Say? How is that?

140 REGAN

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

145 LEAR My curses on her!

146 REGAN Oh, sir, you are old;

Nature in you stands on the very verge
147 Of his confine. You should be ruled and led
148 By some discretion that discerns your state
149 Better than you yourself. Therefore, I pray you,
That to our sister you do make return.
Say you have wronged her.

150 LEAR Ask her forgiveness?
Do you but mark how this becomes the house:
[Kneeling] "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."

151 REGAN Good sir, no more. These are unsightly tricks.
Return you to my sister.

152 LEAR [rising] Never, Regan.

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

158 CORNWALL Fie, sir, fie!

159 LEAR

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

163 REGAN O the blest gods! So will you wish on me
When the rash mood is on.

164 LEAR

No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse.
Thy tender-hafted nature shall not give
165 Thee o'er to harshness. Her eyes are fierce, but thine
166 Do comfort and not burn. 'Tis not in thee
167 To grudge my pleasures, to cut off my train,

168 7 2 0 7 B
169 137–9 **I have . . . duty** I trust this is more a matter of your undervaluing
170 her merit than of her falling slack in her duty to you. 139 **Say?**
171 Come again? 147–8 **Nature . . . confine** i.e., Your life has almost
172 completed its allotted scope. 149 **By . . . state** by some discreet person
173 who understands your situation and condition 153 **becomes the**
174 **house** suits domestic decorum and the royal family line. (Said with
175 bitter irony.) 159 **abated** deprived 163 **ingrateful top** ungrateful
176 head. 164 **taking** infectious 167 **fen-sucked** (It was supposed that
177 the sun sucked up poisons from fens or marshes.) 168 **To fall and**
178 **blister** to fall upon her and blister her beauty. 172 **tender-hafted**
179 gentle. (Literally, set in a tender *haft*, i.e., handle or frame.)

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	I am now from home, and out of that provision Which shall be needful for your entertainment.	206
REGAN	177	LEAR	
Who put my man i' th' stocks?	179	Return to her? And fifty men dismissed?	
CORNWALL	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—	210
REGAN	182	Necessity's sharp pinch. Return with her? Why, the hot-blooded France, that dowerless took	213
I know't—my sister's. This approves her letter, That she would soon be here.	184	Our youngest born—I could as well be brought To knee his throne and, squirelike, pension beg To keep base life afoot. Return with her?	215
Enter steward [Oswald].	186	M Persuade me rather to be slave and sumpter	217
Is your lady come?	187	E To this detested groom. <i>[He points to Oswald.]</i>	
LEAR	188	GONERIL At your choice, sir.	
This is a slave, whose easy-borrowed pride Dwells in the fickle grace of her he follows.— Out, varlet, from my sight!	189	LEAR I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad. I will not trouble thee, my child. Farewell.	
CORNWALL	190	H We'll no more meet, no more see one another.	
LEAR	191	OR But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter—	
Who stocked my servant? Regan, I have good hope Thou didst not know on't.	192	N 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	225
Enter Goneril.	193	IN In my corrupted blood. But I'll not chide thee; Let shame come when it will, I do not call it.	227
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! [To Goneril] Art not ashamed to look upon this beard?	194	ICH I do not bid the thunder-bearer shoot, Nor tell tales of thee to high-judging Jove.	228
[Goneril and Regan join hands.]	195	M Mend when thou canst; be better at thy leisure. I can be patient. I can stay with Regan, I and my hundred knights.	229
Oh, Regan, will you take her by the hand?	196	REGAN Not altogether so.	
GONERIL	197	MICH 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—	234
Why not by th' hand, sir? How have I offended? All's not offense that indiscretion finds And dotage terms so.	198	LEAR But she knows what she does.	236
LEAR	199	REGAN Is this well spoken?	
O sides, you are too tough! Will you yet hold?—How came my man i' th' stocks?	200	L I dare avouch it, sir. What, fifty followers? Is it not well? What should you need of more?	239
CORNWALL	201	7 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	241
I set him there, sir; but his own disorders Deserved much less advancement.	202	2 Hold amity? 'Tis hard, almost impossible.	
LEAR	203	GONERIL	
REGAN	204	0 Why might not you, my lord, receive attendance From those that she calls servants, or from mine?	
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.	205	7 REGAN	
	206	B Why not, my lord? If then they chanced to slack ye, We could control them. If you will come to me—	247
	207	I For now I spy a danger—I entreat you	248

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 **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 dosage of old age deem offensive is actually so. 198 **sides** i.e., sides of the chest (stretched by the swelled 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 embossed 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

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 curlèd 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 outstorm
 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 pertinent 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
 This office to you.

41

42

GENTLEMAN

I will talk further with you.

KENT

No, do not.

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

45

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

47

48

M 12 I will go seek the King.

E GENTLEMAN

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

L KENT

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

52

H pain

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

53

O Holla the other.

Exeunt [separately].

54

R



3.2

Storm still. Enter Lear and Fool.

M LEAR

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

3

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!

4

Crack nature's molds, all germens spill at once
 That makes ingrateful man!

5

Fool

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

10

LEAR

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

15

16

18

B

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 **hurricanes** 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 pothor o'er our heads,
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch,
That hast within thee undivulgèd 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

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 pothor hubbub, turmoil 54 simular pretender 55 Caitiff Wretch 56 convenient seeming deception fitted to the purpose

Has practiced on man's life! Close pent-up guilts, 57
Rive your concealing continents and cry 58
These dreadful summoners grace! I am a man 59
More sinned against than sinning.

21 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—

26 27 More harder than the stones whereof 'tis raised,
28 Which even but now, demanding after you, 65
29 Denied me to come in—return and force
30 Their scanted courtesy.

31 LEAR
My wits begin to turn.
32 Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy? Art cold?
I am cold myself.—Where is this straw, my fellow?
33 The art of our necessities is strange,
34 And can make vile things precious. Come, your
35 hovel.—
36 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." 74

40 LEAR
True, boy.—Come, bring us to this hovel.

41 MICHAE
Exit [with Kent].

FOOL This is a brave night to cool a courtesan. I'll speak 79
a prophecy ere I go:

42 43
When priests are more in word than matter; 81
When brewers mar their malt with water; 82
When nobles are their tailors' tutors, 83
No heretics burned but wenches' suitors, 84
Then shall the realm of Albion 85
Come to great confusion.

44 45
When every case in law is right, 87
No squire in debt, nor no poor knight;
When slanders do not live in tongues, 89
Nor cutpurses come not to throngs;

46 47
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.

4

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.

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.

4

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.
94	KENT	Good my lord, enter here.
95	LEAR	Wilt break my heart?
	KENT	I had rather break mine own. Good my lord, enter.
	LEAR	Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm Invades us to the skin. So 'tis to thee, But where the greater malady is fixed 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,
3	M	The body's delicate. This tempest in my mind
	E	Doth from my senses take all feeling else Save what beats there. Filial ingratitude!
8	L	Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand For lifting food to't? But I will punish home.
	H	No, I will weep no more. In such a night To shut me out? Pour on; I will endure.
11	O	In such a night as this? Oh, Regan, Goneril,
12	R	Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all—
13	,	Oh, that way madness lies; let me shun that!
14	M	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 On things would hurt me more. But I'll go in. [To the Fool] In, boy; go first. You houseless poverty— Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.
	M	<i>Exit [Fool into the hovel].</i>
23	I	Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are, That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm, How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides, Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you From seasons such as these? Oh, I have ta'en Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;
24	C	Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel, That thou mayst shake the superflux to them And show the heavens more just.
21	H	EDGAR [within] Fathom and half, fathom and half!
	A	Poor Tom!
23	E	<i>Enter Fool [from the hovel].</i>
24	L	
7		
2		
2		
0		
0		
7		

Enter Fool [from the hovel].

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' 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 importunate needs can assert themselves. 15 as as if 16 home 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 winded full of openings like windows and loopholes 33 Take physic, pomp Cure yourself, O distempered great ones 35 pre-flux superfluity. (With suggestion of *flux*, "bodily discharge," introduced 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? Come forth.

Enter Edgar [disguised as a madman].

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

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

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

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

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

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

KENT He hath no daughters, sir.

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

43 grumble mutter, murble 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 madmen.

EDGAR Take heed o'th' foul fiend. Obey thy parents; keep thy word's justice; swear not; commit not with man's sworn spouse; set not thy sweet heart on 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 90 deeply, dice dearly, and in woman out-paramoured 91 the Turk. False of heart, light of ear, bloody of hand; 92 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 95 plackets, thy pen from lenders' books, and defy the 96 foul fiend. Still through the hawthorn blows the cold 97 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 thy uncovered body this extremity of the skies. Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou ow'st the 102 worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, 103 the cat no perfume. Ha! Here's three on 's are sophisticated; thou art the thing itself. Unaccommodated 104 man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal 105 as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! Come, unbutton 106 here. *[Tearing off his clothes.]*

FOOL Prithee, nuncle, be contented; 'tis a naughty night 109 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?) 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

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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, squinnies 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
 toad, the tadpole, the wall newt and the water; that in 129
 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
 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 **squinnies** 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*.) 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 learnèd Theban.

[To Edgar] What is your study?

155

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.]

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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

[To Edgar] Noble philosopher, your company.

EDGAR

Tom's a-cold.

GLOUCESTER [to Edgar]

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

LEAR [starting toward the hovel]

Come, let's in all.

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.

7

LEAR Come, good Athenian.

179

2

GLOUCESTER No words, no words! Hush.

EDGAR

Child Rowland to the dark tower came; 181
 His word was still, "Fie, foh, and fum, 182

7

I smell the blood of a British man."

Exeunt. 183

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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** 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 a work by a reprobable 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

7 To have a thousand with red burning spits

8 Come hizzing in upon 'em—

9 EDGAR The foul fiend bites my back.

10 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.

11 LEAR

12 It shall be done; I will arraign them straight.

13 [To Edgar] Come, sit thou here, most learnèd justicer.

14 [To the Fool] Thou, sapient sir, sit here. Now, you she-foxes!

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

16 [Sings.] "Come o'er the burn, Bessy, to me—"

17 FOOL [sings]

18 Her boat hath a leak,

19 And she must not speak

20 Why she dares not come over to thee.

21 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.

22 KENT [to Lear]

23 How do you, sir? Stand you not so amazed.

24 Will you lie down and rest upon the cushions?

25 LEAR

26 I'll see their trial first. Bring in their evidence.

27 [To Edgar] Thou robèd man of justice, take thy place;

28 [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 hizzing 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.) 31 white unsmoked (contrasted with black angel, a demon). 32 Croak (Refers to the rumbling in Edgar's stomach, denoting hunger.) 33 amazed bewildered. 35 their evidence the witnesses against them. 36 robèd 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; 42
 And for one blast of thy minikin mouth,
 Thy sheep shall take no harm. 44
 Purr the cat is gray. 45

LEAR Arraign her first; 'tis Goneril, I here take my oath
 before this honorable assembly, kicked the poor King
 her father. 47

FOOL Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril?
 LEAR She cannot deny it.
 FOOL Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint stool. 51
 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? 53

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
 curs! 63

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. 65

Do de, de, de. Sessa! Come, march to wakes and fairs
 and market towns. Poor Tom, thy horn is dry. 73

LEAR Then let them anatomize Regan; see what breeds
 about her heart. Is there any cause in nature that makes
 these hard hearts? [To Edgar] You, sir, I entertain 75

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]
 Come hither, friend. Where is the King my master?

KENT Here, sir, but trouble him not; his wits are gone.
 GLOUCESTER Good friend, I prithee, take him in thy arms.
 I have o'erheard a plot of death upon him. 89
 There is a litter ready; lay him in't
 And drive toward Dover, friend, where thou shalt
 meet
 Both welcome and protection. Take up thy master.
 If thou shouldst dally half an hour, his life,
 With thine and all that offer to defend him,
 Stand in assurèd loss. Take up, take up,
 And follow me, that will to some provision
 Give thee quick conduct.

KENT Oppressed nature sleeps. 97
 This rest might yet have balmèd thy broken sinews,
 Which, if convenience will not allow,
 Stand in hard cure. [To the Fool] Come, help to bear thy
 master. 98

Thou must not stay behind. [They pick up Lear.]
 GLOUCESTER Come, come, away!
 Exeunt [all but Edgar].

EDGAR When we our betters see bearing our woes, 102
 We scarcely think our miseries our foes. 103
 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
 When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship. 107
 How light and portable my pain seems now,
 When that which makes me bend makes the King
 bow—
 He childed as I fathered. Tom, away! 110

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 balmèd 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 cruelly from his children as I from my father.

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

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



3.7

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

CORNWALL *[to Goneril]* Post speedily to my lord your husband; 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

111 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 41
 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,
 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** withered 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 robbers. 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 holp 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 holp 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.

61
REGAN Out, treacherous villain! 90
Thou call'st on him that hates thee. It was he
64 That made the overture of thy treasons to us,
65 Who is too good to pity thee.

66 GLOUCESTER 94
Oh, my follies! Then Edgar was abused.
68 Kind gods, forgive me that, and prosper him!

69 REGAN [*to a Servant*] 92
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? 97

CORNWALL
72 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 104
I'll never care what wickedness I do,
If this man come to good.

THIRD SERVANT 107
If she live long,
And in the end meet the old course of death,
Women will all turn monsters.

SECOND SERVANT 108
Let's follow the old Earl, and get the Bedlam
106 To lead him where he would. His roguish madness
Allows itself to anything.

THIRD SERVANT 107
108 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].

7 EDGAR 1
2 Yet better thus, and known to be contemned, 2
3 Than still contemned and flattered. To be worst, 3
4 The lowest and most dejected thing of fortune, 4
Stands still in esperance, lives not in fear.

89 nature i.e., filial love 90 quit require. 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).

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
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
speak,
Would stretch thy spirits up into the air.
Conceive, and fare thee well. 24
EDMUND Yours in the ranks of death. *Exit.*
GONERIL My most dear Gloucester!
M Oh, the difference of man and man!
E To thee a woman's services are due;
M My fool usurps my body. 28
L OSWALD Madam, here comes my lord. 29
H [Exit.]
I Enter Albany.
GONERIL I have been worth the whistling.
A 1 ALBANY Oh, Goneril, 30
L You are not worth the dust which the rude wind
R Blows in your face. I fear your disposition; 32
N That nature which contemns its origin 33
C Cannot be bordered certain in itself. 34
H She that herself will sliver and disbranch 35
A From her material sap perforce must wither 36
M And come to deadly use. 37
GONERIL No more. The text is foolish. 38
A 2 ALBANY Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile; 40
L Filths savor but themselves. What have you done?
R 8 Tigers, not daughters, what have you performed?
N A father, and a gracious agèd man, 42
C Whose reverence even the head-lugged bear would
H lick, 43
M Most barbarous, most degenerate, have you madded. 44
E Could my good brother suffer you to do it? 45
L 12 A man, a prince, by him so benefited?
R 13 If that the heavens do not their visible spirits 47
N 14 Send quickly down to tame these vile offenses,
C 15 It will come, 48
H 16 Humanity must perforce prey on itself, 49
A 17 Like monsters of the deep. 50
GONERIL Milk-livered man, 51
0

7 19 like likely 21 mistress's (With sexual double meaning.) 24 Conceive 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 disposition 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 manifested 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. **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?

53 MESSENGER Both, both, my lord.—
54 This letter, madam, craves a speedy answer;
55 Tis from your sister. *[He gives her a letter.]*
56 GONERIL *[aside]* One way I like this well;
57 But being widow, and my Gloucester with her,
58 May all the building in my fancy pluck
59 Upon my hateful life. Another way
60 The news is not so tart.—I'll read, and answer.
61 *[Exit.]*

ALBANY Where was his son when they did take his eyes? 89

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? 91

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 95
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, 3
which since his coming forth is thought of, which imports to the kingdom so much fear and danger that his 4
personal return was most required and necessary. 5

KENT Who hath he left behind him general?

GENTLEMAN The Marshal of France, Monsieur la Far.

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

GENTLEMAN Ay, sir. She took them, read them in my presence,
And now and then an ample tear trilled down 12
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** portends **12 trilled trickled**

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

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.

GENTLEMAN No.

KENT W. Smith from the Kinnear 12

Was this before the King returned?
GENTLEMAN. No, since

Will yield to see his daughter.

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

M
4.[4]

Enter, with drum and colors, Cordelia, Gentleman, and soldiers.

H O R N ,	CORDELIA	
	Alack, 'tis he! Why, he was met even now	
30	As mad as the vexed sea, singing aloud,	
	Crowned with rank fumiter and furrow weeds,	3
32	With hardocks, hemlock, nettles, cuckooflowers,	4
	Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow	5
	In our sustaining corn. A century send forth!	6
34	Search every acre in the high-grown field	
35	And bring him to our eye. [Exit a soldier or soldiers.]	
36	What can man's wisdom	8

	In the restoring his bereavèd sense, He that helps him take all my outward worth.	10
38	MICHAEL GENTLEMAN There is means, madam. Our foster nurse of nature is repose, The which he lacks. That to provoke in him Are many simples operative, whose power Will close the eye of anguish.	13
40		14
42	CORDELIA All blest secrets, All you unpublished virtues of the earth, Spring with my tears! Be aidant and remediate In the good man's distress! Seek, seek for him, Lest his ungoverned rage dissolve the life	16
43		17
	That wants the means to lead it.	19

Enter Messenger.

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

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. **cuckooflowers** 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 knowl-
edge can accomplish 10 **outward** material 13 **That to provoke** To
induce that 14 **Are . . . operative** many herbal remedies are effic-
acious; 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 oeilades 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 oeilades 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.

26

27

M OSWALD
E Would I could meet him, madam! I should show
L What party I do follow.
H REGAN Fare thee well.
O *Exeunt [separately].*

4

4. [6]

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

GLOUCESTER When shall I come to th' top of that same hill? 1
EDGAR You do climb up it now. Look how we labor.
GLOUCESTER Methinks the ground is even.
EDGAR Horrible steep.
Hark, do you hear the sea?
GLOUCESTER No, truly.
EDGAR Why, then, your other senses grow imperfect
By your eyes' anguish.
GLOUCESTER So may it be, indeed.
Methinks thy voice is altered, and thou speak'st
In better phrase and matter than thou didst.
EDGAR You're much deceived. In nothing am I changed
But in my garments.
GLOUCESTER Methinks you're better spoken.
EDGAR 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!
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.
The fishermen that walk upon the beach 15
20
22
24
26
28

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 [kneeling] O you mighty gods!
 This world I do renounce, and in your sights
 Shake patiently my great affliction off.
 If I could bear it longer and not fall
 To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,
 My snuff and loathed part of nature should
 Burn itself out. If Edgar live, 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 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

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 From the dread summit of this chalky bourn. 57
 23 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 And frustrate his proud will.
 M EDGAR Give me your arm.
 E [He lifts him up.]
 L Up—so. How is't? Feel you your legs? You stand.
 30 GLOUCESTER H Too well, too well.
 O EDGAR This is above all strangeness.
 R Upon the crown o'th' cliff what thing was that
 38 Which parted from you?
 GLOUCESTER A poor unfortunate beggar.
 EDGAR N As I stood here below, methought his eyes
 , Were two full moons; he had a thousand noses,
 Horns whelked and waved like the enridged sea. 71
 It was some fiend. Therefore, thou happy father, 72
 Think that the clearest gods, who make them honors
 38 Of men's impossibilities, have preserved thee. 73
 39 GLOUCESTER 74
 M ICH A I do remember now. Henceforth I'll bear
 C Affliction till it do cry out itself 76
 "Enough, enough," and die. That thing you speak of, 77
 42 I took it for a man; often 'twould say
 "The fiend, the fiend." He led me to that place.
 EDGAR 44
 E Bear free and patient thoughts.
 L Enter Lear [mad, fantastically dressed with wild flowers].
 47 But who comes here? 80
 48 The safer sense will ne'er accommodate 81
 7 His master thus. 82
 2 LEAR No, they cannot touch me for coining. I am the 83
 2 King himself. 84
 0 EDGAR Oh, thou side-piercing sight! 85
 52 B
 7
 2
 0
 7
 B 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. enridged 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 same 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, 124

Though women all above.

But to the girdle do the gods inherit; 126

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, 130
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 134
Shall so wear out to naught. Dost thou know me? 135

LEAR I remember thine eyes well enough. Dost thou
squinty at me? No, do thy worst, blind Cupid; I'll not 137
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, 141
And my heart breaks at it.

LEAR Read.

GLOUCESTER What, with the case of eyes? 144

109 LEAR Oho, are you there with me? No eyes in your 145
head, nor no money in your purse? Your eyes are in a
heavy case, your purse in a light, yet you see how this 147
world goes.

GLOUCESTER I see it feelingly. 149

117 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 152
thine ear: change places and, handy-dandy, which is 153
the justice, which is the thief? Thou hast seen a
farmer's dog bark at a beggar?

GLOUCESTER Ay, sir.

121 LEAR And the creature run from the cur? There thou 157
122 mightst behold the great image of authority: a dog's 158
obeyed in office. 159

Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand! 160

Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thine own back; 162

Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind

For which thou whipp'st her. The usurer hangs the
cozener. 163

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 **squinty** 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. 168
 None does offend, none, I say, none. I'll able 'em. 169
 Take that of me, my friend, who have the power 170
 To seal th'accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes, 171
 And like a scurvy politician seem 172
 To see the things thou dost not. Now, now, now, now!
 Pull off my boots. Harder, harder! So.

EDGAR [aside] 172
 Oh, matter and impertinency mixed,
 Reason in madness!

LEAR 174
 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 175
 Alack, alack the day!

LEAR 176
 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 177
 Oh, here he is. Lay hand upon him.—Sir,
 Your most dear daughter—

LEAR 178
 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 179
 You shall have anything.

LEAR 180
 No seconds? All myself?
 Why, this would make a man a man of salt
 To use his eyes for garden waterpots,
 Ay, and laying autumn's dust.
 I will die bravely, like a smug bridegroom. What?

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.")

I will be jovial. Come, come, I am a king, 199
 Masters, know you that? 200

GENTLEMAN 201
 You are a royal one, and we obey you.
 LEAR 202 Then there's life in't. Come, an you get it, you
 shall get it by running. Sa, sa, sa, sa. 203
Exit [running, followed by attendants].

GENTLEMAN 204
 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 205
 Which twain have brought her to. 206

EDGAR 207
 Hail, gentle sir. 208
 GENTLEMAN 209
 Sir, speed you. What's your will?

EDGAR 210
 Do you hear aught, sir, of a battle toward?
 GENTLEMAN 211
 Most sure and vulgar. Everyone hears that
 Which can distinguish sound.

EDGAR 212
 But, by your favor,
 How near's the other army?

GENTLEMAN 213
 Near and on speedy foot. The main desrcy 214
 184 Stands on the hourly thought. 215
 185 EDGAR 216 I thank you, sir; that's all.

GENTLEMAN 217
 Though that the Queen on special cause is here,
 Her army is moved on.

EDGAR 218
 I thank you, sir.
Exit [Gentleman].

GLOUCESTER 219
 You ever-gentle gods, take my breath from me;
 Let not my worser spirit tempt me again 220
 To die before you please!

EDGAR 221
 Well pray you, father. 222
 GLOUCESTER 223 Now, good sir, what are you?

EDGAR 224
 A most poor man, made tame to fortune's blows,
 193 225 Who, by the art of known and feeling sorrows,
 194 226 Am pregnant to good pity. Give me your hand.
 195 227 I'll lead you to some biding. [He offers his arm.]

GLOUCESTER 228
 Hearty thanks. 227

199 **joyful** (1) Jovelike, 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 **worser 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 **biding**

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
OSWALD A proclaimed prize! Most happy! 229 <i>[He draws his sword.]</i>		many opportunities to cut him off; if your will want 267 not, time and place will be fruitfully offered. There is 268 nothing done if he return the conqueror. Then am I 269 the prisoner, and his bed my jail, from the loathed
That eyeless head of thine was first framed flesh 230 To raise my fortunes. Thou old unhappy traitor, Briefly thyself remember. The sword is out 232 That must destroy thee.		warmth whereof deliver me and supply the place for 271 your labor. 272
GLOUCESTER Now let thy friendly hand 233 Put strength enough to't. <i>[Edgar intervenes.]</i>		Your—wife, so I would say—affectionate servant, and for you her own for venture, Goneril." 274
OSWALD Wherefore, bold peasant, 235 Durst thou support a published traitor? Hence, Lest that th'infection of his fortune take 236 Like hold on thee. Let go his arm. 237		Oh, indistinguished space of woman's will! 275
EDGAR 'Chill not let go, zir, without vurther 'cagion. 238		A plot upon her virtuous husband's life, And the exchange my brother! Here in the sands 278 Thee I'll rake up, the post unsanctified 279 Of murderous lechers; and in the mature time 280 With this ungracious paper strike the sight 281 Of the death-practiced Duke. For him 'tis well That of thy death and business I can tell.
OSWALD Let go, slave, or thou diest! 239		<i>[Exit with the body.]</i>
EDGAR Good gentleman, go your gait, and let poor volk 240 pass. An 'chud ha' bin zwaggered out of my life, 241 'twould not ha' bin zo long as 'tis by a vortnight. Nay, 242 come not near th' old man; keep out, 'che vor ye, or 243 Ise try whether your costard or my ballow be the 244 harder. 'Chill be plain with you.		GLOUCESTER The King is mad. How stiff is my vile sense, 283 That I stand up and have ingenious feeling 284 Of my huge sorrows! Better I were distract; 285 So should my thoughts be severed from my griefs, And woes by wrong imaginations lose 287 The knowledge of themselves. <i>Drum afar off.</i>
OSWALD Out, dunghill! 245		<i>[Enter Edgar.]</i>
EDGAR 'Chill pick your teeth, zir. Come, no matter vor 246 your foins. <i>[They fight. Edgar fells him with his cudgel.]</i> 248		EDGAR Give me your hand. 290 Far off, methinks, I hear the beaten drum. Come, father, I'll bestow you with a friend.
OSWALD Slave, thou hast slain me. Villain, take my purse. 249 If ever thou wilt thrive, bury my body 250 And give the letters which thou find'st about me 251 To Edmund, Earl of Gloucester. Seek him out 252 Upon the English party. Oh, untimely death! 253 Death! 254		<i>Exeunt, [Edgar leading his father].</i>
EDGAR I know thee well: a serviceable villain, 255 As duteous to the vices of thy mistress 256 As badness would desire. 257		◆
GLOUCESTER What, is he dead? 258		4.7
EDGAR Sit you down, father. Rest you. <i>[Gloucester sits.]</i> 259		<i>Enter Cordelia, Kent [dressed still in his disguise costume], and Gentleman.</i>
Let's see these pockets; the letters that he speaks of 260 May be my friends. He's dead; I am only sorry 261 He had no other deathsman. Let us see. 262		CORDELIA
<i>[He finds a letter and opens it.]</i> 263		O thou good Kent, how shall I live and work 264 To match thy goodness? My life will be too short, 265 And every measure fail me. 266
Leave, gentle wax, and, manners, blame us not. 267		<small>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 unholly 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.)</small>
<small>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 <i>Ich will</i>. 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 swaggered, 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</small>		<small>4.7. Location: The French camp. 0.2 Gentleman ("Doctor" in Q.) 3 every . . . me every attempt (to match your goodness) will fall short.</small>

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 abused 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

5 Of quick cross lightning? To watch—poor perdu!—
With this thin helm? Mine enemy's dog, 36
Though he had bit me, should have stood that night
Against my fire; and wast thou fain, poor father, 37
To hovel thee with swine and rogues forlorn 39
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. 40
9 GENTLEMAN Madam, do you; 'tis fittest. 41
10 CORDELIA How does my royal lord? How fares Your Majesty? 42
11 LEAR You do me wrong to take me out o' th' grave. 43
M Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
Do scald like molten lead. 44
E CORDELIA Sir, do you know me? 45
H LEAR You are a spirit, I know. Where did you die? 46
L CORDELIA Still, still, far wide! 51
R GENTLEMAN He's scarce awake. Let him alone awhile. 47
N LEAR 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. 54
I will not swear these are my hands. Let's see;
M I feel this pinprick. Would I were assured
Of my condition! 55
C CORDELIA [kneeling] Oh, look upon me, sir,
And hold your hands in benediction o'er me.
I [He attempts to kneel.] 56
H No, sir, you must not kneel. 57
A LEAR Pray, do not mock me.
I I am a very foolish fond old man, 61
C fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less;
E And, to deal plainly,
I I fear I am not in my perfect mind.
M Methinks I should know you, and know this man,
A Yet I am doubtful; for I am mainly ignorant
H What place this is, and all the skill I have
7 Remembers not these garments, nor I know not
B Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me,
2 For, as I am a man, I think this lady
0 To be my child Cordelia. 66
U 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.
I I know you do not love me, for your sisters
H Have, as I do remember, done me wrong.
U 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, bewil dered. 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 Cornwall was so slain?

KENT Most certain, sir.

GENTLEMAN Who is conductor of his people?

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

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

KENT Report is changeable. 'Tis time to look about; the powers of the kingdom approach apace.

GENTLEMAN The arbitrament is like to be bloody. Fare you well, sir. *[Exit.]*

KENT

My point and period will be throughly 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, 6

You know the goodness I intend upon you.

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

7 82 Do you not love my sister?

EDMUND In honored love. 9

84 REGAN

But have you never found my brother's way To the forbended place? 11

87 EDMUND That thought abuses you. 12

REGAN

I am doubtful that you have been conjunct And bosomed with her, as far as we call hers. 13

EDMUND No, by mine honor, madam. 14

REGAN

I never shall endure her. Dear my lord, Be not familiar with her. 17

94 EDMUND

Fear me not.—She and the Duke her husband! 18

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 23
Forced to cry out. Where I could not be honest, 24
I never yet was valiant. For this business, 25
It touches us as France invades our land, 26
Not bolds the King, with others whom, I fear, 27
Most just and heavy causes make oppose. 28

EDMUND Sir, you speak nobly.

REGAN Why is this reasoned? 30

1 GONERIL

Combine together 'gainst the enemy; 31
For these domestic and particular broils 32
Are not the question here.

2 ALBANY Let's then determine
With th'ancient of war on our proceeding. 34

3 EDMUND

I shall attend you presently at your tent.

4 REGAN Sister, you'll go with us?

5 GONERIL No.

6 **doubted** feared 7 **intend** intend to confer 9 **honored** honorable
11 **forswore** 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.

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

71
72
Exit.



5.2

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

Enter Edgar and Gloucester.

M
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L
H
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R
N,
,
GLOUCESTER
EDGAR
EDGAR
M
I
C
H
A
E
L
B
U

42 Here, father, take the shadow of this tree
43 For your good host. Pray that the right may thrive.
45 If ever I return to you again,
46 I'll bring you comfort.
46 GLOUCESTER Grace go with you, sir!
48 Exit [Edgar].

Alarum and retreat within. Enter Edgar.

EDGAR
EDGAR
M
I
C
H
A
E
L
B
U

53 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.
55 GLOUCESTER And that's true too.
56 Exit. 11

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

71 Shall they shall 71-2 my state . . . debate my position depends upon maintenance by forceful action, not by talk.
52. 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.)
53. 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! 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'l 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; 43
 I do require them of you, so to use them
 As we shall find their merits and our safety
 May equally determine.

EDMUND

Sir, I thought it fit

To send the old and miserable King
 To some retention and appointed guard, 49
 Whose age had charms in it, whose title more, 50
 To pluck the common bosom on his side 51
 And turn our impressed lances in our eyes 52
 Which do command them. With him I sent the Queen, 53
 My reason all the same; and they are ready
 Tomorrow, or at further space, t'appear 55
 Where you shall hold your session. At this time
 We sweat and bleed; the friend hath lost his friend, 56
 And the best quarrels in the heat are cursed 58
 By those that feel their sharpness. 59
 The question of Cordelia and her father
 Requires a fitter place.

ALBANY

Sir, by your patience, 61
 I hold you but a subject of this war, 62
 Not as a brother.

REGAN

That's as we list to grace him. 63
 Methinks our pleasure might have been demanded 64
 Ere you had spoke so far. He led our powers,
 Bore the commission of my place and person, 65
 The which immediacy may well stand up 67
 And call itself your brother.

GONERIL

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

REGAN

In my rights, 70
 By me invested, he compeers the best. 71

GONERIL

That were the most if he should husband you. 72

REGAN

Jesters do oft prove prophets.

GONERIL

Holla, holla! 73
 That eye that told you so looked but asquint. 74

REGAN

Lady, I am not well, else I should answer
 From a full-flowing stomach. [To Edmund] General, 76

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;	77	ALBANY [to Soldiers]
Dispose of them, of me; the walls is thine.	78	She is not well. Convey her to my tent. [Exit Regan, supported.]
Witness the world that I create thee here		Come hither, herald. Let the trumpet sound,
My lord and master.		And read out this. [He gives a paper.]
GONERIL	Mean you to enjoy him?	CAPTAIN Sound, trumpet! A trumpet sounds.
ALBANY		HERALD (reads) "If any man of quality or degree within
The let-alone lies not in your good will.	81	the lists of the army will maintain upon Edmund, supposed Earl of Gloucester, that he is a manifold traitor,
EDMUND		let him appear by the third sound of the trumpet. He is bold in his defense."
Nor in thine, lord.	82	EDMUND Sound! First trumpet.
ALBANY Half-blooded fellow, yes.		HERALD Again! Second trumpet.
REGAN [to Edmund]		HERALD Again! Third trumpet.
Let the drum strike and prove my title thine.	85	Trumpet answers within.
ALBANY Stay yet; hear reason. Edmund, I arrest thee		Enter Edgar, armed, [with a trumpeter before him].
On capital treason; and, in thy attaint		ALBANY Ask him his purposes, why he appears
This gilded serpent. [Pointing to Goneril] For your	89	Upon this call o'th' trumpet.
claim, fair sister,	90	HERALD What are you?
I bar it in the interest of my wife;	91	Your name, your quality, and why you answer
'Tis she is subcontracted to this lord,		This present summons?
And I, her husband, contradict your banns.	92	EDGAR Know my name is lost,
If you will marry, make your loves to me;		By treason's tooth bare-gnawn and canker-bit.
My lady is bespoke.		Yet am I noble as the adversary
GONERIL An interlude!	93	I come to cope.
ALBANY Thou art armed, Gloucester. Let the trumpet sound.	94	ALBANY Which is that adversary?
If none appear to prove upon thy person	95	EDGAR What's he that speaks for Edmund, Earl of
Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons,		Gloucester?
There is my pledge. [He throws down a glove.] I'll make	96	EDMUND Himself. What say'st thou to him?
it on thy heart,	97	EDGAR Draw thy sword,
Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less		That, if my speech offend a noble heart,
Than I have here proclaimed thee.	98	Thy arm may do thee justice. Here is mine.
REGAN Sick, oh, sick!	99	[He draws his sword.]
GONERIL [aside] If not, I'll ne'er trust medicine.	100	L Behold, it is the privilege of mine honors,
EDMUND [throwing down a glove]		My oath, and my profession. I protest,
There's my exchange. What in the world he is	101	Maugre thy strength, place, youth, and eminence,
That names me traitor, villain-like he lies.		Despite thy victor sword and fire-new fortune,
Call by the trumpet. He that dares approach,	102	Thy valor, and thy heart, thou art a traitor—
On him, on you—who not?—I will maintain		False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father,
My truth and honor firmly.	103	Conspirant 'gainst this high-illustrious prince,
ALBANY A herald, ho!		And from th'extremest upward of thy head
EDMUND A herald, ho, a herald!	104	To the descent and dust below thy foot
Enter a Herald.		A most toad-spotted traitor. Say thou no,
ALBANY [to Edmund]	105	This sword, this arm, and my best spirits are bent
Trust to thy single virtue; for thy soldiers,		To prove upon thy heart, whereto I speak,
All levied in my name, have in my name	106	Thou liest.
Took their discharge.		
REGAN My sickness grows upon me.		

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

[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,
 Or with this paper shall I stopple it.—Hold, sir.
 Thou worse than any name, read thine own evil.

[He shows the letter.]

[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.
 Exit.

ALBANY Go after her. She's desperate; govern her.
 [Exit a soldier.]

EDMUND What you have charged me with, that have I done,
 And more, much more. The time will bring it out.
 'Tis past, and so am I. 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

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.) 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 for-giveness (for Edmund's wickedness toward Edgar and Edgar's having slain Edmund). 171 th' hast thou hast 173 pleasant pleasurable 175 got begot

144 Cost him his eyes.
 EDMUND Th' hast spoken right. 'Tis true.
 146 The wheel is come full circle; I am here. 177
 147 ALBANY [to Edgar]
 148 Methought thy very gait did prophesy
 149 A royal nobleness. I must embrace thee.
 150 [They embrace.]

151 Let sorrow split my heart if ever I
 152 Did hate thee or thy father!

EDGAR Worthy prince, I know't.

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

EDGAR By nursing them, my lord. List a brief tale, 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, 193
 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—
 Alack, too weak the conflict to support—
 Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,
 Burst smilingly. 200

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, 207
 For I am almost ready to dissolve,
 Hearing of this.
 EDGAR This would have seemed a period 208
 171 To such as love not sorrow; but another, 209
 To amplify too much, would make much more 210
 173 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

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.	217	EDMUND I pant for life. Some good I mean to do, Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send— Be brief in it—to th' castle, for my writ Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia. Nay, send in time.
ALBANY	But who was this?	222	ALBANY Run, run, oh, run!
EDGAR	Kent, sir, the banished Kent, who in disguise Followed his enemy king and did him service Improper for a slave.	224	EDGAR To who, my lord? Who has the office? [To Edmund] Send Thy token of reprieve.
	<i>Enter a Gentleman [with a bloody knife].</i>		EDMUND Well thought on. Take my sword. The captain! Give it the Captain.
GENTLEMAN	Help, help, oh, help!		EDGAR Haste thee, for thy life. [Exit one with Edmund's sword.]
EDGAR	What kind of help?		EDMUND He hath commission from thy wife and me To hang Cordelia in the prison and To lay the blame upon her own despair, That she fordid herself.
ALBANY	Speak, man.	227	ALBANY The gods defend her! Bear him hence awhile. [Edmund is borne off.]
EDGAR	What means this bloody knife?		<i>Enter Lear, with Cordelia in his arms; [Captain].</i>
GENTLEMAN	'Tis hot, it smokes. It came even from the heart of—Oh, she's dead!		LEAR Howl, howl, howl! Oh, you are men of stones! Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone forever. I know when one is dead and when one lives; She's dead as earth. Lend me a looking glass; If that her breath will mist or stain the stone, Why, then she lives.
ALBANY	Who dead? Speak, man.		KENT Is this the promised end?
GENTLEMAN	Your lady, sir, your lady! And her sister By her is poisoned; she confesses it.		EDGAR Or image of that horror?
EDMUND	I was contracted to them both. All three Now marry in an instant.		ALBANY Fall and cease!
EDGAR	Here comes Kent.		LEAR This feather stirs; she lives! If it be so, It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows That ever I have felt.
	<i>Enter Kent.</i>		KENT [kneeling] O my good master!
ALBANY	Produce the bodies, be they alive or dead.		LEAR Prithee, away.
	<i>[Exit Gentleman.]</i>		EDGAR 'Tis noble Kent, your friend.
	This judgment of the heavens, that makes us tremble, Touches us not with pity.—Oh, is this he?		LEAR A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!
	<i>[To Kent] The time will not allow the compliment Which very manners urges.</i>		EDGAR I might have saved her; now she's gone forever! Cordelia, Cordelia! Stay a little. Ha?
KENT	I am come To bid my king and master aye good night. Is he not here?	238	LEAR 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.
ALBANY	Great thing of us forgot! Speak, Edmund, where's the King? And where's Cordelia?	239	CAPTAIN 'Tis true, my lords, he did.
	<i>Goneril and Regan's bodies [are] brought out.</i>		LEAR Did I not, fellow?
	See'st thou this object, Kent?	242	
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 compliment 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			
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	281	Shall be applied. For us, we will resign,	304
I would have made them skip. I am old now,	283	During the life of this old majesty,	
And these same crosses spoil me.—Who are you?	284	To him our absolute power; [to Edgar and Kent] you, to	
Mine eyes are not o'th' best; I'll tell you straight.		your rights,	
KENT		With boot and such addition as your honors	307
If Fortune brag of two she loved and hated,	285	Have more than merited. All friends shall taste	
One of them we behold.	286	The wages of their virtue, and all foes	
LEAR		The cup of their deservings.—Oh, see, see!	
This is a dull sight. Are you not Kent?		LEAR	
KENT	287	And my poor fool is hanged! No, no, no life?	311
Your servant Kent. Where is your servant Caius?	288	Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,	
LEAR		And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,	
He's a good fellow, I can tell you that;		Never, never, never, never, never!	
He'll strike, and quickly too. He's dead and rotten.		Pray you, undo this button. Thank you, sir.	
KENT	292	Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,	
No, my good lord, I am the very man—		Look there, look there! <i>He dies.</i>	
LEAR	293	EDGAR	He faints.—My lord, my lord!
I'll see that straight.		KENT	
KENT		Break, heart, I prithee, break!	
That from your first of difference and decay	294	EDGAR	Look up, my lord.
Have followed your sad steps—	295	KENT	
LEAR	296	Vex not his ghost. Oh, let him pass! He hates him	319
You are welcome hither.		That would upon the rack of this tough world	320
KENT		Stretch him out longer.	
Nor no man else. All's cheerless, dark, and deadly.	297	EDGAR	He is gone indeed.
Your eldest daughters have fordone themselves,		KENT	
And desperately are dead.		ALBANY	The wonder is he hath endured so long.
LEAR			He but usurped his life.
Ay, so I think.		EDGAR	
ALBANY	299	Bear them from hence. Our present business	
He knows not what he says, and vain is it		Is general woe. [To Kent and Edgar] Friends of my soul,	
That we present us to him.		you twain	
EDGAR	300	Rule in this realm, and the gored state sustain.	
Very bootless.		KENT	
<i>Enter a Messenger.</i>		EDGAR	I have a journey, sir, shortly to go.
MESSENGER	301		My master calls me; I must not say no.
Edmund is dead, my lord.			
ALBANY	302	7	The weight of this sad time we must obey;
That's but a trifle here.		2	Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
You lords and noble friends, know our intent:		0	The oldest hath borne most; we that are young
What comfort to this great decay may come		7	Shall never see so much nor live so long.
		B	<i>Exeunt, with a dead march.</i>
281 falchion light sword 283 crosses spoil me adversities take away my strength. 284 I'll . . . straight I'll recognize you in a moment.			332
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 <i>very man</i> (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		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. (<i>Fool</i> 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 <i>Exeunt</i> (Presumably the dead bodies are borne out in procession.)	