# *King Lear*

By William Shakespeare

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## Characters in the Play

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

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

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

EARL OF KENT

FOOL

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

KNIGHT, serving Lear
GENTLEMEN
Three SERVANTS
MESSENGERS
DOCTOR
CAPTAINS
HERALD

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

# *ACT 1*

Scene 1

*Enter Kent, Gloucester, and Edmund.*

KENT 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. (*Sennet.*) The King is coming.

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

LEAR
Attend the lords of France and Burgundy, Gloucester.

GLOUCESTER I shall, my lord. *He exits.*

LEAR
Meantime we shall express our darker purpose.—
Give me the map there. *He is handed a map.*
Know that we have divided
In three our kingdom, and 'tis our fast intent
To shake all cares and business from our age,
Conferring them on younger strengths, while we

Unburdened crawl toward death. Our son of Cornwall
And you, our no less loving son of Albany,
We have this hour a constant will to publish
Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife
May be prevented now.
The two great princes, France and Burgundy,
Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,
Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn
And here are to be answered. Tell me, my daughters—
Since now we will divest us both of rule,
Interest of territory, cares of state—
Which of you shall we say doth love us most,
That we our largest bounty may extend
Where nature doth with merit challenge. Goneril,
Our eldest born, speak first.

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

CORDELIA*, aside*
What shall Cordelia speak? Love, and be silent.

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

REGAN
I am made of that self mettle as my sister
And prize me at her worth. In my true heart
I find she names my very deed of love;
Only she comes too short, that I profess
Myself an enemy to all other joys
Which the most precious square of sense possesses,
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 interessed, 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
Hold thee from this forever. The barbarous Scythian,
Or he that makes his generation messes
To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom
Be as well neighbored, pitied, and relieved
As thou my sometime daughter.
KENT Good my liege—
LEAR Peace, Kent.
Come not between the dragon and his wrath.
I loved her most and thought to set my rest
On her kind nursery. *To Cordelia.* Hence and avoid my sight!—
So be my grave my peace as here I give
Her father's heart from her.—Call France. Who stirs?
Call Burgundy. *An Attendant exits.* Cornwall and Albany,
With my two daughters' dowers digest the third.
Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her.

I do invest you jointly with my power,
Preeminence, and all the large effects
That troop with majesty. Ourself by monthly course,
With reservation of an hundred knights
By you to be sustained, shall our abode
Make with you by due turn. Only we shall retain
The name and all th' addition to a king.
The sway, revenue, execution of the rest,
Belovèd sons, be yours, which to confirm,
This coronet part between you.

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

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

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

LEAR Kent, on thy life, no more.

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

LEAR Out of my sight!

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

LEAR Now, by Apollo—

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

LEAR O vassal! Miscreant!

ALBANY/CORNWALL Dear sir, forbear.

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

LEAR
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.

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,
That justly think'st and hast most rightly said.
*To Goneril and Regan.* And your large speeches may your deeds approve,
That good effects may spring from words of love.—
Thus Kent, O princes, bids you all adieu.
He'll shape his old course in a country new.

*He exits.*

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

GLOUCESTER

Here's France and Burgundy, my noble lord.

LEAR My lord of Burgundy,
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?

BURGUNDY Most royal Majesty,
I crave no more than hath your Highness offered,
Nor will you tender less.

LEAR Right noble Burgundy,
When she was dear to us, we did hold her so,
But now her price is fallen. Sir, there she stands.
If aught within that little seeming substance,
Or all of it, with our displeasure pieced
And nothing more, may fitly like your Grace,
She's there, and she is yours.

BURGUNDY I know no answer.

LEAR

Will you, with those infirmities she owes,
Unfriended, new-adopted to our hate,
Dowered with our curse and strangered with our oath,
Take her or leave her?

BURGUNDY Pardon me, royal sir,
Election makes not up in such conditions.

LEAR

Then leave her, sir, for by the power that made me
I tell you all her wealth.—For you, great king,
I would not from your love make such a stray
To match you where I hate. Therefore beseech you
T' avert your liking a more worthier way

Than on a wretch whom Nature is ashamed
Almost t' acknowledge hers.
FRANCE This is most strange,
That she whom even but now was your best object,
The argument of your praise, balm of your age,
The best, the dearest, should in this trice of time
Commit a thing so monstrous to dismantle
So many folds of favor. Sure her offense
Must be of such unnatural degree
That monsters it, or your forevouched affection
Fall into taint; which to believe of her
Must be a faith that reason without miracle
Should never plant in me.
CORDELIA, *to Lear* I yet beseech your Majesty—
If for I want that glib and oily art
To speak and purpose not, since what I well intend
I'll do 't before I speak—that you make known
It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,
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 respect and fortunes are his love,
I shall not be his wife.
FRANCE
Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich being poor;
Most choice, forsaken; and most loved, despised,
Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon,
Be it lawful I take up what's cast away.
Gods, gods! 'Tis strange that from their cold'st

neglect
My love should kindle to enflamed 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 losest here a better where to find.

LEAR
Thou hast her, France. Let her be thine, for we
Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see
That face of hers again. *To Cordelia.* Therefore begone
Without our grace, our love, our benison.—
Come, noble Burgundy.

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

FRANCE Bid farewell to your sisters.

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

REGAN
Prescribe not us our duty.

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

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

FRANCE Come, my fair Cordelia.

*France and Cordelia exit.*

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

REGAN That's most certain, and with you; next month with us.

GONERIL You see how full of changes his age is; the observation we have made of it hath not been little. He always loved our sister most, and with what poor judgment he hath now cast her off appears too grossly.

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

GONERIL The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash. Then must we look from his age to receive not alone the imperfections of long-engraffed

condition, but therewithal the unruly waywardness
that infirm and choleric years bring with them.
REGAN Such unconstant starts are we like to have from him as this of Kent's banishment.
GONERIL There is further compliment of leave-taking between France and him. Pray you, let us sit together. If our father carry authority with such disposition as he bears, this last surrender of his will but offend us.
REGAN We shall further think of it.
GONERIL We must do something, and i' th' heat.
*They exit.*

## Scene 2

*Enter Edmund, the Bastard.*

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

*Enter Gloucester.*

GLOUCESTER
Kent banished thus? And France in choler parted?
And the King gone tonight, prescribed his power,
Confined to exhibition? All this done
Upon the gad?—Edmund, how now? What news?
EDMUND So please your Lordship, none. *He puts a paper in his pocket.*
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 him the paper.*

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

GLOUCESTER (*reads*) *This policy and reverence of age 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 wake him, you should enjoy half his revenue." My son Edgar! Had he a hand to write this? A heart and brain to breed it in?—When came 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.

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

EDMUND I do not well know, my lord. If it shall please you to suspend your indignation against my brother till you can derive from him better testimony of his intent, you should run a certain course; where, if you violently proceed against him, mistaking his

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

GLOUCESTER Think you so?

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

GLOUCESTER He cannot be such a monster.

EDMUND Nor is not, sure.

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

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

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

EDMUND This is the excellent foppery of the world, that when we are sick in fortune (often the surfeits of our own behavior) we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and stars, 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.—O, 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.

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

EDGAR Some villain hath done me wrong.

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

EDGAR Armed, brother?

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

EDGAR Shall I hear from you anon?

EDMUND I do serve you in this business. *Edgar exits.*

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

*He exits.*

## Scene 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.
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,
Whose mind and mine I know in that are one,
Not to be overruled. Idle old man
That still would manage those authorities
That he hath given away. Now, by my life,
Old fools are babes again and must be used
With checks as flatteries, when they are seen abused.
Remember what I have said.
OSWALD Well, madam.
GONERIL
And let his knights have colder looks among you.
What grows of it, no matter. Advise your fellows so.
I would breed from hence occasions, and I shall,
That I may speak. I'll write straight to my sister
To hold my very course. Prepare for dinner.
*They exit in different directions.*

## Scene 4

*Enter Kent in disguise.*

KENT
If but as well I other accents borrow
That can my speech diffuse, my good intent
May carry through itself to that full issue
For which I razed my likeness. Now, banished Kent,
If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemned,
So may it come thy master, whom thou lov'st,
Shall find thee full of labors.

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

LEAR Let me not stay a jot for dinner. Go get it ready.
*An Attendant exits.*
How now, what art thou?
KENT A man, sir.
LEAR What dost thou profess? What wouldst thou with us?

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

LEAR What art thou?

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

LEAR If thou be'st as poor for a subject as he's for a king, thou art 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.

*An Attendant exits.*

*Enter Oswald, the Steward.*

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

OSWALD So please you— *He exits.*

LEAR What says the fellow there? Call the clotpole back. *A Knight exits.* Where's my Fool? Ho! I think the world's asleep.

*Enter Knight again.*

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? Sayst 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 remembrest me of mine own conception. I have perceived a most faint neglect of late, which I have rather blamed as mine own jealous curiosity than as a very pretense and purpose of unkindness. I will look further into 't. But where's my Fool? I have not seen him this two days.
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. *An Attendant exits.* Go you call hither my Fool.

*Another exits.*

*Enter Oswald, the Steward.*

O 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?

*Lear strikes him.*

OSWALD I'll not be strucken, my lord.
KENT*, tripping him* Nor tripped neither, you base football player?
LEAR I thank thee, fellow. Thou serv'st me, and I'll love thee.
KENT*, to Oswald* Come, sir, arise. Away. I'll teach you differences. Away, away. If you will measure your lubber's length again, tarry. But away. Go to. Have you wisdom? So. *Oswald exits.*
LEAR Now, my friendly knave, I thank thee. There's earnest of thy service. *He gives Kent a purse.*

*Enter Fool.*

FOOL Let me hire him too. *To Kent.* Here's my coxcomb. *He offers Kent his cap.*
LEAR How now, my pretty knave, how dost thou?
FOOL*, to Kent* Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb.
LEAR Why, my boy?
FOOL Why? For taking one's part that's out of favor. *To Kent.* Nay, an thou canst not smile as the wind sits, thou 'lt catch cold shortly. There, take my coxcomb. Why, this fellow has banished two on 's daughters and did the third a blessing against his will. If thou follow him, thou must needs wear my coxcomb.—How now, nuncle? Would I had two coxcombs and two daughters.
LEAR Why, my boy?

FOOL If I gave them all my living, I'd keep my coxcombs myself. There's mine. Beg another of thy daughters.
LEAR Take heed, sirrah—the whip.
FOOL Truth's a dog must to kennel; he must be whipped out, when the Lady Brach may stand by th' fire and stink.
LEAR A pestilent gall to me!
FOOL Sirrah, I'll teach thee a speech.
LEAR Do.
FOOL Mark it, nuncle:
Have more than thou showest.
Speak less than thou knowest,
Lend less than thou owest,
Ride more than thou goest,
Learn more than thou trowest,
Set less than thou throwest;
Leave thy drink and thy whore
And keep in-a-door,
And thou shalt have more
Than two tens to a score.
KENT This is nothing, Fool.
FOOL Then 'tis like the breath of an unfee'd lawyer. You gave me nothing for 't.—Can you make no use of nothing, nuncle?
LEAR Why no, boy. Nothing can be made out of nothing.
FOOL, *to Kent* Prithee tell him, so much the rent of his land comes to. He will not believe a Fool.
LEAR A bitter Fool!
FOOL Dost know the difference, my boy, between a bitter fool and a sweet one?
LEAR No, lad, teach me.
FOOL That lord that counseled thee
To give away thy land,
Come place him here by me;
Do thou for him stand.
The sweet and bitter fool
Will presently appear:
The one in motley here,
The other found out there.
LEAR Dost thou call me "fool," boy?
FOOL All thy other titles thou hast given away. That thou wast born with.
KENT This is not altogether fool, my lord.
FOOL No, faith, lords and great men will not let me. If I had a monopoly out, they would have part on 't. And ladies too, they will not let me have all the fool to myself; they'll be snatching.—Nuncle, give me an egg, and I'll give thee two crowns.
LEAR What two crowns shall they be?
FOOL Why, after I have cut the egg i' th' middle and eat up the meat, the two crowns of the egg. When thou clovest thy crown i' th' middle and gav'st away both parts, thou bor'st thine ass on thy back o'er the dirt. Thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown

when thou gav'st thy golden one away. If I speak like myself in this, let him be whipped that first finds it so. *Sings.*

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

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

FOOL I have used it, nuncle, e'er since thou mad'st thy daughters thy mothers. For when thou gav'st them the rod and put'st down thine own breeches, *Sings.*

Then they for sudden joy did weep,
And I for sorrow sung,
That such a king should play bo-peep
And go the fools among.

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

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

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

*Enter Goneril.*

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

FOOL Thou wast a pretty fellow when thou hadst no need to care for her frowning. Now thou art an O without a figure. 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.

*He points at 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-endurèd 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's had it head bit off by it young.
So out went the candle, and we were left darkling.
LEAR Are you our daughter?
GONERIL
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, his discernings
Are lethargied—Ha! Waking? 'Tis not so.
Who is it that can tell me who I am?
FOOL Lear's shadow.
LEAR
I would learn that, for, by the marks of sovereignty,
Knowledge, and reason, I should be false persuaded
I had daughters.
FOOL Which they will make an obedient father.
LEAR Your name, fair gentlewoman?
GONERIL
This admiration, sir, is much o' th' savor
Of other your new pranks. I do beseech you
To understand my purposes aright.
As you are old and reverend, should be wise.
Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires,
Men so disordered, so debauched and bold,
That this our court, infected with their manners,
Shows like a riotous inn. Epicurism and lust
Makes it more like a tavern or a brothel
Than a graced palace. The shame itself doth speak
For instant remedy. Be then desired,
By her that else will take the thing she begs,
A little to disquantity your train,
And the remainders that shall still depend
To be such men as may besort your age,
Which know themselves and you.
LEAR Darkness and devils!—
Saddle my horses. Call my train together.
*Some exit.*
Degenerate bastard, I'll not trouble thee.
Yet have I left a daughter.
GONERIL
You strike my people, and your disordered rabble

Make servants of their betters.

*Enter Albany.*

LEAR
Woe that too late repents!—O, sir, are you come?
Is it your will? Speak, sir.—Prepare my horses.
*Some exit.*
Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,
More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child
Than the sea monster!
ALBANY Pray, sir, be patient.
LEAR*, to Goneril* Detested kite, thou liest.
My train are men of choice and rarest parts,
That all particulars of duty know
And in the most exact regard support
The worships of their name. O most small fault,
How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show,
Which, like an engine, wrenched my frame of nature
From the fixed place, drew from my heart all love
And added to the gall! O Lear, Lear, Lear!
*He strikes his head.*
Beat at this gate that let thy folly in
And thy dear judgment out. Go, go, my people.
*Some exit.*
ALBANY
My lord, I am guiltless as I am ignorant
Of what hath moved you.
LEAR It may be so, my lord.—
Hear, Nature, hear, dear goddess, hear!
Suspend thy purpose if thou didst intend
To make this creature fruitful.
Into her womb convey sterility.
Dry up in her the organs of increase,
And from her derogate body never spring
A babe to honor her. If she must teem,
Create her child of spleen, that it may live
And be a thwart disnatured torment to her.
Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth,
With cadent tears fret channels in her cheeks,
Turn all her mother's pains and benefits
To laughter and contempt, that she may feel
How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child.—Away, away!
*Lear and the rest of his train exit.*
ALBANY
Now, gods that we adore, whereof comes this?
GONERIL
Never afflict yourself to know more of it,
But let his disposition have that scope
As dotage gives it.

*Enter Lear and the Fool.*

LEAR
What, fifty of my followers at a clap?
Within a fortnight?
ALBANY What's the matter, sir?
LEAR
I'll tell thee. *To Goneril.* Life and death! I am ashamed
That thou hast power to shake my manhood thus,
That these hot tears, which break from me perforce,
Should make thee worth them. Blasts and fogs upon thee!
Th' untented woundings of a father's curse
Pierce every sense about thee! Old fond eyes,
Beweep this cause again, I'll pluck you out
And cast you, with the waters that you loose,
To temper clay. Yea, is 't come to this?
Ha! Let it be so. I have another daughter
Who, I am sure, is kind and comfortable.
When she shall hear this of thee, with her nails
She'll flay thy wolvish visage. Thou shalt find
That I'll resume the shape which thou dost think
I have cast off forever. *He exits.*
GONERIL Do you mark that?
ALBANY
I cannot be so partial, Goneril,
To the great love I bear you—
GONERIL Pray you, content.—What, Oswald, ho!—
You, sir, more knave than Fool, after your master.
FOOL Nuncle Lear, Nuncle Lear, tarry. Take the Fool with thee.
A fox, when one has caught her,
And such a daughter,
Should sure to the slaughter,
If my cap would buy a halter.
So the Fool follows after.
*He exits.*
GONERIL
This man hath had good counsel. A hundred knights!
'Tis politic and safe to let him keep
At point a hundred knights! Yes, that on every dream,
Each buzz, each fancy, each complaint, dislike,
He may enguard his dotage with their powers
And hold our lives in mercy.—Oswald, I say!
ALBANY Well, you may fear too far.
GONERIL Safer than trust too far.
Let me still take away the harms I fear,
Not fear still to be taken. I know his heart.
What he hath uttered I have writ my sister.
If she sustain him and his hundred knights
When I have showed th' unfitness—

*Enter Oswald, the Steward.*

How now, Oswald?
What, have you writ that letter to my sister?
OSWALD Ay, madam.
GONERIL
Take you some company and away to horse.
Inform her full of my particular fear,
And thereto add such reasons of your own
As may compact it more. Get you gone,
And hasten your return. *Oswald exits.* No, no, my lord,
This milky gentleness and course of yours,
Though I condemn not, yet, under pardon,
You are much more at task 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.

*They exit.*

## Scene 5

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

LEAR*, 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. *He exits.*
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? *Gentleman exits.*

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

O, 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.

FOOL

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

*They exit.*

# *ACT 2*

Scene 1

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

EDMUND Save thee, Curan.
CURAN And you, sir. I have been with your father and given him notice that the Duke of Cornwall and Regan his duchess will be here with him this night.
EDMUND 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. *He exits.*

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

*Enter Edgar.*

My father watches. O sir, fly this place!
Intelligence is given where you are hid.
You have now the good advantage of the night.
Have you 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, hoa, here!
*Aside to Edgar.* Fly, brother.—Torches, torches!
—So, farewell. *Edgar exits.*
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 his 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 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. *Servants exit.* By no means what?

EDMUND

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

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

EDMUND

When I dissuaded him from his intent
And found him pight to do it, with curst speech
I threatened to discover him. He replied
"Thou unpossessing bastard, dost thou think
If I would stand against thee, would the reposal
Of any trust, virtue, or worth in thee
Make thy words faithed? No. What I should deny—
As this I would, though thou didst produce
My very character—I'd turn it all
To thy suggestion, plot, and damnèd practice.
And thou must make a dullard of the world
If they not thought the profits of my death
Were very pregnant and potential spurs
To make thee seek it."

GLOUCESTER O strange and fastened villain!

Would he deny his letter, said he?
I never got him. *Tucket within.*
Hark, the Duke's trumpets. I know not why he comes.
All ports I'll bar. The villain shall not 'scape.
The Duke must grant me that. Besides, his picture
I will send far and near, that all the kingdom
May have due note of him. And of my land,
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
O madam, my old heart is cracked; it's cracked.
REGAN
What, did my father's godson seek your life?
He whom my father named, your Edgar?
GLOUCESTER
O lady, lady, shame would have it hid!
REGAN
Was he not companion with the riotous knights
That 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 waste 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
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.

CORNWALL
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 best 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.

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

*Flourish. They exit.*

## Scene 2

*Enter Kent in disguise and Oswald, the Steward, severally.*

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

KENT Ay.

OSWALD Where may we set our horses?

KENT I' th' mire.

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

KENT I love thee not.

OSWALD Why then, I care not for thee.

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

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

KENT Fellow, I know thee.

OSWALD What dost thou know me for?

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

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

KENT What a brazen-faced varlet art thou to deny thou knowest me! Is it two days ago since I tripped up thy heels and beat thee before the King? *He draws his sword.* Draw, you rogue, for though it be night, yet the moon shines. I'll make a sop o' th' moonshine of you, you whoreson, cullionly barbermonger. Draw!

OSWALD Away! I have nothing to do with thee.

KENT Draw, you rascal! You come with letters against the King and take Vanity the puppet's part against the royalty of her father. Draw, you rogue, or I'll so carbonado your shanks! Draw, you rascal! Come your ways.

OSWALD Help, ho! Murder! Help!

KENT Strike, you slave! Stand, rogue! Stand, you neat slave! Strike! *He beats Oswald.*

OSWALD Help, ho! Murder, murder!

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

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

KENT With you, goodman boy, if you please. Come, I'll flesh you. Come on, young master.

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

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

REGAN
The messengers from our sister and the King.

CORNWALL What is your difference? Speak.

OSWALD I am scarce in breath, my lord.

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

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

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

CORNWALL Speak yet, how grew your quarrel?

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

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

CORNWALL Peace, sirrah!
You beastly knave, know you no reverence?

KENT
Yes, sir, but anger hath a privilege.

CORNWALL Why art thou angry?

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

these,
Like rats, oft bite the holy cords atwain
Which are too intrinse t' unloose; smooth every passion
That in the natures of their lords rebel—
Being oil to fire, snow to the colder moods—
Renege, affirm, and turn their halcyon beaks
With every gale and vary of their masters,
Knowing naught, like dogs, but following.—
A plague upon your epileptic visage!
Smile you my speeches, as I were a fool?
Goose, if I had you upon Sarum plain,
I'd drive you cackling home to Camelot.
CORNWALL What, art thou mad, old fellow?
GLOUCESTER How fell you out? Say that.
KENT
No contraries hold more antipathy
Than I and such a knave.
CORNWALL
Why dost thou call him "knave"? What is his fault?
KENT His countenance likes me not.
CORNWALL
No more, perchance, does mine, nor his, nor hers.
KENT
Sir, 'tis my occupation to be plain:
I have seen better faces in my time
Than stands on any shoulder that I see
Before me at this instant.
CORNWALL This is some fellow
Who, having been praised for bluntness, doth affect
A saucy roughness and constrains the garb
Quite from his nature. He cannot flatter, he.
An honest mind and plain, he must speak truth!
An they will take it, so; if not, he's plain.
These kind of knaves I know, which in this plainness
Harbor more craft and more corrupter ends
Than twenty silly-ducking observants
That stretch their duties nicely.
KENT
Sir, in good faith, in sincere verity,
Under th' allowance of your great aspect,
Whose influence, like the wreath of radiant fire
On flick'ring Phoebus' front—
CORNWALL What mean'st by this?
KENT To go out of my dialect, which you discommend so much. I know, sir, I am no flatterer. He that beguiled you in a plain accent was a plain knave, which for my part I will not be, though I should win your displeasure to entreat me to 't.
CORNWALL*, to Oswald* What was th' offense you gave him?
OSWALD I never gave him any.
It pleased the King his master very late
To strike at me, upon his misconstruction;
When he, compact, and flattering his displeasure,

Tripped me behind; being down, insulted, railed,
And put upon him such a deal of man
That worthied him, got praises of the King
For him attempting who was self-subdued;
And in the fleshment of this dread exploit,
Drew on me here again.

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

CORNWALL Fetch forth the stocks.—
You stubborn ancient knave, you reverent braggart,
We'll teach you.

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

CORNWALL
Fetch forth the stocks.—As I have life and honor,
There shall he sit till noon.

REGAN
Till noon? Till night, my lord, and all night, too.

KENT
Why, madam, if I were your father's dog,
You should not use me so.

REGAN Sir, being his knave, I will.

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

*Stocks brought out.*

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

CORNWALL I'll answer that.

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

*Kent is put in the stocks.*

CORNWALL Come, my good lord, away.

*All but Gloucester and Kent exit.*

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

KENT
Pray, do not, sir. I have watched and traveled hard.
Some time I shall sleep out; the rest I'll whistle.

A good man's fortune may grow out at heels.
Give you good morrow.

GLOUCESTER

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

*He exits.*

KENT

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

*Sleeps.*

## Scene 3

*Enter Edgar.*

EDGAR I heard myself proclaimed,
And by the happy hollow of a tree
Escaped the hunt. No port is free; no place
That guard and most unusual vigilance
Does not attend my taking. Whiles I may 'scape,
I will preserve myself, and am bethought
To take the basest and most poorest shape
That ever penury in contempt of man
Brought near to beast. My face I'll grime with filth,
Blanket my loins, elf all my hairs in knots,
And with presented nakedness outface
The winds and persecutions of the sky.
The country gives me proof and precedent
Of Bedlam beggars who with roaring voices
Strike in their numbed and mortifièd arms
Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary,
And, with this horrible object, from low farms,
Poor pelting villages, sheepcotes, and mills,
Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers,
Enforce their charity. "Poor Turlygod! Poor Tom!"
That's something yet. "Edgar" I nothing am.

*He exits.*

## Scene 4

*Enter Lear, Fool, and Gentleman.*

LEAR

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

GENTLEMAN As I learned,

The night before there was no purpose in them
Of this remove.
KENT, *waking* Hail to thee, noble master.
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 overlusty at legs, then he wears wooden netherstocks.
LEAR
What's he that hath so much thy place mistook
To set thee here?
KENT It is both he and she,
Your son and daughter.
LEAR No.
KENT Yes.
LEAR No, I say.
KENT I say yea.
LEAR By Jupiter, I swear no.
KENTBy Juno, I swear ay.
LEAR They durst not do 't.
They could not, would not do 't. 'Tis worse than murder
To do upon respect such violent outrage.
Resolve me with all modest haste which way
Thou might'st deserve or they impose this usage,
Coming from us.
KENT My lord, when at their home
I did commend your Highness' letters to them,
Ere I was risen from the place that showed
My duty kneeling, came there a reeking post,
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
O, 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*, to Fool and Gentleman* Follow me not. Stay here. *He exits.*

GENTLEMAN
Made you no more offense but what you speak of?

KENT None.
How chance the King comes with so small a number?

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

KENT Why, Fool?

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

That sir which serves and seeks for gain,
And follows but for form,
Will pack when it begins to rain
And leave thee in the storm.
But I will tarry; the Fool will stay,
And let the wise man fly.
The knave turns fool that runs away;
The Fool no knave, perdie.

KENT Where learned you this, Fool?

FOOL Not i' th' stocks, fool.

*Enter Lear and Gloucester.*

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

GLOUCESTER My dear lord,
You know the fiery quality of the Duke,
How unremovable and fixed he is
In his own course.

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

GLOUCESTER

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

LEAR

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

GLOUCESTER Ay, my good lord.

LEAR

The King would speak with Cornwall. The dear father
Would with his daughter speak, commands, tends service.
Are they "informed" of this? My breath and blood!
"Fiery"? The "fiery" duke? Tell the hot duke that—
No, but not yet. Maybe he is not well.
Infirmity doth still neglect all office
Whereto our health is bound. We are not ourselves
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. *Noticing Kent again.* 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.

GLOUCESTER I would have all well betwixt you.

*He exits.*

LEAR

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

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

*Enter Cornwall, Regan, Gloucester, Servants.*

LEAR Good morrow to you both.

CORNWALL Hail to your Grace.

*Kent here set at liberty.*

REGAN I am glad to see your Highness.

LEAR

Regan, I think you are. I know what reason
I have to think so: if thou shouldst not be glad,
I would divorce me from thy mother's tomb,
Sepulch'ring an adult'ress. *To Kent.* O, are you free?
Some other time for that.—Belovèd Regan,
Thy sister's naught. O Regan, she hath tied
Sharp-toothed unkindness, like a vulture, here.
I can scarce speak to thee. Thou 'lt not believe
With how depraved a quality—O Regan!

REGAN
I pray you, sir, take patience. I have hope
You less know how to value her desert
Than she to scant her duty.
LEAR Say? How is that?
REGAN
I cannot think my sister in the least
Would fail her obligation. If, sir, perchance
She have restrained the riots of your followers,
'Tis on such ground and to such wholesome end
As clears her from all blame.
LEAR My curses on her.
REGAN O sir, you are old.
Nature in you stands on the very verge
Of his confine. You should be ruled and led
By some discretion that discerns your state
Better than you yourself. Therefore, I pray you
That to our sister you do make return.
Say you have wronged her.
LEAR Ask her forgiveness?
Do you but mark how this becomes the house:
*He kneels.*
"Dear daughter, I confess that I am old.
Age is unnecessary. On my knees I beg
That you'll vouchsafe me raiment, bed, and food."
REGAN
Good sir, no more. These are unsightly tricks.
Return you to my sister.
LEAR*, rising* Never, Regan.
She hath abated me of half my train,
Looked black upon me, struck me with her tongue
Most serpentlike upon the very heart.
All the stored vengeances of heaven fall
On her ingrateful top! Strike her young bones,
You taking airs, with lameness!
CORNWALL Fie, sir, fie!
LEAR
You nimble lightnings, dart your blinding flames
Into her scornful eyes! Infect her beauty,
You fen-sucked fogs drawn by the powerful sun
To fall and blister!
REGAN
O, the blest gods! So will you wish on me
When the rash mood is on.
LEAR
No, Regan, thou shalt never have my curse.
Thy tender-hefted nature shall not give
Thee o'er to harshness. Her eyes are fierce, but
thine
Do comfort and not burn. 'Tis not in thee
To grudge my pleasures, to cut off my train,
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.
REGAN Good sir, to th' purpose.
*Tucket within.*
LEAR
Who put my man i' th' stocks?
CORNWALL What trumpet's that?
REGAN
I know 't—my sister's. This approves her letter,
That she would soon be here.

*Enter Oswald, the Steward.*

Is your lady come?
LEAR
This is a slave whose easy-borrowed pride
Dwells in the fickle grace of her he follows.—
Out, varlet, from my sight!
CORNWALL What means your Grace?
LEAR
Who stocked my servant? Regan, I have good hope
Thou didst not know on 't.

*Enter Goneril.*

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? *Regan takes Goneril's hand.*
O Regan, will you take her by the hand?
GONERIL
Why not by th' hand, sir? How have I offended?
All's not offense that indiscretion finds
And dotage terms so.
LEAR O sides, you are too tough!
Will you yet hold?—How came my man i' th'
stocks?
CORNWALL
I set him there, sir, but his own disorders
Deserved much less advancement.
LEAR You? Did you?
REGAN
I pray you, father, being weak, seem so.
If till the expiration of your month
You will return and sojourn with my sister,
Dismissing half your train, come then to me.
I am now from home and out of that provision
Which shall be needful for your entertainment.
LEAR
Return to her? And fifty men dismissed?
No! Rather I abjure all roofs, and choose
To wage against the enmity o' th' air,
To be a comrade with the wolf and owl,

Necessity's sharp pinch. Return with her?
Why the hot-blooded France, that dowerless took
Our youngest born—I could as well be brought
To knee his throne and, squire-like, pension beg
To keep base life afoot. Return with her?
Persuade me rather to be slave and sumpter
To this detested groom. *He indicates Oswald.*

GONERIL At your choice, sir.

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

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

LEAR Is this well spoken?

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

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

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

LEAR I gave you all—

REGAN And in good time you gave it.

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

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

LEAR
Those wicked creatures yet do look well-favored
When others are more wicked. Not being the worst
Stands in some rank of praise. *To Goneril.* I'll go with thee.
Thy fifty yet doth double five-and-twenty,
And thou art twice her love.
GONERIL Hear me, my lord.
What need you five-and-twenty, ten, or five,
To follow in a house where twice so many
Have a command to tend you?
REGAN What need one?
LEAR
O, reason not the need! Our basest beggars
Are in the poorest thing superfluous.
Allow not nature more than nature needs,
Man's life is cheap as beast's. Thou art a lady;
If only to go warm were gorgeous,
Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,
Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But, for true need—
You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need!
You see me here, you gods, a poor old man
As full of grief as age, wretched in both.
If it be you that stirs these daughters' hearts
Against their father, fool me not so much
To bear it tamely. Touch me with noble anger,
And let not women's weapons, water drops,
Stain my man's cheeks.—No, you unnatural hags,
I will have such revenges on you both
That all the world shall—I will do such things—
What they are yet I know not, but they shall be
The terrors of the Earth! You think I'll weep.
No, I'll not weep.
I have full cause of weeping, but this heart
*Storm and tempest.*
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws
Or ere I'll weep.—O Fool, I shall go mad!
*Lear, Kent, and Fool exit with Gloucester and the Gentleman.*
CORNWALL Let us withdraw. 'Twill be a storm.
REGAN
This house is little. The old man and 's people
Cannot be well bestowed.
GONERIL
'Tis his own blame hath put himself from rest,
And must needs taste his folly.
REGAN
For his particular, I'll receive him gladly,
But not one follower.
GONERIL
So am I purposed. Where is my lord of Gloucester?
CORNWALL
Followed the old man forth.

*Enter Gloucester.*

He is returned.
GLOUCESTER The King is in high rage.
CORNWALL Whither is he going?
GLOUCESTER
He calls to horse, but will I know not whither.
CORNWALL
'Tis best to give him way. He leads himself.
GONERIL*, to Gloucester*
My lord, entreat him by no means to stay.
GLOUCESTER
Alack, the night comes on, and the high winds
Do sorely ruffle. For many miles about
There's scarce a bush.
REGAN O sir, to willful men
The injuries that they themselves procure
Must be their schoolmasters. Shut up your doors.
He is attended with a desperate train,
And what they may incense him to, being apt
To have his ear abused, wisdom bids fear.
CORNWALL
Shut up your doors, my lord. 'Tis a wild night.
My Regan counsels well. Come out o' th' storm.

*They exit.*

# *ACT 3*

Scene 1

*Storm still. Enter Kent in disguise, and a Gentleman, severally.*

KENT  Who's there, besides foul weather?
GENTLEMAN
One minded like the weather, most unquietly.
KENT  I know you. Where's the King?
GENTLEMAN
Contending with the fretful elements;
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 outscorn
The to-and-fro conflicting wind and rain.
This night, wherein the cub-drawn bear would couch,
The lion and the belly-pinchèd wolf
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. 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: 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.
I am a gentleman of blood and breeding,

And from some knowledge and assurance offer
This office to you.
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.
*Kent hands him a purse and a ring.*
If you shall see Cordelia
(As fear not but you shall), show her this ring,
And she will tell you who that fellow is
That yet you do not know. Fie on this storm!
I will go seek the King.
GENTLEMAN
Give me your hand. Have you no more to say?
KENT
Few words, but, to effect, more than all yet:
That when we have found the King—in which your pain
That way, I'll this—he that first lights on him
Holla the other.
*They exit separately.*

## Scene 2

*Storm still. Enter Lear and Fool.*

LEAR
Blow winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow!
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
Till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the cocks.
You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires,
Vaunt-couriers of oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
Singe my white head. And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Strike flat the thick rotundity o' th' world.
Crack nature's molds, all germens spill at once
That makes ingrateful man.
FOOL O nuncle, court holy water in a dry house is better than this rainwater out o' door. Good nuncle, in. Ask thy daughters' blessing. Here's a night pities neither wise men nor fools.
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
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. O, ho, '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 in disguise.*

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 pudder 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
Has practiced on man's life. Close pent-up guilts,
Rive your concealing continents and cry
These dreadful summoners grace. I am a man
More sinned against than sinning.
KENT Alack,
bareheaded?
Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel.
Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the tempest.
Repose you there while I to this hard house—
More harder than the stones whereof 'tis raised,
Which even but now, demanding after you,
Denied me to come in—return and force
Their scanted courtesy.
LEAR My wits begin to turn.—
Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy? Art cold?
I am cold myself.—Where is this straw, my fellow?
The art of our necessities is strange
And can make vile things precious. Come, your hovel.—

Poor Fool and knave, I have one part in my heart
That's sorry yet for thee.

FOOL *sings*

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

LEAR

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

*Lear and Kent exit.*

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

When priests are more in word than matter,
When brewers mar their malt with water,
When nobles are their tailors' tutors,
No heretics burned but wenches' suitors,
When every case in law is right,
No squire in debt, nor no poor knight;
When slanders do not live in tongues,
Nor cutpurses come not to throngs,
When usurers tell their gold i' th' field,
And bawds and whores do churches build,
Then shall the realm of Albion
Come to great confusion;
Then comes the time, who lives to see 't,
That going shall be used with feet.

This prophecy Merlin shall make, for I live before his time.

*He exits.*

## Scene 3

*Enter Gloucester and Edmund.*

GLOUCESTER 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 it, as no less is threatened me, the King my old master must be relieved. There is strange things toward, Edmund. Pray you, be careful. *He exits.*

EDMUND

This courtesy forbid thee shall the Duke
Instantly know, and of that letter too.

This seems a fair deserving, and must draw me
That which my father loses—no less than all.
The younger rises when the old doth fall.

*He exits.*

## Scene 4

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

KENT
Here is the place, my lord. Good my lord, enter.
The tyranny of the open night 's too rough
For nature to endure. *Storm still.*
LEAR Let me alone.
KENT
Good my lord, enter here.
LEAR Wilt break my heart?
KENT
I had rather break mine own. Good my lord, enter.
LEAR
Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm
Invades us to the skin. So 'tis to thee.
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,
The body's delicate. This tempest in my mind
Doth from my senses take all feeling else
Save what beats there. Filial ingratitude!
Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand
For lifting food to 't? But I will punish home.
No, I will weep no more. In such a night
To shut me out? Pour on. I will endure.
In such a night as this? O Regan, Goneril,
Your old kind father whose frank heart gave all!
O, that way madness lies. Let me shun that;
No more of that.
KENT Good my lord, enter here.
LEAR
Prithee, go in thyself. Seek thine own ease.
This tempest will not give me leave to ponder
On things would hurt me more. But I'll go in.—
In, boy; go first.—You houseless poverty—
Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.

*Fool exits.*

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

Poor Tom!

*Enter Fool.*

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

KENT Give me thy hand. Who's there?

FOOL 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 in disguise.*

EDGAR Away. The foul fiend follows me. Through the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind. Hum! Go to thy cold 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. O, 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.

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

LEAR Thou wert better in a grave than to answer with thy uncovered body this extremity of the skies.—Is man no more than this? Consider him well.—Thou ow'st the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha, here's three on 's are sophisticated. Thou art the thing itself; unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! Come, unbutton here. *Tearing off his clothes.*

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

*Enter Gloucester, with a torch.*

Look, here comes a walking fire.

EDGAR This is the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet. He begins at curfew and walks till the first cock. He gives the web and the pin, squints the eye, and makes the harelip, mildews the white wheat, and hurts the poor creature of earth.

Swithold footed thrice the 'old,
He met the nightmare and her ninefold,
Bid her alight,
And her troth plight,
And aroint thee, witch, aroint thee.

KENT How fares your Grace?

LEAR 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 the fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats cow dung for sallets, swallows the old rat and the ditch-dog, drinks the green mantle of the standing pool; who is whipped from tithing to tithing, and stocked, punished, and imprisoned;

who hath had three suits to his back, six shirts to his body,
Horse to ride, and weapon to wear;
But mice and rats and such small deer
Have been Tom's food for seven long year.
Beware my follower. Peace, Smulkin! Peace, thou fiend!

GLOUCESTER*, to Lear*
What, hath your Grace no better company?

EDGAR The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman. Modo he's called, and Mahu.

GLOUCESTER*, to Lear*
Our flesh and blood, my lord, is grown so vile
That it doth hate what gets it.

EDGAR Poor Tom's a-cold.

GLOUCESTER*, to Lear*
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,
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.—
What is your study?

EDGAR How to prevent the fiend and to kill vermin.

LEAR Let me ask you one word in private.

*They talk aside.*

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
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 O, cry you mercy, sir.
*To Edgar.* Noble philosopher, your company.

EDGAR Tom's a-cold.

GLOUCESTER*, to Edgar*
In fellow, there, into th' hovel. Keep thee warm.
LEARCome, let's in all.

KENT This way, my lord.

LEAR*, indicating Edgar* With him.

I will keep still with my philosopher.
KENT*, to Gloucester*
Good my lord, soothe him. Let him take the fellow.
GLOUCESTER*, to Kent* Take him you on.
KENT*, to Edgar*
Sirrah, come on: go along with us.
LEAR Come, good Athenian.
GLOUCESTER No words, no words. Hush.
EDGAR
Child Rowland to the dark tower came.
His word was still “Fie, foh, and fum,
I smell the blood of a British man.”

*They exit.*

## Scene 5

*Enter Cornwall, and Edmund with a paper.*

CORNWALL I will have my revenge ere I depart his house.
EDMUND How, my lord, I may be censured, that nature thus gives way to loyalty, something fears me to think of.
CORNWALL I now perceive it was not altogether your brother’s evil disposition made him seek his death, but a provoking merit set awork by a reprovable badness in himself.
EDMUND How malicious is my fortune that I must repent to be just! This is the letter he spoke of, which approves him an intelligent party to the advantages of France. O heavens, that this treason were not, or not I the detector.
CORNWALL Go with me to the Duchess.
EDMUND If the matter of this paper be certain, you have mighty business in hand.
CORNWALL True or false, it hath made thee Earl of Gloucester. Seek out where thy father is, that he may be ready for our apprehension.
EDMUND*, aside* If I find him comforting the King, it will stuff his suspicion more fully.—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.

*They exit.*

## Scene 6

*Enter Kent in disguise, 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!

*Gloucester exits.*

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

EDGAR Frateretto calls me and tells me Nero is an angler in the lake of darkness. Pray, innocent, and beware the foul fiend.
FOOL Prithee, nuncle, tell me whether a madman be a gentleman or a yeoman.
LEAR A king, a king!
FOOL No, he's a yeoman that has a gentleman to his son, for he's a mad yeoman that sees his son a gentleman before him.
LEAR
To have a thousand with red burning spits
Come hissing in upon 'em!
EDGAR The foul fiend bites my back.
FOOL He's mad that trusts in the tameness of a wolf, a horse's health, a boy's love, or a whore's oath.
LEAR
It shall be done. I will arraign them straight.
*To Edgar.* Come, sit thou here, most learnèd justice.
*To Fool.* Thou sapient sir, sit here. Now, you she-foxes—
EDGAR Look where he stands and glares!—Want'st thou eyes at trial, madam?
*Sings. Come o'er the burn, Bessy, to me—*
FOOL *sings*
Her boat hath a leak,
And she must not speak
Why she dares not come over to thee.
EDGAR The foul fiend haunts Poor Tom in the voice of a nightingale. Hoppedance cries in Tom's belly for two white herring.—Croak not, black angel. I have no food for thee.
KENT*, to Lear*
How do you, sir? Stand you not so amazed.
Will you lie down and rest upon the cushions?
LEAR
I'll see their trial first. Bring in their evidence.
*To Edgar.* Thou robèd man of justice, take thy place,
*To Fool.* And thou, his yokefellow of equity,
Bench by his side. *To Kent.* You are o' th' commission;
Sit you, too.
EDGAR Let us deal justly.
*Sings.* Sleepest or wakest, thou jolly shepherd?
Thy sheep be in the corn.
And for one blast of thy minikin mouth,
Thy sheep shall take no harm.
Purr the cat is gray.
LEAR Arraign her first; 'tis Goneril. I here take my oath before this honorable assembly, kicked the poor king her father.
FOOL Come hither, mistress. Is your name Goneril?
LEAR She cannot deny it.

FOOL Cry you mercy, I took you for a joint stool.

LEAR
And here's another whose warped looks proclaim
What store her heart is made on. Stop her there!
Arms, arms, sword, fire! Corruption in the place!
False justicer, why hast thou let her 'scape?

EDGAR Bless thy five wits!

KENT*, to Lear*
O pity! Sir, where is the patience now
That you so oft have boasted to retain?

EDGAR*, aside*
My tears begin to take his part so much
They mar my counterfeiting.

LEAR The little dogs and all,
Tray, Blanch, and Sweetheart, see, they bark at me.

EDGAR Tom will throw his head at them.—Avaunt, you curs!
Be thy mouth or black or white,
Tooth that poisons if it bite,
Mastiff, greyhound, mongrel grim,
Hound or spaniel, brach, or lym,
Bobtail tike, or trundle-tail,
Tom will make him weep and wail;
For, with throwing thus my head,
Dogs leapt the hatch, and all are fled.
Do de, de, de. Sessa! Come, march to wakes and fairs and market towns. Poor Tom, thy horn is dry.

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

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

LEAR*, lying down* Make no noise, make no noise.
Draw the curtains. So, so, we'll go to supper i' th' morning.

FOOL And I'll go to bed at noon.

*Enter Gloucester.*

GLOUCESTER*, to Kent*
Come hither, friend. Where is the King my master?

KENT
Here, sir, but trouble him not; his wits are gone.

GLOUCESTER
Good friend, I prithee, take him in thy arms.
I have o'erheard a plot of death upon him.
There is a litter ready; lay him in 't,
And drive toward Dover, friend, where thou shalt meet
Both welcome and protection. Take up thy master.
If thou shouldst dally half an hour, his life,
With thine and all that offer to defend him,

Stand in assurèd loss. Take up, take up,
And follow me, that will to some provision
Give thee quick conduct.

KENT Oppressèd nature sleeps.
This rest might yet have balmed thy broken sinews,
Which, if convenience will not allow,
Stand in hard cure. *To the Fool.* Come, help to bear thy master.
Thou must not stay behind.

GLOUCESTER Come, come away.

*All but Edgar exit, carrying Lear.*

EDGAR
When we our betters see bearing our woes,
We scarcely think our miseries our foes.
Who alone suffers suffers most i' th' mind,
Leaving free things and happy shows behind.
But then the mind much sufferance doth o'erskip
When grief hath mates and bearing fellowship.
How light and portable my pain seems now
When that which makes me bend makes the King bow!
He childed as I fathered. Tom, away.
Mark the high noises, and thyself bewray
When false opinion, whose wrong thoughts defile thee,
In thy just proof repeals and reconciles thee.
What will hap more tonight, safe 'scape the King!
Lurk, lurk.

*He exits.*

## Scene 7

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

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

REGAN Hang him instantly.

GONERIL Pluck out his eyes.

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

*Enter Oswald, the Steward.*

How now? Where's the King?

OSWALD
My lord of Gloucester hath conveyed him hence.
Some five- or six-and-thirty of his knights,
Hot questrists after him, met him at gate,

Who, with some other of the lord's dependents,
Are gone with him toward Dover, where they boast
To have well-armèd friends.
CORNWALL Get horses for your mistress.
*Oswald exits.*
GONERIL Farewell, sweet lord, and sister.
CORNWALL
Edmund, farewell. *Goneril and Edmund exit.*
Go seek the traitor Gloucester.
Pinion him like a thief; bring him before us.
*Some Servants exit.*
Though well we may not pass upon his life
Without the form of justice, yet our power
Shall do a court'sy to our wrath, which men
May blame but not control.

*Enter Gloucester and Servants.*

Who's there? The
traitor?
REGAN Ingrateful fox! 'Tis he.
CORNWALL Bind fast his corky arms.
GLOUCESTER
What means your Graces? Good my friends,
consider
You are my guests; do me no foul play, friends.
CORNWALL
Bind him, I say.
REGAN Hard, hard. O filthy traitor!
GLOUCESTER
Unmerciful lady as you are, I'm none.
CORNWALL
To this chair bind him. *Servants bind Gloucester.*
Villain, thou shalt find—
*Regan plucks Gloucester's beard.*
GLOUCESTER
By the kind gods, 'tis most ignobly done
To pluck me by the beard.
REGAN
So white, and such a traitor?
GLOUCESTER Naughty lady,
These hairs which thou dost ravish from my chin
Will quicken and accuse thee. I am your host;
With robber's hands my hospitable favors
You should not ruffle thus. What will you do?
CORNWALL
Come, sir, what letters had you late from France?
REGAN
Be simple-answered, for we know the truth.
CORNWALL
And what confederacy have you with the traitors
Late footed in the kingdom?
REGAN To whose hands
You have sent the lunatic king. Speak.
GLOUCESTER
I have a letter guessingly set down

Which came from one that's of a neutral heart,
And not from one opposed.
CORNWALL Cunning.
REGAN And false.
CORNWALL Where hast thou sent the King?
GLOUCESTER To Dover.
REGAN
Wherefore to Dover? Wast thou not charged at peril—
CORNWALL
Wherefore to Dover? Let him answer that.
GLOUCESTER
I am tied to th' stake, and I must stand the course.
REGAN Wherefore to Dover?
GLOUCESTER
Because I would not see thy cruel nails
Pluck out his poor old eyes, nor thy fierce sister
In his anointed flesh stick boarish fangs.
The sea, with such a storm as his bare head
In hell-black night endured, would have buoyed up
And quenched the stellèd fires;
Yet, poor old heart, he holp the heavens to rain.
If wolves had at thy gate howled that stern time,
Thou shouldst have said "Good porter, turn the key."
All cruels else subscribe. But I shall see
The wingèd vengeance overtake such children.
CORNWALL
See 't shalt thou never.—Fellows, hold the chair.—
Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot.
GLOUCESTER
He that will think to live till he be old,
Give me some help!
*As Servants hold the chair, Cornwall forces out one of Gloucester's eyes.*
O cruel! O you gods!
REGAN
One side will mock another. Th' other too.
CORNWALL
If you see vengeance—
FIRST SERVANT Hold your hand, my lord.
I have served you ever since I was a child,
But better service have I never done you
Than now to bid you hold.
REGAN How now, you dog?
FIRST SERVANT
If you did wear a beard upon your chin,
I'd shake it on this quarrel. What do you mean?
CORNWALL My villain? *Draw and fight.*
FIRST SERVANT
Nay, then, come on, and take the chance of anger.
REGAN*, to an Attendant*
Give me thy sword. A peasant stand up thus?
*She takes a sword and runs at him behind; kills him.*

FIRST SERVANT
O, I am slain! My lord, you have one eye left
To see some mischief on him. O! *He dies.*
CORNWALL
Lest it see more, prevent it. Out, vile jelly!
*Forcing out Gloucester's other eye.*
Where is thy luster now?
GLOUCESTER
All dark and comfortless! Where's my son
Edmund?—
Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature
To quit this horrid act.
REGAN Out, treacherous villain!
Thou call'st on him that hates thee. It was he
That made the overture of thy treasons to us,
Who is too good to pity thee.
GLOUCESTER
O my follies! Then Edgar was abused.
Kind gods, forgive me that, and prosper him.
REGAN
Go thrust him out at gates, and let him smell
His way to Dover.
*Some Servants exit with Gloucester.*
How is 't, my lord? How look you?
CORNWALL
I have received a hurt. Follow me, lady.—
Turn out that eyeless villain. Throw this slave
Upon the dunghill.—Regan, I bleed apace.
Untimely comes this hurt. Give me your arm.
*Cornwall and Regan exit.*
SECOND SERVANT
I'll never care what wickedness I do
If this man come to good.
THIRD SERVANT If she live long
And in the end meet the old course of death,
Women will all turn monsters.
SECOND SERVANT
Let's follow the old earl and get the Bedlam
To lead him where he would. His roguish madness
Allows itself to anything.
THIRD SERVANT
Go thou. I'll fetch some flax and whites of eggs
To apply to his bleeding face. Now heaven help him!
*They exit.*

# *ACT 4*

## Scene 1

*Enter Edgar in disguise.*

EDGAR
Yet better thus, and known to be contemned,
Than still contemned and flattered. To be worst,
The lowest and most dejected thing of Fortune,
Stands still in esperance, lives not in fear.
The lamentable change is from the best;
The worst returns to laughter. Welcome, then,
Thou unsubstantial air that I embrace.
The wretch that thou hast blown unto the worst
Owes nothing to thy blasts. But who comes here?

*Enter Gloucester and an old man.*

My father, poorly led? World, world, O world,
But that thy strange mutations make us hate thee,
Life would not yield to age.
OLD MAN
O my good lord, I have been your tenant
And your father's tenant these fourscore years.
GLOUCESTER
Away, get thee away. Good friend, begone.
Thy comforts can do me no good at all;
Thee they may hurt.
OLD MAN You cannot see your way.
GLOUCESTER
I have no way and therefore want no eyes.
I stumbled when I saw. Full oft 'tis seen
Our means secure us, and our mere defects
Prove our commodities. O dear son Edgar,
The food of thy abusèd father's wrath,
Might I but live to see thee in my touch,
I'd say I had eyes again.
OLD MAN How now? Who's there?
EDGAR*, aside*
O gods, who is 't can say "I am at the worst"?
I am worse than e'er I was.
OLD MAN 'Tis poor mad Tom.
EDGAR*, aside*
And worse I may be yet. The worst is not
So long as we can say "This is the worst."
OLD MAN
Fellow, where goest?
GLOUCESTER Is it a beggar-man?
OLD MAN Madman and beggar too.
GLOUCESTER
He has some reason, else he could not beg.
I' th' last night's storm, I such a fellow saw,
Which made me think a man a worm. My son

Came then into my mind, and yet my mind
Was then scarce friends with him. I have heard more since.
As flies to wanton boys are we to th' gods;
They kill us for their sport.
EDGAR, *aside* How should this be?
Bad is the trade that must play fool to sorrow,
Ang'ring itself and others.—Bless thee, master.
GLOUCESTER
Is that the naked fellow?
OLD MAN Ay, my lord.
GLOUCESTER
Then, prithee, get thee away. If for my sake
Thou wilt o'ertake us hence a mile or twain
I' th' way toward Dover, do it for ancient love,
And bring some covering for this naked soul,
Which I'll entreat to lead me.
OLD MAN Alack, sir, he is mad.
GLOUCESTER
'Tis the time's plague when madmen lead the blind.
Do as I bid thee, or rather do thy pleasure.
Above the rest, begone.
OLD MAN
I'll bring him the best 'parel that I have,
Come on 't what will. *He exits.*
GLOUCESTER Sirrah, naked fellow—
EDGAR
Poor Tom's a-cold. *Aside.* I cannot daub it further.
GLOUCESTER Come hither, fellow.
EDGAR, *aside*
And yet I must.—Bless thy sweet eyes, they bleed.
GLOUCESTER Know'st thou the way to Dover?
EDGAR Both stile and gate, horseway and footpath.
Poor Tom hath been scared out of his good wits.
Bless thee, good man's son, from the foul fiend.
Five fiends have been in Poor Tom at once: of lust, as Obidicut; Hobbididance, prince of dumbness;
Mahu, of stealing; Modo, of murder; Flibbertigibbet, of mopping and mowing, who since possesses chambermaids and waiting women. So, bless thee, master.
GLOUCESTER, *giving him money*
Here, take this purse, thou whom the heavens' plagues
Have humbled to all strokes. That I am wretched
Makes thee the happier. Heavens, deal so still:
Let the superfluous and lust-dieted man,
That slaves your ordinance, that will not see
Because he does not feel, feel your power quickly.
So distribution should undo excess
And each man have enough. Dost thou know Dover?
EDGAR Ay, master.
GLOUCESTER
There is a cliff, whose high and bending head
Looks fearfully in the confinèd deep.
Bring me but to the very brim of it,

And I'll repair the misery thou dost bear
With something rich about me. From that place
I shall no leading need.
EDGAR Give me thy arm.
Poor Tom shall lead thee.
*They exit.*

## Scene 2

*Enter Goneril and Edmund, the Bastard.*

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

*Enter Oswald, the Steward.*

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
Into my husband's hands. This trusty servant
Shall pass between us. Ere long you are like to hear—
If you dare venture in your own behalf—
A mistress's command. Wear this; spare speech.
*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.
EDMUND
Yours in the ranks of death.
*He exits.*
GONERIL My most dear Gloucester!
O, the difference of man and man!
To thee a woman's services are due;
My fool usurps my body.
OSWALD Madam, here comes my lord.
*He exits.*

*Enter Albany.*

GONERIL
I have been worth the whistle.
ALBANY O Goneril,
You are not worth the dust which the rude wind
Blows in your face. I fear your disposition.
That nature which contemns its origin
Cannot be bordered certain in itself.
She that herself will sliver and disbranch
From her material sap perforce must wither
And come to deadly use.
GONERIL No more. The text is foolish.
ALBANY
Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile.
Filths savor but themselves. What have you done?
Tigers, not daughters, what have you performed?
A father, and a gracious agèd man,
Whose reverence even the head-lugged bear would lick,
Most barbarous, most degenerate, have you madded.
Could my good brother suffer you to do it?
A man, a prince, by him so benefited!
If that the heavens do not their visible spirits
Send quickly down to tame these vile offenses,
It will come:
Humanity must perforce prey on itself,
Like monsters of the deep.
GONERIL Milk-livered man,
That bear'st a cheek for blows, a head for wrongs;
Who hast not in thy brows an eye discerning
Thine honor from thy suffering; that not know'st
Fools do those villains pity who are punished
Ere they have done their mischief. Where's thy drum?
France spreads his banners in our noiseless land,
With plumèd 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 O vain fool!
ALBANY
Thou changèd and self-covered thing, for shame
Bemonster not thy feature. Were 't my fitness
To let these hands obey my blood,
They are apt enough to dislocate and tear
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
O, my good lord, the Duke of Cornwall's dead,

Slain by his servant, going to put out
The other eye of Gloucester.
ALBANY Gloucester's eyes?
MESSENGER
A servant that he bred, thrilled with remorse,
Opposed against the act, bending his sword
To his great master, who, thereat enraged,
Flew on him and amongst them felled him dead,
But not without that harmful stroke which since
Hath plucked him after.
ALBANY This shows you are above,
You justicers, that these our nether crimes
So speedily can venge. But, O poor Gloucester,
Lost he his other eye?
MESSENGER Both, both, my lord.—
This letter, madam, craves a speedy answer.
*Giving her a paper.*
'Tis from your sister.
GONERIL*, aside* One way I like this well.
But being widow and my Gloucester with her
May all the building in my fancy pluck
Upon my hateful life. Another way
The news is not so tart.—I'll read, and answer.
*She exits.*
ALBANY
Where was his son when they did take his eyes?
MESSENGER
Come with my lady hither.
ALBANY He is not here.
MESSENGER
No, my good lord. I met him back again.
ALBANY Knows he the wickedness?
MESSENGER
Ay, my good lord. 'Twas he informed against him
And quit the house on purpose, that their punishment
Might have the freer course.
ALBANY Gloucester, I live
To thank thee for the love thou show'd'st the King,
And to revenge thine eyes.—Come hither, friend.
Tell me what more thou know'st.
*They exit.*

## Scene 3

*Enter Kent in disguise and a Gentleman.*

KENT Why the King of France is so suddenly gone back know you no reason?
GENTLEMAN Something he left imperfect in the state, which since his coming forth is thought of, which imports to the kingdom so much fear and danger that his personal return was most required and necessary.
KENT Who hath he left behind him general?
GENTLEMAN The Marshal of France, Monsieur La Far.
KENT Did your letters pierce the Queen to any demonstration of grief?

GENTLEMAN
Ay, sir, she took them, read them in my presence,
And now and then an ample tear trilled down
Her delicate cheek. It seemed she was a queen
Over her passion, who, most rebel-like,
Fought to be king o'er her.
KENT O, then it moved her.
GENTLEMAN
Not to a rage. Patience and sorrow strove
Who should express her goodliest. You have seen
Sunshine and rain at once; her smiles and tears
Were like a better way. Those happy smilets
That played on her ripe lip seemed not to know
What guests were in her eyes, which parted thence
As pearls from diamonds dropped. In brief,
Sorrow would be a rarity most beloved
If all could so become it.
KENT Made she no verbal question?
GENTLEMAN
Faith, once or twice she heaved the name of "father"
Pantingly forth, as if it pressed her heart;
Cried "Sisters, sisters, shame of ladies, sisters!
Kent, father, sisters! What, i' th' storm, i' th' night?
Let pity not be believed!" There she shook
The holy water from her heavenly eyes,
And clamor moistened. Then away she started,
To deal with grief alone.
KENT It is the stars.
The stars above us govern our conditions,
Else one self mate and make could not beget
Such different issues. You spoke not with her since?
GENTLEMAN No.
KENT
Was this before the King returned?
GENTLEMAN No, since.
KENT
Well, sir, the poor distressèd Lear's i' th' town,
Who sometime in his better tune remembers
What we are come about, and by no means
Will yield to see his daughter.
GENTLEMAN Why, good sir?
KENT
A sovereign shame so elbows him—his own unkindness,
That stripped her from his benediction, turned her
To foreign casualties, gave her dear rights
To his dog-hearted daughters—these things sting
His mind so venomously that burning shame
Detains him from Cordelia.
GENTLEMAN Alack, poor gentleman!
KENT
Of Albany's and Cornwall's powers you heard not?
GENTLEMAN 'Tis so. They are afoot.

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

*They exit.*

## Scene 4

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

CORDELIA
Alack, 'tis he! Why, he was met even now
As mad as the vexed sea, singing aloud,
Crowned with rank fumiter and furrow-weeds,
With hardocks, hemlock, nettles, cuckooflowers,
Darnel, and all the idle weeds that grow
In our sustaining corn. A century send forth.
Search every acre in the high-grown field
And bring him to our eye. *Soldiers exit.*
What can man's wisdom
In the restoring his bereavèd sense?
He that helps him take all my outward worth.
DOCTOR There is means, madam.
Our foster nurse of nature is repose,
The which he lacks. That to provoke in him
Are many simples operative, whose power
Will close the eye of anguish.
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
That wants the means to lead it.

*Enter Messenger.*

MESSENGER News, madam.
The British powers are marching hitherward.
CORDELIA
'Tis known before. Our preparation stands
In expectation of them.—O dear father,
It is thy business that I go about.
Therefore great France
My mourning and importuned tears hath pitied.
No blown ambition doth our arms incite,
But love, dear love, and our aged father's right.
Soon may I hear and see him.

*They exit.*

## Scene 5

*Enter Regan and Oswald, the Steward.*

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 letter 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,
Some things—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 eliads and most speaking looks
To noble Edmund. I know you are of her bosom.
OSWALD I, madam?
REGAN
I speak in understanding. Y' are; I know 't.
Therefore I do advise you take this note:
My lord is dead; Edmund and I have talked,
And more convenient is he for my hand
Than for your lady's. You may gather more.
If you do find him, pray you, give him this,
And when your mistress hears thus much from you,
I pray, desire her call her wisdom to her.
So, fare you well.
If you do chance to hear of that blind traitor,
Preferment falls on him that cuts him off.
OSWALD
Would I could meet him, madam. I should show
What party I do follow.
REGAN Fare thee well.

*They exit.*

## Scene 6

*Enter Gloucester and Edgar dressed as a peasant.*

GLOUCESTER
When shall I come to th' top of that same hill?
EDGAR
You do climb up it now. Look how we labor.
GLOUCESTER
Methinks the ground is even.
EDGAR Horrible steep.
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
Show scarce so gross as beetles. Halfway down
Hangs one that gathers samphire—dreadful trade;
Methinks he seems no bigger than his head.
The fishermen that walk upon the beach
Appear like mice, and 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. Fairies and gods
Prosper it with thee. *He gives Edgar a purse.*
Go thou further off.
Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.
EDGAR*, walking away*
Now fare you well, good sir.
GLOUCESTER With all my heart.
EDGAR*, aside*
Why I do trifle thus with his despair
Is done to cure it.

GLOUCESTER O you mighty gods! *He kneels.*
This world I do renounce, and in your sights
Shake patiently my great affliction off.
If I could bear it longer, and not fall
To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,
My snuff and loathèd part of nature should
Burn itself out. If Edgar live, O, bless him!—
Now, fellow, fare thee well. *He falls.*
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.
Ten masts at each make not the altitude
Which thou hast perpendicularly fell.
Thy life's a miracle. Speak yet again.
GLOUCESTER But have I fall'n or no?
EDGAR
From the dread summit of this chalky bourn.
Look up a-height. The shrill-gorged lark so far
Cannot be seen or heard. Do but look up.
GLOUCESTER Alack, I have no eyes.
Is wretchedness deprived that benefit
To end itself by death? 'Twas yet some comfort
When misery could beguile the tyrant's rage
And frustrate his proud will.
EDGAR Give me your arm.
*He raises Gloucester.*
Up. So, how is 't? Feel you your legs? You stand.
GLOUCESTER
Too well, too well.
EDGAR This is above all strangeness.
Upon the crown o' th' cliff, what thing was that
Which parted from you?
GLOUCESTER A poor unfortunate beggar.
EDGAR
As I stood here below, methought his eyes
Were two full moons; he had a thousand noses,
Horns whelked and waved like the enragèd sea.
It was some fiend. Therefore, thou happy father,
Think that the clearest gods, who make them honors
Of men's impossibilities, have preserved thee.
GLOUCESTER
I do remember now. Henceforth I'll bear

Affliction till it do cry out itself
"Enough, enough!" and die. That thing you speak of,
I took it for a man. Often 'twould say
"The fiend, the fiend!" He led me to that place.

EDGAR
Bear free and patient thoughts.

*Enter Lear.*

But who comes here?
The safer sense will ne'er accommodate
His master thus.

LEAR No, they cannot touch me for coining. I am the King himself.

EDGAR O, thou side-piercing sight!

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

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 the 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 simp'ring 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 with a more riotous appetite. Down from the waist they are centaurs, though women all above. But to the girdle do the gods inherit; beneath is all the fiend's. There's hell, there's darkness, there is the sulphurous pit; burning, scalding, stench, consumption! Fie, fie, fie, pah,

pah! Give me an ounce of civet, good apothecary;
sweeten my imagination. There's money for thee.
GLOUCESTER O, let me kiss that hand!
LEAR Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality.
GLOUCESTER
O ruined piece of nature! This great world
Shall so wear out to naught. Dost thou know me?
LEAR I remember thine eyes well enough. Dost thou
squinny at me? No, do thy worst, blind Cupid, I'll
not love. Read thou this challenge. Mark but the
penning of it.
GLOUCESTER
Were all thy letters suns, I could not see.
EDGAR, *aside*
I would not take this from report. It is,
And my heart breaks at it.
LEAR Read.
GLOUCESTER What, with the case of eyes?
LEAR O ho, are you there with me? No eyes in your
head, nor no money in your purse? Your eyes are in
a heavy case, your purse in a light, yet you see how
this world goes.
GLOUCESTER I see it feelingly.
LEAR What, art mad? A man may see how this world
goes with no eyes. Look with thine ears. See how
yond justice rails upon yond simple thief. Hark in
thine ear. Change places and, handy-dandy, which
is the justice, which is the thief? Thou hast seen a
farmer's dog bark at a beggar?
GLOUCESTER Ay, sir.
LEAR And the creature run from the cur? There thou
might'st behold the great image of authority: a
dog's obeyed in office.
Thou rascal beadle, hold thy bloody hand!
Why dost thou lash that whore? Strip thy own back.
Thou hotly lusts to use her in that kind
For which thou whipp'st her. The usurer hangs the
cozener.
Through tattered clothes small vices do appear.
Robes and furred gowns hide all. Plate sin with
gold,
And the strong lance of justice hurtless breaks.
Arm it in rags, a pygmy's straw does pierce it.
None does offend, none, I say, none; I'll able 'em.
Take that of me, my friend, who have the power
To seal th' accuser's lips. Get thee glass eyes,
And like a scurvy politician
Seem to see the things thou dost not. Now, now,
now, now.
Pull off my boots. Harder, harder. So.
EDGAR, *aside*
O, matter and impertinency mixed,
Reason in madness!
LEAR
If thou wilt weep my fortunes, take my eyes.
I know thee well enough; thy name is Gloucester.

Thou must be patient. We came crying hither;
Thou know'st the first time that we smell the air
We wawl and cry. I will preach to thee. Mark.
GLOUCESTER Alack, alack the day!
LEAR
When we are born, we cry that we are come
To this great stage of fools.—This' a good block.
It were a delicate stratagem to shoe
A troop of horse with felt. I'll put 't in proof,
And when I have stol'n upon these son-in-laws,
Then kill, kill, kill, kill, kill, kill!

*Enter a Gentleman and Attendants.*

GENTLEMAN*, noticing Lear*
O, here he is. *To an Attendant.* Lay hand upon him.—Sir,
Your most dear daughter—
LEAR
No rescue? What, a prisoner? I am even
The natural fool of Fortune. Use me well.
You shall have ransom. Let me have surgeons;
I am cut to th' brains.
GENTLEMAN You shall have anything.
LEAR No seconds? All myself?
Why, this would make a man a man of salt,
To use his eyes for garden waterpots,
Ay, and laying autumn's dust.
I will die bravely like a smug bridegroom. What?
I will be jovial. Come, come, I am a king,
Masters, know you that?
GENTLEMAN
You are a royal one, and we obey you.
LEAR Then there's life in 't. Come, an you get it, you shall get it by running. Sa, sa, sa, sa.

*The King exits running pursued by Attendants.*

GENTLEMAN
A sight most pitiful in the meanest wretch,
Past speaking of in a king. Thou hast a daughter
Who redeems nature from the general curse
Which twain have brought her to.
EDGAR Hail, gentle sir.
GENTLEMAN Sir, speed you. What's your will?
EDGAR
Do you hear aught, sir, of a battle toward?
GENTLEMAN
Most sure and vulgar. Everyone hears that,
Which can distinguish sound.
EDGAR But, by your favor,
How near's the other army?
GENTLEMAN
Near and on speedy foot. The main descry
Stands on the hourly thought.
EDGAR I thank you, sir. That's all.
GENTLEMAN
Though that the Queen on special cause is here,

Her army is moved on.
EDGAR I thank you, sir.
*Gentleman exits.*
GLOUCESTER
You ever-gentle gods, take my breath from me;
Let not my worser spirit tempt me again
To die before you please.
EDGAR Well pray you, father.
GLOUCESTER Now, good sir, what are you?
EDGAR
A most poor man, made tame to Fortune's blows,
Who, by the art of known and feeling sorrows,
Am pregnant to good pity. Give me your hand;
I'll lead you to some biding.
*He takes Gloucester's hand.*
GLOUCESTER Hearty thanks.
The bounty and the benison of heaven
To boot, and boot.

*Enter Oswald, the Steward.*

OSWALD*, drawing his sword*
A proclaimed prize! Most happy!
That eyeless head of thine was first framed flesh
To raise my fortunes. Thou old unhappy traitor,
Briefly thyself remember; the sword is out
That must destroy thee.
GLOUCESTER Now let thy friendly hand
Put strength enough to 't.
*Edgar steps between Gloucester and Oswald.*
OSWALD Wherefore, bold peasant,
Dar'st thou support a published traitor? Hence,
Lest that th' infection of his fortune take
Like hold on thee. Let go his arm.
EDGAR Chill not let go, zir, without vurther 'casion.
OSWALD Let go, slave, or thou diest!
EDGAR Good gentleman, go your gait, and let poor
volk pass. An 'chud ha' bin zwaggered out of my
life, 'twould not ha' bin zo long as 'tis by a vortnight.
Nay, come not near th' old man. Keep out,
che vor' ye, or Ise try whether your costard or my
ballow be the harder. Chill be plain with you.
OSWALD Out, dunghill.
EDGAR Chill pick your teeth, zir. Come, no matter vor
your foins.
*They fight.*
OSWALD*, falling*
Slave, thou hast slain me. Villain, take my purse.
If ever thou wilt thrive, bury my body,
And give the letters which thou find'st about me
To Edmund, Earl of Gloucester. Seek him out
Upon the English party. O, untimely death! Death!
*He dies.*
EDGAR
I know thee well, a serviceable villain,
As duteous to the vices of thy mistress
As badness would desire.

GLOUCESTER What, is he dead?
EDGAR Sit you down, father; rest you.
Let's see these pockets. The letters that he speaks of
May be my friends. He's dead; I am only sorry
He had no other deathsman. Let us see.
*He opens a letter.*
Leave, gentle wax, and, manners, blame us not.
To know our enemies' minds, we rip their hearts.
Their papers is more lawful. *Reads the letter.*
*Let our reciprocal vows be remembered. You have many opportunities to cut him off. If your will want not, time and place will be fruitfully offered. There is nothing done if he return the conqueror. Then am I the prisoner, and his bed my jail, from the loathed warmth whereof deliver me and supply the place for your labor.*
*Your (wife, so I would say) affectionate servant, and, for you, her own for venture,* *Goneril.*
O indistinguished space of woman's will!
A plot upon her virtuous husband's life,
And the exchange my brother.—Here, in the sands
Thee I'll rake up, the post unsanctified
Of murderous lechers; and in the mature time
With this ungracious paper strike the sight
Of the death-practiced duke. For him 'tis well
That of thy death and business I can tell.
GLOUCESTER
The King is mad. How stiff is my vile sense
That I stand up and have ingenious feeling
Of my huge sorrows! Better I were distract.
So should my thoughts be severed from my griefs,
And woes, by wrong imaginations, lose
The knowledge of themselves. *Drum afar off.*
EDGAR Give me your hand.
Far off methinks I hear the beaten drum.
Come, father, I'll bestow you with a friend.
*They exit.*

## Scene 7

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

CORDELIA
O, thou good Kent, how shall I live and work
To match thy goodness? My life will be too short,
And every measure fail me.
KENT
To be acknowledged, madam, is o'erpaid.
All my reports go with the modest truth,
Nor more, nor clipped, but so.
CORDELIA Be better suited.
These weeds are memories of those 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.—How does the King?
DOCTOR Madam, sleeps still.
CORDELIA O, you kind gods,
Cure this great breach in his abusèd nature!
Th' untuned and jarring senses, O, wind up,
Of this child-changèd father!
DOCTOR So please your Majesty
That we may wake the King? He hath slept long.
CORDELIA
Be governed by your knowledge, and proceed
I' th' sway of your own will. Is he arrayed?

*Enter Lear in a chair carried by Servants.*

GENTLEMAN
Ay, madam. In the heaviness of sleep,
We put fresh garments on him.
DOCTOR
Be by, good madam, when we do awake him.
I doubt not of his temperance.
CORDELIA Very well.

*Music.*

DOCTOR
Please you, draw near.—Louder the music there.
CORDELIA*, kissing Lear*
O, my dear father, restoration hang
Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss
Repair those violent harms that my two sisters
Have in thy reverence made.
KENT Kind and dear princess.
CORDELIA
Had you not been their father, these white flakes
Did challenge pity of them. Was this a face
To be opposed against the jarring winds?
To stand against the deep dread-bolted thunder,
In the most terrible and nimble stroke
Of quick cross-lightning? To watch, poor *perdu*,
With this thin helm? Mine enemy's dog,
Though he had bit me, should have stood that night
Against my fire. And wast thou fain, poor father,
To hovel thee with swine and rogues forlorn
In short and musty straw? Alack, alack,
'Tis wonder that thy life and wits at once
Had not concluded all.—He wakes. Speak to him.
DOCTOR Madam, do you; 'tis fittest.
CORDELIA
How does my royal lord? How fares your Majesty?
LEAR
You do me wrong to take me out o' th' grave.
Thou art a soul in bliss, but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
Do scald like molten lead.
CORDELIA Sir, do you know me?

LEAR
You are a spirit, I know. Where did you die?
CORDELIA Still, still, far wide.
DOCTOR
He's scarce awake. Let him alone awhile.
LEAR
Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?
I am mightily abused; I should e'en die with pity
To see another thus. I know not what to say.
I will not swear these are my hands. Let's see.
I feel this pinprick. Would I were assured
Of my condition!
CORDELIA O, look upon me, sir,
And hold your hand in benediction o'er me.
No, sir, you must not kneel.
LEAR Pray do not mock:
I am a very foolish fond old man,
Fourscore and upward, not an hour more nor less,
And to deal plainly,
I fear I am not in my perfect mind.
Methinks I should know you and know this man,
Yet I am doubtful, for I am mainly ignorant
What place this is, and all the skill I have
Remembers not these garments; nor I know not
Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me,
For, as I am a man, I think this lady
To be my child Cordelia.
CORDELIA*, weeping* And so I am; I am.
LEAR
Be your tears wet? Yes, faith. I pray, weep not.
If you have poison for me, I will drink it.
I know you do not love me, for your sisters
Have, as I do remember, done me wrong.
You have some cause; they have not.
CORDELIA No cause, no
cause.
LEAR Am I in France?
KENT In your own kingdom, sir.
LEAR Do not abuse me.
DOCTOR
Be comforted, good madam. The great rage,
You see, is killed in him, and yet it is danger
To make him even o'er the time he has lost.
Desire him to go in. Trouble him no more
Till further settling.
CORDELIA Will 't please your Highness walk?
LEAR You must bear with me.
Pray you now, forget, and forgive. I am old and
foolish. *They exit. Kent and Gentleman remain.*
GENTLEMAN Holds it true, sir, that the Duke of Cornwall
was so slain?
KENT Most certain, sir.
GENTLEMAN Who is conductor of his people?
KENT As 'tis said, the bastard son of Gloucester.
GENTLEMAN They say Edgar, his banished son, is with
the Earl of Kent in Germany.

KENT  Report is changeable. 'Tis time to look about.
The powers of the kingdom approach apace.
GENTLEMAN  The arbitrament is like to be bloody. Fare
you well, sir. *He exits.*
KENT
My point and period will be throughly wrought,
Or well, or ill, as this day's battle's fought.
*He exits.*

# *ACT 5*

Scene 1

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

EDMUND*, to a Gentleman*
Know of the Duke if his last purpose hold,
Or whether since he is advised by aught
To change the course. He's full of alteration
And self-reproving. Bring his constant pleasure.
*A Gentleman exits.*
REGAN
Our sister's man is certainly miscarried.
EDMUND
'Tis to be doubted, madam.
REGAN Now, sweet lord,
You know the goodness I intend upon you;
Tell me but truly, but then speak the truth,
Do you not love my sister?
EDMUND In honored love.
REGAN
But have you never found my brother's way
To the forfended place?
EDMUND That thought abuses you.
REGAN
I am doubtful that you have been conjunct
And bosomed with her as far as we call hers.
EDMUND No, by mine honor, madam.
REGAN
I never shall endure her. Dear my lord,
Be not familiar with her.
EDMUND
Fear me not. She and the Duke, her husband.

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

GONERIL*, aside*
I had rather lose the battle than that sister
Should loosen him and me.
ALBANY
Our very loving sister, well bemet.—
Sir, this I heard: the King is come to his daughter,
With others whom the rigor of our state
Forced to cry out. Where I could not be honest,
I never yet was valiant. For this business,
It touches us as France invades our land,
Not bolds the King, with others whom, I fear,
Most just and heavy causes make oppose.
EDMUND
Sir, you speak nobly.
REGAN Why is this reasoned?

GONERIL
Combine together ’gainst the enemy,
For these domestic and particular broils
Are not the question here.
ALBANY Let’s then determine
With th’ ancient of war on our proceeding.
EDMUND
I shall attend you presently at your tent.
REGAN Sister, you’ll go with us?
GONERIL No.
REGAN
’Tis most convenient. Pray, go with us.
GONERIL*, aside*
Oho, I know the riddle.—I will go.
*They begin to exit.*

*Enter Edgar dressed as a peasant.*

EDGAR*, to Albany*
If e’er your Grace had speech with man so poor,
Hear me one word.
ALBANY*, to those exiting*
I’ll overtake you.—Speak.
*Both the armies exit.*
EDGAR*, giving him a paper*
Before you fight the battle, ope this letter.
If you have victory, let the trumpet sound
For him that brought it. Wretched though I seem,
I can produce a champion that will prove
What is avouchèd there. If you miscarry,
Your business of the world hath so an end,
And machination ceases. 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. *He exits.*
ALBANY
Why, fare thee well. I will o’erlook thy paper.

*Enter Edmund.*

EDMUND
The enemy’s in view. Draw up your powers.
*Giving him a paper.*
Here is the guess of their true strength and forces
By diligent discovery. But your haste
Is now urged on you.
ALBANY We will greet the time.
*He exits.*
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,
Shall never see his pardon, for my state
Stands on me to defend, not to debate.

*He exits.*

## Scene 2

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

EDGAR
Here, father, take the shadow of this tree
For your good host. Pray that the right may thrive.
If ever I return to you again,
I'll bring you comfort.
GLOUCESTER Grace go with you, sir.

*Edgar exits.*

*Alarum and Retreat within.*

*Enter Edgar.*

EDGAR
Away, old man. Give me thy hand. Away.
King Lear hath lost, he and his daughter ta'en.
Give me thy hand. Come on.
GLOUCESTER
No further, sir. A man may rot even here.
EDGAR
What, in ill thoughts again? Men must endure
Their going hence even as their coming hither.
Ripeness is all. Come on.
GLOUCESTER And that's true too.

*They exit.*

## Scene 3

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

EDMUND
Some officers take them away. Good guard
Until their greater pleasures first be known
That are to censure them.
CORDELIA*, to Lear* We are not the first
Who with best meaning have incurred the worst.
For thee, oppressèd king, I am cast down.
Myself could else outfrown false Fortune's frown.
Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?
LEAR
No, no, no, no. Come, let's away to prison.
We two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage.

When thou dost ask me blessing, I'll kneel down
And ask of thee forgiveness. So we'll live,
And pray, and sing, and tell old tales, and laugh
At gilded butterflies, and hear poor rogues
Talk of court news, and we'll talk with them too—
Who loses and who wins; who's in, who's out—
And take upon 's the mystery of things,
As if we were God's spies. And we'll wear out,
In a walled prison, packs and sects of great ones
That ebb and flow by th' moon.

EDMUND Take them away.

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

*Lear and Cordelia exit, with Soldiers.*

EDMUND Come hither, captain. Hark.

*Handing him a paper.*

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

CAPTAIN I'll do 't, my lord.

EDMUND
About it, and write "happy" when th' hast done.
Mark, I say, instantly, and carry it so
As I have set it down.

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

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

ALBANY*, to Edmund*
Sir, you have showed today your valiant strain,
And Fortune led you well. You have the captives
Who were the opposites of this day's strife.
I do require them of you, so to use them
As we shall find their merits and our safety
May equally determine.

EDMUND Sir, I thought it fit
To send the old and miserable king
To some retention and appointed guard,
Whose age had charms in it, whose title more,
To pluck the common bosom on his side

And turn our impressed lances in our eyes,
Which do command them. With him I sent the Queen,
My reason all the same, and they are ready
Tomorrow, or at further space, t' appear
Where you shall hold your session. At this time
We sweat and bleed. The friend hath lost his friend,
And the best quarrels in the heat are cursed
By those that feel their sharpness.
The question of Cordelia and her father
Requires a fitter place.
ALBANY Sir, by your patience,
I hold you but a subject of this war,
Not as a brother.
REGAN That's as we list to grace him.
Methinks our pleasure might have been demanded
Ere you had spoke so far. He led our powers,
Bore the commission of my place and person,
The which immediacy may well stand up
And call itself your brother.
GONERIL Not so hot.
In his own grace he doth exalt himself
More than in your addition.
REGAN In my rights,
By me invested, he compeers the best.
GONERIL
That were the most if he should husband you.
REGAN
Jesters do oft prove prophets.
GONERIL Holla, holla!
That eye that told you so looked but asquint.
REGAN
Lady, I am not well, else I should answer
From a full-flowing stomach. *To Edmund.* General,
Take thou my soldiers, prisoners, patrimony.
Dispose of them, of me; the walls is thine.
Witness the world that I create thee here
My lord and master.
GONERIL Mean you to enjoy him?
ALBANY
The let-alone lies not in your goodwill.
EDMUND
Nor in thine, lord.
ALBANY Half-blooded fellow, yes.
REGAN*, to Edmund*
Let the drum strike, and prove my title thine.
ALBANY
Stay yet, hear reason.—Edmund, I arrest thee
On capital treason; and, in thine attaint,
This gilded serpent.—For your claim, fair sister,
I bar it in the interest of my wife.
'Tis she is subcontracted to this lord,
And I, her husband, contradict your banns.
If you will marry, make your loves to me.

My lady is bespoke.
GONERIL An interlude!
ALBANY
Thou art armed, Gloucester. Let the trumpet sound.
If none appear to prove upon thy person
Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons,
There is my pledge. *He throws down a glove.*
I'll make it on thy heart,
Ere I taste bread, thou art in nothing less
Than I have here proclaimed thee.
REGAN Sick, O, sick!
GONERIL*, aside* If not, I'll ne'er trust medicine.
EDMUND
There's my exchange. *He throws down a glove.*
What in the world he is
That names me traitor, villain-like he lies.
Call by the trumpet. He that dares approach,
On him, on you, who not, I will maintain
My truth and honor firmly.
ALBANY
A herald, ho!
EDMUND A herald, ho, a herald!
ALBANY
Trust to thy single virtue, for thy soldiers,
All levied in my name, have in my name
Took their discharge.
REGAN My sickness grows upon me.
ALBANY
She is not well. Convey her to my tent.
*Regan is helped to exit.*

*Enter a Herald.*

Come hither, herald. Let the trumpet sound,
And read out this. *He hands the Herald a paper.*
CAPTAIN Sound, trumpet!
*A trumpet sounds.*
HERALD *reads.*
*If any man of quality or degree, within the lists of the army, will maintain upon Edmund, supposed Earl of Gloucester, that he is a manifold traitor, let him appear by the third sound of the trumpet. He is bold in his defense.* *First trumpet sounds.*
HERALD Again! *Second trumpet sounds.*
HERALD Again! *Third trumpet sounds.*
*Trumpet answers within.*

*Enter Edgar armed.*

ALBANY*, to Herald*
Ask him his purposes, why he appears
Upon this call o' th' trumpet.
HERALD What are you?
Your name, your quality, and why you answer
This present summons?
EDGAR Know my name is lost,

By treason's tooth bare-gnawn and canker-bit.
Yet am I noble as the adversary
I come to cope.

ALBANY Which is that adversary?

EDGAR
What's he that speaks for Edmund, Earl of Gloucester?

EDMUND
Himself. What sayest thou to him?

EDGAR Draw thy sword,
That if my speech offend a noble heart,
Thy arm may do thee justice. Here is mine.
*He draws his sword.*
Behold, it is my privilege, the privilege of mine honors,
My oath, and my profession. I protest,
Maugre thy strength, place, youth, and eminence,
Despite thy victor-sword and fire-new fortune,
Thy valor, and thy heart, thou art a traitor,
False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father,
Conspirant 'gainst this high illustrious prince,
And from th' extremest upward of thy head
To the descent and dust below thy foot,
A most toad-spotted traitor. Say thou "no,"
This sword, this arm, and my best spirits are bent
To prove upon thy heart, whereto I speak,
Thou liest.

EDMUND In wisdom I should ask thy name,
But since thy outside looks so fair and warlike,
And that thy tongue some say of breeding breathes,
What safe and nicely I might well delay
By rule of knighthood, I disdain and spurn.
Back do I toss these treasons to thy head,
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 his sword. Alarums. Fights. Edmund falls, wounded.*

ALBANY*, to Edgar*
Save him, save him!

GONERIL This is practice, Gloucester.
By th' law of war, 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.
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! O!
Know'st thou this paper?

GONERIL Ask me not what I know.
*She exits.*

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

*A Soldier exits.*

EDMUND*, to Edgar*
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
Cost him his eyes.

EDMUND Th' hast spoken right. 'Tis true.
The wheel is come full circle; I am here.

ALBANY*, to Edgar*
Methought thy very gait did prophesy
A royal nobleness. I must embrace thee.
Let sorrow split my heart if ever I
Did hate thee or thy father!

EDGAR Worthy prince, I know 't.

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

EDGAR
By nursing them, my lord. List a brief tale,
And when 'tis told, O, that my heart would burst!
The bloody proclamation to escape
That followed me so near—O, our lives' sweetness,
That we the pain of death would hourly die
Rather than die at once!—taught me to shift
Into a madman's rags, t' assume a semblance
That very dogs disdained, and in this habit
Met I my father with his bleeding rings,
Their precious stones new lost; became his guide,
Led him, begged for him, saved him from despair.
Never—O fault!—revealed myself unto him
Until some half hour past, when I was armed.
Not sure, though hoping of this good success,
I asked his blessing, and from first to last
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.

EDMUND This speech of yours hath moved me,
And shall perchance do good. But speak you on.
You look as you had something more to say.

ALBANY
If there be more, more woeful, hold it in,
For I am almost ready to dissolve,
Hearing of this.

EDGAR This would have seemed a period

To such as love not sorrow; but another,
To amplify too much, would make much more
And top extremity. Whilst I
Was big in clamor, came there in a man
Who, having seen me in my worst estate,
Shunned my abhorred society; but then, finding
Who 'twas that so endured, with his strong arms
He fastened on my neck and bellowed out
As he'd burst heaven, threw him on my father,
Told the most piteous tale of Lear and him
That ever ear received, which, in recounting,
His grief grew puissant, and the strings of life
Began to crack. Twice then the trumpets sounded,
And there I left him tranced.

ALBANY But who was this?

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

*Enter a Gentleman with a bloody knife.*

GENTLEMAN
Help, help, O, help!

EDGAR What kind of help?

ALBANY*, to Gentleman* Speak, man!

EDGAR What means this bloody knife?

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

ALBANY Who dead? Speak, man.

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

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

EDGAR Here comes Kent.

*Enter Kent.*

ALBANY*, to the Gentleman*
Produce the bodies, be they alive or dead.
*Gentleman exits.*
This judgment of the heavens, that makes us tremble,
Touches us not with pity. O, is this he?
*To Kent.* The time will not allow the compliment
Which very manners urges.

KENT I am come
To bid my king and master aye goodnight.
Is he not here?

ALBANY Great thing of us forgot!
Speak, Edmund, where's the King? And where's Cordelia?
*Goneril and Regan's bodies brought out.*

Seest thou this object, Kent?
KENT Alack, why thus?
EDMUND Yet Edmund was beloved.
The one the other poisoned for my sake,
And after slew herself.
ALBANY Even so.—Cover their faces.
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 Run, run, O, run!
EDGAR
To who, my lord? *To Edmund.* Who has the office? Send
Thy token of reprieve.
EDMUND
Well thought on. Take my sword. Give it the Captain.
EDGAR*, to a Soldier* Haste thee for thy life.
*The Soldier exits with Edmund's sword.*
EDMUND*, to Albany*
He hath commission from thy wife and me
To hang Cordelia in the prison, and
To lay the blame upon her own despair,
That she fordid herself.
ALBANY
The gods defend her!—Bear him hence awhile.
*Edmund is carried off.*

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

LEAR
Howl, howl, howl! O, 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.
KENT Is this the promised end?
EDGAR
Or image of that horror?
ALBANY Fall and cease.
LEAR
This feather stirs. She lives. If it be so,
It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows
That ever I have felt.
KENT O, my good master—
LEAR
Prithee, away.
EDGAR 'Tis noble Kent, your friend.

LEAR
A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!
I might have saved her. Now she's gone forever.—
Cordelia, Cordelia, stay a little. Ha!
What is 't thou sayst?—Her voice was ever soft,
Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman.
I killed the slave that was a-hanging thee.
GENTLEMAN
'Tis true, my lords, he did.
LEAR Did I not, fellow?
I have seen the day, with my good biting falchion
I would have made him skip. I am old now,
And these same crosses spoil me. *To Kent.* Who are you?
Mine eyes are not o' th' best. I'll tell you straight.
KENT
If Fortune brag of two she loved and hated,
One of them we behold.
LEAR
This is a dull sight. Are you not Kent?
KENT The same,
Your servant Kent. Where is your servant Caius?
LEAR
He's a good fellow, I can tell you that.
He'll strike and quickly too. He's dead and rotten.
KENT
No, my good lord, I am the very man—
LEAR I'll see that straight.
KENT
That from your first of difference and decay
Have followed your sad steps.
LEAR You are welcome hither.
KENT
Nor no man else. All's cheerless, dark, and deadly.
Your eldest daughters have fordone themselves,
And desperately are dead.
LEAR Ay, so I think.
ALBANY
He knows not what he says, and vain is it
That we present us to him.
EDGAR Very bootless.

*Enter a Messenger.*

MESSENGER Edmund is dead, my lord.
ALBANY That's but a trifle here.—
You lords and noble friends, know our intent:
What comfort to this great decay may come
Shall be applied. For us, we will resign,
During the life of this old Majesty,
To him our absolute power; you to your rights,
With boot and such addition as your Honors
Have more than merited. All friends shall taste
The wages of their virtue, and all foes
The cup of their deservings. O, see, see!

LEAR
And my poor fool is hanged. No, no, no life?
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,
And thou no breath at all? Thou 'lt come no more,
Never, never, never, never, never.—
Pray you undo this button. Thank you, sir.
Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,
Look there, look there! *He dies.*
EDGAR He faints. *To Lear.* My lord,
my lord!
KENT
Break, heart, I prithee, break!
EDGAR Look up, my lord.
KENT
Vex not his ghost. O, let him pass! He hates him
That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer.
EDGAR He is gone indeed.
KENT
The wonder is he hath endured so long.
He but usurped his life.
ALBANY
Bear them from hence. Our present business
Is general woe. *To Edgar and Kent.* Friends of my
soul, you twain
Rule in this realm, and the gored state sustain.
KENT
I have a journey, sir, shortly to go;
My master calls me. I must not say no.
EDGAR
The weight of this sad time we must obey,
Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.
The oldest hath borne most; we that are young
Shall never see so much nor live so long.
*They exit with a dead march.*