



*William Shakespeare's*  
**King Lear**

Adapted by Rachel Gold  
Script Cutting [Gold, March 2024]

CAST OF CHARACTERS

ACTOR 1.....	<i>EDMUND</i>
ACTOR 2.....	<i>GLOUCESTER</i>
ACTOR 3.....	<i>KING LEAR</i>
ACTOR 4.....	<i>EDGAR / KING OF FRANCE / 1ST SERVANT</i>
ACTOR 5.....	<i>FOOL / CORDELIA</i>
ACTOR 6.....	<i>GONERIL</i>
ACTOR 7.....	<i>REGAN</i>
ACTOR 8.....	<i>CORNWALL / OSWALD / CAPTAIN</i>
ACTOR 9.....	<i>ALBANY / 2ND SERVANT / DOCTOR</i>
ACTOR 10.....	<i>KENT / 3RD SERVANT</i>

**ACT I; sc. 1 | King Lear's palace***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 it. But I have, sir, a son by order of law, some year elder than this, who yet is no dearer in my account: though this knave came something saucily into 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 honourable friend.

**EDMUND** My services to your lordship.

**GLOUCESTER** The king is coming.

*Sennet. Enter KING LEAR, CORNWALL, ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN, CORDELIA, and Attendants*

**KING LEAR** Meantime we shall express our darker purpose. Give me the map there. Know that we have divided In three our kingdom: and 'tis our fast intent To shake all cares and business from our age; Conferring them on younger strengths, while we Unburthen'd 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. 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?

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

**CORDELIA** <sup>[Aside]</sup> What shall Cordelia do? Love, and be silent.

**REGAN** Sir, I am made Of the self-same metal that my sister is, Only she comes too short: that I profess Myself an enemy to all other joys,

**[cont'd]** Which the most precious square of sense possesses;  
And find I am alone felicitate  
In your dear highness' love.

ACT 1; sc. 1

**CORDELIA** <sup>[Aside]</sup> Then poor Cordelia!  
And yet not so; since, I am sure, my love's  
More richer than my tongue.

**KING LEAR** To thee and thine hereditary ever  
Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom;  
No less in space, validity, and pleasure,  
Than that conferr'd on Goneril. Now, our joy,  
Although the last, not least; what can you say to draw  
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

**CORDELIA** Nothing, my lord.

**KING LEAR** Nothing!

**CORDELIA** Nothing.

**KING 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; nor more nor less.

**KING LEAR** How, how, Cordelia! mend your speech a little,  
Lest it 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 honour 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.

**KING LEAR** So young, and so untender?

**CORDELIA** So young, my lord, and true.

**KING LEAR** Let it be so; thy truth, then, be thy dower:  
Here I disclaim all my paternal care,  
And as a stranger to my heart and me  
Hold thee, from this, for ever.

**KENT** Good my liege,--

**KING 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. 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?

*Exit GLOUCESTER*

Cornwall and Albany,  
With my two daughters' dowers digest this third:  
Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her.

**KENT** Royal Lear,  
Whom I have ever honour'd as my king,  
Loved as my father, as my master follow'd,  
As my great patron thought on in my prayers,--

**KING LEAR** Kent, on thy life, no more.

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

**KING LEAR** Out of my sight!

**ALBANY & CORNWALL**

Dear sir, forbear.

**KENT** Do:  
Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow  
Upon thy foul disease. Revoke thy doom;  
Or, whilst I can vent clamour from my throat,  
I'll tell thee thou dost evil.

**KING LEAR** Hear me, recreant!  
Five days we do allot thee, for provision  
To shield thee from diseases of the world;  
And on the sixth to turn thy hated back  
Upon our kingdom: if, on the tenth day following,  
Thy banish'd trunk be found in our dominions,  
The moment is thy death.

**KENT** Fare thee well, king: sith thus thou wilt appear,  
Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here.

*To CORDELLIA*

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

*To REGAN and GONERIL*

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

*Exit*

*Flourish. Re-enter GLOUCESTER, with KING OF FRANCE, and Attendants*

**GLOUCESTER** Here's France, my noble lord.

**KING LEAR** For you, great king,  
I would not from your love make such a stray,  
To match you where I hate; therefore beseech you  
To avert your liking a more worthier way  
Than on a wretch whom nature is ashamed  
Almost to acknowledge hers.

**FRANCE** This is most strange,  
That she, that even but now was your best object,  
The argument of your praise, balm of your age,  
Most best, most dearest, should in this trice of time  
Commit a thing so monstrous, to dismantle  
So many folds of favour. Sure, her offence  
Must be of such unnatural degree,  
That monsters it, or your fore-vouch'd affection

[cont'd]

Fall'n into taint: which to believe of her,  
Must be a faith that reason without miracle  
Could never plant in me.

ACT 1; sc. 1

**CORDELIA**

I yet beseech your majesty,--  
--that you make known  
It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,  
No unchaste action, or dishonour'd step,  
That hath deprived me of your grace and favour;  
But even for want of that for which I am richer,  
A still-soliciting eye, and such a tongue  
As I am glad I have not, though not to have it  
Hath lost me in your liking.

**KING LEAR**

Better thou  
Hadst not been born than not to have pleased me better.

**FRANCE**

Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich, being poor;  
Most choice, forsaken; and most loved, despised!  
Thy dowerless daughter, king, thrown to my chance,  
Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France:  
Bid them farewell, Cordelia, though unkind:  
Thou lovest here, a better where to find.

**KING LEAR**

Thou hast her, France: let her be thine; for we  
Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see  
That face of hers again.

*Flourish. Exeunt all but KING OF FRANCE,*

*GONERIL, REGAN, and CORDELIA*

**FRANCE**

Bid farewell to your sisters.

**CORDELIA**

The jewels of our father, with wash'd 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. Use well our father:  
So, farewell to you both.

**REGAN**

Prescribe not us our duties.

**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 plaited cunning hides:  
Who cover faults, at last shame them derides.  
Well may you prosper!

**FRANCE**

Come, my fair Cordelia.

*Exeunt KING OF FRANCE and CORDELIA*

**GONERIL**

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

**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.

**GONERIL**

We must do something, and i' the heat.

*Exeunt*

## ACT I sc. 2 | The Earl of Gloucester's castle.

ACT I; sc. 2

*Enter EDMUND, with a letter*

**EDMUND** Thou, nature, art my goddess; to thy law  
My services are bound. Wherefore should I  
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit  
The curiosity of nations to deprive me,  
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moon-shines  
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 the 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 the legitimate: fine word,--legitimate!  
Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed,  
And my invention thrive, Edmund the base  
Shall top the legitimate. I grow; I prosper:  
Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

*Enter GLOUCESTER*

**GLOUCESTER** Edmund, how now! what news?

**EDMUND** So please your lordship, none.  
Putting up the letter

**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'er-read; and for so much as I have perused, I find it not fit for  
your o'er-looking.

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

**GLOUCESTER**<sup>[Reads]</sup> '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. Come to me, that of this I may speak more. If  
our father would sleep till I waked him, you should half his revenue  
for ever, and live the beloved of your brother, EDGAR.' Hum--  
conspiracy!--'Sleep till I waked him,--you should enjoy half his  
revenue,'--My son Edgar!  
Had he a hand to write this? a heart and brain to breed it in?--When

**[cont'd]** came this to you? who brought it?

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

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

**EDMUND** 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** Hath he never heretofore sounded you in this business?

**EDMUND** Never, my lord: but I have heard him oft maintain it to be fit, that, sons at perfect age, and fathers declining, 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.

**GLOUCESTER** Think you so?

**EDMUND** If your honour 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.

*Exit*

*Enter EDGAR*

And pat he comes like the catastrophe of the old comedy: my cue is villanous 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** Come, come; when saw you my father last?

**EDGAR** Why, the night gone by.

**EDMUND** Spake you with him?

**EDGAR** Ay, two hours together.

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

**EDGAR** None at all.

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

**EDGAR** Some villain hath done me wrong.

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

**EDGAR** Armed, brother!

**EDMUND** Brother, I advise you to the best; go armed: I am no honest man if there be any good meaning towards you: I have told you what I have seen and heard; but faintly, nothing like the image and horror of it: pray you, away.

**EDGAR** Shall I hear from you anon?

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

*Exit EDGAR*

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

*Exit*

### ACT I SCENE III. The Duke of Albany's palace.

*Enter GONERIL, and OSWALD, her steward*

**GONERIL** Did my father strike my gentleman for chiding of his fool?

**OSWALD** Yes, 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:  
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** Well, madam.

**GONERIL** I'll write straight to my sister,  
To hold my very course. Prepare for dinner.

*Exeunt*

### ACT I SCENE IV. A hall in the same.

*Enter KENT, disguised*

*Horns within. Enter KING LEAR, Knights, and Attendants*

**KING LEAR** Let me not stay a jot for dinner; go get it ready.

*Exit an Attendant*

How now! what art thou?



**KENT** A man, sir.

**KING 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.

**KING LEAR** What art thou?

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

**KING LEAR** If thou be as poor for a subject as he is for a king, thou art poor enough. What wouldst thou?

**KENT** Service.

**KING LEAR** Who wouldst thou serve?

**KENT** You.

**KING LEAR** Dost thou know me, fellow?

**KENT** No, sir; but you have that in your countenance which I would fain call master.

**KING LEAR** What's that?

**KENT** Authority.

**KING LEAR** What services canst thou 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.

**KING LEAR** Follow me; thou shalt serve me: if I like thee no worse after dinner, I will not part from thee yet.

*Giving KENT money*  
*Enter Fool*

**FOOL** Let me hire him too: here's my coxcomb.  
Offering KENT his cap

**KING LEAR** How now, my pretty knave! how dost thou?

**FOOL** Sirrah, you were best take my coxcomb.

**KENT** Why, fool?

**FOOL** Why, for taking one's part that's out of favour: 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!

*Enter GONERIL*

**KING LEAR** How now, daughter! what makes that frontlet on?  
Methinks you are too much of late i' the 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.

**KING LEAR** Are you our daughter?

**GONERIL** Come, sir,

**[cont'd]** I would you would make use of that good wisdom,  
Whereof I know you are fraught; and put away  
These dispositions, that of late transform you  
From what you rightly are.

**FOOL** May not an ass know when the cart draws the horse?

**KING LEAR** Doth any here know me? This is not Lear:  
Doth 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.

**KING LEAR** Your name, fair gentlewoman?

**GONERIL** This admiration, sir, is much o' the savour  
Of other your new pranks. I do beseech you  
To understand my purposes aright:  
As you are old and reverend, you should be wise.  
Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires;  
Men so disorder'd, so debosh'd and bold,  
That this our court, infected with their manners,  
Shows like a riotous inn: epicurism and lust  
Make it more like a tavern or a brothel  
Than a graced palace. The shame itself doth speak  
For instant remedy.

**KING LEAR** Darkness and devils!  
Saddle my horses; call my train together:  
Degenerate bastard! I'll not trouble thee.  
Yet have I left a daughter.

**GONERIL** You strike my people; and your disorder'd rabble  
Make servants of their betters.

*Enter ALBANY*

**KING LEAR** O, sir, are you come?  
Is it your will? Speak, sir. Prepare my horses.  
Ingratitude, thou marble-hearted fiend,  
More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child  
Than the sea-monster!

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

**KING 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 honour her! If she must teem,  
Create her child of spleen; that it may live,  
And be a thwart disnatur'd 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

**[cont'd]** How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is  
To have a thankless child! Away, away!

*Exit*

**ALBANY** Now, gods that we adore, whereof comes this?

**GONERIL** Never afflict yourself to know the cause;  
But let his disposition have that scope  
That dotage gives it.

*Enter OSWALD*

How now, Oswald!  
What, have you writ that letter to my sister?

**OSWALD** Yes, 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.

*Exit OSWALD*

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

*Exeunt*

## ACT II SCENE I. GLOUCESTER's castle.

*Enter EDMUND*

**EDMUND** The duke be here to-night? 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' the night, i' the 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.  
Yield: come before my father. Light, ho, here!  
Fly, brother, fly. Torches, torches! So, farewell.

*Exit EDGAR*

Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion.  
Wounds his arm

*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.  
Exeunt some Servants  
By no means what?

**EDMUND** Persuade me to the murder of your lordship;  
But when he saw my best alarm'd spirits,  
Bold in the quarrel's right, roused to the encounter,  
Or whether gasted 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 to-night:  
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.

*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 the offender. How dost, my lord?

**GLOUCESTER** O, madam, my old heart is crack'd, it's crack'd!

**REGAN** What, did my father's godson seek your life?  
He whom my father named? your Edgar?  
Was he not companion with the riotous knights  
That tend upon my father?

**GLOUCESTER** I know not, madam: 'tis too bad, too bad.

**EDMUND** Yes, madam, he was of that consort.

**CORNWALL** Edmund, I hear that you have shown your father  
A child-like office.

**EDMUND** 'Twas my duty, sir.

**GLOUCESTER** He did bewray his practise; 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 fear'd 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:

**[cont'd]** 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 least thought it fit  
To answer from our home; the several messengers  
From hence attend dispatch. Our good old friend,  
Lay comforts to your bosom; and bestow  
Your needful counsel to our business,  
Which craves the instant use.

**GLOUCESTER** I serve you, madam:  
Your graces are right welcome.

*Exeunt all but GLOUCESTER*

## ACT II sc. 2 | Before GLOUCESTER's castle. (II.IV)

*Enter KING LEAR, Fool, and KENT*

**KING LEAR** Why, Gloucester, Gloucester,  
I'd speak with the Duke of Cornwall and his wife.

**GLOUCESTER** Ay, my good lord.

*Exit*

**KING 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' the paste alive; she knapped 'em o' the 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,  
and Servants*

**KING LEAR** Good morrow to you both.

**CORNWALL** Hail to your grace!

**REGAN** I am glad to see your highness.

**KING 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,  
Sepulchring an adultress.  
Beloved Regan,  
Thy sister's naught: O Regan, she hath tied  
Sharp-tooth'd unkindness, like a vulture, here.

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

**KING LEAR** Say, how is that?

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

**KING LEAR** My curses on her!

**REGAN** O, sir, you are old.  
 Nature in you stands on the very verge  
 Of her 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 wrong'd her, sir.

**KING LEAR** Ask her forgiveness?  
 Do you but mark how this becomes the house:  
 '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.  
 Tucket within

**CORNWALL** What trumpet's that?

**REGAN** I know't, my sister's: this approves her letter,  
 That she would soon be here.

*Enter GONERIL*

**KING LEAR** Art not ashamed to look upon this beard?  
 O Regan, wilt thou take her by the hand?

**GONERIL** Why not by the hand, sir? How have I offended?  
 All's not offence that indiscretion finds  
 And dotage terms so.

**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:

**KING LEAR** Return to her, and fifty men dismiss'd?

**REGAN** I dare avouch it, sir: what, fifty followers?  
 Is it not well? What should you need of more?

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

**REGAN** Why not, my lord? If then they chanced to slack you,  
 We could control them. 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.

**KING LEAR** I gave you all--

**REGAN** And in good time you gave it.

**KING LEAR** Made you my guardians, my depositaries;

**[cont'd]** But kept a reservation to be follow'd  
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.

**KING LEAR** I'll go with thee:  
*[To GONERIL]* 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?

**KING LEAR** 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  
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws,  
Or ere I'll weep. O fool, I shall go mad!

*Exeunt KING LEAR, GLOUCESTER, KENT,*

*and FOOL*

*Storm and tempest*

**CORNWALL** Let us withdraw; 'twill be a storm.

**REGAN** This house is little: the old man and his people  
Cannot be well bestow'd.

**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** Follow'd the old man forth: he is return'd.  
Re-enter GLOUCESTER

**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** My lord, entreat him by no means to stay.

**GLOUCESTER** Alack, the night comes on, and the bleak winds  
Do sorely ruffle; for many miles a bout  
There's scarce a bush.

**REGAN** O, sir, to wilful men,  
The injuries that they themselves procure  
Must be their schoolmasters. Shut up your doors:  
He is attended with a desperate train;

[cont'd] And what they may incense him to, being apt  
To have his ear abused, wisdom bids fear.

ACT 2; sc. 3

**CORNWALL** Shut up your doors, my lord; 'tis a wild night:  
My Regan counsels well; come out o' the storm.

*Exeunt all, but GLOUCESTER*

### ACT II sc. 3 | Gloucester's castle. (III.III)

*Enter EDMUND*

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

**EDMUND** Most savage and unnatural!

**GLOUCESTER** Go to; say you nothing. There's a division betwixt the dukes;  
and a worse matter than that: these injuries the king now  
bears will be revenged home; there's part of a power already  
footed: we must incline to the king. I will seek 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. Though I die for it, as no less is  
threatened me, the king my old master must be relieved.  
There is some strange thing toward, Edmund; pray you, be  
careful.

*Exit*

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

*Exit*

### ACT III sc. 1 | Another part of the heath. Storm still.

#### (III.II)

*Enter KING LEAR, KENT and FOOL*

**KING LEAR** Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!  
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout  
Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!  
You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,  
Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,  
Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,  
Smite flat the thick rotundity o' the world!  
Crack nature's moulds, an germens spill at once,  
That make ingrateful man!

**FOOL** O nuncle, court holy-water in a dry house is better than this  
rain-water out o' door. Good nuncle, in, and ask thy daughters'  
blessing: here's a night pities neither wise man nor fool.

**KING LEAR** Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! spout, rain!  
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters:



**[cont'd]** I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness;  
 I never gave you kingdom, call'd 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:

**KENT** Alack, bare-headed!  
 Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel;  
 Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the tempest:

**KING LEAR** True, my good boy. Come, bring us to this hovel.

*Exit*

*Enter EDGAR*

**EDGAR** I heard myself proclaim'd;  
 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 hair in knots;  
 And with presented nakedness out-face  
 The winds and persecutions of the sky.  
 The country gives me proof and precedent  
 Of Bedlam beggars, who, with roaring voices,  
 Strike in their numb'd and mortified bare arms  
 Pins, wooden pricks, nails, sprigs of rosemary;  
 And with this horrible object, from low farms,  
 Poor pelting villages, sheep-cotes, and mills,  
 Sometime with lunatic bans, sometime with prayers,  
 Enforce their charity. Poor Turlygod! poor Tom!  
 That's something yet: Edgar I nothing am.

*Enter KING LEAR, KENT, 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.

*EDGAR hide. Storm still*

**KING LEAR** Let me alone.

**KENT** Good my lord, enter here.

**KING LEAR** Wilt break my heart?

**KENT** I had rather break mine own. Good my lord, enter.

**KING LEAR** Prithee, go in thyself: seek thine own ease:  
 This tempest will not give me leave to ponder  
 On things would hurt me more. But I'll go in.

*To the Fool*

In, boy; go first. You houseless poverty,--  
 Nay, get thee in. I'll pray, and then I'll sleep.

*Fool goes in*

**EDGAR** [*Within*] Fathom and half, fathom and half! Poor Tom!

**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' the straw?  
Come forth.

*Enter EDGAR disguised as a mad man*

**EDGAR** Away! the foul fiend follows me!  
Through the sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind.

**KING LEAR** Hast thou given all to thy two daughters?  
And art thou come to this?

**KENT** He hath no daughters, sir.

**KING LEAR** Death, traitor! nothing could have subdued nature  
To such a lowness but his unkind daughters.

**EDGAR** Pillicock sat on Pillicock-hill:  
Halloo, halloo, loo, loo!

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

**KING LEAR** What hast thou been?

**EDGAR** A serving-man, 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-par  
amoured the Turk: false of heart, light of ear, bloody o  
hand; hog in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in  
madness, lion in prey.

*Storm still*

**KING LEAR** Why, thou wert better in thy grave than to answer with thy  
uncovered body this extremity of the skies. Is man no more  
than this? 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. Look, here comes a  
walking fire.

*Enter GLOUCESTER, with a torch*

**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 hare-lip; mildews the white  
wheat, and hurts the poor creature of earth.

**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.

**GLOUCESTER** What, hath your grace no better company?

**EDGAR** The prince of darkness is a gentleman:  
Mudo he's call'd, and Mahu.

**GLOUCESTER** Our flesh and blood is grown so vile, my lord,  
That it doth hate what gets it.  
I had a son,  
Now outlaw'd from my blood; he sought my life,  
But lately, very late: I loved him, friend;  
No father his son dearer: truth to tell thee,  
The grief hath crazed my wits. What a night's this!  
I do beseech your grace,--

**KING LEAR** O, cry your mercy, sir.  
Noble philosopher, your company.

**EDGAR** Tom's a-cold.

**GLOUCESTER** In, fellow, there, into the hovel: keep thee warm.

**KING LEAR** Come let's in all.

*Exeunt*

### ACT III sc. 2 | Gloucester's castle. (III.V)

*Enter CORNWALL and EDMUND*

**CORNWALL** I will have my revenge ere I depart his house.

**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.

[to CORNWALL] I will persevere in my course of loyalty, though the conflict be sore between that and my blood.

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

*Exeunt*

### ACT III sc. 3 | A farmhouse adjoining the castle. (III.VI)

*Enter GLOUCESTER, KING LEAR, KENT, Fool, and EDGAR*

**GLOUCESTER** Here is better than the open air; take it thankfully. I will piece out the comfort with what addition I can: I will not be long from you.

**KENT** All the power of his wits have given way to his  
Impatience: The gods reward your kindness!

*Exit GLOUCESTER*

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

**KING LEAR** Make no noise, make no noise; draw the curtains:

**[cont'd]** so, so, so. We'll go to supper i' he morning. So, so, so.

**FOOL** And I'll go to bed at noon.

**EDGAR** When we our betters see bearing our woes,  
We scarcely think our miseries our foes.  
Who alone suffers suffers most i' the mind,  
Leaving free things and happy shows behind:  
But then the mind much sufferance doth o'er skip,  
When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship.

*Re-enter GLOUCESTER*

**GLOUCESTER** Come hither, friend: where is the king my master?

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

**GLOUCESTER** I have o'erheard a plot of death upon him:  
There is a litter ready; lay him in 't,  
And drive towards Dover, friend, where thou shalt meet  
Both welcome and protection.

**KENT** Come, help to bear thy master;  
*[To the Fool]* Thou must not stay behind.

**GLOUCESTER** Come, come, away.

*Exeunt all but GLOUCESTER*

*GLOUCESTER is captured*

## ACT III sc. 4 | Gloucester's castle. (III.VII)

*Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, GONERIL, EDMUND, and Ser-*

*vants*

**CORNWALL** Post speedily to my lord your husband; show him this letter: the  
*[to GONERIL]* army of France is landed.  
*[to Servants]* Seek out the villain Gloucester.

**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. Farewell, dear sister:  
farewell, my lord of Gloucester.

*Exeunt GONERIL and EDMUND*

Though well we may not pass upon his life  
Without the form of justice, yet our power  
Shall do a courtesy to our wrath, which men  
May blame, but not control. Who's there? the traitor?

*Enter GLOUCESTER, brought in by two or three*

**REGAN** Ingrateful fox! 'tis he.

**CORNWALL** Bind fast his corky arms.

**GLOUCESTER** What mean your graces? Good my friends, consider  
You are my guests: do me no foul play, friends.

**CORNWALL** Bind him, I say.

*Servants bind him*

**REGAN** Hard, hard. O filthy traitor!

**GLOUCESTER** Unmerciful lady as you are, I'm none.

**CORNWALL** To this chair bind him.  
Come, sir, what letters had you late from France?

**REGAN** Be simple answerer, for we know the truth.

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

**REGAN** To whose hands have you 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 first answer that.

**REGAN** Wherefore to Dover, sir?

**GLOUCESTER** Because I would not see thy cruel nails  
Pluck out his poor old eyes; nor thy fierce sister  
In his anointed flesh stick boarish fangs.

**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! O cruel! O you gods!

**REGAN** One side will mock another; the other too.

**CORNWALL** If you see vengeance,--

**1st 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!

**1st SERVANT** If you did wear a beard upon your chin,  
I'd shake it on this quarrel. What do you mean?

**CORNWALL** My villain!

*They draw and fight*

*REGAN Takes a sword, and runs at him behind*

**1ST SERVANT** O, I am slain! My lord, you have one eye left  
To see some mischief on him. O!

*Dies*

**CORNWALL** Lest it see more, prevent it. Out, vile jelly!  
Where is thy lustre 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!

**[cont'd]** 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.

*Exit one 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.

*Exit CORNWALL, led by REGAN*

**2ND SERVANT** I'll never care what wickedness I do,  
If this man come to good.

**3RD SERVANT** If she live long,  
And in the end meet the old course of death,  
Women will all turn monsters.

**2ND SERVANT** Let's follow the old earl, and get the Bedlam  
To lead him where he would: his roguish madness  
Allows itself to any thing.

**3RD SERVANT** Go thou: I'll fetch some flax and whites of eggs  
To apply to his bleeding face. Now, heaven help him!

*Exeunt severally*

## ACT III sc. 5 | A tent in the French camp. (IV.VII)

*Enter CORDELIA and Doctor*

**CORDELIA** How does the king?

**DOCTOR** Madam, sleeps still.

**CORDELIA** O you kind gods,  
Cure this great breach in his abused nature!  
The untuned and jarring senses, O, wind up  
Of this child-changed father!

**DOCTOR** So please your majesty  
That we may wake the king: he hath slept long.

**CORDELIA** Be govern'd by your knowledge, and proceed  
I' the sway of your own will. Is he array'd?

**DOCTOR** Ay, madam; in the heaviness of his sleep  
We put fresh garments on him.  
Be by, good madam, when we do awake him;  
I doubt not of his temperance.

**CORDELIA** Very well.

*Enter LEAR*

**CORDELIA** 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!

**KING LEAR** You do me wrong to take me out o' the grave:  
Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound  
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears  
Do scald like moulten lead.

**CORDELIA** Sir, do you know me?

**KING LEAR** You are a spirit, I know: when did you die?

**CORDELIA** Still, still, far wide!

**DOCTOR** He's scarce awake: let him alone awhile.

**KING LEAR** Pray, do not mock me:  
Methinks I should know you, Do not laugh at me;  
For, as I am a man, I think this lady  
To be my child Cordelia.

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

**KING 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.

**KING LEAR** Am I in France?

**DOCTOR** In your own kingdom, sir.

**KING LEAR** Do not abuse me.

**DOCTOR** Be comforted, good madam: the great rage,  
You see, is kill'd 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?

**KING LEAR** You must bear with me:  
Pray you now, forget and forgive: I am old and foolish.

*Exeunt all*

## ACT IV. sc 1 | The heath.

*Enter EDGAR*

**EDGAR** Yet better thus, and known to be contemn'd,  
Than still contemn'd and flatter'd. 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, led by Second Servant*

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

**GLOUCESTER** Away, get thee away; good friend, be gone:

**[cont'd]** Thy comforts can do me no good at all;  
Thee they may hurt.

**2ND SERVANT** Alack, sir, you cannot see your way.

**GLOUCESTER** I have no way, and therefore want no eyes;  
I stumbled when I saw: full oft 'tis seen,  
Our means secure us, and our mere defects  
Prove our commodities. O dear son Edgar,  
The food of thy abused father's wrath!  
Might I but live to see thee in my touch,  
I'd say I had eyes again!

**2ND SERVANT** 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.

**GLOUCESTER** Is it a beggar-man?

**2ND SERVANT** Madman and beggar too.

**GLOUCESTER** He has some reason, else he could not beg.  
I' the 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 the gods.  
They kill us for their sport.

**EDGAR** *[Aside]* How should this be?  
Bad is the trade that must play fool to sorrow,  
Angering itself and others.--Bless thee, master!

**GLOUCESTER** Is that the naked fellow?

**2ND SERVANT** Ay, my lord.

**GLOUCESTER** Then, prithee, get thee gone: if, for my sake,  
Thou wilt o'ertake us, hence a mile or twain,  
I' the way toward Dover, do it for ancient love;  
And bring some covering for this naked soul,  
Who I'll entreat to lead me.

**2ND SERVANT** Alack, sir, he is mad.

**GLOUCESTER** 'Tis the times' plague, when madmen lead the blind.  
Do as I bid thee, or rather do thy pleasure;  
Above the rest, be gone.

*Exit*

**GLOUCESTER** Sirrah, naked fellow,--

**EDGAR** *[Aside]* Poor Tom's a-cold.  
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, horse-way and foot-path.

**GLOUCESTER** There is a cliff, whose high and bending head  
Looks fearfully in the confined deep:  
Bring me but to the very brim of it,



[cont'd] And I'll repair the misery thou dost bear  
With something rich about me: from that place  
I shall no leading need.

ACT 4; sc. 2

**EDGAR** Give me thy arm:  
Poor Tom shall lead thee.

*Exeunt*

## ACT IV sc. 2 | Before ALBANY's palace.

*Enter GONERIL and EDMUND*

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

*Enter OSWALD*

Now, where's your master'?

**OSWALD** Madam, within; but never man so changed.  
I told him of the army that was landed;  
He smiled at it: I told him you were coming:  
His answer was 'The worse:' of Gloucester's treachery,  
And of the loyal service of his son,  
When I inform'd him, then he call'd me sot,  
And told me I had turn'd the wrong side out:  
What most he should dislike seems pleasant to him;  
What like, offensive.

**GONERIL** Then shall you go no further.  
*[To EDMUND]* 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 arms 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;  
Giving a favour  
Decline your head: 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.

**GONERIL** My most dear Gloucester!

*Exit EDMUND and OSWALD*

**ALBANY** *[within]* O Goneril!

**GONERIL** I have been worth the whistling.

*Enter ALBANY*

**ALBANY** 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 border'd 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.

ACT 4; sc. 3

**ALBANY** Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile:  
Filths savour but themselves. What have you done?  
A father, and a gracious aged man,  
Whose reverence even the head-lugg'd bear would lick,  
Most barbarous, most degenerate! have you madded.  
Could my good brother suffer you to do it?

*Enter Third Servant*

**ALBANY** What news?

**3RD SERVANT** 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 eye!

**3RD SERVANT** A servant that he bred, thrill'd with remorse,  
Opposed against the act, bending his sword  
To his great master; who, thereat enraged,  
Flew on him, and amongst them fell'd him dead;  
But not without that harmful stroke, which since  
Hath pluck'd him after.

**ALBANY** Lost he his other eye?  
Third Servant  
Both, both, my lord.  
This letter, madam, craves a speedy answer;  
'Tis from your sister.

**GONERIL** <sup>[Aside]</sup> One way I like this well;  
But being widow, and my Gloucester with her,  
May all the building in my fancy pluck  
Upon my hateful life: another way,  
The news is not so tart.--I'll read, and answer.

*Exit GONERIL*

**ALBANY** Where was his son when they did take his eyes?  
Knows he the wickedness?

**3RD SERVANT** Ay, my good lord; 'twas he inform'd against him;  
And quit the house on purpose, that their punishment  
Might have the freer course.

**ALBANY** Gloucester, I live  
To thank thee for the love thou show'dst the king,  
And to revenge thine eyes. Come hither, friend:  
Tell me what more thou know'st.

*Exeunt*

## ACT IV sc. 3 | Gloucester's castle. (IV.V)

*Enter REGAN and OSWALD*

**REGAN** But are my brother's powers set forth?

**OSWALD** Ay, madam.

**REGAN** Himself in person there?

**OSWALD** Madam, with much ado:  
Your sister is the better soldier.

**REGAN** Lord Edmund spake not with your lord at home?

**OSWALD** No, madam.

**REGAN** What might import my sister's 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' the enemy.

**OSWALD** I must needs after him, madam, with my letter.

**REGAN** Our troops set forth to-morrow: 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?

**OSWALD** Madam, I had rather--

**REGAN** I know your lady does not love her husband;  
I am sure of that: and at her late being here  
She gave strange ocellades and most speaking looks  
To noble Edmund.  
My lord is dead; Edmund and I have talk'd;  
And more convenient is he for my hand  
Than for your lady's:  
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.

*Exeunt*

## ACT IV sc. 4 | Fields near Dover. (IV.VI)

*Enter GLOUCESTER, and EDGAR*

**GLOUCESTER** When shall we come to the top of that same hill?

**EDGAR** You do climb up it now: look, how we labour.

**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 alter'd; 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: half way down  
Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade!

**GLOUCESTER** Set me where you stand.

**EDGAR** Give me your hand: you are now within a foot  
Of the 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! Go thou farther off;  
Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.

**EDGAR** Now fare you well, good sir.

**GLOUCESTER** O you mighty gods!  
*[Kneeling]* This world I do renounce, and, in your sights,  
Shake patiently my great affliction off:  
If I could bear it longer, and not fall  
To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,  
My snuff and loathed part of nature should  
Burn itself out. If Edgar live, O, bless him!  
Now, fellow, fare thee well.  
He falls forward

**EDGAR** 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** 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:  
Up: so. How is 't? Feel you your legs? You stand.

**GLOUCESTER** Too well, too well.

**EDGAR** Bear free and patient thoughts. But who comes here?

*Enter OSWALD*

**OSWALD** A proclaim'd 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 interposes

**OSWALD** Wherefore, bold peasant,  
Darest thou support a publish'd traitor? Hence;  
Lest that the infection of his fortune take  
Like hold on thee. Let go his arm.

**EDGAR** Ch'll 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.

*They fight*

**EDGAR** Ch'll pick your teeth, zir: come; no matter vor your foins.

*EDGAR knocks him down*

**OSWALD** Slave, thou hast slain me: villain, take my purse:  
If ever thou wilt thrive, bury my body;  
And give the letters which thou find'st about me  
To Edmund earl of Gloucester; seek him out  
Upon the British party: O, untimely death!

*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 death's-man. Let us see:  
Leave, gentle wax; and, manners, blame us not:  
To know our enemies' minds, we'd rip their hearts;  
Their papers, is more lawful.

*Reads*

'Let our reciprocal vows be remembered. You have  
many opportunities to cut him off: if your will  
want not, time and place will be fruitfully offered.  
'Your--wife, so I would say--  
'Affectionate servant,  
'GONERIL.'

O undistinguish'd space of woman's will!  
A plot upon her virtuous husband's life;  
And the exchange my brother!

[to GLOUCESTER] Give me your hand:

*Drum afar off*

[cont'd]

Far off, methinks, I hear the beaten drum:  
Come, father, I'll bestow you with a friend.

ACT 5; sc. 1

*Exeunt*

## ACT V sc. 1 | The British camp, near Dover.

*Enter, with drum and colours, EDMUND, REGAN, Captain, and Soldiers.*

**EDMUND** 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.  
To a Captain, who goes out

**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 honour'd love.

**REGAN** I am doubtful that you have been conjunct  
And bosom'd with her, as far as we call hers.

**EDMUND** No, by mine honour, 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 colours, ALBANY, GONERIL,  
and Soldiers*

**ALBANY** Our very loving sister, well be-met.  
Sir, this I hear; the king is come to his daughter,  
With others whom the rigor of our state  
Forced to cry out. Where I could not be honest,  
I never yet was valiant: for this business,  
It toucheth 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.

**ALBANY** Let's then determine  
With the ancient of war on our proceedings.

**EDMUND** I shall attend you presently at your tent.

**REGAN** Sister, you'll go with us?

**GONERIL**<sub>[Aside]</sub> O, ho, I know the riddle.--I will go.  
As they are going out, enter EDGAR disguised

**EDGAR** If e'er your grace had speech with man so poor,  
Hear me one word.

**ALBANY** I'll overtake you. Speak.

*Exeunt all but ALBANY and EDGAR*

**EDGAR** Before you fight the battle, ope this letter.

**ALBANY** Stay till I have read the letter.

**EDGAR** I was forbid it.  
When time shall serve,  
I'll appear again.

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

*Exit EDGAR*

*Re-enter EDMUND*

**EDMUND** The enemy's in view; draw up your powers.  
Here is the guess of their true strength and forces  
By diligent discovery; but your haste  
Is now urged on you.

**ALBANY** We will greet the time.

*Exit*

**EDMUND** To both these sisters have I sworn my love;  
Each jealous of the other, as the stung  
Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?  
Both? one? or neither? Neither can be enjoy'd,  
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.

*Exit*

*Battle sequence between the British and the French,  
resulting in the capture of LEAR and CORDELIA*

## ACT V sc. 2 | The British camp near Dover. (V.III)

*Enter, in conquest, with drum and colours, EDMUND, KING LEAR and CORDELIA,  
prisoners; Captain, Soldiers, & c*

**EDMUND** Some officers take them away: good guard,  
Until their greater pleasures first be known  
That are to censure them.

**CORDELIA** We are not the first  
Who, with best meaning, have incurr'd the worst.  
For thee, oppressed king, am I cast down;  
Myself could else out-frown false fortune's frown.  
Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?

**EDMUND** Take them away.

**KING LEAR** Upon such sacrifices, my Cordelia,  
The gods themselves throw incense. Have I caught thee?

*Embraces CORDELIA*

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,

[cont'd]

Ere they shall make us weep: we'll see 'em starve first. Come.

ACT 5; sc. 2

*Exeunt KING LEAR and CORDELLA, guarded*

EDMUND

Come hither, captain; hark.  
Take thou this note;  
Giving a paper go follow them to prison:

CAPTAIN

I'll do 't, my lord.

EDMUND

About it; and write happy when thou hast done.  
Mark, I say, instantly; and carry it so  
As I have set it down.

*Exit*

*Flourish. Enter ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN,  
another Captain, and Soldiers*

ALBANY

Sir, you have shown to-day your valiant strain,  
And fortune led you well: you have the captives  
That were the opposites of this day's strife:  
We 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;  
With him I sent the queen;  
My reason all the same; and they are ready  
To-morrow, or at further space, to appear  
Where you shall hold your session.

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.

ALBANY

The let-alone lies not in your good will.

EDMUND

Nor in thine, lord.

ALBANY

Half-blooded fellow, yes.

REGAN

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,

*[to Goneril]*

This gilded serpent

*[to Regan]*

For your claim, fair sister,



**[cont'd]** I bar it in the interest of my wife:  
 'Tis she is sub-contracted to this lord,  
 And I, her husband, contradict your bans.  
 If you will marry, make your love to me,  
 My lady is bespoke.

**GONERIL** An interlude!

**ALBANY** Thou art arm'd, Gloucester: let the trumpet sound:  
 If none appear to prove upon thy head  
 Thy heinous, manifest, and many treasons,  
 There is my pledge;  
 Throwing down a glove

**REGAN** Sick, O, sick!

**GONERIL** *[Aside]* If not, I'll ne'er trust medicine.

**EDMUND** There's my exchange:  
 Throwing down a glove what in the world he is  
 That names me traitor, villain-like he lies:  
 Call by thy trumpet: he that dares approach,  
 On him, on you, who not? I will maintain  
 My truth and honour firmly.

**REGAN** My sickness grows upon me.

**ALBANY** She is not well; convey her to my tent.  
*Exit Regan, led*  
*Enter EDGAR*

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

**EDMUND** Himself: what say'st thou to him?

**EDGAR** Draw thy sword,  
 That, if my speech offend a noble heart,  
 Thy arm may do thee justice: here is mine.  
 Behold, it is the privilege of mine honours,  
 Despite thy victor sword and fire-new fortune,  
 Thy valour and thy heart, thou art a traitor;  
 False to thy gods, thy brother, and thy father;  
 And, from the extremest upward of thy head  
 To the descent and dust below thy foot,  
 A most toad-spotted traitor.

**EDMUND** 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 for ever.  
*They fight. EDMUND falls*

**ALBANY** Save him, save him!

**GONERIL** This is practise, Gloucester:  
 By the law of arms thou wast not bound to answer  
 An unknown opposite; thou art not vanquish'd,  
 But cozen'd and beguiled.

**ALBANY** Shut your mouth, dame,  
 Or with this paper shall I stop it: Hold, sir:  
 Thou worse than any name, read thine own evil:

No tearing, lady: I perceive you know it.

*Gives the letter to EDMUND*

**GONERIL**

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

*Exit*

**ALBANY**

Most monstrous! oh!  
Know'st thou this paper?

**EDMUND**

Ask me not what I know.

**ALBANY**

Go after her: she's desperate; govern her.

**EDMUND**

What you have charged me with, that have I done;  
And more, much more; the time will bring it out:  
'Tis past, and so am I. But what art thou  
That hast this fortune on me? If thou'rt noble,  
I do forgive thee.

**EDGAR**

Let's exchange charity.  
I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund;  
If more, the more thou hast wrong'd me.  
My name is Edgar, and thy father's son.  
The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices  
Make instruments to plague us:  
The dark and vicious place where thee he got  
Cost him his eyes.

**EDMUND**

Thou hast spoken right, 'tis true;  
The wheel is come full circle: I am here.

**ALBANY**

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 follow'd me so near, taught me to shift  
Into a madman's rags; to assume a semblance  
That very dogs disdain'd: and in this habit  
Met I my father with his bleeding rings,  
Their precious stones new lost: became his guide,

Led him, begg'd for him, saved him from despair;  
 Never,--O fault!--reveal'd myself unto him,  
 Until some half-hour past, when I was arm'd:  
 Not sure, though hoping, of this good success,  
 I ask'd his blessing, and from first to last  
 Told him my pilgrimage: but his flaw'd heart,  
 Alack, too weak the conflict to support!  
 'Twixt two extremes of passion, joy and grief,  
 Burst smilingly.

*Enter Captain, with a bloody knife*

**CAPTAIN**

Help, help, O, help!

**EDGAR**

What kind of help?

**ALBANY**

Speak, man.

**EDGAR**

What means that bloody knife?

**CAPTAIN**

'Tis hot, it smokes;  
 It came even from the heart of--O, she's dead!

**ALBANY**

Who dead? speak, man.

**CAPTAIN**

Your lady, sir, your lady: and her sister  
 By her is poisoned; she hath confess'd it.

**EDMUND**

I was contracted to them both: all three  
 Now marry in an instant.

*The bodies of GONERIL and REGAN are brought in*

**EDMUND**

Yet Edmund was beloved:  
 The one the other poison'd for my sake,  
 And after slew herself.

**ALBANY**

Even so. Cover their faces.  
 Speak, Edmund, where's the king? and where's Cordelia?

**EDMUND**

I pant for life: some good I mean to do,  
 Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send,  
 Be brief in it, to the 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? Who hath the office? send  
 Thy token of reprieve.

**EDMUND**

**[cont'd]** Well thought on: take my sword,  
Give it the captain.

**ALBANY** Haste thee, for thy life.

*Exit EDGAR*

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

**ALBANY** The gods defend her! Bear him hence awhile.

*EDMUND is borne off*

*Re-enter KING LEAR, with CORDELIA dead in his arms;*

*EDGAR, Captain, and others following*

**KING LEAR** Howl, 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 for ever!  
I know when one is dead, and when one lives;  
She's dead as earth. Lend me a looking-glass;  
If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,  
Why, then she lives.

**ALBANY** Fall, and cease!

**KING LEAR** A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!  
I might have saved her; now she's gone for ever!  
Cordelia, Cordelia! stay a little. Ha!  
What is't thou say'st? Her voice was ever soft,  
Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman.  
I kill'd the slave that was a-hanging thee.

*Enter a Captain*

**CAPTAIN** Edmund is dead, my lord.

**ALBANY** That's but a trifle here.

**KING LEAR** And my poor fool is hang'd! 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!

*Dies*

**EDGAR** He is gone, indeed.

**ALBANY** Bear them from hence. Our present business  
Is general woe.  
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.

*Exeunt, with a dead march*

*End*