

KENT

Lear has just banished his favourite daughter, Cordelia; and Kent, Lear's most loyal advisor, objects...

KENT Royal Lear,
Whom I have ever honour'd as my king,
Lov'd as my father.— What wouldst thou do, old man?
Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak,
When power to flattery bows? To plainness honour's bound
When majesty falls to folly. Reverse thy state;
And in thy best consideration check
This hideous rashness:
Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least;

LEAR Kent, on thy life, no more.

KENT My life I never held but as a pawn
To wage against thine enemies; ne'er fear to lose it.

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 swears't thy gods in vain.

LEAR O vassal! Miscreant!

ALBANY Dear sir, forbear!

KENT Revoke thy gift,
Or, whilst I can vent clamour from my throat,
I'll tell thee thou dost evil.

LEAR Hear me, recreant! on thine allegiance, hear me!
Since thou hast sought, and with strained pride
To come betwixt our sentences 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:
 -- if, on the next day following,
Thy banish'd trunk be found in our dominions,
The moment is thy death. Away!
By Jupiter, This shall not be revok'd.

KENT Fare thee well, King: sith thus thou wilt appear,
Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here.
The gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid,
That justly think'st and hast most rightly said!
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**

KENT(as CAIUS)

Kent (banished by Lear, but now disguised as Caius, and serving Lear to help protect him) got into a brawl with Goneril's Steward; and Regan (and her husband) subsequently put him in the "Stocks". Since Caius was Lear's messenger, this is a grave insult, equivalent to punishing King Lear, himself.

Caius (Kent) cannot move his feet – sitting or standing at the reader's choice

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 No, no; they would not.

KENT Yes, they have.

LEAR By Jupiter, I swear no.

KENT By Juno, I swear ay.

LEAR They durst not do't.
They could not, would not do't; 'tis worse than murder,
To do upon respect such violent outrage:
Resolve me, with all modest haste, which way
Thou mightst deserve or they impose this usage,
Coming from us.

KENT Yesternorn, My lord,
No sooner had I 'rived at Cornwall's
And did commend your highness' letters to them,
Ere I was risen from the place that show'd
My duty kneeling, came there a reeking post,
Panting forth from Goneril, his mistress, salutations.
Then he deliver'd letters, spite of intermission,
Which presently they read; and on those contents,
They straight took horse; and giving me cold looks,
Commanded me to follow and attend
The leisure of their answer. I rode behind, but
Meeting here first that other messenger,
Whose welcome I perceiv'd had poison'd mine,
Being that very Oswald which of late
Display'd so saucily against your highness,
Having more man than wit about me, drew;
He rais'd the house with loud and coward cries.
In brief, your son and daughter found in me
A trespass worth the shame which here I suffer.

GONERIL or REGAN

Lear has rejected Cordelia (the daughter he loved most) and then banished Kent (his most loyal advisor) for defending Cordelia. After Lear's court departs, the two elder daughters stay behind...

GONERIL

You see how full of changes his age is;
He always loved our sister most; and with
What poor judgement 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 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

Pray you let us hit together:

REGAN

We shall further think of it.

GONERIL

We must do something, and i' th' heat.

GLOUCESTER or EDMUND

EDMUND, second son of the Duke of Gloucester, begins an intrigue against his elder brother EDGAR in order to convince their father to make Edmund his heir, instead of Edgar.

GLOUCESTER Kent banish'd thus! And the King's prescrib'd his pow'r!
All this done upon the gad!—Edmund, how now!
What news?

EDMUND So please your lordship, none.

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

EDMUND 'Tis 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 perus'd, I find it
not fit for your o'er-looking.

GLOUCESTER Give me the letter, sir.

EDMUND 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 test of my virtue.

GLOUCESTER *This policy and reverence of age keeps our fortunes from us till our oldness
cannot relish them. Come to me, that of this I may speak more. If our father
would sleep till I waked him, you should enjoy half his revenue for ever, 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 this to you? Who brought it?

EDMUND 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?

EDGAR or EDMUND

EDMUND, second son of the Duke of Gloucester, begins an intrigue against his elder brother EDGAR in order to convince their father to make Edmund his heir, instead of Edgar.

- EDMUND [as Edgar approaches]
Pat! he comes: my cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o'Bedlam.—
O, these eclipses do portend these divisions!
- EDGAR How now, brother Edmund, what serious contemplation are you in?
- EDMUND Of a prediction, brother, 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; — 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?
- 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.
- 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 retire to my lodging. 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? **Exiting**
- EDMUND I do serve you in this business.

GONERIL and Oswald

Lear has moved into Goneril's property for a month, bringing 100 knights as followers. Previously, she and her sister, Regan, had discussed their concerns that Lear would become ungovernable, and now Goneril sees it start to happen...

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.

OSWALD
He's coming, madam; I see 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 our sister,
Whose mind and mine, I know, in that are one,
Idle old man, that still would manage those
Authorities that he hath given away!
Now, by my life, Old fools are babes again;
Remember what I have said.

OSWALD
Very well, ma'am.

GONERIL
Prepare for dinner 'n advise your fellows;
I'll write straight to my sister
To hold my very course.

Exit Oswald

FOOL

A singing-dancing-clowning role

“Speaking Truth to Power” – The FOOL can say to the King what other characters can’t, because it’s done in song & dance, or clever jokes and impersonations, etc... But sometimes the FOOL oversteps and gets whipped. The FOOL has told Lear that Lear himself was the bigger fool when he gave his land away to his daughters and left himself without an income. The FOOL’s song-and-dance may not be enough to spare the whip today...

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

LEAR No, lad; teach me.

**NOTE — if your read for the FOOL
you must also read for CORDELIA
It is a double-cast Role**

FOOL That lord that counsell’d 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 Thou hadst little wit in thy bald crown when thou gav’st thy golden one away.
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 apeish.

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,
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.
Prythee, nuncle, keep a schoolmaster to 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’ the middle: Here comes one o’ the parings. **Goneril Enters**

LEAR and Gloucester

Lear has just discovered that Regan (his daughter) and Cornwall (her husband) have punished the King's messenger by putting him in the "Stocks". Even though it's late and Regan/Cornwall have gone to bed, Lear demands an explanation...

LEAR

Deny to speak with me? They are sick? they are weary?
They have travell'd all the night? Mere fetches;
The images of revolt and flying off.
Fetch me a better answer.

Re-entering w/Gloucester

GLOUCESTER

My dear lord,
You know the fiery quality of the Duke;
How unremovable and fix'd 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 inform'd them so.

LEAR

Inform'd 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, demands their service
Are they "inform'd" 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:
We are not ourselves when nature commands
The mind to suffer with the body: I'll forbear.
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,

Seeing his messenger in the Stocks

CORNWALL or EDMUND

Gloucester, Edmund's father, has received a letter regarding the French invasion of Britain. Desiring to gain social advancement, Edmund betrays his father to the Duke of Cornwall, Gloucester's feudal superior. Cornwall is co-regent of Britain, and wishes his own advancement to sole ruler.

CORNWALL

I will have my revenge ere I depart this house. I now perceive it was not altogether your brother's evil disposition made him seek your father's death; but a provoking merit, set a-work by a reproveable badness in the old man himself.

EDMUND

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

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.

CORDELIA – An assistant will read the text aloud for the Candidate.

Similar to a voice-over in a film: Cordelia has a letter in hand (this paper) and silently experiences what the Gentleman describes – whether or not her lips move as she reads is up to the reader.

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 trill'd down
Her delicate cheek.

**NOTE — if you read for CORDELIA
you must also read for the FOOL
It is a double-cast Role**

KENT

O, then it mov'd 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 day. Those happy smilets
That play'd on her ripe lip seem'd not to know
What guests were in her eyes; which parted thence
As pearls from diamonds dropp'd. In brief,
Sorrow would be a rarity most belov'd,
If all could so become it.

KENT

Made she no verbal question?

GENTLEMAN Faith, once or twice she heav'd the name of 'father'
Pantingly forth, as if it press'd her heart;
Cried 'Sisters, sisters! Shame of ladies! Sisters!
Kent! father! sisters! What, i' the storm? i' the night?
Let pity not be believ'd!' Then away she started
To deal with grief alone.

KENT

It is the stars,
The stars above us govern our conditions;
Else one such a father could not beget
Such different daughters.

ALBANY or GONERIL

Goneril, Lear's eldest daughter, in a loveless marriage to a husband she perceives as spineless, has her eye set on Edmund, newly made Earl of Gloucester. She is encouraging Edmund to make sure that her husband, Albany, "accidentally dies" in the coming war with France. Albany, long at odds with Goneril, discovers the intrigue.

GONERIL
My most dear Gloucester.
O, the difference of man and man!

[Watching Edmund go, then Seeing Albany Entering]

GONERIL
I have been worth the whistle.

ALBANY
O Goneril!
You are not worth the dust which the rude wind
Blows in your face!

GONERIL
No more; the text is foolish.

ALBANY
Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile.
What have you done? What have you perform'd?
A father, and a gracious aged man —
Could my good brother suffer you to do it?

GONERIL
Milk-liver'd man!
Who hast not in thy brows an eye discerning
Thine honour from thy suffering. Where's thy drum?
France spreads his banners in our noiseless land.

ALBANY
See thyself, devil!
Proper deformity seems not in the fiend
So horrid as in woman.

REGAN or OSWALD

*Cornwall, Regan's husband, is dead and she wishes to marry Edmund.
Goneril, the Lady that Oswald serves, also wishes to marry Edmund, and has sent him a letter.*

Oswald, a servant, should obey Regan, a noble, but Goneril, also a noble, has forbidden it.

Regan is not used to being contradicted – “kill Gloucester for me” is a bribe to influence Oswald

- REGAN Lord Edmund spake not with your lord at home?
- OSWALD No, madam.
- REGAN What then might import my sister's letter to Edmund?
- OSWALD I know not, lady.
- REGAN Faith, he is posted hence on serious matter.
Edmund, I think, is gone 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 charg'd my duty in this business.
- REGAN Why should she write to Edmund? Might not you
Transport her purposes by word? Belike —
Somethings — 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 glances 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 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 Gloucester,
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.

EDGAR and GLOUCESTER

Edgar has disguised themselves as a madman (Tom O'Bedlam) to avoid capture and execution – a doom placed upon them by Gloucester, their father. Edgar finds Gloucester, blinded, and decides to help him. As Edgar is leading Gloucester to “Dover” (so Gloucester can kill himself), they find that they have been forgiven by Gloucester, and Edgar now seeks reconciliation.

Three different voices are used

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

EDGAR

[In Tom O'Bedlam's voice]

Come on, sir; here's the place. Stand still. How fearful
And dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low!
The fishermen that walk upon the beach
Appear like mice. 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.

GLOUCESTER

Let go my hand. Go thou further off;
Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.

EDGAR Now fare ye well, good sir.

GLOUCESTER With all my heart.

EDGAR

{Aside, in his own voice}

{Why I do trifle thus with his despair, is done to cure it.}

GLOUCESTER

O you mighty gods!
This world I do renounce, and in your sights,
Shake patiently my great affliction off:
If Edgar live, O, bless him!

[JUMPS and faints]

EDGAR

*{And yet, had he been where he thought,
By this had thought been past.}*

{Aside, in his own voice}

Alive or dead?

{in a “fisherman's voice}

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 shiver'd like an egg:
Thy life is 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. Do but look up.

GLOUCESTER Alack, I have no eyes.