

The prologue plays, MAZOURSKY's PICTURES ON THE WALL, trumpet  
LEAR and KENT enter

LEAR

I like not your news good Kent;  
The young rebel against rightful monarchy.  
O nation miserable, I fear you are undone,  
The bond crack'd 'twixt father and son;  
In cities mutinies in country discord:  
In palaces treason! Strange eruptions in England!

KENT

'Tis good to keep close at such times  
Your stout house a beacon;  
Your knights firm in their resolve to serve you;  
Protect this wind-blown isle from rife winter storms.

LEAR

Though this island seem to be a desert  
Unhabitable and almost inaccessible  
I would offer it as refuge to my King  
For my imagination sees a crown dropping from his sacred head.

(MADAM LEAR enters)

LEAR (Cont.)

Our troubles here are of a different hue.  
What figures of us does our homeland bear?  
For you must know we have with special soul  
Elected you our absence to supply the nature of our peoples;  
Our institutions and our three new daughters, Goneril,  
Regan and Cordelia; do they mock me for strength  
in not begatting sons?

KENT

I have told them, my Lord  
You love the people  
But do not like to stage the throne before their eyes  
Though do it well if required.

LEAR

There is written in your brow, honesty and constancy.  
 Let us presently go sit in council  
 How matters of weakness may be best disclosed.  
 What news of my friends Lord Cornwall and Duke Albany?

KENT

They do hail your household fair, salute your puissance  
 And ask leave to embark, come with all haste here.

LEAR

What do they intend, to tip me off or escape cruel wars?  
 To be most welcome shall be their study and their profit therein.  
 Such friends I need not. I am most loyally attended here,  
 Even if my encounters lack the personal;  
 Unlike attentions given to my wife.

FOOL

Hey nonny, nonny, no, lords and ladies lack suspicions  
 no proof! Jealousy, no judge!

KENT

How do you madam?

MADAM LEAR

Faith, half ill.

LEAR (to KENT)

How is the Queen? Why a shallow changing woman!  
 When men are ruled by women scant in numbers  
 We hang ourselves for their kind favours.

(LEAR brings out shawl from KENT's purse)

MADAM LEAR

Our hearts receive you warmly.

KENT

Kind Madam, your Lord has weighed me down with services  
 Shawls, gems from abroad. To go hence in debt.  
 Who carries the son which will make his heart dance for joy.

MADAM LEAR

What tidings have you brought from England?

LEAR

Let the sailors tell her tall tales:  
No, they are muleteers, people  
Ingross'd by swift impress: enemies perhaps,  
Our force is loyalty, our foe betrayal.

MADAM

How's my husband's fool?

FOOL

Less, husband, more fool.

LEAR

Art thou my boy?  
Art thou my calf?

FOOL

Mark it, nuncle.

(FOOL goes to LEARS feet)

KENT

You look as if you held a brow of much distraction  
Are you mov'd, my lord?

LEAR

Looking on the lines  
Of my boy's face, methoughts I did precoil  
Twenty-three years, and saw myself unbreech'd  
In my green velvet coat, my dagger muzzled,  
Lest it should bite its master, and so prove,  
As ornaments oft do, too dangerous,  
Will you take eggs for money?

FOOL

No my lord, I'd rather eat them.

(MADAM LEAR, in response, rises to exit)

LEAR

Is Madam sick?  
And will she steal out of her wholesome bed

to dare the damp contagion of sea air?

MADAM LEAR

Let me pray the god of soldiers  
That I mayst prove to shame unvulnerable  
When I take the night air.

LEAR

Do not bid me dismiss my soldiers, they obey me.

MADAM LEAR

Were to be hemmed by them  
Should be an honour prized in this encampment  
I would stay within.

LEAR

Within, without, you veer from north to south  
Like you would deny your country's love.

MADAM LEAR

Your country and I have no quarrel.

LEAR

Is my country not thine?

MADAM LEAR

Why, it must be so. But thou knowest best our  
Strengths and weaknesses.

LEAR

I have observed them, and in the person of the Queen  
Who thinks it wise to keep our pretences veil'd.

MADAM LEAR

I make no pretence, I would take the air.

KENT

I hope our noble Lord esteems her honest.

FOOL

Aye, as the summer flies are in the shambles  
That quicken even with blowing.

MADAM LEAR

Unkindness may do much  
And his unkindness may defeat my life  
But never taint my love!

LEAR

Kill the spiders-toads  
Whose ugly aspect may fright the hopeful  
Mother at the view  
Calm and faithful let her confinement be.

(He follows her)

Keep her from wretches  
Oillading rogues, who seek safe haven  
In her kind of nursery. Let them suck elsewhere!

KENT (to FOOL)

It seems he hath no care to please his wife.

LEAR (Leading MADAM LEAR back to the throne)

What say you Madam?

MADAM

Nothing, my Lord.

LEAR

Nothing will come of nothing: speak again.  
Is whispering nothing? Stopping the career of laughter with a sigh  
Skulking in corners?  
My wife is slippery.  
My wife's a hobby-horse.

KENT

A revered woman, made tame to fortune's blows;  
Who, by the art of known and feeling sorrows,  
Is pregnant to good pity. Give me your ear,  
I'll recount her worth.

LEAR

How say you. That you have a pretty foot.  
And that your rude kindred are made gentlefolks?  
What about your cousin?

MADAM LEAR

My cousin?

LEAR

Aye, your aunt's son. Are there others then?

KENT

My Lord, look not at me. I've been on commission to England.

LEAR

Is there news there of Madam's reputation.

Reputation!

While with child! There's safety in so lying.

Already embedded, contaminating the innocence within

I am driven mad thinking on these things.

I am mistaken in thee, in your name.

MADAM

Your life stands in the level of my dreams,

Which I'll lay down.

LEAR

Your actions are my dreams.

KENT

For her, my Lord,

I dare my life lay down and will do't sir,

Please you to' accept it, that the queen is spotless

I' the' eyes of heaven, and to you - I mean

In this which you accuse her.

FOOL

For every inch of woman in the world,

Every dram of woman's flesh be false,

If she be.

LEAR (to all and sundry)  
Frailty thy name is woman.

MADAM  
I grant I am a woman, but, withall,  
A woman that Lord Lear took to wife.

LEAR  
I speak of treason  
By my despairing shalt thou stand accused.  
But not to die!  
Die for adultery? No!  
The wren goes to't, and the small gilded fly  
Does lecher I do  
Let copulation thrive. DON'T I LACK SOLDIERS?

MADAM LEAR  
Sir, spare your threats:  
The bug which you would fright me with  
Have stretched my strength. No, my liege,  
Tell me what rewards I have here alive  
That I should fear to die.

LEAR  
And she dried-eyed!

MADAM  
I am not prone to weeping, as our sex  
Commonly are; the want of which vain drew  
Perchance shall dry your pities: but I have  
That honourable grief lodg'd here which burns  
Worse than tears drown: I beseech my gods,  
The deities who rule our mortal combat  
Be my judge!

LEAR  
Your gods! Not Diana, Goddess of Chastity!  
She calls on her gods, MODO and MAHU!

MADAM LEAR

Be done! this approach so out or circumstances and sudden,  
Such inflamed speeches bring me to consider that which may  
Unfurnish me of reason.

LEAR

Your gods are not mine Modo of murder,  
Mahu of stealing, no such gods exist in lawful kingdoms.

(MADAM LEAR as she exits, collapses)

KENT (Going to help MADAM LEAR)

Grief has crazed his mind.

FOOL

There will be no heir, ere lost wits be found.  
Have more than thou showest,  
Speak LESS than thou knowest.  
Leave thy drink and thy whore  
And keep in a' door  
And thou shalt have more than two tens to a score.

KENT

She is faint.

LEAR

Take her hence:  
Her heart is but o'ercharged; she will recover.

END OF SCENE ONE

## SCENE TWO

Trumpet flourish. We hear a tumult outside (backstage) LEAR enters in robes excitedly, and lifts up a baby. Crowds roar.

KENT and FOOL enter

KENT

The greatest monarch now alive may glory  
In such an honour.

FOOL

Lest he might not deserve it.

KENT

Trumpeters, with brazen din blast you the island's ear  
Make mingle with our rattling tambourines that heaven and earth  
May strike their sounds together.

(LEAR enters in robes carrying baby)

LEAR

God have made me now a man: never, before  
This happy child, did I get any thing.  
This oracle of comfort has so pleas'd me,  
That when I am in heaven, I shall seek  
To see what does this child, and praise my Maker.

(LEAR returns to crowds)

LEAR

I name him Temmah!

KENT

Wherever the bright sun of heaven shall shine  
His honour and the greatness of his name  
Shall be, and make new nations; he shall flourish  
And like a mountain cedar, reach his branches  
To new and wonderous, undiscovered lands.

LEAR

This day no man think  
He has business at his house, for all shall stay:  
This little one shall make it holiday.

(MADAM LEAR enters)

KENT  
Good madam, immodest haste from child-bed privilege  
Belongs not to Royalty.

MADAM  
I must see my son!

(LEAR gives baby to KENT)

LEAR  
I have a son whose high-browed forehead  
Looks to the raging sea and quiets the grief  
Fearfully contained in the angry deep.  
Bear him to the prow of our stately ship  
That he might guide us, who much leading need.

MADAM LEAR  
Give him to me.

LEAR  
Would you deny my son, Madam?

MADAM LEAR  
For pity's sake, mistake not my intent.

LEAR  
How should I not if you intend it so.

FOOL  
What manner of reasoning is this for a fool?

KENT  
My lord, look to her.

MADAM LEAR  
Can I not see my son?

LEAR

It seems to me, mistaken though I may be, you are, as we all are,  
 saved by eyeing him,  
 withall I grant that you might be saved, as I am,  
 by seeing him.

FOOL

This is a poor epitome of yours.

LEAR

She has a perturbed mind  
 Which I cannot minister to.

FOOL

Who's so sane they can claim?

MADAM LEAR

My knees grow to th' ground but by that faith,  
 By that you would have pity in another,  
 By your own honest virtues,  
 To crown all this, by your most noble soul,  
 Let me entreat for mercy.

LEAR

Nothing emboldens sin so much as mercy.

KENT

She has her mortal hurt on your behalf.

LEAR

I observe her inclination.

MADAM LEAR

You have too much believed your own suspicion.

LEAR

It doth not content me to see her so inclined.

MADAM LEAR

I beg thee, breed these my children

At thy dearest cost  
In qualities of the best,

LEAR  
I will deny thee nothing:  
Whereon, I do beseech thee, grant me this,  
To leave me but this little one.

MADAM LEAR  
No idly casting forth thy own daughters.

LEAR  
Do no doubt me yet?

MADAM LEAR  
My four swans on the sea of fortune  
Swear to me they will ne'er be hunted  
S'long as you do breathe

LEAR  
Shall I deny you? No, my lady!

FOOL  
She bleeds apace.

LEAR  
(To KENT)  
Go and see if you can bring  
Tincture, or lustre to her cheek  
Research you, tenderly apply to her  
Some remedies for life.

(KENT exits with BABY)

LEAR  
I swear thy children will have their rightful inheritance.

FOOL  
She has reached the limit of her life.  
And he is born too soon.

LEAR  
Do you want the whip?

O cursed, cursed slave, whip me, ye devils  
From possession of this awful sight.

FOOL  
Your loyal servant is stricken with silence.

END OF SCENE TWO

## SCENE THREE

LEAR

Suckle him, for pity's sake  
 Give him nourishment  
 Give him the breast, his body's cold, cold  
 Even like her body.

FOOL

Kent searches for a foster-nurse of nature

LEAR

Pray to the gods, he finds one.  
 Send to the whores, damned in heaven's eyes  
 We will be happy to redeem her worth  
 And call her as benefits a kinswoman.

FOOL

This look of thine will hurl my soul from heaven  
 And friends will snatch at it.

LEAR

Who's to be thy nurses? Wolves, bears  
 Casting their savageness aside, have done  
 Like office of pity against this cruelty.

(KENT enters)

KENT

There is no wet-nurse to be found on this curséd island.

LEAR

What this?  
 Search every acre to bring her hence for the restoring of our bereaved son.

KENT

If I could, I would send forthwith to England.

LEAR

Am I not fortune's vassal?

(FOOL takes the dying baby)

FOOL

Your father loved you. He said he did  
and so did crown his word upon you.

LEAR

His word? How are we keep this child alive?

KENT

Isn't there a dog, a bitch with puppies?

LEAR

I have soldiers by the score and none do doubt me,  
Or able to offer succor.  
No ewes to milk and weep? None, nonny, non!

(FOOL takes the baby and exits)

KENT

Good my lord, soothe yourself.

LEAR

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 scant friend to him:  
As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods,  
They kill us for their sport.

END OF ACT ONE

## INTERLUDE

CORDELIA is picking flowers.

CORDELIA

(This should be sung if possible)

First my fear; then, my curtsy; last my speech. My fear is your displeasure, my curtsy, my duty, and my speech, to beg your pardon. If you look for a good speech now, you undo me; for what I have to say is of mine own making; and what indeed I should say will, no doubt, prove mine own marring.

(SHE throws flowers down)

CORDELIA

But to the purpose, and so to the venture.

## ACT II

## SCENE ONE

REGAN and GONERIL enter, dressed in breeches, dueling.

GONERIL

Villain, I say, knock me here soundly.

REGAN

Knock you madam? May a horse mire upon your face. The devil's a handmaiden.

GONERIL

Rap me well, or I'll stop your noisome prate.

REGAN

Help, masters, my sister is grown brutal. I should knock you first and then you'll know who comes by the worst.

(KENT enters)

KENT

Stay, what manner of brawling is this for two princesses?  
Your presence is missed at Gloucester's feast:  
The kitchen is halted to know your best commands.

REGAN

Good Kent wants the sauce, with vinegar and pepper in 'it.

GONERIL

Get him to say his prayers - to Satan!

REGAN

Let me alone with him - I'll give him sauce right 'nough.

KENT

My ladies, the boar is from the pit.

GONERIL

Let us see if the boar doth use us kindly.

REGAN

Where is your boar-spear?

GONERIL

Fear you the boar and go so unprovided?

KENT

Your swords are too weighty for you to wear.

REGAN

I wear a sword lightly, that I might thank you as you call me.

KENT

How?

REGAN

Too often.

(GONERIL punches REGAN)

REGAN

Thou woundest me like a rogue and villain.

GONERIL

(To REGAN)

Friend, as thou usest me, to taunt and scorn me.

(REGAN hits GONERIL)

GONERIL

If bloody coxcomb be hurt, you have hurt me.

KENT

What manner of speech is ever on your ladys' lips?  
Those that love you both do honestly request your attendance.

REGAN

Alas their love may be call'd appetite  
No motion of the liver, but the palate  
That suffer, surfeit, cloyment and revolt.

(FOOL enters)

(They taunt FOOL)

KENT

My Lord Lear urged us to bounteous.

REGAN

Hark, I am bounteous!

FOOL

Oi, oi, the meat's as dry as a puritan's mouth on a Sunday.

REGAN

Call forth the household servants, let them to the table.

FOOL (to KENT)

Why art thou angry?

KENT

That such nobly-born women should wear swords.  
 Amazons to no purpose.  
 Our Lord, your father toils for England's sake  
 In this ungentle weather  
 While skies look grimly, heaven's frown:  
 The burden of his armour is heavy on him,  
 He is not himself.

FOOL

Then who should he be?

KENT

Last month he lost balance:  
 He looks pale and feverish like a young maid  
 With the green sickness.

FOOL

He sleeps suddenly;  
 Which is a symptom in those who totter yet have not drunken.  
 Only he who kisses knows.

(They all try to kiss KENT)  
 (LEAR enters)

LEAR

Let me play the fool.

With mirth and laughter let old wrinkles come;  
 And let my liver rather heat with wine  
 Than my heart cool with mortifying groans.  
 Why should a man whose blood is warm within  
 Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster,  
 Sleep when he wakes, and creep into the jaundice  
 By being peevish.

(HE swirls daughters round,  
 stumbling over their swords)

KENT

A strange sight for entertainment.  
 Were I in England now not a holiday fool there  
 But would give a piece of silver; as they often do  
 to see a dead Indian.

LEAR (To KENT)

Come march to supper: I take you, sir for one of my hundred  
 although I do not like your countenance

(GONERIL and REGAN swing the FOOL  
 by his arms and legs).

FOOL

Her boat hath a leak  
 And she must not speak  
 Why she dares not come over to thee.

KENT

A word, sire, your daughters -

LEAR

That they are, dear sir. But let me not boast of two lovely BOYS!  
 Don't girls promise boys hereafter? As like to me  
 As cherry is to cherry.

KENT

You have bereft me of all words, my liege  
 But I would entreat them show a woman's pity, sweetness, grace.

LEAR

Two of my whelps fell curs of a bold kind  
 Word has it Cordelia's voice is varied  
 Enchanting every ear. Even now her age must be sweet sixteen.  
 Time to send for her.

(LEAR tries to stop them from torturing FOOL)

LEAR

If they live long and in the end  
 Meet the old course of death  
 Women will all turn monsters.  
 Some wine within there and our viands.  
 I am one who am nourished by vicuals and would faint have meat.  
 Be moved, be moved!

REGAN

Meat fills knaves, wine heats fools.

LEAR

A hundred whore's oaths!  
 Knights, soldiers, sailors must eat  
 It is good to have well-armed friends.

GONERIL

Let their meat make them silent.

LEAR

They stay to dinner.

REGAN

And supper too, although thou see'st it not.  
 A knot they are of damned bloodsuckers.

GONERIL

Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires;  
Men so disorder'd, so debosh'd and bold,  
Make this our house more like a tavern or a brothel  
Than a grac'd place.

(LEAR chases her)

KENT

These are not natural events; they strength'n  
From strange to stranger.

REGAN (To KENT)

Never afflict yourself to know the cause:  
But let his majesty have the scope  
That habit has commanded.

(SHE exits)

LEAR

This small isle's my court; here I keep few attendants  
find no obedience; await some awful power to guide me

(To FOOL)

Out of this tormented troubled country.  
Smile you me speeches, as I were a fool?  
Goose, if I had you upon Sarum plain  
I'd drive ye cackling home to Camelot.

(FOOL Exits)

LEAR cont.. (TO KENT)

Better dueling daughters than dueling sons.  
Marked you how Edmund looked at Edgar  
When lands were deeded him?  
Edmund's mind and shape's as sound as Madam's true issue.  
You understand not the import,  
On with the feasting!

(LEAR and KENT exit)

END OF SCENE ONE

## ACT TWO - Scene Two

REGAN and GONERIL enter to search in the trunk.

GONERIL

How many jewels have you cozened of him?

REGAN

You taught me how, and how to be a pander.  
That diamond upon your finger, say how came it yours!

GONERIL

That bracelet, cunning how you got it.

REGAN

You have sold your favours too cheaply, vouchsafed a coin  
where a thousand would not do.

(REGAN tries on a dress)

(LEAR enters)

LEAR

If only to go warm were gorgeous  
Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st  
Which scarcely keeps thee warm.

GONERIL

A garment more noble than that it covers.

LEAR

Why are you not equally array'd?

(Too GONERIL)

Thou hast my love, my painful labour  
On sea and land, my maintenance, to clothe thy body.

GONERIL

Do not peevishly throw us rings and things  
Are stones worth stooping for, when dogs  
Do sniff and turn from gems, as from a dish of poison.  
Go wind your watch, go play with your - rich jewels.

LEAR

Pretty, and apt.

GONERIL

Speak you this in my praise.

I will praise an eel with the same praises,

That an eel is ingenious, an eel is quick.

I do say thou art quick in answers: thou heatest my blood!

(LEAR runs after GONERIL, gets dizzy and falls)

LEAR

Tw'as a feast where viands had been poison'd, or at least

Those which I heav'd to head! Ill men were -

GONERIL

They come faint for want of meat

Depart reeling with too much drink.

LEAR (Sings)

Briefly die our joys that place them on the truth of girls and boys.

Why stand ye so perplex'd?

REGAN

What would's't thou, father?

LEAR

I love thee more and more; think more and more

What thou would's't ask. I have treasures taken from pirate ships.

REGAN

You surely would not extort from me

That which I do mean to keep.

LEAR

Certainly, a woman's thought runs before her actions.

(He sits)

LEAR (conts..)

I incline to sadness, oftimes not knowing why  
 So sick I am not, nor yet I am not well;  
 But not so citizen a wanton as  
 To seem to die ere sick. So please you, leave me;  
 Stick to your journal course. The breach of custom  
 Is breach of all. I am ill, but your being by me  
 Cannot amend me; society is not comfort  
 To one not sociable. I am not very sick,  
 Since I can reason of it.

GONERIL

What should WE speak of  
 When we are old as you? When we shall hear  
 The rain and wind beat dark December, how  
 In this our pinching cave, shall we discourse  
 The freezing hours away?

LEAR

Pray you trust me here, though I suffer much  
 I'll not die of pugging tooth or a queasie stomach

GONERIL

Go cosset thee, go beguile thee, with the cozens.

LEAR (to REGAN)

I can scarce speak; thou'lt not believe  
 how your sister advises me to depravity.

GONERIL

No more bawdy houses for him, he wants to hear the vestals sing?

LEAR

I'll do anything now that's virtuous, I'm out  
 of the road of rutting for ever. My desires  
 Run not before mine honour, nor my lusts  
 Burn hotter than my faith!

GONERIL

Thou liest, thou art  
 The damned doorkeeper to every custrel  
 That comes for his Tib!

(LEAR runs after GONERIL again)

REGAN

How ill it agrees with your gravity  
To mingle your blood with the crime of lust.

LEAR

If fires be hot, knives sharp, or waters deep  
Untied thy virgin knots, I'll keep upon my oath.  
Diana, aid my purpose!

REGAN

What have we to do with Diana

LEAR

She's the darling of modest Cordelia.  
Every hour's a year since I last saw her,  
I mean, Cordelia.  
I have thee in bondage to ribbon and gloves.  
I promise you a piece of tawdry lace, for you a pair of gloves.

REGAN

How dearly would it touch thee to the quick  
Houldst thou but hear I were licentious.

LEAR

(to REGAN)

Come, I will fasten on this sleeve of thine;  
Thou art an elm, your father but a vine;  
Whose weakness, with thy strength leads me to a stronger state:  
Transform my sorrows!

REGAN

Your unnatural bemaddening sorrow wears us  
Weep no more, make content with your fortune.

(LEAR grabs REGAN's breast, FOOL enters)

GONERIL

Get thee hence!

LEAR

'Tis not in thee to grudge my tenour  
thy tender-hefted natures shall not give  
Thee o'er to harshness.

REGAN

Good sir, press me no further; lie in the lap of  
the gods, not dutiful daughters.

LEAR

Grief has taken my manhood.  
I'm a dry fool.  
But once more I spoke to th' purpose? when?  
Nay, let me have't: I long?

(REGAN pushes him to floor)

LEAR

Is there no manners left among maids?  
The love I bore the queen, your mother  
Lo, fool again, I'll speak of her no more  
Nor of her daughters. Your mother was a witch  
And one so strong to control the moon,  
Make flow and ebb the tides: she took from, my son!  
What's gone and what's past help  
Should be past grief!  
Nurse my mothers, both, I am my son:  
Not my father's, though he did whelp me  
I lay no claim to him but on my own head be my sins.  
Nurses, there is no way for men to be but women.

(LEAR sleeps. REGAN and GONERIL cover him)

GONERIL

O! that infected moisture of his eye,  
O! that sad breath his spongy lungs bestows.

REGAN

O that false fire which in his cheek so glows  
Would yet again betray the fore-betrayed  
And new pervert! Oh gods make him  
Appear to him, as he to us appears.

GONERIL

He will get his wish for Cordelia sooner than he thinks.

REGAN

She will have much to learn about our barren rustic gardens.

END OF SCENE TWO

## Act II - Scene 3

CORDELIA enters previous space. LEAR is hidden, slowly rises, scratching his head.)

LEAR

Halt! Why dost thou lash that whore!  
(Sits fully awake)

I had an excellent head of hair.  
Where is my head now? Without a home.  
But have the gods put me in a dream?  
When the image of it leaves me I must run mad.

CORDELIA

You are retired, as if you were a feasted one.

LEAR

O she's warm!  
I'm glad I was up so late  
For that's the reason I was up so early.  
If this be magic  
Let it be an art as lawful as eating.  
Let us part from hence, speedily away  
Before you are too long at your trade.

CORDELIA

What trade, sir?

LEAR

Why I cannot name it but I shall offend.

CORDELIA

I cannot be offended with my trade. Please you to name it.

(FOOL enters)

LEAR

How long have you been of this profession?  
Did you go to't so young? Were you a gamester at five, or at seven?

CORDELIA

Earlier too, sir. Are you acquainted with the governor of this place?

FOOL

Will you buy a lace  
for your cape my dainty  
Any silk, any thread  
And toys for your head?

CORDELIA

Alas, I have no money.

LEAR

Better and better. Prosperity's the very bond of love.

FOOL

Fools had ne'er less grace in a year;  
For wise men are grown foppish  
And I for sorrow sung  
That such a king should play bo-peep  
And go the fools among.

LEAR

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

FOOL

Ever since thou madest thy daughters thy mothers.

LEAR

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

FOOL

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

LEAR

He's simple and tells too much. (Fool plays with Cordelia) How now, fair shepherdess?

Your mind is full of something that does take  
Your heart from listening. Sooth, when I was young  
And handed love, as you do, I was wont  
To load my she with knacks: I would have ransack'd  
The pedlar's silken treasure, and have pour'd it on your lap.

FOOL (appung LEAR)

I'll swear this is the prettiest low-born lass that ever  
Ran on the green-sward: nothing she does or seems  
But smacks of something greater than herself  
Too noble for this place.

LEAR

Let us look for a bank to like on  
Where we may leisurely each one demand  
And answer to our part. Give me those flowers there.

CORDELIA

Rosemary and rue, these keep seeming and savour all winter long:  
Grace and remembrance. As for trade, I cared for mountain goats;  
Called sheep on the isle of Foley.

LEAR

Foley? Who brought you here?

CORDELIA

My sisters, Goneril and Regan.

LEAR

As I am a man, I thank this lady  
For being my child; she, Cordelia.

CORDELIA

Father!

FOOL

Now thou art an O without a figure. I am better than thou art now; I am a fool,  
thou art nothing. Yes, forsooth, I will hold my tongue; so your face bids me,  
though you say nothing. Mum, mum.

LEAR

You are no strumpet, by my life  
 An I had better be known to you when I had fresher clothes.  
 Thou I could have raz'd my likeness to good effect,  
 what say you sirrha?

FOOL

You forget your age, shelled peascod.

LEAR

Struck with his tongue! But  
 Wherefore this disguise,  
 Wherefore have these gifts a ragged curtain hid:  
 Where's your branched velvet gown, my lady, pearls?

FOOL

A one-trunk inheriting wenck look to't.

(Gets jewels from CORDELIA's trunk)

LEAR (to FOOL)

You leer upon me, you do. There's an eye  
 Wounds like a leaden sword. Go, you are allow'd.  
 Die when you will, a frock shall be your shroud.

FOOL

Well, better wits have worn plain statue-caps.  
 My love is sworn, this is the ape of form  
 The King weeping-ripe!

LEAR (to CORDELIA presenting her with gems)

Thank the Lord Apollo: you are a spirit I know  
 To halt the warring winds. Had thou not been my daughter,  
 I was exps'd to deep dread-bolted thunder  
 And the most terrible lightening, lost.

CORDELIA

I understand not.

LEAR

Come, your hand daughter. Get thee gone, sirrah, or I'll have you whipped.

FOOL

Truth's a dog must to kennel and must be whipped.

(LEAR kicks and trips him)

FOOL

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

(FOOL exits)

LEAR

How sure are you my daughter  
Flesh of my flesh, what music?

CORDELIA

I hear none.

LEAR

Let there be spirit of youth in everything  
How like a winter thou hast absence been.

END OF SCENE THREE

## ACT II - Scene Four

LEAR enters to trumpet flourish, leading CORDELIA decked in jewels, low neckline. KENT follows, FOOL leads the way.

LEAR

Pompey The Great ne'er had such a daughter  
Virtuous and fair, royal and gracious.

KENT

Fair be to all this fair company!  
Fair desires, in all fair measure, fairly guide them -  
especially you in Cordelia. Fair thoughts be your fair pillow.

LEAR

You are full of fair words.

FOOL

Why this is like the mending of highways  
In summer, where the ways are fair enough.  
What, are we cuckolds e're we have deserv'd it?

LEAR

Speak not so grossly. Return to your place.

(FOOL withdraws but does not exit)

CORDELIA

What kind of man is that?

LEAR

He's not a shepherd; nor does he spin wool -  
Tis hard to fathom -  
More like a harmless necessary cat.  
No, God made him, let him pass for a man.

(REGAN and GONERIL enter)

LEAR

Enough of daughters who usurp our throne  
Cordelia's appearance will no doubt  
Halt your boldness, and make it manners.

GONERIL

May good angels fly o'er her royal head, and shake her person  
Under their blessed wings!

LEAR

Silence, no more tongue!  
Fetch me my rapier, boy: who dares the King  
Come hither, cover'd with an antic face  
To flear and scorn at our solemnity?  
Now, by the stock and honour of my kin  
I'll strike you dead and hold it not a sin.

(CORDELIA runs to him)

LEAR (to CORDELIA)

Be glad her beauty  
As beauty does, melts us with forgiveness.

KENT

Drawn in the flattering table of her eye,  
Hang'd in the frowning wrinkle of her brow  
And quarter'd in her heart - me doth espy  
Love's traitor.

LEAR

Your verse wants improving.  
Let now my project gather to a head.  
Shortly shall my labours with my daughters  
Reach our desir'd end. My unguarded heart  
Allowed them change a distaff to a lance,  
But 'tis time to name the very deed of love and have them wed.

REGAN

This is a piece of malice.

LEAR

The occasion shall instruct you: if entreaties  
Render you no remedy, marriage will.

(REGAN & GONERIL taunt KENT)

KENT

I thought their swords were ta'en from them!

LEAR

What's this? Who gave you arms?

REGAN

Oswald favoured me, Edmund unsheath'd his sword for that hand.

GONERIL

Oswald favours me, Edmund notwithstanding.

CORDELIA

My sisters delight in to and fro conflicting!

GONERIL

If we must marry, we'll marry them. I will have Edmund.

REGAN

His heart is taken. But these be our choice of husbands.

KENT

Oswald's a steward, Edmund illegitimate.

GONERIL

Praise God then - for bastards.

LEAR

Sweet daughters, Regan and Goneril  
 Tractable and mild, whom I hold most dear  
 In all things do cheerfully obey me.  
 Their dower will be no less fitting here  
 Than in England. To wit: of good estate.  
 Of certain interest to my two best friends  
 Lord Cornwall, Duke of Albany, soon to be welcom'd  
 To this island.

REGAN

Come, sire, no mirth on such a subject!

GONERIL

They are both three score!

LEAR

A man of property cannot give his gifts to beggars on the streets. Old friends, they may belittle me; no matter, it is THEIR worth I consider. As I do yours, on bended knee.

(HE 'mock' kneels to them)

GONERIL

Begone with your pranks.

REGAN

Rise as is proper.

LEAR

My Lord Cornwall, Duke of Albany have long upbraided me for neglect of their fortunes, this boon I do therefore grant them.  
My irksome brawling daughters with drawn swords,  
Must have husbands.

KENT

What of your youngest daughter?

LEAR

I love her most and think to set my rest  
On her kind nursery.  
She is teaching me a lesson on mine own mortality.

(EXITS with CORDELIA, KENT and FOOL following)

GONERIL

Marry us off 'in the heat.  
Heavy matters, without our good will.

REGAN

Husbands make a whore foreswear her trade.

GONERIL

Since our sister has arrived, 'tis suddenly not politic to preserve our virginity.

REGAN

Threescore, 'tis to be doubted  
If they could ever find their way  
To the forefended place.

GONERIL

We are subject to a tyrant, a despot  
Whose cunning holds this land in dreadful sway.

(Turning on REGAN)

REGAN

Want of wisdom hath misled us, inform'd  
With new opinions, divers and seemingly dangerous  
Our Lord's fears may prove pernicious.

GONERIL

'Tis a cruelty to load a fallen woman.

REGAN

We will be short with them.

GONERIL

Duchess Albany!  
Hear tell he's a milk-livered man  
Forsoothe, what bon chance  
You can go milk him.

REGAN (Taunting her with sword)

Never! You my lady  
Go to't with Lord Cornwall  
Who I heard tell eats cats, knaws on bear bones  
And has warts.

GONERIL

I'd rather marry a gallows  
And begat gibbets.

(THEY exit)

END OF SCENE FOUR

INTERMISSION

## ACT III

## Scene One

LEAR is walking CORDELIA by the hand

LEAR

Be not offended, nature's miracle,  
 Thou art allotted to be led by me:  
 So doth the swan her downy cygnets save,  
 Keeping them prisoners underneath her wings.  
 Yet if this servile father once offend  
 Go and be free. Oh stay! I have no power to let you pass;  
 My hand would free you, but my heart says no.  
 As plays the sun upon the glassy streams,  
 Twinkling another counterfeited beam,  
 So seems this gorgeous beauty to mine eyes.

CORDELIA

It seems I must pay I ransom before you let me go.

LEAR

Ah yes, a dispensation may be had.

CORDELIA

For I perceive, I am thy prisoner.

(FOOL enters)

LEAR

Keep from her, she is not used to such as you.

FOOL

An' she will become used to such as you?

LEAR (to CORNELIA)

Madam, I would in no way dishonour you,  
 But I have a secret to reveal.

CORDELIA

Wilt thou accept of ransom, yea or no?

LEAR

Say, gentle princess, would you not suppose  
Your bondage happy to be made a queen?

FOOL

For you are daughter of a king!

LEAR

I'll undertake to make thee queen and put a golden sceptre in thy hand and set a  
precious crown upon thy head, if thou wilt condescend to be my...

FOOL

What?

LEAR

Daughter,  
In all things most dear. Oh me! my heart, my rising heart!  
But down!

FOOL

Cry to it, nuncle, as the cockney did to the eels when she put 'em in the paste  
alive; she knapped 'em o'er the coxcombs with a stick and cried, 'Down  
wantons, down!'

LEAR

What would'st thou do with the world, if it lay in thy power?  
Give it to the beasts, to be rid of the men?

FOOL

First mend thy company, without willing misery.  
Marry them off, not one, two, but all three.

LEAR

Change my daughters for boys, is that better?

FOOL

Sons will be thy reward.

LEAR

Consumption, catch you! I can't!

(pushes him away)

A fool, a fool! As I do live by drink, a noble fool.

(Kent enters)

FOOL

Here's a likely husband who would be a father and not vice versa.

KENT

(to CORDELIA, offering stalks)

For thee.

CORDELIA

Flowers or weeds are not so plentiful here as on Foley.

KENT

This is a cursed lump of rock;  
But for you, I'd live here forever.

CORDELIA

And you would teach me with your pen and ink?

KENT

Faith no, thou see'st me copy verses from the poet.

CORDELIA

Can you recite them for me?

KENT

“O you, so perfect and so peerless, are created  
Of every creature's best.  
The very instant that I saw you, did  
My heart fly to your service.  
Beyond all limit of what else I' th' world,  
Do love, prize, honour you.

The earth is in love with thee  
Imagine this, if thou didst fall 'tis  
But to rob thee of a kiss. Riches  
Make true-men thieves; as do thy lips  
Make modest Diana cloud and forlorn  
Lest she should steal a kiss and die forsworn.”

CORDELIA

This Diana, I have not met.

KENT  
Goddess o' modesty.

CORDELIA  
And she be immortal?

KENT  
(moving towards her)  
An immortal goddess that hath serv'd us,  
And brought us thus together.

(LEAR reveals himself)

LEAR  
Sir, she is mortal;  
But by immortal Providence she's mine.  
Meddle not with her!

KENT  
A poor man's suit is unequal odds  
And may be brooked without offence.

LEAR  
Go to the devil!

From afar husbands will be sought  
Not whom we will, but who her Grace affects  
Must be companion of her nuptial bed;  
For what is wedlock forced, but a hell,  
An age of discord and continual strife?  
Whereas the contrary bringeth bliss,  
And is a pattern of celestial peace.

CORDELIA  
Have you decided I too must marry?

LEAR  
Such grace  
Must be bestowed kindly, most carefully,  
Give no ear to suitors, your father knows

Are in treacherous pursuit of a dow'r  
Deemed your worth, my might.  
You must be well shepherded  
From the wolves of lust.

FOOL

Spoken very like a righteous father.

LEAR

Her goodness and beauty hath so  
Changed our peevish disposition it seems  
We are clothed in new and shining raiement.

KENT

How shall I live and work to match her goodness?

LEAR

I'll choose her husband,  
If needs must, searching the world  
In hopeful expectation, for none deserve her who live on this island.

KENT

My hopes lie drown'd then:  
In how many fathoms deep  
They lie indrench'd!

(KENT exits)

LEAR

Her virtue and obedience has tamed a sinner, who marvels to be tamed so;  
I would my heart were in her body but  
As flesh becomes flesh, patiently I'll wait  
Beside her, while she a mother grows  
A child beneath her breast.

END OF SCENE ONE

## ACT III

## Scene Two

(REGAN and GONERIL enter with bowl, reluctant cooks)

GONERIL

We are couched in a sulphurous pit where fires are found  
Not raked and hearths unswept. Come, will this wood take fire?

(She advances on REGAN with burning flame)

REGAN

Oh, Oh!

GONERIL

If you be chaste the flame will back descend and turn you to no pain.

(CORDELIA enters)

REGAN

Turn it on yourself first.

CORDELIA

Our father bids you keep me company.

GONERIL

We are his prisoners.

CORDELIA

Bound as we all must be to our ruler.

REGAN

Canst thou remember of a time before you left this place?  
I do not think thou canst, for then thou wast not of speech.

CORDELIA

To be restored has been my greatest wish  
When first I heard of my sisters, Goneril and Regan.

REGAN

O my, bring out a barrel of fish  
We'll have fish stew together.

GONERIL

I'll corrupt her manners, stain her beauty.  
Come and be chastened in the trial-by-fire.

CORDELIA (Taking Pot)

I am to cook a sheep's head in the style of Foley!

REGAN

Aren't you Foley-sick?

CORDELIA

(Laughing)

In truth I must confess I am Foley-sick, I so miss it.

REGAN

(Imitating FOOL)

I love, and hate her, for she's fair and royal  
And that she hath all courtly parts more exquisite  
Than lady, ladies, woman. From every one.  
The best she hath, and she, from us STOLEN, THIEF!

CORDELIA

You jest! My father says he never revered you thus  
Until I came upon his sight and warmed him to his task  
Of writing letters upon your behalf, your contracts.

REGAN

He's suddenly discovered we're women.

GONERIL

How should we thank this carnal cur  
Who preys on the issue of his wife's body?

CORDELIA

For the wedded happiness you surely seek.

REGAN/GONERIL

With Edmund, Oswald. Edmund! Oswald!

GONERIL

Wives, whores, are one to him.

CORDELIA

I will prepare the dish.

REGAN

Husband or whoremonger must have substance  
The one to rut and provide for the result,  
The other to promptly pay for it.

GONERIL

Serving wench come here, go there, with the pot.

REGAN

She's new to gluttony and lust.

GONERIL

I'm glad she's come, we were never so much out of creatures.

REGAN

Take you the marks of her, height, age, complexion, with warrant of her  
virginity, and cry "He that will give most shall have her first." Such a  
maidenhead were no cheap thing, if men were as they have been.

GONERIL

So wise, so young, they say do never live long.

REGAN

There are ways to be thought of yet.

GONERIL

Unless her father wants to give me gold first.

REGAN

Can her father afford her; she doesn't  
Want to be fettered in a bawdy house  
But taste gentlemen of all fashions  
the difference of all complexions.

CORDELIA

The gods defend me!

GONERIL

You must seem to do that fearfully which you commit willingly, despise profit where you have most gain.

REGAN

What, do you stop your ears?

CORDELIA

And are you women?

REGAN

Well, I had rather than twice the worth of her, she had ne'er come here.

GONERIL

The men are already placing odds on her.

REAL

Fie upon her prayers, she'll make our knights puritans,  
Our swearers priests, freeze the god Priapus  
And undo a whole generation.

GONERIL

She was born to undo us.

CORDELIA

My mother gave birth to a strange brood.

GONERIL

How's this? We must take another course with you.

REGAN

Tell her how our father is incapable  
Of reasonable affairs, disputes his own reason  
As well as the reason of others; lies in bed  
Does nothing but what he did being childish.

GONERIL

If his liver were as infected as his life  
He would not live the running of one glass.

CORDELIA

Hold up your arm! who made this havoc with you?  
It is bruised.

GONERIL

Hang it up for a monument.

REGAN

If he had not been in drink, he would have tickl'd me othergates than he did.

GONERIL

She likes men lean and mean about her.

REGAN

She likes them sour for want of power.

GONERIL

What are you putting in our father's soup?

REGAN

What, chestnuts to munch on, and what else?  
Fillet of a fenny snake?

GONERIL

Root of hemlock, digg'd i' th' dark,  
For a charm of pow'rful trouble.

REGAN

Ratsbane's nearer the mark!

CORDELIA

He is coming to make his peace with you  
Name the date of your nuptials  
Give you promises, if I mistake not his intent,  
Of acreage and forests.

REGAN

For us or our bridegrooms?

GONERIL

My sister is enrag'd against her love!

REGAN

I wait to plough his visage up with prepared nails.

GONERIL

The rack dislimbs less than my fury will

Hungry for revenge.

REGAN

Then you have a disposition to marry?

CORDELIA

It is an honour that I dream not of.

GONERIL

Do you hearken after prophecies? And dreams?  
A witch told us that our father's issue disinherited  
Will be: if he were dead, what would befall us?

REGAN

No other harm but loss of such a lord.

CORDELIA

The loss of such a lord includes all harms.

GONERIL

If he dies, he has been sick of late, a deathly pale,  
How is it we three will not all inherit?

REGAN

The entire kingdom, such that it is.  
Give me the soup, I will taste it.

(CORDELIA gives her soup, she spits in it)

GONERIL

An I will make it tastier.

(GONERIL adds things)

(LEAR enters)

CORDELIA

I will bid you come into dinner.

LEAR

I thank you for your pains, I would my pain could thank  
thee. Gallants I am not as I have been. Methinks I am sadder.

REGAN

You could be in love.

LEAR

I have the toothache.

REGAN

Draw it. Hang it first and draw it afterward.

LEAR

What! Sigh I for the toothache, that's a grief  
To be mastered. Bring me some sweetmeats.

GONERIL

Cordelia has prepared you a pretty mess.

LEAR

Put the sheep aside,  
a man loves meat in his youth, that he cannot endure in his age.  
This kitchen hath a pleasant seat; the air  
Nimbly and tartly recommends itself  
Unto our gentle senses. Heaven's breath  
Moves wooingly here, the air is delicate.  
Can I taste this dish?

REGAN

We were play acting, and there might be a part for you in it.

LEAR

(picking up bowl)

What's the text?

GONERIL

A blind cupid above the door.

CORDELIA

What means that?

(GONERIL whispers to CORDELIA)

LEAR

A sign I hope you'll never see and herewith forget.

CORDELIA

A bawdy house, they said.

LEAR

(begins to drink from bowl)

I'm curious to know what's in this dish.

CORDELIA

Please, sire, it is not finished.

LEAR

(eating)

A bawdy house, they said?

REGAN

(Bawdily)

I'm glad to see your honour in good health.

GONERIL

(Accosting LEAR)

We have one, sir, if she would - there never came her like  
But she'd do the deed of darkness.

REGAN

Call forth, call forth, here comes that which grows to the stalk  
never plucked yet, I can assure you.

GONERIL

I warrant you, thunder shall not so awake a bed of eels  
as my giving out her beauty stirs up the lewdly inclined.  
Bring her here.

LEAR

(Eating)

I've yet to hear the argument, I hope there's no offence in 't.

(THEY bring CORDELIA before him)

REGAN

Show him how we told you to say your prayers.

GONERIL

Bend over like the serving wenches.

LEAR

CEASE! SHE IS A PRINCESS! And so are both of you.

GONERIL

Men are no more than poor, bare, forked animals.

LEAR

As your tongue is! You must be wed!  
 Daughters will out; ruin will come upon us.  
 Daughters will out in bawdy house or palace,  
 Unlike sons, you cannot geld them.  
 Sweet Cordelia, 'tis a worthy deed  
 And shall become you well, to entreat your sisters  
 to soft and gentle speech.

LEAR

(Coughing)

Who have you put in this?

GONERIL

Rank fumitor and furrow meds, burdocks,  
 Hemlock, nettles, cuckoo flowers, Darnel  
 And such death weeds that grow in your garden.

LEAR

If I'd believe you'd dare, I'd give this to the cat  
 And see if the cat died of it.

CORDELIA

Please sire, don't eat it.

LEAR

Have they poisoned me?

CORDELIA

Of the flowers under heaven, poison ones  
 Hath I no recognition.

LEAR

'Tis a weak father who would be frightened  
 When the hen pecks.

(LEAR coughs and chokes)

LEAR

Enough play acting. To the marriage bed!  
If I live through the night, you will wed.  
The two suitors I have chosen for you. Cordelia,  
Will have the choice of two.

(He exits, taking CORDELIA)

GONERIL

Your eyes are too bold on me, get them off.

REGAN

He will hang us.

END OF ACT III

## ACT IV

## SCENE ONE

LEAR stumbles from his bed, unseeing.

LEAR

Fool, fool curses! If I mean myself. Fool, where art thou?

(FOOL enters with light. LEAR sees him)

LEAR

My eyes, thanks be to heaven! I am not blind.  
Thou' I have eaten foully at my daughters -  
They made me eat dung with evil water.

FOOL

Your daughters of ice?

LEAR

I thought Cordelia to have improved their tempers  
She hath worsened them.  
When I seem'd to shake and fear;  
Then they loved my looks the most:  
Could they, so young, give out such a seeming  
To seal their father's eyes up close as oak!  
I thought 'twas witchcraft. Cordelia,  
The country lass said nothing, like me  
She wanted my daughters honest. Hell on my soul  
If I cannot judge them so.

FOOL

Did your daughters bid you eat?

LEAR

I was a fine fool to take it.  
 I pray you tell me what they deserve  
 That do conspire my death with devilish plots  
 That hath prevail'd upon my body with such hellish charms?  
 I say, they have deserved death.  
 Strumpets, I will chop them into messes!  
 Murder me? Let them rot and perish and be damn'd, they shall not live  
 My heart is turn'd to stone, I strike it, and it hurts my hand.

FOOL

If they have done this thing, my noble Lord, -

LEAR

If! thou protector of strumpets,  
 Talk'st thou to me of ifs? Thou art a traitor.

FOOL

Some pardoned, some punished be. Sacrifice the lie or lie back  
 sacrificed!

LEAR

I took them for harmless creatures  
 Made them my book, wherein my soul recorded  
 The history of my most secret thoughts.  
 So dear I loved those two that I must weep!  
 Shift me into madman's rags:  
 Too weak the conflict to support  
 'Twixt two extremes of passion, love and revenge.  
 I am not so valient I could hourly die, by the gods,  
 Betrayed by my daughters as well as my queen.

FOOL

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

(Sings)

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

(LEAR joins in the last two lines)

FOOL

Here this, a song that old was sung  
 Of a king whose female heir  
 So buxom, blithe, and full of face  
 Grace with liking her father took  
 And her to incest did provoke. Bad child!  
 Worse father! To entice his own  
 To evil should be done by none.

LEAR

I never touched my daughters forbiddenly.

FOOL

Whether makest thou the beast with two backs.  
 Or apist thou mother and child,  
 Blasphemy curses the kingdom.

LEAR

By your words you think I should give them joint-rings,  
 Lawn, gown, petticoats, charm my tongue and tell them  
 I wish them good fortune.

FOOL

Be done paddling palms, pinching fingers, plucking breasts,  
 And worse it may be yet; the worst is not  
 So long as we can say, 'This is the worst'.

LEAR

Who is't who can truly say, 'I am at the worst?.'

FOOL

Heed well, those wounds heal ill that men do give themselves.

LEAR

Undo't which I have done?

FOOL

Let heaven kiss earth.

LEAR

Forgive them the oldest sin of female ruffians.

(KENT enters)

KENT

Posted, my lord, fresh from England  
 Shame and confusion all is on the rise  
 Fear frames disorder and disorder wounds  
 Where it should guard!

LEAR

Welcome good Kent, he lives to dance attendance here.

(FOOL exits)

KENT

Disturbances abroad which do threaten  
 The supreme seat, the throne majestic  
 The sceptred office of your ancestors  
 Whiles, in the mildness of your sleepy thoughts  
 Which here we waken to our country's good  
 Her noble face defac'd with scars of infamy  
 Her royal stock graft with ignoble plants  
 Your gracious self is solicited  
 To take the charge and kindly government  
 Of our former home: your very worshipful and loving friends  
 My Lord Cornwall and Duke Albany would marry your daughters in London.

LEAR

They promised to come here.

KENT

They have already set sail and by a faster vessel  
 Have sent word they would bring your daughters back to England.

LEAR

On thy oath, would'st thou be window'd in great London  
 And see thy master thus with broken heart  
 Corrigible neck, bending his subdued face  
 To shake, whilst the courtiers mince and ask  
 Why I had to kill my daughters?

KENT

I would not see'st, or ask why.

LEAR

Betray'd I am by these false idols  
 Whose eyes hold mine and beckon forth  
 The image of their traitorous mother  
 Her whose bosom was once my only crown  
 Coronet, chief end. It was their sudden blossom  
 That came upon my deprived sight, so long denied  
 Unleashed my ardour, revived my very touch  
 Beguiled me to the heart of loss.  
 (He touched KENTS chest)

The polecats have cause to doubt me,  
 But they tried to poison me.

KENT

You have bereft me of all words, my liege.

LEAR

I have found out the source of thy trance.  
 It is the trance of a servant.

KENT

You have found out the truth, my honour is to serve you.

LEAR

I would learn how to serve from you.

KENT

Sire, for myself, to heaven I do appeal,  
 How I have lov'd my lord and commonweal:  
 And for your daughters, I know not how you stand  
 Sorry I am to hear what I have heard:  
 If they have your name dishonour'd  
 Call offenders to their answers  
 And poise the cause in justice' equal scales.  
 Whose beam stands sure, whose rightful cause prevails.

LEAR

(makes to leave)

I will not stay thy looks: let me go  
 Or, if thou still will follow me  
 Believe I have made mischief.  
 Who is't in England calls for a man with three daughters?  
 Three times, I'll put aside the crown.  
 Why should I be besieged in my castle  
 When I can increase my worth without stirring from the hearth?  
 Let my daughters learn service.  
 My queens will one day hold parliaments:  
 And I content to be their council;  
 Proud to be behind the chair of power!  
 Make preparations for the celebration of their nuptials.  
 Marriage is a better execution I think.

KENT

So long as I am loyal and true shall I be used according  
 to your state.

LEAR

Live a little, comfort a little, cheer thyself a little.  
 I drink to you in a cup of sack: and fear not, fear not your manhood.

KENT

I thank you, sire, drink and pray for me, I pray you.  
 I have taken my last draught.

(Refuses drink)

LEAR

Be gone while thy fearful head is on.  
 You do impeach your modesty too much  
 To commit yourself to one who loves you not.

KENT

Tempt not too much the hatred of my spirit.

LEAR

Away. Is not a prince made a wonder and a pointing-stock  
 to every idle follower?

KENT

I shame to hear such speech from revered master.

LEAR

My daughters will reign over more than half the kingdom and I another daughter more, her gracious person will tempt the Lords of France no less. We will send to France to be rescued by the French. I hear the Duke of Burgandy is looking for a wife. When Hymen of the marriage bed lights the torch for my daughter, Cordelia, you and I will drink together then, in friendship.

KENT

I have long since withdrawn my unworthy suit  
I am no impatient hot tempered Italian  
Who brooks no competition in Love.  
Si fortuna me tormento, sperato me contento.

LEAR

You are a soldier and unapt to weep: there is left us  
Self-punishment.

END OF SCENE ONE

## ACT IV

## Scene Two

CORDELIA enters

CORDELIA

Before the sun rises, the air doth drizzle rain  
 Of late I could have given good account of the drops.  
 O sleep, gentle sleep, nature's soft nurse, I would woo thee  
 Weigh my eyelids down and steep my senses in forgetfulness  
 Of hills and sycamores, the flowering hedgerows  
 Where I ran with the water in the brook.  
 My gracious lord, my father drives from me  
 All aspects of my former self and pushes me ever t'ward advancement.  
 Is there an empty chair in my heart  
 That I must ask a husband to fill it?  
 How troublesome is this new majesty  
 That calls gentlemen from abroad, to act  
 In the cause of right and foreign quarrels  
 To join with me and grow their legions  
 That the great body of their states will call forth  
 Proclamation and go in equal rank with the most powerful nations.  
 Are these things then necessities?  
 Then let me meet them like necessities. Happy lo, lie down  
 Uneasy is the lady forced to wear a crown.

(FOOL enters, soberly)

FOOL

You called my lady

CORDELIA

Unless it be the call of one in fretful sleep

FOOL

Let me offer you drink, mead, sack, sherri for the lady.  
 Many a morning hath you been with tears augemnting the fresh morning's dew.

CORDELIA

But all too soon the all cheering sun begins the day anew.

FOOL

You do teach the sun and torches to burn bright  
 When you do hang upon the cheek of night  
 Like a rich jewel from Ethiopia  
 Beauty too rich for human use.

CORDELIA

Why, what is this speech?

FOOL

I would serve you Madam, what wouldst thou from a fool?

CORDELIA

I would you be serious so that I can ask you this,  
 Why did my father not woo another wife?

FOOL

Your mother was a piece of virtue and  
 Your father's wantonness a sin repented of, when  
 Grief on your brother's death unmanned him  
 His groans did make wolves howl and fools knash their teeth.

CORDELIA

He would not invite the affections of another?

FOOL

He hid what a beggar-fool the heart is

CORDELIA

And will not talk of things of the past.

FOOL

Things of the past are done with him, bound fast  
 With bonds of death  
 That barrel ferments!

CORDELIA

There are things I would know of  
 But know not how best to ask.

FOOL

Faith, you are at court - trust no one

Forget not, we are season'd cynics  
Who undermine most honest questions.

CORDELIA

How have you conspired to buzz such  
Conjurations in my brain, my speech is strangled.  
For want of proper paradox?

FOOL

Sweet lady there is no such thing.  
Proper and paradox are strange bedfellows

CORDELIA

But this is how you speak and mean not what you say

FOOL

You would have me defend my tongue?  
Well then I'll tell you something straight,  
Your father loves you, but love blows this way and that  
Through the leaves of summer leaving them shred  
Which you might take to mean your father would harm you  
Not for all the world but a man's heart, and a woman's no less  
is more twisted than a tongue ever is.  
Now, mark you, by what you say you mean not and yet  
You may mean what you say not.

CORDELIA

And am I twisted too.  
Or will I be if I speak so?

FOOL

You cannot help but speak and thus you will end up twisted

CORDELIA

Then I will be strangely silent.

FOOL

And discard one of nature's grace? I bid you  
Rather drink too much and mar your senses  
They threaten to be sharper than my wits by which I do attempt to live.

CORDELIA

My sisters are not the jewels of my fathers claims

With wash'd eyes I know them for what they are  
 But like a sister am most loath to call their faults as they are named.

FOOL

Who covers faults, at last shame them derides.  
 Goneril and Regan have long been fortune's plaything  
 At the mercy of mankind tides, come upon these shores  
 To stake their claim with fife and drum, hopes and ambitions.  
 Brazen bellies all.

CORDELIA

I do not mean to condemn them without knowledge of their temptations.

FOOL

Fear not, the heavens set their orbs on a wondrous path  
 When they arranged the birth of own who seeks the light of truth.  
 Light seeking light.  
 And I for my folly am one who studies the sun:  
 To conquer that huge army of the world's desires;  
 And wage war against my affections.

CORDELIA

Why the sun will not be studied  
 Your light will grow dark by the losing of your eyes.

FOOL

Mark how easily she trains her intellect to delight in  
 The vain manner of speaking!  
 Manners in court being the very substance.

CORDELIA

A substance more difficult to touch than ... will whisps  
 It disappears at the touch.

FOOL

Most excellent, but be not too much in earnest.

CORDELIA

Forsooth, you will mock me from briar to cabbage patch.

FOOL

Only let me hazzard this, 'tis thorny to be a rose plucked  
 By a blind minstrel and offered thus as a precious gift.

CORDELIA

Some phrases I must confess are barr'd from my common sense.

FOOL

Ay, that's study's god-like recompense.

END OF SCENE TWO

END OF ACT IV

## ACT V - SCENE ONE

REGAN and GONERIL are outside in the rain. KENT enters

KENT

My ladies, the tyranny of this stormy night's too rough for ladies to endure, I bid you enter in.

REGAN

Let us alone.

GONERIL

We have stirred up this hateful vaporious night.  
And put the wild waters in this roar.

KENT

It seems imperious blasts have come to crack the vaults  
Of heaven, and blow the ocean on us.

REGAN

Bid the wind blow the earth into the sea  
And swell the curled waters 'bove the main  
In the hope our bridegrooms change their course  
Their ship neglect to find our ports.

KENT

Good Ladies, I fear this contentious storm  
Invades you to the skin.

REGAN

Go in thyself; seek thine own ease.

GONERIL

Cornwall and Albany are skulking the holds of storm-tossed ships  
Contending with the frightful elements  
They rage in their foam-tossed beds  
In vain dreams of calming our cruel waves.

REGAN

Show thy banners now to gods of wind and rain.

GONERIL

Haul ship thy cargo to the bottom before it sinks us  
Under the impious vows of holy wedlock.

KENT

Good ladies, I beg you to come in.

REGAN

The great stars are intelligent of their state,  
That is wet.  
Tremble wretches that such a noise from heaven  
Will drown your cries for women.

GONERIL

Lord Cornwall lists to port, falls to his knees in the unfair fight  
Heaving ho, not letting go the taste of fear in his mouth.

REGAN

Two thoughts do plague Lord Albany  
As water boils his little root  
Why he doth quake when nature speaks  
Before she hath made herself a widow.

GONERIL

I see two spent swimmers that do cling together  
And choke their art.

KENT

Come in and pray our lighthouse stands fast  
The torch keep them far from our rocky shore.

(KENT exits with GONERIL and REGAN)

END OF SCENE ONE

## ACT V - SCENE TWO

CORDELIA sits sewing, REGAN and GONERIL enter

CORDELIA

Our father bids you stay inside after report of you daring the waves in imitation of Neptune, as if you have a mind to drown amid the wind's howling, and asks if you would remain on solid ground.

REGAN

Doting father.

GONERIL

Kind sire, to bid us what he doth ask.

REGAN

(to CORDELIA)

We saw a brave vessel, who had no doubt, some noble creatures in her, dash'd all to pieces.

GONERIL

On their cries did knock against my very heart!

CORDELIA

You mean to jest, but fear was for your lives.

GONERIL

As well it might be, they are sold to the highest bidder: Lords of England to make our lord content; Concern is for the merchandise.

REGAN

Our favours are given too cheap for those who desire egress and regress.

GONERIL (of REGAN)

She has a weak heart which ever yet affected eminence, wealth, sovereignty.

REGAN

Sovereignty's too much to ask. Seven hundred pounds and possibilities of good gifts, who needs a dower when she has a good inheritance from a grandshire!

GONERIL

She has so many crochets in her head.

CORDELIA

As a young traveller to this court my every action must be guided by other's experience, but upon my mended judgement - if I offend not to say it is mended - marriage will be a joyous improvement of your fortunes.

GONERIL

Money buys land and wives are sold for fortune and their fates. We would evitate and shun a thousand irreligious curséd hours which forced marriage bring upon us.

REGAN

Fetch the chains, by this I know they're made!  
It would make a woman mad to be so bought and sold;  
When the image of our father's power is not ours,  
Our honour is denied increase; we forget our place  
But not the price of gold by the weight.

GONERIL

Our father has been sick of late,  
If he dies, who will inherit?

REGAN

No doubt we'll be content with the kingdom, such that it is.

CORDELIA

Our content is our best having but if you seek assurances  
Of wealth, you will be pleased with powerful husbands.

REGAN

This advice is very sweetly given.

CORDELIA

For myself, by my troth and maidenhead, I would never seek to be a queen.

REGAN

I would, and venture maidenhead for it.

CORDELIA

Not for all the riches under heaven, for all the world.

GONERIL

'Tis strange, I would for a crooked three pence.

REGAN

But then her valeur comes of sack and sherri.

GONERIL

'Tis true, she can be truly valient who can scarcely suffer.

REGAN

The worst that men can do, and make her wrongs  
Her outside, to wear them like her gowns, carelessly.

CORDELIA

I do not wish for half your miseries, but if your business  
seek me out, then tell me how I can be a friend to virtue. Out  
with it now, truth loves open dealing.

GONERIL (OF CORDELIA)

She doth not laugh because she does not drink. If I had a  
thousand daughters, which I intend to have not, not one, but  
I'd have them addict themselves to wine and be merry because  
a woman's made an ass and a beast to bear every wrong.

CORDELIA

Is this how you speak of weddings?  
You forget the song, a wedding's Juno's crown  
High wedlock a high honour  
'Tis Hyman marriage touch which people's every town.

REGAN

You misuse our sex with your love-prate.

GONERIL

If a mother I become, by Hymen's torch, I'll unpeople this island.

REGAN

I'd rather kiss a spotted-toad than a little one.

CORDELIA

Women, ladies, for shame!

REGAN

Aye, she learns that women are  
As Time is!

GONERIL

Unsex me here, stop up the access and passage to remorse  
Or may my milk be gall!

REGAN

I'd sooner grow a beard on my breasts than offer them to issue.

GONERIL (playacting)

Come to thy mother, child:  
Give mother kingdom and it mother will  
Give it a plum, a cherry, and a fig:  
There's a good mother!

CORDELIA

I could weep could it change your hearts  
And I would sing if weeping not halt they cruel sport.  
These are the very fruits of rashness. Unruly children  
Make their sire stoop with oppression like an overburdened branch.

GONERIL

She has been taught zeal and obedience.

CORDELIA

There was a plot of a certain Lord  
And sovereign's fiefdom that I prompt forgot  
for none could doubt the goodness of our sire  
Soul and substance of us all.  
Surely I misheard mischief, villainies.

REGAN

Meau, meau, she has not yet learned the bloody mind.

CORDELIA

When did the tiger teach you lessons  
Who trained you in the art of cheating?

REGAN

Tigers, there's a thrust, are we not called polecats!

GONERIL

Our lady has a softness in her for animals  
Which includes the fox.

REGAN

I ask you this, were it not madness to make the fox  
Surveyor of the chicken fold?  
So the poor chicken be assured of death  
No, let him die, in that he is a fox  
By nature prov'd an enemy to the flock.

CORDELIA

Is it not madness to overthrow your own father's throne?  
An' should he hear your discord's ground, the earth will quake  
The storm within our house defy the storm without.

GONERIL

She thinks our keeper, our head, our lord  
Who gives us life and keeps it from us  
Commits his body to our safety and security.

REGAN

She knows not the wrong he did us, nor the error of his ways.

CORDELIA

Authority, even though it errs, like others  
Hath yet a kind of medicine in itself  
That skims the vice o'the top.

REGAN

The milkmaid speaks.

GONERIL

She will not believe he's incestuous  
What? Incestuous, let us forget it.

REGAN

Incest, strange, I find myself familiar with it.

CORDELIA

No, you must find another to tell your tale to  
 Look in the woods and streams for another sister  
 To scold with tales of woe because I cannot believe it to be so.

(FOOL enters)

(LEAR enters)

LEAR

Give them fresh garments and thank the gods of thunder  
 They are not drowned.  
 Are you so impatient to be wives  
 You walk to bridegrooms on water?  
 Desolate, desolate will I be when you are gone  
 But do learn by those that know the very nerves of the state -

FOOL

State being the nerve!

LEAR

That my givings out were of an infinite distance  
 From comfortable design, I do not want you gone.

REGAN

Say you have good news, no ship has been seen  
 Tell us what our husbands might have been.

LEAR

Consenting to the safeguard of our honours  
 I deemed marriage fit, else imputation  
 Might reproach your life and halt your good to come.

GONERIL

Let those that beat with continual motion  
 On my rocky heart, find my loyalty stand firm  
 It lies buried with my stolen sword.

LEAR

Just and heavy causes matrimonial beds:  
 The future of our state hangs on your tender-minded grace.

GONERIL

The future haunts me in the likeness of a fat old man.

LEAR

Old friends, dear friends, I swear it is hard to remember them.

REGAN

Old fellows both, their blood cak'd, it seldom flows  
Lack of kindly warmth, no doubt they are not kind.

LEAR

That I cannot say.

REGAN

Unlook'd for evil when virtue is profan'd  
In such a plan as unkind marriage.

LEAR

A goodly portly man the Duke of Albany, and thy husband Cornwall a warrior.

GONERIL

A horse-back breaker, well I will embrace him with a soldier's arm.

REGAN

Why should the worm intrude the maiden bud?

LEAR

Why daughters, no perfection is so absolute  
That some impurity doth not pollute.  
Fie, fie unknit that threatening unkind brow,  
And dart not scornful glances from those eyes  
To wound thy lord, thy king, thy governor:  
It blots thy beauty.

GONERIL

Our lances are now but straws, our strength  
Weakness, and weakness past compare  
That seeming to be most, which we indeed least are.

LEAR

Prisoners of womanly persuasion  
No more conferring by the parlour fire  
Headstrong women owe duty to their lords and husbands  
The wonder of peace, love and quiet life  
An awful rule and right supremacy;

And, to be short, what not that's sweet and happy.

CORDELIA

They would accuse you of incest.

LEAR

I am mightily abus'd!

GONERIL

But you have been known to commit outrages  
And cherish falsehood.

REGAN

Admit thy days are foul and your drink dangerous.

LEAR

The adders hiss where the sweet bird sings  
We have no good we can say is ours completely.

REGAN

Guilty thou art  
An accessory by thine inclination!

LEAR

You have no cause to mock me.

REGAN

No cause?

GONERIL

No cause?

(LEAR turns to FOOL)

LEAR

Am I at home here? Tell me sirrah!

GONERIL

Aye tell him!

FOOL

Mum, mum! They grew parts to charm a sacred nun.

LEAR

I swear they hold their virtue still

And I my mind.

All my offences - I will not swear what doth my hands.

Are errors of the blood, none of the mind.

REGAN

O hear me tell of broken bosoms.

That to me belong and have emptied

All their sorrows in your well. What a hell

Of witchcraft lies in the orb of his one tear

Which shook off my sober guard and civil fears

All melting, though our drops this difference bore

His poison'd me, and mine did him restore.

LEAR

What 'tis to love? How want of love tormenteth!

GONERIL

You might as yet have been a spreading flower

'Fresh to yourself, if you had self-applied

Love to yourself and to no love besides.

CORDELIA

If this be so, rebellion cannot find rebuke:

Nor sin pardoned in terms of love.

If diverted into paths of a hated pleasure,

And from their true natures led astray:

Misused thus our own kinswomen's trust;

Then never can our country live.

LEAR

Fondlings, if I have harmed there, I beg forgiveness.

If I have loved, it was too much.

GONERIL

If thou be repitent, grant us this

First, make this the last time

You ask us to dance attendance on your will

Next, if our bridegrooms do not survive this night

Deed us the lands and gifts  
 Money, furniture of our future inheritance.

LEAR

If I was not a model sire, I beg you to forgive me.

REGAN

When you gave us gifts you tempted us with bracelets for a kiss  
 Now give us the kingdom complete and we will give thee forgiveness.

(Goes to kiss him)

LEAR

The younger rises when the old doth fall.  
 Let the high office and honour go  
 To those who dare receive it. I would  
 Finish with affairs of state and king-becoming grace.

(FOOL enters)

LEAR

My boy will take care of me. Tell me  
 Is there a prophecy for a man practis'd on  
 Scatter'd to the winds and unprovided with opinion?

FOOL

Thou should's't not have been old, before thou had's't been wise.

LEAR

A prophecy too late. Demand what you will of me.

GONERIL

Deliver not Lord Cornwall!  
 Put out the lighthouse,  
 Send them with all haste to the deep!

REGAN

Hardly can we carry out our sides, if our bridegrooms survive.

LEAR

Mother of three, ne'er mother rejoic'd deliverance more.

CORDELIA

May fortune love you, for I cannot.  
But I embrace this fortune patiently  
Since not to be avoided, it falls on me.

LEAR

Make them all queens.

(KENT enters)

KENT

Good news! The ship we seek is sighted  
Free from shallows and flats, an argosy afloat  
Would not be a pageant as great as that gentle vessel  
Much awaited by our company as she sails  
Into our harbour.

END OF PLAY