

***WILLIAM  
SHAKESPEARE***



***KING  
LEAR***

**William Shakespeare & Sidney Lee**

# **King Lear**

**Including "The Life of William Shakespeare"**

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# King Lear

## Persons Represented.

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Lear, King of Britain.

King of France.

Duke of Burgundy.

Duke of Cornwall.

Duke of Albany.

Earl of Kent.

Earl of Gloster.

Edgar, Son to Gloster.

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Curan, a Courtier.

Old Man, Tenant to Gloster.

Physician.

Fool.

Oswald, steward to Goneril.

An Officer employed by Edmund.

Gentleman, attendant on Cordelia.

A Herald.

Servants to Cornwall.

Goneril, daughter to Lear.

Regan, daughter to Lear.

Cordelia, daughter to Lear.

Knights attending on the King, Officers, Messengers,  
Soldiers, and Attendants.

Scene,—Britain.



# ACT I.

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### **SCENE I. A Room of State in King Lear's Palace.**

[Enter Kent, Gloster, and Edmund.]

Kent.

I thought the King had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.

Glou. 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?

Glou. His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge: I have so often blush'd to acknowledge him that now I am braz'd to't.

Kent.

I cannot conceive you.

Glou. Sir, this young fellow's mother could: whereupon she grew round-wombed, and had indeed, sir, a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her bed. Do you smell a fault?

Kent.

I cannot wish the fault undone, the issue of it being so proper.

Glou. 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?

Edm.

No, my lord.

Glou.

My Lord of Kent: remember him hereafter as my honourable friend.

Edm.

My services to your lordship.

Kent.

I must love you, and sue to know you better.

Edm.

Sir, I shall study deserving.

Glou. He hath been out nine years, and away he shall again.—The king is coming.

[Sennet within.]

[Enter Lear, Cornwall, Albany, Goneril, Regan, Cordelia, and Attendants.]

Lear.

Attend the lords of France and Burgundy,  
Gloster.

Glou.

I shall, my liege.

[Exeunt Gloster and Edmund.]

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  
Unburden'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. The princes, France and  
Burgundy,  
Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,  
Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn,  
And here are to be answer'd.—Tell me, my daughters,—  
Since now we will divest us both of rule,  
Interest of territory, cares of state,—  
Which of you shall we say doth love us most?  
That we our largest bounty may extend  
Where nature doth with merit challenge.—Goneril,  
Our eldest-born, speak first.

Gon.

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

Cor.

[Aside.] What shall Cordelia speak? Love, and be silent.

Lear.

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

Reg.

Sir, I am made of the selfsame metal that my sister is,  
And prize me at her worth. In my true heart  
I find she names my very deed of love;  
Only she comes too short,—that I profess  
Myself an enemy to all other joys  
Which the most precious square of sense possesses,  
And find I am alone felicitate  
In your dear highness' love.

Cor.

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

Lear.

To thee and thine hereditary ever  
Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom;  
No less in space, validity, and pleasure  
Than that conferr'd on Goneril.—Now, our joy,  
Although the last, not least; to whose young love  
The vines of France and milk of Burgundy  
Strive to be interest'd; what can you say to draw  
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

Cor.

Nothing, my lord.

Lear.

Nothing!

Cor.

Nothing.

Lear.

Nothing can come of nothing: speak again.

Cor.

Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave  
My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty  
According to my bond; no more nor less.

Lear.

How, how, Cordelia? mend your speech a little,  
Lest you may mar your fortunes.

Cor.

Good my lord,

You have begot me, bred me, lov'd 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.

Lear.

But goes thy heart with this?

Cor.

Ay, good my lord.

Lear.

So young, and so untender?

Cor.

So young, my lord, and true.

Lear.

Let it be so,—thy truth then be thy dower:

For, by the sacred radiance of the sun,

The mysteries of Hecate, and the night;

By all the operation of the orbs,

From whom we do exist and cease to be;

Here I disclaim all my paternal care,

Propinquity, and property of blood,

And as a stranger to my heart and me

Hold thee, from this for ever. The barbarous Scythian,

Or he that makes his generation messes

To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom

Be as well neighbour'd, pitied, and reliev'd,

As thou my sometime daughter.

Kent.

Good my liege,—

Lear.

Peace, Kent!

Come not between the dragon and his wrath.

I lov'd her most, and thought to set my rest

On her kind nursery.—Hence, and avoid my sight!—[To Cordelia.]

So be my grave my peace, as here I give

Her father's heart from her!—Call France;—who stirs?

Call Burgundy!—Cornwall and Albany,

With my two daughters' dowers digest this third:

Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her.

I do invest you jointly in my power,

Pre-eminence, and all the large effects

That troop with majesty.—Ourselves, by monthly course,

With reservation of an hundred knights,

By you to be sustain'd, shall our abode

Make with you by due turns. Only we still retain

The name, and all the additions to a king;

The sway,

Revenue, execution of the rest,

Beloved sons, be yours; which to confirm,

This coronet part betwixt you.

[Giving the crown.]

Kent.

Royal Lear,

Whom I have ever honour'd as my king,

Lov'd as my father, as my master follow'd,

As my great patron thought on in my prayers.—

Lear.

The bow is bent and drawn; make from the shaft.

Kent.

Let it fall rather, though the fork invade

The region of my heart: be Kent unmannerly

When Lear is mad. What wouldst thou do, old man?

Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak

When power to flattery bows? To plainness honour's

bound

When majesty falls to folly. Reverse thy state;  
And in thy best consideration check  
This hideous rashness: answer my life my judgment,  
Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least;  
Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound  
Reverbs no hollowness.

Lear.

Kent, on thy life, no more.

Kent.

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

Lear.

Out of my sight!

Kent.

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

Lear.

Now, by Apollo,—

Kent.

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

Lear.

O vassal! miscreant!

[Laying his hand on his sword.]

Alb. and Corn.

Dear sir, forbear!

Kent.

Do;

Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow  
Upon the foul disease. 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 to make us break our vow,—  
Which we durst never yet,—and with strain'd pride  
To come between our sentence and our power,—  
Which nor our nature nor our place can bear,—  
Our potency made good, take thy reward.  
Five days we do allot thee for provision  
To shield thee from 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. 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.—  
[To Cordelia.] 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 Gloster, with France, Burgundy, and Attendants.]

Glou.

Here's France and Burgundy, my noble lord.

Lear.

My Lord of Burgundy,  
We first address toward you, who with this king  
Hath rivall'd for our daughter: what in the least  
Will you require in present dower with her,  
Or cease your quest of love?

Bur.

Most royal majesty,  
I crave no more than hath your highness offer'd,  
Nor will you tender less.

Lear.

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

Bur.

I know no answer.

Lear.

Will you, with those infirmities she owes,  
Unfriended, new-adopted to our hate,  
Dower'd with our curse, and stranger'd with our oath,  
Take her, or leave her?

Bur.

Pardon me, royal sir;  
Election makes not up on such conditions.

Lear.

Then leave her, sir; for, by the power that made me,  
I tell you all her wealth.—[To France] 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 asham'd  
Almost to acknowledge hers.

France.

This is most strange,  
That she, who 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  
Fall'n into taint; which to believe of her  
Must be a faith that reason without miracle  
Should never plant in me.

Cor.

I yet beseech your majesty,—  
If for I want that glib and oily art  
To speak and purpose not; since what I well intend,  
I'll do't before I speak,—that you make known  
It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,  
No unchaste action or dishonour'd step,  
That hath depriv'd 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.

Lear.

Better thou  
Hadst not been born than not to have pleas'd me better.  
France.

Is it but this,—a tardiness in nature  
Which often leaves the history unspoke  
That it intends to do?—My lord of Burgundy,  
What say you to the lady? Love's not love  
When it is mingled with regards that stands  
Aloof from the entire point. Will you have her?  
She is herself a dowry.

Bur.

Royal king,  
Give but that portion which yourself propos'd,  
And here I take Cordelia by the hand,  
Duchess of Burgundy.

Lear.

Nothing: I have sworn; I am firm.



Bur.

I am sorry, then, you have so lost a father  
That you must lose a husband.

Cor.

Peace be with Burgundy!  
Since that respects of fortune are his love,  
I shall not be his wife.

France.

Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich, being poor;  
Most choice, forsaken; and most lov'd, despis'd!  
Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon:  
Be it lawful, I take up what's cast away.  
Gods, gods! 'tis strange that from their cold'st neglect  
My love should kindle to inflam'd respect.—  
Thy dowerless daughter, king, thrown to my chance,  
Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France:  
Not all the dukes of waterish Burgundy  
Can buy this unpriz'd precious maid of me.—  
Bid them farewell, Cordelia, though unkind:  
Thou lovest here, a better where to find.

Lear.

Thou hast her, France: let her be thine; for we  
Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see  
That face of hers again.—Therefore be gone  
Without our grace, our love, our benison.—  
Come, noble Burgundy.

[Flourish. Exeunt Lear, Burgundy, Cornwall, Albany,  
Gloster, and Attendants.]

France.

Bid farewell to your sisters.

Cor.

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 nam'd. Love well our father:

To your professed bosoms I commit him:  
But yet, alas, stood I within his grace,  
I would prefer him to a better place.  
So, farewell to you both.

Reg.

Prescribe not us our duties.

Gon.

Let your study

Be to content your lord, who hath receiv'd you  
At fortune's alms. You have obedience scanted,  
And well are worth the want that you have wanted.

Cor.

Time shall unfold what plighted cunning hides:  
Who cover faults, at last shame them derides.  
Well may you prosper!

France.

Come, my fair Cordelia.

[Exeunt France and Cordelia.]

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

Reg.

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

Gon. 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.

Reg. 'Tis the infirmity of his age: yet he hath ever but  
slenderly known himself.

Gon. The best and soundest of his time hath been but  
rash; then must we look to receive from his age, not  
alone the imperfections of long-ingraffed condition, but

therewithal the unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them.

Reg.

Such unconstant starts are we like to have from him as this of

Kent's banishment.

Gon. There is further compliment of leave-taking between France and him. Pray you let us hit together: if our father carry authority with such dispositions as he bears, this last surrender of his will but offend us.

Reg.

We shall further think of it.

Gon.

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

[Exeunt.]

## **SCENE II. A Hall in the Earl of Gloster's Castle.**

[Enter Edmund with a letter.]

Edm.

Thou, nature, art my goddess; to thy law  
My services are bound. Wherefore should I  
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit  
The curiosity of nations to deprive me,  
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines  
Lag of a brother? Why bastard? wherefore base?  
When my dimensions are as well compact,  
My mind as generous, and my shape as true  
As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us  
With base? with baseness? bastardy? base, base?  
Who, in the lusty stealth of nature, take  
More composition and fierce quality  
Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,

Go to 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 Gloster.]

Glou.  
Kent banish'd thus! and France in choler parted!  
And the king gone tonight! subscrib'd his pow'r!  
Confin'd to exhibition! All this done  
Upon the gad!—Edmund, how now! What news?  
Edm.  
So please your lordship, none.  
[Putting up the letter.]

Glou.  
Why so earnestly seek you to put up that letter?  
Edm.  
I know no news, my lord.  
Glou.  
What paper were you reading?  
Edm.  
Nothing, my lord.  
Glou.  
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.  
Edm.

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'erlooking.

Glou.

Give me the letter, sir.

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

Glou.

Let's see, let's see!

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

Glou. [Reads.] 'This policy and reverence of age makes the world bitter to the best of our times; keeps our fortunes from us till our oldness cannot relish them. I begin to find an idle and fond bondage in the oppression of aged tyranny; who sways, not as it hath power, but as it is suffered. Come to me, that of this I may speak more. If our father would sleep till I waked him, you should enjoy half his revenue 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 came this to you? who brought it?

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

Glou.

You know the character to be your brother's?

Edm. 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.

Glou.

It is his.

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

Glou.

Hath he never before sounded you in this business?

Edm. 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.

Glou. 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?

Edm. I do not well know, my lord. If it shall please you to suspend your indignation against my brother till you can derive from him better testimony of his intent, you should run a certain course; where, if you violently proceed against him, mistaking his purpose, it would make a great gap in your own honour, and shake in pieces the heart of his obedience. I dare pawn down my life for him that he hath writ this to feel my affection to your honour, and to no other pretence of danger.

Glou.

Think you so?

Edm. 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.

Glou.

He cannot be such a monster.

Edm.

Nor is not, sure.

Glou. 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.

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

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

[Exit.]

Edm. This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune,—often the surfeit of our own behaviour,—we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars; as if we were villains on necessity; fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary

influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on: an admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star! My father compounded with my mother under the dragon's tail, and my nativity was under ursa major; so that it follows I am rough and lecherous.—Tut! I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing.

[Enter Edgar.]

Pat!—he comes, like the catastrophe of the old comedy: my cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o' Bedlam.—O, these eclipses do portend these divisions! fa, sol, la, mi.

Edg.

How now, brother Edmund! what serious contemplation are you in?

Edm. I am thinking, brother, of a prediction I read this other day, what should follow these eclipses.

Edg.

Do you busy yourself with that?

Edm. I promise you, the effects he writes of succeed unhappily: as of unnaturalness between the child and the parent; death, dearth, dissolutions of ancient amities; divisions in state, menaces and maledictions against king and nobles; needless diffidences, banishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, nuptial breaches, and I know not what.

Edg.

How long have you been a sectary astronomical?

Edm.

Come, come! when saw you my father last?



Edg.

The night gone by.

Edm.

Spake you with him?

Edg.

Ay, two hours together.

Edm. Parted you in good terms? Found you no displeasure in him by word or countenance?

Edg.

None at all.

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

Edg.

Some villain hath done me wrong.

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

Edg.

Armed, brother!

Edm. 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!

Edg.

Shall I hear from you anon?

Edm.

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 practices ride easy!—I see the business.  
Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit:  
All with me's meet that I can fashion fit.  
[Exit.]

### **SCENE III. A Room in the Duke of Albany's Palace.**

[Enter Goneril and Oswald.]

Gon.  
Did my father strike my gentleman for chiding of his fool?  
Osw. Ay, madam.

Gon.  
By day and night, he wrongs me; every hour  
He flashes into one gross crime or other,  
That sets us all at odds; I'll not endure it:  
His knights grow riotous, and himself upbraids us  
On every trifle.—When he returns from hunting,  
I will not speak with him; say I am sick.—  
If you come slack of former services,  
You shall do well; the fault of it I'll answer.

Osw.  
He's coming, madam; I hear him.  
[Horns within.]

Gon.  
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,  
Not to be overruled. Idle old man,  
That still would manage those authorities  
That he hath given away!—Now, by my life,  
Old fools are babes again; and must be us'd  
With checks as flatteries,—when they are seen abus'd.  
Remember what I have said.

Osw.

Very well, madam.

Gon.

And let his knights have colder looks among you;  
What grows of it, no matter; advise your fellows so;  
I would breed from hence occasions, and I shall,  
That I may speak.—I'll write straight to my sister  
To hold my very course.—Prepare for dinner.

[Exeunt.]

#### **SCENE IV. A Hall in Albany's Palace.**

[Enter Kent, disguised.]

Kent.

If but as well I other accents borrow,  
That can my speech defuse, my good intent  
May carry through itself to that full issue  
For which I rais'd my likeness.—Now, banish'd Kent,  
If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemn'd,  
So may it come, thy master, whom thou lov'st,  
Shall find thee full of labours.

[Horns within. Enter King Lear, Knights, and Attendants.]

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.

Lear.

What dost thou profess? What wouldst thou with us?

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

Lear.

What art thou?

Kent.

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

Lear. If thou be'st as poor for a subject as he's for a king, thou art poor enough. What wouldst thou?

Kent.

Service.

Lear.

Who wouldst thou serve?

Kent.

You.

Lear.

Dost thou know me, fellow?

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

Lear.

What's that?

Kent.

Authority.

Lear.

What services canst 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.

Lear.

How old art thou?

Kent. Not so young, sir, to love a woman for singing; nor so old to dote on her for anything: I have years on my back forty-eight.

Lear.

Follow me; thou shalt serve me. If I like thee no worse after dinner, I will not part from thee yet.—Dinner, ho, dinner!  
—

Where's my knave? my fool?—Go you and call my fool hither.

[Exit an attendant.]

[Enter Oswald.]

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

Osw.

So please you,—

[Exit.]

Lear.

What says the fellow there? Call the clotpoll back.—

[Exit a Knight.]

Where's my fool, ho?—I think the world's asleep.

[Re-enter Knight.]

How now! where's that mongrel?

Knight.

He says, my lord, your daughter is not well.

Lear.

Why came not the slave back to me when I called him?

Knight.

Sir, he answered me in the roundest manner, he would not.

Lear.

He would not!

Knight. My lord, I know not what the matter is; but to my judgment your highness is not entertained with that ceremonious affection as you were wont; there's a great abatement of kindness appears as well in the general dependants as in the duke himself also and your daughter.

Lear.

Ha! say'st thou so?

Knight. I beseech you pardon me, my lord, if I be mistaken; for my duty cannot be silent when I think your highness wronged.

Lear. Thou but rememberest me of mine own conception: I have perceived a most faint neglect of late; which I have rather blamed as mine own jealous curiosity than as a very pretence and purpose of unkindness: I will look further into't.—But where's my fool? I have not seen him this two days.

Knight. Since my young lady's going into France, sir, the fool hath much pined away.

Lear. No more of that; I have noted it well.—Go you and tell my daughter I would speak with her.—