

KING LEAR

By William Shakespeare

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Characters

Many of which may be doubled

Lear, *King of Britain*

King of France

Duke of Cornwall

Duke of Albany

Earl of Kent

Earl of Gloucester

Edgar, *son to Gloucester*

Edmund, *illegitimate son to Gloucester*

Oswald, *steward to Goneril*

Old Man, *tenant to Gloucester*

An Officer

A Gentleman

A Herald

A Messenger

Servants to Cornwall

Goneril, Regan, Cordelia, *daughters to Lear*

Soldiers and Servants

SCENE I. King Lear's palace.

Enter KENT, GLOUCESTER, and EDMUND.

KENT

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

GLOUCESTER

It did always seem so to us: but now, in the division of the kingdom, it appears not which of the dukes he values most.

KENT

Is not this your son, my lord?

GLOUCESTER

His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge: this young fellow's mother grew round-wombed ere she had a husband for her bed. But I have, sir, a son by order of law, some year elder than this. The king is coming.

Enter KING LEAR, CORNWALL, ALBANY, GONERIL, REGAN and CORDELIA.

KING LEAR

Attend the lord of France, Gloucester.

GLOUCESTER

I shall, my liege.

Exeunt GLOUCESTER and EDMUND.

KING LEAR

Give me the map there. Know that we have divided In three our kingdom. Tell me, my daughters,-- Which of you shall we say doth love us most? Goneril, speak first.

GONERIL

Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter; Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare; No less than life, as much as child e'er loved; Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

LEAR

What says our second daughter, Our dearest Regan? Speak.

REGAN

Sir, I am made of the self-same metal that my sister is;
Only she comes too short: I profess
Myself an enemy to all other joys,
And I alone felicitate in your dear highness' love.

CORDELIA

[Aside] Poor Cordelia!
I am sure, my love's richer than my tongue.

KING LEAR

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

CORDELIA

Nothing, my lord.

KING LEAR

Nothing! Nothing will come of nothing: speak again.

CORDELIA

I cannot heave my heart into my mouth:
I love your majesty according to my bond; nor more nor less.

KING LEAR

Cordelia! mend your speech a little,
Lest it may mar your fortunes.

CORDELIA

Good my lord,
You have begot me, bred me, loved me: I
Return those duties back as are right fit,
Obey you, love you, and most honour you.

KING LEAR

So young, and so untender?

CORDELIA

So young, my lord, and true.

KING LEAR

Let it be so; Here I disclaim all my paternal care,
And as a stranger to my heart and me
Hold thee, from this, for ever.
Regan and Goneril, digest this third:
I do invest you jointly with my power.

KENT

Royal Lear,
Whom I have ever honour'd as my king--
Reverse thy doom; cheque this hideous rashness:
Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least.

KING LEAR

Kent, on thy life, no more! Five days we do allot thee.
If following, thy banish'd trunk be found in our dominions,
The moment is thy death. Away!

KENT

Fare thee well, king.

Exit.

Re-enter GLOUCESTER, with KING OF FRANCE.

GLOUCESTER

Here's France, my noble lord.

CORDELIA

I yet beseech your majesty,--

KING LEAR

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

Exeunt all but KING OF FRANCE, GONERIL, REGAN, and CORDELIA.

KING OF FRANCE

Bid farewell to your sisters.

CORDELIA

With wash'd eyes Cordelia leaves you:

I know you what you are;
And like a sister am most loath to call
Your faults as they are named.

KING OF FRANCE

Come, my fair Cordelia.

Exeunt KING OF FRANCE and CORDELIA.

GONERIL

He always loved our sister most.

REGAN

We must do something.

Exeunt.

SCENE II. The Earl of Gloucester's castle.

Enter EDMUND, with a letter.

EDMUND

For that I am some twelve or fourteen moon-shines
Lag of a brother? Why brand they me
With base? with baseness? base, base?
Well, then, legitimate Edgar, I must have your land:
If this letter speed, Edmund the base
Shall top the legitimate.
Now, gods, stand up for baseness!

Enter GLOUCESTER.

GLOUCESTER

Kent banish'd thus! and France in choler parted!
And the king gone to-night! subscribed his power!
Edmund, how now! what news?

EDMUND

None.

Putting up the letter.

GLOUCESTER

Why so earnestly seek you to put up that letter?

EDMUND

I know no news, my lord.

GLOUCESTER

No? What needed, then, that terrible dispatch of it into your pocket? the quality of nothing hath not such need to hide itself.

EDMUND

I beseech you, sir, pardon me: it is a letter from my brother.

GLOUCESTER

Give me the letter, sir.

[Reads] 'This policy and reverence of age keeps our fortunes from us. If our father would sleep till I waked him, you should half his revenue for ever, and live the beloved of your brother, EDGAR.' Conspiracy! When came this to you? Who brought it?

EDMUND

I found it in my closet.

GLOUCESTER

You know the character to be your brother's?

EDMUND

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

GLOUCESTER

O villain, villain! His very opinion in the letter! Go, sirrah, seek him; I'll apprehend him! Where is he?

EDMUND

I do not well know, my lord. If it shall please you I will place you where you shall hear us confer of this, this very evening.

GLOUCESTER

These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us: there's son against father: the king falls from bias of nature; there's father against child. And the noble and true-hearted Kent banished! his offence, honesty! 'Tis strange.

GLOUCESTER exits.

Enter EDGAR.

EDGAR

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

EDMUND

When saw you my father last?

EDGAR

Why, the night gone by.

EDMUND

Spake you with him?

EDGAR

Ay, two hours together.

EDMUND

Parted you in good terms? Found you no displeasure in him?

EDGAR

None at all.

EDMUND

You may have offended him: forbear his presence till some little time hath qualified the heat of his displeasure.

EDGAR

Some villain hath done me wrong.

EDMUND

That's my fear. I pray you, retire with me to my lodging, from whence I will fitly bring you to hear my lord speak: there's my key: go armed.

EDGAR

Armed, brother!

EDMUND

I advise you to the best; pray you, away.

Exit EDGAR.

A credulous father! and a brother noble, on whose foolish honesty
My practices ride easy!
Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit.

EDMUND exits.

SCENE III. The Duke of Albany's palace.

Enter GONERIL.

GONERIL

My father struck my steward for chiding of his fool?
By day and night he wrongs me; I'll not endure it:
Let him to my sister, whose mind and mine, I know,
In that are one: Not to be over-ruled.

Exits as KENT, disguised, enters.

KENT

If I other can my speech defuse, my good intent
May carry through itself. Now, banish'd Kent,
If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemn'd,
So may it come, thy master, whom thou lovest,
Shall find thee full of labours.

Enter KING LEAR.

KING LEAR

How now! what art thou?

KENT

A man, sir; to serve him truly that will put me in trust.

KING LEAR

Dost thou know me, fellow?

KENT

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

KING LEAR

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

Enter GONERIL.

How now, daughter! what makes that frown?

GONERIL

These dispositions, that of late transform you
From what you rightly are.
As you are old and reverend, you should be wise.
Here do you keep a hundred knights and squires;
Men so disorder'd, so debosh'd and bold,
That make our court more like a tavern or a brothel
Than a graced palace.

KING LEAR

Detested kite! thou liest.

GONERIL

The shame itself doth speak for instant remedy.

KING LEAR

Monster ingratitude!
More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child
Than the sea-monster! How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is
To have a thankless child! Away, away! I'll not trouble thee.
Yet have I left a daughter.

Exeunt all.

SCENE IV. GLOUCESTER's castle.

Enter EDMUND.

EDMUND

My father hath set guard to take my brother;
I must act: briefness and fortune, work!
Brother, a word; descend: brother, I say!

Enter EDGAR.

O sir, fly this place; you have now the good advantage of the night:
I hear my father coming: draw; seem to defend yourself;
'Yield: come before my father. Light, ho, here!'
Fly, brother. 'Torches, torches!' So, farewell.

Exit EDGAR.

Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion.

Wounds his arm.

Enter GLOUCESTER and Servant.

GLOUCESTER

Now, Edmund, where's the villain?

EDMUND

Here stood he in the dark, his sharp sword out,
Look, sir, I bleed.

GLOUCESTER

Where is the villain, Edmund?

EDMUND

Fled this way, sir. When by no means he could—

GLOUCESTER

Pursue him, ho! Go after.

Exeunt Servant.

By no means what?

EDMUND

Persuade me to the murder of your lordship.

GLOUCESTER

Not in this land shall he remain uncaught;
He which finds him shall deserve our thanks,
He that conceals him, death.

Enter REGAN and CORNWALL.

CORNWALL

I have heard strange news.

REGAN

How dost, my lord?

GLOUCESTER

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

REGAN

What, did your Edgar seek your life?

GLOUCESTER

O, lady, lady, shame would have it hid!

REGAN

Was he not companion with the riotous knights
That tend upon my father?

EDMUND

Yes, madam, he was of that consort.

REGAN

I have this present evening from my sister
Been well inform'd of them; and with such cautions,
That if they come to sojourn at my house,
I'll not be there.

CORNWALL

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

EDMUND

'Twas my duty, sir.

REGAN

If Edgar be taken, he shall never more
Be fear'd of doing harm.

Exeunt.

SCENE V. A wood.

Enter EDGAR.

EDGAR

I will preserve myself: my face I'll grime with filth;
Blanket my loins: elf all my hair in knots.
Poor Turlygod! poor Tom! Edgar I nothing am.

Exits.

SCENE VI. Before GLOUCESTER's castle.

Enter KING LEAR, KENT and GLOUCESTER.

KING LEAR

Deny to speak with me? They are sick? they are weary?
They have travell'd all the night?
The king would speak with Cornwall; the dear father
Would with his daughter speak, commands her service:
Are they inform'd of this? My breath and blood!

Go tell the duke and 's wife I'd speak with them,
Now, presently.

GLOUCESTER enters the castle and returns a moment later with REGAN.

REGAN

Hail to your grace!

KING LEAR

Beloved Regan, thy sister's naught:
O Regan, she hath tied sharp-tooth'd unkindness,
like a vulture, here:

Points to his heart.

I can scarce speak to thee; thou'lt not believe
With how depraved a quality--O Regan!

REGAN

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

KING LEAR

My curses on her!

REGAN

O, sir, you are old.
I pray you to our sister you do make return;
Say you have wrong'd her, sir.

KING LEAR

Ask her forgiveness? Never, Regan:
She hath struck me with her tongue,
Most serpent-like, upon the very heart!

REGAN

Fie, sir, fie!

KING LEAR

Thou better know'st the dues of gratitude;
Thy half o' the kingdom hast thou not forgot,
Wherein I thee endow'd.

REGAN

I pray you, father, being weak, seem so.
You will return and sojourn with my sister.

KING LEAR

Return with her?
Why, the hot-blooded France that dowerless took
Our youngest born, I could as well be brought
To knee his throne.

REGAN

At your choice, sir.

KING LEAR

You unnatural hags,
I will have such revenges on you both,
That all the world -- they shall be
The terrors of the earth!

Exeunt KING LEAR and KENT as REGAN watches.

SCENE VII. A heath.

Storm. Enter KENT and a Gentleman, meeting.

KENT

Sir, I commend a dear thing to you.
Make your speed to Dover, making just report
Of how unnatural and bemadding sorrow
The king hath cause to plain.
If you shall see Cordelia,--
As fear not but you shall,--show her this ring;
Fie on this storm! I will go seek the king.

Exeunt.

SCENE VIII. Another part of the heath.

Enter KING LEAR.

KING LEAR

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!
You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts,
Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Smite that who make ingrateful man!

Rumble thy bellyful! Spit, fire! spout, rain!
I never gave you kingdom, call'd you children,
You owe me no subscription: then let fall
Your horrible pleasure 'gainst a head
So old and white as this!
I am a man more sinn'd against than sinning.

Enter KENT.

KENT

Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel;
Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the tempest:
Repose you there.

Exeunt.

SCENE IX. Gloucester's castle.

Enter GLOUCESTER and EDMUND.

GLOUCESTER

I have received a letter this night;
I have locked the letter in my closet:
These injuries the king now bears will be revenged.
I will seek him: go you and maintain talk with
the duke, that my charity be not of him perceived:
the king my old master must be relieved.

Exit.

EDMUND

This courtesy, forbid thee, shall the duke
Instantly know; and of that letter too:
The younger rises when the old doth fall.

Exit.

SCENE X. The heath. Before a hovel.

Enter KING LEAR and KENT.

KENT

Here is the place, my lord; good my lord, enter.

KING LEAR

Filial ingratitude!
To shut me out in such a night as this! O Regan, Goneril!

KENT

Good my lord, enter here.

EDGAR

[Within] Poor Tom!

KENT

Who's there?

Enter EDGAR disguised as a mad man.

EDGAR

Who gives any thing to poor Tom? Tom's a-cold.

KING LEAR

What hast thou been?

EDGAR

A serving-man, proud in heart and mind.

KING LEAR

Why, thou wert better in thy grave than to answer
with thy uncovered body this extremity of the skies.

Enter GLOUCESTER, with a torch.

KENT

Who's there? What is't you seek?

GLOUCESTER

Go in with me: my duty cannot suffer
To obey in all your daughters' hard commands:
Though their injunction be to bar my doors,
Yet have I ventured to come seek you out,
And bring you where both fire and food is ready.

KING LEAR

First let me talk with this philosopher.

KENT

Importune him once more to go, my lord;
His wits begin to unsettle.

GLOUCESTER

Canst thou blame him?

I'll tell thee, friend, I am almost mad myself: I had a son
sought my life.
I do beseech your grace,--

KENT

This way, my lord.

KING LEAR

With him;
I will keep still with my philosopher.

Exeunt.

SCENE XI. Gloucester's castle.

Enter CORNWALL, reading a letter, and EDMUND.

EDMUND

This is the letter he spoke of!

CORNWALL

True or false, it hath made thee earl of Gloucester.
Seek out where thy father is, that he may be ready for our apprehension.
I will have my revenge ere I depart his house.

Exeunt.

SCENE XII. A chamber in a farmhouse adjoining the castle.

Enter KING LEAR, KENT and EDGAR. GLOUCESTER enters and pulls KENT aside.

GLOUCESTER

Come hither, friend: I prithee, take the king in thy arms;
I have o'erheard a plot of death upon him:
Drive towards Dover, friend, where thou shalt meet
Both welcome and protection. Come, come, away.

Exeunt all.

SCENE XIII. Gloucester's castle.

Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, GONERIL, EDMUND, and Servant.

CORNWALL

Seek out the villain Gloucester.

Exit Servant.

REGAN

Hang him instantly.

GONERIL

Pluck out his eyes.

Enter OSWALD.

CORNWALL

How now! where's the king?

OSWALD

My lord of Gloucester hath convey'd him towards Dover;
where they have well-armed friends.

CORNWALL

Get horses for your mistress.

GONERIL

Farewell, sweet lord, and sister.

Exeunt GONERIL, EDMUND, and OSWALD.

Who's there? the traitor?

Enter GLOUCESTER, brought in by two servants.

REGAN

Ingrateful fox!

CORNWALL

Bind fast his arms.

Servants bind him.

GLOUCESTER

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

REGAN

O filthy traitor!

GLOUCESTER

Unmerciful lady as you are, I'm none.

REGAN

So white, and such a traitor!

GLOUCESTER

What will you do?

REGAN

To whose hands have you sent the lunatic king? Speak.

GLOUCESTER

To Dover.

REGAN

Wherefore to Dover?

GLOUCESTER

Because I would not see thy cruel nails
Pluck out his poor old eyes; nor thy fierce sister
In his anointed flesh stick boarish fangs.
I shall see the winged vengeance overtake such children.

CORNWALL

See't shalt thou never. Fellows, hold the chair.
Upon these eyes of thine I'll set my foot.

GLOUCESTER

Give me some help! O cruel! O you gods!

REGAN

One side will mock another; the other too.

A servant lets go of GLOUCESTER'S hand and draws his sword on CORNWALL.

How now, you dog!

Servant

Nay. Come!

CORNWALL and the Servant fight.

REGAN

Give me thy sword!

REGAN grabs another Servant's sword and kills the fighting Servant from behind. CORNWALL stabs out GLOUCESTER's other eye.

GLOUCESTER

All dark and comfortless. Where's my son Edmund?

REGAN

Thou call'st on him that hates thee: it was he
That made the overture of thy treasons to us;
Who is too good to pity thee.

GLOUCESTER

O my follies! then Edgar was abused.
Kind gods, forgive me that, and prosper him!

REGAN

Go thrust him out at gates, and let him smell
His way to Dover.

Exit one servant with GLOUCESTER.

CORNWALL

I have received a hurt: follow me lady.
Regan I bleed apace: Untimely comes this hurt.

Exit CORNWALL, led by REGAN.

SCENE XIV. The heath.

Enter EDGAR.

EDGAR

Who comes here?

Enter GLOUCESTER, led by an Old Man.

My father, poorly led? World, world, O world!

GLOUCESTER

Away, get thee away; good friend, be gone:
Thy comforts can do me no good at all.

Old Man

Alack, sir, you cannot see your way.

GLOUCESTER

I have no way, and therefore want no eyes;
O dear son Edgar, the food of thy abused father's wrath!
Might I but live to see thee in my touch,
I'd say I had eyes again!

Old Man

How now! Who's there?

EDGAR

[Aside] O gods!

Old Man

'Tis poor mad Tom. Madman and beggar too.

EDGAR

Bless thee, master!

GLOUCESTER

Prithee, get thee gone: bring some covering for this naked soul,
Who I'll entreat to lead me.

Old Man

Alack, sir, he is mad.

GLOUCESTER

'Tis the times' plague, when madmen lead the blind.
Do as I bid thee.

Old Man exits.

EDGAR

Bless thy sweet eyes, they bleed.

GLOUCESTER

Know'st thou the way to Dover?

EDGAR

Both horse-way and foot-path.

GLOUCESTER

There is a cliff, whose high and bending head
Looks fearfully in the confined deep:
Bring me but to the very brim of it,
From that place I shall no leading need.

EDGAR

Give me thy arm: Poor Tom shall lead thee.

Exeunt.

SCENE XV. Gloucester's castle.

Enter REGAN and Messenger.

REGAN

What news?

Messenger

The Duke of Cornwall's dead; slain by his servant.

Messenger exits. OSWALD enters with a letter. REGAN stops him, and examines the letter.

REGAN

Why should Goneril write to Edmund? Let me unseal the letter.

OSWALD

Madam, I had rather—

REGAN

I know your lady does not love her husband;
and gave most speaking looks to noble Edmund!
My lord is dead; Edmund and I have talk'd;
And more convenient is he for my hand
Than for your lady's.
I pray, desire her call her wisdom to her.
Fare thee well.

Exeunt.

SCENE XVI. Fields near Dover.

Enter GLOUCESTER, and EDGAR dressed like a peasant.

GLOUCESTER

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

EDGAR

Bear free and patient thoughts. But who comes here?

Enter KING LEAR, mad.

KING LEAR

They are not men o' their words: they told me I was everything; 'tis a lie.

GLOUCESTER

The trick of that voice I do well remember:
Is 't not the king?

KING LEAR

Ay, every inch a king.

GLOUCESTER

O, let me kiss that hand!
Dost thou know me?

KING LEAR

I know thee well enough; thy name is Gloucester.

Enter two Soldiers and OSWALD.

OSWALD

O, here he is: lay hand upon him.

KING LEAR

What, a prisoner?

Exit running; Soldiers follow. EDGAR interposes.

OSWALD

Out, dunghill, or thou diest!

They fight, and EDGAR slays him.

Slave, thou hast slain me: give the letters which thou find'st about me
To Edmund earl of Gloucester; seek him out
Upon the British party: O, untimely death!

Dies.

GLOUCESTER

What, is he dead?

EDGAR

Sit you down, father; rest you
Let's see these letters that he speaks of.

Reads the letter to himself.

Goneril!
O undistinguish'd space of woman's will!
A plot upon her virtuous husband's life;
And the exchange my brother!
Give me your hand:
Come, father, I'll bestow you with a friend.

Exeunt.

SCENE XVII. A tent in the French camp. LEAR asleep.

Enter CORDELIA and KENT.

CORDELIA

O thou good Kent, how shall I live and work,
To match thy goodness?

KENT

To be acknowledged, madam, is o'erpaid.

CORDELIA

O my dear father! Restoration hang
Thy medicine on my lips; and let this kiss
Repair those violent harms that my two sisters
Have in thy reverence made!
He wakes; How does my royal lord?

KING LEAR

Where have I been? Where am I?

CORDELIA

O, look upon me, sir,
And hold your hands in benediction o'er me.

KING LEAR

I fear I am not in my perfect mind.
I think this lady to be my child Cordelia.

CORDELIA

And so I am, I am.

KING LEAR

Be your tears wet? yes, 'faith. Your sisters
Have, as I do remember, done me wrong:
You have some cause, they have not.

CORDELIA

No cause, no cause.
Will't please your highness walk?

KING LEAR

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

Exeunt all.

SCENE XVIII. The British camp, near Dover.

Enter EDMUND and REGAN.

REGAN

Now, sweet lord,
You know the goodness I intend upon you:
Tell me--but truly--but then speak the truth,
Do you not love my sister?

EDMUND

No, by mine honour, madam.

REGAN

I never shall endure her: dear my lord,
Be not familiar with her.

EDMUND

Fear not!

Enter ALBANY and GONERIL.

ALBANY

Sir, the king is come to his daughter.
France invades our land.
Let's then determine our proceedings.

EDMUND

I shall attend you presently at your tent.

As they are going out, enter EDGAR disguised.

EDGAR

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

ALBANY

Speak.

Exeunt all but ALBANY and EDGAR.

EDGAR

Before you fight the battle, ope this letter.
Fortune love you.

ALBANY

Stay till I have read the letter.

EDGAR

I was forbid it.

When time shall serve, I'll appear again.

ALBANY

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

Exit EDGAR and ALBANY. Enter EDMUND.

EDMUND

To both these sisters have I sworn my love;
Which of them shall I take? Both? one? or neither?
Neither can be enjoy'd,
If both remain alive: to take the widow
Exasperates, makes mad her sister Goneril;
And hardly shall I carry out my side,
Her husband being alive. Now then we'll use
His countenance for the battle; which being done,
Let her who would be rid of him devise
His speedy taking off.

A Soldier and Captain enter with KING LEAR and CORDELIA their prisoners.

Take them away.

Exeunt KING LEAR and CORDELIA, guarded.

EDMUND

Come hither, captain; hark.

Take thou this note;

Giving him written instructions.

go follow them to prison:
One step I have advanced thee; if thou dost
As this instructs thee, thou dost make thy way
To noble fortunes.

Captain

I'll do 't, my lord.

Exit.

Enter ALBANY, GONERIL and REGAN.

ALBANY

Sir, we do require the captives of you.

EDMUND

Sir, I thought it fit
To send the old and miserable king
To some retention. With him I sent the queen.

ALBANY

Sir, by your patience,
I hold you but a subject of this war,
Not as a brother.

REGAN

He led our powers; call him brother.

GONERIL

Not so hot:
In his own grace he doth exalt himself,
More than in your addition.

REGAN

He compeers the best.

GONERIL

If he should husband you.

REGAN

Lady, I am not well; else I should answer.
Witness the world, that I create thee here
My lord and master.

GONERIL

Mean you to enjoy him?

ALBANY

Half-blooded fellow!
Edmund, I arrest thee on capital treason.

REGAN

My sickness grows upon me.

GONERIL

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

ALBANY

She is not well; convey her to my tent.

Exit REGAN, led by a Soldier. Enter a Herald.

Herald

[Reads] 'If any man of quality or degree within the lists of the army will maintain upon Edmund, supposed Earl of Gloucester, that he is a manifold traitor, let him appear.'

Enter EDGAR.

EDGAR

Draw thy sword,
Thou art a traitor; False to thy brother, and thy father.

They fight. EDMUND falls. GONERIL exits.

I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund;
My name is Edgar, and thy father's son.

ALBANY

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

EDGAR

By nursing them, my lord.
Whilst I was big in clamour came there a man,
Kent, sir, the banish'd Kent; who in disguise
Follow'd his enemy king, and did him service.

Enter a Gentleman, with a bloody knife.

Gentleman

Help, help, O, help!

ALBANY

Speak, man.

EDGAR

What means that bloody knife?

Gentleman

It came even from the heart of--O, she's dead!

ALBANY

Who dead? speak, man.

Gentleman

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

Enter KENT.

ALBANY

Speak, Edmund, where's the king? and where's Cordelia?

The bodies of GONERIL and REGAN are brought in.

KENT

Alack, why thus?

EDMUND

Yet Edmund was beloved:
The one the other poison'd for my sake,
And after slew herself.
I pant for life: some good I mean to do,
Despite of mine own nature. Quickly send,
Be brief in it, to the castle; for my writ
Is on the life of Lear and on Cordelia:
Nay, send in time.

ALBANY

Run, run, O, run!

Exit EDGAR.

EDMUND

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

ALBANY

The gods defend her! Bear him hence awhile.

EDMUND is borne off. Re-enter KING LEAR, with CORDELIA dead in his arms; EDGAR and others follow.

KING LEAR

She's gone for ever!

A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!

I might have saved her; now she's gone for ever!

Cordelia, Cordelia! Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
And thou no breath at all?

Dies.

EDGAR

He is gone.

KENT

O, let him pass! he hates him much

That would upon the rack of this tough world

Stretch him out longer.

ALBANY

Our present business is general woe.

The weight of this sad time we must obey;

Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.

The oldest hath borne most: we that are young

Shall never see so much, nor live so long.

Exeunt, with a dead march.