

King Lear

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SCENE VII. Gloucester's castle.

Enter CORNWALL, REGAN, GONERIL, EDMUND, and Servants

CORNWALL

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

Exeunt some of the Servants

REGAN

Hang him instantly.

GONERIL

Pluck out his eyes.

CORNWALL

Leave him to my displeasure. Edmund, keep you our sister company: the revenges we are bound to take upon your traitorous father are not fit for your beholding. Advise the duke, where you are going, to a most festinate preparation: we are bound to the like. Our posts shall be swift and intelligent betwixt us. Farewell, dear sister: farewell, my lord of Gloucester.

Enter OSWALD

How now! where's the king?

OSWALD

My lord of Gloucester hath convey'd him hence: Some five or six and thirty of his knights, Hot questrists after him, met him at gate; Who, with some other of the lords dependants, Are gone with him towards Dover; where they boast To have well-armed friends.

CORNWALL

Get horses for your mistress.

GONERIL

Farewell, sweet lord, and sister.

CORNWALL

Edmund, farewell.

Exeunt GONERIL, EDMUND, and OSWALD

Go seek the traitor Gloucester,
Pinion him like a thief, bring him before us.

Exeunt other Servants

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

Enter GLOUCESTER, brought in by two or three

REGAN

Ingrateful fox! 'tis he.

CORNWALL

Bind fast his corky arms.

GLOUCESTER

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

CORNWALL

Bind him, I say.

Servants bind him

REGAN

Hard, hard. O filthy traitor!

GLOUCESTER

Unmerciful lady as you are, I'm none.

CORNWALL

To this chair bind him. Villain, thou shalt find--

REGAN plucks his beard

GLOUCESTER

By the kind gods, 'tis most ignobly done
To pluck me by the beard.

REGAN

So white, and such a traitor!

GLOUCESTER

Naughty lady,
These hairs, which thou dost ravish from my chin,
Will quicken, and accuse thee: I am your host:
With robbers' hands my hospitable favours
You should not ruffle thus. What will you do?

CORNWALL

Come, sir, what letters had you late from France?

REGAN

Be simple answerer, for we know the truth.

CORNWALL

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

REGAN

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

GLOUCESTER

I have a letter guessingly set down,
Which came from one that's of a neutral heart,
And not from one opposed.

CORNWALL

Cunning.

REGAN

And false.

CORNWALL

Where hast thou sent the king?

GLOUCESTER

To Dover.

REGAN

Wherefore to Dover? Wast thou not charged at peril--

CORNWALL

Wherefore to Dover? Let him first answer that.

GLOUCESTER

I am tied to the stake, and I must stand the course.

REGAN

Wherefore to Dover, sir?

GLOUCESTER

Because I would not see thy cruel nails
Pluck out his poor old eyes; nor thy fierce sister
In his anointed flesh stick boarish fangs.
The sea, with such a storm as his bare head
In hell-black night endured, would have buoy'd up,
And quench'd the stelled fires:
Yet, poor old heart, he help the heavens to rain.
If wolves had at thy gate howl'd that stern time,
Thou shouldst have said 'Good porter, turn the key,'
All cruels else subscribed: but 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

He that will think to live till he be old,
Give me some help! O cruel! O you gods!

REGAN

One side will mock another; the other too.

CORNWALL

If you see vengeance,--

First Servant

Hold your hand, my lord:
I have served you ever since I was a child;
But better service have I never done you
Than now to bid you hold.

REGAN

How now, you dog!

First Servant

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

CORNWALL

My villain!

They draw and fight

First Servant

Nay, then, come on, and take the chance of anger.

REGAN

Give me thy sword. A peasant stand up thus!

Takes a sword, and runs at him behind

First Servant

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

Dies

CORNWALL

Lest it see more, prevent it. Out, vile jelly!
Where is thy lustre now?

GLOUCESTER

All dark and comfortless. Where's my son Edmund?
Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature,
To quit this horrid act.

REGAN

Out, treacherous villain!
Thou call'st on him that hates thee: it was he

That made the overture of thy treasons to us;
Who is too good to pity thee.

GLOUCESTER

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

REGAN

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

Exit one with GLOUCESTER

How is't, my lord? how look you?

CORNWALL

I have received a hurt: follow me, lady.
Turn out that eyeless villain; throw this slave
Upon the dunghill. Regan, I bleed apace:
Untimely comes this hurt: give me your arm.

Exit CORNWALL, led by REGAN

Second Servant

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

Third Servant

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

Second Servant

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

Third Servant

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

Exeunt severally