

# King Lear

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## SCENE II. Before ALBANY's palace.

*Enter GONERIL and EDMUND*

### GONERIL

Welcome, my lord: I marvel our mild husband  
Not met us on the way.

*Enter OSWALD*

Now, where's your master'?

### OSWALD

Madam, within; but never man so changed.  
I told him of the army that was landed;  
He smiled at it: I told him you were coming:  
His answer was 'The worse:' of Gloucester's treachery,  
And of the loyal service of his son,  
When I inform'd him, then he call'd me sot,  
And told me I had turn'd the wrong side out:  
What most he should dislike seems pleasant to him;  
What like, offensive.

### GONERIL

[To EDMUND] Then shall you go no further.  
It is the cowish terror of his spirit,  
That dares not undertake: he'll not feel wrongs  
Which tie him to an answer. Our wishes on the way  
May prove effects. Back, Edmund, to my brother;  
Hasten his musters and conduct his powers:  
I must change arms at home, and give the distaff  
Into my husband's hands. This trusty servant  
Shall pass between us: ere long you are like to hear,  
If you dare venture in your own behalf,  
A mistress's command. Wear this; spare speech;

*Giving a favour*

Decline your head: this kiss, if it durst speak,  
Would stretch thy spirits up into the air:  
Conceive, and fare thee well.

### EDMUND

Yours in the ranks of death.

## **GONERIL**

My most dear Gloucester!

*Exit EDMUND*

O, the difference of man and man!  
To thee a woman's services are due:  
My fool usurps my body.

## **OSWALD**

Madam, here comes my lord.

*Exit*

*Enter ALBANY*

## **GONERIL**

I have been worth the whistle.

## **ALBANY**

O Goneril!  
You are not worth the dust which the rude wind  
Blows in your face. I fear your disposition:  
That nature, which contemns its origin,  
Cannot be border'd certain in itself;  
She that herself will sliver and disbranch  
From her material sap, perforce must wither  
And come to deadly use.

## **GONERIL**

No more; the text is foolish.

## **ALBANY**

Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile:  
Filths savour but themselves. What have you done?  
Tigers, not daughters, what have you perform'd?  
A father, and a gracious aged man,  
Whose reverence even the head-lugg'd bear would lick,  
Most barbarous, most degenerate! have you madded.  
Could my good brother suffer you to do it?  
A man, a prince, by him so benefited!  
If that the heavens do not their visible spirits  
Send quickly down to tame these vile offences,  
It will come,  
Humanity must perforce prey on itself,

Like monsters of the deep.

**GONERIL**

Milk-liver'd man!  
That bear'st a cheek for blows, a head for wrongs;  
Who hast not in thy brows an eye discerning  
Thine honour from thy suffering; that not know'st  
Fools do those villains pity who are punish'd  
Ere they have done their mischief. Where's thy drum?  
France spreads his banners in our noiseless land;  
With plumed helm thy slayer begins threats;  
Whiles thou, a moral fool, sit'st still, and criest  
'Alack, why does he so?'

**ALBANY**

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

**GONERIL**

O vain fool!

**ALBANY**

Thou changed and self-cover'd thing, for shame,  
Be-monster not thy feature. Were't my fitness  
To let these hands obey my blood,  
They are apt enough to dislocate and tear  
Thy flesh and bones: howe'er thou art a fiend,  
A woman's shape doth shield thee.

**GONERIL**

Marry, your manhood now--

*Enter a Messenger*

**ALBANY**

What news?

**Messenger**

O, my good lord, the Duke of Cornwall's dead:  
Slain by his servant, going to put out  
The other eye of Gloucester.

**ALBANY**

Gloucester's eye!

**Messenger**

A servant that he bred, thrill'd with remorse,  
Opposed against the act, bending his sword  
To his great master; who, thereat enraged,  
Flew on him, and amongst them fell'd him dead;  
But not without that harmful stroke, which since  
Hath pluck'd him after.

**ALBANY**

This shows you are above,  
You justicers, that these our nether crimes  
So speedily can venge! But, O poor Gloucester!  
Lost he his other eye?

**Messenger**

Both, both, my lord.  
This letter, madam, craves a speedy answer;  
'Tis from your sister.

**GONERIL**

[Aside] One way I like this well;  
But being widow, and my Gloucester with her,  
May all the building in my fancy pluck  
Upon my hateful life: another way,  
The news is not so tart.--I'll read, and answer.

*Exit*

**ALBANY**

Where was his son when they did take his eyes?

**Messenger**

Come with my lady hither.

**ALBANY**

He is not here.

**Messenger**

No, my good lord; I met him back again.

**ALBANY**

Knows he the wickedness?

**Messenger**

Ay, my good lord; 'twas he inform'd against him;  
And quit the house on purpose, that their punishment  
Might have the freer course.

## **ALBANY**

Gloucester, I live  
To thank thee for the love thou show'dst the king,  
And to revenge thine eyes. Come hither, friend:  
Tell me what more thou know'st.

*Exeunt*

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