

The History of King Lear

Sc.14

*Enter the Duke of Cornwall and Regan, and Gonoril
and Edmund the bastard, and Servants*

CORNWALL (to Gonoril)

Post speedily to my lord your husband.

Show him this letter. The army of France is landed.

(To Servants) Seek out the villain Gloucester.

Exeunt some

REGAN

Hang him instantly.

GONORIL

Pluck out his eyes.

CORNWALL Leave him to my displeasure.±±

Edmund, keep you our sister company. 5

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
intelligence betwixt us.±± 10

Farewell, dear sister. Farewell, my lord of Gloucester.

Enter Oswald the steward

How now, where's the King?

OSWALD

My lord of Gloucester hath conveyed him hence.

Some five- or six-and-thirty of his knights,

Hot questants after him, met him at gate, 15

Who, with some other of the lord's dependants,

Are gone with him towards Dover, where they boast

To have well-armed friends.

CORNWALL Get horses for your mistress.

Exit Oswald

GONORIL Farewell, sweet lord, and sister. 20

CORNWALL

Edmund, farewell.

Exeunt Gonoril and Edmund

(To Servants) Go seek the traitor Gloucester.

Pinion him like a thief; bring him before us.

Exeunt other Servants

Though we may not pass upon his life
Without the form of justice, yet our power
Shall do a curtsy to our wrath, which men 25
May blame but not control. Who's there±±the traitor?

Enter the Duke of Gloucester brought in by two or three

REGAN

Ingrateful fox, 'tis he.

CORNWALL *(to Servants)* Bind fast his corky arms.

GLOUCESTER

What means your graces? Good my friends, consider
You are my guests. Do me no foul play, friends.

CORNWALL *(to Servants)*

Bind him, I say±±

REGAN

Hard, hard! O filthy traitor! 30

GLOUCESTER

Unmerciful lady as you are, I am true.

CORNWALL *(to Servants)*

To this chair bind him. *(To Gloucester)* Villain, thou
shalt find±±

Regan plucks Gloucester's beard

GLOUCESTER

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

REGAN So white, and such a traitor! 35

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? 40

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

You have sent the lunatic King. Speak. 45

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±± 50

CORNWALL

Wherefore to Dover? Let him first answer that.

GLOUCESTER

I am tied to th' 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 55
In his anointed flesh rash boarish fangs.

The sea, with such a storm as his bowed head
In hell-black night endured, would have buoyed up
And quenched the stelleÁd fires. Yet, poor old heart,
He holped the heavens to rage. 60

If wolves had at thy gate howled that dern time,
Thou shouldst have said `Good porter, turn the key;
All cruels I'll subscribe.' But I shall see
The wingeÁd vengeance overtake such children.

CORNWALL

See't shalt thou never.±±Fellows, hold the chair.±± 65
Upon those 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 ye gods!
*[Cornwall pulls out one of Gloucester's eyes and
stamps on it]*

REGAN *(to Cornwall)*

One side will mock another; t'other, too.

CORNWALL *(to Gloucester)*

If you see vengeance±±

SERVANT

Hold your hand, my lord. 70

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!

SERVANT

If you did wear a beard upon your chin
I'd shake it on this quarrel. *[To Cornwall]* What do
you mean? 75

CORNWALL My villain!

SERVANT

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

They draw and fight

REGAN *[to another Servant]*

Give me thy sword. A peasant stand up thus!
She takes a sword and runs at him behind

SERVANT *(to Gloucester)*

O, I am slain, my lord! Yet have you one eye left
To see some mischief on him.
[Regan stabs him again]

O!

80

He dies

CORNWALL

Lest it see more, prevent it. Out, vile jelly!
He [pulls out] Gloucester's other eye
Where is thy lustre now?

GLOUCESTER

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

REGAN Out, villain! 85

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! 90

REGAN *(to Servants)*

Go thrust him out at gates, and let him smell
His way to Dover. *(To Cornwall)* How is't, my lord?
How look you?

CORNWALL

I have received a hurt. Follow me, lady.
(To Servants) Turn out that eyeless villain. Throw this
slave
Upon the dunghill.

*Exit one or more with Gloucester
[and the body]*

Regan, I bleed apace.

95

Untimely comes this hurt. Give me your arm.
Exeunt Cornwall and 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.

100

SECOND SERVANT

Let's follow the old Earl and get the bedlam
To lead him where he would. His roguish madness
Allows itself to anything.

THIRD SERVANT

Go thou. I'll fetch some flax and whites of eggs
To apply to his bleeding face. Now heaven help him!¹⁰⁵
Exeunt severally