

# The History of King Lear

## Sc.5

*Enter King Lear, the Earl of Kent disguised, and  
Lear's Fool*

**LEAR** *[to Kent]* Go you before to Gloucester with these letters. Acquaint my daughter no further with anything you know than comes from her demand out of the letter. If your diligence be not speedy, I shall be there before you. 5

**KENT** I will not sleep, my lord, till I have delivered your letter.

*Exit*

**FOOL** If a man's brains were in his heels, were't not in danger of kibes?

**LEAR** Ay, boy. 10

**FOOL** Then, I prithee, be merry: thy wit shall ne'er go slipshod.

**LEAR** Ha, ha, ha!

**FOOL** Shalt see thy other daughter will use thee kindly, for though she's as like this as a crab is like an apple, 15 yet I con what I can tell.

**LEAR** Why, what canst thou tell, my boy?

**FOOL** She'll taste as like this as a crab doth to a crab. Thou canst not tell why one's nose stands in the middle of his face? 20

**LEAR** No.

**FOOL** Why, to keep his eyes on either side 's nose, that what a man cannot smell out, a may spy into.

**LEAR** I did her wrong.

**FOOL** Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell? 25

**LEAR** No.

**FOOL** Nor I neither; but I can tell why a snail has a house.

**LEAR** Why?

**FOOL** Why, to put his head in, not to give it away to his 30 daughter and leave his horns without a case.

**LEAR**  
I will forget my nature. So kind a father!

Be my horses ready?

**FOOL** Thy asses are gone about them. The reason why  
the seven stars are no more than seven is a pretty 35  
reason.

**LEAR** Because they are not eight.

**FOOL** Yes. Thou wouldst make a good fool.

**LEAR**

To take't again perforce±±monster ingratitude!

**FOOL** If thou wert my fool, nuncle, I'd have thee beaten 40  
for being old before thy time.

**LEAR** How's that?

**FOOL** Thou shouldst not have been old before thou hadst  
been wise.

**LEAR**

O, let me not be mad, sweet heaven! 45

I would not be mad.

Keep me in temper. I would not be mad.

*Enter a Servant*

Are the horses ready?

**SERVANT** Ready, my lord.

**LEAR** (to Fool) Come, boy.

*Exeunt Lear and Servant*

**FOOL**

She that is maid now, and laughs at my departure, 50  
Shall not be a maid long, except things be cut shorter.

*Exit*