

The History of King Lear

Sc.21

[Soft music.] Enter Queen Cordelia, and the Earl of Kent, disguised

CORDELIA O thou good Kent,
How shall I live and work to match thy goodness?
My life will be too short, and every measure fail me.

KENT
To be acknowledged, madam, is o'erpaid.
All my reports go with the modest truth, 5
Nor more, nor clipped, but so.

CORDELIA Be better suited.
These weeds are memories of those worser hours.
I prithee put them off.

KENT Pardon me, dear madam.
Yet to be known shortens my made intent.
My boon I make it that you know me not 10
Till time and I think meet.

CORDELIA Then be't so, my good lord.
[Enter the Doctor and First Gentleman]
How does the King?

DOCTOR Madam, sleeps still.

CORDELIA O you kind gods,
Cure this great breach in his abuseÁd nature;
The untuned and hurrying senses O wind up
Of this child-changeÁd father!

DOCTOR So please your majesty
15
That we may wake the King? He hath slept long.

CORDELIA
Be governed by your knowledge, and proceed
I'th' sway of your own will. Is he arrayed?

[FIRST GENTLEMAN]
Ay, madam. In the heaviness of his sleep
We put fresh garments on him. 20

[DOCTOR]
Good madam, be by when we do awake him.
I doubt not of his temperance.

CORDELIA

Very well.

DOCTOR

Please you draw near. Louder the music there!

King Lear is [discovered] asleep

CORDELIA

O my dear father, restoration hang

Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss

25

Repair those violent harms that my two sisters

Have in thy reverence made!

KENT

Kind and dear princess!

CORDELIA

Had you not been their father, these white flakes

Had challenged pity of them. Was this a face

To be exposed against the warring winds,

30

To stand against the deep dread-bolted thunder

In the most terrible and nimble stroke

Of quick cross-lightning, to watch±±poor *perdu*±±

With this thin helm? Mine injurer's mean'st dog,

Though he had bit me, should have stood that night 35

Against my fire. And wast thou fain, poor father,

To hovel thee with swine and rogues forlorn

In short and musty straw? Alack, alack,

'Tis wonder that thy life and wits at once

Had not concluded all! (*To the Doctor*) He wakes.

Speak to him.

40

DOCTOR Madam, do you; 'tis fittest.

CORDELIA (*to Lear*)

How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?

LEAR

You do me wrong to take me out o'th' grave.

Thou art a soul in bliss, but I am bound

Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears

45

Do scald like molten lead.

CORDELIA

Sir, know me.

LEAR

You're a spirit, I know. Where did you die?

CORDELIA (*to the Doctor*) Still, still far wide!

DOCTOR

He's scarce awake. Let him alone a while.

LEAR

Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?

50

I am mightily abused. I should e'en die with pity
To see another thus. I know not what to say.
I will not swear these are my hands. Let's see:
I feel this pin prick. Would I were assured
Of my condition.

CORDELIA (*kneeling*) O look upon me, sir, 55
And hold your hands in benediction o'er me.
No, sir, you must not kneel.

LEAR Pray do not mock.

I am a very foolish, fond old man,
Fourscore and upward, and to deal plainly,
I fear I am not in my perfect mind. 60
Methinks I should know you, and know this man;
Yet I am doubtful, for I am mainly ignorant
What place this is; and all the skill I have
Remembers not these garments; nor I know not
Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me, 65
For as I am a man, I think this lady
To be my child, Cordelia.

CORDELIA And so I am.

LEAR
Be your tears wet? Yes, faith. I pray, weep not.
If you have poison for me, I will drink it.
I know you do not love me; for your sisters 70
Have, as I do remember, done me wrong.
You have some cause; they have not.

CORDELIA No cause, no cause.

LEAR Am I in France?

KENT In your own kingdom, sir.

LEAR Do not abuse me. 75

DOCTOR
Be comforted, good madam. The great rage
You see is cured in him, and yet it is danger
To make him even o'er the time he has lost.
Desire him to go in; trouble him no more
Till further settling. 80

CORDELIA (*to Lear*) Will't please your highness walk?

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

[FIRST] GENTLEMAN Holds it true, sir, that the Duke
Of Cornwall was so slain?

[FIRST] GENTLEMAN
Who is conductor of his people?

[FIRST] GENTLEMAN They say Edgar,
His banished son, is with the Earl of Kent
In Germany.

[FIRST] GENTLEMAN The arbitrement is
Like to be bloody. Fare you well, sir.

KENT
My point and period will be thoroughly wrought,
Or well or ill, as this day's battle's fought.

Exit