

The History of King Lear

Sc.9

Storm. Enter King Lear and his Fool

LEAR

Blow, wind, and crack your cheeks! Rage, blow,
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
Till you have drenched the steeples, drowned the
cocks!

You sulphurous and thought-executing fires,
Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunderbolts, 5
Singe my white head; and thou all-shaking thunder,
Smite flat the thick rotundity of the world,
Crack nature's mould, all germens spill at once
That make ingrateful man.

FOOL O nuncle, court holy water in a dry house is better 10
than this rain-water out o' door. Good nuncle, in, and
ask thy daughters blessing. Here's a night pities neither
wise man nor fool.

LEAR

Rumble thy bellyful; spit, fire; spout, rain.
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire are my daughters. 15
I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness.
I never gave you kingdom, called you children.
You owe me no subscription. Why then, let fall
Your horrible pleasure. Here I stand your slave,
A poor, infirm, weak and despised old man, 20
But yet I call you servile ministers,
That have with two pernicious daughters joined
Your high engendered battle 'gainst a head
So old and white as this. O, 'tis foul!

FOOL He that has a house to put his head in has a good 25
headpiece.

[Sings]

The codpiece that will house
Before the head has any,
The head and he shall louse,
So beggars marry many. 30
The man that makes his toe

What he his heart should make
Shall have a corn cry woe,
And turn his sleep to wake±±
for there was never yet fair woman but she made
mouths in a glass.

35

LEAR

No, I will be the pattern of all patience.
[He sits.] Enter the Earl of Kent disguised
I will say nothing.

KENT Who's there?

FOOL Marry, here's grace and a codpiece±±that's a wise 40
man and a fool.

KENT *(to Lear)*

Alas, sir, sit you here? Things that love night
Love not such nights as these. The wrathful skies
Gallow the very wanderers of the dark
And makes them keep their caves. Since I was man 45
Such sheets of fire, such bursts of horrid thunder,
Such groans of roaring wind and rain I ne'er
Remember to have heard. Man's nature cannot carry
The affliction nor the force.

LEAR

Let the great gods,
That keep this dreadful pother o'er our heads, 50
Find out their enemies now. Tremble, thou wretch
That hast within thee undivulgeÁd crimes
Unwhipped of justice; hide thee, thou bloody hand,
Thou perjured and thou simular man of virtue
That art incestuous; caitiff, in pieces shake, 55
That under covert and convenient seeming
Hast practised on man's life;
Close pent-up guilts, rive your concealeÁd centres
And cry these dreadful summoners grace.
I am a man more sinned against than sinning. 60

KENT Alack, bare-headed?

Gracious my lord, hard by here is a hovel.
Some friendship will it lend you 'gainst the tempest.
Repose you there whilst I to this hard house±±
More hard than is the stone whereof 'tis raised, 65
Which even but now, demanding after you,
Denied me to come in±±return and force

Their scant'd courtesy.

LEAR

My wit begins to turn.

(*To Fool*) Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy? Art
cold?

I am cold myself.±±Where is this straw, my fellow? 70

The art of our necessities is strange,

That can make vile things precious. Come, your
hovel.±±

Poor fool and knave, I have one part of my heart
That sorrows yet for thee.

FOOL [*sings*]

He that has a little tiny wit, 75

With heigh-ho, the wind and the rain,

Must make content with his fortunes fit,

For the rain it raineth every day.

LEAR

True, my good boy. (*To Kent*) Come, bring us to this
hovel.

Exeunt