

The Tragedy of King Lear

4.6

*Enter Queen Cordelia, the Earl of Kent disguised,
and [the First] Gentleman*

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, 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.±±

How does the King?

[FIRST] GENTLEMAN

Madam, sleeps still.

CORDELIA

O

you kind gods,

Cure this great breach in his abuseÁd nature;
Th'untuned and jarring senses O wind up
Of this child-changeÁd father!

[FIRST] GENTLEMAN

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 sleep
We put fresh garments on him. 20

Enter King Lear asleep, in a chair carried by servants

Be by, good madam, when we do awake him.
I doubt not of his temperance.

CORDELIA

O my dear father, restoration hang
Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss
Repair those violent harms that my two sisters 25
Have in thy reverence made!

KENT

Kind and dear princess!

CORDELIA

Had you not been their father, these white flakes
Did challenge pity of them. Was this a face
To be opposed against the warring winds?
Mine enemy's dog, though he had bit me, should
have stood 30
That night 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 Gentleman*) He wakes.
Speak to him. 35

[FIRST] GENTLEMAN 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 40
Do scald like molten lead.

CORDELIA

Sir, do you know me?

LEAR

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

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

[FIRST] GENTLEMAN

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

LEAR

Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight? 45
I am mightily abused. I should ev'n 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, 50

And hold your hands in benediction o'er me.
You must not kneel.

LEAR Pray do not mock.
I am a very foolish, fond old man,
Fourscore and upward,
Not an hour more nor less; and to deal plainly, 55
I fear I am not in my perfect mind.

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 60
Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me,
For as I am a man, I think this lady
To be my child, Cordelia.

CORDELIA And so I am, I am.

LEAR Be your tears wet? Yes, faith. I pray, weep not.
If you have poison for me, I will drink it. 65
I know you do not love me; for your sisters
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. 70

LEAR Do not abuse me.

[FIRST] GENTLEMAN

Be comforted, good madam. The great rage
You see is killed in him. Desire him to go in.
Trouble him no more till further settling.

CORDELIA (to Lear) Will't please your highness walk? 75

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

Exeunt