

The History of King Lear

Sc.11

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

KENT

Here is the place, my lord. Good my lord, enter.
The tyranny of the open night's too rough
For nature to endure.

LEAR Let me alone.

KENT

Good my lord, enter here.

LEAR

Wilt break my heart?

KENT

I had rather break mine own. Good my lord, enter. 5

LEAR

Thou think'st 'tis much that this contentious storm
Invades us to the skin. So 'tis to thee;
But where the greater malady is fixed,
The lesser is scarce felt. Thou'dst shun a bear,
But if thy flight lay toward the roaring sea 10
Thou'dst meet the bear i'th' mouth. When the mind's
free,

The body's delicate. This tempest in my mind
Doth from my senses take all feeling else
Save what beats there: filial ingratitude.
Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand 15
For lifting food to't? But I will punish sure.

No, I will weep no more.±±
In such a night as this! O Regan, Gonoril,
Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave you all±±
O, that way madness lies. Let me shun that. 20
No more of that.

KENT

Good my lord, enter.

LEAR

Prithee, go in thyself. Seek thy own ease.
This tempest will not give me leave to ponder
On things would hurt me more; but I'll go in.

[Exit Fool]

Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'er you are, 25
That bide the pelting of this pitiless night,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this. Take physic, pomp, 30
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou mayst shake the superflux to them
And show the heavens more just.

Enter Lear's Fool

FOOL Come not in here, nuncle; here's a spirit. Help me,
help me! 35

KENT Give me thy hand. Who's there?

FOOL A spirit. He says his name's Poor Tom.

KENT

What art thou that dost grumble there in the straw?
Come forth.

[Enter Edgar as a Bedlam beggar]

EDGAR Away, the foul fiend follows me. Through the 40
sharp hawthorn blows the cold wind. Go to thy cold
bed and warm thee.

LEAR

Hast thou given all to thy two daughters,
And art thou come to this?

EDGAR Who gives anything to Poor Tom, whom the foul 45
fiend hath led through fire and through ford and
whirlpool, o'er bog and quagmire; that has laid knives
under his pillow and halters in his pew, set ratsbane
by his potage, made him proud of heart to ride on a
bay trotting-horse over four-inched bridges, to course 50
his own shadow for a traitor. Bless thy five wits, Tom's
a-cold! Bless thee from whirlwinds, star-blasting, and
taking. Do Poor Tom some charity, whom the foul fiend
vexes. There could I have him, now, and there, and
there again. 55

LEAR

What, has his daughters brought him to this pass?
(*To Edgar*) Couldst thou save nothing? Didst thou give
them all?

FOOL Nay, he reserved a blanket, else we had been all

shamed.

LEAR (to Edgar)

Now all the plagues that in the pendulous air 60
Hang fated o'er men's faults fall on thy daughters!

KENT He hath no daughters, sir.

LEAR

Death, traitor! Nothing could have subdued nature
To such a lowness but his unkind daughters.
(To Edgar) Is it the fashion that discarded fathers 65
Should have thus little mercy on their flesh?
Judicious punishment: 'twas this flesh begot
Those pelican daughters.

EDGAR Pillicock sat on pillicock's hill; a lo, lo, lo.

FOOL This cold night will turn us all to fools and madmen. 70

EDGAR Take heed o'th' foul fiend; obey thy parents; keep
thy word justly; swear not; commit not with man's
sworn spouse: set not thy sweet heart on proud array.
Tom's a-cold.

LEAR What hast thou been? 75

EDGAR A servingman, proud in heart and mind, that
curled my hair, wore gloves in my cap, served the lust
of my mistress' heart, and did the act of darkness with
her; swore as many oaths as I spake words, and broke
them in the sweet face of heaven; one that slept in the 80
contriving of lust, and waked to do it. Wine loved I
deeply, dice dearly, and in woman out-paramoured the
Turk. False of heart, light of ear, bloody of hand; hog
in sloth, fox in stealth, wolf in greediness, dog in
madness, lion in prey. Let not the creaking of shoes 85
nor the rustlings of silks betray thy poor heart to
women. Keep thy foot out of brothel, thy hand out of
placket, thy pen from lender's book, and defy the foul
fiend. Still through the hawthorn blows the cold wind.
Heigh no nonny. Dolphin, my boy, my boy! Cease, let 90
him trot by.

LEAR Why, thou wert better in thy grave than to answer
with thy uncovered body this extremity of the skies. Is
man no more but this? Consider him well. Thou owest
the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, 95
the cat no perfume. Here's three on 's are sophisticated;

thou art the thing itself. Unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! Come on, be true.

FOOL Prithee, nuncle, be content. This is a naughty night 100
to swim in. Now a little fire in a wild field were like
an old lecher's heart±±a small spark, all the rest on 's
body cold. Look, here comes a walking fire.

Enter the Duke of Gloucester with a [torch]

EDGAR This is the foul fiend Flibbertigibbet. He begins at curfew and walks till the first cock. He gives the web 105
and the pin, squinies the eye, and makes the harelip;
mildews the white wheat, and hurts the poor creature
of earth.

[Sings]

Swithin footed thrice the wold,
A met the night mare and her nine foal; 110
Bid her alight
And her troth plight,
And aroint thee, witch, aroint thee!

KENT *(to Lear)*
How fares your grace?

LEAR What's he?

KENT *(to Gloucester)* Who's there? What is't you seek? 115

GLOUCESTER What are you there? Your names?

EDGAR Poor Tom, that eats the swimming frog, the toad,
the tadpole, the wall-newt and the water; that in the
fury of his heart, when the foul fiend rages, eats
cowdung for salads, swallows the old rat and the ditch- 120
dog, drinks the green mantle of the standing pool; who
is whipped from tithing to tithing, and stock-punished,
and imprisoned; who hath had three suits to his back,
six shirts to his body,

Horse to ride, and weapon to wear. 125

But mice and rats and such small deer

Hath been Tom's food for seven long year±±

Beware my follower. Peace, Smolking; peace, thou
fiend!

GLOUCESTER *(to Lear)*

What, hath your grace no better company? 130

EDGAR

The Prince of Darkness is a gentleman;
Modo he's called, and Mahu±±

GLOUCESTER *(to Lear)*

Our flesh and blood is grown so vile, my lord,
That it doth hate what gets it.

EDGAR

Poor Tom's a-cold.

GLOUCESTER *(to Lear)*

Go in with me. My duty cannot suffer 135
To obey in all your daughters' hard commands.
Though their injunction be to bar my doors
And let this tyrannous night take hold upon you,
Yet have I ventured to come seek you out
And bring you where both food and fire is ready. 140

LEAR

First let me talk with this philosopher.
(To Edgar) What is the cause of thunder?

KENT

My good lord,
Take his offer; go into the house.

LEAR

I'll talk a word with this most learneÁd Theban.
(To Edgar) What is your study? 145

EDGAR

How to prevent the fiend, and to kill vermin.

LEAR

Let me ask you one word in private.
They converse apart

KENT *(to Gloucester)*

Importune him to go, my lord.
His wits begin to unsettle.

GLOUCESTER

Canst thou blame him?

His daughters seek his death. O, that good Kent, 150
He said it would be thus, poor banished man!
Thou sayst the King grows mad; I'll tell thee, friend,
I am almost mad myself. I had a son,
Now outlawed from my blood; a sought my life
But lately, very late. I loved him, friend; 155
No father his son dearer. True to tell thee,
The grief hath crazed my wits. What a night's this!
(To Lear) I do beseech your grace±±

LEAR

O, cry you mercy.

(*To Edgar*) Noble philosopher, your company.

EDGAR

Tom's a-cold.

GLOUCESTER

In, fellow, there in t'hovel; keep thee warm.

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LEAR

Come, let's in all.

KENT

This way, my lord.

LEAR

With him!

I will keep still with my philosopher.

KENT (*to Gloucester*)

Good my lord, soothe him; let him take the fellow.

GLOUCESTER Take him you on.

KENT [*to Edgar*]

Sirrah, come on. Go along with us.

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LEAR (*to Edgar*)

Come, good Athenian.

GLOUCESTER

No words, no words. Hush.

EDGAR

Child Roland to the dark tower come,

His word was still `Fie, fo, and fum;

I smell the blood of a British man.'

Exeunt