

The Tragedy of King Lear

3.6

Enter the Earl of Kent disguised, and the Duke of Gloucester

GLOUCESTER Here is better than the open air; take it thankfully. I will piece out the comfort with what addition I can. I will not be long from you.

KENT All the power of his wits have given way to his impatience; the gods reward your kindness! 5

Exit Gloucester

Enter King Lear, Edgar as a Bedlam beggar, and Lear's Fool

EDGAR Frateretto calls me, and tells me Nero is an angler in the lake of darkness. Pray, innocent, and beware the foul fiend.

FOOL Prithee, nuncle, tell me whether a madman be a gentleman or a yeoman. 10

LEAR A king, a king!

FOOL No, he's a yeoman that has a gentleman to his son; for he's a mad yeoman that sees his son a gentleman before him.

LEAR
To have a thousand with red burning spits 15
Come hissing in upon 'em!

EDGAR Bless thy five wits.

KENT *(to Lear)*
O, pity! Sir, where is the patience now
That you so oft have boasted to retain?

EDGAR *(aside)*
My tears begin to take his part so much
They mar my counterfeiting.

LEAR The little dogs and all, 20
Tray, Blanch, and Sweetheart±±see, they bark at me.

EDGAR Tom will throw his head at them.±±Avaunt, you curs!
Be thy mouth or black or white,
Tooth that poisons if it bite, 25
Mastiff, greyhound, mongrel grim,

Hound or spaniel, brach or him,
Bobtail tyke or trundle-tail,
Tom will make him weep and wail;
For with throwing thus my head, 30
Dogs leapt the hatch, and all are fled.
Do, de, de, de. Sese! Come, march to wakes and fairs
And market towns. Poor Tom, thy horn is dry.

LEAR Then let them anatomize Regan; see what breeds
about her heart. Is there any cause in nature that 35
makes these hard-hearts? *(To Edgar)* You, sir, I entertain
for one of my hundred, only I do not like the fashion
of your garments. You will say they are Persian; but
let them be changed.

KENT
Now, good my lord, lie here and rest a while. 40

LEAR Make no noise, make no noise. Draw the curtains.
So, so. We'll go to supper i'th' morning.
[He sleeps]

FOOL And I'll go to bed at noon.
Enter the Duke of Gloucester

GLOUCESTER *(to Kent)*
Come hither, friend. Where is the King my master?

KENT
Here, sir, but trouble him not; his wits are gone. 45

GLOUCESTER
Good friend, I prithee take him in thy arms.
I have o'erheard a plot of death upon him.
There is a litter ready. Lay him in't
And drive toward Dover, friend, where thou shalt meet
Both welcome and protection. Take up thy master. 50
If thou shouldst dally half an hour, his life,
With thine and all that offer to defend him,
Stand in assure loss. Take up, take up,
And follow me, that will to some provision
Give thee quick conduct. Come, come away. 55
Exeunt, [Kent carrying Lear in his arms]