

QUEEN LEAR, a Comedy

By Daniel Curzon

CHARACTERS:

QUEEN LEAR, Queen of Britain, over forty

GONORRHEA, Queen Lear's eldest daughter

REAGAN, Lear's middle daughter

DUKE of ALBANY, husband of Gonorrhea

DUKE of CORNWALL, husband of Reagan

EARL of KENT

EARL of WORCHESTERSHIRE

EDGAR, son of Worchestershire, later Poor Tommy

EDMUND, a bastard

OSWALD, Gonorrhea's servant

FOOL, an elfish youngster

ASSORTED OTHERS, as needed

Plus CORDELIA, Queen Lear's youngest daughter

I.1 *Enter Kent, Earl of Worchestershire, and Edmund*

KENT: Is not this your son, my lord?

EARL of W: He is my bastard.

EDMUND: I am his bastard.

KENT: I cannot wish the fault undone, the issue of it being so handsome.

EARL of W: That sounds very homoerotic. Are you one of those?

KENT: Are you a homophobe?

EARL of W: A what?!

KENT: It's 500 A.D. What else can I expect!?

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EARL of W: Are you coming on to my son?

KENT: I can notice that your son is handsome without coming on to him. Jesus!

EDMUND: My services to your lordship.

KENT: Thanks, but I'm not gay.

EDMUND: I'm not gay either. Just flexible.

EARL of W: I didn't hear that! . . . The Queen is coming.

Sound of a coronet. Enter Lear, Cornwall, Albany, Gonorrhea, Reagan, Cordelia.

LEAR: Attend the lords of France and Burgundy over there, Worchestershire. (*says all the syllables*).

EARL of W: It's pronounced Woo, sire.

LEAR: Woo? Oh, whatever!

EARL of W: I shall attend them over there, my liege.

Exeunt Earl of W. and Edmund.

LEAR: Meanwhile, give me the map there. Know that we have divided in three our queendom and 'tis our fast intent to shake all cares and business from our age, conferring them on younger strengths, while we unburdened crawl toward death.

REAGAN: Don't say that, Mummy!

GONORRHEA: No, don't! We love you so, Mummy!

LEAR: Tell me, my daughters, since we will divest us both of rule, interest of territory, cares of state, and common sense, which of you shall say doth love us most?

CORDELIA: (*correcting*) More. Between the two of them. More.

LEAR: Cordelia, you are always so precise.

CORDELIA: I try.

LEAR: So that we our largest bounty (among you *three*, please note) may extend, pray tell. Hint, hint. Gonorrhea, our eldest born, with such a lovely name, speak first.

GONORRHEA: Ma'am, I love you more than words can wield the matter, deeper than eyesight, bigger than a breadbox, beyond infinity, no less than life, as much as child e'er loved or mother found, so much I love thee!

LEAR: Well, that's a start.

CORDELIA: What bullshit.

GONORRHEA: Shut your mouth, she-bitch.

LEAR: And what says our second daughter, our dearest Reagan?

REAGAN: In my heart, I find that my sister, dearest Gonorrhea, names my very deed of love. Only she comes too short. My love for our mother is so profound that I don't care what you leave me in your will. In fact, I promise to die before you do and leave you everything I own!

LEAR: Well said!

CORDELIA: I like my mother some days. Other times, she's a monster. What more can I say?

LEAR: Reagan, to thee and thine remain this ample third of our fair kingdom!

REAGAN: Thanks, Mummy.

LEAR: Cordelia, my favorite, what can you say to draw a third more opulent than your sisters?

CORDELIA: Nothing.

LEAR: Nothing?

CORDELIA: Nothing.

LEAR: Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again.

CORDELIA: I love your majesty according to my bond. But you're being silly and foolish to make us praise you like we're Donald Trump's cabinet.

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LEAR: Like who?

CORDELIA: Somebody in the future, who's worse than you.

LEAR: 'Silly' and 'foolish' are not the words of a grateful offspring,

CORDELIA: Making us bray in court how much we love you is not the wisdom of a monarch.

LEAR: So young and so untender.

CORDELIA: So young and true.

LEAR: Let it be so! Thy truth shall be thy dower! Here I disclaim all my parental care and as a
stranger to my heart hold thee from this forever!

KENT: My queen –

LEAR: Peace, Kent! Come not between the dragon and her wrath!

KENT: But Your Majesty –

LEAR: Majesty is right! Call Burgundy, Cornwall, and Albany. With my two remaining loving
daughters' dowers digest the third. Let pride, which she thinks plainness, marry Cordelia!

CORDELIA: I don't need to marry. I can be a scribe or a milkmaid.

LEAR: Or a prostitute!

CORDELIA: Like you, Mummy? You sold yourself to the highest bidder.

LEAR: I did what any smart woman does.

CORDELIA: Well, I won't! I will sleep alone and need no royal battering ram to make me
happy.

LEAR: Hence and be gone, my daughter no more!

KENT: Royal Majesty, whom I have honored as my Queen –

LEAR: Yes, blindly, blindly, blindly, like all my subjects,

KENT: Not this time!

LEAR: (*striking him*) O vassal! Stop thy mealy mouth.

KENT: No, I must tell thee when thou dost evil.

LEAR: To come betwixt our sentence and our power, take thy reward. Five days we do allot thee for provision to shield thee from disasters of the world and on the sixth turn thy hated back upon our queendom. If on the tenth day following thy banished trunk be found in our dominion, that moment is thy death!

KENT: Are you sure this is not yet another rash and impetuous act?

LEAR: If you're so wise, why won't you born a King? Huh?!

KENT: I was not born a King perhaps because I did not have ancestors who were willing to kiss ass and kill rivals to achieve such so-called greatness! *(to Cordelia)* The gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid. *(to Gonorrhea and Reagan)* And your large, well-rehearsed speeches may you future deeds approve, that good effects may spring from words of loove. [*sic*] Excuse my rhyme. It's circa 500 A.D.

LEAR: Your rhyme's a crime! At any time. But not mine!

KENT: Thus Kent – that is I – bids you all adieu.

LEAR: Speak Old English! Not Old French!

KENT: He'll shape his course in a country new. I'm off to Florida. Fuck you!

(The others gasp as one.)

Flourish, Enter Earl of Worchestershire with France and Burgundy.

EARL of W: 'Tis I, the Earl –

LEAR: -- of Worchestershire. *(mangling the pronunciation)*

EARL of W: Precisely, Your Majesty.

LEAR: I know that! *(to France)* Will you with those infirmities she has take my wretch of a daughter for your wife?

FRANCE: I thought she was to pick her husband from three boxes, of lead, silver, and gold.

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LEAR: We don't have time for such judicious choices as that. Will you accept Cordelia,
the scorpion, or nay?

FRANCE: I must say nay. No dowry, you say?

CORDELIA: Please make known, Mother, that it is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness, no
unchaste action or dishonoured step that hath deprived me of your grace and
favour.

LEAR: Better thou hadst not been born than not to have pleased me better.

CORDELIA: A bit harsh, my Queen and mother. All I did was refuse to puke forth my guts in
praise of you.

LEAR: Why else have children, unless, of course to till the soil or tend to our arthritis?!

CORDELIA: I do not need a mother who thinks such plans. Nor husband neither.

FRANCE: Fairest Cordelia, thee and thy virtues here I seize upon. I take up what has been cast
away. More have I to say!

CORDELIA: No more, I pray! Too many words and words and words today.

FRANCE: But I can fashion them into blank verse, if I may.

CORDELIA: (*sweetly*) No more words. Especially no rhymes! Blank means no rhyme.

FRANCE: (*whispering*) My dearest, if I take thee to wed, may I at least, from time to time,
expect a little head?

CORDELIA: A little head? My head is little. . . . We'll see.

FRANCE: Then I am thine! Come, my fair Cordelia.

Exeunt France and Cordelia

GONORRHEA: (*to Reagan*) Sister, I think our mother will want to house with you.

REAGAN: And soon with you, sister dear.

GONORRHEA: You see how full of changes her old age is. She has always loved our little sister most and yet with what poor judgment hath now cast her off appears too grossly.

REAGAN: 'Tis the infirmity of her age. Yet she hath ever but slenderly known herself. We need a Place for Mom.

GONORRHEA: There is a place I know that she will hate.

REAGAN: She can't expect her to look after her just because she left us a fortune.

GONORRHEA: Indeed. My castle needs a new flying buttress. And the drafts are horrendous!

REAGAN: Mine too!

GONORRHEA: We must do something. We must look after ourselves. It's circa 500 A.D.!

Exeunt

I.2 Enter Edmund

EDMUND: Always be wary when a bastard enters alone. He's probably not happy. Wherefore should I stand in the plague of custom and permit others to deprive me for that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines lag of a brother. Why bastard? Wherefore base/? When my dimensions are as impressive as a god's. (*Touches his crotch*) And my shape as true as honest madam's issue. Why brand they us with 'bastardy' Says who?! Just because I came not from a dull, stale, tired, legitimate bed?! Well then, legitimate Edgar, precious Edgar, I must have your land. If this letter speed and my evil invention thrive, I grow, I prosper! If only my stupid father would come by.

Enter Earl of Worchestershire

EARL of W: Edmund, how now? What news?

EDMUND: So please your lordship none. (*Ostentatiously hides the letter.*)

EARL of W: Why so earnestly seek you to put up that letter there?

EDMUND: I know no news, my lord.

EARL of W: Know no news? What paper were you reading?

EDMUND: What letter? I know no letter.

EARL of W: No, no, you do! Or perhaps I am wrong?

EDMUND: I beseech you, sir, pardon me. It is merely a letter from my brother that I have not all o'er read, and for so much as I have perused, I find it not fit for your o'erlooking. No, no!

EARL of W: Yes, yes. Give me that letter, boy.

EDMUND: No, not so, sire. I think you will hate it.

EARL of W: As I am Earl of Worcestershire, let me see it. Let me see it!

EDMUND: I'm sure my brother wrote it simply to test my virtue. (*Waves the letter.*)

EARL of W: (*grabbing and reading the letter*) "Our father is a tyrant and we should off him."
What does this mean?

EDMUND: I know not, dearest father.

EARL of W: (*reading more*) "If our father would sleep until we waked him, you, Edmund, should enjoy his revenue forever." I smell a conspiracy here! My son Edgar wrote this? When came you to this? Who brought it?

EDMUND: There's the cunning of it, my lord. I found it thrown in at the casement of my closet.

EARL of W: You are in the closet?

EDMUND: My reading and writing room.

EARL of W: Oh. You know the character here to be your brother's?

EDMUND: It is his hand, my lord, but I hope his heart is not in the contents.

EARL of W: As I am an Earl, the writing is his! What more proof do I need?! Hath he never sounded you before on such?

EDMUND: Never, my lord. But I have heard him oft maintain it to be fit that, sons at perfect age and foolish fathers declined, the father should become the ward to the son, and the son thus manage the family revenue, no matter what the father wants.

EARL of W: O villain, villain! His very opinion in this letter!

EDMUND: You think so?

EARL of W: Unnatural, detested, brutish villain! Go, Edmund, seek him. I will apprehend him.

Where be he?

EDMUND: He be not far. Only be most careful not to injure thyself with a false charge.

EARL of W: But it's all written there!

EDMUND: If your honour judge it meet, I will place you where you shall hear us confer of this and by the proof auricular shall you wisely have your satisfaction of his dastardly intent. In the future, they will call it the Internet.

EARL of W: He cannot be such a monster, surely.

EDMUND: Of course not. Don't call me Shirley.

EARL of W: I'll call you anything I want to!

EDMUND: Just not Shirley. Honored sire.

EARL of W: How about Gwyneth? Can I call you Gwyneth? Ha, ha!

EDMUND: As it pleases you. I will seek Edgar presently and convey the business as I shall find means, and acquaint you withal.

EARL of W: These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us. Love cools, joints creak, friendships fall off, brothers divide, girls take boys' names. Discord, bond cracked 'twixt son and father I don't mean to complain. But machinations, hollowness, treachery, monkeypox, Woe, O woe! And the true-hearted Kent banished. His offence, honesty, 'tis strange. WOE!

EDMUND: *(to the audience)* This is the excellent foppery of the world, that when we are sick in fortune – often the surfeit of our own behaviour – we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, the stars, as if we are villains of necessity, knaves, thieves, assholes, by a divine thrusting-on, or our ancestors who were mistreated and we can never escape from that. Take some responsibility for yourself. And here ends the author’s message. *(Enter Edgar.)* Pat, he comes! My cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom of Bedlam. *(Big sigh.)* O these eclipses do portend these divisions. *(Sings)* Doe, Ray, Me!

EDGAR: How now, my brother Edmund! What serious contemplation are you in?

EDMUND: I am thinking, brother, of a prediction I read the other day.

EDGAR: Don’t read bad stuff and it won’t happen.

EDMUND: Of what should follow these eclipses.

EDGAR: I fear pregnant snakes under my bed, cows with seven udders!

EDMUND: Yes, and unnaturalness between the child and the parent.

EDGAR: You don’t mean the “I” word?!

EDMUND: Nay. Not that. Dissolution of ancient amities, divisions in state, maledictions against king and nobles, banishment of friends, dissipations of cohorts, nuptial breaches –

EDGAR: So many, brother! You are, unlike I, glib of tongue.

EDMUND: When saw you our father last?

EDGAR: The night gone by, as you would say. Last night.

EDMUND: Spake you with him?

EDGAR: I spaked for two hours. He, like you, is verbose of tongue. He read my astronomical chart. I have a great future!

EDMUND: Parted you on good terms? Found you no displeasure in him toward you?

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EDGAR: None at all. Why would he?

EDMUND: Art thou sure?

EDGAR: Some villain hath done me wrong!

EDMUND: That is my fear. Villains abound in circa 500 A.D. and forward too. Beware our
father's rage. Retire with me to my lodging.

EDGAR: But I'm too young to retire.

EDMUND (*aside to audience*) My brother's none too bright. (*to Edgar*) I mean, I will bring you
to hear my lord speak of you. If you go abroad, go armed.

EDGAR: I'm staying home. I'm not planning to go abroad. Armed, you say?

EDMUND: Yay, open carry! I am no honest man, if there be any good meaning toward you.
Pray you, away!

EDGAR: Shall I hear from you anon?

EDMUND: You shall, as I am your non-resentful, loving brother.

Exit Edgar

A credulous father and a brother noble, and a bit stupid both, woe to their offspring,
But not to me! I take after my mother. My practices ride easy. Before long, if not by
birth, let me have lands by wit! I shall win by being a total shit!

I.3 Enter Gonorrhoea and Oswald, her servant

GONORRHEA: Did my mother strike my gentleman for chiding of the Queen's Fool?

OSWALD: Ay, madam.

GONORRHEA: By day and night she wrongs me every hour. She commits one gross crime or
other that sets us all at odds. I'll not endure it! When she returns from hunting
baby foxes, I will not speak with her. Say I am sick with a plague of some

dreadful kind. And you shall do well if you come slack of your former services to the Queen. The fault of it I'll answer.

OSWALD: She's coming, madam. I hear her. (*Loud offstage noise.*)

GONORRHEA: Put on what negligence you please. If she distastes it, let her let her stay with my sister, whose mind and mine I know in that are one not to be overruled by an idle old woman, that would manage those authorities that she hath given away! Now, by my life, old, demented fools are babes again and must be beaten as all the philosophers instruct. Remember, Oswald, what I have said.

OSWALD: Indeed, Madam Gonorrhea.

GONORRHEA: I'll text my sister to hold my very course.

OSWALD: I don't believe we have texts yet, Madam.

GONORRHEA: Why doesn't someone invent a text?! So that I can keep my silly old mother in check?!

I.4 Enter Kent in disguise, a bad one

KENT: Now banished Kent, in disguise, if thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemned, so may it come to pass thy royal mistress, whom thou lovest, despite my banishment, shall find thee full of labours. Such do I signal to the world my virtue! (*Crosses himself.*)
Horns within. Enter Lear with an Attendant.

LEAR: Let me not stay a jot for dinner! Go, get it ready. I want that fox for an appetizer!

Attendant exits

LEAR: What art thou? You look like Kent in disguise.

KENT: A mere peasant, ma'am. (*Keeps trying to improve his disguise throughout the scene.*)

LEAR: What wouldst thou have with us?

KENT: I do profess to be no less than I seem to serve she truly that will put me in trust.

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LEAR: Yeah, yeah, so you say! Thou dost mightily resemble my late friend and counselor Kent.

KENT: As I am an honest peasant, I deny being Kent! I just request service, with a reasonable salary and no beatings.

LEAR: Who wouldst thou serve?

KENT: You.

LEAR: Dost thou know me, fellow?

KENT: No, ma'am, but you have that in your countenance which I would call royal.

LEAR: What's that?

KENT: (*after thinking*) A strong, strong woman who is very strong..

LEAR: Go on.

KENT: Your strength is so boundless I cannot name it all. (*aside*) I know how to butter.

LEAR: I like this man. What services canst thou do?

KENT: I can flatter with the best of them. And do it night and day.

LEAR: How old art thou?

KENT: Twenty-eight.

LEAR: You lie, sir! But then don't we all, when it comes to age and bloodlines. Follow me, fellow, you can serve me. Dinner. Dinner! Where's my knave, my Fool? Somebody get me my Fool! How can we have dinner without a Fool?!

Enter Attendant

LEAR: Where's that mongrel daughter of mine?

ATTENDANT: My lady, your daughter is not well.

LEAR: Gonorrhoea is not well? What's wrong with her?

ATTENDANT: To my judgment, your highness is not being entertained with the ceremonious affection as you were wont.

LEAR: Ha! Sayest thou so?

ATTENDANT: I beseech your pardon, my lady, if I be mistaken, for my duty cannot be silent when I think your highness wronged.

LEAR: Aye, I have perceived a most faint neglect of late. Not a single kiss upon my ass since Tuesday last! I will look further into it. And where's my Fool? I have not seen him this two days.

ATTENDANT: Since my young lady's going into France, the Fool hath much pined away.

LEAR: No more of that! I have noted it well. Go you and tell my eldest daughter I would speak with her, plague or no plague.

ATTENDANT: Yes, my lady.

Exit Attendant

Enter Oswald

LEAR: O, you, sir, you! Come you hither. Who am I, sir?

OSWALD: My lady's ancient mother.

LEAR: My lady's ancient mother! You whoreson dog! You slave! You cur! Is a cur a dog? You are a double dog! And a skunk besides.

OSWALD: I am none of these, my lady, I beseech your pardon. Especially I am no skunk!

LEAR: Do you bandy words with me, you rascal? (*She strikes Oswald.*)

OSWALD: I'll not be stricken, my lady.

KENT: Nor tripped neither. You base . . . base football player? (*Trips him.*)

OSWALD: What?! Football player? Why that?

KENT: It's in the text. If you can read, slave!

LEAR: I thank thee, the man who resembles Kent but is not. Thou servest me by tripping for me, and I will love thee for it.

KENT: (*to Oswald*) Come, slave, arise, away! I'll teach you class difference. Away! Away! (*Pushes Oswald out.*) Vile nobody!

LEAR: Now, my friend, I thank thee. Even a strong, strong woman, can always use a good kicker. (*Gives him a coin.*)

Enter the Fool

FOOL: Your Fool is here. Am I a boy or a girl? I won't tell.

LEAR: I love that you are non-binary. How now, my pretty knave! How dost thee?

FOOL: I take a feather on a stick. (*Demonstrates.*)

LEAR: Yes, and?

FOOL: That is how I *dust!* (*Dusts with the invisible feather.*)

LEAR: Most witty! I have my Fool again!

FOOL: I'll be here until noon, if not all week!

LEAR: Not your best wit. But 'twill do!

FOOL: (*under his breath*) Screw you, Your Majesty.

LEAR: Have you heard what my daughters have done to me?

FOOL: Here, take my Fool's cap.

LEAR: Why, my boy? My girl?

FOOL: For giving them all your estate. Only a fool – small f – would do that. Take it!

LEAR: Take heed, sirrah, the whip!

FOOL: You frighten me not. I'll fetch your daughters to beat you. Is it funny yet?

LEAR: A pestilent gall is this to me. But I need to hear it.

FOOL: Sirrah, I'll teach thee a speech.

LEAR: Do.

FOOL: Mark it, nuncle. Leave thy drink and thy stud and fall in the mud!

LEAR: This is nothing, Fool.

FOOL: That's what you gave me for it? Can you make no use of nothing, nuncle head?

(Holds out hand for money.)

LEAR: Why no, sir, Nothing can be made out of nothing.

FOOL: That sounds familiar. No?

LEAR: A bitter Fool!

FOOL: Dost thou know the difference, my girl, between a bitter Fool and a sweet one?"

LEAR: No, smartass, teach me.

FOOL: The Queen who gave away her throne

Can always gnaw upon a bone!

The Queen who is her own Fool

Shall never lack a mouth to drool.

LEAR: Dost call me a real fool, Fool?

FOOL: All thy other titles that you were born with you have given away! Hey, nonny, nonny!

LEAR: I'll hey nonny, nonny you!

KENT: This is not altogether fool, my lady.

LEAR: Oh, shut up!

KENT: Yes, Majesty.

FOOL: Nuncle, I'm still waiting for my crown. *(Hand out.)* Like you!

LEAR: Well, you can wait till you die, which from the looks of you, is not too far off!

FOOL: I shall sing a rhyme about it.

LEAR: When were you wont to be so full of rhymes, sirrah?

FOOL: Ever since thou madest thy daughters thy mothers, as when thou gavest them the rod and
puttest down thine own breeches to spank. La, la, la.

LEAR: Listen, boyish girl, or girlish boy, I'll have you whipped on your non-binary ass!

FOOL: I marvel what kin thou and thy daughters are. They will have me whipped for speaking true. You'll have me whipped for lying. And sometimes I whip myself, just for the hell of it. What's a poor Fool to do? Here comes your mother, Queen! Enter Gonorrhea

LEAR: How now, Gonorrhea! Thou art of late too much in the frown.

FOOL: Thou wast a pretty thing when thou hadst no need to care for her frowning. Yet, forsooth, I will hold my tongue. (*Hold his tongue with his fingers.*)

GONORRHEA: Not only, sir, this your all-licensed fool but others of your insolent retinue do hourly carp and quarrel –

FOOL: And fart! (*Places fingers on his tongue again.*) Oops, milady will take away my license!

GONORRHEA: I'll clobber thee, you'd better watch!

LEAR: Touch not my Fool!

FOOL: (*grabbing his crotch*) Grab not her Fool!

GONORRHEA: You filthy wanton!

FOOL: Double negative! No, no!

LEAR: You said you were my loving daughter.

GONORRHEA: I said so when thou wert worth the loving.

FOOL: Whoop, jug, I love thee!

LEAR: Shush. Who is it that can tell me who I am? Am I not Queen Lear?!

FOOL: Queen Lear's shadow. Oops! (*Places fingers on his tongue.*)

GONORRHEA: You make my house more like a tavern or a brothel, so low do you go.

FOOL: What's a brothel? Who can tell me what's a brothel?!

GONORRHEA: When I get finished with you, you'll be working in a brothel!

FOOL: A Fool in a brothel! I won't be the first. I love it! I love it! I'll be here till noon!

GONORRHEA: We'll see what you love when you're sucking six dicks at once!

FOOL: Who's counting? Hey, nonny nonny!

LEAR: Saddle my horses. Call my train together!

FOOL: Choo choo!

LEAR: (*to Gonorrhoea*) Degenerate, unnatural daughter! *American!* Yet have I left a true daughter, Reagan.

GONORRHEA: You strike my people and your disordered rabble make servants of their betters.

Enter Albany, husband of Gonorrhoea

LEAR: O, sir, are you come at last! Prepare my horsies – horses. I will leave your monster wife.

ALBANY: Pray, ma'am, be patient.

LEAR: I am being patient! O Lear, Lear, Lear! Beat at this gate that let thy folly in. (*Strikes her own head.*)

FOOL: That's not good for your head. It's too light!

LEAR: Go, go, my people.

Exeunt Kent and Attendant

GONORRHEA: Yet more people!?

LEAR: Hush!

ALBANY: Your Majesty, I am as guiltless as I am ignorant of what hath moved you.

LEAR: It may be so, my lord. (*Kneels.*) Hear, Nature, hear! Dear goddess, hear! Suspend thy purpose if thou didst intend to make this creature fruitful. Into her womb convey sterility. Dry up in her the organs of increase. And from her body never spring a babe to honour her. If she must teem, create her child of spleen that it may live and be a thwart, disnatured torment to her. Amen!

FOOL: Hey, the Fool's here! Who's up for a good time?

LEAR: Let it stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth with torrents of tears that fret channels in her cheeks, turn all her mother's pains to laughter and contempt that she may feel how sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a child named Gonorrhea!

FOOL: A bit harsh, nuncle.

LEAR: Away! Away!

Exit Lear
ALBANY: Good gods, whence comes this?!

GONORRHEA: Never afflict yourself to know more of it. Let her disposition have that scope as dotage give it. I told you we needed a Place for Mom!

Enter Lear

LEAR: (to Gonorrhea) I am ashamed that thou hast the power to shake my womanhood thus, that these hot tears which break from me perforce should make thee worth them. Blasts and fogs upon thee. These old eyes of mine will I pluck out if I have to see you again. But I have another daughter – what's her name . . .

GONORRHEA: Reagan.

LEAR: Reagan! When she shall hear of this of thee, with her nails she'll flay thy wolfish visage!

Exit Lear

GONORRHEA: Did you hear that?

ALBANY: How could I not?

GONORRHEA: What, Oswald, ho! (*to Fool*) You, thing, after your mistress!

FOOL: Nuncle Lear, nuncle Lear. Tarry! Take the Fool with thee. . . But first, a rhyme!

I feel a whipping coming on!

I do not want one – my back upon.

Should I stay here, with Gonorrhea?

Or should I flee to North Korea?

O hell, either way is hell to me!

I wish it wasn't circa 500 A.D.!

Exit Fool

GONORRHEA: Good riddance to the little rat. Oswald, I say! Where are you?

ALBANY: I like not these turmoils.

GONORRHEA: Safer than to trust too far. I know my mother's heart. I have writ my sister –

ALBANY: Reagan?

GONORRHEA: Reagan, yes. Not Cordelia. Keep up! I told her not to comfort our mother. But
to back me in all this. (Enter Oswald) Oswald at last!

OSWALD: Ay, madam.

GONORRHEA: Take this missive and away to horse. Inform my sister Reagan. Inform her full
and add such reasons of your own why she must not soothe our mother, the
former Queen of Britain.

OSWALD: My best I shall do, gracious lady.

GONORRHEA: Oh, do better than that!

Exeunt

I.5 Enter Lear, Kent, the Fool, and Attendants.

LEAR: (*to Kent*) Take you this letter to the Earl of Worchestershire. He will assist me.

KENT: I will not sleep, my lady, until I have delivered your letter.

FOOL: If a man's brains were in his heels, were he not in danger of kibes?

LEAR: What the fuck does that mean?

FOOL: The hell if I know!

LEAR: Ha, ha, ha!

FOOL: Shalt thou see thy other daughter, who you think will use you kindly. To me, she's
as like the other as a sister is. So I can tell what I can tell.

LEAR: What canst tell?

FOOL: Whoop, jug, I love thee!

LEAR: Tell me!

FOOL: Canst thou tell me why one's nose sits in the middle of one's face?

LEAR: No.

FOOL: Why, to keep one's eyes on either side of one's face, so that a person cannot smell out
or she may smell into. Or –

LEAR: Enough word play! I did her wrong.

FOOL: Canst tell me how an oyster makes his shell?

LEAR: No.

FOOL: Nor I neither. But I can tell why a snail has a house on its back.

LEAR: Why?

FOOL: Why, to put her head in, not to give it away to her daughters.

LEAR: I will forget my royal nature. So kind a mother – Be my horsies – horses ready?

FOOL: Thy asses are gone about them.

LEAR: How many asses does it take to round up horsies?

FOOL: Thou wouldst make a good fool, madam.

LEAR: To take back my gifts to them! Monster ingratitude!

FOOL: If you were my fool, nuncle, I'd have thee beaten for being old before thy time.

LEAR: How's that?

FOOL: Thou shouldst not have been old till thou hadst been wise.

LEAR: O let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven! Keep me in temper!

FOOL: Too late! Too late!

LEAR: Are my horsies – horses – ready?

ATTENDANT: Ready, my lady.

Exeunt all but the Fool

FOOL: (to audience) I suppose you expect yet more wit? And some you can even understand?

(*Clears his throat*) How do you expect this play to end, I ask?

Will it turn sour, with bloodied eye sockets and such rot?

I'd rather that it didn't. And to make it so is my task.

But I am but a lowly Fool and can only do so much to steer this plot.

Humor will take you just so far. People laugh. But then dismissive are!

Exit the Fool

II.1 Enter Edmund and Servant by opposite doors

EDMUND: Save thee, sirrah.

SERVANT: And you, sir.

EDMUND: *Que sera*, sirrah?

SERVANT: I know not Spanish, sir.

EDMUND: What news of my father, the Earl?

SERVANT: I have been with your father and given him notice that the Duke of Cornwall and his lovely wife Reagan will be here with him tonight. You have heard this?

EDMUND: Not I.

SERVANT: There are rumors of war.

EDMUND: From whom?

SERVANT: Somebody.

EDMUND: No doubt.

SERVANT: Fare you well, sir!

Exit Servant

EDMUND: A war. Good news! I will see how I can profit from this war! The Duke of Cornwall will be here tonight. This weaves itself perforce into my business to unseat my brother – you remember Edgar. Silly Edgar. I now must act! (*Calls*) Brother, a word! Descend! Brother, I say!

Enter Edgar

Have you not spoken against the Duke of Cornwall. Or against Albany?

EDGAR: Not a word. I am sure on it.

EDMUND: I hear our father coming. Pardon me, in cunning I must draw my sword upon you.

Draw!

EDGAR: What do you want me to draw with? I have no pencil!

EDMUND: Draw your sword! Seem to defend yourself! (*Aloud*) Yield! Come before my father!

Torches, torches! (*to Edgar*) Flee, brother, flee!

Exit Edgar

Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion of my fierce endeavor. I have seen drunkards do more than this in sport. (*Edmund wounds himself in the arm.*)

Stop, stop! Father, father!

Enter Earl of W. and servants with torches

EARL of W: Now, Edmund, where's the villain who attacked you?

EDMUND: Here stood he in the dark, his sword out, mumbling of wicked charms.

EARL of W: Not charms! Oh, my God! But where is he now?

EDMUND: Look, sir, I bleed. Edgar did it.

EARL of W: What more proof do we need of his villainy?!

EDMUND: Flee this way, sir! Avoid him!

EARL of W: Pursue him, Edmund. Go after him!

EDMUND: He tried to persuade me to murder your lordship, but I did tell him the revenging gods did all their thunder bend against parricides. Seeing how I stood opposed to his unnatural purpose, with his sword he charged home my body, lashed mine arm. After which he suddenly fled. His name is Edgar!(spelling it) E-D-G --

EARL of W: Let him flee far. Not in this land shall he remain uncaught. And once found, Dispatched, as I am an Earl!

EDMUND: Yes, dispatch him before he can defend himself with lies and more lies.

EARL of W: The noble Duke of Cornhole, my master comes tonight –

EDMUND: I think you mean Cornwall.

EARL of W: What did I say?

EDMUND: Cornhole. Don't call him that.

EARL of W: He is my patron what'er his name. By his authority I will proclaim Edgar a murderous coward who shall be brought to the stake.

EDMUND: When I dissuaded him from his foul intent, and found him adamant, I threatened to discover him like the good son I am. He replied, 'Thou unpossessing bastard, dost thou think, if I would stand against thee, anyone would believe you. No, I should deny it all and I would be believed.'

EARL of W: O strange and hardened villain! Would he deny his very letter?! I curse the day I begot him! Even though it he was legitimate and you weren't.

(Trumpets within)

I hear trumpets within! Hark, the Duke's trumpets within!

EDMUND: (*aside*) One day I will have trumpets.

EARL of W: Loyal and natural boy, I hear thee, when I want to. You shall one day have trumpets.

EDMUND: Most kind father. (*Bows*)

Enter Cornwall, Reagan, and Attendants

CORNWALL: How now, my noble friend, I have heard strange news of thy son Edgar.

REAGAN: If it be true, all vengeance comes too short. How dost my lord?

EARL of W: O madam, my old heart is cracked, it's cracked.

REAGAN: Did your Edgar seek your life?

EARL of W: O lady, lady, I shame myself to name it.

REAGAN: Was he not companion to those riotous knights who tended upon my mother?

EDMUND: Yes, madam, he was of that consort.

REAGAN: I have this present evening heard so from my sister. Our mother keeps ignominious company. If they come to sojourn at my house, I won't be there.

CORNWALL: Nor I, assure thee Reagan. Edmund, I hear that you have shown your father kind offices.

EDMUND: It was nothing much, mere offering of my life. After all, I'm just a bastard.

EARL of W: My dear Edmund did receive this hurt you see. (*Points to wound.*)

CORNWALL: Is Edgar pursued?

EARL of W: Aye, my good lord.

CORNWALL: If he be taken, he shall never more be feared of doing harm. As for you, Edmund, whose virtue and obedience doth so much commend themselves, you shall be ours. Natures of such deep trust we shall much need.

EDMUND: I hall serve you, sir, as I do my father. (*Bows.*)

CORNWALL: I think you know not why we came to visit you.

EARL of W: I had hoped you would call first.

CORNWALL: My phone was not working.

EARL of W: I understand. Phones don't work very well in circa 500 A.D.

REAGAN: I told my husband not to rely on new-fangled crap like phones! But he would not hear. Earl, we wish to impose upon your hospitality for some days until we sort out how best to deal with my mother who is the former Queen of Britain, as you may recall.

EDMUND: Milady, have you tried a Place for Mom?

REAGAN: We'll see her put somewhere, you can count on that!

EDMUND: (*Aside to Reagan*) And perhaps even a Place for Dad, in my case?

REAGAN: (*Aside*) We'll talk anon.

EARL of W: I'm not going into a home!

Exeunt

II.2 Enter Kent and Oswald from opposite sides

OSWALD: Good dawning to thee, friend. Art of this house?

KENT: Aye.

OSWALD: Where may we set our horses?

KENT: In the mire.

OSWALD: Prithee, if thou lovest me, tell me.

KENT: I love thee not. Prithee.

OSWALD: Why then, I care not for thee.

KENT: I care not if you care not for me. Prithee!

OSWALD: Why dost thou use me thus? I know thee not.

KENT: Fellow, I know thee.

OSWALD: Oh?

KENT: You serve the lady Gonorrhoea. A base, proud, shallow, beggarly, lily-livered, finical
rogue! And a skunk!

OSWALD: And you look like Kent in disguise! A bad one!

KENT: Draw, you skunky rogue! (*Brandishes a sword*)

OSWALD: Help, ho! Murder! Help!

KENT: Strike, you slave! (*Oswald attempts to escape.*) Stand and fight!

Enter Edmund, Cornwall, Reagan, the Earl of W. and servants.

EDMUND: How now, brown cow, what's what?! Tut! Tut! I am Edmund the Bastard!

KENT: Tut! Tut! Up your butt! Come, come, young master. Draw, you rascal!

EARL of W: Weapons upon the public byways and highways? It's come to this in this day and
age?! Oh, 'this my misfortune to live in circa 500 A.D.!

CORNWALL: Keep peace, upon your lives. He dies that strikes again.

KENT: Thou shalt not tamper with my right to bear arms! Read the Second Amendment of the
Magna Carta, you elite creeps! (*Blesses himself.*)

(*All kneel in deference to the mention of the Magna Carta.*)

ALL: The Magna Carta!

CORNWALL: What is the problem here? Speak.

OSWALD: I am scarce in breath, my lord.

KENT: And that breath is bad! Scoundrel! Ruffian! Poop sniffer!

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OSWALD: Poop sniffer?! I am no poof sniffer! Never have I sniffed poop!

CORNALL: (*to Kent*) You are a strange, yet familiar, fellow. You epithets blow the mind.

KENT: He be of the house of Gonorrhea, and thus an enemy of my lady, Queen Lear.

CORNWALL: Boy, when you take sides, you do so with gusto.

KENT: 'Tis easy when it is the likes of this 'prithee' fellow! Rogue! Dog! Gonorrhea lover!

CORNWALL: Enough!

KENT: Yet he is an unbolted , one-suited, phlegm-coughing pip!

CORNWALL: I know not what these things are! Know you no ordinary vocabulary?

KENT: I do, sir, but anger hath a privilege to insult anew!

CORNWALL: Methinks thou art some relative of Kent, who is banished now from court.

KENT: Nay, sir. Not so. (*Tries to disguise himself more.*)

CORNWALL: I will hear no more base terms. This is Britain! Even if it is circa 500 A.D.

KENT: That such a slave as this should wear a sword! A plague upon your epileptic visage!

OSWALD: Careful now. I cannot help my epilepsy.

KENT: I'll help you cure it – by death!

EARL of W: This is some fellow who having been praised for bluntness doth affect a saucy roughness. He cannot flatter, he! These kind of knaves I know, which in this plainness harbor more craft more corrupter ends than twenty easy flatterers.

OSWALD: Yay, yay, you say!

CORNWALL (*to Oswald*) What was the offence you gave him, other than being of the house of Gonorrhea?

OSWALD: I never gave him any. He thinks he will score points with the Queen, Her Majesty.

KENT: The Queen! The former Queen of Britain?!

ALL: (*kneeling*) The Queen! (*All rise.*)

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CORNWALL: Fetch forth the stocks! You stubborn knave, we'll teach you –

KENT: I am too old to learn. Call not your stocks for me.

CORNWALL: But they are good stocks! You'll make a fortune. (*Laughs*)

KENT: I fear some scam in these stocks.

CORNWALL: All right, you had your chance. (*calling*) Bring in those other stocks, the ones with holes! (*Enter servant with wooden stocks*) There shall he sit till he learns respect and temperance.

REAGAN: Be not too lenient, husband. At least a year in the stocks!

KENT: A year?! I'll stay another year as long as my Queen needs me!

REAGAN: You'll be dead by noon by thirst.

KENT: I will still find spit to lather up your face, madam!

CORNWALL: Are you mad, fellow? Fuck not with my wife! She'll have your eyes.

EARL of W: Let me speak in this. Let me beseech your grace not to do so. His fault is much, and the Queen, his mistress, will check him for it. Do not lower thyself to stock this churl. Any more than you would stock a barn with rotten corn. If I may jest. The Queen would take it ill. She is the former Queen of all Britain, you know..

CORNWALL: You may not jest in my presence, especially with so poor a jest. And as for the Queen, there is only so much more we'll take from her.

REAGAN: My sister may receive much more worse to have her gentleman here, her Oswald, abused and assaulted for following her affairs. Put in his legs! (*Kent is put in the stocks.*) Come, my lord away! For his devotion he shall pay!

Exeunt all but Earl of W. and Kent

EARL of W: I am sorry for thee, friend. 'Tis the Duke's pleasure, egged on by his wife, both whose disposition all the world well knows will not be stopped.

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KENT: A curse upon them both.

EARL of W: But I'll entreat for thee.

KENT: Pray do not, sir. I have watched and traveled hard. Some time I will sleep out, the rest of the time I'll whistle.

EARL of W: Do not. 'Twill be taken ill.

KENT: 'Twill give me a thrill!

Earl of W. shakes his head and exits.

KENT: Somehow I have received a letter even though I be in the stocks! I will peruse this letter, which I am sure is from Cordelia, who hath most fortunately been informed of my fate here. How swift is the post in circa 500 A.D. that I should receive her letter!

(Tries to get the letter in front of his eyes, but he can't. All weary am I with heavy eyes.

So I must sleep before I read. Fortune, good night! I sleep! *(He falls asleep immediately.)*

II.3 Enter Edgar

EDGAR: I heard myself proclaimed, and by the happy hollow of a tree I escaped, for now.

I will preserve myself and take the basest, poorest shape that ever penury brought to man. My face I'll grime with filth, twist my hair in knots and, nearly naked, outface the winds and persecutions of the sky. Like the beggars on the streets, I will shout and prance and will, of course, be invisible to every eye. No one will recognize me one whit when I become Poor Tommy. *(Screams)* I'm Poor Tommy! Edgar, I nothing am!

Exit Edgar

II.4 Kent is still in the stocks asleep.

Enter Lear, the Fool, and a Gentleman.

LEAR: I have heard naught from my daughters. Why do children never write?!

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KENT: *(waking up)* Hail to thee, noble mistress!

LEAR: Ha! It is that man who resembles Kent. How lucky that we stumbled upon him. It

is good that Britain is a small country.

FOOL: Ha, ha! In the stocks! What witty remark can I make about that? He wears cruel garters?

LEAR: What's he that hath so much thy place mistook to set thee here, sir?

KENT: Your son and daughter.

LEAR: No. Not the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall!

KENT: Yes.

LEAR, No, I say.

KENT: I say yea.

FOOL: (*singing*) You say nay! And I say yea! Let's call the whole thing off!

KENT: Your Fool is merry.

FOOL: Call me fool. But don't call me Mary! *Boing!*

LEAR: Fool, shut up, for five seconds. (*The Fool zips his mouth shut in pantomime.*)

By Jupiter, I swear no! They durst not do this. They could not, would not do such violent outrage upon my man. I am the Queen of all Britain!

KENT: My Queen, when I was at their home, I did commend your highness's letters to them. But before I could speak more, from Gonorrhea did Oswald deliver other letters —

LEAR: So many letters! It's hard to keep them straight, even for a Queen!

KENT: Those other letters they read, ignoring yours, and taking to horse commanded me to follow and attend the leisure of their answer to you, and gave me cold looks. I drew my sword, of course, at that other messenger—

LEAR: Did my daughter Reagan read my messages or not?!

KENT: I know not.

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FOOL: Hey, nonny, nonny! He who hath daughters—

LEAR: Shut up, Fool!

FOOL: But you pay me to be annoying.

LEAR: Not that annoying!

FOOL: Just doing my job!

LEAR: (*to Kent*) Where is this daughter, whichever one she be?

KENT: With the Earl, within.

LEAR: Follow me not. Stay here.

KENT: I am in the stocks, sir. I cannot follow.

Exit Lear.

GENTLEMAN: Are you sure you made no more offence than what you spoke of?

KENT: None.

GENTLEMAN: You look like Kent, who was banished by the Queen.

KENT: I am none, sir. Mind your own small business. Why comes the Queen with such a small number?

FOOL: Hadst thou been set in the stocks for that question, thou didst well deserve it.

KENT: Why?

FOOL: You are too rash to learn anything.

KENT: Where learned you this, Fool?

FOOL: Not in the stocks, fool.

Enter Lear and Earl of W.

LEAR: They deny to speak with me!? They say they are sick! They are weary! They have travelled all the night!? May the gods screw them!

EARL of W: My dear lady, you know the fiery quality of the Duke of Cornwall and his Reagan.

Both are unmovable and fixed.

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LEAR: Vengeance, plague, death, confusion on them! I will speak with Cornwall and his Reagan! Or I am not Queen Lear!

EARL of W: Well, my good lady, I have informed them so.

LEAR: Informed them? Dost thou understand me, man?

EARL of W: Aye, my good lady.

LEAR: Good lady, my ass! The Queen would speak with Cornwall, the dear mother would with her daughter --what's her name -- speak.

EARL of W: Reagan, I think. I would have all well betwixt you.

Exit Earl of W.

LEAR: O my heart, my rising heart! But down!

FOOL: Down wantons, down! I am Queen of all Britain! Hey, nonny, nonny!

Enter Cornwall, Reagan. Earl of W. and servants

LEAR: At last! Good morrow to you both.

CORNWALL: Hail to your grace.

REAGAN: I am glad to see your highness.

LEAR: That's news to me. If I were a King, you wouldst not make me wait!

REAGAN: Yes, we would. Let's free your man. (*She and Cornwall free Kent from the stocks.*)

LEAR: Beloved Reagan, your elder sister has laid a vulture on my breast. (*Touches her heart.*)

REAGAN: I hear such scuttlebutt, but believe it not. Not Gonorrhoea.

LEAR: What?!

REAGAN: I cannot think my sister wouldst fail her obligation. If, madam, perchance she has restrained the unseemly riots of your followers, this on such ground and to such wholesome end as clears her from all blame.

LEAR: My curses on her.

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REAGAN: O Mother, you are old. You should be ruled and led by some discretion that discerns your state better than yourself.

LEAR: You art not putting me in a Place for Mom!

REAGAN: I pray you that to our sister you make return and say you have wronged her.

LEAR: Ask her forgiveness? Do you mark how this becomes a Queen?! (*Kneels.*) 'Dear daughter, dearest, Gonorrhea, I confess that I am old. On my knees I beg that you will vouchsafe me clothing, bed, and food. Kick me, daughter! Kick!'

REAGAN: These are unsightly tricks, but stir not my heart. Return you to my sister.

LEAR: Never, Reagan. All the stored vengeance of heaven fall on her ungrateful head!
Strike her young bones with leprosy!

CORNWALL: Fie, madam, fie! Such excess!

LEAR: You nimble lightnings dart your blinding flames into her scornful eyes! Infect her beauty! You fen-sucked fogs fall and blister her!

REAGAN: So will you wish on me as well when the rash mood is on.

LEAR: No, Reagan, thou shalt never have my curse. Her eyes are fierce, but thine do comfort and do not burn. Thou better knowest the offices of nature, the bond of childhood, the dues of gratitude, nor hast thou forgot the half of the queendom wherein I thee endowed.

REAGAN: It took you long enough!

LEAR: What trumpet's that?

REAGAN: I hear no trumpet. (*Trumpet sounds.*) Ah, 'tis my sister's trumpet! This approves her letter that she would soon be here. Both letter and trumpet confirm!

LEAR: Another letter! And yet none to me!

Enter Oswald

REAGAN: Did your lady come?

OSWALD: I know not. You'll have to ask her. It was good for me! Oh, you meant is she come here?

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LEAR: This man is he whose easy-borrowed pride dwells in the fickle grace of her he follows.

CORNWALL: Is Gonorrhea here or not?

Enter Gonorrhea

LEAR: O heavens! Gonorrhea is here! Art thou not ashamed to look upon this beard, if I had one?

GONORRHEA: (*to Reagan*) O sister! (*They embrace.*)

LEAR: O Reagan, do you embrace this viper?

REGAN: I do! And yet again I embrace my Gonorrhea! (*They embrace again.*)

GONORRHEA: How do I offend? All is not offence that dotage terms so.

LEAR: O my sides! They will burst! How came my man, who resembles my former servant Kent, to be in the stocks?! It was no accident! He did not fall into the stocks!

CORNWALL: I set him there, madam, but his own disorders deserved no less.

LEAR: Did you!? Did you!? Do you not know that to put my man in the stocks is tantamount to putting me, the divinely appointed Queen of all Britain, in the stocks?!

REAGAN: Oh, mother, being weak, be so. Return and sojourn with my sister here, dismissing half your train. Choo, Choo, as your Fool would say. Then later come to me, if you must.

LEAR: Return to her? No, rather I abjure all roofs and choose to wage against the enmity of the air, to be the comrade of the wolf and the rat-eating owl! Return with Gonorrhea?

Persuade me rather to be slave to this detested skunky-crotch groom! (*Points to Oswald.*)

OSWALD: Hey! I can hear you!

GONORRHEA: At your choice, ma'am.

LEAR: I prithee, daughter, or so you say, do not make me mad. I will trouble thee no more.

Farewell. We'll no more meet, no more see one another.

GONORRHEA: Good! Farewell!

LEAR: But yet thou art my flesh, my blood. Or is it a disease that's in my flesh?

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GONORRHEA: O Jesus!

LEAR: But I'll not chide thee more.

GONORRHEA: I'll bet.

LEAR: Let shame come when it will. I can be patient. I can stay with my Reagan. I and my hundred knights.

REAGAN: Not altogether so. I looked not for you yet, nor am provided for your welcome. Give ear to my sister. And do not make demands that cannot be met!

LEAR: Is this well-spoken?

REAGAN: I dare avouch it, ma'am. Why not fifty followers? What should you need of more? Yea, why so many? How in one house should so many people under two commands hold amity? 'Tis hard, almost impossible.

GONORRHEA: Why might not you, madam, receive attendance from those that Reagan calls servants, or from mine?

REAGAN: I now do spy a danger. I entreat you to bring but five and twenty. To no more will I give place or notice. The rest can rest on the streets or in the gutters.

LEAR: I gave you all –

REAGAN: But you gave it, Mother!

LEAR: You said five and twenty.

REAGAN: I misspoke. Zero is a more charming number.

LEAR: Wicked creatures yet do look well-favoured when others show care more wicked. Not being the very worst stands in some rank of praise. (*to Gonorrhea*) I'll go with thee. Your fifty doth double twenty-five.

GONORRHEA: What need you them, or ten, or five?

REAGAN: Or even one?

LEAR: O reason not the need! Our basest beggars are in the poorest thing superfluous. Allow not nature more than nature needs. You heavens, give me patience I need. You see

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me here, you gods, a poor, old lady, as full of grief as age, wretched in both.

REAGAN Oh, here we go again! Enough!

LEAR: And let not women's weapons, water drops, stain my woman's cheeks.

GONORRHEA: We won't!

LEAR: No, you unnatural hags, I will have such revenges on you both that all the world – I will
do such things –

REAGAN: We're waiting!

LEAR: What they are yet I know not, but they shall be the terrors of the earth.

GONORRHEA: Boo hoo.

LEAR: You think I'll weep. Nay, I'll not weep. This heart shall break into a hundred flaws
before I'll weep. O Fool, I shall go mad!

FOOL: Whoop, jug, I love thee!

LEAR: Come, watch me go mad!

Exeunt Lear, the Fool, Kent, Earl of W. and a Gentleman

CORNWALL: What a drama Queen! Let us withdraw. There will be a storm.

REAGAN: My house is small. That old woman and her people cannot be well bestowed.

GONORRHEA: It's her own fault that she has put herself from rest.

REAGAN: If she just didn't play the Self--Pity Card so much! I will take her, but not one
follower.

GONORRHEA: So am I purposed. Where is my lord of Worchestershire?

CORNWALL: He followed the old woman. But look, he is returned!

Enter the Earl of W.

EARL of W: The Queen is in high rage.

REAGAN: What a surprise!

EARL of W: She calls for a horse. But I know not wither she intends to go.

CORNWALL: 'Tis best to give her way, is it not?

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GONORRHEA: Entreat her by no means to stay.

EARL of W: Alack, night comes on and bleak winds do sorely ruffle. No one should be

outdoors this night. You might get wet.

REAGAN: O sir, our injuries are too oft self-imposed. Shut up your doors. The raging Queen is attended by a desperate train –

GONORRHEA: Choo choo!

CORNWALL: Shut up your doors, who will, 'tis a wild and tragic night. My Reagan counsels well. Come out of the storm.

REAGAN: Here we all go! Choo, choo!

Exeunt

III.1 The storm rages. Enter Kent and a gentleman from opposite sides.

KENT: Who's there, besides foul weather?

GENTLEMAN: One minded like this weather.

KENT: I know you. Where's the Queen?

GENTLEMAN: Contending with the fretful elements. Tears at her white hair.

KENT: I get the picture.

GENTLEMAN: Unhomed she runs, unbonneted, distraught.

KENT: Enough detail!

GENTLEMAN: Oh, but sir, there is so much more to say.

KENT: Not another syllable!

GENTLEMAN: Even the lion and the belly-pinched wolf keep their fur dry –

KENT: Good grief, man! Just tell me who is with the Queen?

GENTLEMAN: None but the Fool, who will not cease his cruel jests.

KENT: I hear that the King of France marches toward this divided country to stifle these rebellious dukes who may well do hateful harm against the proud, sad Queen.

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GENTLEMAN: Is this for true, or merely hapless hope?

KENT: I hope it is not hapless hope, nor rootless rumor –

GENTLEMAN: Nor fruitless fiction nor flimsy whimsy –

KENT: Exactly!

GENTLEMAN: I will further talk with them, man who resembles Kent.

KENT: No, do not. If you would have confirmation of who I be, despite my outward cover,
open this purse –

GENTLEMAN: You carry a purse?!

KENT: Not a purse purser! A purse from circa 500 A.D. (*Shows a sack purse.*) See what it
contains. If you happen to see Cordelia, the Queen's forgotten daughter, show her this
ring in this purse and she will tell you who that fellow is that yet you do not know for
sure.

GENTLEMAN: You?

KENT: *Shhh!* No more! Fie on this storm! I will go seek the Queen.

GENTLEMAN: Wait! Have you no more to say?

KENT: When we have found the Queen – in which you go that way, I go this – he who lights
upon her first yells to the other.

GENTLEMAN: Like this? (*yells*) Queen! O Queen!

KENT: "Twill do. Anon!

The two exit in opposite directions.

III. 2 Storm. Enter Lear and the Fool. The Queen's hair is blown into an absolute mess.

LEAR: Blow winds and crack your cheeks!

FOOL: But not these, my sweet butt cheeks! Please not those!

LEAR: You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout till you have drenched our steeples, drowned the
cocks!

40

FOOL: Only spare my cock!

LEAR: Singe my white, somewhat colored, hair!

FOOL: O nuncle head, in, ask for thy daughters' blessing. Here's a night that pities neither
wise men nor fools.

LEAR: Rumble thy bellyful, sky! Spit! Spout! Spoot!

FOOL: Spoot?

LEAR: I tax not you, elements, with unkindness. I never gave you queendoms, called you
children. Let fall your horrible pleasure. Here I stand, your slave, a poor, infirm, weak,
and despised – but still strong – old woman! O, ho!

FOO: Shall I sing you a rhyme or a lullaby?

LEAR: No.

FOOL Without a lullaby I will die!

LEAR: If you must.

FOOL: Thank ye, Majesty. (*Clears throat*)

There once was a Queen in old Britain

Who by her daughters was bitten.

She thought by her screaming

To overcome scheming.

But she wound up alone and be-shitten!

LEAR: You are my joy, boy. (*Hugs him*)

FOOL: Are you my mother?

LEAR: Hush, my boy.

FOO9L: Is that a yes? Is Kent my father? Is Edmund? Is anybody?

LEAR: Hush, darling.

FOOL: Is that a no?

LEAR: So many, many questions.

41

FOOL: May a poor Fool make one request?

LEAR: And what is that?

FOOL: Kill Claudio.

LEAR: Who's Claudio?

FOOL: Oops! That must be another play. I'm forgetting my lines.

LEAR: No one will notice.

FOOL: A demented Queen and her dying, forgetful Fool. How tragic!

(They strike a tragic pose together.)

Enter Kent

KENT: There you are, my Queen! How fortunate I should stumble upon thy whereabouts.

FOOL: Father, is that you?

KENT: *(ignoring him)* My cod-piece is soaked!

FOOL: Is that a riddle?

KENT: How about this weather, huh?!

FOOL: Is *that* a riddle?

LEAR: I am a woman more sinned against than sinning!

KENT: Your Grace, nearby is a hovel. Some friendship will it lend you against the tempest.

Repose you there while I return to the castle and force them to render you courtesy.

LEAR: You expect me to stay in a hovel?! My wits begin to turn. The art of our necessities is

strange and can make vile things precious. Come, to your hovel, poor fool. I have one part in my heart that's sorry yet for thee.

FOOL: I feel a song coming on. *(Clears throat, then belts out)* "Everything's coming up roses!

For you and for me!"

LEAR: I hope so, boy. *(to Kent)* Come, bring us to this hovel.

Exeunt Lear and Kent

FOOL I'll speak a prophecy ere I go:

42

There will come a time when there will be no crime.

There will be an age when everyone will be a sage.

In just about a minute

This whole world and all the people in it
Will live in peace and joy.
And I will be the perfect boy.
No pain, nor sorrow, no scars – tomorrow!
Every man will be a king.
And every person will have everything.
Oh, just put your mind to it
And we can surely do it.
Oh, do not be so cynical!
Here we are, at life's pinnacle!
If life is not a romance novel.
Hey, at least you have a filthy hovel!

Fool exits

INTERMISSION

III.3 Enter Earl of W. and Edmund, with lights

EARL of W: Alack, alack, Edmund, when I desired their leave that I might pity the Queen,
they took from me the use of mine own house, charged me on pain of perpetual
displeasure neither to speak of her, entreat for her, or any other way sustain her.

EDMUND: Most savage and unnatural. Of course, it is circa 500 A.D.

EARL of W: Go to. Say you nothing! I have received a letter this night. 'Tis dangerous to be
spoken, so I have locked the letter in my closet. These injuries the Queen now
bears will be avenged. Go you and talk with the Duke. If he ask for me, tell him

43 I am ill and gone to bed. If I die for it, the Queen must be relieved. There are
strange things afoot, Edmund. Pray you, be careful.

. Exit the Earl of W.

EDMUND: This shall the Duke of Cornwall instantly know, and of that letter too. This seems a

fair deserving and must secure me what my father loses – no less than all. The younger rises when the old doth fall!

Exit Edmund

III.4 Enter Lear, Kent, and the Fool to a sign that says MOTEL 6

KENT: Here is the place, my lady. Pray, enter. It is not much, but the tyranny of the open night is worse.

(Storm rages.)

LEAR Let me alone.

KENT: Good lady, you must enter here.

LEAR: Wilt break my heart.

KENT: I had rather break mine own. Yet, Your Majesty, please enter.

LEAR: O Reagan, Gonorrhoea, and . . . What's Her Name?

KENT: Cordelia.

LEAR: Cordelia. Your old, kind mother, whose frank heart gave all! O, that way madness lies.

Let me shun that. No more of that!

KENT: Yeah, shun that.

LEAR: You go in first to this motel. *(to the Fool)* Or you, boy, go first, like a canary in a coal mine.

FOOL: Nay!

LEAR: I'll pray and then I'll sleep. And maybe fix my hair!

Exit the Fool

44LEAR: Poor, naked wretches, wherever you be, let me editoraize a while. Have we, have I taken too little care of you? O, audience, expose thyselves to feel what wretches feel! And no just here, or at *Les Miz*. Buy a ticket for that unhoused wretch outside the theater and let him sit on your lap at the matinee! Share your cookie in the intermission! *(looking off)* What is that creature over there?

EDGAR: (*as Poor Tommy within*) It is I, Poor Tommy!

Enter the Fool.

FOOL Come not in here, Majesty. For here is a spirit, a goblin. Help! Help!

KENT: Give me thy hand. What spirit is it?

FOOL: He says his name is Poor Tommy.

EDGAR: Poor Tommy has a poor tummy!

KENT: Perhaps I should not go in!

Enter Edgar

EDGAR Away! The foul fiend follows me. Fie, fie, foul fiend!

FOOL: Fuck that foul fiend, says the Fool!

LEAR: Didst thou give all to thy daughters? And so thou hast come to this?

EDGAR: The foul fiend hath led Poor Tommy through fire, whirlpool, and quagmire.

LEAR: What about ratsbane in your porridge?

EDGAR: Yea, that too!

LEAR: What about sour milk from a cranky elk?

EDGAR: Gallons!

LEAR: His daughters again! Couldst thou save nothing at all?

FOOL: He did reserve a nasty blanket, else we had been shamed.

EDGAR: Do you like my blanket? (*Shows off his blanket*)

FOOL: (*dirty*) Hey, nonny, nonny!

LEAR: Now all the plagues in the air light on his daughters!

45

KENT: He hath no daughters, madam.

LEAR: Death, traitor! Nothing could have subdued his faculties to such a state but his selfish daughters. Those pelican daughters!

KENT: Pelican daughters?

EDGAR: (*Makes bird noises.*)

FOOL: This night will turn us all to fools and madmen. With bad hair!

EDGAR: Obey thy parents, even when they're wrong. Wear clothes even when they don't fit.

Poor Tommy's a-cold.

LEAR: Listen to this man!

EDGAR: I have been a serving man and did the deed of darkness with my mistress. I have made oaths and broke them in the face of heaven. Do not go out naked in a storm. Stay out of brothels except on Sundays or if there is a discount. Don't trust your brother, especially if he's a bastard.

LEAR: Is this man no more than this? Consider him well.

KENT: He looks like Edgar, the Earl's boy.

LEAR: Unaccommodated man is no more than this, a poor, bare, fucked animal –

FOOL: Forked animal.

LEAR: Forked. Off, off, you lendings! Come, unbutton here. (*Tears off her clothes.*)

FOOL: (*singing*) Button up your overcoat, when the wind is free. Take good care of yourself.

You belong to me. Eat an apple every day. Get to bed by three. Take good care of thyself. Thou belongst to me! Look, here comes a walking fire.

Enter the Earl of W with a torch.

EDGAR: This is the foul fiend! Aroint thee, witch, aroint thee!

EARL of W: Edgar?

EDGAR: Nay! Never!

KENT: How fares your grace? Is it your grace?

46

EARL of W: It is I – the earl of Woo!

LEAR: What's he? Woo who?

KENT: I know not. It may be the Earl.

FOOL: He who, he who? And boo hoo hoo on such a night as this.

EARL of W: Your names!

EDGAR: I'm Poor Tommy, who swallows the odd cockroach, the green muck on the standing pool. Who is whipped from here to Worcestershire.

FOOL: Whipped? (*Enjoys the idea*)

EDGAR: My disguise is working!

EARL of W: Edgar?

KENT: I am a counselor to the Queen.

EARL of W: Kent?

KENT: Nay! Never!

LEAR: And I am the Queen of Romania!

ALL: Your Majesty! (*All genuflect.*)

LEAR: Who do I have to screw to get a decent night's lodging around here?!

EARL of W: Go in with me. I have ventured to come to come seek you out and bring you where both fire and food be ready.

LEAR: First let me talk with this philosopher. (*to Edgar*) What is the cause of thunder?

KENT: Good madam, take his offer. Go into the house.

EDGAR: Thunder is the indigestion of the gods!

LEAR: I thought so! What is your study in this life?

EDGAR: How to prevent the fiend and to kill vermin.

LEAR: Excellent! Let me ask one word in private.

(Lear and Edgar talk apart.)

47

KENT: Importune her once more, my lord, to go with you. Her wits begin to fester. And her hair, my God!!

EARL of W: Who can blame her? Her daughters seek her death. Ah, that good man Kent said it would be thus, poor banished man.

KENT: I wonder what happened to him.

EARL of W: Most likely dead in some bog.

KENT: I always liked him.

EARL of W: Thou sayest the Queen grows mad. I'll tell thee, friend, I am almost mad myself.

I had a son, a bastard not only in name but in character. Yet I loved him. And yet he sought my life. True to tell thee, the grief of it hath crazed my precarious wits.

LEAR: I'll go in! But this philosopher, his company I demand.

FOOL: Please no more mad people!

EDGAR: Poor Tommy's a-cold.

FOOL: The poor Fool is a-colder! My wits! My wits! My hair! My hair!

EARL of W: (*to Edgar*) In fellow, there, into the hovel. Keep thee warm.

KENT: This way, madam.

LEAR: I will keep with my philosopher.

KENT: Let him come in. Go along with us, sirrah

LEAR: Come, good Armenian.

EDGAR: Who?

EARL of W: No words, no words! Hush!

EDGAR: Thank the gods, nobody recognizes me!

Exeunt

Enter Cornwall and Edmund

CORNWALL: I will have my revenge ere I depart his house.

EDMUND: On my father? How, my lord?

48

CORNWALL I am not surprised that Edgar turned on him.

EDMUND: How ill-saddled am I with a bad brother and a bad father! Here is the letter that I spoke of. O heavens that this treason were not, or not I the detector of it!

CORNWALL: Alas, poor you. Go with me to my Duchess. Also known as the Duchess of Cornwall.

EDMUND: If the matter of this letter be certain, you have mighty business in hand.

CORNWALL: True or false, it hath made thee Earl of Worchestershire. (*mangles the name*)

EDMUND: Easy for you to say, my lord. I fear it will not be that easy.

CORNWALL: Seek out where thy father is, that he may be ready for apprehension.

EDMUND: (*Aside*) If I find my father comforting the Queen, it will stuff this Duke's suspicion more fully. (*Aloud*) I will persevere in my course of loyalty to you, though the conflict be sore between that and my blood.

CORNWALL: I will lay trust upon thee, Edmund, and thou shalt find a dearer father in my love.

Exeunt

Enter Kent and Earl of W.

EARL of W: Here is better than in the open air. Take it thankfully. I will piece out the comfort with what addition I can. I will not be long from you. Have I mentioned that you remind me of someone?

KENT: My genes are replicated by many in this area, sir.

EARL of W: Perhaps that is it.

Exit Earl of W.

Enter Lear, Edgar, and the Fool

FOOL: (*to audience*) Enter Lear, Edgar, and the Fool! Lucky you!

EDGAR: (*to audience*) Beware the foul fiend!

FOOL: (*to Lear*) Tell me, auntie, whether a madman be a gentleman or a yokel?

LEAR: A Queen, a Queen!

49

FOOL: Yes, I fear some queens are less than queenly.

EDGAR: Will somebody please scratch my back?

FOOL: I'll scratch thy back.

EDGAR: (*Points*) Here! Give a good one!

FOOL: I will scratch like a bitch!

EDGAR: No , gently, gently.

FOOL: Gently then. (*Edgar presents his back*) He's mad who trusts in the tameness of a Fool.

(*He scratches Edgar's back with his Fool's scepter.*)

How's that? No more foil fiend?

EDGAR: Divine. Don't stop.

FOOL: How's this? (*Scratches Edgar's butt*) Good?

EDGAR: Too good. I fear it is a sin.

FOOL: I scratch my own back sometimes.

EDGAR: TMI.

FOOL: We Fools get very tired of always entertaining everybody else.

LEAR: (*to Edgar*) Come, sir, sit here, most learned justice. (*to the Fool*) And thou, sapient sir, sit here. We shall have a trial!

KENT: Madam, how do you? Will you lay down and rest?

LEAR: (*correcting*) Lie down. I will not! I'll see the trial first. Bring in the evidence! (*to Edgar*)

Thou robed man of justice, take thy place. (*to the Fool*) And thou, his fellow of equity, bench by his side. (*to Kent*) You are on the commission. Sit your banished butt as well.

KENT: I know naught of any banished butt, but for you I will sit.

EDGAR: Let us deal justly.

FOOL: I fear some commentary about injustice is to descend upon us.

LEAR: Arrange Gonorrhea first! She mistreated the poor Queen, her mother.

FOOL: Come hither, mistress. Is your name Gonorrhea?

50

LEAR: She cannot deny it.

(*Somebody pushes a stool so it is the focus of the trial.*)

FOOL: (*singing*) I just met a girl, Gonorrhea! Gonorrhea!

EDGAR: She's taken the form of a stool! So many disguises!

LEAR: She is lower than a stool! A stool has more pity!

KENT: Peace, madam! It is not your daughter.

LEAR: It is! (*Kicks another stool into focus.*) And here is Reagan! Prime in bitchery!

(*Kent moves the two stools.*)

LEAR: They are escaping! Stop them! Stop them!

EDGAR: (*aside*) My tears begin to take the Queen's part so much they may mar my
counterfeiting,

LEAR: (*aside*) Do my eyes deceive me? Is this not Edgar, the very son of Worchesterszhire?!

EDGAR: The Queen suspects me, I can tell! More make-up., it must be! (*Applies more dirt to
his face.*)

LEAR: See those invisible dogs over there?

EDGAR Nay!

LEAR: They bark at me. (*Barks*)

EDGAR: Poor Tommy will throw his head at them. (*Pretends to throw his head*) Avaunt, you
curs!

LEAR: Avaunt! Avaunt! Moreover, no dogs allowed! No dogs allowed!

EDGAR: Gibberish, gibberish, and more gibberish on thee!

LEAR: When I am back in power, you, sir, shall be of my knights. But I do not like your
fashions. They must be altered!

KENT: Good Queen, the trial is over, so come and rest awhile.

LEAR: So it shall be. We'll go to supper in the morning.

51

FOOL: And I'll go to bed at noon. (*Exits, then returns.*) That means because I'm sick and
I'm not coming back in this play. I'm probably going to die. Got it? Die! . . . Bye.
Exit the Fool.

Enter the EARL of W.

EARL of W: Come hither, friend. Where is the Queen, my sovereign?

KENT: There, sir, but trouble her not. Her wits are gone.

EARL of W: Have you tried a Place for Mom?

KENT: Not yet.

EARL of W: Are you sure that's the Queen? Is she in disguise? Her hair!

KENT: Who knows?!

EARL of W: 'Tis not a good age when so many are in disguise!

(Kent re-arranges his disguise.)

KENT: The times, sir, it is the times.

EARL of W: Good friend, I prithee take the Queen in thy arms I have heard of a plot of death upon her. There is a litter ready. Lay her in it. And drive to Dover, where thou shalt find both welcome and protection.

KENT: Drive? In a car? It's circa 500 A.D.

EARL of W: Get there how you will, sir. Bother me not with details. Take up thy mistress and depart. If you shouldst dally half an hour, her life with thine and all that offer to defend her, stand in assured loss. Take up, take up, and follow me that will to some means of transportation give them conduct.

KENT: Come, those who can bear the Queen!

Re-enter the Fool

FOOL: I can almost bear her! Whoop, jug, I love thee!

EARL of W: Come, come away!

Exeunt Kent, Earl of W, and the Fool bearing off the Queen

52

EDGAR: How light and portable my pain seems now. Now that Poor Tommy, a monarchist to the core, hast seen his Queen treated thus. And what more will hap this night! It makes me want to scream. *(Screams, the exits.)*

Enter Cornwall, Reagan, Gonorrhea, Edmund, and servants

CORNWALL: *(to Gonorrhea)* Post speedily to my lord your husband, show him this letter.

The army of France has landed, including your youngest sister, named . . . ?

GONORRHEA: I don't remember. Perhaps my other sister, Reagan, remembers?

REAGAN: She's been gone so long I don't remember.

EDMUND: It's Cordelia.

GONORRHEA: Oh, yes. Well, what about her?

CORNWALL: Before she gets here, seek out the traitor Worchestershire, who has harboured
the Queen.

Exeunt some servants

REAGAN: Lock him up! Lock him up!

GONORRHEA: Pluck out his eyes!

REAGAN: Or worse!

EDMUND: What's worse than that!?

CORNWALL: Leave him to my displeasure. Edmund, the revenges we are bound to take upon
your traitorous father are not fit for your beholding. Stay here. Let all posts and
email betwixt us be swift and well punctuated. Farewell to all here. And soon we
say farewell to the Earl of Woo too!

REAGAN: The Earl of Woe!

EDMUND: (to audience) And I become the Earl of Worchestershire!

Enter Oswald

CORNWALL: How now? Where's the Queen?

53

OSWALD: My lord of Woo hath conveyed her hence. Some six and thirty of her knights met
her at a gate and are now gone with him to Dover, where they boast to have well-
armed friends.

CORNWALL: Get horses for your mistress.

Exit Oswald

GONORRHEA: I'm going to Dover?

CORNWALL: Indeed!

GONORRHEA: How do I get there?

CORNWALL: Your servants will know the way. Edmund, go with Gonorrhea!

Exeunt Gonorrhea and Edmund

CORNWALL: Somebody get the Earl! Pinion him like a thief and bring him before us.

Exeunt several servants

We next shall do a curtsy to our wrath, which men may blame but not control.

Enter the Earl of W., brought in by servants.

REAGAN: 'Tis he, the traitor!

CORNWALL: Bind fast his fat old arms.

EARL of W: What means your grace? Good my friends, consider you are my guests. Do me no
foul play.

CORNWALL: Bind him, I say!

SERVANT: I hate this job! (*Servants tie Earl's hands.*)

REAGAN: Hard, hard! O filthy Queen-ass kisser!

EARL of W: Unmerciful lady as you are, I'm none.

REAGAN: I've seen you kiss my mother's ass a thousand times!

CORNWALL: To this chair bind him! Villain, thou shalt find –

REAGAN: Let me pluck his beard! (*She does.*)

EARL of W: By all the gods, 'tis most ignobly done to pluck me by the beard.

54

REAGAN: You ain't seen nothing yet! And soon you will see nothing at all!

EARL of W: Naughty lady, the hairs which thou dost ravish from my chin will quicken and
accuse thee. I am your host!

CORNWALL: Come, sir, what letters had you late from the King of France and what's her
name.

EARL of W: Cordelia?

CORNWALL: Yes, Cordelia!

REAGAN: Answer! We know the truth!

CORNWALL: What confederacy have you with the traitors invading Britain?

REAGAN: To whose coddling hands you have sent the lunatic Queen Speak!

EARL of W: Any letters I received I could not read, so poor was the handwriting.

CORNWALL: Cunning.

REAGAN: And false.

CORNWALL: Where hast thou sent the Queen?

EARL of w: To Dover.

REAGAN: Wherefore to Dover? Wast thou not charged at peril –

CORNWALL: Wherefore to Dover? Let him answer that.

EARL of W: I am tied at the stake, but I must stand the course.

REAGAN: Wherefore to Dover, bitch?

EARL of W: Because here I would not see thy cruel nails pluck out her poor old eyes, nor thy
fierce sister in her anointed flesh stick boarish fangs.

CORNWALL: See it shalt thou never. Fellows, hold the chair. Upon these eyes of thine I'll
set my foot.

EARL of W: Give me some help! O, cruel! O, you gods, no!

REAGAN: Even for me, the eyes do seem a bit much.

CONRWALL: You're right, my dove. I have another idea. Bare his chest!

55

(The servants bare the chest of the Earl.)

EARL of W: What's what?!

CORNALL: Here's what! (*He twists a nipple of the Earl.*) A twist of his tit will give him a fit!

EARL: Not my tit!

REAGAN: Excellent substitute, my lord and husband. Now do both!

CORNWALL: You think?

REAGAN: Both at once!

(Cornwall twists the Earls nipples with glee.)

CORNWALL: Take that, evil traitor!

EARL of W: No more! No more, I pray!

SERVANT: Hold your hands, my lord! I have served you ever since I was a child, through no consent of mine, but better service have I never done you than now to bid you hold.

REAGAN: How now, you dog!

SERVANT: Lay not another hand upon his nipples!

CORNWALL: Not only upon his nipples but upon my sword too! *(Draws his sword.)*

SERVANT: Do not make me stab thee, sir.

CORNWALL: Villain! *(Lunges at him.)*

SERVANT: *(drawing his sword)* Come then, fat ass, and see how you do against the lower class!
(Wounds Cornwall.)

REAGAN: Give me a sword. A peasant stand up thus! No way!

(She takes a sword and runs the servant through from behind.)

SERVANT: O, I am slain! My lord, may your aching nipples bear witness to the evil here.
(He dies.)

CORNWALL: *(to the Earl)* How do your tits feel now, old man? Do you want more?!

EARL of W: Some decency. Are you incapable of the merest decency?!

56

CORNWALL: I think you enjoyed it!

EARL of W: You are wrong, sir, so wrong. Most wrong. Where's my son Edmund? Edmund, enkindle all the sparks of nature to avenge this horrid act!

REAGAN: Oh, treacherous villain! Thou call'st on him that hates thee. It was he that made clear thy treasons to us.

EARL of W: O my follies! Then Edgar, my other son, was abused. I am but an old fool, with
twisted tits. (*Hangs his head.*)

REAGAN: Go thrust him out at gates and let him ache his way to Dover.

EARL of W: (*touching his nipples*) O ye gods, my nipples!

Exit servant with the Earl Enter Edgar

EDGAR: To be the lowest and most dejected thing of fortune stands still in some little hope.

Welcome then thou unsubstantial air that I embrace!

Enter the Earl of W.

EARL of W: I think I am near Dover. (*A man passes nearby*) Excuse me, person unknown
to me. Are we close to Dover? Or must I trudge on?

MAN: You are very near to the cliffs of Dover.

EARL of W: Good. I thank thee.

EDGAR: How fortunate! There is my father!

EARL of W: O my poor nipples. How they ache with every step.

EDGAR: What tortures have they done to him?!

MAN: (*to the Earl*) I do know you, I see now. You are the Earl of Worchestershire.

EARL of W: Good friend, be gone. Lest others hurt you.

MAN: (*clutching his nipples*) Nay, not that! But I will not abandon you.

EARL of W: Though these tits give me fits, I will to the cliffs! A poor triple rhyme, but mine
own. O dear son Edgar, if only you were here! Unlucky victim of thy foolish
father's wrath!

57

MAN: How now! Who's that? (*Points at Edgar.*) Is that Edgar?

EDGAR: O gods, I am discovered!

MAN: Or is it poor, mad Tommy?

EARL of W: Is he by any chance a beggar man?

MAN: Madman and beggar too.

EARL of W: He has some reason left, else he could not beg.

MAN: We must find hope even if it is tiny and lives under a rock.

EARL of W: Nay! As flies to mean little boys are we to the gods –

MAN: They make us their favourite pets?

EARL of W: They kill us for their sport!

MAN: I think there is a plan for each of us.

EARL of W: Oh, shut up! Go, go, let me end myself and these tits!

EDGAR: How should this be? Should I speak to my father or not?

EARL of W: If only my good son were here to speak to me!

EDGAR: Bless thee, master!

EARL of W: I will ask this madman to lead me to the cliffs.

MAN: But, sir, he is mad!

EARL of W: I know, but what great theatre when the mad lead the tit-injured! Oh, ouch!

Begone, person!

MAN: I can only do so much. I will be gone, come what will. (Exits.)

EARL of W: (*to Edgar*) Sirrah! Come hither!

EDGAR: I cannot continue in this way.

EARL of W: Come hither, fellow!

EDGAR: And yet I must. What pray tell can I do for you?

EARL of W: Mad fellow, dost thou knowest thou the way to the cliffs of Dover?

EDGAR: (*to audience*) Should I lead my own father to the cliffs of death?

58

EARL of W: O these nips cannot be borne another moment!

EDGAR: Shall I end his suffering?

EARL of W: Here, take this purse. That I am wretched makes thee the happier.

Dost thou know Dover or not?

EDGAR: I have a bad sense of direction.

EARL of W: There is a cliff whose high and bending head looks fearfully in the confined deep.
Bring me but to the very brim of it and I'll repair the misery thou dost bear with something rich about me. From that place I shall no leading need.

EDGAR: Perhaps your nips will be healed by the cool but soothing breezes there. Give me thy arm. Poor Tommy shall lead thee.

Exeunt

Enter Gonorrhea and Edmund

GONORRHEA: Welcome, my lord! We should better get to know one another.

EDMUND: I am at your service, Madam Gonorrhea.

GONORRHEA: Sounds goodly to me.

Enter Oswald

GONORRHEA: Now where's my mild husband?

OSWALD: Madam, within. He is much changed. I told him of the French army that was landed. He smiled. I told him that you were coming. He said, 'the worse'. Of Worchestershire's treachery and the loyal service of his son Edmund, then did he call me sot. I am no sot! Sot am I not!

GONORRHEA: Then shalt we go no further now. Back, Edmund, to my brother-in-law.

Hasten his musters.

EDMUND: I will not only hasten his musters. I will pour mustard up his bung!

GONORRHEA: Well said. You're my kind of man! I'm so through with my girly husband!

If you would like a strong woman, wear this. (*Gives him a favour.*)

59

EDMUND: What is it? It looks too fem.

GONORRHEA: Spare speech! Decline your head. Let this kiss stretch thy spirits up into the air.
(*Kisses him on the top of the head.*) Are you stretched like a man?

EDMUND: O madam, I am mightily stretched!

GONORRHEA: What a man! But for now, farewell.

EDMUND: Yours in the ranks of death!

Exit Edmund

OSWALD: Madam, here comes your husband.

Enter Albany

GONORRHEA: I have been worth the whistling.

ALBANY: O wife, you are not worth the dust which the rude wind blows in your face. Hello.

GONORRHEA; Ha! Says he who farts in the cart when we go to the mart!

ALBANY: You are lower than a peasant's butt! You will wither and come to a terrible end.

GONORRHEA: No more! Your text is vile.

ALBANY: Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile. What have you done, been tigers, not daughters, your mother and the Earl treated most barbarously, like monsters of the deep.

GONORRHEA: Skim-milk-livered man! Thou bearest a cheek for blows! The King of France and my sister, what's her name? –

ALBANY: Cordelia.

GONORRHEA: Yay, Cordelia! Spread their war-like banners in our noiseless land, whilst thou, a moral fool, sits still and cries 'Alack, alack, why do they do so?'

ALBANY: Fiend! Double-Fiend!

GONORRHEA: Say that again and I'll –

ALBANY: Triple-Fiend!

GONORRHEA: You wouldn't say that if I were a man!

60

ALBANY: Yes, I would.

GONORRHEA: I spit on your manhood! Mew!

Enter a Messenger

ALBANY: What news?

MESSENGER: O, my good lord, the Duke of Cornwall's dead, slain by his servant, while

twisting the tit of the Earl of Worcestershire!

ALBANY: Say it isn't so!

MESSENGER: I am just the Messenger, good sir.

ALBANY: Poor Worcestershire! Has he at least one good tit left?

MESSENGER: I know not every detail, sir. (*to Gonorrhea*) This letter craves a speedy answer.

'Tis from your sister.

GONORRHEA: From Cordelia?

MESSENGER: No, from Reagan.

GONORRHEA: (*aside*) In one way, I like this well. Although who know how it will all turn out.

(*Aloud*) I'll read and answer.

Exit

ALBANY: Where was his son Edmund when they did twist the noble Earl's noble nips?

MESSENGER: With your wife. Hint, hint.

ALBANY: What hint? He is not here.

MESSENGER: No, my good lord, not now.

ALBANY: Knows he of this wickedness?

MESSENGER: Ay, my good lord. 'Twas he that informed against his father and quit the house
on purpose that their nipple business have the freer course.

ALBANY: Dear Earl, I thank thee for the love thou showed the Queen and vow to avenge thy
poor, blessed nips! (*to Messenger*) Come, friend, and tell me what more thou
knowest.

61

Exeunt

Enter Kent and a Gentleman

KENT: Do you have any idea why the King of France is no longer marching to save the day?

GENTLEMAN: The word on the street is that he left something imperfect back in France,
something that required his personal return.

KENT: Have you by any chance delivered letters to the Queen of France, formerly known as Cordelia?

GENTLEMAN: I did sir.

KENT: You look like someone who would deliver letters to the Queen of France!

GENTLEMAN: She took the letters, read them in my presence and now and then an ample tear trilled down her delicate cheek.

KENT: So Cordelia was moved?

GENTLEMAN: Unless she but had a speck of dust in her eye.

KENT: She is a good lady.

GENTLEMAN: She looked so lovely as she wept.

KENT: Of course she did. But did she make no verbal question?

GENTLEMAN: Once or twice, she heaved the name of mother, pantingly, forth, as if it pressed her heart with grief, cried 'Sisters shame, shame!' Then even more she shook water from her eyes.

KENT: Shook water?

GENTLEMAN: So to speak. Then she turned away to deal with her grief alone.

KENT: Did she mention me?

GENTLEMAN: I don't know, sir. Who are you?

KENT: Never mind. It does not matter. I am but a mere earthling under the vast stars. Have you spoke with her since?

GENTLEMAN: I have told you too much already, sir.

62

KENT: And I thank the gods that I happened to run into you.

GENTLEMAN: The stars above must have willed it to be.

KENT: It was predicted at my birth!

GENTLEMAN: And mine! But let me tell you more about Cordelia's tears.

KENT: Must you?

GENTLEMAN: Her tears parted her eyes like pearls from diamonds dropped.

KENT: I get the picture.

GENTLEMAN: Like tears from a mastodon when it sees its offspring trampled by a dinosaur.

KENT: A what?

GENTLEMAN: Like a giant lizard with a terrible toothache, cried she.

KENT: No more, I beg you! I cannot stand it. Have you spoke with her since?

GENTLEMAN: No.

KENT: Was this before or after Queen Lear went naked in the storm?

GENTLEMAN: I'm not sure.

KENT: Something tells me Queen Lear would not wish to see Cordelia.

GENTLEMAN: Even for comfort?

KENT: Her three daughters are all confused in her storm-worn brain.

GENTLEMAN: Alack! Where is the Queen?

KENT: You do not mean her injury, I trust?!

GENTLEMAN: Merely do I bring letters.

KENT: One can have too many letters. Nevertheless, I will bring you to our mistress and leave you to attend on her. Meanwhile, I must wrap me up awhile. When I am known aright, you shalt not grieve.

GENTLEMAN: You somewhat resemble someone from court, named Kent.

KENT: Kent was banished. I am not he! O to be vanished but not banished! All this anarchy!

Go along with me, sir.

Exeunt

IV.4

Enter with drums and colours, Cordelia, Doctor, and soldiers

CORDELIA: Alas, my mother is as vexed as the sea, singing aloud, and off-tune, crowned with rank weeds, nettles, cuckoo-flowers, or so I hear. And her hair a mess.

(to soldier) Search every acre and bring my mother to me.

Exeunt soldiers

CORDELIA: (*to Doctor*) Doctor, what wisdom dost thou have to restore her bereaved senses?

DOCTOR: First we try leeches! Then maggots.

CORDELIA: Really?!

DOCTOR: Or I can bleed her!

CORDELIA: She's anemic already!

DOCTOR: Are you the doctor or am I?!

CORDELIA: Well, I'm the Queen of France.

DOCTOR: Madam, I defer. There is a means, however, that will close the eyes of anguish.

CORDELIA: You mean kill her?

DOCTOR: I mean to soothe her with med'cines made of garish flowers.

Enter a Messenger

MESSENGER: I bring news, madam!

CORDELIA: I only want good news!

MESSENGER: The British powers are marching hitherward.

CORDELIA: Our preparations stand in expectation of them. O dear Mummy, it is thy business that I go about. It is not France and its ambitions here I do promote. I swear! But love, dear love, and our aged mother's right. Soon may I see her and in her eyes a shining light!

Exeunt

IV.5

Enter Reagan and Oswald

REAGAN: Stop here and talk. Are my brother-in-law's, also known as Albany's, powers set forth?

OSWALD: Ay, madam.

REAGAN: Himself in person there?

OSWALD: Do you mean is he there in person?

REAGAN: I do, blockhead!

OSWALD: Your speech is convoluted at times, madam.

REAGAN: Nay, you have a peasant's ear! Is my sister in charge?

OSWALD: Your sister is the better soldier.

REAGAN: Good! Why were the Romans great? Because they took what they wanted and gave nobody a casino afterwards! We shall emulate them.

OSWALD: Indeed, madam.

REAGAN: Have you seen Edmund around? Is he as handsome as ever?

OSWALD: I know not, madam.

REAGAN: Oh, you, you're such a lousy envoy.

OSWALD: I am sorry, madam.

REAGAN: Does he write to my sister Gonorrhoea?

OSWALD: I can find out, if you like.

REAGAN: Tell Edmund I said hello.

OSWALD: Most assuredly, milady.

REAGAN: I should not have let the Earl of Worchestershire go after we tortured his nips.

Wherever he moves, he moves hearts against us.

OSWALD: I dare say. The Earl is much discussed in the villages.

REAGAN: We'll get his ass yet, you watch! Our troops set forth tomorrow. Are you sure Edmund does not write to my sister? What's in that message you carry? Let me see it.

65

OSWALD: Madam, I had rather . . .

REAGAN: I know that your lady does not love her husband – I am sure of that – and who can miss the way her eyes follow him? Tell me! I know you are of her bosom?

OSWALD: Of her bosom, madam? Not I!

REAGAN: You are, I know it! Therefore, take this note. My lord is dead. Edmund and I

understand each other. He wishes my hand more than your mistress's. You may redeem yourself by learning more. If you do find Edmund, give him this note. Tell him it's from his honey bunny. (*Hands him a note.*) So fare you well, even though you are a blockhead. And, if you run into the Earl, preferment falls on him who cuts short his complaints, if you catch my drift?

OSWALD: Should I meet him, madam, I should show what party I do follow.

REAGAN: Better and better, my good fellow.

Exeunt

IV.6

Enter the Earl of W with Edgar, who is wearing peasant's clothes.

EDGAR: And still my father does not recognize me. Most fortunate! Even in these different
Clothes that I found! Who says disguises do not work!?

EARL of W: When shall I get to the top of the hill?

EDGAR: You do climb it now. Look how we labour.

EARL of W: I see nor feel no hill! The ground is even!

EDGAR: It is most horribly steep. Do you not hear the sea?

EARL of W: No, truly.

EDGAR: Your other senses grow imperfect when your nips hurt.

EARL of W: They do hurt. I have noticed that your voice is different, that thou speakest in
better phrase and matter than you didst before.

EDGAR: You are much deceived. In nothing am I changed but in my garments.

66

EARL of W: No, you are better spoken.

EDGAR: Come on, sir. Here's the place you asked for. Over there, beyond that bluff is
the cliff's edge. Though why you want it escapes me quite. Unless it is to cool thy
twisted nips in the ocean's breezes.

EARL: Oh, do not ask why I want the cliff. You have been kind to lead me where my pain can

end.

EDGAR: Yay, the cool air up here will be a balm to your . . .

EARL of W: -- Yes, to my migraine nipples. Do not enquire further! (*Aside*) This man does not realise I mean to jump!

EDGAR: If he jumps and survives, he will be so relieved he won't want to jump again! Sir, close your eyes and run but some short distance, where you will find your relief.

EARL of W: Are you certain there's a cliff there with fishermen below as small as mice?

EDGAR: Unless they be tiny, tiny fishermen in fact.

EARL of W: Clear the way. Stand off! And let me hear thy going.

EDGAR: Keep closed your orbs.

EARL of W: They are. Now I bid you farewell. Bid me farewell.

EDGAR: Farewell. I'm sure this is the best course of action for my only father!

EARL of W: If my son Edgar live, the gods bless him!

EDGAR: Run forward with thy eyes closed and bare thy nips to the salt-soothing air!

(The Earl of W shuts his eyes and runs forward, then stops and does a little hop as he leaps and falls down.)

EARL of W: (*opens his eyes*) I leapt from that cliff up there. (*Points upward.*)

EDGAR: (*in a different voice*) Ho, you, sir! Friend! Speak! Are you dead or alive?

EARL of W: Away and let me die! I just now did jump off a cliff.

EDGAR: Fall did you, sir, perpendicularly. I saw you with these my eyes. And yet you live!

EARL of W: Your voice sounds familiar. Didn't you just lead me to the cliff?

67

EDGAR: Your ears deceive you, sir. I just happened to pass by.

EARL of W: You also sound like my son Edgar before he went mad and into hiding.

EDGAR: It is my accent, sir. We all sound alike. Do not question those who do you good.

Now that you have fallen from a cliff, you can but be ready to go on with life.

EARL of W: Would someone who cared for me risk me having a heart attack during such a fall?

EDGAR: 'Tis most wondrous, like much in life!

EARL of W: I hope that mad beggar up there is okay.

EDGAR: When he passed me, I directed him to a local shelter.

EARL of W: His state still troubles me.

EDGAR: There is only so much we can do. Give me your arm, sir.

(Edgar helps up the Earl.)

Enter Queen Lear dressed fantastically with wild flowers.

But who comes here? Surely not the Queen!

LEAR: It is the Queen Herself! *(Twirls.)*

EDGAR: O thou side-piercing sight!

LEAR: You're not so hot yourself! What's the password? Do you like my hair?

EDGAR: Sweet marjoram?

LEAR: Pass.

EARL of W: I know that voice. *(Falls to his knees before Lear.)* It is my Edgar!

EDGAR: No, that is not your Edgar!

EARL of W: It is my Edgar! I'd know him anywhere! *(calling)* Are you not my very Edgar?

LEAR: I am the Queen of all Britain! See how everyone quakes when I speak?! What is thy cause? Accused of adultery? Thou shalt not die! The wren goes to it! Peasants try! Let copulation thrive! The Earl's bastard son was kinder to his father than my licit daughters – Gonorrhea, Reagan and what's her name?!

EARL of W: Ophelia. Amelia?

68

LEAR: Cordelia! See, my mind grows clear. But I could use a sniff of civet. Here's money for you. *(Gives flowers.)*

EARL of W: O let me kiss that hand.

LEAR: Let me wipe it first. It smells of mortality. *(Wipes her hand on the Earl.)*

EARL of W: Dost thou know me?

LEAR: You did me a kindness once involving a hovel.

EARL of W: I did, Your Grace.

LEAR: And was for it was rudely stripped and tweaked.

EARL of W: Do you want to see what they did?

LEAR: No, thank you.

EARL of W: It still hurts.

LEAR: I said no, thank you!

EDGAR: I would not believe this from report, and yet I see it as it is!

LEAR: Are we not pitiful, the all of us?

EDGAR: I am the most pitiful, bereft of father, betrayed by brother, and these clothes do not fit.

EARL of W: No, I am the most pitiful. You should see my nips!

ALL: No, thank you!

Enter the Fool.

FOOL: No, it is I the Fool, who is the most pitiful of all! Shrunken and mocked and barely tolerated even if my jokes are wonderful! Sickly, and almost dead, and yet here I am unwilling to fade away. My stool improves with each hour. Do you want proof? It's never looked better.

ALL: No, thank you!

LEAR: I am glad to have my Fool again. Take my coronet of weeds! (*Takes off her coronet of flowers, gives it to the Fool.*)

FOOL: O, mother, thou dost restore my heart! (*They kiss.*)

69

LEAR: A Queen and her Fool, it does not get better than this!

FOOL: You should see the Fool's stool.

LEAR: Jesus H. Christ, no stool!

FOOL: Okay, okay.

EARL of W: That I should come to this, with nips aflame and a Fool's stool my study!

LEAR: I know thee, sir. Thy name is Worcestershire. Is it not?

EARL of W: It was. My son Edmund has stolen my title.

LEAR: We both were not blessed in our children. Yet I shall give thee comfort.

EARL of W: Oh?

LEAR: As Queen of all Britain, I rename thee Earl of Dover!

EARL of W: Majesty, how can I ever thank thee enough?

LEAR: Do everything I ask henceforth and keep your mouth shut when you don't like something.

EARL of W: Of course, Your Majesty.

LEAR: Here is a minor coronet. (*Takes the coronet off the Fool's head, places it on the Earl's head.*)

FOOL: Hey! And not nonny, nonny!

LEAR: Fate is fickle, Fool.

Enter a Gentleman and two Attendants. The Earl and Edgar draw back.

GENTLEMAN: Here the Queen is! Lay hands upon her!

LEAR: What, a prisoner? Fate is even fickler than I thought! Let me have surgeons! I am cut to the brains!

GENTLEMAN: You mistake us, madam.

LEAR: I will not die bravely. I will flee!

Exit Lear running with Attendants

70

GENTLEMAN: A sight most pitiful to see in the meanest wretch, past speaking in a queen. At least she has one daughter who redeems nature from the general curse that two others have brought her to,

EDGAR: (*coming forward*) Hail, gentle sir!

GENTLEMAN: Sir, speed you. What's your will?

EDGAR: I believe the Queen mistook your purpose. You are here to assist the Queen, yay?

GENTLEMAN: We root for the Queen!

EDGAR: Do you hear aught of a battle?

GENTLEMAN: Everybody knows that, that can distinguish sound.

EDGAR: But how goes the battle is my question?

GENTLEMAN: The main descry stands on the hourly thought.

EDGAR: What does that mean?

GENTLEMAN: That though the Queen herself be here, or hopefully somewhere near, her army
is moved on.

EDGAR: I know not what to think, and yet I thank thee, sir.

GENTLEMAN: I must move on!

Exit Gentleman

EARL of W: (*coming forward*) Ye gods above, let not my worser spirit tempt me to end my life
before you please!

EDGAR: (*using yet another dialect*) A most good prayer, father!

EARL of W: Who are you?

EDGAR: A poor, multilingual fellow down on his luck.

EARL of W: And I am the Earl of Dover. Or I may be. Who knows if the Queen signed the
proper papers. She did not even tap me on the shoulder with a sword. I so want
to be Dover instead of Worchesterwshire!

EDGAR: Give me your hand, sir. I will lead you to some resting place. (*Takes his hand.*)

71

EARL of W: Hearty thanks, sir!

Enter Oswald

OSWALD: Aha, a proclaimed prize! Most happy! Thou old, unhappy traitor with a traitor's
tits! The sword is out that must destroy thee.

EARL of W: Lo, these injured orbs upon my chest can beat your sword any day or night!

EDGAR: (intervening) Stop!

OSWALD: Wherefore, bold peasant, darest thou support a published poet?!

EDGAR: (*correcting*) Published traitor!

OSWALD: What did I say?

EDGAR: Published poet.

OSWALD: Let go, slave, or thou diest!

EDGAR: Good gentleman, go your way and let poor folk like us pass. Am I plain enough?

OSWALD: Out, dunghill!

EDGAR: I am no one's dunghill! (*They fight.*)

OSWALD: Slave, thou hast slain me! Slave, take my purse!

EDGAR: I don't carry a purse.

OSWALD: Bury my body and give the letters which thou dost find about me to Edmund.

EDGAR: Yet more letters!

OSWALD: Seek him out wher;er he be! (*Dies.*)

EDGAR: Don't pick a fight if you can't win it. I know thee well, a serviceable villain,
as duteous to the vices of thy mistress as badness would desire.

EARL of W: What, is he dead?

EDGAR: Sit you down, father, and rest you. Meanwhile, I will search his pockets. The letters
that he speaks of may be my friends. I know I should not read other people's letters,
but I'll make an exception in his case. And he did ask me.

EARL of W: Your scruples, sir, commend you.

72

(*Edgar reads the letter.*)

*Hi from Gonorrhoea! Let our reciprocal vows be remembered, Edmund. From my
husband's loathed bed save me. And help me to your bed. Hint, hint!*

EARL of W: What does she mean?

EDGAR: Rest thy brain, father. (*Finishes the letter.*) *Your eager, would-be wife!*

EARL of W: Does she mean . . . ?

EDGAR: Yes, father, yes.

EARL of W: Why do you keep calling me 'father'?

EDGAR: Because you are old and reverent, nothing more. This ungracious letter shows nothing less than a plot upon her true husband's life! And with my brother, no less!

EARL of W: Really?

EDGAR: Rest! For God's sake, your brains are addled!

EARL of W: I cannot rest. The Queen is mad. Her hair is bad. My old orbs ache yet. Better I were distracted. So should my thoughts be severed from my griefs. (*Sound of a drum far off.*) Perchance that far-off drum will do the trick.

EDGAR: Perchance. Perchance it is too late. But give me your hand and I will bestow you with a friend.

Exeunt

IV.7

Enter Cordelia, Doctor, and Kent

CORDELIA: Wait, stop! I have a thought out here in the middle of the field!

KENT: Yes?

CORDELIA: Kent, are you not?

KENT: Yes.

CORDELIA: I'd know you anywhere. How should I live and work to match thy goodness?

KENT: To be recognized is quite enough, milady.

73

CORDELIA: Those clothes you wear are memories of the worser hours. I prithee take them off!

KENT: Off?

CORDELIA: Don't get your hopes up, boy. I merely meant change those clothes.

KENT: I have grown used to these, if I may, madam.

CORDELIA: They are a terrible disguise, Kent. But suit yourself. Pun intended!

KENT: I thank thee, madam.

CORDELIA: And I thank thee for all thy service.*(to Doctor)* How does the Queen?

DOCTOR: She sleeps well, a little dyspepsia.

CORDELIA: O you kind gods! Continue to watch after my benighted mother!

DOCTOR: So please Your Majesty, let us wake the Queen. She hath slept long.

CORDELIA: I think more leeches are in order, but according to your expertise.

DOCTOR: I dosed her with some peasant urine, and she seems to have benefited well.

We also put on her some fresh garments. And I fixed her hair.

Enter Gentleman ushering Queen Lear in a chair, accompanied by servants.

All fall to their knees.

GENTLEMAN: Be by, good madam, when we do awaken her. Your presence may temper her.

CORDELIA: Very well. What if she flies off the handle again?

GENTLEMAN: Let's hope, madam.

CORDELIA: *(kneeling by the chair and kissing the Queen's hand)* O my dear mother, let this
kiss repair those violent harms that my two sisters have in thy reverence made.

KENT: She's a keeper!

CORDELIA: Was this a face to be opposed against the jarring winds? Nay! Mine enemy's dog,
though he had riddled me with rabies, should have stood that night against my
fire! Yay! Who'll give me a yay?

KENT: Yay!

CORDELIA: She wakes! Speak to her!

74

DOCTOR: Madam, do you so. It is fittest.

CORDELIA: How dost my royal lady? How fares Your Majesty?

LEAR: *(waking up more)* Not too bad. But you do wrong me to take me out of the grave.

What's your name?

CORDELIA: Cordelia.

LEAR: Such a pretty name. I had a daughter named Ophelia or Amelia.

CORDELIA: Do you know me?

LEAR: You are a spirit. Where did you die?

DOCTOR: She's scarce awake. Let her alone awhile.

LEAR: Where have I been? I don't think it was Hawaii.

CORDELIA: No, it was not Hawaii.

LEAR: Would I were assured of my condition.

CORDELIA: Look upon me, madam. And hold your hand in benediction over me.

(Lear falls to her knees.) No, madam, you must not kneel.

LEAR: Pray do not mock me. I am four score and upward and to deal plainly, I fear I am not in my perfect mind. Methinks I should know you and this man, yet I am doubtful for I am ignorant what place this is, nor these garments, or where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me, for I think this lady to be my child Cordelia.

CORDELIA: And so I am, I am.

LEAR: Be your tears wet? Yet weep not! If you have poison for me, I will drink it. I know you not love me, for your sisters have done, as I 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 queendom, madam.

LEAR: Do not abuse me.

75

DOCTOR: Be comforted, madam. The great rage, you see, is killed in her. Desire her to go in; trouble her no more till further settling.

CORDELIA: Will it please your highness walk?

LEAR: You must bear with me. Forget and forgive. I am old and foolish. But my hair looks great, I know not how!

CORDELIA: You are my special Queen.

Exeunt all but Kent and the Gentleman

GENTLEMAN Hold it true that the Duke of Cornwall was slain by his servant?

KENT: That's the word on the country road..

GENTLEMAN: Bad times! Who is in charge now of his people?

KENT: The bastard son of Worchestershire, who now, I think, goes by the name Duke of Dover,

GENTLEMAN: All this name-changing is not good! I heard that Edgar, his banished son, is with
the Earl of Kent in Germany.

KENT: Don't believe everything you hear. Or see. Or think.

GENTLEMAN: If only there were something like an Internet to separate fact from fiction.

KENT: Indeed!

GENTLEMAN: I think the approaching battle will be bloody.

KENT: I think so too. Nice chatting with you.

GENTLEMAN: May we bump into each other like this again.

Exeunt

V.1

Enter, with drums and colours, Edmund, Reagan, gentlemen and soldiers

EDMUND: (*to a gentleman*) Do you know if the Duke of Albany has decided to change his
mind again?

GENTLEMAN: He is full of alteration, true.

EDMUND: (*to Reagan*) What thinks the sweet and widowed lady here?

76

REAGAN: We'll have to kill the vacillating prick!

EDMUND: Spoken like a valiant lady, which one must love.

REAGAN: Now, sweet lord, do you not love my sister.

EDMUND: Yay, but only as a sister.

REAGAN: For one such as you, I doubt that matters in your lusts!

EDMUND: That thought abuses you.

REAGAN: I suspect you two have been bosom to bosom.

EDMUND: We have not touched bosoms! I swear it on my honour, madam.

REAGAN: Endure her not, will I. Be not familiar with her, bosom or no bosom!

EDMUND: Fear not. Here they come!

Enter, with drums and colours, Albany, Gonorrhea, and soldiers

GONORRHEA: Look at us! Our drums and colours are better than thine!

REAGAN: Ha! In your dreams, dear sister!

GONORRHEA: (*aside*) I had rather lose the battle than that my sister here should loosen
me and Edmund.

REAGAN: (*to audience*) Did you hear that? She should keep her thoughts to herself.

ALBANY: Our loving sister, well met! I hear that some are gossiping about my so-called
vacillation. I am deliberative, not vacillating.

GONORRHEA: (*aside*) Like a virgin on her wedding night!

ALBANY: I heard that!

GONORRHEA: I care not!

ALBANY: The Queen is come to his daughter Cordelia. It touches us as France thus invades
our land.

EDMUND: You speak nobly, sir.

REAGAN: Why do you tell him that?

77

GONORRHEA: We need to stick together to defeat those troops. We can quarrel between
ourselves afterwards.

EDMUND: I am sure there will be only peace after. (*to Albany*) I shall attend you presently
at your tent.

REAGAN: Sister, you'll go with us then?

GONORRHEA: No!

REAGAN: "Tis most convenient. Pray go with us.

GONORRHEA: If only to keep an eye on you, sister mine.

EDMUND: Both sisters, will you not come, pray you both?

GONORRHEA: I like not this.

REAGAN: I like not this.

Exeunt

Edgar enters as Albany is going out.

EDGAR: Your Grace, if you would speak with man so poor as me, hear me, one word.

ALBANY: (*to his soldiers*) I'll overtake you!

EDGAR: Before you fight the battle, ope this letter.

ALBANY: Yet another letter!

EDGAR: If you have victory, let the trumpet sound for him that brought it. Wretched though

I seem, I can produce a champion that will, through physical valour, prove what is avouched there. If you miscarry, your business of the world hath so an end and machinations cease.

ALBANY: Why should I listen to you? Nonetheless, stay till I have perused thy letter.

EDGAR: I was forbid it. When time shall serve, let but a herald cry and I will appear again.

ALBANY: I understand. You need time to dress up like this champion you mentioned.

EDGAR: My lips are mum on that.

Enter Edmund.

78

EDMUND: The filthy French are in view! Draw up your powers. Here is the guess of their true strength and forces. (*Hands Albany a letter.*)

ALBANY: Another letter?! Jesus Christ! (*Crosses himself.*)

EDMUND: Haste is now urged upon you!

ALBANY: Be it so!

Exit Albany

EDMUND: (to audience) To both these sisters have I sworn my love. Each is jealous of the other. Which of them shall I take? (*Cackles.*) Ha! Ha! Ha! And I haven't even wooed Cordelia yet! One? Two? Or all three?! None can be enjoyed if all are left alive! And 'tis Albany here must surely perish. Oh, I am so bad! And yet so sexy! And as for Queen Lear herself, no pardon, none. No mercy! No Place for Mom!

Exit.

V.2

Alarm within. Enter, with drum and colours, Lear, Cordelia holding her hand, and soldiers, cross the stage.

LEAR: (*looking around*) Where are we going?

Exeunt

Enter Edgar and the Earl W.

EDGAR: Here, father, take the shadow of this tree to be your host. If I can get back, I'll bring you comfort. If I can't, have a good life.

EARL of W: Grace go with you, sir!

Exit Edgar.

Alarm and retreat within. Re-enter Edgar.

EARL of W: Back so soon? Have I met you before?

EDGAR: You must away, old man! Give me your hand! Away!

EARL: No further, sir. A man may rot and decay and decompose even here.

79

EDGAR: What, in ill thoughts again? Men must endure.

EARL of W: Who says?!

EDGAR: Their going hence as their coming hither.

EARL of W: What bullshit!

EDGAR: Father, no!

EARL of W: "Tis bullshit, yet I will give it one more try.

Exit both.

V.3

Enter in conquest Edmund. Lear and Cordelia are prisoners with their hands tied.

Captain present.

EDMUND: Some officers take away these prisoners. We'll decide later what to do with them.

(Cackles.) I'm so bad, so bad! I give myself goosebumps!

CORDELIA: We are not the first who with good meaning have incurred the worst. For thee,
oppressed Queen, I am cast down.

LEAR: And for thee too, am I.

CORDELIA: But shall we not see Gonorrhea and Reagan bespattered with tears when they
see our plight? They are kin!

LEAR: No, no, no, no! Come, let's away to prison. We too alone will sing like birds in a cage.

Tweet, tweet! Tweet, tweet! And we'll chirp of court gossip, who loses and who wins.
Whose reputation falls or rises on a whim!

EDMUND: Here's a whim for you. Take them away!

LEAR: Oh, do not whim on the mighty of spirit! *(to Cordelia)* Have I embraced you today?
(Embraces her.) Wipe thine soggy eyes. In time, these villains shall be devoured by
beasts!

CORDELIA: But what of mercy, Mother?

80

LEAR: They shall taste what starvation tastes like! Their frail flesh shall be simmered in a
cauldron!

CORDELIA: Mother!

LEAR: What?! It's circa 500 A.D.! Let us go off and plan more revenges.

Exeunt Lear and Cordelia, guarded.

EDMUND: Come hither, Captain. You're here. You might as well say something.

CAPTAIN: I'll do it, my lord.

EDMUND: Take this note. And go follow them to prison. If thou dost as this instructs thee, thou shall make thy way to noble fortunes. Either say thou wilt do it or thrive by other means.

CAPTAIN: I do not follow.

EDMUND: Art thou a dullard? Or is it my princely, orotund lingo that baffles thee?!

CAPTAIN: Oh, you mean . . . ? *((Puts invisible knife to his throat.))*

EDMUND: Carry it so as I have set it down in this note. *(Hands him a note.)*

CAPTAIN: I cannot read, but I think I catch your drift.

EDMUND: Read it well, sir. Read it well.

Exit the Captain

Flourish. Enter Albany, Gonorrhea, Reagan, and officers.

ALBANY: Oh, here's Edmund! What luck! *(to Edmund)* Sir, you have shown today your valiant strain and Dame Fortune led you well.

EDMUND: I only did what any villainous bastard would do.

ALBANY: You are the best villainous bastard I have ever met.

EDMUND: I thank you, sir.

ALBANY: Now I do require those prisoners of you, so to use them as we shall find their forgotten merits and we can spend some forty minutes forgiving one another.

81

EDMUND: Sir, I thought it fit to send the old and miserable Queen to some retention and appointed guard. The question of Queen Lear and Cordelia requires a fitter place than this.

ALBANY: Sir, by your patience, I hold you but a minor participant in this war, not as a brother.

REAGAN: Methinks our pleasure might have been demanded ere you spoke so far. Edmund led

our powers, bore the commission of my place and person, which may well stand up to call itself your brother.

GONORRHEA: Not so hot, hot sister! Edmund may 'stand up' in your 'place' and 'person.'

But we need not hear of such things here in public!

REAGAN: He's the best.

ALBANY: Your husband is not even rotten yet!

REAGAN: At least my husband's dead! Sister, you are an adulteress!

GONORRHEA: Who ha, who ha! Look who's calling names!

REAGAN: Lady, I am not well. Else I should answer from a full-flowing stomach.

GONORRHEA: Full-flowing with sperm, is it?

REAGAN: (*to Edmund*) Sir, witness the word that create thee here my lord and master.

GONORRHEA: No, he's *my* lord and master!

ALBANY: A bastard your lord and master!?

GONORRHEA: And twice the man you are! Or ever were!

ALBANY: Oh, so? Let us show our penises to the assembled as proof of what needs proof!

REAGAN: No, let the drum strike and prove my title Edmund's.

GONORRHEA: Foolish sister if ever there was one!

ALBANY: Edmund, I arrest thee on capital treason!

EDMUND: Like hell!

ALBANY: And in your ascendancy you can have this gilded serpent, my wife! Reagan, you have been outfoxed. I know my wife! You have been poisoned!

82

REAGAN: You mean with poison?

ALBANY: No, I mean with indigestion! Of course with poison, several, most like.

REAGAN: But I poisoned her!

GONORRHEA: Or so you thought, bitch! I spat it out without one drop passing to my blood.

Ha! Ha!

ALBANY: (*to Edmund*) Thou art armed. Let the trumpet sound. If none appear to prove upon thy person thy heinous treasons, then there is my pledge. (*Throws down his glove.*)

REAGAN: O I am sick, most sick!

EDMUND: Proclaim me, you worthless clod, will you?! (*Throws down his glove.*) There's my exchange!

ALBANY: Throw your glove, will you?! I throw my shoe! (*Throws a shoe.*)

EDMUND: Your shoe?! I spit upon your shoe! Here be my leotards! (*Attempts to throw them but can't get them off.*)

ALBANY: Well, I'm waiting.

EDMUND: All I really need is a sword! (*Pronounces it with the 'w' in it. Takes his sword and waves it. He is stumbling around in his leotards, waving the sword.*)

ALBANY: Did you say sword? With an *w*?!

EDMUND: What of it?

ALBANY: Nobody pronounces the *w* anymore!

EDMUND: Against any who step forth to challenge me, I am prepared now to maintain my honour and dignity!

ALBANY: A herald, ho!

Enter a Herald.

Trust to thy single virtue, Edmund.

REAGAN: My sickness grows upon me.

ALBANY: She is not well. Convey her to my tent.

83

Exit Reagan, supported.

ALBANY: Come hither, herald. Let the trumpet sound and read out this. (*Hands out a note.*)

A trumpet sounds.

HERALD: (*reading*) If any man of quality (or woman) or degree within the lists of the army

maintain upon Edmund, supposed Earl, that he is a manifest traitor, let him (or her) appear by the third sound of the trumpet. He is most bold in his defence.

(First trumpet)

Again!.

(Second trumpet.)

Again!

(Third trumpet.)

(Trumpet answers within. Edgar enters armed, a trumpet before him.)

ALBANY: Ask him (or her) his or her purpose here!

HERALD: What are you? Your name, your quality, and your answer to this summons. And of course your pronouns.

EDGAR: My name is lost, but I am as noble as the adversary. As for my pronouns, just guess!

Who speaks for the Earl?

EDMUND: Me, me, and me! What sayest thou to me?!

EDGAR: Draw thy sword. Here is mine. Mine, mine, mine, mine! *(Draws his sword.)* Behold!

By my pronouns, thou art a coward, false to the gods, to thy brother, and to thy father!

EDMUND: By my pronouns, am I none!

EDGAR: Thou liest, pronoun-boy!

EDMUND: Legally, I should ask thy name, but since thy outside looks so fair and warlike, I will not haggle. By rule of knighthood, I toss this charge of treason back into your face!

Pronoun that! This sword of mine will show whose might is right. Trumpets, speak!

84

(Alarms, a fight with swords, Edmund falls.)

ALBANY: *(to Edgar, about to slay Edmund)* Spare him! Spare him!

GONORRHEA: Edmund, by law, you were not bound to answer an unknown opponent.

You are not vanquished, but cheated!

ALBANY: Goddamn it, Dame! Stop! Or I will make you read another letter!

GONORRHEA: No, not that!

ALBANY: Thou worse than any name. Read here thine own evil. (*Shows her a letter.*)

(*She grabs at it.*) No tearing, lady! Thy words betray thee!

GONORRHEA: I did not write it! I dictated it, maybe. That doesn't count.

ALBANY: Do not woman-splain to me! (*to Edmund*) Knowest thou this paper?

EDMUND: Ask me not what I know.

GONORRHEA: I am out of this space!

Exit Gonorrhea

ALBANY: Go after her. She's desperate. Govern her.

Exit an officer

I hope she'll be all right!

(*All the others turn their heads to look at Albany.*)

I can't help it. I love a strong woman!

EDMUND: (*to Edgar*) What you have charged me with, that have I done. The time will reveal all. Yet that is past, and so am I. But what art thou that has bested me? If you're noble, I do forgive thee. If you're a peasant, I spit on your mother's pronouns!

EDGAR: Let's exchange charity.

EDMUND: No! Charity is for sissies.

EDGAR: I am no less in blood than thou art, Edmund. My name is Edgar and thy father's son.

EDMUND: Edgar, not!

EDGAR: Yes, that Edgar, of many faces and many voices. Even I don't know who I am at times.

85

EDMUND: I used to think you were something of a clown. Yet now I see that thou art a worthy prince.

EDGAR: I know it.

ALBANY: Where have you been hiding, Edgar? And do you know where your father is?

EDGAR: It is not a brief tale, but I will tell it all.

ALBANY: That's all right. We don't need every detail.

EDGAR: First there was a proclamation I had to escape. Naturally , I slipped into a madman's rags and screamed and carried on.

ALBANY: You can tell us more, over mulled wine, later.

EDGAR: Then I ran into my father with his tortured nips and became his guide, as would any son. Nay, I did not take him to a surgeon or an apothecary. That would be too simple. I never revealed myself as his son to him. That would be too simple. He asked me to lead him to the cliffs of Dover. I suspected that he wished to jump, and of course the strain of thinking he had jumped to his death – but survived – did him a world of good. At first! But then, despite my many ministrations, his heart burst smilingly, and I left him under a tree.

EDMUND: This speech of yours hath moved me. And I may live to do such good yet.

EDGAR: Thank you, brother. You're legit in my eyes!

EDMUND: But speak you on. You look as if you have more to say.

ALBANY: If there be more, hold it in, for I am almost ready to dissolve in tears, hearing all this.

EDGAR: A little more. I ran into a man I was sure was formerly known as Kent. I told him what happened to his employer, the beleaguered Queen. The tale unsettled him and he clamoured like a babe with an irritating diaper, and there I left him in a trance.

ALBANY: So you left your father under a tree and Kent in a trance?

EDGAR: O do not thank me, sir. It was what anyone would do.

Enter a Gentleman with a bloody knife

86

GENTLEMAN: Help, help! O help!

EDGAR: What kind of help?

ALBANY: Speak, man!

EDGAR: What means this bloody knife?

ALBANY: Don't tell me my wife is dead!

GENTLEMAN: No, sir. She sacrificed a chicken to the gods instead. She's resting now.

ALBANY: She's a bitch, but I love her.

GENTLEMAN: And, by the way, your wife confessed to poisoning the Duchess Reagan, but
also has survived because the poison was made in China and did not work.

EDMUND: I was engaged to them both! Never again!

EDGAR: Here comes Kent in disguise, as usual.

Enter Kent

KENT: I am come. No more disguise! (*Takes off his disguise.*) I am Kent and I have come to
serve my Queen openly. Is she not here?

ALBANY: Ut oh! All may not turn out so well, I fear! Speak, Edmund! Before this recent
conversion, did you do ill to the Queen and Ophelia – I mean Cordelia?

EDMUND: I may have. My mind is clouded. I'm a bastard.

Enter Gonorrhea and Reagan

Oh, no, old girlfriends!

ALBANY: A fitting threesome!

KENT: Did I miss something?

EDMUND: This Edmund was beloved. The one the other poisoned for my sake.

ALBANY: Brag not, you're still a bastard! There are loose ends here that must be tied.

Let's see. I send my wife and her evil sister to be teachers of our youth!

REAGAN: No! Please never that!

GONORRHEA: I'd rather die!

87

ALBANY: You want a strong man, I'll show you a strong man! Take them away to a school and
let them try to teach! Good luck with that! (*Weeping loudly, Reagan and Gonorrhea
are dragged off.*) All right, are there any more loose ends? What about you, Kent?

KENT: I always shall make myself of use, sir.

ALBANY: I shall find some place, some role for thee! (*Kent bows.*)

EDMUND: I remember me now. I pant for life, but some good I mean to do despite my own nature. Quickly send to the castle, for my writ is on the life of the Queen and Cordelia. Pray send in time!

ALBANY: Run, run! O ran!

SOLDIER: Run, run! O run!?

EDGAR: To whom, my lord? Who handles the paperwork? Send thy token of reprieve!

EDMUND: Well thought on, Edgar, for once. Take my sword. Give it to the captain.

EDGAR: *(to soldier)* Haste thee for thy life.

Exit soldier

EDMUND: The captain hath a commission from thy wife and me, to hang Cordelia in the prison and lay the blame upon her own despair,

ALBANY: The gods defend her. Bear this bastard hence awhile. *(Edmund is borne off)*

Enter Lear with a comatose Cordelia in her arms, followed by officers and others.

ALBANY: What's here?

LEAR: Howl! Howl! Howl! How many howls is that?

CORDELIA: *(waking up)* Three. *(Falls back into a coma.)*

LEAR: Are you all men of stone? Yes, she came out of her coma to count my howls, but who knows what will happen to my lovely Cordelia. This may be a tragedy yet.

KENT: Oh, nay! Not a tragedy!

EDGAR: Such horror!

LEAR: She is heavy! I will put her down. No, I will carry her and carry her and carry her!

88

KENT: O madam, I will help you tote your daughter. It is I, Kent!

LEAR: Prithee away! Kent never looks like Kent! It is a disguise!

EDGAR: It is indeed the noble Kent, your friend.

LEAR: Hold steady Cordelia while I breathe a moment. *(Hands Cordelia to Edgar and Kent, who hold.) her up although she keeps almost swooning,*) Cordelia, stay a little. No word

for me? Her voice was ever soft. Don't let her fall.

EDGAR/KENT: No, Your Majesty.

LEAR: Mine eyes are not of the best. But are you not Kent?

KENT: The same – your faithful servant Kent.

LEAR: I should not have banished thee. Correct?

KENT: No, Majesty, perhaps you should not have.

LEAR: Well, you are welcome now. Don't let Cordelia fall!

KENT: Nor are your other daughters dead. They are punished more than that, with teaching school to the unwilling who trudge there.

LEAR: O happy day! If I know them, and I do, they will still claim that I gave them my lands.

KENT: You did, madam.

LEAR: Nay, read the small print! My eyes are not so bad they canst not deal with small print.

I hereby reclaim my properties and lands according to what is there on the last page – the small print! I am still Queen!

KENT: It is a much happy day then!

LEAR: What's a much-happy day? And, no, I'm not now giving you, Kent, or you, Edgar, any lands of mine! I have learned my lesson from my teacher-daughters!

Enter Edmund

EDMUND: I did not perish from my wound! The leeches helped. I may have a little limp, but some ladies find that attractive. I shall beget a litter of bastards yet!

Enter the Earl of W

89

EDGAR: Father, is that you? I thought I left you under a tree.

EARL of W: You did, you loveable imbecile. But I managed to find my way here anyway.

As for my abused nips, the Lord is my comfort. (*Makes the sign of the cross.*)

In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. (*Makes another sign*

of the cross.) In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (*Makes*

a third sign of the cross.) In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost!

EDMUND: Father? Can you ever forgive me for taking your title?

EARL of W: Give it back.

EDMUND: Okay.

EARL of W: Henceforth I am the Earl of Dover!

(They embrace. Edgar joins them in the embrace.)

ALBANY: Well done! It is good to see the family thrive.

LEAR: I think, despite all this gladness, that I am going to croak. *(Grabs at her throat.*

has a coughing spell.) No, I think it was just a hairball. Don't ask!

ALBANY: Are we all settled then, as God and comedy would have it. Remember, a comedy is the comfort food of life!

KENT: Sir, I hate to remind you, but what is my fate to be?

ALBANY: You aren't married, I believe. Why don't you marry Cordelia?

KENT: Okay.

ALBANY: It's done then! Wake her up.

CORDELIA: *(waking up)* I'm already married. To the King of France.

LEAR: But that was an arranged marriage. And French! I hereby declare it null and void, by the wave of my hand. It is good to be an autocrat! But do you and Kent feel anything at all for one another? We do not want to exchange one arranged marriage for another.

90

KENT: I do feel a special tingling for Cordelia. I never let on before.

CORDELIA: I like a man who likes disguises! It makes me tingle!

LEAR: Well matched! I declare thee wife and husband.

(Kent and Cordelia embrace.)

KENT: However, I do have one question. As Cordelia was married before, I must ask if that

marriage was consummated.

CORDELIA: No, I am still a vegan!

KENT: Close enough. My bride! (*They embrace again.*)

ALBANY: Sop then, can we wrap this up at last?!

(Offstage voice of the Fool.)

FOOL: Wait but a minute more! Guess who's been left outside this door?

LEAR: Who's that? It can't be . . .

Enter the Fool

FOOL: O it can be – in a comedy! As You Like It, What You Will, All's Swell That

Ends Swell! Need I go on? Old Will Shakespeare knew how to end a play!

With a laugh, a laugh a laugh to keep dark grief away! (*Turns toward Queen Lear*)

There she is! O Mummy! Mummy! (*The Fool runs toward Lear and jumps into her arms.*)

LEAR: (*cradling the Fool*) O my boy! My boy! You are indeed my boy!

(All applaud.)

BLACKOUT