

# KING LEAR

King Lear decides to divide his kingdom into three portions- one for each of his daughters- conditioned on their public professions of their exclusive love. While the older Goneril and Regan fawn over him, Cordelia refuses, and is banished to France without a dowry, as is the good Earl of Kent who supports her. The King of France agrees to marry her, even without a dowry, making her a queen.

Gloucester has two sons, one is the good Edgar, and the other is the conniving Edmund, who is a bastard. He schemes to cast mistrust on Edgar by forging a letter that purports to plot the demise of the father, the Earl of Gloucester, and shows it to him, feigning as if to protect Edgar from this exposure. Gloucester is enraged, and Edmund tells his brother to make himself scarce, which he does by leaving the palace and wandering the countryside disguised alternately as Poor Tom, ( who the foul fiend has led through fire and flood), a madman beggar and a poor countryman. Meanwhile, he deliberately wounds himself with his sword and calls out for Gloucester, claiming that Edgar wounded him as he defended his father.

Edmund declares " Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit."

Goneril and Regan are displeased with Lear about casting off Cordelia, but now begin to ostracize Lear, kicking him out of their respective palaces, and denying him his entourage of 100 knights. Goneril claims she turns the palace into a brothel or tavern with all this riotous behavior. For her ingratitude, Lear asks nature to render Goneril barren " How sharper than a serpent's tooth is to have a thankless child." He is left to fend for himself in a storm by his two selfish power-hungry daughters. The Earl of Kent returns in disguise to assist Lear, ingratiating himself by tripping Oswald, Goneril's servant, calling him a "WHORESON DOG". Lear's Fool offers him his "coxcomb" (hat) for taking the side of one who is out of favor. The fool declares: "Have more than thou showest, speak less than thou knowest, lend less than thou owest." Hold your cards close.

Goneril's spouse, the Duke of Albany, and Cornwall, Regan's spouse are about to go to war against one another. Edmund continues to scheme and spread lies about Edgar. Gloucester proclaims that he shall bring the murderous coward to the stake.

Regan and Goneril learn of this, and welcome Edmund into their service.

Kent meets Oswald at Gloucester's castle and challenges him to fight, calling him " a knave, a rascal, an eater of broken meats; a base, proud, shallow, beggarly, three-suited, hundred-pound filthy worsted -stocking knave; a lily-livered, action-taking, whoreson, glass-gazing, superserviceable, finical rogue; the son and heir of a mongrel bitch. Kent's conduct provokes Cornwall into putting Kent in the stocks. for punishment. Lear arrives, enraged that his

messenger is in the stocks and that his daughters want to deny him his knights; they close off Gloucester's castle to him

Kent finds Lear and his Fool in the monstrous storm that builds, and warns a Gentleman that the French forces are set to invade. Kent leads them all to a hovel, where they eventually run into the disguised Edgar.

Gloucester, ever loyal to the King, goes to Lear's aid, while Edmund plots against him by telling Cornwall that his father is betraying them by allying himself with King Lear. He finds them and leads them to a house, where Lear conducts a mock trial of his two ungrateful daughters, where Goneril is represented by a joint stool. The Fool warns that " This cold night will turn us all to fools and madmen"

Edmund: tells Cornwall of Gloucester's betrayal and of the letter from France indicating a pending invasion ; they plot Lear' s death

Gloucester tells Lear to go to Cordelia's aid in Dover, where she has arrived with the French army, and tells Lear about the plot to kill him.

Cornwall dispatches men to catch Gloucester, and sends Edmund and Goneril to tell Albany about the French army; Gloucester is caught, and Cornwall puts out his eyes, but ends up getting mortally wounded by a servant loyal to Gloucester. Regan eggs him on, interrogating Gloucester as to why he sent the King to Dover. The servants help Gloucester heal his wounds with the flax and whites of eggs.

Edgar, still disguised, runs into Gloucester, his father, proclaiming " Who can say I am at the worst?" "I am worse than e'er I was." He agrees to lead him to the cliffs of Dover. They run into Lear, going mad, villifying women; " Down from the waist they are centaurs, though women all above ;but to the girdle do the God's inherit; benerath is all the fiend's." Edgar brings Gloucester to a make-believe cliff where Gloucester tries to jump, but only falls at his own feet, and Edgar tells him the gods must have intervened. Oswald appears and tries to kill Gloucester, as per his commands, but Edgar intervenes and finds a letter on him where Goneril writes to her would-be spouse Edmund plotting Albany's death. ( Albany had learned about the plot to kill Lear, and the torture of Gloucester, and rudely reprimanded Goneril, who calls him a coward.

Cordelia orders out a search party for King Lear, who dodges them out of shame at having initially turned away the one daughter he loved.

Meanwhile, Regan has eyes for Edmund, now that she is a widow, but also realizes that her sister has plans as well, and questions the letter Oswald is taking to Edmund and warns Edmund not to become familiar with her.

Lear is reunited with Cordelia in the French camp, and she provides him with medical assistance.

Albany joins forces with Regan's, led by Edmund, putting their differences aside to fight the foreign invasion. Edgar gives him the letter of Goneril's scheme he found on Oswald, and Edmund contemplates whether to couple off with Regan or Edmund, and how he intends to kill Lear and Cordelia upon their capture, although Albany's intent was to show them mercy.. In fact, Cordelia's French army is defeated and she and Lear are taken prisoners.

Edmund commissions their secret assassination and Albany confronts Edmund and Goneril about their plot, and calls for a champion that Edgar promised to produce to duel Edmund, which turns out to be him. In the ensuing trial by combat, Edmund is mortally wounded by Edgar, who reveals his identity. Edgar tells how Gloucester's heart split, from joy and grief, when Edgar told him who he was. A messenger announces Regan's death, poisoned by Goneril; and Goneril's death, by her own hand. ( knife). Edmund, wounded confesses the plan of assassination but it comes too late, as Lear walks in carrying Cordelia body, who was hung by a guard (it was meant to look like a suicide.) Lear kills the guard, but Cordelia dies. Lear dies of a broken heart.