

## **Overview**

The epic tragedy, "King Lear", has often been regarded as Shakespeare's greatest masterpiece, if not the crowning achievement of any dramatist in the Western canon. This introduction to "King Lear" will provide students with a general overview of the play and its primary characters, in addition to selected essay topics. Studying a Shakespearean play deepens students' appreciation for all literature and facilitates both their understanding of themes and symbolism in literary works and their recognition of effective characterization and stylistic devices.

## **A brief overview of the most important characters in the play.**

### **King Lear**

Childlike, passionate, cruel, kind, unlikable, and sympathetic – Lear is one of Shakespeare's most complex characters and portraying him remains a tremendous challenge to any actor. The noted Shakespearean scholar, William Hazlitt, eloquently elaborated on Lear's many dimensions:

"The character of Lear itself is very finely conceived for the purpose. It is the only ground on which such a story could be built with the greatest truth and effect. It is his rash haste, his violent impetuosity, his blindness to every thing but the dictates of his passions or affections, that produces all his misfortunes, that aggravates his impatience of them, that enforces our pity for him...The greatness of Lear is not in corporal dimension, but in intellectual; the explosions of his passions are terrible as a volcano: they are storms turning up and disclosing to the bottom that rich sea, his mind, with all its vast riches. It is his mind which is laid bare." ("Characters of Shakespear's Plays", 1817)

### **Cordelia**

As the honorable and beloved daughter of King Lear, Cordelia ranks among Shakespeare's finest heroines. Although Cordelia's role in the play is minor (appearing on stage only in the first and final act), she is ever-present in the minds of readers as the symbol of virtue and mercy, in stark contrast to her sisters, Goneril and Regan.

### **Regan and Goneril**

King Lear's two monstrous daughters, Goneril and Regan, are archetype villains from the onset of the play, and, although they serve well their purpose, they are not as developed as other Shakespearean scoundrels, such as Lady Macbeth.

### **Kent**

Kent, King Lear's loyal and selfless companion, is one of Shakespeare's most cherished creations. "Kent is, perhaps, the nearest to perfect goodness in all Shakespeare's characters, and yet the most individualized." ("Complete Works of Samuel Coleridge, Vol. IV", edited by W.G.T. Shedd, Harper and Bros., New York: 1884, pp. 138).

### **Edgar**

Edgar, the banished son of Gloucester and brother to the villain Edmund, is the primary character in the sub-plot of "King Lear". The dutiful Edgar is much like Cordelia and suffers throughout the play due to his father's transgressions. Unlike Cordelia, however, Edgar remains alive at the end of the drama, and becomes King of Britain.

## **A summary of the significant events in Shakespeare's "King Lear."**

The story opens in ancient Britain, where the elderly King Lear is deciding to give up his power and divide his realm amongst his three daughters, Cordelia, Regan, and Goneril. Lear's plan is to give the largest piece of his kingdom to the child who professes to love him the most, certain that his favorite daughter, Cordelia, will win the challenge. Goneril and Regan, corrupt and deceitful, lie to their father with sappy and excessive declarations of affection. Cordelia, however, refuses to engage in Lear's game, and replies simply that she loves him as a daughter should.

Her lackluster retort, despite its sincerity, enrages Lear, and he disowns Cordelia completely. When Lear's dear friend, the Earl of Kent, tries to speak on Cordelia's behalf, Lear banishes him from the kingdom.

Meanwhile, the King of France, present at court and overwhelmed by Cordelia's honesty and virtue, asks for her hand in marriage, despite her loss of a sizable dowry. Cordelia accepts the King of France's proposal, and reluctantly leaves Lear with her two cunning sisters. Kent, although banished by Lear, remains to try to protect the unwitting King from the evils of his two remaining children. He disguises himself and takes a job as Lear's servant. Now that Lear has turned over all his wealth and land to Regan and Goneril, their true natures surface at once. Lear and his few companions, including some knights, a fool, and the disguised Kent, go to live with Goneril, but she reveals that she plans to treat him like the old man he is while he is under her roof. So Lear decides to stay instead with his other daughter, and he sends Kent ahead to deliver a letter to Regan, preparing her for his arrival. However, when Lear arrives at Regan's castle, he is horrified to see that Kent has been placed in stocks. Kent is soon set free, but before Lear can uncover who placed his servant in the stocks, Goneril arrives, and Lear realizes that Regan is conspiring with her sister against him.

Aware now of the extent of his daughters' betrayal, Lear rushes from the castle alone into the wilderness in a raging storm. After wandering for some time in the howling wind and pelting rain, the Fool and Kent find the King and beg him to seek shelter in a nearby hovel. But Lear, overcome with feelings of sorrow and remorse over his own transgressions, refuses to move, until the Earl of Gloucester arrives and convinces Lear that he understands his turmoil, for he too has an evil child, Edmund, and a beloved banished child, Edgar. The unsuspecting Gloucester has no idea that Edgar is nearby on the heath, disguised as a beggar.

Gloucester arrives back at Regan's castle in time to hear that the two sisters are planning to murder the King. He rushes away immediately to warn Kent to send Lear to Dover, where they will find protection. Kent, Lear, and the Fool leave at once, while Edgar remains behind in the shadows. Sadly, Regan and Goneril discover Gloucester has warned Lear of their plot, and Cornwall, Regan's husband, gouges out Gloucester's eyes. A servant tries to help Gloucester and attacks Cornwall with a sword – a blow later to prove fatal.

News arrives that Cordelia has raised an army of French troops that have landed at Dover. Regan and Goneril ready their troops to fight and they head to Dover. Meanwhile, Kent has heard the news of Cordelia's return, and sets off with Lear hoping that father and daughter can be reunited. Gloucester too tries to make his way to Dover, and on the way, finds his own lost son, Edgar.

Tired from his ordeal, Lear sleeps through the battle between Cordelia and her sisters. When Lear awakes he is told that Cordelia has been defeated. Lear takes the news well, thinking that he will be jailed with his beloved Cordelia – away from his evil offspring. However, the orders have come, not for Cordelia's imprisonment, but for her death.

Despite their victory, the evil natures of Goneril and Regan soon destroy them. Both in love with Gloucester's conniving son, Edmund (who gave the order for Cordelia to be executed), Goneril poisons Regan. But when Goneril discovers that Edmund has been fatally wounded by Edgar, Goneril kills herself as well.

As Edmund takes his last breath he repents and the order to execute Cordelia is reversed. But the reversal comes too late and Cordelia is hanged. Lear appears, carrying the body of Cordelia in his arms. Mad with grief, Lear bends over Cordelia's body, looking for a sign of life. The strain overcomes Lear and he falls dead on top of his daughter. Kent declares that he will follow his master into the afterlife and the noble Edgar becomes the ruler of Britain.

## **A selection of study questions for students or fans who love to discuss Lear.**

1) Trace the different stages of Lear's insanity. Is it true that "King Lear" is the tragedy of a "man going sane", as some critics suggest?

- 2) Discuss the role of the Fool in "King Lear."
- 3) What is the significance of the Gloucester subplot?
- 4) Compare Lear's three daughters. By what means does Shakespeare deepen the contrast between Cordelia and her two sinister sisters.
- 5) Sketch the character of Kent. How is he similar to Lear?
- 6) Discuss the effect of suffering on both Lear and Gloucester.
- 7) Explain the irony in the deaths of Lear and Cordelia.
- 8) Compare the character Edmund in "King Lear" to the character Iago in "Othello". Are their motives similar? Is one a more developed character than the other and why is this so?
- 9) Analyze the following quote taken from the letters of John Keats. Take a stand for or against the argument posed:

"The excellence of every art is its intensity, capable of making all disagreeables evaporate from their being in close relationship with Beauty and Truth. Examine "King Lear" and you will find this exemplified throughout." ("Keats in a letter to George and Thomas Keats", 1817)

## The Chronicle History of King Leir

### Part 1: Introduction to the Play

The story of King Lear and his three daughters is an old tale, well known in England for centuries before Shakespeare wrote the definitive play on the subject. The first English account of Lear can be found in the *History of the Kings of Britain*, written by Geoffrey Monmouth in 1135. Monmouth's account spawned several 16th-century narratives about Lear, including renderings in Holinshed's *Chronicles* (first edition, 1577) and in *The Mirror for Magistrates* (1574). Even the great poet Edmund Spenser recounted Lear's tragedy in Canto 10, Book II of *The Faerie Queen* (1590). All of the aforementioned versions of the tale, and possibly dozens more, were readily available to Shakespeare and shaped the main plot of his own drama. However, it is clear that Shakespeare relied chiefly on *King Leir*, fully titled *The True Chronicle History of King Leir, and his three daughters, Gonorill, Ragan, and Cordella*, the anonymous play published twelve years before the first recorded performance of Shakespeare's *King Lear*.

In 1594, entrepreneur and theatre manager Philip Henslowe noted in his diary that *King Leir* was performed at the Rose Theatre in London as a springtime co-production by the Queen's Men and Lord Sussex's Men, two of the most prominent acting companies of the day. That same year a bookseller named Edward White obtained a license to publish the play, but since no copy of the play printed in that year survives, we do not know if White went through with an actual printing. In May of 1605, another license was obtained to publish *King Leir*, this time by a printer named Simon Stafford. It is through the efforts of Stafford and his co-publisher, John Wright, that we have a surviving printed edition of the play.

Although *King Leir* retains the ending found in earlier accounts of the story, in which Cordelia lives and Leir is restored to the throne, the anonymous play incorporates vivid new characters (the most crucial being Perillus) and situations which are not found in any of the previous retellings of the tale, thus expanding the sparse legend into an effective, five-act play. Shakespeare, in turn, expands on *King Leir's* original elements. He changes Perillus' name to Kent, and adopts most of the scenes shared between Leir and Perillus. Compare Lear's famous speech 2.4 to the analogous speech found in 3.3 of *King Leir*:

**Lear.** O, reason not the need: our basest beggars  
Are in the poorest thing superfluous:  
Allow not nature more than nature needs,  
Man's life's as cheap as beast's: thou art a lady;  
If only to go warm were gorgeous,  
Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,  
Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But, for true need,-  
You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need!  
You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,  
As full of grief as age; wretched in both!  
If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts  
Against their father, fool me not so much  
To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger,  
And let not women's weapons, water-drops,  
Stain my man's cheeks!  
**(King Lear, 2.4.291-305)**

**Leir.** Nay, if thou talk of reason, then be mute;  
For with good reason I can thee confute.  
If they, which first by nature's sacred law,  
Do owe to me the tribute of their lives;  
If they to whom I always have been kind,  
And bountiful beyond comparison;  
If they, for whom I have undone myself,  
And brought my age unto this extreme want,  
Do now reject, condemn, despise, abhor me,  
What reason moveth thee to sorrow for me?  
**(King Leir, 3.3.79-90)**

Notice also the similarities in the two plays as the king first confronts his three daughters.

**Lear.** Know that we have divided  
In three our kingdom: and 'tis our fast intent  
To shake all cares and business from our age;  
Conferring them on younger strengths, while we  
Unburthen'd crawl toward death. Our son of Cornwall,  
And you, our no less loving son of Albany,  
We have this hour a constant will to publish  
Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife  
May be prevented now. The princes, France and Burgundy,  
Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,  
Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn,  
And here are to be answer'd. Tell me, my daughters,-  
Since now we will divest us both of rule,  
Interest of territory, cares of state,-  
Which of you shall we say doth love us most?  
That we our largest bounty may extend  
Where nature doth with merit challenge. Goneril,  
Our eldest-born, speak first.

**Gon.** Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter;  
Dearer than eye-sight, space, and liberty;  
Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare;  
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour;  
As much as child e'er loved, or father found;  
A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable;  
Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

**Cord.** {Aside}  
Love, and be silent.

**Lear.** Of all these bounds, even from this line to this,  
With shadowy forests and with champains rich'd,  
With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads,  
We make thee lady: to thine and Albany's issue  
Be this perpetual. What says our second daughter,  
Our dearest Regan, wife to Cornwall? Speak.

**Reg.** Sir, I am made  
Of the self-same metal that my sister is,  
And prize me at her worth. In my true heart  
I find she names my very deed of love;  
Only she comes too short: that I profess  
Myself an enemy to all other joys,  
Which the most precious square of sense possesses;  
And find I am alone felicitate  
In your dear highness' love.

**Cord.** {Aside}  
And yet not so; since, I am sure, my love's  
More richer than my tongue.

**Lear.** To thee and thine hereditary ever  
Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom;  
No less in space, validity, and pleasure,  
Than that conferr'd on Goneril. Now, our joy,  
Although the last, not least; to whose young love  
The vines of France and milk of Burgundy  
Strive to be interest'd; what can you say to draw  
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

**Cord.** Nothing, my lord.

**Lear.** Nothing!

**Cord.** Nothing.

**Leir.** Dear Gonorill, kind Ragan, sweet Cordella,  
Ye flourishing branches of a kingly stock,  
Sprung from a tree that once did flourish green,  
Whose blossoms now are nipped with winter's frost,  
And pale grim death doth wait upon my steps,  
And summons me unto his next assizes.  
Therefore, dear daughters, as ye tender the safety  
Of him that was the cause of your first being,  
Resolve a doubt which much molests my mind,  
Which of you three to me would prove most kind;  
Which loves me most, and which at my request  
Will soonest yield unto their father's hest.

**Gon.** I hope, my gracious father makes no doubt  
Of any of his daughters' love to him:  
Yet for my part, to show my zeal to you,  
Which cannot be in windy words rehearsed,  
I prize my love to you at such a rate,  
I think my life inferior to my love.  
Should you enjoin me for to tie a millstone  
About my neck, and leap into the sea,  
At your command I willingly would do it:  
Yea, for to do you good, I would ascend  
The highest turret in all Brittany,  
And from the top leap headlong to the ground:  
Nay, more should you appoint me for to marry  
The meanest vassal in the spacious world,  
Without reply I would accomplish it:  
In brief, command whatever you desire,  
And if I fail no favour I require.

**Leir.** O, how my words revive my dying soul!

**Cord.** O, how I do abhor this flattery!

**Leir.** But what saith Ragan to her father's will?

**Rag.** O, that my simple utterance could suffice,  
To tell the true intention of my heart,  
Which burns in zeal of duty to your grace,  
And never can be quenched, but by desire  
To show the same in outward forwardness.  
Oh, that there were some other maid that durst  
But make a challenge of her love with me;  
I would make her soon confess she never loved  
Her father half so well as I do you.  
Ay then, my deeds should prove in plainer case,  
How much my zeal aboundeth to your grace:  
But for them all, let this one mean suffice,  
To ratify my love before your eyes:  
I have right noble suitors to my love,  
No worse than kings, and haply I love one:  
Yet, would you have me make my choice anew,  
I would bridle fancy, and be ruled by you.

**Leir.** Did never Philomel sing so sweet a note.

**Cord.** Did never flatterer tell so false a tale.

**Leir.** Speak now, Cordella, make my joys at full,  
And drop down nectar from thy honey lips.

**Cord.** I cannot paint my duty forth in words  
I hope my deeds shall make report for me:  
But look what love the child doth owe the father,  
5The same to you I bear, my gracious lord.

Shakespeare also borrows several smaller yet important details from *King Leir*:

It was the advice with which the old dramatist [of *King Leir*] credited Skalliger, whose time-serving propensities helped to generate the wicked servility of Goneril's servant, Oswald. Something of the stage business which is associated in Shakespeare's tragedy with the exchange of letters, e.g. between Regan and Goneril (IV. ii. 82), Kent and Cordelia (IV. iii, seq.), and Goneril and Edmund (IV. v, passim), seems traceable to the interception by Gonoril in the old play of letters addressed to Leir (III. v. 45, seq) and to the passage of letters between Ragan and Gonoril (IV. iii. passim). Ragan's angry outburst of unfilial heartlessness on reading Gonoril's written complaint of the old King's 'presumption' (IV. iii. 14, seq) may have given the cue to the splendid outcry in Shakespeare's piece of filial sympathy to which Cordelia gives passionate utterance on receiving Kent's written report of her father's distresses (IV. iii. 11-34).

(Lee xli)

Faced with incessant comparisons to Shakespeare's profound tragedy, *King Leir* often is dismissed as a prosaic, didactic failure, worth little study in its own right. However, some feel that the play is not without artistic merit, and, although the quality of poetry cannot match that found in *King Lear*, it is an entertaining work with lively verse and interesting imagery. I have prepared the complete text of *King Leir* online, so that you may judge for yourself.

### **KING LEIR -- DRAMATIS PERSONAE**

KING LEIR, king of Britain {Brittany}.

SKALLIGER, PERILLUS, King Leir's counsellors.

The Gallian king, king of France, husband of Cordella.

MUMFORD, the Gallian king's attendant.

The king of Cornwall, husband of Gonorill.

MORGAN, king of Cambria, husband of Ragan.

Servant to the king of Cornwall.

Servant to the king of Cambria.

Messenger [or Murtherer], in the service of Gonorill.

Ambassador from Gallia to Britain.

First Mariner.

Second Mariner.

Captain of the Watch.

First Watchmen.

Second Watchmen.

First British Captain.

Second British Captain.

The 'chief' (or mayor) of a British town.

GONORILL, eldest daughter of King Leir, wife of the king of Cornwall.

RAGAN, second daughter of King Leir, wife of the king of Cambria.

CORDELLA, youngest daughter of King Leir, wife of the Gallian king.

Nobles at Leir's court; nobles of Gallia; attendants on the king of Cornwall; nobles of the prince of Cambria; Gallian soldiers; soldiers of Cornwall and Cambria.

## ACT I

### SCENE I

Chamber in King Leir's palace at Troynovant.

Flourish.

[Enter King Leir, Skalliger, Perillus, and Nobles.]

**Leir.** Thus to our grief the obsequies performed  
Of our too late deceased and dearest queen,  
Whose soul I hope, possessed of heavenly joys,  
Doth ride in triumph amongst the cherubins;  
Let us request your grave advice, my lords,  
For the disposing of our princely daughters,  
For whom our care is specially employed,  
As nature bindeth to advance their states,  
In royal marriage with some princely mates:  
For wanting now their mother's good advice,  
Under whose government they have received  
A perfect pattern of a virtuous life:  
Left as it were a ship without a stern,  
Or silly sheep without a pastor's care:  
Although ourselves do dearly tender them,  
Yet are we ignorant of their affairs:  
For fathers best do know to govern sons;  
But daughters' steps the mother's counsel turns.  
A son we want for to succeed our crown,  
And course of time hath cancelled the date  
Of further issue from our withered loins:  
One foot already hangeth in the grave,  
And age hath made deep furrows in my face:  
The world of me, I of the world am weary,  
And I would fain resign these earthly cares,  
And think upon the welfare of my soul:  
Which by no better means may be effected,  
Than by resigning up the crown from me,  
In equal dowry to my daughters three.

**Skall.** A worthy care, my liege, which well declares,  
The zeal you bare unto our quondam queen:  
And since your grace hath licensed me to speak,  
I censure thus; your majesty knowing well,  
What several suitors your princely daughters have,  
To make them each a jointure more or less,  
As is their worth, to them that love profess.

**Leir.** No more, nor less, but even all alike,  
My zeal is fixed, all fashioned in one mould:  
Wherefore impartial shall my censure be,  
Both old and young shall have alike from me.

**Nobl.** my gracious lord, I heartily do wish,  
That god had lent you an heir indubitate,  
Which might have set upon your royal throne,  
When fates should loose the prison of your life,  
By whose succession all this doubt might cease;  
And as by you, by him we might have peace.  
But after-wishes ever come too late,  
And nothing can revoke the course of fate:  
Wherefore, my liege, my censure deems it best,  
To match them with some of your neighbour kings,  
Bordering within the bounds of Albion,  
By whose united friendship, this our state  
May be protected against all foreign hate.

**Leir.** Herein, my lords, your wishes sort with mine,  
And mine (i hope) do sort with heavenly powers:  
For at this instant two near neighbouring kings  
Of Cornwall and of Cambria, motion love  
To my two daughters, Gonorill and Ragan.  
My youngest daughter, fair Cordella, vows  
No liking to a monarch, unless love allows.  
She is solicited by divers peers;  
But none of them her partial fancy hears.  
Yet, if my policy may her beguile,  
I will match her to some king within this isle,  
And so establish such a perfect peace,  
As fortune's force shall never prevail to cease.

**Peril.** Of us and ours, your gracious care, my lord,  
Deserves an everlasting memory,  
To be enrolled in chronicles of fame,  
By never-dying perpetuity:  
Yet to become so provident a prince,  
Lose not the title of a loving father:  
Do not force love, where fancy cannot dwell,  
Lest streams being stopped, above the banks do swell.

**Leir.** I am resolved, and even now my mind

Doth meditate a sudden strategem,  
To try which of my daughters loves me best:  
Which till I know, I cannot be in rest.  
This granted, when they jointly shall contend,  
Each to exceed the other in their love:  
Then at the vantage will I take Cordella,  
Even as she doth protest she loves me best,  
I will say, then, daughter, grant me one request,  
To show thou lovest me as thy sisters do,  
Accept a husband, whom myself will woo.  
Although (poor soul) her senses will be mute:  
Then will I triumph in my policy,  
And match her with a king of Brittany.

**Skall.** I will to them before, and bewray your secrecy.  
Peril. Thus fathers think their children to beguile,  
And oftentimes themselves do first repent,  
When heavenly powers do frustrate their intent. { *Exeunt.* }

## ACT I

### SCENE II

A room in King Leir's palace.

[Enter Gonorill and Ragan.]

**Gon.** I marvel, Ragan, how you can endure  
To see that proud pert peat, our youngest sister,  
So slightly to account of us, her elders,  
As if we were no better than herself!  
We cannot have a quaint device so soon,  
Or new-made fashion, of our choice invention;  
But if she like it, she will have the same,  
Or study newer to exceed us both.  
Besides, she is so nice and so demure;  
So sober, courteous, modest, and precise,  
That all the court hath work enough to do,  
To talk how she exceedeth me and you.

**Rag.** What should I do? would it were in my power,  
To find a cure for this contagious ill:  
Some desperate medicine must be soon applied,  
To dim the glory of her mounting fame;  
Else ere it be long, she will have both prick and praise,  
And we must be set by for working days.  
Do you not see what several choice of suitors  
She daily hath, and of the best degree?  
Say, amongst all, she hap to fancy one,  
And have a husband whenas we have none:  
Why then, by right, to her we must give place,  
Though it be never so much to our disgrace.

**Gon.** By my virginity, rather than she shall have  
A husband before me,  
I will marry one or other in his shirt:  
And yet I have made half a grant already  
Of my good-will unto the king of Cornwall.

**Rag.** Swear not so deeply, sister, here cometh my lord Skalliger:  
Something his hasty coming doth import.

{Enter Skalliger}

**Skall.** Sweet princesses, I am glad I met you here so luckily,  
Having good news which doth concern you both,  
And craveth speedy expedition.

**Rag.** For god's sake tell us what it is, my lord,  
I am with child until you utter it.

**Skall.** Madam, to save your longing, this it is:  
Your father in great secrecy today,  
Told me, he means to marry you out of hand,  
Unto the noble prince of Cambria;  
You, madam, to the king of Cornwall's grace:  
Your younger sister he would fain bestow  
Upon the rich king of Hibernia:  
But that he doubts, she hardly will consent;  
For hitherto she never could fancy him.  
If she do yield, why then, between you three,  
He will divide his kingdom for your dowries.  
But yet there is a further mystery,  
Which, so you will conceal, I will disclose.

**Gon.** Whatever thou speakest to us, kind Skalliger,  
Think that thou speakest it only to thyself.

**Skall.** He earnestly desireth for to know,  
Which of you three do bear most love to him,  
And on your loves he so extremely dotes,  
As never any did, I think, before.  
As presently doth mean to send for you,  
To be resolved of this tormenting doubt:  
And look, whose answer pleaseth him the best,  
They shall have most unto their marriages.

**Rag.** O that I had some pleasing mermaid's voice,  
For to enchant his senseless senses with!

**Skall.** For he supposeth that Cordella will  
Striving to go beyond you in her love,  
Promise to do whatever he desires:  
Then will he straight enjoin her for his sake,  
The hibernian king in marriage for to take.  
This is the sum of all I have to say;

Which being done, I humbly take my leave,  
Not doubting but your wisdoms will foresee  
What course will best unto your good agree.

**Gon.** Thanks, gentle Skalliger, thy kindness undeserved  
Shall not be unrequited if we live. {Exit Skalliger}

**Rag.** Now have we fit occasion offered us,  
To be revenged upon her unperceived.

**Gon.** Nay, our revenge we will inflict on her  
Shall be accounted piety in us:  
I will so flatter with my doting father,  
As he was never so flattered in his life.  
Nay, I will say, that if it be his pleasure,  
To match me to a beggar, I will yield:  
For why, I know whatever I do say,  
He means to match me with the Cornwall king.

**Rag.** I will say the like: for I am well assured,  
Whatever I say to please the old man's mind,  
Who dotes, as if he were a child again,  
I shall enjoy the noble Cambrian prince:  
Only, to feed his humour, will suffice,  
To say, I am content with anyone  
Whom he will appoint me; this will please him more,  
Than ever Apollo's music pleased Jove.

**Gon.** I smile to think, in what a woeful plight  
Cordella will be, when we answer thus:  
For she will rather die, than give consent  
To join in marriage with the Irish king:  
So will our father think, she loveth him not,  
Because she will not grant to his desire,  
Which we will aggravate in such bitter terms,  
That he will soon convert his love to hate:  
For he, you know, is always in extremes.

**Rag.** Not all the world could lay a better plot,  
I long till it be put in practice. {*Exeunt.*}

## ACT I SCENE III

Chamber in King Leir's palace.

[Enter Leir and Perillus.]

**Leir.** Perillus, go seek my daughters,  
Will them immediately come and speak with me.

**Peril.** I will, my gracious lord. {Exit}

**Leir.** Oh, what a combat feels my panting heart,  
Betwixt children's love, and care of common weal!  
How dear my daughters are unto my soul,  
None knows, but he, that knows my thoughts and secret deeds.  
Ah, little do they know the dear regard,  
Wherein I hold their future state to come:  
When they securely sleep on beds of down,  
These aged eyes do watch for their behalf:  
While they like wantons sport in youthful toys,  
This throbbing heart is pierced with dire annoys.  
As doth the sun exceed the smallest star;  
So much the father's love exceeds the child's.  
Yet my complaints are causeless: for the world  
Affords not children more conformable:  
And yet, methinks, my mind presageth still  
I know not what; and yet I fear some ill.

{Enter Perillus with Leir's three daughters.}  
Well, here my daughters come: I have found out  
A present means to rid me of this doubt.

**Gon.** Our royal lord and father, in all duty,  
We come to know the tenour of your will,  
Why you so hastily have sent for us.

**Leir.** Dear Gonorill, kind Ragan, sweet Cordella,  
Ye flourishing branches of a kingly stock,  
Sprung from a tree that once did flourish green,  
Whose blossoms now are nipped with winter's frost,  
And pale grim death doth wait upon my steps,  
And summons me unto his next assizes.  
Therefore, dear daughters, as ye tender the safety  
Of him that was the cause of your first being,  
Resolve a doubt which much molests my mind,  
Which of you three to me would prove most kind;  
Which loves me most, and which at my request  
Will soonest yield unto their father's hest.

**Gon.** I hope, my gracious father makes no doubt  
Of any of his daughters' love to him:  
Yet for my part, to show my zeal to you,  
Which cannot be in windy words rehearsed,  
I prize my love to you at such a rate,  
I think my life inferior to my love.  
Should you enjoin me for to tie a millstone  
About my neck, and leap into the sea,  
At your command I willingly would do it:  
Yea, for to do you good, I would ascend  
The highest turret in all brittany,  
And from the top leap headlong to the ground:  
Nay, more should you appoint me for to marry

The meanest vassal in the spacious world,  
Without reply I would accomplish it:  
In brief, command whatever you desire,  
And if I fail no favour I require.

**Leir.** O, how my words revive my dying soul!

**Cord.** O, how I do abhor this flattery!

**Leir.** But what saith Ragan to her father's will?

**Rag.** O, that my simple utterance could suffice,  
To tell the true intention of my heart,  
Which burns in zeal of duty to your grace,  
And never can be quenched, but by desire  
To show the same in outward forwardness.  
Oh, that there were some other maid that durst  
But make a challenge of her love with me;  
I would make her soon confess she never loved  
Her father half so well as I do you.  
Ay then, my deeds should prove in plainer case,  
How much my zeal aboundeth to your grace:  
But for them all, let this one mean suffice,  
To ratify my love before your eyes:  
I have right noble suitors to my love,  
No worse than kings, and haply I love one:  
Yet, would you have me make my choice anew,  
I would bridle fancy, and be ruled by you.

**Leir.** Did never Philomel sing so sweet a note.

**Cord.** Did never flatterer tell so false a tale.

**Leir.** Speak now, Cordella, make my joys at full,  
And drop down nectar from thy honey lips.

**Cord.** I cannot paint my duty forth in words  
I hope my deeds shall make report for me:  
But look what love the child doth owe the father,  
The same to you I bear, my gracious lord.

**Gon.** Here is an answer answerless indeed:  
Were you my daughter, I should scarcely brook it.

**Rag.** Dost thou not blush, proud peacock as thou art,  
To make our father such a slight reply?

**Leir.** Why how now, minion, are you grown so proud?  
Doth our dear love make you thus peremptory?  
What, is your love become so small to us,  
As that you scorn to tell us what it is?  
Do you love us, as every child doth love  
Their father? true indeed, as some,

Who by disobedience short their father's days,  
And so would you; some are so father-sick,  
That they make means to rid them from the world;  
And so would you: some are indifferent,  
Whether their aged parents live or die;  
And so are you. but, didst thou know, proud girl,  
What care I had to foster thee to this,  
Ah, then thou wouldst say as thy sisters do:  
Our life is less, than love we owe to you.

**Cord.** Dear father, do not so mistake my words  
Nor my plain meaning be misconstrued;  
My tongue was never used to flattery.

**Gon.** You were not best say I flatter: if you do,  
My deeds shall show, I flatter not with you.  
I love my father better than thou canst.

**Cord.** The praise were great, spoke from another's mouth:  
But it should seem your neighbours dwell far off.

**Rag.** Nay, here is one, that will confirm as much  
As she hath said, both for myself and her.  
I say, thou dost not wish my father's good.

**Cord.** Dear father.

**Leir.** Peace, bastard imp, no issue of King Leir,  
I will not hear thee speak one tittle more.  
Call not me father, if thou love thy life,  
Nor these thy sisters once presume to name:  
Look for no help henceforth from me nor mine;  
Shift as thou wilt, and trust unto thyself:  
My kingdom will I equally divide  
Betwixt thy two sisters to their royal dower,  
And will bestow them worthy their deserts:  
This done, because thou shalt not have the hope,  
To have a child's part in the time to come,  
I presently will dispossess myself,  
And set up these upon my princely throne.

**Gon.** I ever thought that pride would have a fall.

**Rag.** Plain dealing, sister: your beauty is so sheen,  
You need no dowry, to make you be a queen.  
{Exeunt King Leir, Gonorill, and Ragan. }

**Cord.** Now whither, poor forsaken, shall I go,  
When mine own sisters triumph in my woe?  
But unto him which doth protect the just,  
In him will poor Cordella put her trust.  
These hands shall labour, for to get my spending;

And so I will live until my days have ending. {Exit}

**Peril.** Oh, how I grieve, to see my lord thus fond,  
To dote so much upon vain flattering words.  
Ah, if he but with good advice had weighed,  
The hidden tenour of her humble speech,  
Reason to rage should not have given place,  
Nor poor Cordella suffer such disgrace. {Exit}

## ACT II

### SCENE I

The palace of the Gallian king.

[Enter the Gallian king with Mumford and three nobles.]

**King.** Dissuade me not, my lords, I am resolved,  
This next fair wind to sail for Brittany,  
In some disguise, to see if flying fame  
Be not too prodigal in the wondrous praise  
Of these three nymphs, the daughters of King Leir.  
If present view do answer absent praise,  
And eyes allow of what our ears have heard,  
And Venus stand auspicious to my vows,  
And fortune favour what I take in hand;  
I will return seized of as rich a prize  
As Jason, when he won the golden fleece.

**Mum.** Heavens grant you may; the match were full of honour,  
And well beseeming the young Gallian king.  
I would your grace would favour me so much,  
As make me partner of your pilgrimage.  
I long to see the gallant British dames,  
And feed mine eyes upon their rare perfections:  
For till I know the contrary, I will say,  
Our dames in France are far more fair than they.

**King.** Lord Mumford, you have saved me a labour,  
In offering that which I did mean to ask:  
And I most willingly accept your company.  
Yet first I will enjoin you to observe  
Some few conditions which I shall propose.

**Mum.** So that you do not tie mine eyes for looking  
After the amorous glances of fair dames:  
So that you do not tie my tongue from speaking,  
My lips from kissing when occasion serves,  
My hands from congees, and my knees to bow  
To gallant girls; which were a task more hard,  
Than flesh and blood is able to endure:  
Command what else you please, I rest content.

**King.** To bind thee from a thing thou canst not leave,  
Were but a means to make thee seek it more:  
And therefore speak, look, kiss, salute for me;  
In these myself am like to second thee.  
Now hear thy task. I charge thee from the time  
The first we set sail for the British shore,  
To use no words of dignity to me,  
But in the friendliest manner that thou canst,  
Make use of me as thy companion:  
For we will go disguised in palmers' weeds,  
That no man shall mistrust us what we are.

**Mum.** If that be all, I will fit your turn, I warrant you. I am  
some kin to the Blunts, and I think, the bluntest of all my kindred;  
therefore if I be too blunt with you, thank yourself for praying me to be so.

**King.** Thy pleasant company will make the way seem short.  
It resteth now, that in my absence hence,  
I do commit the government to you  
My trusty lords and faithful counsellors.  
Time cutteth off the rest I have to say:  
The wind blows fair, and I must needs away.

**Nobles.** Heavens send your voyage to as good effect,  
As we your land do purpose to protect. {Exit}

## ACT II

### SCENE II

On the road to King Leir's palace at Troynovant.

[Enter the king of Cornwall and his man booted and spurred, holding a riding wand and letter in his hand.]

**Corn.** But how far distant are we from the court?  
Ser. Some twenty miles, my lord, or thereabouts.

**Corn.** It seemeth to me twenty thousand miles:  
Yet hope I to be there within this hour.

**Ser.** Then are you like to ride alone for me.  
I think, my lord is weary of his life.

**Corn.** Sweet Gonorill, I long to see thy face,  
Which hast so kindly gratified my love.  
{Enter the king of Cambria booted and spurred, and his servant with a wand and a letter.}

**Cam.** Get a fresh horse: for by my soul I swear,  
{looks at the letter.}  
I am past patience, longer to forbear  
The wished sight of my beloved mistress,  
Dear Ragan, stay and comfort of my life.

**Ser.** Now what in god's name doth my lord intend?

{to himself}.

He thinks he never shall come at his journey's end.

I would he had old Daedalus' waxen wings,

That he might fly, so I might stay behind:

For ere we get to Troynovant, I see,

He quite will tire himself, his horse and me.

{Cornwall and Cambria see one another.}

**Corn.** Brother of Cambria, we greet you well,

As one whom here we little did expect.

**Cam.** Brother of Cornwall, met in happy time:

I thought as much to have met with the souldan of Persia,

As to have met you in this place, my lord.

No doubt, it is about some great affairs,

That makes you here so slenderly accompanied.

**Corn.** To say the truth, my lord, it is no less,

And for your part some hasty wind of chance

Hath blown you hither thus upon the sudden.

**Cam.** My lord, to break off further circumstances,

For at this time I cannot brook delays:

Tell you your reason, I will tell you mine.

**Corn.** In faith, content, and therefore to be brief;

For I am sure my haste is as great as yours:

I am sent for, to come unto King Leir,

Who by these present letters promiseth

His eldest daughter, lovely Gonorill,

To me in marriage, and for present dowry,

The moiety of half his regiment.

The lady's love I long ago possessed:

But until now I never had the father's.

**Cam.** You tell me wonders, yet I will relate

Strange news, and henceforth we must brothers call;

Witness these lines: his honourable age,

Being weary of the troubles of his crown,

His princely daughter Ragan will bestow

On me in marriage, with half his seignories,

Whom I would gladly have accepted of,

With the third part, her complements are such.

**Corn.** If I have one half, and you have the other,

Then between us we must needs have the whole.

**Cam.** The hole! how mean you that? 'sblood, I hope,

We shall have two holes between us.

**Corn.** Why, the whole kingdom.

**Cam.** Ay, that is very true.

**Corn.** What then is left for his third daughter's dowry,  
Lovely Cordella, whom the world admires?

**Cam.** It is very strange, I know not what to think,  
Unless they mean to make a nun of her.

**Corn.** It were pity such rare beauty should be hid  
Within the compass of a cloister's wall:  
But howsoever, if Leir's words prove true,  
It will be good, my lord, for me and you.

**Cam.** Then let us haste, all danger to prevent,  
For fear delays do alter his intent. {Exeunt }

## ACT II

### SCENE III

A room in King Leir's palace at Troynovant.

[Enter Gonorill and Ragan.]

**Gon.** Sister, when did you see Cordella last,  
That pretty piece, that thinks none good enough  
To speak to her, because, sir-reverence,  
She hath a little beauty extraordinary?

**Rag.** Since time my father warned her from his presence,  
I never saw her, that I can remember.  
God give her joy of her surpassing beauty;  
I think, her dowry will be small enough.

**Gon.** I have incensed my father so against her,  
As he will never be reclaimed again.

**Rag.** I was not much behind to do the like.

**Gon.** Faith, sister, what moves you to bear her such good-will?

**Rag.** In truth, I think, the same that moveth you;  
Because she doth surpass us both in beauty.

**Gon.** Beshrew your fingers, how right you can guess:  
I tell you true, it cuts me to the heart.

**Rag.** But we will keep her low enough, I warrant,  
And clip her wings for mounting up too high.

**Gon.** Who ever hath her, shall have a rich marriage of her.

**Rag.** She were right fit to make a parson's wife:  
For they, men say, do love fair women well,  
And many times do marry them with nothing.

**Gon.** With nothing! marry god forbid: why, are there any such?

**Rag.** I mean, no money.

**Gon.** I cry you mercy, I mistook you much:  
And she is far too stately for the church;  
She will lay her husband's benefice on her back,  
Even in one gown, if she may have her will.

**Rag.** In faith, poor soul, I pity her a little.  
Would she were less fair, or more fortunate.  
Well, I think long until I see my Morgan,  
The gallant prince of Cambria, here arrive.

**Gon.** And so do i, until the Cornwall king  
Present himself, to consummate my joys.  
Peace, here cometh my father.

{Enter Leir, Perillus, and others.}

**Leir.** Cease, good my lords, and sue not to reverse  
Our censure, which is now irrevocable.  
We have dispatched letters of contract  
Unto the kings of Cambria and of Cornwall;  
Our hand and seal will justify no less:  
Then do not so dishonour me, my lords  
As to make shipwreck of our kingly word.  
I am as kind as is the pelican,  
That kills itself, to save her young ones' lives:  
And yet as jealous as the princely eagle,  
That kills her young ones, if they do but dazzle  
Upon the radiant splendour of the sun.  
Within this two days I expect their coming.

{Enter kings of Cornwall and Cambria.}

But in good time, they are arrived already.  
This haste of yours, my lords, doth testify  
The fervent love you bear unto my daughters:  
And think yourselves as welcome to King Leir,  
As ever Priam's children were to him.

**Corn.** My gracious lord, and father too, I hope,  
Pardon, for that I made no greater haste:  
But were my horse as swift as were my will,  
I long ere this had seen your majesty.

**Cam.** No other excuse of absence can I frame,  
Than what my brother hath informed your grace:  
Or our undeserved welcome, we do vow,  
Perpetually to rest at your command.

**Corn.** But you, sweet love, illustrious Gonorill,  
The regent, and the sovereign of my soul,  
Is Cornwall welcome to your excellency?

**Gon.** As welcome, as Leander was to hero,  
Or brave Aeneas to the Carthage queen:  
So and more welcome is your grace to me.

**Cam.** O, may my fortune prove no worse then his,  
Since heavens do know, my fancy is as much.  
Dear Ragan, say, if welcome unto thee,  
All welcomes else will little comfort me.

**Rag.** As gold is welcome to the covetous eye,  
As sleep is welcome to the traveller,  
As is fresh water to sea-beaten men,  
Or moistened showers unto the parched ground,  
Or anything more welcomer than this,  
So and more welcome lovely Morgan is.

**Leir.** What resteth then, but that we consummate,  
The celebration of these nuptial rites?  
My kingdom I do equally divide.  
Princes draw lots, and take your chance as falls.  
{They draw lots.}  
These I resign as freely unto you,  
As erst by true succession they were mine.  
And here I do freely dispossess myself,  
And make you two my true adopted heirs:  
Myself will sojourn with my son of Cornwall,  
And take me to my prayers and my beads.  
I know, my daughter Ragan will be sorry,  
Because I do not spend my days with her:  
Would I were able to be with both at once;  
They are the kindest girls in Christendom.

**Peril.** I have been silent all this while, my lord,  
To see if any worthier than myself,  
Would once have spoke in poor Cordella's cause:  
But love or fear ties silence to their tongues.  
Oh, hear me speak for her, my gracious lord,  
Whose deeds have not deserved this ruthless doom,  
As thus to disinherit her of all.

**Leir.** Urge this no more, and if thou love thy life:  
I say, she is no daughter, that doth scorn  
To tell her father how she loveth him.  
Whoever speaketh hereof to me again,  
I will esteem him for my mortal foe.  
Come, let us in, to celebrate with joy,  
The happy nuptials of these lovely pairs.  
{Exit all except Perillus.}

**Peril.** Ah, who so blind, as they that will not see  
The near approach of their own misery?

Poor lady, I extremely pity her:  
And whilst I live, each drop of my heart blood,  
Will I strain forth, to do her any good. {Exeunt}

## ACT II

### SCENE IV

The open country in Britain.

[Enter the Gallian king and Mumford, disguised like pilgrims.]

**Mum.** My lord, how do you brook this British air?

**King.** 'My lord,' I told you of this foolish humour,  
And bound you to the contrary, you know.

**Mum.** Pardon me for once, my lord; I did forget.

**King.** 'My lord' again? then let us have nothing else,  
And so be taken for spies, and then it is well.

**Mum.** 'Swounds, I could bite my tongue in two for anger:  
For god's sake name yourself some proper name.

**King.** Call me Tresillus; I'll call thee Denapoll.

**Mum.** Might I be made the monarch of the world,  
I could not hit upon these names, I swear.

**King.** Then call me Will, I will call thee Jack.

**Mum.** Well, be it so, for I have well deserved to be called Jack.

**King.** Stand close; for here a British lady cometh:  
{Enter Cordella}

A fairer creature never mine eyes beheld.

**Cord.** This is a day of joy unto my sisters,  
Wherein they both are married unto kings;  
And I, by birth, as worthy as themselves,  
Am turned into the world, to seek my fortune.  
How may I blame the fickle queen of chance,  
That maketh me a pattern of her power?  
Ah, poor weak maid, whose imbecility  
Is far unable to endure these brunts.  
Oh, father Leir, how dost thou wrong thy child,  
Who always was obedient to thy will!  
But why accuse I fortune and my father?  
No, no, it is the pleasure of my God:  
And I do willingly embrace the rod.

**King.** It is no goddess; for she doth complain  
On fortune, and the unkindness of her father.

**Cord.** These costly robes ill-fitting my estate  
I will exchange for other meaner habits.

**Mum.** Now if I had a kingdom in my hands,  
I would exchange it for a milkmaid's smock and petticoat,  
That she and I might shift our clothes together.

**Cord.** I will betake me to my thread and needle,  
And earn my living with my fingers' ends.

**Mum.** O brave! god willing, thou shalt have my custom,  
By sweet saint denis, here I sadly swear,  
For all the shirts and night-gear that I wear.

**Cord.** I will profess and vow a maiden's life.

**Mum.** Then I protest thou shalt not have my custom.

**King.** I can forbear no longer for to speak:  
For if I do, I think my heart will break.

**Mum.** 'Sblood, will, I hope you are not in love with my sempster.

**King.** I am in such a labyrinth of love,  
As that I know not which way to get out.

**Mum.** You will never get out, unless you first get in.

**King.** I prithee jack, cross not my passions.

**Mum.** Prithee will, to her, and try her patience.

**King.** Thou fairest creature, whatsoever thou art,  
That ever any mortal eyes beheld,  
Vouchsafe to me, who have overheard thy woes,  
To show the cause of these thy sad laments.

**Cord.** Ah pilgrims, what avails to show the cause,  
When there is no means to find a remedy?

**King.** To utter grief, doth ease a heart overcharged.

**Cord.** To touch a sore, doth aggravate the pain.

**King.** The silly mouse, by virtue of her teeth,  
Released the princely lion from the net.

**Cord.** Kind palmer, which so much desirest to hear  
The tragic tale of my unhappy youth:  
Know this in brief, I am the hapless daughter  
Of Leir, sometimes king of Brittany.

**King.** Why, who debars his honourable age,  
From being still the king of Brittany?

**Cord.** None, but himself hath dispossessed himself,  
And given all his kingdom to the kings  
Of Cornwall and of Cambria, with my sisters.

**King.** Hath he given nothing to your lovely self?

**Cord.** He loved me not, and therefore gave me nothing,  
Only because I could not flatter him:  
And in this day of triumph to my sisters,  
Doth fortune triumph in my overthrow.

**King.** Sweet lady, say there should come a king,  
As good as either of your sisters' husbands,  
To crave your love, would you accept of him?

**Cord.** Oh, do not mock with those in misery,  
Nor do not think, though fortune have the power,  
To spoil mine honour, and debase my state,  
That she hath any interest in my mind:  
For if the greatest monarch on the earth,  
Should sue to me in this extremity,  
Except my heart could love, and heart could like,  
Better than any that I ever saw,  
His great estate no more should move my mind,  
Than mountains move by blast of every wind.

**King.** Think not, sweet nymph, 'tis holy palmers' guise,  
To grieved souls fresh torments to devise:  
Therefore in witness of my true intent,  
Let heaven and earth bear record of my words:  
There is a young and lusty Gallian king,  
So like to me, as I am to myself,  
That earnestly doth crave to have thy love,  
And join with thee in Hymen's sacred bonds.

**Cord.** The like to thee did ne'er these eyes behold;  
Oh live to add new torments to my grief:  
Why didst thou thus entrap me unawares?  
Ah palmer, my estate doth not befit  
A kingly marriage as the case now stands.  
Whilom whenas I lived in honour's height,  
A prince perhaps might postulate my love:  
Now misery, dishonour and disgrace,  
Hath light on me, and quite reversed the case.  
Thy king will hold thee wise, if thou surcease  
The suit, whereas no dowry will ensue.  
Then be advised, palmer, what to do:  
Cease for thy king, seek for thyself to woo.

**King.** Your birth's too high for any, but a king.

**Cord.** My mind is low enough to love a palmer,

Rather than any king upon the earth.

**King.** O, but you never can endure their life,  
Which is so straight and full of penury.

**Cord.** O yes, I can, and happy if I might:  
I will hold thy palmer's staff within my hand,  
And think it is the sceptre of a queen.  
Sometime I will set thy bonnet on my head,  
And think I wear a rich imperial crown.  
Sometime I will help thee in thy holy prayers,  
And think I am with thee in paradise.  
Thus I will mock fortune as she mocketh me,  
And never will lovely choice repent:  
For, having thee, I shall have all content.

**King.** It were sin to hold her longer in suspense,  
Since that my soul hath vowed she shall be mine.  
Ah, dear Cordella, cordial to my heart,  
I am no palmer, as I seem to be,  
But hither come in this unknown disguise,  
To view the admired beauty of those eyes.  
I am the king of Gallia, gentle maid,  
Although thus slenderly accompanied,  
And yet thy vassal by imperious love,  
And sworn to serve thee everlastingly.

**Cord.** Whatever you be, of high or low descent,  
All's one to me, I do request but this:  
That as I am, you will accept of me,  
And I will have you whatsoever you be:  
Yet well I know, you come of royal race,  
I see such sparks of honour in your face.

**Mum.** Have palmer's weeds such power to win fair ladies?  
Faith, then I hope the next that falls is mine:  
Upon condition I no worse might speed,  
I would forever wear a palmer's weed.  
I like an honest and plain dealing wench,  
That swears, without exceptions, I will have you.  
These foppets, that know not whether to love a man or no,  
except they first go ask their mother's leave, by this hand, I  
hate them ten times worse than poison.

**King.** What resteth then our happiness to procure?

**Mum.** Faith, go to church, to make the matter sure.

**King.** It shall be so because the world shall say,

**King.** Leir's three daughters were wedded in one day:  
The celebration of this happy chance,

We will defer, until we come to France.

**Mum.** I like the wooing, that is not long a-doing.  
Well, for her sake, I know what I know:  
I will never marry whilst I live,  
Except I have one of these British ladies,  
My humour is alienated from the maids of France. {Exeunt}

### ACT III SCENE I

A road leading to Cornwall.

[Enter Perillus, alone.]

**Peril.** The king hath dispossessed himself of all,  
Those to advance, which scarce will give him thanks:  
His youngest daughter he hath turned away,  
And no man knows what is become of her.  
He sojourns now in Cornwall with the eldest,  
Who flattered him, until she did obtain  
That at his hands, which now she doth possess:  
And now she sees he hath no more to give,  
It grieves her heart to see her father live.  
Oh, whom should man trust in this wicked age,  
When children thus against their parents rage?  
But he, the mirror of mild patience,  
Puts up all wrongs, and never gives reply:  
Yet shames she not in most opprobrious sort,  
To call him fool and dotard to his face,  
And sets her parasites of purpose oft,  
In scoffing wise to offer him disgrace.  
Oh iron age! O times! O monstrous, vile,  
When parents are contemned of the child!  
His pension she hath half restrained from him,  
And will, ere long, the other half, I fear:  
For she thinks nothing is bestowed in vain,  
But that which doth her father's life maintain.  
Trust not alliance; but trust strangers rather,  
Since daughters prove disloyal to the father.  
Well, I will counsel him the best I can:  
Would I were able to redress his wrong.  
Yet what I can, unto my utmost power,  
He shall be sure of to the latest hour. {Exeunt}

### ACT III SCENE II

A room in the royal palace of Cornwall.

[Enter Gonorill and Skalliger.]

**Gon.** I prithee, Skalliger, tell me what thou thinkest:  
Could any woman of our dignity  
Endure such quips and peremptory taunts,  
As I do daily from my doting father?  
Doth it not suffice that I him keep of alms,  
Who is not able for to keep himself?  
But as if he were our better, he should think  
To check and snap me up at every word.  
I cannot make me a new fashioned gown,  
And set it forth with more than common cost;  
But his old doting doltish withered wit,  
Is sure to give a senseless check for it.  
I cannot make a banquet extraordinary,  
To grace myself and spread my name abroad,  
But he, old fool, is captious by and by,  
And saith, the cost would well suffice for twice.  
Judge then, I pray, what reason is it, that I  
Should stand alone charged with his vain expense,  
And that my sister Ragan should go free,  
To whom he gave as much as unto me?  
I prithee, Skalliger, tell me, if thou know,  
By any means to rid me of this woe.

**Skall.** Your many favours still bestowed on me,  
Bind me in duty to advise your grace,  
How you may soonest remedy this ill.  
The large allowance which he hath from you,  
Is that which makes him so forget himself:  
Therefore abridge it half, and you shall see,  
That having less, he will more thankful be:  
For why, abundance maketh us forget  
The fountains whence the benefits do spring.

**Gon.** Well, Skalliger, for thy kind advice herein,  
I will not be ungratefull, if I live:  
I have restrained half his portion already,  
And I will presently restrain the other,  
That having no means to relieve himself,  
He may go seek elsewhere for better help.

**Skall.** Go, viperous woman, shame to all thy sex:  
The heavens, no doubt, will punish thee for this;  
And me, a villain, that to curry favour,  
Have given the daughter counsel against the father.  
But us the world doth this experience give,  
That he that cannot flatter cannot live. {Exeunt}

**ACT III**  
**SCENE III**

A hall in the royal palace of Cornwall.

[Enter king of Cornwall, Leir, Perillus, and nobles.]

**Corn.** Father, what aileth you to be so sad?  
Methinks, you frolic not as you were wont.

**Leir.** The nearer we do grow unto our graves,  
The less we do delight in worldly joys.

**Corn.** But if a man can frame himself to mirth,  
It is a mean for to prolong his life.

**Leir.** Then welcome sorrow, Leir's only friend,  
Who doth desire his troubled days had end.

**Corn.** Comfort yourself, father, here comes your daughter,  
Who much will grieve, I know, to see you sad.

{Enter Gonorill}

**Leir.** But more doth grieve, I fear, to see me live.

**Corn.** My Gonorill, you come in wished time,  
To put your father from these pensive dumps.  
In faith I fear that all things go not well.

**Gon.** What, do you fear, that I have angered him?  
Hath he complained of me unto my lord?  
I will provide him a piece of bread and cheese;  
For in a time he will practise nothing else,  
Than carry tales from one unto another.  
It is all his practice for to kindle strife,  
Betwixt you, my lord, and me your loving wife:  
But I will take an order, if I can,  
To cease the effect, where first the cause began.

**Corn.** Sweet, be not angry in a partial cause,  
He never complained of thee in all his life.  
Father, you must not weigh a woman's words.

**Leir.** Alas, not I: poor soul, she breeds young bones,  
And that is it makes her so touchy sure.

**Gon.** What, breeds young bones already! you will make  
An honest woman of me then, belike.  
O vile old wretch! who ever heard the like,  
That seeketh thus his own child to defame?

**Corn.** I cannot stay to hear this discord sound. {Exit}

**Gon.** For anyone that loves your company,  
You may go pack, and seek some other place,  
To sow the seed of discord and disgrace. {Exit}

**Leir.** Thus, say or do the best that ever I can,

It is wrested straight into another sense.  
This punishment my heavy sins deserve,  
And more than this ten thousand thousand times:  
Else aged Leir them could never find  
Cruel to him, to whom he hath been kind.  
Why do I over-live myself, to see  
The course of nature quite reversed in me?  
Ah, gentle death, if ever any wight  
Did wish thy presence with a perfect zeal:  
Then come, I pray thee, even with all my heart,  
And end my sorrows with thy fatal dart. { Weeps }

**Peril.** Ah, do not so disconsolate yourself,  
Nor dew your aged cheeks with wasting tears.

**Leir.** What man art thou that takest any pity  
Upon the worthless state of old Leir?

**Peril.** One, who doth bear as great a share of grief,  
As if it were my dearest father's case.

**Leir.** ah, good my friend, how ill art thou advised,  
For to consort with miserable men:  
Go learn to flatter, where thou mayest in time  
Get favour amongst the mighty, and so climb:  
For now I am so poor and full of want,  
As that I never can recompense thy love.

**Peril.** What is got by flattery doth not long endure;  
And men in favour live not most secure.  
My conscience tells me, if I should forsake you,  
I were the hatefulest excrement on the earth:  
Which well do know, in course of former time,  
How good my lord hath been to me and mine.

**Leir.** did I ere raise thee higher than the rest  
Of all thy ancestors which were before?

**Peril.** I never did seek it; but by your good grace,  
I still enjoyed my own with quietness.

**Leir.** Did I ere give thee living, to increase  
The due revenues which thy father left?

**Peril.** I had enough, my lord, and having that,  
What should you need to give me any more?

**Leir.** Oh, did I ever dispossess myself,  
And give thee half my kingdom in good-will?

**Peril.** Alas, my lord, there were no reason, why  
You should have such a thought, to give it me.

**Leir.** nay, if thou talk of reason, then be mute;  
For with good reason I can thee confute.  
If they, which first by nature's sacred law,  
Do owe to me the tribute of their lives;  
If they to whom I always have been kind,  
And bountiful beyond comparison;  
If they, for whom I have undone myself,  
And brought my age unto this extreme want,  
Do now reject, contemn, despise, abhor me,  
What reason moveth thee to sorrow for me?

**Peril.** Where reason fails, let tears confirm my love,  
And speak how much your passions do me move.  
Ah, good my lord, condemn not all for one:  
You have two daughters left, to whom I know  
You shall be welcome, if you please to go.

**Leir.** Oh, how thy words add sorrow to my soul,  
To think of my unkindness to Cordella!  
Whom causeless I did dispossess of all,  
Upon the unkind suggestions of her sisters:  
And for her sake, I think this heavy doom  
Is fallen on me, and not without desert:  
Yet unto Ragan was I always kind,  
And gave to her the half of all I had:  
It may be, if I should to her repair,  
A he would be kinder, and entreat me fair.

**Peril.** No doubt she would, and practise ere it be long,  
By force of arms for to redress your wrong.

**Leir.** Well, since thou dost advise me for to go,  
I am resolved to try the worst of woe. {Exeunt}

### ACT III

#### SCENE IV

A room in the royal palace of Cambria.

[Enter Ragan, alone.]

**Rag.** How may I bless the hour of my nativity,  
Which bodeth unto me such happy stars!  
How may I thank kind fortune, that vouchsafes  
To all my actions, such desired event!  
I rule the king of cambria as I please:  
The states are all obedient to my will;  
And look whatever I say, it shall be so;  
Not anyone, that dareth answer no.  
My eldest sister lives in royal state,  
And wanteth nothing fitting her degree:  
Yet hath she such a cooling card withal,

As that her honey savoureth much of gall.  
My father with her is quarter-master still,  
And many times restrains her of her will:  
But if he were with me, and served me so,  
I would send him packing somewhere else to go.  
I would entertain him with such slender cost,  
That he should quickly wish to change his host. {Exeunt}

**ACT III**  
**SCENE V**

A room in the royal palace of Cornwall.

[Enter Cornwall, Gonorill, and attendants.]

**Corn.** Ah, Gonorill, what dire unhappy chance  
Hath sequestered thy father from our presence,  
That no report can yet be heard of him?  
Some great unkindness hath been offered him,  
Exceeding far the bounds of patience:  
Else all the world shall never me persuade,  
He would forsake us without notice made.

**Gon.** Alas, my lord, whom doth it touch so near,  
Or who hath interest in this grief, but I,  
Whom sorrow had brought to her longest home,  
But that I know his qualities so well?  
I know, he is but stolen upon my sister  
At unawares, to see her how she fares,  
And spend a little time with her, to note  
How all things go, and how she likes her choice:  
And when occasion serves, he will steal from her,  
And unawares return to us again.  
Therefore, my lord, be frolic, and resolve  
To see my father here again ere long.

**Corn.** I hope so too; but yet to be more sure,  
I will send a post immediately to know  
Whether he be arrived there or no.

**Gon.** But I will intercept the messenger,  
And temper him before he doth depart  
With sweet persuasions, and with sound rewards,  
That his report shall ratify my speech,  
And make my lord cease further to inquire.  
If he be not gone to my sister's court,  
As sure my mind presageth that he is,  
Fall sick, and as common passenger,  
Be dead and buried: would god it were so well;  
For then there were no more to do, but this,  
He went away, and none knows where he is.

But say he be in Cambria with the king,  
And there exclaim against me, as he will:  
I know he is as welcome to my sister,  
As water is into a broken ship.  
Well, after him I will send such thunderclaps  
Of slander, scandal, and invented tales,  
That all the blame shall be removed from me,  
And unperceived rebound upon himself.  
Thus with one nail another I will expel,  
And make the world judge, that I us'd him well.

{Enter the messenger that should go to Cambria, with a letter.}

**Gon.** My honest friend, whither away so fast?

**Mess.** To Cambria, madam, with letters from the King.

**Gon.** To whom?

**Mess.** Unto your father, if he be there.

**Gon.** Let me see them. {Opens letters}

**Mess.** Madam, I hope your grace will stand  
Between me and my neck-verse, if I be  
Called in question, for opening the king's letters.

**Gon.** It was I that opened them, it was not thou.

**Mess.** Ay, but you need not care: and so must I,  
A handsome man, be quickly trussed up,  
And when a man is hanged, all the world cannot save him.

**Gon.** He that hangs thee, were better hang his father,  
Or that but hurts thee in the least degree.  
I tell thee, we make great account of thee.

**Mess.** I am overjoyed, I surfeit of sweet words:  
Kind queen, had I a hundred lives, I would  
Spend ninety-nine of them for you, for that word.

**Gon.** Ay, but thou wouldst keep one life still,  
And that is as many as thou art like to have.

**Mess.** That one life is not too dear for my good queen; this sword, this buckler, this head, this heart, these hands, arms, legs, tripes, bowels, and all the members else whatsoever, are at your dispose; use me, trust me, command me: if I fail in anything, tie me to a dung-cart, and make a scavenger's horse of me, and whip me, so long as I have any skin on my back.

**Gon.** In token of further employment, take that. {Throws a purse of money}

**Mess.** A strong bond, a firm obligation, good in law, good in law: if I keep not the condition, let my neck be the forfeiture of my negligence.

**Gon.** I like thee well, thou hast a good tongue.

**Mess.** And as bad a tongue if it be set on it, as any oysterwife at billingsgate hath: why, I have made many of my neighbours forsake their houses with railing upon them, and go dwell elsewhere; and so by my means houses have been good cheap in our parish: my tongue being well whetted with choler, is more sharp than a razor of Palermo.

**Gon.** O, thou art a fit man for my purpose.

**Mess.** Commend me not, sweet queen, before you try me. as my deserts are, so do think of me.

**Gon.** well said, then this is thy trial: instead of carrying the king's letters to my father, carry thou these letters to my sister, which contain matter quite contrary to the other: there shall she be given to understand, that my father hath detracted her, given out slanderous speeches against her; that he hath most intolerably abused me, set my lord and me at variance, and made mutinies amongst the commons.

These things (although it be not so)  
Yet thou must affirm them to be true,  
With oaths and protestations as will serve  
To drive my sister out of love with him,  
And cause my will accomplished to be.  
This do, thou winnest my favour for ever,  
And makest a high way of preferment to thee  
And all thy friends.

**Mess.** It sufficeth, conceit it is already done:  
I will so tongue-whip him, that I will  
Leave him as bare of credit, as a poulter  
Leaves a cony, when she pulls off his skin.

**Gon.** Yet there is a further matter.

**Mess.** I thirst to hear it.

**Gon.** If my sister thinketh convenient, as my letters importeth, to make him away, hast thou the heart to effect it?

**Mess.** Few words are best in so small a matter:  
These are but trifles. By this book I will.

**Gon.** About it presently, I long till it be done.

**Mess.** I fly, I fly. {Exeunt}

## ACT IV SCENE I

Outside a church in Gallia.

[Enter Cordella, alone.]

**Cord.** I have been over-negligent to-day,  
In going to the temple of my God,  
To render thanks for all his benefits,  
Which he miraculously hath bestowed on me,  
In raising me out of my mean estate,  
Whenas I was devoid of worldly friends,  
And placing me in such a sweet content,  
As far exceeds the reach of my deserts.

My kingly husband, mirror of his time,  
For zeal, for justice, kindness, and for care  
To God, his subjects, me, and common weal,  
By his appointment was ordained for me.  
I cannot wish the thing that I do want;  
I cannot want the thing but I may have,  
Save only this which I shall never obtain,  
My father's love, oh this I never shall gain.  
I would abstain from any nutriment,  
And pine my body to the very bones:  
Barefoot I would on pilgrimage set forth  
Unto the furthest quarters of the earth,  
And all my lifetime would I sackcloth wear,  
And mourning-wise pour dust upon my head:  
So he but to forgive me once would please,  
That his gray hairs might go to heaven in peace.  
And yet I know not how I him offended,  
Or wherein justly I have deserved blame.  
Oh, sisters! you are much to blame in this,  
It was not he, but you that did me wrong:  
Yet God forgive both him, and you, and me;  
Even as I do in perfit charity.  
I will to church, and pray unto my Saviour,  
That ere I die, I may obtain his favour. {Exeunt}

## ACT IV

### SCENE II

A road leading to the royal palace in Cambria.

[Enter Leir and Perillus, weary.]

**Peril.** Rest on me, my lord, and stay yourself,  
The way seems tedious to your aged limbs.

**Leir.** Nay, rest on me, kind friend, and stay thyself,  
Thou art as old as I, but more kind.

**Peril.** Ah, good my lord, it ill befits, that I  
Should lean upon the person of a King.

**Leir.** But it fits worse, that I should bring thee forth,  
That had no cause to come along with me,  
Through these uncouth paths, and tireful ways,  
And never ease thy fainting limbs a whit.  
Thou hast left all, ay, all to come with me,  
And I, for all, have naught to guerdon thee.

**Peril.** Cease, good my lord, to aggravate my woes,  
With these kind words, which cuts my heart in two,  
To think your will should want the power to do.

**Leir.** Cease, good Perillus, for to call me lord,  
And think me but the shadow of myself.

**Peril.** That honourable title will I give,  
Unto my lord, so long as I do live.  
Oh, be of comfort; for I see the place  
Whereas your daughter keeps her residence.  
And lo, in happy time the Cambrian prince  
Is here arrived, to gratify our coming.

{Enter the prince of Cambria, Ragan, and nobles}

**Leir.** Were I best speak, or sit me down and die?  
I am ashamed to tell this heavy tale.

**Peril.** Then let me tell it, if you please, my lord:  
It is shame for them that were the cause thereof.

**Cam.** What two old men are those that seem so sad?  
Methinks, I should remember well their looks.

**Rag.** No, I mistake not, sure it is my father:  
I must dissemble kindness now of force.  
{She runs to him, and kneels down.}  
Father, I bid you welcome, full of grief,  
To see your grace used thus unworthily,  
And ill befitting for your reverend age,  
To come on foot a journey so endurable.  
Oh, what disaster chance hath been the cause,  
To make your cheeks so hollow, spare and lean?  
He cannot speak for weeping: for god's love, come.  
Let us refresh him with some needful things,  
And at more leisure we may better know,  
Whence springs the ground of this unlooked-for woe.

**Cam.** Come, father, ere we any further talk,  
You shall refresh you after this weary walk.  
{Exeunt all but Ragan}

**Rag.** Comes he to me with finger in the eye,  
To tell a tale against my sister here?  
Whom I do know, he greatly hath abused:  
And now like a contentious crafty wretch,  
He first begins for to complain himself,  
Whenas himself is in the greatest fault?  
I will not be partial in my sister's cause;  
Nor yet believe his doting vain reports;  
Who for a trifle (safely) I dare say,  
Upon a spleen is stolen thence away:  
And here (forsooth) he hopeth to have harbour,  
And to be moaned and made on like a child:  
But ere it be long, his coming he shall curse,

And truly say, he came from bad to worse:  
Yet will I make fair wheather, to procure  
Convenient means, and then I will strike it sure. {Exeunt}

## ACT IV

### SCENE III

Outside the royal palace in Cambria.

[Enter Messenger, alone.]

**Mess.** Now happily I am arrived here,  
Before the stately palace of the Cambrian king:  
If Leir be here safe-seated, and in rest,  
To rouse him from it I will do my best.

{Enter Ragan}

Now bags of gold, your virtue is, no doubt  
To make me in my message bold and stout.  
The king of heaven preserve your Majesty.  
And send your highness everlasting reign.

**Rag.** Thanks, good my friend; but what imports thy message?

**Mess.** Kind greetings from the Cornwall queen:  
The residue these letters will declare. {Opens letters}

**Rag.** How fares our royal sister?

**Mess.** I did leave her, at my parting, in good health.

{She reads the letters}

See how her colour comes and goes again  
Now red as scarlet, now as pale as ash:  
See how she knits her brow, and bites her lips,  
And stamps, and makes a dumb show of disdain,  
Mixed with revenge, and violent extremes.  
Here will be more work and more crowns for me.

**Rag.** Alas, poor soul, and hath he used her thus?

And is he now come hither, with intent  
To set divorce betwixt my lord and me?  
Doth he give out, that he doth hear report,  
That I do rule my husband as I list,  
And therefore means to alter so the case,  
That I shall know my lord to be my head?  
Well, it were best for him to take good heed,  
Or I will make him hop without a head,  
For his presumption, dottard that he is.  
In Cornwall he hath made such mutinies,  
First, setting of the king against the queen;  
Then stirring up the commons against the king;  
That had he there continued any longer,  
He had been called in question for his fact.

So upon that occasion thence he fled,  
And comes thus slyly stealing unto us;  
And now already since his coming hither,  
My lord and he are grown in such a league,  
That I can have no conference with his grace:  
I fear, he doth already intimate  
Some forged cavillations against my state:  
It is therefore best to cut him off in time,  
Lest slanderous rumours once abroad dispersed,  
It is to late for them to be reversed.  
Friend, as the tenour of these letters shows,  
My sister puts great confidence in thee.

**Mess.** She never yet committed trust to me,  
But that, I hope, she found me always faithful:  
So will I be to any friend of hers,  
That hath occasion to employ my help.

**Rag.** Hast thou the heart to act a stratagem,  
And give a stab or two, if need require?

**Mess.** I have a heart compact of adamant,  
Which never knew what melting pity meant.  
I weigh no more the murdering of a man,  
Than I respect the cracking of a flea,  
When I do catch her biting on my skin.  
If you will have your husband or your father,  
Or both of them sent to another world,  
Do but command me do it, it shall be done.

**Rag.** It is enough, we make no doubt of thee:  
Meet us tomorrow here, at nine o'clock:  
Meanwhile, farewell, and drink that for my sake.

**Mess.** Ay, this is it will make me do the deed:  
Oh, had I every day such customers,  
This were the gainfullest trade in Christendom!  
A purse of gold given for a paltry stab.  
Why, here's a wench that longs to have a stab.  
Well, I could give it her, and never hurt her neither. {Exeunt }

## ACT IV

### SCENE IV

A room in the royal palace in Gallia.

[Enter the Gallian king, and Cordella.]

**King.** When will these clouds of sorrow once disperse,  
And smiling joy triumph upon thy brow?  
When will this scene of sadness have an end,  
And pleasant acts ensue, to move delight?

When will my lovely queen cease to lament,  
And take some comfort to her grieved thoughts?  
If of thyself thou deign'st to have no care,  
Yet pity me, whom thy grief makes despair.

**Cord.** Oh, grieve not you, my lord, you have no cause;  
Let not my passions move your mind a whit:  
For I am bound by nature to lament  
For his ill will, that life to me first lent.  
If so the stock be dried with disdain,  
Withered and sere the branch must needs remain.

**King.** But thou art now graft in another stock;  
I am the stock, and thou the lovely branch:  
And from my root continual sap shall flow,  
To make thee flourish with perpetual spring.  
Forget thy father and thy kindred now,  
Since they forsake thee like inhuman beasts,  
Think they are dead, since all their kindness dies,  
And bury them, where black oblivion lies.  
Think not thou art the daughter of old Leir,  
Who did unkindly disinherit thee:  
But think thou art the noble Gallian queen,  
And wise to him that dearly loveth thee:  
Embrace the joys that present with thee dwell,  
Let sorrow pack and hide herself in hell.

**Cord.** Not that I miss my country or my kin,  
My old acquaintance or my ancient friends,  
Doth any whit distemperate my mind,  
Knowing you, which are more dear to me,  
Than country, kin, and all things else can be.  
Yet pardon me, my gracious lord, in this:  
For what can stop the course of Nature's power?  
As easy is it for four-footed beasts,  
To stay themselves upon the liquid air,  
And mount aloft into the element,  
And overstrip the feathered fowls in flight:  
As easy is it for the slimy fish,  
To live and thrive without the help of water:  
As easy is it for the blackamoor,  
To wash the tawny colour from his skin,  
Which all oppose against the course of nature,  
As I am able to forget my father.

**King.** Mirror of virtue, Phoenix of our age!  
Too kind a daughter for an unkind father,  
Be of good comfort; for I will dispatch  
Ambassadors immediately for Britain,  
Unto the king of Cornwall's court, whereas  
Your father keepeth now his residence,

And in the kindest manner him entreat,  
That setting former grievances apart,  
He will be pleased to come and visit us.  
If no entreaty will suffice the turn,  
I will offer him the half of all my crown:  
If that moves not, we will furnish out a fleet,  
And sail to Cornwall for to visit him;  
And there you shall be firmly reconciled  
In perfit love, as erst you were before.

**Cord.** Where tongue cannot sufficient thanks afford,  
The king of heaven remunerate my lord.

**King.** Only be blithe and frolic, sweet, with me;  
This and much more I will do to comfort thee. {Exeunt}

## ACT IV

### SCENE V

A room in the royal palace in Cambria.

[Enter Messenger, alone.]

**Mess.** It is a world to see now I am flush,  
How many friends I purchase everywhere!  
How many seeks to creep into my favour,  
And kiss their hands, and bend their knees to me!  
No more, here comes the queen, now shall I know her mind,  
And hope for to derive more crowns from her.

{Enter Ragan}

**Rag.** My friend, I see thou mindest thy promise well,  
And art before me here, methinks, today.  
**Mess.** I am a poor man, and it like your grace;  
But yet I always love to keep my word.

**Rag.** Well, keep thy word with me, and thou shalt see,  
That of a poor man I will make thee rich.  
**Mess.** I long to hear it, it might have been dispatched,  
If you had told me of it yesternight.

**Rag.** It is a thing of right strange consequence,  
And well I cannot utter it in words.

**Mess.** It is more strange, that I am not by this  
Beside myself, with longing for to hear it.  
Were it to meet the devil in his den,  
And try a bout with him for a scratched face,  
I would undertake it, if you would but bid me.

**Rag.** Ah, good my friend, that I should have thee do,  
Is such a thing, as I do shame to speak;

Yet it must needs be done.

**Mess.** I will speak it for thee, queen: shall I kill thy father?  
I know it is that, and if it be so, say.

**Rag.** Ay.

**Mess.** Why, that is enough.

**Rag.** And yet that is not all.

**Mess.** What else?

**Rag.** Thou must kill that old man that came with him.

**Mess.** Here are two hands, for each of them is one.

**Rag.** And for each hand here is a recompense.  
{ Gives him two purses }

**Mess.** Oh, that I had ten hands by miracle!  
I could tear ten in pieces with my teeth,  
So in my mouth you'ld put a purse of gold.  
But in what manner must it be effected?

**Rag.** Tomorrow morning ere the break of day,  
I by a wile will send them to the thicket,  
That is about some two miles from the court,  
And promise them to meet them there myself,  
Because I must have private conference,  
About some news I have received from Cornwall.  
This is enough, I know, they will not fail,  
And then be ready for to play thy part:  
Which done, thou mayest right easily escape,  
And no man once mistrust thee for the fact:  
But yet, before thou prosecute the act,  
Show him the letter, which my sister sent,  
There let him read his own indictment first,  
And then proceed to execution:  
But see thou faint not; for they will speak fair.

**Mess.** Could he speak words as pleasing as the pipe  
Of mercury, which charmed the hundred eyes  
Of watchful Argos, and enforced him sleep:  
Yet here are words so pleasing to my thoughts,  
As quite shall take away the sound of his.

**Rag.** About it then, and when thou hast dispatched,  
I will find a means to send thee after him. { Exeunt }

**ACT IV**  
**SCENE VI**

A room in the royal palace in Cornwall.

[Enter Cornwall and Gonorill.]

**Corn.** I wonder that the messenger doth stay,  
Whom we dispatched for Cambria so long since:  
If that his answer do not please us well,  
And he do shew good reason for delay,  
I will teach him how to dally with his king,  
And to detain us in such long suspense.

**Gon.** My lord, I think the reason may be this:  
My father means to come along with him;  
And therefore it is his pleasure he shall stay,  
For to attend upon him on the way.

**Corn.** It may be so, and therefore till I know  
The truth thereof, I will suspend my judgment.  
Ser. An' it like your grace, there is an ambassador  
Arrived from Gallia, and craves admittance to your majesty.

**Corn.** From Gallia? what should his message  
Hither import? is not your father haply  
Gone thither? well, whatsoever it be,  
Bid him come in, he shall have audience.  
What news from Gallia? speak ambassador.

**Amb.** The noble king and queen of gallia first salutes,  
By me, their honourable father, my lord Leir:  
Next, they commend them kindly to your graces,  
As those whose welfare they entirely wish.  
Letters I have to deliver to my lord Leir,  
And presents too, if I might speak with him.

**Gon.** If you might speak with him? why, do you think,  
We are afraid that you should speak with him?  
**Amb.** Pardon me, madam; for I think not so,  
But say so only, because he is not here.

**Corn.** Indeed, my friend, upon some urgent cause,  
He is at this time absent from the court:  
But if a day or two you here repose,  
It is very likely you shall have him here,  
Or else have certain notice where he is.

**Gon.** Are not we worthy to receive your message?

**Amb.** I had in charge to do it to himself.

**Gon.** It may be then it will not be done in haste.  
How doth my sister brook the air of France?

**Amb.** Exceeding well, and never sick one hour,  
Since first she set her foot upon the shore.

**Gon.** I am the more sorry.

**Amb.** I hope, not so, madam.

**Gon.** Didst thou not say, that she was ever sick,  
Since the first hour that she arrived there?

**Amb.** No, madam, I said quite contrary.

**Gon.** Then I mistook thee.

**Corn.** Then she is merry, if she have her health.

**Amb.** Oh no, her grief exceeds, until the time,  
That she be reconciled unto her father.

**Gon.** God continue it.

**Amb.** What, madam?

**Gon.** Why, her health.

**Amb.** Amen to that: but god release her grief,  
And send her father in a better mind,  
Than to continue always so unkind.

**Corn.** I will be a mediator in her cause,  
And seek all means to expiate his wrath.

**Amb.** Madam, I hope your grace will do the like.

**Gon.** Should I be a mean to exasperate his wrath  
Against my sister, whom I love so dear? no, no.

**Amb.** To expiate or mitigate his wrath:  
For he hath misconceived without a cause.

**Gon.** O, ay, what else?

**Amb.** It is pity it should be so, would it were otherwise.

**Gon.** It were great pity it should be otherwise.

**Amb.** Than how, madam?

**Gon.** Than that they should be reconciled again.

**Amb.** It shows you bear an honourable mind.

**Gon.** It shows thy understanding to be blind,  
And that thou hadst need of an interpreter:  
Well, I will know thy message ere it be long,  
And find a mean to cross it, if I can.

**Corn.** Come in, my friend, and frolic in our court,  
Till certain notice of my father come. {Exeunt}

**ACT IV**  
**SCENE VII**

In the open country of Cambria.

[Enter Leir and Perillus.]

**Peril.** My lord, you are up today before your hour,  
It is news to you to be abroad so rathe.

**Leir.** It is news indeed, I am so extreme heavy,  
That I can scarcely keep my eyelids open.

**Peril.** And so am I, but I impute the cause  
To rising sooner than we use to do.

**Leir.** Hither my daughter means to come disguised:  
I will sit me down, and read until she come.

**Peril.** She will not be long, I warrant you, my lord:  
But say, a couple of these they call good fellows,  
Should step out of a hedge, and set upon us,  
We were in good case for to answer them.

**Leir.** It were not for us to stand upon our hands.

**Peril.** I fear, we scant should stand upon our legs.  
But how should we do to defend ourselves?

**Leir.** Even pray to god, to bless us from their hands:  
For fervent prayer much ill hap withstands.

**Peril.** I will sit and pray with you for company;  
Yet was I never so heavy in my life.  
{They both fall asleep}

{Enter the Messenger (murderer), with two daggers in hand}

**Mess.** Were it not a mad jest, if two or three of my profession should meet me, and lay me down in a ditch, and play rob thief with me, and perforce take my gold away from me, whilst I act this stratagem, and by this means the graybeards should escape? faith, when I were at liberty again, I would make no more to do, but go to the next tree, and there hang myself.

{Sees them, and begins}

But stay, methinks my youths are here already,  
And with pure zeal have prayed themselves asleep.  
I think, they know to what intent they came,  
And are provided for another world.

{He takes their books away}

Now could I stab them bravely, while they sleep,  
And in a manner put them to no pain;  
And doing so, I showed them mighty friendship:  
For fear of death is worse than death itself.  
But that my sweet queen willed me for to show  
This letter to them, ere I did the deed.

Mass, they begin to stir: I will stand aside;  
So shall I come upon them unawares.  
{They awaken and rise}

**Leir.** I marvel that my daughter stays so long.

**Peril.** I fear, we did mistake the place, my lord.

**Leir.** God grant we do not miscarry in the place:  
I had a short nap, but so full of dread,  
As much amazeth me to think thereof.

**Peril.** Fear not, my lord, dreams are but fantasies,  
And slight imaginations of the brain.

**Mess.** Persuade him so; but I will make him and you  
Confess, that dreams do often prove too true.

**Peril.** I pray, my lord, what was the effect of it?  
I may go near to guess what it portends.

**Mess.** Leave that to me, I will expound the dream.

**Leir.** Methought, my daughters, Gonorill and Ragan,  
Stood both before me with such grim aspects,  
Each brandishing a falchion in their hand,  
Ready to lop a limb off where it fell,  
And in their other hands a naked poniard,  
Wherewith they stabbed me in a hundred places,  
And to their thinking left me there for dead:  
But then my youngest daughter, fair Cordella,  
Came with a box of balsam in her hand,  
And poured it into my bleeding wounds,  
By whose good means I was recovered well,  
In perfect health, as erst I was before:  
And with the fear of this I did awake,  
And yet for fear my feeble joints do quake.

**Mess.** I will make you quake for something presently.  
Stand, stand.  
{They Reel}

**Leir.** We do, my friend, although with much ado.

**Mess.** Deliver, deliver.

**Peril.** Deliver us, good lord, from such as he.

**Mess.** You should have prayed before, while it was time,  
And then perhaps, you might have escaped my hands:  
But you, like faithful watch-men, fell asleep,  
The whilst I came and took your halberds from you.  
{Shows their books}  
And now you want your weapons of defense,

How have you any hope to be delivered?  
This comes, because you have no better stay,  
But fall asleep, when you should watch and pray.

**Leir.** My friend, thou seemest to be a proper man.

**Mess.** 'Sblood, how the old slave claws me by the elbow?  
He thinks, belike, to escape by scraping thus.

**Peril.** And it may be, are in some need of money.

**Mess.** That to be false, behold my evidence.  
{Shows his Purses }

**Leir.** If that I have will do thee any good,  
I give it thee, even with a right good will.  
{Messenger takes it }

**Peril.** Here, take mine too, and wish with all my heart,  
To do thee pleasure, it were twice as much.  
{The messenger takes his, and weighs both in his hands }

**Mess.** I'll none of them, they are too light for me.  
{Puts them in his pocket }

**Leir.** Why then farewell: and if thou have occasion  
In anything, to use me to the queen,  
It is like enough that I can pleasure thee.

**Mess.** Do you hear, do your hear, sir?  
If I had occasion to use you to the queen,  
Would you do one thing for me I should ask?

**Leir.** Ay, anything that lies within my power.  
Here is my hand upon it, so farewell.

**Mess.** Hear you sir, hear you? pray, a word with you.  
Methinks, a comely honest ancient man  
Should not dissemble with one for a vantage.  
I know, when I shall come to try this gear,  
You will recant from all that you have said.

**Peril.** Mistrust not him, but try him when thou wilt:  
He is her father, therefore may do much.

**Mess.** I know he is, and therefore mean to try him:  
You are his friend too, I must try you both.

**Amb.** Prithee do, prithee do.

**Mess.** Stay graybeards then, and prove men of your words:  
The queen hath tied me by a solemn oath,  
Here in this place to see you both dispatched:  
Now for the safeguard of my conscience,  
Do me the pleasure for to kill yourselves:

So shall you save me labour for to do it,  
And prove yourselves true old men of your words.  
And here I vow in sight of all the world,  
I never will trouble you whilst I live again.

**Leir.** Affright us not with terror, good my friend,  
Nor strike such fear into our aged hearts.  
Play not the cat, which dallieth with the mouse;  
And on a sudden maketh her a prey:  
But if thou art marked for the man of death  
To me and to my Damon, tell me plain,  
That we may be prepared for the stroke,  
And make ourselves fit for the world to come.

**Mess.** I am the last of any mortal race,  
That ever your eyes are likely to behold,  
And hither sent of purpose to this place,  
To give a final period to your days,  
Which are so wicked, and have lived so long,  
That your own children seek to short your life.

**Leir.** Camest thou from France, of purpose to do this?

**Mess.** From France? Zounds, do I look like a Frenchman? sure I have not mine own face on; somebody hath changed faces with me, and I know not of it: but I am sure, my apparel is all English. Sirra, what meanest thou to ask that question? I could spoil the fashion of this face for anger. A French face!

**Leir.** Because my daughter, whom I have offended,  
And at whose hands I have deserved as ill,  
As ever any father did of child,  
Is queen of france, no thanks at all to me,  
But unto god, who my injustice see.  
If it be so, that she doth seek revenge,  
As with good reason she may justly do,  
I will most willingly resign my life,  
A sacrifice to mitigate her ire:  
I never will entreat thee to forgive,  
Because I am unworthy for to live.  
Therefore speak soon, and I will soon make speed;  
Whether Cordella willed thee do this deed?

**Mess.** As I am a perfect gentleman, thou speakest French to me:  
I never heard Cordella's name before,  
Nor never was in France in all my life:  
I never knew thou hadst a daughter there,  
To whom thou didst prove so unkind a churl:  
But thy own tongue declares that thou hast been  
A vile old wretch, and full of heinous sin.

**Leir.** Ah, no, my friend, thou art deceived much:  
For her except, whom I confess I wronged,  
Through doting frenzy, and over-jealous love.

There lives not any under heaven's bright eye,  
That can convict me of impiety.  
And therefore sure thou dost mistake the mark:  
For I am in true peace with all the world.

**Mess.** You are the fitter for the king of heaven:  
And therefore, for to rid thee of suspense,  
Know thou, the queens of Cambria and Cornwall,  
Thy own two daughters, Gonorill and Ragan,  
Appointed me to massacre thee here.  
Why wouldst thou then persuade me, that thou art  
In charity with all the world? but now  
When thy own issue hold thee in such hate,  
That they have hired me to abridge thy fate,  
Oh, fie upon such vile dissembling breath,  
That would deceive, even at the point of death.

**Peril.** Am I awake, or is it but a dream?

**Mess.** Fear nothing, man, thou art but in a dream,  
And thou shalt never wake until doomsday,  
By then, I hope, thou wilt have slept enough.

**Leir.** Yet, gentle friend, grant one thing ere I die.

**Mess.** I will grant you anything, except your lives.

**Leir.** Oh, but assure me by some certain token,  
That my two daughters hired thee to this deed:  
If I were once resolved of that, then I  
Would wish no longer life, but crave to die.

**Mess.** That to be true, in sight of heaven I swear.

**Leir.** Swear not by heaven, for fear of punishment:  
The heavens are guiltless of such heinous acts.

**Mess.** I swear by earth, the mother of us all.

**Leir.** Swear not by earth; for she abhors to bear  
Such bastards, as are murderers of her sons.

**Mess.** Why then, by hell, and all the devils I swear.

**Leir.** Swear not by hell; for that stands gaping wide,  
To swallow thee, and if thou do this deed.  
{Thunder and lightning}

**Mess.** I would that word were in his belly again,  
It hath frightened me even to the very heart:  
This old man is some strong magician:  
His words have turned my mind from this exploit.  
Then neither heaven, earth, nor hell be witness;  
But let this paper witness for them all.

{Shows Gonorill's letter}

Shall I relent, or shall I prosecute?

Shall I resolve or were I best recant?

I will not crack my credit with two queens,

To whom I have already passed my word.

Oh, but my conscience for this act doth tell,

I get heaven's hate, earth's scorn, and pains of hell.

{They bless themselves}

**Peril.** Oh just Jehovah, whose almighty power

Doth govern all things in this spacious world,

How canst thou suffer such outrageous acts

To be committed without just revenge?

O viperous generation and accursed,

To seek his blood, whose blood did make them first!

**Leir.** Ah, my true friend in all extremity,

Let us submit us to the will of god:

Things past all sense, let us not seek to know;

It is god's will, and therefore must be so.

My friend, I am prepared for the stroke:

Strike when thou wilt, and I forgive thee here,

Even from the very bottom of my heart.

**Mess.** But I am not prepared for to strike.

**Leir.** Farewell, Perillus, even the truest friend,

That ever lived in adversity:

The latest kindness I will request of thee,

Is that thou go unto my daughter Cordella,

And carry her her father's latest blessing:

Withal desire her, that she will forgive me;

For I have wronged her without any cause.

Now, lord, receive me, for I come to thee,

And die, I hope, in perfect charity.

Dispatch, I pray thee, I have lived too long.

**Mess.** Ay, but you are unwise, to send an errand

By him that never meaneth to deliver it:

Why, he must go along with you to heaven:

It were not good you should go all alone.

**Leir.** No doubt, he shall, when by the course of nature,

He must surrender up his due to death:

But that time shall not come till god permit.

**Mess.** Nay, presently, to bear you company.

I have a passport for him in my pocket,

Already sealed, and he must needs ride post.

{Shows a bag of money}

**Leir.** The letter which I read, imports not so,

It only toucheth me; no word of him.

**Mess.** Ay, but the queen commands it must be so,  
And I am paid for him, as well as you.

**Per.** I, who have borne you company in life,  
Most willingly will bear a share in death.  
It skilleth not for me, my friend, a whit,  
Nor for a hundred such as thou and I.

**Mess.** Marry, but it doth, sir, by your leave; your good days are past: though it be no matter for you, it is a matter for me, proper men are not so rife.

**Peril.** Oh, but beware, how thou dost lay thy hand  
Upon the high anointed of the Lord:  
O, be advised ere thou dost begin:  
Dispatch me straight, but meddle not with him.

**Leir.** Friend, thy commission is to deal with me,  
And I am he that hath deserved all:  
The plot was laid to take away my life:  
And here it is, I do entreat thee take it:  
Yet for my sake, and as thou art a man,  
Spare this my friend, that hither with me came:  
I brought him forth, whereas he had not been,  
But for good-will to bear me company.  
He left his friends, his country and his goods,  
And came with me in most extremity.  
Oh, if he should miscarry here and die,  
Who is the cause of it, but only I?

**Mess.** Why that am I, let that never trouble thee.

**Leir.** O no, 'tis I. O, had I now to give thee  
The monarchy of all the spacious world  
To save his life, I would bestow it on thee:  
But I have nothing but these tears and prayers,  
And the submission of a bended knee.  
O, if all this to mercy move thy mind,  
Spare him, in heaven thou shalt like mercy find.

**Mess.** I am as hard to be moved as another, and yet methinks the  
Strength of their persuasions stirs me a little.

**Peril.** My friend, if fear of the almighty power  
Have power to move thee, we have said enough:  
But if thy mind be moveable with gold,  
We have not presently to give it thee:  
Yet to thyself thou mayest do greater good,  
To keep thy hands still undefiled from blood:  
For do but well consider with thyself,  
When thou hast finished this outrageous act,

What horror still will haunt thee for the deed:  
Think this again, that they which would incense  
Thee for to be the butcher of their father,  
When it is done, for fear it should be known,  
Would make a means to rid thee from the world:  
Oh, then art thou forever tied in chains  
Of everlasting torments to endure,  
Even in the hottest hole of grisly hell,  
Such pains, as never mortal tongue can tell.

**Leir.** O, heavens be thanked, he will spare my friend.  
Now when thou wilt come make an end of me.

**Peril.** Oh, happy sight! he means to save my lord.  
The king of heaven continue this good mind.

**Leir.** Why stayest thou to do execution?

**Mess.** I am as willful as you for your life:  
I will not do it, now you do entreat me.

**Peril.** Ah, now I see thou hast some spark of grace.

**Mess.** Beshrew you for it, you have put it in me:  
The parlousest old men, that ever I heard.  
Well, to be flat, I will not meddle with you:  
Here I found you, and here I will leave you:  
If any ask you why the case so stands?  
Say that your tongues were better than your hands.

**Peril.** Farewell. If ever we together meet,  
It shall go hard, but I will thee greet.  
Courage, my lord, the worst is overpast;  
Let us give thanks to God, and hie us hence.

**Leir.** Thou art deceived; for I am past the best,  
And know not whither for to go from hence:  
Death had been better welcome unto me,  
Than longer life to add more misery.

**Peril.** It were not good to return from whence we came,  
Unto your daughter Ragan back again.  
Now let us go to France, unto Cordella,  
Your youngest daughter, doubtless she will succour you.

**Leir.** Oh, how can I persuade myself of that,  
Since the other two are quite devoid of love;  
To whom I was so kind, as that my gifts,  
Might make them love, if it were nothing else?

**Peril.** No worldly gifts, but grace from God on high,  
Doth nourish virtue and true charity.  
Remember well what words Cordella spake,

What time you asked her, how she loved your grace,  
She said, her love unto you was as much,  
As ought a child to bear unto her father.

**Leir.** But she did find, my love was not to her,  
As should a father bear unto a child.

**Peril.** That makes her love not to be any less,  
If she do love you as a child should do:  
You have tried two, try one more for my sake,  
I will never entreat you further trial make.  
Remember well the dream you had of late,  
And think what comfort it foretells to us.

**Leir.** Come, truest friend, that ever man possessed,  
I know thou counsellest all things for the best:  
If this third daughter play a kinder part,  
It comes of God, and not of my desert. {Exeunt }

## ACT IV SCENE VIII

Outside the royal palace of Cornwall.

[Enter the Gallian Ambassador, solus.]

**Amb.** There is of late news come unto the court,  
That old lord Leir remains in Cambria:  
I will hie me thither presently, to impart  
My letters and my message unto him.  
I never was less welcome to a place  
In all my lifetime, than I have been hither,  
Especially unto the stately queen,  
Who would not cast one gracious look on me,  
But still with lowering and suspicious eyes,  
Would take exceptions at each word I spake,  
And fain she would have undermined me,  
To know what my ambassage did import:  
But she is like to hop without her hope,  
Though, by report, sh' ll have it in all things else.  
Well, I will post away for Cambria:  
Within these few days I hope to be there. {Exeunt }

## ACT V SCENE I

A room in the royal palace of Gallia.

[Enter the king and queen of Gallia, and Mumford.]

**King.** By this, our father understands our mind,  
And our kind greetings sent to him of late:

Therefore my mind presageth ere it be long,  
We shall receive from Britain happy news.

**Cord.** I fear, my sister will dissuade his mind;  
For she to me hath always been unkind.

**King.** Fear not, my love, since that we know the worst,  
The last means helps, if that we miss the first:  
If he will not come to Gallia unto us,  
Then we will sail to Britain unto him.

**Mum.** Well, if I once see Britain again,  
I have sworn, I will never come home without my wench,  
And I will not be forsworn,  
I will rather never come home while I live.

**Cord.** Are you sure, Mumford, she is a maid still?

**Mum.** Nay, I will not swear she is a maid, but she goes for one:  
I will take her at all adventures, if I can get her.

**Cord.** Ay, that is well put in.

**Mum.** Well put in? Nay, it was ill put in; for had it  
Been as well put in, as ever I put in, in my days,  
I would have made her follow me to France.

**Cord.** Nay, you would have been so kind, as take her with you,  
Or else, were I as she, I would have been so loving, as I would stay  
behind you: Yet I must confess, you are a very proper man,  
And able to make a wench do more than she would do.

**Mum.** Well, I have a pair of slops for the nonce,  
Will hold all your mocks.

**King.** Nay, we see you have a handsome hose.

**Cord.** Ay, and of the newest fashion.

**Mum.** More bobs, more: put them in still,  
They will serve instead of bombast, yet put not in too many,  
Lest the seams crack, and they fly out amongst you again:  
You must not think to outface me so easily in my mistress' quarrel,  
Who if I see once again, ten team of horses shall  
Not draw me away, till I have full and whole possession.

**King.** Ay, but one team and a cart will serve the turn.

**Cord.** Not only for him, but also for his wench.

**Mum.** Well, you are two to one, I will give you over:  
And since I see you so pleasantly disposed,  
Which indeed is but seldom seen, I will claim  
A promise of you, which you shall not deny me:

For promise is debt, and by this hand you promised it me.  
Therefore you owe it me, and you shall pay it me,  
Or I will sue you upon an action of unkindness.

**King.** Prithee, lord Mumford, what promise did I make thee?

**Mum.** Faith, nothing but this,  
That the next fair weather, which is very now,  
You would go in progress down to the seaside,  
Which is very near.

**King.** Faith, in this motion I will join with thee,  
And be a mediator to my queen.  
Prithee, my love, let this match go forward,  
My mind foretells, it will be a lucky voyage.

**Cord.** Entreaty needs not, where you may command,  
So you be pleased, I am right well content;  
Yet, as the sea I much desire to see;  
So am I most unwilling to be seen.

**King.** We will go disguised, all unknown to any.

**Cord.** Howsoever you make one, I will make another.

**Mum.** And I the third: oh, I am over-joyed!  
See what love is, which getteth with a word,  
What all the world besides could never obtain!  
But what disguises shall we have, my lord?

**King.** Faith thus: my queen and I will be disguised,  
Like a plain country couple, and you shall be roger  
Our man, and wait upon us: or if you will,  
You shall go first, and we will wait on you.

**Mum.** It were more than time; this device is excellent.  
Come let us about it. {Exeunt}

## ACT V

### SCENE II

A room in the royal palace of Cambria.

[Enter Cambria and Ragan with nobles.]

**Cam.** What strange mischance or unexpected hap  
Hath thus deprived us of our father's presence?  
Can no man tell us what is become of him,  
With whom we did converse not two days since?  
My lords, let everywhere light horse be sent,  
And scour about through all our regiment.  
Dispatch a post immediately to Cornwall,  
To see if any news be of him there;

Myself will make a strict enquiry here,  
And all about our cities near at hand,  
Till certain news of his abode be brought.

**Rag.** All sorrow is but counterfeit to mine,  
Whose lips are almost sealed up with grief:  
Mine is the substance, whilst they do but seem  
To weep the loss, which tears cannot redeem.  
O, never was heard so strange a misadventure,  
A thing so far beyond the reach of sense,  
Since no man's reason in the cause can enter.  
What hath removed my father thus from hence?  
O, I do fear some charm or invocation  
Of wicked spirits, or infernal fiends,  
Stirred by Cordella, moves this innovation,  
And brings my father timeless to his end.  
But might I know, that the detested witch  
Were certain cause of this uncertain ill,  
Myself to France would go in some disguise,  
And with these nails scratch out her hateful eyes:  
For since I am deprived of my father,  
I loath my life, and wish my death the rather.

**Cam.** The heavens are just, and hate impiety,  
And will, no doubt, reveal such heinous crimes:  
Censure not any, till you know the right:  
Let him be judge, that bringeth truth to light.

**Rag.** O, but my grief, like to a swelling tide,  
Exceeds the bounds of common patience:  
Nor can I moderate my tongue so much,  
To conceal them, whom I hold in suspect.

**Cam.** This matter shall be sifted: if it be she,  
A thousand Frances shall not harbour her.

**Amb.** All happiness unto the Cambrian king.

**Cam.** Welcome, my friend, from whence is thy Ambassage?

**Amb.** I came from Gallia, unto Cornwall sent,  
With letters to your honourable father,  
Whom there not finding, as I did expect,  
I was directed hither to repair.

**Rag.** Frenchman, what is thy message to my father?

**Amb.** My letters, madam, will import the same,  
Which my commission is for to deliver.

**Rag.** In his absence you may trust us with your letters.

**Amb.** I must perform my charge in such a manner,

As I have strict commandment from the king.

**Rag.** There is good packing betwixt your king and you:  
You need not hither come to ask for him,  
You know where he is better than ourselves.

**Amb.** Madam, I hope not far off.

**Rag.** Hath the young murderess, your outrageous queen,  
No means to colour her detested deeds,  
In finishing my guiltless father's days,  
Because he gave her nothing to her dower  
But by the colour of a feigned **Amb.**assage,  
To send him letters hither to our court?  
Go carry them to them that sent them hither,  
And bid them keep their scrolls unto themselves:  
They cannot blind us with such slight excuse,  
To smother up so monstrous vile abuse.  
And were it not, it is against law of arms,  
To offer violence to a messenger,  
We would inflict such torments on thyself,  
As should enforce thee to reveal the truth.

**Amb.** Madam, your threats no whit appal my mind,  
I know my conscience guiltless of this act;  
My king and queen, I dare be sworn, are free  
From any thought of such impiety:  
And therefore, madam, you have done them wrong,  
And ill-beseeming with a sister's love,  
Who in mere duty tender him as much,  
As ever you respected him for dower.  
The king your husband will not say as much.

**Cam.** I will suspend my judgment for a time,  
Till more appearance give us further light:  
Yet to be plain, your coming doth enforce  
A great suspicion to our doubtful mind,  
And that you do resemble, to be brief,  
Him that first robs, and then cries, 'Stop the thief.'

**Amb.** Pray God some near you have not done the like.

**Rag.** Hence, saucy mate, reply no more to us;  
For law of arms shall not protect thy tongue.

**Amb.** Never was I offered such discourtesy;  
God and my king, I trust, ere it be long,  
Will find a mean to remedy this wrong.

**Rag.** How shall I live, to suffer this disgrace,  
At every base and vulgar peasant's hands?  
It ill befitteth my imperial state,  
To be thus used, and no man take my part.

**Cam.** What should I do? infringe the law of arms,  
Were to my everlasting obloquy:  
But I will take revenge upon his master,  
Which sent him hither, to delude us thus.

**Rag.** Nay, if you put up this, be sure, ere long,  
Now that my father thus is made away,  
She will come and claim a third part of your crown,  
As due unto her by inheritance.

**Cam.** But I will prove her title to be nought  
But shame, and the reward of parricide,  
And make her an example to the world,  
For after-ages to admire her penance.  
This will I do, as I am Cambria's king,  
Or lose my life, to prosecute revenge.  
Come, first let us learn what news is of our father,  
And then proceed, as best occasion fits. {Exeunt }

## ACT V

### SCENE III

A port on the coast of Gallia.

[Enter Leir, Perillus, and two mariners in sea-gowns and sea-caps.]

**Peril.** My honest friends, we are ashamed to show  
The great extremity of our present state,  
In that at this time we are brought so low,  
That we want money for to pay our passage.  
The truth is so, we met with some good fellows,  
A little before we came aboard your ship,  
Which stripped us quite of all the coin we had,  
And left us not a penny in our purses:  
Yet wanting money, we will use the mean,  
To see you satisfied to the uttermost.

**First Mar.** Here is a good gown, it would become me passing well,  
I should be fine in it.

**Second Mar.** Here is a good cloak, I marvel how I should look in it.

**Leir.** Faith, had we others to supply their room,  
Though never so mean, you willingly should have them.

**First Mar.** Do you hear, sir? you look like an honest man;  
I will not stand to do you a pleasure: here is a good strong motley  
gabardine, cost me fourteen good shillings at billingsgate, give me your gown  
for it, and your cap for mine, and I will forgive your passage.

**Leir.** With all my heart, and twenty thanks.

**Second Mar.** Do you hear, sir? you shall have a better match than he,

because you are my friend: here is a good sheep's russet sea-gown, will bide more stress, I warrant you, than two of his, yet for you seem to be an honest gentleman, I am content to change it for your cloak, and ask you nothing for your passage more.

**Peril.** My own I willingly would change with thee,  
And think myself indebted to thy kindness:  
But would my friend might keep his garment still.  
My friend, I will give thee this new doublet, if thou wilt  
Restore his gown unto him back again.

**First Mar.** Nay, if I do, would I might never eat powdered beef and mustard more, nor drink can of good liquor whilst I live. My friend, you have small reason to seek to hinder me of my bargain: but the best is, a bargain's a bargain.

**Leir.** {To Perillus} Kind friend, it is much better as it is.  
For by this means we may escape unknown,  
Till time and opportunity do fit.

**Second Mar.** Hark, hark, they are laying their heads together,  
They'll repent them of their bargain anon,  
'Twere best for us to go while we are well.

**First Mar.** God be with you, sir, for your passage back again,  
I will use you as unreasonable as another.

**Leir.** I know thou wilt; but we hope to bring ready money.  
With us, when we come back again. {Exeunt Mariners}  
Were ever men in this extremity,  
In a strange country, and devoid of friends,  
And not a penny for to help ourselves?  
Kind friend, what thinkest thou will become of us?

**Peril.** Be of good cheer, my lord, I have a doublet  
Will yield us money enough to serve our turns,  
Until we come unto your daughter's court:  
And then, I hope, we shall find friends enough.

**Leir.** Ah, kind Perillus, that is it I fear,  
And makes me faint, or ever I come there.  
Can kindness spring out of ingratitude?  
Or love be reaped, where hatred hath been sown?  
Can henbane join in league with Mithridate?  
Or sugar grow in wormwood's bitter stalk?  
It cannot be, they are too opposite:  
And so am I to any kindness here.  
I have thrown wormwood on the sugared youth,  
And like to henbane poisoned the fount,  
Whence flowed the Mithridate of a child's good will:  
I, like an envious thorn, have pricked the heart,  
And turned sweet grapes, to sour unrelished sloes:  
The causeless ire of my respectless breast,  
Hath soured the sweet milk of dame nature's paps:

My bitter words have galled her honey thoughts,  
And weeds of rancour choked the flower of grace.  
Then what remainder is of any hope,  
But all our fortunes will go quite aslope?

**Peril.** Fear not, my lord, the perfect good indeed,  
Can never be corrupted by the bad:  
A new fresh vessel still retains the taste  
And therefore, though you name yourself the thorn,  
The weed, the gall, the henbane and the wormwood;  
Yet she will continue in her former state,  
The honey, milk, grape, sugar, Mithridate.

**Leir.** Thou pleasing orator unto me in woe,  
Cease to beguile me with thy hopeful speeches:  
O join with me, and think of nought but crosses,  
And then we will one lament another's losses.

**Peril.** Why, say the worst, the worst can be but death,  
And death is better than for to despair:  
Then hazard death, which may convert to life;  
Banish despair, which brings a thousand deaths.

**Leir.** Overcome with thy strong arguments, I yield,  
To be directed by thee, as thou wilt:  
As thou yieldest comfort to my crazed thoughts,  
Would I could yield the like unto thy body,  
Which is full weak, I know, and ill apaid,  
For want of fresh meat and due sustenance.

**Peril.** Alack, my lord, my heart doth bleed, to think  
That you should be in such extremity.

**Leir.** Come, let us go, and see what god will send;  
When all means fail, he is the surest friend. {Exeunt}

## ACT V SCENE IV

The open country near the coast of Gallia.

[Enter the Gallian king and queen, and Mumford with a basket, disguised like country folk.]

**King.** This tedious journey all on foot, sweet love,  
Cannot be pleasing to your tender joints,  
Which never were used to these toilsome walks.

**Cord.** I never in my life took more delight  
In any journey, than I do in this:  
It did me good, whenas we happed to light  
Amongst the merry crew of country folk,  
To see what industry and pains they took,  
To win them commendations amongst their friends.

Lord, how they labour to bestir themselves,  
And in their quirks to go beyond the moon,  
And so take on them with such antic fits,  
That one would think they were beside their wits!  
Come away, roger, with your basket.

**Mum.** Soft, dame, here comes a couple of old youths,  
I must needs make myself fat with jesting at them.

**Cord.** Nay, prithee do not, they do seem to be  
Men much overcome with grief and misery.  
Let's stand aside, and hearken what they say.

**Leir.** Ah, my Perillus, now I see we both  
Shall end our days in this unfruitful soil.  
Oh, I do faint for want of sustenance:  
And thou, I know, in little better case.  
No gentle tree affords one taste of fruit,  
To comfort us, until we meet with men:  
No lucky path conducts our luckless steps  
Unto a place where any comfort dwells.  
Sweet rest betide unto our happy souls;  
For here I see our bodies must have end.

**Peril.** Ah, my dear lord, how doth my heart lament,  
To see you brought to this extremity!  
Oh, if you love me, as you do profess,  
Or ever thought well of me in my life;  
Feed on this flesh, whose veins are not so dry,  
But there is virtue left to comfort you.  
Oh, feed on this, if this will do you good,  
I will smile for joy, to see you suck my blood.

**Leir.** I am no cannibal, that I should delight  
To slake my hungry jaws with human flesh:  
I am no devil, or ten times worse than so,  
To suck the blood of such a peerless friend.  
O, do not think that I respect my life  
So dearly, as I do thy loyal love.  
Ah, Britain, I shall never see thee more,  
That hast unkindly banished thy king:  
And yet not thou dost make me to complain,  
But they which were more near to me than thou.

**Cord.** What do I hear? this lamentable voice,  
Methinks, ere now I oftentimes have heard.

**Leir.** Ah, Gonorill, was half my kingdom's gift  
The cause that thou didst seek to have my life?  
Ah, cruel Ragan, did I give thee all,  
And all could not suffice without my blood?  
Ah, poor Cordella, did I give thee nought,

Nor never shall be able for to give?  
O, let me warn all ages that ensueth,  
How they trust flattery, and reject the truth.  
Well, unkind girls, I here forgive you both,  
Yet the just heavens will hardly do the like;  
And only crave forgiveness at the end  
Of good Cordella, and of thee, my friend;  
Of God, whose majesty I have offended,  
By my transgression many thousand ways:  
Of her, dear heart, whom I for no occasion  
Turned out of all, through flatterer's persuasion;  
Of thee, kind friend, who but for me, I know,  
Had'st never come unto this place of woe.

**Cord.** Alack, that ever I should live to see  
My noble father in this misery.

**King.** Sweet love, reveal not what thou art as yet,  
Until we know the ground of all this ill.

**Cord.** O, but some meat, some meat: do you not see,  
How near they are to death for want of food?

**Peril.** Lord, which didst help thy servants at their need,  
Or now or never send us help with speed.  
Oh comfort, comfort! yonder is a banquet,  
And men and women, my lord: be of good cheer;  
For I see comfort coming very near.  
O my lord, a banquet, and men and women!

**Leir.** O, let kind pity mollify their hearts,  
That they may help us in our great extremes.

**Peril.** God save you, friends; and if this blessed banquet  
Affordeth any food or sustenance,  
Even for his sake that saved us all from death,  
Vouchsafe to save us from the grip of famine.

**Cord.** Here father, sit and eat, here, sit and drink:  
And would it were far better for your sakes.

**Peril.** I will give you thanks anon: my friend doth faint,  
And needeth present comfort.

**Mum.** I warrant, he never stays to say a grace:  
O, there is no sauce to a good stomach.

**Peril.** The blessed God of heaven hath thought upon us.

**Leir.** The thanks be his, and these kind courteous folk,  
By whose humanity we are preserved.

**Cord.** And may that draught be unto him, as was

That which old eson drank, which did renew  
His withered age, and made him young again.  
And may that meat be unto him, as was  
That which elias ate, in strength whereof  
He walked forty days, and never fainted.  
Shall I conceal me longer from my father?  
Or shall I manifest myself to him?

**King.** Forbear awhile, until his strength return,  
Lest being overjoyed with seeing thee,  
His poor weak senses should forsake their office,  
And so our cause of joy be turned to sorrow.

**Peril.** What cheer, my lord? how do you feel yourself?

**Leir.** Methinks, I never ate such savoury meat:  
It is as pleasant as the blessed manna,  
That rained from heaven amongst the Israelites:  
It hath recalled my spirits home again,  
And made me fresh, as erst I was before.  
But how shall we congratulate their kindness?

**Peril.** In faith, I know not how sufficiently;  
But the best mean that I can think on, is this:  
I will offer them my doublet in requital;  
For we have nothing else to spare.

**Leir.** Nay, stay, Perillus, for they shall have mine.

**Peril.** Pardon, my lord, I swear they shall have mine.

**Leir.** Ah, who would think such kindness should remain  
Among such strange and unacquainted men:  
And that such hate should harbour in the breast  
Of those, which have occasion to be best?

**Cord.** Ah, good old father, tell to me thy grief,  
I will sorrow with thee, if not add relief.

**Leir.** Ah, good young daughter, I may call thee so;  
For thou art like a daughter I did owe.

**Cord.** Do you not owe her still? what, is she dead?

**Leir.** No, god forbid: but all my interest is gone,  
By showing myself too much unnatural:  
So have I lost the title of a father,  
And may be called a stranger to her rather.

**Cord.** Your title is good still; for it is always known,  
A man may do as him list with his own.  
But have you but one daughter then in all?

**Leir.** Yes, I have more by two, than would I had.

**Cord.** O, say not so, but rather see the end:  
They that are bad, may have the grace to mend:  
But how have they offended you so much?

**Leir.** If from the first I should relate the cause,  
It would make a heart of adamant to weep;  
And thou, poor soul, kind-hearted as thou art,  
Dost weep already, ere I do begin.

**Cord.** For god's love tell it, and when you have done,  
I will tell the reason why I weep so soon.

**Leir.** Then know this first, I am a Briton born,  
And had three daughters by one loving wife:  
And though I say it, of beauty they were sped;  
Especially the youngest of the three,  
For her perfections hardly matched could be:  
On these I doted with a jealous love,  
And thought to try which of them loved me best,  
By asking them, which would do most for me?  
The first and second flattered me with words,  
And vowed they loved me better than their lives:  
The youngest said, she loved me as a child  
Might do: her answer I esteemed most vile,  
And presently in an outrageous mood,  
I turned her from me to go sink or swim:  
And all I had, even to the very clothes,  
I gave in dowry with the other two:  
And she that best deserved the greatest share,  
I gave her nothing, but disgrace and care.  
Now mark the sequel: when I had done thus,  
I sojourned in my eldest daughter's house,  
Where for a time I was entreated well,  
And lived in state sufficing my content:  
But every day her kindness did grow cold,  
Which I with patience put up well enough,  
And seemed not to see the things I saw:  
But at the last she grew so far incensed  
With moody fury, and with causeless hate,  
That in most vile and contumelious terms,  
She bade me pack, and harbour somewhere else.  
Then was I fain for refuge to repair  
Unto my other daughter for relief,  
Who gave me pleasing and most courteous words;  
But in her actions showed herself so sore,  
As never any daughter did before:  
She prayed me in a morning out betime,  
To go to a thicket two miles from the court  
, Pointing that there she would come talk with me:  
There she had set a shag-haired murdering wretch,  
To massacre my honest friend and me.

Then judge yourself, although my tale be brief,  
If ever man had greater cause of grief.

**King.** Nor never like impiety was done,  
Since the creation of the world begun.

**Leir.** And now I am constrained to seek relief  
Of her, to whom I have been so unkind;  
Whose censure, if it do award me death,  
I must confess she pays me but my due:  
But if she show a loving daughter's part,  
It comes of god and her, not my desert.

**Cord.** No doubt she will, I dare be sworn she will.

**Leir.** How know you that, not knowing what she is?

**Cord.** Myself a father have a great way hence,  
Used me as ill as ever you did her;  
Yet, that his reverend age I once might see,  
I would creep along, to meet him on my knee.

**Leir.** O, no men's children are unkind but mine.

**Cord.** Condemn not all, because of others' crime:  
But look, dear father, look, behold and see  
Thy loving daughter speaketh unto thee.

**Leir.** Oh, stand thou up, it is my part to kneel,  
And ask forgiveness for my former faults.

**Cord.** Oh, if you wish, I should enjoy my breath,  
Dear father rise, or I receive my death.

**Leir.** Then I will rise to satisfy your mind,  
But kneel again, till pardon be resigned.

**Cord.** I pardon you: the word beseems not me:  
But I do say so, for to ease your knee.  
You gave me life, you were the cause that I  
Am what I am, who else had never been.

**Leir.** But you gave life to me and to my friend,  
Whose days had else, had an untimely end.

**Cord.** You brought me up, whenas I was but young,  
And far unable for to help myself.

**Leir.** I cast thee forth, whenas thou was but young,  
And far unable for to help thyself.

**Cord.** God, world and nature say I do you wrong,  
That can endure to see you kneel so long.

**King.** Let me break off this loving controversy,  
Which doth rejoice my very soul to see.  
Good father, rise, she is your loving daughter,  
And honours you with as respective duty,  
As if you were the monarch of the world.

**Cord.** But I will never rise from off my knee,  
Until I have your blessing, and your pardon  
Of all my faults committed anyway,  
From my first birth unto this present day.

**Leir.** The blessing, which the God of Abraham gave  
Unto the tribe of Judah, light on thee,  
And multiply thy days, that thou mayest see  
Thy children's children prosper after thee.  
Thy faults, which are just none that I do know,  
God pardon on high, and I forgive below.

**Cord.** Now is my heart at quiet, and doth leap  
Within my breast, for joy of this good hap:  
And now, dear father, welcome to our court,  
And welcome, kind Perillus, unto me,  
Mirror of virtue and true honesty.

**Leir.** O, he hath been the kindest friend to me,  
That ever man had in adversity.

**Peril.** My tongue doth fail, to say what heart doth think,  
I am so ravished with exceeding joy.

**King.** All you have spoke: now let me speak my mind,  
And in few words much matter here conclude:  
If ever my heart do harbour any joy,  
Or true content repose within my breast,  
Till I have rooted out this viperous sect,  
And repossessed my father of his crown,  
Let me be counted for the perjuredest man,  
That ever spake word since the world began.

**Mum.** Let me pray too, that never prayed before;  
If ere I resalute the British earth,  
(As, ere 't be long, I do presume I shall)  
And so return from thence without my wench,  
Let me be gelded for my recompense.

**King.** Come, let us to arms for to redress this wrong:  
Till I am there, methinks, the time seems long. {Exeunt}

## ACT V SCENE V

A room in the royal palace of Cambria

[Enter Ragan, solus.]

**Rag.** I feel a hell of conscience in my breast,  
Tormenting me with horror for my fact,  
And makes me in a agony of doubt,  
For fear the world should find my dealing out.  
The slave whom I appointed for the act,  
I never set eye upon the peasant since:  
O, could I get him for to make him sure,  
My doubts would cease, and I should rest secure.  
But if the old men, with persuasive words,  
Have saved their lives, and made him to relent;  
Then are they fled unto the court of France,  
And like a trumpet manifest my shame.  
A shame on these white-livered slaves, say I,  
That with fair words so soon are overcome.  
O god, that I had been but made a man;  
Or that my strength were equal with my will!  
These foolish men are nothing but mere pity,  
And melt as butter doth against the sun.  
Why should they have pre-eminence over us,  
Since we are creatures of more brave resolve?  
I swear, I am quite out of charity  
With all the heartless men in Christendom.  
A pox upon them, when they are afraid  
To give a stab, or slit a paltry wind-pipe,  
Which are so easy matters to be done.  
Well, had I thought the slave would serve me so,  
Myself would have been executioner:  
It is now undone, and if that it be known,  
I will make as good shift as I can for one.  
He that repines at me, however it stands,  
T'were best for him to keep him from my hands. {Exeunt}

## ACT V

### SCENE VI

A Port of Gallia.

[Sounds drums and trumpets: Enter the Gallian king, Leir, Mumford, and the army.]

**King.** Thus have we brought our army to the sea,  
Whereas our ships are ready to receive us:  
The wind stands fair, and we in four hours' sail,  
May easily arrive on British shore,  
Where unexpected we may them surprise,  
And gain a glorious victory with ease.  
Wherefore, my loving countrymen, resolve,  
Since truth and justice fighteth on our sides,  
That we shall march with conquest where we go.  
Myself will be as forward as the first,  
And step by step march with the hardiest wight:

And not the meanest soldier in our camp  
Shall be in danger, but I will second him.  
To you, my lord, we give the whole command  
Of all the army, next unto ourself;  
Not doubting of you, but you will extend  
Your wonted valour in this needful case,  
Encouraging the rest to do the like,  
By your approved magnanimity.

**Mum.** My liege, 'tis needless to spur a willing horse,  
That's apt enough to run himself to death:  
For here I swear by that sweet saint's bright eyes,  
Which are the stars, which guide me to good hap,  
Either to see my old lord crowned anew,  
Or in his cause to bid the world adieu.

**Leir.** Thanks, good lord Mumford, it is more of your good-will,  
Than any merit or desert in me.

**Mum.** And now to you, my worthy countrymen,  
Ye valiant race of Genovestan Gauls,  
Surnamed Red-shanks, for your chivalry,  
Because you fight up to the shanks in blood;  
Show yourselves now to be right Gauls indeed,  
And be so bitter on your enemies,  
That they may say, you are as bitter as gall.  
Gall them, brave shot, with your artillery:  
Gall them, brave halberts, with your sharp point bills,  
Each in their appointed place, not one, but all,  
Fight for the credit of yourselves and Gaul.

**King.** Then what should more persuasion need to those,  
That rather wish to deal, than hear of blows?  
Let us to our ships, and if that god permit,  
In four hours' sail, I hope we shall be there.

**Mum.** And in five hours more, I make no doubt,  
But we shall bring our wished desires about. {Exeunt }

## ACT V SCENE VII

The ramparts of a town in Britain.

[Enter a Captain of the Watch, and two Watchmen.]

**Capt.** My honest friends, it is your turn tonight, To watch in this place, near about the beacon, And vigilantly have regard, if any fleet of ships pass hitherward: which if you do, your office is to fire the beacon presently, and raise the town.

**First W.** Ay, ay, ay, fear nothing; we know our charge, I warrant: I have been a watchman about this beacon this thirty year, and yet I Never see it stir, but stood as quietly as might be.

**Second W.** Faith neighbour, and you will follow my advice, instead of Watching the beacon, we will go to goodman Jennings's,

and watch a pot of ale And a rasher of bacon: and if we do not drink ourselves drunk, then so; I warrant, the beacon will see us when we come out again.

**First W.** Ay, but how if somebody excuse us to the captain?

**Second W.** 'Tis no matter, I will prove by good reason that we watch the beacon: ass for example.

**First W.** I hope you do not call me ass by craft, neighbour.

**Second W.** No, no, but for example: say here stands the pot of ale, that is the beacon.

**First W.** Ay, ay, it is a very good beacon.

**Second W.** Well, say here stands your nose, that is the fire.

**First W.** Indeed I must confess, it is somewhat red.

**Second W.** I see come marching in a dish, half a score pieces of salt bacon.

**First W.** I understand your meaning, that is as much to say, half a score ships.

**Second W.** True, you conster right; presently, like a faithful watchman, I fire the beacon, and call up the town.

**First W.** Ay, that is as much as to say, you set your nose to the pot, and drink up the drink.

**Second W.** You are in the right; come, let us go fire the beacon. {Exeunt}

## ACT V

### SCENE VIII

Before the walls of a town in Britain.

[Enter the king of Gallia with a still march, Mumford and soldiers.]

**King.** Now march our ensigns on the British earth,  
And we are near approaching to the town.  
Then look about you valiant countrymen,  
And we shall finish this exploit with ease.  
The inhabitants of this mistrustful place  
Are dead asleep, as men that are secure:  
Here shall we skirmish but with naked men,  
Devoid of sense, new-waked from a dream,  
That know not what our coming doth pretend,  
Till they do feel our meaning on their skins:  
Therefore assail: God and our right for us. {Exeunt}

## ACT V

### SCENE IX

An open place in a town of Britain.

[Alarm, with men and women half naked: Enter two Captains without doublets, with swords.]

**First Cap.** Where are these villains that were set to watch,  
And fire the beacon, if occasion served,

That thus have suffered us to be surprised,  
And never given notice to the town?  
We are betrayed, and quite devoid of hope,  
By any means to fortify ourselves.

**Second Cap.** 'Tis ten to one the peasants are o'ercome with drink and sleep, and so neglect their charge.

**First Cap.** A whirl-wind carry them quick to a whirl-pool,  
That there the slaves may drink their bellies full.

**Second Cap.** This 'tis, to have the beacon so near the ale-house.

**First Cap.** Out on ye, villains, whither run you now?

**First W.** To fire the town, and call up the beacon.

**Second W.** No, no, sir to fire the beacon.

**Second Cap.** What, with a pot of ale, you drunken rogues?

**First Cap.** You will fire the beacon, when the town is lost: I will teach you how to tend your office better.

**Mum.** Yield, yield, yield.

**First W.** Reel? no, we do not reel:  
You may lack a pot of ale ere you die.

**Mum.** But in mean space, I answer, you want none.  
Well there is no dealing with you, you are tall men, and well weaponed,  
I would there were no worse than you in the town.

**Second W.** A' speaks like an honest man, my choler's past already.  
Come, neighbour, let us go.

**First W.** Nay, first let us see and we can stand. {Exeunt}

## ACT V

### SCENE X

An open place in a town of Britain.

[Enter the Gallian king, Leir, Mumford, Cordella, Perillus and soldiers, with the chief of the town bound.]

**King.** Fear not, my friends, you shall receive no hurt,  
If you will subscribe unto your lawful king,  
And quite revoke your fealty from Cambria,  
And from aspiring Cornwall too, whose wives  
Have practised treason against their father's life.  
We come in justice of your wronged king,  
And do intend no harm at all to you,  
So you submit unto your lawful king.

**Leir.** Kind countrymen, it grieves me, that perforce,  
I am constrained to use extremities.  
Nobles. Long have you here been looked for, good my lord,

And wished for by a general consent:  
And had we known your highness had arrived,  
We had not made resistance to your grace:  
And now, my gracious lord, you need not doubt,  
But all the country will yield presently,  
Which since your absence have been greatly taxed,  
For to maintain their overswelling pride.  
We will presently send word to all our friends;  
When they have notice, they will come apace.

**Leir.** Thanks, loving subjects; and thanks, worthy son,  
Thanks, my kind daughter, thanks to you, my lord,  
Who willingly adventured have your blood,  
(Without desert) to do me so much good.

**Mum.** Oh, say not so:  
I have been much beholding to your grace:  
I must confess, I have been in some skirmishes,  
But I was never in the like to this:  
For where I was wont to meet with armed men,  
I was now encountered with naked women.

**Cord.** We that are feeble, and want use of arms,  
Will pray to god, to shield you from all harms.

**Leir.** The while your hands do manage ceaseless toil,  
Our hearts shall pray, the foes may have the foil.

**Peril.** We will fast and pray, whilst you for us do fight,  
That victory may prosecute the right.

**King.** Methinks, your words do amplify (my friends)  
And add fresh vigour to my willing limbs:  
But hark, I hear the adverse drum approach.  
God and our right, Saint Denis, and Saint George.

**Corn.** Presumptuous king of Gauls, how darest thou  
Presume to enter on our British shore?  
And more than that, to take our towns perforce,  
And draw our subjects' hearts from their true king?  
Be sure to buy it at as dear a price,  
As ever you bought presumption in your lives.

**King.** Over-daring Cornwall, know, we came in right,  
And just revengement of the wronged king,  
Whose daughters there, fell vipers as they are,  
Have sought to murder and deprive of life:  
But god protected him from all their spite,  
And we are come in justice of his right.

**Cam.** Nor he nor thou have any interest here,  
But what you win and purchase with the sword.  
Thy slanders to our noble virtuous queens,

We will in the battle thrust them down thy throat,  
Except for fear of our revenging hands,  
Thou fly to sea, as not secure on lands.

**Mum.** Welshman, I will so ferret you ere night for that word,  
That you shall have no mind to crake so well this twelvemonth.

**Gon.** They lie, that say, we sought our father's death.

**Rag.** It is merely forged for a colour's sake,  
To set a gloss on your invasion.  
Methinks, an old man ready for to die,  
Should be ashamed to broach so foul a lie.

**Cord.** Fie, shameless sister, so devoid of grace,  
To call our father liar to his face.

**Gon.** Peace, puritan, dissembling hypocrite,  
Which art so good, that thou wilt prove stark naught:  
Anon, whenas I have you in my fingers,  
I will make you wish yourself in purgatory.

**Peril.** Nay, peace thou monster, shame unto thy sex:  
Thou fiend in likeness of a human creature.

**Rag.** I never heard a fouler spoken man.

**Leir.** Out on thee, viper, scum, filthy parricide,  
More odious to my sight than is a toad.  
Knowest thou these letters? {Grabs the letters and tears them.}

**Rag.** Think you to outface me with your paltry scrolls?  
You come to drive my husband from his right,  
Under the colour of a forged letter.

**Leir.** Who ever heard the like impiety?

**Peril.** You are our debtor of more patience:  
We were more patient when we stayed for you,  
Within the thicket two long hours and more.

**Rag.** What hours? what thicket?

**Peril.** There, where you sent your servant with your letters,  
Sealed with your hand, to send us both to heaven,  
Where as I think, you never mean to come.

**Rag.** Alas, you are grown a child again with age,  
Or else your senses dote for want of sleep.

**Peril.** Indeed you made us rise betimes, you know,  
Yet had a care we should sleep where you bade us stay,  
But never wake more till the latter day.

**Gon.** Peace, peace, old fellow, thou art sleepy still.

**Mum.** Faith, and if you reason till tomorrow,  
You get no other answer at their hands.  
It is pity two such good faces  
Should have so little grace between them.  
Well, let us see if their husbands with their hands,  
Can do as much, as they do with their tongues.

**Cam.** Ay, with their swords they will make your tongue unsay  
What they have said, or else they will cut them out.

**King.** To it, gallants, to it, let us not stand brawling thus. {Exeunt both armies.}

## ACT V

### SCENE XI

A battlefield outside the walls of a town of Britain.

[Sound Alarum: excursions. Mumford must chase Cambria away: then cease. Enter Cornwall.]

**Corn.** The day is lost, our friends do all revolt,  
And join against us with the adverse part:  
There is no means of safety but by flight,  
And therefore I will to Cornwall with my queen.

**Cam.** I think, there is a devil in the camp hath haunted  
Me today: he hath so tired me, that in a manner I can fight no more.  
Zounds, here he comes, I will take me to my horse.

**Mum.** Farewell, Welshman, give thee but thy due,  
Thou hast a light and nimble pair of legs:  
Thou art more in debt to them than to thy hands:  
But if I meet thee once again today,  
I will cut them off, and set them to a better heart. {Exit}

## ACT V

### SCENE XII

The same.

[Alarum and excursions; then sound victory. Enter Leir, Perillus, King, Cordella, and Mumford.]

**King.** Thanks be to god, your foes are overcome,  
And you again possessed of your right.

**Leir.** First to the heavens, next, thanks to you, my son,  
By whose good means I repossess the same:  
Which if it please you to accept yourself,  
With all my heart I will resign to you.  
For it is yours by right, and none of mine.  
First, have you raised, at your own charge, a power  
Of valiant soldiers; this comes all from you;

Next have you ventured your own person's scathe.  
And lastly worthy Gallia never stained,  
My kingly title I by thee have gained.

**King.** Thank heavens, not me, my zeal to you is such,  
Command my utmost I will never grutch.

**Cord.** He that with all kind love entreats his queen,  
Will not be to her father unkind seen.

**Leir.** Ah, my Cordella, now I call to mind,  
The modest answer, which I took unkind:  
But now I see, I am no whit beguiled,  
Thou lovedst me dearly, and as ought a child.  
And thou, Perillus, partner once in woe,  
Thee to requite, the best I can, I will do:  
Yet all I can, ay, were it never so much,  
Were not sufficient, thy true love is such.  
Thanks, worthy Mumford, to thee last of all,  
Not greeted last, because thy desert was small;  
No, thou hast lion-like laid on today,  
Chasing the Cornwall king and Cambria;  
Who with my daughters, daughters did I say?  
To save their lives, the fugitives did play.  
Come, son and daughter, who did me advance,  
Repose with me awhile, and then for France. {Sound drums and trumpets. Exeunt.}