

King Lear

ACT IV SCENE VI

[Enter GLOUCESTER, and EDGAR dressed like a peasant]

GLOUCESTER When shall we come to the top of that same hill?
EDGAR You do climb up it now: look, how we labour.
GLOUCESTER Methinks the ground is even.
EDGAR Horrible steep.
 Hark, do you hear the sea?
GLOUCESTER No, truly.
EDGAR Why, then, your other senses grow imperfect
 By your eyes' anguish.
GLOUCESTER So may it be, indeed:
 Methinks thy voice is alter'd; and thou speak'st
 In better phrase and matter than thou didst.
EDGAR You're much deceived: in nothing am I changed
 But in my garments.
GLOUCESTER Methinks you're better spoken.
EDGAR Come on, sir; here's the place: stand still. How fearful
 And dizzy 'tis, to cast one's eyes so low!
 The crows and choughs that wing the midway air
 Show scarce so gross as beetles: half way down
 Hangs one that gathers samphire, dreadful trade!
 Methinks he seems no bigger than his head:
 The fishermen, that walk upon the beach,
 Appear like mice; and yond tall anchoring bark,
 Diminish'd to her cock; her cock, a buoy
 Almost too small for sight: the murmuring surge,
 That on the unnumber'd idle pebbles chafes,
 Cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more;
 Lest my brain turn, and the deficient sight
 Topple down headlong.
GLOUCESTER Set me where you stand.
EDGAR Give me your hand: you are now within a foot
 Of the extreme verge: for all beneath the moon
 Would I not leap upright.
GLOUCESTER Let go my hand.
 Here, friend, 's another purse; in it a jewel
 Well worth a poor man's taking: fairies and gods
 Prosper it with thee! Go thou farther off;
 Bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.
EDGAR Now fare you well, good sir.
GLOUCESTER With all my heart.
EDGAR Why I do trifle thus with his despair
 Is done to cure it.
GLOUCESTER *[Kneeling]* O you mighty gods!
 This world I do renounce, and, in your sights,
 Shake patiently my great affliction off:
 If I could bear it longer, and not fall
 To quarrel with your great opposeless wills,
 My snuff and loathed part of nature should
 Burn itself out. If Edgar live, O, bless him!
 Now, fellow, fare thee well.

[He falls forward]
EDGAR Gone, sir: farewell.
 And yet I know not how conceit may rob
 The treasury of life, when life itself
 Yields to the theft: had he been where he thought,

By this, had thought been past. Alive or dead?
Ho, you sir! friend! Hear you, sir! speak!
Thus might he pass indeed: yet he revives.
What are you, sir?

GLOUCESTER
EDGAR

Away, and let me die.
Hadst thou been aught but gossamer, feathers, air,
So many fathom down precipitating,
Thou'dst shiver'd like an egg: but thou dost breathe;
Hast heavy substance; bleed'st not; speak'st; art sound.
Ten masts at each make not the altitude
Which thou hast perpendicularly fell:
Thy life's a miracle. Speak yet again.

GLOUCESTER
EDGAR

But have I fall'n, or no?
From the dread summit of this chalky bourn.
Look up a-height; the shrill-gorged lark so far
Cannot be seen or heard: do but look up.

GLOUCESTER

Alack, I have no eyes.
Is wretchedness deprived that benefit,
To end itself by death? 'Twas yet some comfort,
When misery could beguile the tyrant's rage,
And frustrate his proud will.

EDGAR

Give me your arm:
Up: so. How is 't? Feel you your legs? You stand.

GLOUCESTER
EDGAR

Too well, too well.
This is above all strangeness.
Upon the crown o' the cliff, what thing was that
Which parted from you?

GLOUCESTER
EDGAR

A poor unfortunate beggar.
As I stood here below, methought his eyes
Were two full moons; he had a thousand noses,
Horns whelk'd and waved like the enridged sea:
It was some fiend; therefore, thou happy father,
Think that the clearest gods, who make them honours
Of men's impossibilities, have preserved thee.

GLOUCESTER

I do remember now: henceforth I'll bear
Affliction till it do cry out itself
'Enough, enough,' and die.