

King Lear abbreviated

Act 1, Scene 1

Daughter to Father

Situation: An old and getting weaker King Lear has made plans to divide his Kingdom of Britain into three parts, one part for each daughter. He has asked his daughters to let him know “which of you shall we say doth love us most.” His two older daughters offer him what he wants to hear. But Cordelia, his youngest, stands up to him, telling him she loves him “according to my bond, no more nor less.” Her response infuriates him.

LEAR: To thee and thine hereditary ever remain this ample third of our fair kingdom, no less in space, validity and pleasure than that conferred on Goneril. Now, our joy, although our last and least, what can you say to draw a third more opulent than your sisters?

CORDELIA: Nothing, my lord.

LEAR: Nothing?

CORDELIA: Nothing.

LEAR: Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again.

Cordelia to Lear, No. 1

Hard as this is for me, I cannot heave
My heart to say I love you all and leave
No love for a husband. Your Majesty
I love according to my bond, no more
Nor less. You fathered me, bred me, loved me.
I return those duties back, as called for
To obey you, love you, most honor you.
Why have my sisters husbands if they do
Love you all? He with my plight shall carry
Half my love with him, when comes that dear hour
I wed, and he shall take half my duty
And care, unlike my sisters to love our
Father all. My heart may appear to you
Untender, but my lord it's young and true.

LEAR: Let it be so, my sometime daughter.

KENT: Good my liege-----

LEAR: Peace, Kent. Come not between the dragon and his wrath. I loved her most and thought to set my rest on her kind nursery.

LEAR TO CORDELIA: Hence and avoid my sight! Cornwall and Albany, with my two daughters' dowers digest the third. Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her.