

King Lear abbreviated

Act 5, Scene 3

Father to Daughter

Situation: Edgar and Gloucester exit, learning that “King Lear and his daughter ta’en.” Edmund enters with Lear and Cordelia as prisoners and has them sent to prison. He also sends along a set of instructions to the attending captain.

EDMUND: Some officers take them away.

CORDELIA TO LEAR: We are not the first who with best meaning have incurred the worst. Shall we not see these daughters and these sisters?

Lear to Cordelia

No, no, no. Come, let's away to prison.
Like birds in a cage, we two will sing on
Alone. When thou doth ask me blessing, I'll
Kneel and ask thee forgiveness. So we'll live,
And sing, and tell old tales, and all the while
Laugh as gilded butterflies. We can give
Beggars counsel, hear them talk of court news,
Taking on this mystery, learning the views
Of this unknown nether world as if we
Were spies for the gods. We'll hear the voices
Of the rogues who daily ebb and flow. The
Gods themselves honor such sacrifices.
Prithee, wipe thine wet eyes. In thy heart keep
The good years; do not let them make us weep.

EDMUND: Take them away.

Lear and Cordelia exit with soldiers.

EDMUND: Come hither, Captain.

He hands the Captain a paper.

EDMUND: Take thou this note. Go follow them to prison. If thou dost as this instructs thee, thou does make thy way to noble fortunes. Know thus this: that men are as the time is; to be tender-minded does not become a sword. Either say thou'lt do 't, or thrive by other means.

CAPTAIN: I'll do 't, my lord.