

King Lear abbreviated

Act 1, Scene 4

Insight

Situation: Being treated with less than “ceremonious affection,” King Lear, as noted, has struck Oswald, Goneril’s steward. Kent has tripped the steward, receiving praise from the king. At this point the king’s Fool, who addresses the king as “Nuncle,” offers the disguised Kent his views on the unfolding situation.

KENT TO OSWALD: Come, sir, arise. Away. I’ll teach you differences.

Oswald exits.

LEAR: I thank thee. There’s earnest of thy service.

He gives Kent a purse. The Fool enters.

FOOL: Let me hire him too.

The Fool offers Kent his fool’s cap.

LEAR: Why, my boy?

FOOL: Why?

Fool to Kent, No. 1

For taking sides with that out of favor,
Take my fool’s cap, man. If thou canst waver
With the wind thou’lt catch cold. He hath banished
Two of his daughters; blessed a third counter
His will. I’d keep the Fool’s caps if I’d wished
All my living to them. He that confer
With thee to give away all his land is
As bitter a fool as thee. Nuncle, ‘tis
Little wit in thy bald crown; beseeches
One to keep the golden one. Gav’st you
Them the rod and put’st down thine breeches.
Prithee, nuncle, keep a schoolmaster who
Can teach thy Fool to lie before he die.
If thou would’st do, I’d here learn to lie.

LEAR: If you lie, sirrah, we’ll have you whipped.

FOOL: I marvel what kin thou and thy daughters are. They’ll have me whipped for speaking true, thou’lt have me whipped for lying.