

King Lear abbreviated

Act 1, Scene 4

Pleading

Situation: Kent is the king's aide who was banned from Britain by King Lear for criticizing him over his harsh treatment of his youngest daughter, Cordelia. Risking all, Kent, disguising himself as a beggar, hopes to find employment with the king.

KENT: If I can disguise my accents as well as my outward appearance, then my good intent may carry through itself to that full issue.

Lear enters.

LEAR: How now, what art thou?

KENT: A man, sir.

LEAR: What doth thou profess? What services canst do? How old art thou?

Kent to Lear

I do profess to be no less than I
Seem, to love him that is honest, to lie
Not to him that will put me in trust, to
Fight when no other choice, to at no time
Eat fish, to hold communion with him who
Is wise, and am an honest fellow. I'm
Not so young to love women for singing,
Nor so old to dote on them for nothing,
Can deliver a plain message bluntly,
And that which ordinary men are fit
For I am qualified in. And with me
Diligence is loyal, and the best of wit
Is my true counsel; I'm good at running
And can mar a good tale in the telling.

LEAR: Follow me. Thou shalt serve me----if I like thee no worse after dinner. Where's my knave, my Fool? Ho! I think the world's asleep.