

THE LEAR EXPERIENCE

BY MIRIAM D. YOUNG

*BASED ON
THE TRAGEDY
OF
KING LEAR*

*BY
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE*

The Tragedy

of

King Lear

by William Shakespeare

PROPS

BATS

MIRRORS

NETS

LETTERS

ONIONS

WHEELS

CORDS

THRONES

and BEASTS

Act I.

Scene I. *King Lear's Palace.*

Enter Kent, Gloucester, and Edmund.

Kent. I thought the king had more affected the Duke of Albany than Cornwall.

Glou. It did always seem so to us; but now, in the division of the kingdom, it appears not which of the dukes he values most, for equalities are so weighed that curiosity in neither can make choice of either's moiety.

Kent. Is not this your son, my lord?

Glou. His breeding, sir, hath been at my charge. I have so often blushed to acknowledge him that now I am brazed to it.

Kent. I cannot conceive you.

Glou. Sir, this young fellow's mother could; whereupon she grew round-wombed, and had indeed, sir, a son for her cradle ere she had a husband for her bed. Do you smell a fault?

Kent. I cannot wish the fault undone, the issue of it being so proper.

Glou. But I have, sir, a son by order of law, some year elder than this, who yet is no dearer in my account. Though this knave come something saucily into the world before he was sent for, yet was his mother fair; there was good sport at his making, and the whoreson must be acknowledged. -Do you know this noble gentleman, Edmund?

Edm. No, my lord.

Glou. My lord of Kent; remember him hereafter as my honourable friend.

Edm. My services to your lordship.

Kent. I must love you, and sue to know you better.

Edm. Sir. I shall study deserving.

Glou. . He hath been out nine years, and away he shall again. - The king is coming.

Sennet. Enter one bearing a coronet, King Lear, Cornwall, Albany, Goneril, Regan, Cordelia, and

Meantime we shall express our darker purpose.-

while we Unburthen'd crawl toward death.

Cor. [Aside] What shall Cordelia do? Love,
and be silent.

attendants.

Lear. Attend the lords of France and Burgundy, Gloucester.

Glou. I shall, my liege.

[Exeunt Gloucester and Edmund.]

Lear. Meantime we shall express our darker purpose.-
Give me the map there. -Know we have divided
In three our kingdom; and 'tis our fast intent
To shake all cares and business from our age,
Conferring them on younger strengths, while we
Unburthen'd crawl toward death. -Our son of Cornwall,-
And you, our no less loving son of Albany,-
We have this hour a constant will to publish
Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife
My be prevented now. The princes France and
Burgundy,
Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love,
Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn,
And here are to be answer'd.- Tell me, my daughters,
Since now we will divest us both of rule,
Interest of territory, cares of state,
Which of you shall we say doth love us most,
That we our largest bounty may extend
Where nature doth with merit challenge?
-Goneril,
Our eldest-born, speak first.

Gon. Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter,
Dearer than eye-sight, space, and liberty,
Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare,
No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honour,
As much as child e'er loved or father found,-
A love that makes breath poor and speech unable;
Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

Cor. [Aside] What shall Cordelia do? Love,
and be silent.

Lear. Of all these bounds, even from this live to this,
With shadowy forests and with champains rich'd,
With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads,
We make thee lady. To thine and Albany's issue
Be this perpetual. -What says our second daughter,
Our dearest Regan, wife to Cornwall? Speak.

Reg. I am made of that self metal as my sister,
And prize me at her worth. In my true heart
I find she names my very deed of love,
Only she comes too short; that I profess
Myself an enemy to all other joys
Which the most precious square of sense possesses,
And find I am alone felicitate
In your dear highness' love.

Cor. [Aside] Then poor Cordelia!
And yet not so, since I am sure my love's
More ponderous than my tongue.

Lear. To thee and thine hereditary ever
Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom,
No less in space, validity, and pleasure
Than that conferr'd on Goneril. -Now, our joy,
Although the last, not least, to whose young love
The vines of France and milk of burgundy
Strive to be interest'd, what can you say to draw
A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

Cor. **Nothing, my lord.**

Lear. Nothing!

Cor. Nothing.

Lear. Nothing will come of nothing; speak again.

Cor. Unhappy that I am, **I cannot heave
My heart into my mouth.** I love your majesty
According to my bond, nor more nor less.

Lear. How, how, Cordelia! Mend your speech a little,
Lest it may mar your fortunes.

Cor. Good my lord,
You have begot me, bred me, loved me; I
Return those duties back as are right fit,-
Obey you, love you, and most honour you.
Why have my sisters husbands, if they say
They love you all? Haply, when I shall wed,
That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry
Half my love with him, half my care and duty.
Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters,
To love my father all.

*But 'nothing' is not nothing.
'Nothing' is quite complex...*

*it's all about values: numerical values which are directions,
and moral values which are moral directions, which are
patterns. And patterns are the paths on the dome of many-
colored glass that lead between chaos and the white radiance.-*

DURER'S BAT WIELDS A CERTAIN KIND OF BLINDNESS:

GOD DID NOT MAKE US HUMBLE. HE MADE
US PROUD THAT WE MIGHT AMUSE HIM.

"CEUX QUI ADORENT LA BETE BOIRONT LE VIN DE LA
COLERE DE DIEU

THOSE WHO ADORE THE BEAST WILL DRINK THE
WINE OF GOD'S ANGER.

OUT OF MY SIGHT

the blind have only one guide...
the mirror

Whom I have ever honour'd as my king,
Loved as my father, as my master follow'd,
As my great patron thought on in my prayers,-

Lear. The bow is bent and drawn; make from the shaft.

Kent. Let it fall rather, though the fork invade
The region of my heart; be Kent unmannerly,
When Lear is mad. - What wouldst thou do, my old man?
Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak,
When power to flattery bows? To plainness honour's bound,
When majesty stoops to folly. Reverse thy doom,
And in thy best consideration check
This hideous rashness. Answer my life my judgement,
Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least;
Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound
Reverbs no hollowness.

Lear. Kent, on thy life, no more.

Kent. My life I never held but as a pawn
to wage against thy enemies, nor fear to lose it,
Thy safety being the motive.

Lear. **Out of my sight!**

Kent. See better, Lear, and let me still remain
The true blank of thine eye.

Lear. Now, by Apollo,-

Kent. Now, by Apollo, king,
though swear'st thy gods in vain.

Lear. O, vassal! miscreant!
[Laying his hand on his sword.

Alb.
Dear sir, forbear.

Corn.

Kent. Do;
Kill thy physician, and the fee bestow
Upon the foul disease. Revoke thy doom;
Or, whilst I can vent clamour from my throat,
I'll tell thee thou dost evil.

Lear. Hear me, recreant!

On thy allegiance, hear me!
Since thou hast sought to make us break our vow,
Which we durst never yet, and with strain'd pride
To come between our sentence and our power,
Which nor our nature nor our place can bear,
Our potency made good, take thy reward.
Five days we do allot thee, for provision
To shield thee from diseases of the world,
And on the sixth to turn thy hated back
Upon our kingdom; if on the tenth day following
Thy banish'd trunk be found in our dominions,
The moment is thy death. Away! By Jupiter,
This shall not be revoked.

Kent. Fare thee well, king; sith thus thou wilt appear,
Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here.-
[To Cordelia] The gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid,
That justly think'st and hast most rightly said!-
[To Regan and Goneril] And your large speeches may your deeds approve,
That good effects may spring from words of love.-
Thus Kent, O prince, bids you all adieu;
He'll shape his old course in a country new. [Exit.

Flourish. Re-enter Gloucester, with France, Burgundy, and Attendants.

Glou. Here's France and Burgundy, my noble lord.

Lear. My lord of Burgundy,
We first address toward you, who with this king
Hath rivall'd for our daughter.
What, in the least,
Will you require in the present dower with her,
Or cease your quest of love?

Bur. Most royal majesty,
I crave no more than what your highness offer'd,
Nor will you tender less.

Lear. Right noble Burgundy,
When she was dear to us, we did hold her so;
But now her price is fallen. Sir, there she stands;
If aught within that little seeming substance,
Or all of it, with our displeasure pieced,
And nothing more, may fitly like your grace,
She's there, and she is yours. *she's there and she is yours.*

Bur. I know no answer.

Lear. Will you, with those infirmities she owes,
Unfriended, new adopted to our hate,
Dower'd with our curse and stranger'd with our oath,
Take her or leave her? *takeherorleaveher*

Bur. Pardon me, royal sir;
Election makes not up on such conditions.

Lear. Then leave her, sir; for, by the power that made me,
I tell you all her wealth. - [To France] For you,
great king,
I would not from your love make such a stray
To match you where I hate; therefore beseech you
To avert your liking a more worthier way
Than on a wretch whom nature is ashamed
Almost to acknowledge hers.

Fran. This is most strange
That she, that even but now was your best object,
The argument of your praise, balm of your age,
Most best, most dearest, should in this trice of time
Commit a thing so monstrous to dismantle
So many folds of favour. Sure, her offence
Must be of such unnatural degree
That monsters it, or your fore-vouch'd affection
Fallen into taint; which to believe of her
Must be a faith that reason without miracle
Could never plant in me.

Cor. I yet beseech your majesty,-
If for I want that glib and oily art
To speak and purpose not, since what I will intend
I'll do't before I speak, -that you make known
It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness,
No unchaste action, or dishonour'd step,
That hath deprived me of your grace and favour;
But even for want of that for which I am richer,-
A still-soliciting eye, and such a tongue
As I am glad I have not, though not to have it
Hath lost me in your liking.

Lear. **Better thou**

Hadst not been born than not to have pleased me better.

Fran. Is it but this, - a tardiness in nature

Which often leaves the history unspoke

That it intends to do? -My lord of Burgundy,

What say you to the lady? **Love's not love**

When it is mingled with regards that stand

Aloof from the entire point. Will you have her?

She is herself a dowry.

Bur. Royal Lear,

Give but that portion which yourself proposed,

And here I take Cordelia by the hand,

Duchess of Burgundy.

Lear. Nothing! I have sworn; I am firm

Nothing is not nothing.
Nothing is quite
complex...it's all about
values: numerical values
which are directions,
and moral values which

Bur. I am sorry then you have so lost a father
That you must lose a husband.

Cor. Peace be with Burgundy!
Since that respects of fortune are his love,
I shall not be his wife.

Fran. Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich being poor,
Most choice forsaken, and most loved despised,
Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon;
Be it lawful I take up what's cast away.-
Gods, gods! 'tis strange that from their cold'st neglect
My love should kindle to inflamed respect.-
Thy dowerless daughter, king, thrown to my
 chance,
Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France.
Not all the dukes of waterish Burgundy
Can buy this unprized precious maid of me.-
Bid them farewell, Cordelia, though unkind;
Thou lovest here, a better where to find.

are moral directions,
which are patterns- And
patterns are the paths on
the dome of many-colored
glass that lead between
chaos and the white radi-
ance

Lear. Thou hast her, France; let her be thine, for we
Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see
That face of hers again. Therefore be gone
Without our grace, our love, our benison.-
Come, noble Burgundy.

[Flourish. Exeunt all but France, Goneril,
Regan, and Cordelia.

EXEUNT

Fran. Bid farewell to your sisters.

Cor. The jewels of our father, with washed eyes
Cordelia leaves you. I know you what you are;
And, like a sister, am most loath to call
Your faults as they are named. Use well our father;
To your professed bosoms I commit him,-
But yet, alas, stood I within his grace,
I would prefer him to a better place.
So farewell to you both.

Reg. Prescribe not us our duties.

Gon. Let your study
Be to content your lord, who hath received you
At fortune's alms. **You have obedience scanted,**
And well are worth the want that you have wanted.

Cor. Time shall unfold what plaited cunning hides;
Who cover faults, at last shame them derides.
Well may you prosper!

Fran. Come, my fair Cordelia

[Exeunt France and Cordelia.

EXEUNT

Gon. Sister, it is not a little I have to say of what most nearly appertains to us both. I think our father will hence to-night.

Reg. That's most certain, and with you; next month with us.

Gon. You see how full of changes his age is; the observation we have made of it hath not been little. He always loved our sister most; and with what poor judgement he hath now cast her off appears too grossly.

Reg. **'Tis the infirmity of his age; yet he hath ever but slenderly known himself.**

Gon. The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash; then must we look to receive from his age not alone the imperfections of long ingrafted condition, but therewithal the unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them.

Reg. Such unconstant starts are we like to have from him as this of Kent's banishment.

Gon. There is further compliment of leave-taking between France and him. Pray you, let's hit together; if our father carry authority with such dispositions as he bears, this last surrender of his will but offend us.

Reg. We shall further think on 't.

Gon. We must do something, and i' the heat.

[Exeunt.]

EXEUNT

absense is not nothing. absense is something. the path that leads between chaos and the white radiance.

Scene II. *The Earl of Gloucester's Castle*

Enter Bastard

Edm. Thou, nature, art my goddess; to thy law
My services are bound. Wherefore should I
Stand in the plague of custom, and permit
The curiosity of nations to deprive me,
For that I am some twelve or fourteen moonshines
Lag of a brother? Why bastard, wherefore base,
When my dimensions are as well compact,
My mind as generous and my shape as true,
As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us
With base, with baseness, -bastardy, base, base,-
Who in the lusty stealth of nature take
More composition and fierce quality
Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed,
Go to the creating a whole tribe of fops
Got 'tween asleep and wake? Well then,
Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land.
Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund
As to the legitimate. Fine word, 'legitimate'!
Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed
And my invention thrive, Edmund the base
Shall top the legitimate. I grow, I prosper.-
Now, gods, stand up for bastards!

Enter Gloucester.

Gon. Kent banish'd thus! and France in choler parted!
And the king gone to-night! **subscribed his power!**
Confined to exhibition! All this done
Upon the gad! -Edmund, how now! what news?

Edm. So please your lordship, none.
[Putting up the letter.]

Gon. Why so earnestly seek you to put up that letter?

Edm. I know no news, my lord.

Gon. What paper were you reading?

Edm. Nothing, my lord.

Gon. No? What needed then that terrible dispatch of it into your pocket? The quality of nothing hath no such need to hide itself. Let's see; come, if it be nothing, I shall not need spectacles.

*nothing is an absense into which we might pitch
ourselves out of our hiding places*

Edm. I beseech you, sir, pardon me; it is a letter from my brother that I have not all o'er-read, and for so much as I have perused I find it not fit for your o'er-looking.

Glou. Give me the letter, sir.

Edm. I shall offend, either to detain or give it. The contents, as in part I understand them, are to blame.

Glou. Let's see, let's see.

Edm. I hope, for my brother's justification, he wrote this but as an essay or taste of my virtue.

Glou. [Reads] 'This policy and reverence of age makes the world bitter to the best of our ties, keeps our fortunes from us till our oldness cannot relish them. I begin to find an idle and fond bondage in the oppression of aged tyranny, who sways, not as it hath power, but as it is suffered. Come to me, that of this I may speak more. If our father would sleep till I waked him, you should enjoy half his revenue for ever, and live the beloved of your brother,
Edgar.'

Hum! Conspiracy!- 'Sleep till I waked him, you should enjoy half his revenue!'- My son Edgar! Had he a hand to write this, a heart and brain to breed it in? -When came this to you? Who brought it?

Edm. It was not brought me, my lord; there's the cunning of it. I found it thrown in at the casement of my closet.

Glou. You know the character to be your brother's?

Edm. If the matter were good, my lord, I durst swear it were his; but, in respect of that, I would fain think it were not.

Glou. It is his.

Edm. It is his hand, my lord; But I hope his heart is not in the contents.

Glou. Hath he never heretofore sounded you in this business?

Edm. Never, my lord; but I have heard him oft maintain it to be fit, that, sons at perfect age and fathers declining, the father should be as ward to the son, and the son manage his revenue.

Glou. O villain, villain! His very opinion in the letter! Abhorred villain! Unnatural, detested, brutish villain! worse than brutish! -Go, sirrah, seek him; ay, apprehend him. -Abominable villain! -Where is he?

Edm. I do not well know, my lord. If it shall please you to suspend your indignation against my brother till you can derive from him better testimony of his intent, you should run a certain course; where, if you violently proceed against him, mistaking his purpose, it would make a great gap in your own honour and shake in pieces the heart of his obedience. I dare pawn

Nothing is a Net to Catch

down my life for him that he hath wrote this to feel my affection to your honour and to no further pretence of danger.

Glou. Think you so?

Edm. If your honour judge it meet, I will place you where you shall hear us confer of this, and by an auricular assurance have your satisfaction, and that without any further delay than this very evening.

Glou. He cannot be such a monster-

Edm. Nor is not, sure.

Glou. To his father, that so tenderly and entirely loves him. Heaven and earth! -Edmund, seek him out; wind me into him, I pray you; frame the business after your own wisdom. I would unstate myself, to be in a due resolution.

Edm. I will seek him, sir, presently, convey the business as I shall find the means, and acquaint you withal.

Glou. These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us. Though the wisdom of nature can reason it thus and thus, yet nature finds itself scourged by the sequent effects; love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide; in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces, treason; and the bond cracked 'twixt son and father. This villain of mine comes under the prediction; there's son against father. The king falls from bias of nature; there's father against child. We have seen the best of our time; machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders follow us disquietly to our graves. -Find out this villain, Edmund, it shall lose thee nothing; do it carefully. -And the noble and true-hearted Kent banished! **his offence, honesty!** "Tis strange. [Exit.

Edm. **This is the excellent foppery of the world, that when we are sick in fortune- often the surfeit of our own behaviour- we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars,-** as if we were villains by necessity, fools by heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers by an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on. **An admirable evasion of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish disposition to the charge of a star!** My father compounded with my mother under the dragon's tail, and my nativity was under Ursa major; so that it follows I am rough and lecherous. **Tut, I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing.** Edgar-

Enter Edgar

And pat **he comes like the catastrophe of the old comedy; my cue is villanous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o' Bedlam. -O, these eclipses so portend these divisions! fa, sol, la me.**

Edg. How now, brother Edmund! what serious contemplation are you in?

Edm. I am thinking, brother, of a prediction I read this other day, what should follow these

THOSE WHO BUT SLENDERLY

eclipses.

Edg. Do you busy yourself about that?

Edm. I promise you, the effects he writ of succeed unhappily,- as of unnaturalness between the child and the parent; death, dearth, dissolutions of ancient amities; divisions in state, menaces and maledictions against king and nobles; needless diffidences, banishment of friends, dissipation of cohorts, nuptial breaches, and I know not what.

Edg. How long have you been a sectary astronomical?

Edm. Come, come; when saw you my father last?

Edg. Why, the night gone by.

Edm. Spake you with him?

Edg. Ay, two hours together.

Edm. Parted you in good terms? Found you no displeasure in him by word or countenance?

Edg. None at all.

Edm. Bethink yourself wherein you may have offended him; and at my entreaty forbear his presence till some little time hath qualified the heat of his displeasure, which at this instant so rageth in him that with the mischief of your person it would scarcely allay.

Edg. Some villain hath done me wrong.

Edm. That's my fear. I pray you, have a continent forbearance till the speed of his rage goes slower, and, as I say, retire with me to my lodging, from whence I will fitly bring you to hear my lord speak. Pray ye, go; there's my key. If you do stir abroad, go armed.

Edg. Armed, brother!

Edm. Brother, I advise you to the best: go armed. I am no honest man if there be any good meaning towards you. I have told you what I have seen and heard; but faintly, nothing like the image and horror of it. Pray you, away.

Edg. Shall I hear from you anon?

Edm. I do serve you in this business.-

[Exit Edgar.]

A credulous father, and a brother noble,
Whose nature is so far from doing harms
That he suspects none; on whose foolish honesty
My practices ride easy. I see the business.

KNOW THEMSELVES.

Let me, if not by birth, have lands by wit;
All with me's meet that I can fashion fit. [Exit.]

Scene III. *The Duke of Albany's Palace.*

Enter Goneril and Oswald, her steward.

Gon. Did my father strike my gentleman for chiding of his fool?

Osw. Yes, madam.

Glou. By day and night he wrongs me; every hour
He flashes into one gross crime or other,
That sets us all at odds. I'll not endure it.
His knights grow riotous, and himself upbraids us
On every trifle. When he returns from hunting,
I will not speak with him; say I am sick.
If you come slack of former services,
You shall do well; the fault of it I'll answer.

Osw. He's coming, madam; I hear him.
[Horns within.]

Gon. Put on what weary negligence you please,
You and your fellows; I'd have it come to question.
If he distaste it, let him to our sister,
Whose mind and mine, I know, in that are one,
Not to be over-ruled. Idle old man,
That still would manage those authorities
That he hath given away! Now, by my life,
Old fools are babes again, and must be used
With checks as flatteries, when they are seen abused.
Remember what I tell you.

Osw. Very well, madam.

Gon. And let his knights have colder looks among you;
What grows of it, no matter. Advise your fellows so,-
I would breed from hence occasions, and I shall,
That I may speak. I'll write straight to my sister
To hold my very course. -Prepare for dinner.
[Exeunt.]