***King Lear***

William Shakespeare

(adapted by R Parker)

**Dramatis Personae**

Lear, *King of Britain*

King of France

Duke of Burgundy

Duke of Cornwall

Duke of Albany

Earl of Kent

Earl of Gloucester

Edgar, *son to Gloucester*

Edmund, *bastard son to Gloucester*

Oswald, *steward to Goneril*

Old Man, *tenant to Gloucester*

Doctor

Fool

An Officer,

A Gentleman,

A Herald

Servants to Cornwall

Goneril, Regan, Cordelia, *daughters to Lear*

Knights of Lear's train, Officers, Messengers, Soldiers, and Attendants

Scene: *Britain*

***Prologue:*** *Edgar sits DSC surrounded by the rest of the cast as they will be at the end of the play:*

*Lear, dead with Cordelia dead in his arms. Regan and Goneril dead at one side. Albany and Kent looking on from the side.*

*At the back of the stage looking front are Gloucester, Cornwall, Edmund and Oswald – ghosts observing the scene. By them are the servants – silent observers. It is a posed tableau.*

*Edgar slowly rises and look at the assembled cast before turning to address the audience:*

Edgar: The weight of this sad time we must obey;

Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say.

The oldest hath borne most: we that are young

Shall never see so much, nor live so long.

A king and his three offspring here you see

And this their tale, our purpose now must be

With gentle word your sympathy to find

For consequences of this aged mind.

That actions of betrayal, hate and greed

Could stem unnoticed from a thoughtless seed

And bring a proud old Monarch to the ground

When in despair his truth he fin’ly found.

Proud Edmund, Gloucester’s bane and lust’s cruel jest

Lies broken, bleeding all his crimes confessed.

Two sisters by their own deceit deceived

And one whose honesty was not believed

In orbit round a ruined Monarch sought

A future that the fates would not support.

To tell how we to this sad ending came

Is now the simple traffic of our game

And so we beg indulgence as you hear

 The tragic life and story of King Lear.

**ACT I**

**SCENE I. King Lear's palace.**

**KING LEAR**

Give me the map there. Know that we have divided

In three our kingdom:

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

May be prevented now.

Tell me, my daughters,

Which of you shall we say doth love us most?

Goneril, our eldest-born, speak first.

**GONERIL**

Sir, I love you more than words can wield the matter;

Dearer than eye-sight, space, and liberty;

A love that makes breath poor, and speech unable;

Beyond all manner of so much I love you.

**CORDELIA**

[Aside] What shall Cordelia do?

Love, and be silent.

**LEAR**

Of all these bounds, even from this line to this,

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.

**REGAN**

Sir, I am made

Of the self-same metal that my sister is,

And prize me at her worth. 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.

**CORDELIA**

[Aside] Then poor Cordelia!

And yet not so; since, I am sure, my love's more richer than my tongue.

**KING 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;

What can you say to draw

A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak.

**CORDELIA**

Nothing, my lord.

**KING LEAR**

Nothing!

**CORDELIA**

Nothing.

**KING LEAR**

Nothing will come of nothing: speak again.

**CORDELIA**

Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave

My heart into my mouth: I love your majesty

According to my bond; nor more nor less.

**KING LEAR**

How, how, Cordelia! mend your speech a little,

Lest it may mar your fortunes.

**CORDELIA**

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.

**KING LEAR**

But goes thy heart with this?

**CORDELIA**

Ay, good my lord.

**KING LEAR**

So young, and so untender?

**CORDELIA**

So young, my lord, and true.

**KING LEAR**

Let it be so; thy truth, then, be thy dower:

Here I disclaim all my paternal care,

And as a stranger to my heart and me

Hold thee, from this, for ever.

**KENT**

Good my liege,--

**KING 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. Hence, and avoid my sight!

Cornwall and Albany,

With my two daughters' dowers digest this third:

Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her.

I do invest you jointly with my power,

Ourself, by monthly course, with reservation of an hundred knights,

By you to be sustain'd, shall our abode make with you by due turns. Only we still retain the name, and all the additions to a king; which to confirm, this coronet part betwixt you.

*Giving the crown*

**KENT**

Royal Lear…

**KING 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 wilt thou do, old man?

Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak, when power to flattery bows

Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least;

Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound

Reverbs no hollowness.

**KING LEAR**

Kent, on thy life, no more.

**KENT**

See better, Lear; and let me still remain

The true blank of thine eye.

**KING LEAR**

Hear me, recreant! On thine allegiance, hear me!

Five days we do allot thee for provision:

if, on the tenth day following,

Thy banish'd trunk be found in our dominions,

The moment is thy death

**KENT**

Fare thee well, king: since thus thou wilt appear,

Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here.

*To CORDELIA*

The gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid,

*To REGAN and GONERIL*

And your large speeches may your deeds approve,.

Thus Kent, O princes, bids you all adieu;

He'll shape his old course in a country new. *Exit*

**CORDELIA**

The jewels of our father, with wash'd 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.

*Exit*

**GONERIL**

Sister, I think our father will hence to-night.

**REGAN**

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

**GONERIL**

You see how full of changes his age is; he always loved our sister most; and with what poor judgment he hath now cast her off

**REGAN**

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

**GONERIL**

The best and soundest of his time hath been but rash;.

**REGAN**

Such unconstant starts are we like to have from

him as this of Kent's banishment.

**GONERIL**

We must do something, and i' the heat.

*Exeunt*

**Interlude 1:**

And so our scene is set and lines are drawn

Cordelia disgraced but not forlorn,

As bride to France her new found fortune wakes

And Kent , a secret journey undertakes.

For Goneril and Regan mutual gain

Can only presage future strife and pain.

The King, unthinking, knows not what he’s wrought

And looks toward the peace and rest he’s sought.

With dreadful certainty the sands of time

Will draw a sad conclusion to his line.

Whilst elsewhere, other plots begin to rise

As Gloucester’s low born son has set his eyes

Upon his father’s titles, he intends

By treachery to gain his wicked ends.

Poor Edgar, Gloucester’s noble, well born child

Will not suspect his brother, and beguiled

By falsehood unexpected, brought so low

He must as beggar and as madman go.

Nobility, what harms you must now face

As treachery and treason gather pace.