

Re-enter KING LEAR, with CORDELIA dead in his arms; EDGAR, Captain, and others following

KING LEAR

Howl, howl, howl, howl! O, you are men of stones:
Had I your tongues and eyes, I'd use them so
That heaven's vault should crack. She's gone for ever!
I know when one is dead, and when one lives;
She's dead as earth. Lend me a looking-glass;
If that her breath will mist or stain the stone,
Why, then she lives.

KENT

Is this the promised end

EDGAR

Or image of that horror?

ALBANY

Fall, and cease!

KING LEAR

This feather stirs; she lives! if it be so,
It is a chance which does redeem all sorrows
That ever I have felt.

KENT

[Kneeling] O my good master!

KING LEAR

Prithee, away.

EDGAR

'Tis noble Kent, your friend.

KING LEAR

A plague upon you, murderers, traitors all!
I might have saved her; now she's gone for ever!
Cordelia, Cordelia! stay a little. Ha!
What is't thou say'st? Her voice was ever soft,
Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in woman.
I kill'd the slave that was a-hanging thee.

Captain

'Tis true, my lords, he did.

KING LEAR

Did I not, fellow?
I have seen the day, with my good biting falchion
I would have made them skip: I am old now,
And these same crosses spoil me. Who are you?
Mine eyes are not o' the best: I'll tell you straight.

KENT

If fortune brag of two she loved and hated,
One of them we behold.

KING LEAR

This is a dull sight. Are you not Kent?

KENT

The same,
Your servant Kent: Where is your servant Caius?

KING LEAR

He's a good fellow, I can tell you that;
He'll strike, and quickly too: he's dead and rotten.

KENT

No, my good lord; I am the very man,--

KING LEAR

I'll see that straight.

KENT

That, from your first of difference and decay,
Have follow'd your sad steps.

KING LEAR

You are welcome hither.

KENT

Nor no man else: all's cheerless, dark, and deadly.

Your eldest daughters have fordone them selves,
And desperately are dead.

KING LEAR

Ay, so I think.

ALBANY

He knows not what he says: and vain it is
That we present us to him.

EDGAR

Very bootless.

Enter a Captain

Captain

Edmund is dead, my lord.

ALBANY

That's but a trifle here.
You lords and noble friends, know our intent.
What comfort to this great decay may come
Shall be applied: for us we will resign,
During the life of this old majesty,
To him our absolute power:

To EDGAR and KENT

you, to your rights:
With boot, and such addition as your honours
Have more than merited. All friends shall taste
The wages of their virtue, and all foes
The cup of their deservings. O, see, see!

KING LEAR

And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life!
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
Never, never, never, never, never!
Pray you, undo this button: thank you, sir.
Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,
Look there, look there!

Dies

EDGAR

He faints! My lord, my lord!

KENT

Break, heart; I prithee, break!

EDGAR

Look up, my lord.

KENT

Vex not his ghost: O, let him pass! he hates him much
That would upon the rack of this tough world
Stretch him out longer.

EDGAR

He is gone, indeed.

KENT

The wonder is, he hath endured so long:
He but usurp'd his life.

ALBANY

Bear them from hence. Our present business
Is general woe.

To KENT and EDGAR

Friends of my soul, you twain
Rule in this realm, and the gored state sustain.

KENT

I have a journey, sir, shortly to go;
My master calls me, I must not say no.

ALBANY

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.

Exeunt, with a dead march