Act 4

**Scene 1**

Edgar

To be worst,

The lowest and most dejected thing of fortune,

Stands still in esperance, lives not in fear.

The lamentable change is from the best;

The worst returns to laughter

Gloucester

I have no way and therefore want no eyes;

I stumbled when I saw.

Edgar (Aside)

O gods! Who is’t can say’I am the worst’?

I am worse than ever I was.

And worse I may be yet. The worst is not

So long as we can say ‘This is the worst’.

Gloucester

As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods.

They kill us for their sport.

Tis the time’s plague when madmen lead the blind.

Edgar

Poor Tom’s a-cold. (Aside) I cannot daub it further.

Gloucester

Let the superfluous and lust–dieted man,

That slaves your ordinance, that will not see

Because he does not feel, feel your power quickly;

So distribution should undo excess,

And each man have enough.

Edgar

Poor Tom shall lead thee.

**Scene 2**

Oswald

I told him of the army that was landed:

He smiled at it.

Goneril to Edmund

It is the cowish terror of his spirit,

That dares not undertake. He’ll not feel wrongs

Which tie him to an answer.

I must change arms at home and give the distaff

Into my husband’s hands.

You are like to hear

A mistress’s command

Conceive and fare thee well

Edmund

Yours in the ranks of death

Goneril

O the difference of man and man

To thee a woman’s services are due

My fool usurps my body

Albany

O Goneril

You are not worth the dust which the rude wind

Blows in your face. I fear your disposition.

Wisdom and goodness to the vile seem vile;

Filths savour but themselves. What have you done?

Tigers, not daughters, what have you performed?

If the heavens do not their visible spirits

Send quickly down to tame these vile offences,

It will come,

Humanity must perforce prey on itself,

Like monsters of the deep –

Goneril

Milk-livered man!

That bear’st a cheek for blows and a head for wrongs.

Albany

See thyself, devil!

Proper deformity seems not in the fiend

So horrid as in woman.

Were’t my fitness

To let these hands obey my blood,

They are apt enough to dislocate and tear

Thy flesh and bones. Howe’er thou art a fiend,

A woman’s shape doth shield thee.

Albany (on hearing the news of Cornwall’s death)

This shows you are above,

You justicers, that these our nether crimes

So speedily can venge.

One way I like this well.

But being widow and my Gloucester with her,

May all the building in my fancy pluck

Upon my hateful life.

Albany

Gloucester, I live

To thank thee for the love thou show’dst the King,

And to revenge thine eyes.

**Scene 3**

Gentleman

Now and then an ample tear trilled down

Her delicate cheek. It seemed she was a queen

Over her passion, who, most rebel-like,

Sought to be king o’er her.

Patience and sorrow stove

Who should express her goodliest.

Those happy smilets

That played on her ripe lip seemed not to know

What guests were in her eyes, which parted thence

As pearls from diamonds dropped.

Sorrow would be a rarity most beloved

If all could so become it.

She heaved the name of ‘father’

Cried ‘Sisters, sisters! Shame of ladies! Sisters!

Kent! Father! Sisters! What i’ th’ storm? i’ the night?’

There she shook

The holy water from her heavenly eyes,

And clamour moistened.

Kent

It is the stars,

The stars above us, govern our conditions;

Else oneself mate and make could not beget

Such different issue.

(Lear) by no means

Will yield to see his daughter.

Kent

A sovereign so elbows him; his own unkindness,

That stripped her from his benediction….

Gave her dear rights

To his dog-hearted daughters – these things sting

His mind so venomously that burning shame

Detains him from Cordelia.

**Scene 4**

Cordelia

What can man’s wisdom

In the restoring his bereaved sense?

He that helps him take all my outward worth.

All blest secrets

All you unpublished virtues of the earth,

Spring with my tears.

O dear father,

It is thy business that I go about.

No blown ambition doth our arms incite,

But love, dear love, and our aged father’s right.

**Scene 5**

Regan

It was great ignorance, Gloucester’s eyes being out,

To let him live. Where he arrives he moves

All hearts against us.

Why should she write to Edmund

If you chance to hear of that blind traitor,

Preferment falls on him that cuts him off.

**Scene 6**

Edgar

How fearful

And dizzy ‘tis to cast one’s eye so low!

(And more)

You are now within a foot

Of th’ extreme verge.

Gloucester

O you mighty gods!

This world I do renounce, and, in your sights,

Shake patiently my great affliction off.

Edgar

Hadst thou been aught but gossamer feathers, air,

So many fathom down precipitating,

Thou’dst shivered like an egg.

Thy life is a miracle

Gloucester

Twas yet some comfort

When misery could beguile the tyrant’s rage

And frustrate his proud will

Henceforth I’ll bear

Affliction til it do cry out itself

‘Enough, enough’ and die.

Lear

They flattered me like a dog, and told me I had white hairs in my beard ere the black ones were there.

They told me I was everything. Tis a lie – I am not ague-proof.

Let copulation thrive.

Down from the waist they are centaurs, though women all above.

There’s hell, there’s darkness, there’s the sulphurous pit; burning, scalding, stench, consumption.

Let me wipe it first; it smells of mortality.

Gloucester

O ruin’d piece of nature!

Lear

You see how this world goes.

Gloucester

I see it feelingly.

Lear

Through tattered clothes small vices do appear;

Robes and furred gowns hide all. Plate sin with gold,

(And more)

Edgar (Aside)

O matter and impertinency mixed!

Reason in madness.

Lear

I know thee well; thy name is Gloucester.

When we are born, we cry that we are come

To this great stage of fools.

Gentleman

Thou hast one daughter

Who redeems nature from the general curse

Which twain have brought her to.

Gloucester

You ever-gentle gods, take my breath from me;

Let not my worser spirit tempt me again

To die before you please!

Oswald

A proclaimed prize! Most happy!

Edgar

I know thee well. A serviceable villain,

As duteous to the vices of thy mistress

As badness would desire

O indistinguished space of woman’s will!

A plot upon her virtuous husband’s life,

And the exchange my brother!

**Scene 7**

Cordelia

O thou good Kent, how shall I live and work

To match thy goodness? My life will be too short

And every measure fall me.

O you kind gods

Cure this great breach in his abused nature!

O my dear father, restoration hang

Thy medicine on my lips, and let this kiss

Repair those violent harms that my two sisters

Have in thy reverence made!

Mine enemy’s dog,

Though he had bit me, should have stood that night

Against my fire.

Lear

You do me wrong to take me out of the grave.

Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound

Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears

Do scald like molten lead.

Cordelia

O look upon me sir,

And hold your hands in benediction o’er me.

Lear

Pray do not mock me.

I am a very foolish fond old man

I fear I am not in my perfect mind.

All the skill I have

Remembers not these garments.

I think this lady

To be my child Cordelia.

Cordelia

And so I am! I am!

Lear

If you have poison for me, I will drink it.

I know you do not love me; for your sisters

Have, as I do remember, done me wrong.

You have some cause, they have not.

Cordelia

No cause, no cause

Doctor

The great rage

You see is killed in him.

Lear

Pray you now, forget and forgive. I am old and foolish.