

REGAN

I pray you, father, being weak, seem so.
If till the expiration of your month
You will return and sojourn with my sister,
5 Dismissing half your train, come then to me.
I am now from home and out of that provision
Which shall be needful for your entertainment.

LEAR

Return to her? And fifty men dismissed?
10 No! Rather I abjure all roofs and choose
To wage against the enmity o'th' air –
To be a comrade with the wolf and owl –
Necessity's sharp pinch! Return with her?
Why, the hot-blooded France, that dowerless took
15 Our youngest born, I could as well be brought
To kneel his throne and squire-like pension beg,
To keep base life afoot. Return with her?
Persuade me rather to be slave and sumpter
To this detested groom. [*Points at Oswald.*]

20 GONERIL At your choice, sir.

LEAR

Now I prithee, daughter, do not make me mad:
I will not trouble thee, my child. Farewell:
We'll no more meet, no more see one another.
25 But yet thou art my flesh, my blood, my daughter,
Or rather a disease that's in my flesh,
Which I must needs call mine. Thou art a boil,
A plague sore, or embossed carbuncle
In my corrupted blood. But I'll not chide thee:
30 Let shame come when it will; I do not call it,
I do not bid the thunder-bearer shoot,
Nor tell tales of thee to high-judging Jove.
Mend when thou canst, be better at thy leisure:
I can be patient, I can stay with Regan,
35 I and my hundred knights.

REGAN Not altogether so, sir.

I looked not for you yet, nor am provided
For your fit welcome. Give ear, sir, to my sister;
For those that mingle reason with your passion
40 Must be content to think you are old, and so –
But she knows what she does.

LEAR Is this well spoken now?

REGAN

I dare avouch it, sir. What, fifty followers?
45 Is it not well? What should you need of more?
Yea, or so many, sith that both charge and danger
Speak 'gainst so great a number? How in one house

Should many people, under two commands,
Hold amity? 'Tis hard, almost impossible.

50 GONERIL
Why might not you, my lord, receive attendance
From those that she calls servants or from mine?

REGAN
Why not, my lord? If then they chanced to slack ye
55 We could control them. If you will come to me –
For now I spy a danger – I entreat you
To bring but five and twenty: to no more
Will I give place or notice.

LEAR
60 I gave you all –

REGAN And in good time you gave it.

LEAR
– Made you my guardians, my depositaries,
But kept a reservation to be followed
65 With such a number. What, must I come to you
With five and twenty? Regan, said you so?

REGAN
And speak't again, my lord: no more with me.

LEAR
70 Those wicked creatures yet do look well favoured
When others are more wicked; not being the worst
Stands in some rank of praise. [*To Goneril*] I'll go with thee;
Thy fifty yet doth double five and twenty,
And thou art twice her love.

75 GONERIL Hear me, my lord:
What need you five and twenty? Ten? Or five?
To follow in a house where twice so many
Have a command to tend you?

REGAN What need one?

80 LEAR
O, reason not the need! Our basest beggars
Are in the poorest thing superfluous;
Allow not nature more than nature needs,
Man's life is cheap as beast's. Thou art a lady;
85 If only to go warm were gorgeous,
Why, nature needs not what thou gorgeous wear'st,
Which scarcely keeps thee warm. But for true need –
You heavens, give me that patience, patience I need!
You see me here, you gods, a poor old man,
90 As full of grief as age, wretched in both:
If it be you that stir these daughters' hearts
Against their father, fool me not so much
To bear it tamely; touch me with noble anger,

95 And let not women's weapons, water-drops,
Stain my man's cheeks. No, you unnatural hags,
I will have such revenges on you both
That all the world shall – I will do such things –
What they are yet I know not, but they shall be
The terrors of the earth! You think I'll weep,
100 No, I'll not weep. *Storm and tempest.*
I have full cause of weeping, but this heart
Shall break into a hundred thousand flaws
Or e're I'll weep. O fool, I shall go mad!
Exeunt Lear, Gloucester, Kent, Fool [and Knight]

William SHAKESPEARE, *King Lear*, II, ii, 390-475
The Arden Shakespeare, 1997.