

KING LEAR Audition Side #2 – Gloucester, Edmund

GLOUCESTER.

What paper were you reading?

EDMUND.

Nothing, my lord.

GLOUCESTER.

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

EDMUND.

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 perus'd, I find it not fit for your o'er-looking.

GLOUCESTER.

Give me the letter, sir.

EDMUND.

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

GLOUCESTER.

[Reads.] 'This policy and reverence of age makes the world bitter to the best of our times; 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 wake 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?

EDMUND.

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

GLOUCESTER.

You know the character to be your brother's?

EDMUND.

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.

GLOUCESTER.

It is his.

EDMUND.

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

GLOUCESTER.

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

EDMUND.

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

GLOUCESTER.

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.]

EDMUND.

This is the excellent foppery of the world, that, when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeits of our own behaviour, we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars; as if we were villains on 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. Fut! I should have been that I am, had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing.