

*The Bottom of the Fool (OR The Fool's End)*<sup>1</sup>

*Enter LEAR, FOOL, KENT, and GLOUCESTER.*

*Enter GENTLEMAN.*

GENTLEMAN: Greetings, kind sirs, from one gentleman to likewise.

LEAR: You seem a gentleman, sir, yet your tongue lies strangely upon my ear. Tell me,  
From where do you come?

[GLOUCESTER<sup>2</sup>: I see no ear-licking here  
nor hear no tongues prior to this.

KENT: Hush, sir, for you disturb the line of the story.

GLOUCESTER: I apologize, my lord, for speaking out of turn.  
May this bit appear in scenes deleted.]<sup>3</sup>

GENTLEMAN: A gentleman am I lord, of Verona.

FOOL: Speak not the name of Verona.

GENTLEMAN: Why not speak of it?

FOOL: Speak not of it, sir, for 'tis not Dover.  
Speak not of it, or the white cliffs I shall throw thee over.  
We must maintain our consistency  
to fulfill our debt to posterity.

LEAR: (to FOOL) Hush, fool. Speak not rubbish.  
(to GENTLEMAN) Tell me, gentleman, what is your purpose?

GENTLEMAN: To tell your audience, sire,  
of that which has been, and that which shall be.  
To keep your audience, sire, on track,  
'Tis the burden upon my back.

LEAR: Said well, and well said! So unburden yourself, good man, what have you to tell  
us?

GENTLEMAN: Only this, my lord,  
A great king you once were,  
and before that a god.  
Keep well to your best intents,  
Lest future writers make glosses,

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<sup>1</sup> Despite years of extensive research as to where Shakespeare originally intended to insert this scene, no general consensus has emerged. Most opinions are that it may occur anywhere between the end of Act III and the end of Act V, or between the beginning of Act I and the end of Act III, although one expert opines that it must occur at the end of Act II, but he's a total prat, and the current editors can't understand why my sister married him, so his opinion must be disregarded.

<sup>2</sup> The role of Gloucester in this parody is disputed. For more information, see "Notes on This Text."

<sup>3</sup> These lines appear in no complete text, and thus are a total fabrication. But the story-telling rather demands it, and so it is rather demanded of the story-telling. Such is life. See the "Notes on This Text" for more information.

Full of rhyme but lacking in senses,  
That speak too much of your losses.

FOOL: Oh, nuncle! Here is a man,  
Who does all he can,  
To bring you to your senses.  
Heed well his mastery of tenses!

LEAR: (to FOOL) That I shall, and that I should, If return to me my wits would.  
(to GENTLEMAN) Your role is well played. For that I give great thanks.  
(to [FOOL,] KENT, and GLOUCESTER)  
What are we to make of this, then, mine gentlemen? How shall we make  
amends, to stave off the omen this gentleman portends?

KENT: (to LEAR) Too long have I served you, my lord,  
But can you trust this man's word?  
(to GENTLEMAN) Eerie manners and skillful words,  
Along with your strange dress,  
Do not protect us from swords,  
Nor draw us out of this mess.

GENTLEMAN: Strange dress?  
with mud, twigs, and leaves, I do not adorn myself  
as do you honourable Englishmen, natch<sup>4</sup>.  
Think now, upon my quest! What am I to make  
Of your strange fashion dispatch<sup>5</sup>?  
You should wash yourselves in near lake.

Yet, I hear you, mine Kent,  
trust [that] your message has been sent.

Your heart is wounded but pure,  
For this, but that I had the cure.  
With me, feel free to jest,  
But soon my words will pass the test.

KENT: Play no wits with me!  
I am no touchstone.  
Tell me how to trust thee,  
Then my heart you shall have one<sup>6</sup>.

GENTLEMAN: 'Tis but my role to play a game,  
One 'mongst you is already lame.  
Trust my role is all I ask.  
Now you should act out your task.

*Exit GENTLEMAN.*

LEAR: Now I see the truth of his words.

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<sup>4</sup> Google "Morris Men" for more gen.

<sup>5</sup> In French, "depêche mode."

<sup>6</sup> At the time Shakespeare was writing, English spelling was in a state of flux. But this is so egregious a misspelling that one must doubt the authenticity of this script.

KENT: In your present state, what can you see, my lord?

GLOUCESTER: In my present state, I see nothing.  
What is it that you see?

LEAR: Only this, that I have committed sins 'gainst my Britain. *L'etat c'est moi*<sup>7</sup>, that I do believe, but *Je ne suis pas l'etat*<sup>8</sup>, that I have forgotten. How am I to confess my sins? How am I to atone my wrong-doings?

KENT: Seek a priest, a brother, my lord.  
Make your confession, do  
For your salvation is as much as ours,  
And the action we may move along.

FOOL: Yes, that is what you need, nuncle,  
Your own personal Jesus:

*Someone to hear your prayers,  
Someone who's there  
Feeling unknown  
When you're all alone,  
Flesh and bone.*

LEAR: Thinkst thou this?

FOOL: Nay, nuncle, but that role I would gladly play,  
No cowled monk am I, but

*Take second best  
put me to the test  
lift up the receiver  
I'll make you a believer.*

LEAR [to KENT]: Trust him we must, and to him give our trust. My eyes are clearer, and this you should know — I don't think I like the end of this show<sup>9</sup>.

KENT: Have faith, my lord!

LEAR: Oh, what dastardly state I'm in! And you speak to me of faith, of confession?  
How am I to reach out and touch faith?

FOOL: Not to faith, nuncle,  
But to thy youngest daughter reach out.  
For by sinning 'gainst her,  
So you sinned 'gainst this land,  
And thereby sinned 'gainst yourself.  
To end this sinning, you know how.

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<sup>7</sup> In English, "I like chocolate biscuits."

<sup>8</sup> In English, "Chocolate biscuits don't like me."

<sup>9</sup> Here Lear is probably referring to an episode of *Coronation Street* or *East Enders* (probably the latter).

LEAR: Oh, my fool, my dear beloved fool. Long have you been the conscience of this king. Too heavy a role I fear this has been for you. How much longer shall you bear it? How much longer shalt thou bear me?

FOOL: Only until you regain your wits,  
 And sheathe your hot temper.  
 Let your conscience enter your mind,  
 And search your heart, its truth to find.  
 Reach out to your least daughter, and reclaim  
 that which is yours in her true name.

LEAR: But my suffering I cannot bear. How am I to find such strength to wear?

FOOL: 'Tis not your own suffering,  
 That makes your life hard to bear.  
 Pursue a policy of truth, within and without.

LEAR: Thinkst thou the way to truth this is?

FOOL: I do, nuncle, mine yoda<sup>10</sup>.

*Now you're not satisfied  
 With what you're being put through.  
 It's just time to pay the price  
 For not listening to advice.  
 It's too late to change events.  
 It's time to face the consequence.*

That, nuncle, is what thou must do.  
 This, do, and I may leave this role, another to play.

LEAR: If that I could, that I would.  
 But by doing thus, you sayest that you, who art the conscience of the king, shall disappear? I fear to have leave of you.

FOOL: Leave of me you shall never have, my lord.  
 For as a man's true heart is to a normal man,  
 So am I to you.  
 Forgive my temporal leave of your heart and senses,  
 But worry not, 'tis only temp'rary.  
 I am as much of you, as you are of me.

KENT: Oh listen how our honourable lord  
 Converses with thin air!  
 His senses have taken leave of him,  
 For good, I fear!

GLOUCESTER: (*Waving sword*) Not thin air, my noble Earl of Kent!  
 See not the ghost of a fool,  
 That all this way with us went?

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<sup>10</sup> A late sixteenth century term of either endearment or derision.

KENT: Yoda, I see neither fool nor ghost.  
Taken leave of your senses have you?  
For I see no such host.

GLOUCESTER: Rather, my senses have taken leave of me.  
He that afflicts our lord I clearly see.

KENT: But why stab at thin air?  
I see not the point.

GLOUCESTER: Clearly, I see the point.

LEAR: As do I.

FOOL: As do I.  
Here it comes.  
See the point at last?  
Do you, nuncle?

*(GLOUCESTER stabs FOOL.)*

LEAR: *(rising up)* Oh, bloody fool!

GLOUCESTER: Who?<sup>11</sup>

FOOL: Not a fool, nor bloodied am I.  
Know now what you must do.  
Bear up thine daughter.  
Keep to thine true path.

*“Lift up the receiver  
I’ll make you a believer.”*

Difficulties you will still have,  
Your wits you will still doubt.  
But trust your heart,  
And your actions the truth will out.

*FOOL fades away.*

LEAR: Friends, Britons, countrymen,  
Now lend me your ears.  
Our way ahead I now see clearly.  
Ignore my ignorant foolish years.  
For that I hope I alone must pay dearly.

*All exit.*

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<sup>11</sup> This is the only page without a footnote, so the editors insert one here, because they make us look clever. Works pretty well, doesn't it?

## Notes on This Text

For years, there has been a great controversy over the fate of the Fool in *King Lear*. Some are of the opinion that the Fool had to disappear, since the same actor that played the Fool would also have played Cordelia<sup>12</sup>. Others are of the opinion that Shakespeare, like Raymond Chandler, liked his tittle. When Chandler was questioned about the fate of the murdered chauffeur in *The Big Sleep*, he responded simply, “Oh, him. You know, I forgot all about him.”<sup>13</sup> It is difficult to imagine Shakespeare, who rarely spoke of wine, whisky (even in that awful Scottish play), or any mind-altering substance saying this, but by completely ignoring Occam’s razor, we can throw probability to the wind, and imagine that this is possible.

The text we present here is based upon a number of loosely related documents found in the British Museum, one of which was originally used as endpapers in a book of bawdy jokes, and then later disassembled<sup>14</sup> to wrap a ham. This same document was then scraped clean to produce a palimpsest of Shakespeare’s *Love Labor Won*. Printed on one side only, it was later torn into strips to be used as receipts in a pub *cum* nylon hotel<sup>15</sup>, and whose reverse sides still contain many original signatures of former members of Parliament from the eighteenth century (many of whose descendents are currently members of the American Congress and one 21<sup>st</sup>-century governor). Only through intense scientific analysis (including x-ray diffraction multi-modal subspace Marxist Feminist postmodernist post-Kantian-Leibniz controversy analysis) and diligent intellectual labor have we been able to discern Shakespeare’s original script. If the modern student wonders what that means, it means that modern editors are smarter than current readers. And if current readers are bothered by this, well, that’s tough. That’s your lookout, Pop-Eye.

Furthermore, this source contains the character of Gloucester, who has been blinded by Cornwall. However, in the extant versions of *King Lear*, Lear and Gloucester never meet after the latter’s blinding.<sup>16</sup> This could mean that another blind man named Gloucester has met up with Lear, or that Shakespeare had simply lost track of his thoughts while composing the canonical version of *King Lear*. Given that this new version is so much better than the commonly accepted one, we could conclude either one. Does it matter?<sup>17</sup> Curiously, the Fool speaks (and is spoken to only by King Lear and the gentleman) which perhaps, slightly, possibly, indicates that both characters are but the imaginings of the mad King Lear. Did Shakespeare imagine this? We can’t really tell, so we can only assert a firm “yes.”<sup>18</sup>

An important note that must be noted (which we note here, because this is the section of the book where we note notes) is that many of the lines in this play, especially that of the Fool, are nearly identical to the lyrics found in *Violator*, an album by the twentieth-century pop group Depeche Mode<sup>19</sup>. Naturally, according to Occam’s

<sup>12</sup> Which may be a feminine derivative of “Coeur de Leon” (lion-hearted) or some other word. It doesn’t really matter, since her name can’t be linked to a venereal disease or a disgraced American president, and since our research ends there, is totally irrelevant.

<sup>13</sup> Or words to this effect, for effect is all that matters.

<sup>14</sup> From “dis-“ *undone* + “assembled” *endpaper* (from “ass” *end* + “embled” *papered*). This scholarship is undisputed, except for those who think it is wrong.

<sup>15</sup> From the modern Serbo-Croatian for *brothel*. There is no evidence that Shakespeare ever spent any time in the Balkans, and so this taken by many as proof that he was in the Balkans for a considerable time, and thus was unable to write his own plays. Since there is no evidence for this, the current editors must defer to the general opinion of those who don’t know any better that this must be factual. For more on this, see *Total Crap Literary Analysis* by K.J. Odle, and *Shakespeare Wrote His Plays, Only He Didn’t Because He Was Somewhere Else So Someone Else Named Shakespeare Wrote These Plays*, also by K.J. Odle. (These texts are found only on the internet, and thus, must be completely true, since not just anyone can post something on the internet.)

<sup>16</sup> Actually, they do meet, but one should never let the facts stand in the way of a good story.

<sup>17</sup> It does, but such important matters we will not bore the reader with here.

<sup>18</sup> Years ago (dog’s ages, that is) the editor responded to all his cousin Tyler’s questions with a simple “yes.” At some point, Tyler (then being about eleven or so) said, “You know, when you say ‘yes,’ I think you mean that you don’t know.” To which this editor responded with a simple nod of the head, which speaks wonders. Such is the wisdom of those eleven years!

<sup>19</sup> Originally from Basildon, in Essex, in East Anglia. Unfortunately, these lines have been edited out. See “Scenes Deleted.”

razor, we should conclude that the current script is a total falsehood, as if it were written by a modern student of Shakespeare deficient in ideas, but more than sufficient in current, yet somewhat slightly defunct, but still reminisced over, yet still somewhat popular, but nearly entirely forgotten, and yet still exported, pop lyrics found only in retrospective 1980's films such as *Son of Rambow (sic)*<sup>20</sup>. The editors of this text (who drink way too much Folger's, often long into the night) are all bearded, however, and so another interpretation presents itself: the members of Depeche Mode are reincarnated members of Shakespeare's company. This is reflected in the Dalai Lama's<sup>21</sup> remark regarding *King Lear*: "I think *King Lear* rocks"<sup>22</sup> and his comments regarding modern pop music: "Depeche Mode: Why 'I Just Can't Get Enough.'"<sup>23</sup> If that weren't enough to convince modern readers of this view, then such readers are unable to believe the unbelievable. Such is life. Physics majors of the world, untie!

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<sup>20</sup> The "w" was added for legal reasons, although Sylvester Stallone, desperate for residuals, approved the film. Oh, how the mighty are fallen. (Well, not really mighty, and thus, not really fallen. Such is life.)

<sup>21</sup> An expert in reincarnation, and an Asian ringer, to boot.

<sup>22</sup> In a speech delivered to the Royal Shakespeare Company, circa 1998, in which the Dalai Lama claims that Shakespeare touches upon nearly every aspect of human experience. In this case, he is probably not completely off his rocker.

<sup>23</sup> In a speech delivered on *Top of the Pops*, roughly 1991 or 1992, or possibly some other year, in which the Dalai Lama explains that the aesthetics of modern pop music is merely the reincarnation of the aesthetics of Himalayan ritual chanting. Some critics have noted that this speech reflects the Dalai Lama's connection with modern western society, or that it reflects the fact that he has totally gone round the twist. Either interpretation is equally acceptable.