

Enter the King of GALLIA, CORDELLA, and MUMFORD, with a basket, disguised like country folk.

Gallia:

This tedious journey all on foot, sweet love,
Cannot be pleasing to your tender joints
Which ne'er were used to these toilsome walks.

Cordella:

I never in my life took more delight
In any journey than I do in this;
It did me good, whenas we happed to light
Amongst the merry crew of country folk,
To see what industry and pains they took
To win them commendations 'mongst their friends. [10]
Lord, how they labor to bestir themselves,
And in their quirks to go beyond the moon,
And so take on them with such antic fits
That one would think they were beside their wits!
Come away, Roger, with your basket.

Mumford:

Soft, dame, here comes a couple of old youths.
I must needs make myself fat with jesting at them.
Enter LEIR and PERILLUS, very faintly

Cordella:

Nay, prithee do not; they do seem to be
Men much o'ergone with grief and misery. [20]
Let's stand aside and harken what they say.

Leir:

Ah, my Perillus, now I see we both
Shall end our days in this unfruitful soil.
Oh, I do faint for want of sustenance,
And thou, I know, in little better case.
No gentle tree affords one taste of fruit
To comfort us until we meet with men,
No lucky path conducts our luckless steps
Unto a place where any comfort dwells.
Sweet rest betide unto our happy souls, [30]
For here I see our bodies must have end.

Perillus:

Ah, my dear lord, how doth my heart lament
To see you brought to this extremity!
Oh, if you love me, as you do profess,
Or ever thought well of me in my life,
He strips up his arm.
Feed on this flesh, whose veins are not so dry
But there is virtue left to comfort you.

Oh, feed on this; if this will do you good,
I'll smile for joy to see you suck my blood. [40]

Leir:

I am no cannibal that I should delight
To slake my hungry jaws with human flesh;
I am no devil, or ten times worse than so,
To suck the blood of such a peerless friend.
Oh, do not think that I respect my life
So dearly as I do thy loyal love. --
Ah, Britain, I shall never see thee more,
That hast unkindly banishèd thy king,
And yet not thou dost make me to complain,
But they which were more near to me than thou. [50]

Cordella:

What do I hear? This lamentable voice,
Methinks, ere now I oftentimes have heard.

Leir:

Ah, Gonorill, was half my kingdom's gift
The cause that thou didst seek to have my life?
Ah, cruel Ragan, did I give thee all,
And all could not suffice without my blood?
Ah, poor Cordella, did I give thee nought,
Nor never shall be able for to give?
Oh, let me warn all ages that ensueth
How they trust flattery and reject the truth. [60]
Well, unkind girls, I here forgive you both --
Yet the just heavens will hardly do the like --
And only crave forgiveness, at the end,
Of good Cordella, and of thee, my friend;
Of God, whose majesty I have offended
By my transgression many thousand ways;
Of her, dear heart, whom I for no occasion
Turned out of all through flatterers' persuasion;
Of thee, kind friend, who, but for me, I know,
Hadst never come unto this place of woe. [70]

Cordella:

Alack, that ever I should live to see
My noble father in this misery.

Gallia:

Sweet love, reveal not what thou art as yet,
Until we know the ground of all this ill.

Cordella:

Oh, but some meat, some meat! Do you not see
How near they are to death for want of food?

Perillus:

Lord, which didst help thy servants at their need,

Or now or never send us help with speed.--
Oh, comfort, comfort! Yonder is a banquet
And men and women, my lord; be of good cheer,
For I see comfort coming very near.
Oh, my lord, a banquet and men and women!

[80]

Leir:

Oh, let kind pity mollify their hearts
That they may help us in our great extremes.

Perillus:

God save you, friends, an if this blessed banquet
Affordeth any food or sustenance,
Even for his sake that saved us all from death,
Vouchsafe to save us from the grip of famine.
She bringeth him to the table.

Cordella:

Here, father, sit and eat; here, sit and drink,
And would it were far better for your sakes.
PERILLUS takes LEIR by the hand to the table.

Perillus:

I'll give you thanks anon: my friend doth faint
And needeth present comfort.
LEIR drinks.

Mumford:

I warrant, he ne'er stays to say grace.
Oh, there's no sauce to a good stomach.

Perillus:

The blessèd God of heaven hath thought upon us.

Leir: [100]

The thanks be His, and these kind courteous folk,
By whose humanity we are preserved.
They eat hungrily. LEIR drinks.

Cordella:

And may that draught be unto him as was
That which old Aeson drank, which did renew
His withered age and made him young again.
And may that meat be unto him as was
That which Elias ate, in strength whereof
He walked forty days and never fainted. --