

GONERIL

This man hath had good counsel – a hundred knights !
'Tis politic and safe to let him keep
At point a hundred knights – yes, that on every dream,
Each buzz, each fancy, each complaint, dislike,
He may enguard his dotage with their pow'rs
And hold our lives in mercy. – Oswald, I say !

ALBANY

Well, you may fear too far.

GONERIL

Safer than trust too far.

Let me still take away the harms I fear,
Not fear still to be taken. I know his heart.
What he hath uttered I have writ my sister.
If she sustain him and his hundred knights,
When I have showed th' unfitness –

Enter Steward [Oswald]. How now, Oswald ?

What, have you writ that letter to my sister ?

OSWALD Ay, madam.

GONERIL

Take you some company, and away to horse.
Inform her full of my particular fear,
And thereto add such reasons of your own
As may compact it more. Get you gone,
And hasten your return. [*Exit Oswald.*] No, no, my lord,
This milky gentleness and course of yours,
Though I condemn not, yet under pardon,
You are much more atasked for want of wisdom
Than praised for harmful mildness.

ALBANY

How far your eyes may pierce I cannot tell ;
Striving to better, oft we mar what's well.

(I iv : 313 – 337)

FOOL Nuncle Lear, nuncle Lear, tarry. Take the fool
with thee.

A fox, when one has caught her,
And such a daughter,
Should sure to the slaughter,
If my cap would buy a halter.
So the fool follows after.

(I iv : 306 – 312)

FOOL Canst tell how an oyster makes his shell ?

LEAR No.

FOOL Nor I neither ; but I can tell why a snail has a house.

LEAR Why ?

FOOL Why, to put 's head in ; not to give it away to his
daughters, and leave his horns without a case.

LEAR I will forget my nature. So kind a father ! – Be my
horses ready ?

FOOL Thy asses are gone about 'em. The reason why the
seven stars are no moe than seven is a pretty reason.

LEAR Because they are not eight.

FOOL Yes indeed. Thou wouldst make a good fool.

LEAR To take 't again perforce – Monster ingratitude !

FOOL If thou wert my fool, nuncle, I'd have thee beaten
for being old before thy time.

LEAR How's that ?

FOOL Thou shouldst not have been old till thou hadst
been wise.

LEAR

O, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven !
Keep me in temper ; I would not be mad !

(I v : 22 – 41)