

Lear, King of Britain, had three daughters -- Goneril, wife of the Duke of Albany, Regan, wife of the Duke of Cornwall, and Cordelia, the youngest. He was so angry at Cordelia's plainness of speech, which he called pride, that he shared the third part of his kingdom equally between Cordelia's two sisters and their husbands, the Dukes of Albany and Cornwall. That same day one of Goneril's servants was disrespectful to Lear and spoke rudely to him, as no doubt he was secretly encouraged to do by Goneril herself. Lear had escaped from the care of the soldiers in whose charge Kent had left him, and he was found by some of Cordelia's soldiers, wandering about the fields near Dover in a sad condition. The latter did not recognize him as Kent in his new dress, but was pleased with his direct speech and honesty; and so an agreement was made, and Lear took his favourite adviser back into his service under the name of Caius. But Goneril too sent letters to her sister, saying that her father would do nothing he was asked and was bad-tempered, and advising Regan not to receive him with such a large number of followers. He commanded the wind to blow the earth into the sea, or to make the waves so big that they drowned the earth, so that no sign remained of such an ungrateful animal as man. Caius still continued to beg the king not to stay out in the open air, and at last persuaded him to enter a miserable little hut that they came to. The fool entered first but ran out in terror saying that he had seen a spirit.