



King Lear Act 1 Scene 1 lines 31-291

King Lear appears with his daughters and sons-in-law. He orders Gloucester to attend to France and Burgundy and then addresses the assembly at large as to his intentions going forward: As age is catching up to him, the King will retire, transferring his authority and wealth to his daughters and sons-in-law. All that remains is the allotment of the King's authority and wealth which will depend on the respective daughters' testimonies of love. And thus the daughters--Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia--offer their father their testimonies of love. Satisfied with Goneril's and Regan's, Lear offers them each a substantial tract of land. Alas, Lear finds Cordelia's testimony lacking and urges her to do better. Cordelia refuses to flatter, however, and the upshot is that Cordelia is disowned and her allotment of land divided up and taken possession of by Goneril and Regan. As Lear orders an attendant to go fetch France and Burgundy, the Earl of Kent objects to Lear's decisions. The King demands Kent to be quiet but Kent persists, compelling Lear to exile Kent for life. As Kent departs Gloucester appears, bringing with him France and Burgundy. Burgundy is told that Cordelia is his to wed if he doesn't mind wiving a dowerless bride. When Burgundy rejects the offer, France is told that the offer is so poor that the courtesy of extending France the same offer wouldn't even be bothered with, to which France objects, claiming Cordelia as his wife and France's Queen. Indifferent, Lear, accompanied by Burgundy, departs from the scene.



	<i>Original Text</i>	<i>Modern Text</i>
	<p><i>Sennet.</i> The king is coming. <i>Enter one bearing a coronet, then King LEAR, then the Dukes of CORNWALL and ALBANY, next GONERIL, REGAN, CORDELIA, and attendants</i></p> <p>LEAR Attend the lords of France and Burgundy, Gloucester. GLOUCESTER I shall, my lord. <i>Exit GLOUCESTER</i>LEAR</p> <p>LEAR Meantime we shall express our darker purpose.— Give me the map there.— Know that we have divided In three our kingdom, and 'tis our fast intent To shake all cares and business from our age, Conferring them on younger strengths while we Unburdened crawl toward death.—Our son of Cornwall, And you, our no less loving son of Albany, We have this hour a constant will to publish Our daughters' several dowers, that future strife May be prevented now. The two great princes, France and Burgundy, Great rivals in our youngest daughter's love, Long in our court have made their amorous sojourn, And here are to be answered.— Tell me, my daughters, (Since now we will divest us both of rule, Interest of territory, cares of state) Which of you shall we say doth love us most That we our largest bounty may extend Where nature doth with merit challenge?— Goneril, Our eldest born, speak first. GONERIL Sir, I do love you more than words can wield the matter, Dearer than eyesight, space, and liberty, Beyond what can be valued, rich or rare, No less than life, with grace, health, beauty, honor, As much as child e'er loved or father found— A love that makes breath poor and speech unable. Beyond all manner of so much I love you. CORDELIA</p>	<p><i>Trumpets announce the arrival of King LEAR.</i> The king is coming. <i>A man bearing a crown enters, followed by KING LEAR, the Dukes of CORNWALL and ALBANY, then GONERIL, REGAN, CORDELIA, and attendants.</i></p> <p>LEAR Go escort the lords of France and Burgundy, Gloucester. GLOUCESTER Yes, my lord. <i>GLOUCESTER exits.</i></p> <p>LEAR In the meantime I'll get down to my real business.— Hand me that map over there.— I hereby announce that I've divided my kingdom into three parts, which I'm handing over to the younger generation so I can enjoy a little rest and peace of mind in my old age.— Cornwall and Albany, my loving sons-in-law, I now want to announce publicly what each of my daughters will inherit, to avoid hostilities after I die. The two great princes of France and Burgundy, vying for the hand of my youngest Cordelia, have been at my court a long time and will soon have their answers.— My daughters, since I'm about to give up my throne and the worries that go along with it, tell me which one of you loves me most, so that I can give my largest gift to the one who deserves it most.— Goneril, my oldest daughter, you speak first.</p> <p>GONERIL Sir, I love you more than words can say. I love you more than eyesight, space, and freedom, beyond wealth or anything of value. I love you as much as life itself, and as much as status, health, beauty, or honor. I love you as much as any child has ever loved her father, with a love too deep to be spoken of. I love you more than any answer to the question "How much?"</p> <p>CORDELIA</p>



<p>65</p> <p>70</p> <p>75</p> <p>80</p> <p>85</p> <p>90</p>	<p>(aside) What shall Cordelia speak? Love, and be silent. LEAR Of all these bounds, even from this line to this, With shadowy forests and with champains riched, With plenteous rivers and wide-skirted meads, We make thee lady. To thine and Albany's issue Be this perpetual.—What says our second daughter, Our dearest Regan, wife of Cornwall? Speak. REGAN Sir, I am made of that self mettle as my sister, And prize me at her worth. In my true heart, I find she names my very deed of love— Only she comes too short, that I profess</p> <p>Myself an enemy to all other joys, Which the most precious square of sense possesses. And find I am alone felicitate In your dear highness' love. CORDELIA (aside) Then poor Cordelia! And yet not so, since I am sure my love's More ponderous than my tongue. LEAR To thee and thine hereditary ever Remain this ample third of our fair kingdom, No less in space, validity, and pleasure Than that conferred on Goneril.—But now, our joy, Although our last and least, to whose young love The vines of France and milk of Burgundy Strive to be interested. What can you say to draw A third more opulent than your sisters? Speak. CORDELIA Nothing, my lord. LEAR Nothing? CORDELIA Nothing. LEAR How? Nothing will come of nothing. Speak again.</p>	<p>(to herself) What will I say? I can only love and be silent. LEAR I give you all this land, from this line to that one—dense forests, fertile fields, rivers rich with fish, wide meadows. This land will belong to your and Albany's children forever.—And now what does my second daughter Regan, the wife of Cornwall, have to say? Tell me.</p> <p>REGAN Sir, I'm made of the same stuff as my sister and consider myself just as good as she is. She's described my feelings of love for you precisely, but her description falls a little short of the truth. I reject completely any</p> <p>joy except my love for you, and I find that only your majesty's love makes me happy.</p> <p>CORDELIA (to herself) Poor me, what am I going to say now? But I'm not poor in love—my love is bigger than my words are. LEAR You and your heirs hereby receive this large third of our lovely kingdom, no smaller in area or value than what I gave Goneril.—Now, you, my youngest daughter, my joy, courted by the rich rulers of France and Burgundy, what can you tell me that will make me give you a bigger part of my kingdom than I gave your sisters? Speak.</p> <p>CORDELIA Nothing, my lord. LEAR Nothing? CORDELIA Nothing. LEAR Come on, “nothing” will get you nothing. Try again.</p>
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<p>95</p> <p>100</p> <p>105</p> <p>110</p> <p>115</p> <p>120</p> <p>125</p>	<p>CORDELIA Unhappy that I am, I cannot heave My heart into my mouth. I love your majesty According to my bond, no more nor less.</p> <p>LEAR How, how, Cordelia? Mend your speech a little, Lest you may mar your fortunes.</p> <p>CORDELIA Good my lord, You have begot me, bred me, loved me. I Return those duties back as are right fit— Obey you, love you, and most honor you. Why have my sisters husbands if they say They love you all? Haply when I shall wed That lord whose hand must take my plight shall carry Half my love with him, half my care and duty. Sure, I shall never marry like my sisters, To love my father all.</p> <p>LEAR But goes thy heart with this?</p> <p>CORDELIA Ay, good my lord.</p> <p>LEAR So young and so untender?</p> <p>CORDELIA So young, my lord, and true.</p> <p>LEAR Let it be so. Thy truth then be thy dower. For by the sacred radiance of the sun, The mysteries of Hecate and the night, By all the operation of the orbs From whom we do exist and cease to be— Here I disclaim all my paternal care, Propinquity, and property of blood, And as a stranger to my heart and me Hold thee from this for ever. The barbarous Scythian, Or he that makes his generation messes To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom Be as well neighbored, pitied, and relieved As thou my sometime daughter.</p> <p>KENT Good my liege—</p> <p>LEAR Peace, Kent. Come not between the dragon and his wrath. I loved her most and thought to set my rest On her kind nursery.— (to CORDELIA)</p>	<p>CORDELIA I'm unlucky. I don't have a talent for putting my heart's feelings into words. I love you as a child should love her father, neither more nor less.</p> <p>LEAR What are you saying, Cordelia? Revise your statement, or you may damage your inheritance.</p> <p>CORDELIA My lord, you brought me up and loved me, and I'm giving back just as I should: I obey you, love you, and honor you. How can my sisters speak the truth when they say they love only you? Don't they love their husbands too? Hopefully when I get married, I'll give my husband half my love and half my sense of duty. I'm sure I'll never get married in the way my sisters say they're married, loving their father only.</p> <p>LEAR But do you mean what you're saying?</p> <p>CORDELIA Yes, my lord.</p> <p>LEAR So young and so cruel?</p> <p>CORDELIA So young, my lord, and honest.</p> <p>LEAR Then that's the way it'll be. The truth will be all the inheritance you get. I swear by the sacred sun, by the mysterious moon, and by all the planets that rule our lives, that I disown you now as my daughter. As of now, there are no family ties between us, and I consider you a stranger to me. Foreign savages who eat their own children for dinner will be as close to my heart as you, ex-daughter of mine.</p> <p>KENT But sir—</p> <p>LEAR Be quiet, Kent. Don't get in my way when I'm angry. I loved Cordelia most of all and planned to spend my old age with her taking care of me. (to CORDELIA) Go away! Get out of my sight!—I guess if she</p>
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<p>130</p> <p>135</p> <p>140</p> <p>145</p> <p>150</p> <p>155</p>	<p>Hence, and avoid my sight!— So be my grave my peace as here I give Her father's heart from her.—Call France. Who stirs? Call Burgundy.— Exeunt several attendants Cornwall and Albany, With my two daughters' dowers digest this third. Let pride, which she calls plainness, marry her. I do invest you jointly with my power, Preeminence, and all the large effects That troop with majesty. Ourself, by monthly course, With reservation of an hundred knights By you to be sustained, shall our abode Make with you by due turns. Only shall we retain The name, and all th' additions to a king. The sway, revenue, execution of the rest, Belovèd sons, be yours; which to confirm, This coronet part between you. (gives CORNWALL and ALBANY the coronet) KENT Royal Lear, Whom I have ever honored as my king, Loved as my father, as my master followed, As my great patron thought on in my prayers— LEAR The bow is bent and drawn. Make from the shaft. KENT Let it fall rather, though the fork invade The region of my heart. Be Kent unmannerly When Lear is mad. What wouldst thou do, old man? Think'st thou that duty shall have dread to speak When power to flattery bows? To plainness honor's bound When majesty falls to folly. Reserve thy state, And in thy best consideration check This hideous rashness. Answer my life my judgment, Thy youngest daughter does not love thee least, Nor are those empty-hearted whose low sound Reverbs no hollowness. LEAR Kent, on thy life, no more. KENT</p>	<p>doesn't love her father, then I'll only have peace when I'm dead.—Call the King of France. Why is nobody doing anything? Call the Duke of Burgundy.</p> <p>Several attendants exit. Cornwall and Albany, you and your wives can divide this last third of my kingdom between you. If she wants to be proud, or "honest," as she calls it, she can just marry her own pride. I hereby grant to you two my crown and all the privileges that kingship brings. I'll live one month with one of you, the next month with the other one. All I ask is that you provide me with a hundred knights for my own entourage. I'll keep only the title of king, but you'll have everything else: all the authority and income that come with kingship. To confirm all this, take this crown to share between yourselves. (he gives CORNWALL and ALBANY the crown)</p> <p>KENT King Lear, I've always honored you as king, loved you as my father, obeyed you as my master, and thanked you in my prayers—</p> <p>LEAR I'm furious and ready to snap. Stay away or else I'll take my anger out on you. KENT Let your anger fall on me then, even if its sharpness pierces my heart. Kent can speak rudely when Lear goes mad. What are you doing, old man? When powerful kings cave in to flatterers, do you think loyal men will be afraid to speak out against it? When a majestic king starts acting silly, then it's my duty to be blunt.</p> <p>Hold on to your crown and use your better judgment to rethink this rash decision. On my life I swear to you that your youngest daughter doesn't love you least. A loud mouth often points to an empty heart, and just because she's quiet doesn't mean she's unloving. LEAR Kent, if you want to stay alive, stop talking. KENT</p>
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160	<p>My life I never held but as a pawn To wage against thy enemies, nor fear to lose it, Thy safety being motive. LEAR Out of my sight! KENT See better, Lear, and let me still remain The true blank of thine eye. LEAR Now, by Apollo— KENT Now, by Apollo, King, Thou swear'st thy gods in vain. LEAR</p>	<p>I never considered my life as anything more than a chess pawn for you to play off against your enemies. I'm not afraid to lose it if it helps protect you. LEAR Get out of my sight! KENT Learn to see better, Lear, and let me stay here where you can look to me for good advice. LEAR Now, I swear by Apollo... KENT By Apollo, King, you're taking the names of the gods in vain. LEAR Oh, you lowlife! Scum! ALBANY, CORNWALL Please stop, sir. KENT Sure, kill the doctor who's trying to cure you and pay your disease. Take back your gift to Albany and Cornwall. If you don't, then as long as I'm able to speak I'll keep telling you you've done a bad, bad thing. LEAR Listen to me, you traitor. You'll pay the price for trying to make me go back on the vow I made when I bequeathed my kingdom to them. I've never broken a vow yet. You tried to make me revise my judgment on my youngest daughter, disrespecting my power as</p>
165	<p>O vassal! Miscreant! ALBANY, CORNWALL Dear sir, forbear! KENT Do, kill thy physician, and the fee bestow Upon thy foul disease. Revoke thy gift, Or whilst I can vent clamor from my throat, I'll tell thee thou dost evil.</p>	<p>king—which I can't put up with either as a ruler or as a person. This is your punishment: I'll give you five days to gather together what you need to survive, then on the sixth day you'll leave this kingdom that hates you. If the day after that you're found in my kingdom, you die. Now get out of here! I swear by Jupiter I'll never revoke this punishment.</p>
170	<p>LEAR Hear me, recreant! On thine allegiance hear me. That thou hast sought to make us break our vows, Which we durst never yet, and with strained pride To come betwixt our sentence and our power, Which nor our nature nor our place can bear,</p>	<p>KENT Farewell, King. If this is how you act, it's clear that freedom has been banished from this kingdom.(to CORDELIA) I hope the gods will protect you, my dear girl, for thinking fairly and speaking correctly. (to REGAN and GONERIL) And you two, I hope your actions carry out your grand promises of love, so that big words can bring big results. Farewell to all</p>
175	<p>Our potency made good, take thy reward: Five days we do allot thee for provision To shield thee from diseases of the world. And on the sixth to turn thy hated back Upon our kingdom. If on the next day following</p>	<p>KENT Why, fare thee well, King. Sith thus thou wilt appear,</p>
180	<p>Thy banished trunk be found in our dominions, The moment is thy death. Away! By Jupiter, This shall not be revoked. KENT</p>	<p>Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here. (to CORDELIA) The gods to their dear shelter take thee, maid, That justly think'st and hast most rightly said! (to REGAN and GONERIL)</p>
185	<p>And your large speeches may your deeds</p>	<p>And your large speeches may your deeds</p>
190	<p>And your large speeches may your deeds</p>	<p>And your large speeches may your deeds</p>



<p>195</p> <p>200</p> <p>205</p> <p>210</p> <p>215</p>	<p>approve, That good effects may spring from words of love.— Thus Kent, O princes, bids you all adieu. He'll shape his old course in a country new. Exit KENT Flourish. Enter GLOUCESTER with the King of FRANCE, the Duke of BURGUNDY, and attendants GLOUCESTER Here's France and Burgundy, my noble lord.</p> <p>LEAR My lord of Burgundy. We first address towards you, who with this king Hath rivaled for our daughter. What in the least Will you require in present dower with her Or cease your quest of love? BURGUNDY Most royal majesty, I crave no more than hath your highness offered. Nor will you tender less. LEAR Right noble Burgundy, When she was dear to us we did hold her so, But now her price is fallen. Sir, there she stands. If aught within that little seeming substance, Or all of it, with our displeasure pieced And nothing more, may fitly like your grace, She's there, and she is yours. BURGUNDY I know no answer. LEAR Sir, will you, with those infirmities she owes— Unfriended, new adopted to our hate, Dowered with our curse and strangered with our oath— Take her or leave her? BURGUNDY Pardon me, royal sir. Election makes not up in such conditions. LEAR Then leave her, sir, for by the power that made me, I tell you all her wealth. (to FRANCE) For you, great King, I would not from your love make such a stray To match you where I hate. Therefore beseech</p>	<p>of you. I'll carry on my old life in a new land.</p> <p>KENT exits. Trumpets play. GLOUCESTER enters with the King of FRANCE, the Duke of BURGUNDY, and attendants. GLOUCESTER Here are the rulers of France and Burgundy, my lord. LEAR My lord the ruler of Burgundy, I'll speak to you first. You've been competing with this king for my daughter. What's the least that you will settle for as a DOWRY?</p> <p>BURGUNDY Your highness, I want nothing more than what you've already offered. I know you'll offer nothing less than that.</p> <p>LEAR Burgundy, I valued her highly when I cared about her. But now her price has fallen. There she is, over there. If there's anything you like about that worthless little thing, then go for it. She's all yours. But what you see is what you get—her only dowry is my disapproval. There she is.</p> <p>BURGUNDY I don't know what to say. LEAR She's got big flaws. She has no friends or protectors. I no longer love her. Her only dowry is my curse and banishment. So do you take her or leave her?</p> <p>BURGUNDY I'm sorry, sir, but nobody can make a choice like this in such circumstances. LEAR Then leave her, sir. I swear to God she's not worth anything more than what I told you. (to FRANCE) And as for you, great King of France, I'd never insult our friendship by encouraging you to marry a girl I hate. So I beg you to look around for a better match than</p>
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<p>220</p> <p>225</p> <p>230</p> <p>235</p> <p>240</p> <p>245</p> <p>250</p>	<p>you T' avert your liking a more worthier way Than on a wretch whom Nature is ashamed Almost t' acknowledge hers. FRANCE This is most strange, That she that even but now was your best object— The argument of your praise, balm of your age, Most best, most dearest—should in this trice of time Commit a thing so monstrous to dismantle So many folds of favor. Sure, her offense Must be of such unnatural degree That monsters it (or your fore-vouched affection Fall into taint), which to believe of her Must be a faith that reason without miracle Could never plant in me. CORDELIA (to LEAR) I yet beseech your majesty, If for I want that glib and oily art To speak and purpose not—since what I well intend, I'll do 't before I speak—that you make known It is no vicious blot, murder, or foulness, No unchaste action or dishonored step That hath deprived me of your grace and favor, But even for want of that for which I am richer: A still-soliciting eye and such a tongue As I am glad I have not, though not to have it Hath lost me in your liking. LEAR Go to, go to. Better thou Hadst not been born than not t' have pleased me better. FRANCE Is it no more but this—a tardiness in nature Which often leaves the history unspoke That it intends to do?—My lord of Burgundy, What say you to the lady? Love's not love When it is mingled with regards that stands Aloof from th' entire point. Will you have her? She is herself a dowry. BURGUNDY (to LEAR) Royal King, Give but that portion which yourself proposed, And here I take Cordelia by the hand, Duchess of Burgundy.</p>	<p>this wretched creature that you can barely call human. FRANCE This is very odd. Until very recently she was your favorite, the object of all your praise and the delight of your old age. It's strange that someone so dear to you could do anything so horrible as to warrant this sudden hatred. Her crime must be extreme and monstrous, or else your earlier love for her wasn't as true as it seemed. But it'd take a miracle to make me believe she could do anything that horrible. CORDELIA (to LEAR) Please, your majesty, I don't have a glib way with words and I only say what I mean. If I decide to do something, then I do it instead of talking about it. So I beg your majesty to let people know that it wasn't because I did something atrocious that I fell from your favor. I didn't murder or commit any immoral or lustful act. I'm out of favor simply because I'm not a fortune-hunter and I don't have a smooth way with words— and I'm a better person because of it, even though it has cost me your love. LEAR Enough. It would've been better for you not to have been born at all than to displease me as you did. FRANCE You mean this is the whole problem, that she is shy and hasn't said everything she means to say and do?—My lord of Burgundy, what do you have to say to this lady? Love's not love when it gets mixed up with irrelevant outside matters. Will you marry her? She herself is as valuable as any dowry could ever be. BURGUNDY (to LEAR) King, just give me the dowry you promised me, and I'll make Cordelia the Duchess of Burgundy right away.</p>
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<p>255</p> <p>260</p> <p>265</p> <p>270</p> <p>275</p> <p>280</p> <p>285</p>	<p>LEAR Nothing. I have sworn. I am firm.</p> <p>BURGUNDY (to CORDELIA) I am sorry then. You have so lost a father That you must lose a husband.</p> <p>CORDELIA Peace be with Burgundy. Since that respects and fortunes are his love, I shall not be his wife.</p> <p>FRANCE Fairest Cordelia, that art most rich being poor, Most choice forsaken, and most loved despised! Thee and thy virtues here I seize upon, Be it lawful I take up what's cast away. Gods, gods! 'Tis strange that from their cold'st neglect My love should kindle to inflamed respect.— Thy dowerless daughter, King, thrown to my chance, Is queen of us, of ours, and our fair France. Not all the dukes of waterish Burgundy Can buy this unprized precious maid of me.— Bid them farewell, Cordelia, though unkind. Thou lovest here, a better where to find.</p> <p>LEAR Thou hast her, France. Let her be thine, for we Have no such daughter, nor shall ever see That face of hers again. (to CORDELIA) Therefore be gone Without our grace, our love, our benison.— Come, noble Burgundy.</p> <p>Flourish Exeunt all but FRANCE, GONERIL, REGAN, and CORDELIA</p> <p>FRANCE Bid farewell to your sisters.</p> <p>CORDELIA The jewels of our father, with washed eyes Cordelia leaves you. I know you what you are, And like a sister am most loath to call Your faults as they are named. Love well our father. To your professèd bosoms I commit him. But yet, alas, stood I within his grace, I would prefer him to a better place. So farewell to you both.</p> <p>REGAN Prescribe not us our duty.</p> <p>GONERIL</p>	<p>LEAR No, I'll give nothing. I won't budge on that.</p> <p>BURGUNDY (to CORDELIA) In that case, I'm sorry you have to lose me as a husband because you lost the king as a father.</p> <p>CORDELIA Peace to you, my lord of Burgundy. Since you love money and power so much, I won't be your wife.</p> <p>FRANCE Beautiful Cordelia, you're all the richer now that you're poor. You're more valuable now that you're rejected and more loved now that you're hated. I'll take you and your wonderful virtues here and now, if it's okay that I'm picking up what others have thrown away. It's so strange that in neglecting you so cruelly, the gods have made me love you so dearly.—King, the daughter you've rejected is now mine, as Queen of France. No Duke of spineless Burgundy can take this treasure of a girl from me now.—Say goodbye to them, Cordelia, even though they've been unkind to you. You'll find a much better place in France than what you're giving up here.</p> <p>LEAR She's yours, King of France. Take her. She's no longer my daughter, and I'll never see her face again. (to CORDELIA) So get out of here. Leave without any blessing or love from me.— Come with me, Burgundy.</p> <p>Trumpets play. Everyone exits except FRANCE, GONERIL, REGAN, and CORDELIA.</p> <p>FRANCE Say goodbye to your sisters.</p> <p>CORDELIA Sisters, you whom our father loves so dearly, I leave you now with tears in my eyes. I know you for what you really are, but as your sister I'm reluctant to criticize you. Take good care of our father and show him the love that you have professed. I leave him in your care—but oh, if only I were still in his favor I could arrange for better care for him. Goodbye to you both.</p> <p>REGAN Don't tell us what our duty is.</p> <p>GONERIL</p>
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290	<p>Let your study Be to content your lord, who hath received you At fortune's alms. You have obedience scanted, And well are worth the want that you have wanted.</p> <p>CORDELIA Time shall unfold what plighted cunning hides, Who covers faults at last with shame derides. Well may you prosper.</p> <p>FRANCE Come, my fair Cordelia. Exeunt FRANCE and CORDELIA</p>	<p>You should focus instead on pleasing your husband, who's taken you in as an act of charity. You've failed to obey your father and you deserve to be deprived of everything that's been taken away from you.</p> <p>CORDELIA Time will tell what you've got up your sleeve. You can be deceitful in the short term, but eventually truth will come out. Have a good life.</p> <p>FRANCE Come with me, my dear Cordelia. FRANCE and CORDELIA exit.</p>
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