

**GLOUCESTER**

Kent banish'd thus! and France in choler parted!  
And the king gone to-night! subscribed his power!  
Confined to exhibition! All this done  
Upon the gad! Edmund, how now! what news?

**EDMUND**

So please your lordship, none.

*Putting up the letter*

**GLOUCESTER**

Why so earnestly seek you to put up that letter?

**EDMUND**

I know no news, my lord.

**GLOUCESTER**

What paper were you reading?

**EDMUND**

Nothing, my lord.

**GLOUCESTER**

No? What needed, then, that terrible dispatch of  
it into your pocket? the quality of nothing hath  
not such need to hide itself. Let's see: come,  
if it be nothing, I shall not need spectacles.

**EDMUND**

I beseech you, sir, pardon me: it is a letter  
from my brother, that I have not all o'er-read;  
and for so much as I have perused, I find it not  
fit for your o'er-looking.

**GLOUCESTER**

Give me the letter, sir.

**EDMUND**

I shall offend, either to detain or give it. The  
contents, as in part I understand them, are to blame.

**GLOUCESTER**

Let's see, let's see.

**EDMUND**

I hope, for my brother's justification, he wrote  
this but as an essay or taste of my virtue.

**GLOUCESTER**

[Reads] 'This policy and reverence of age makes  
the world bitter to the best of our times; keeps  
our fortunes from us till our oldness cannot relish  
them. I begin to find an idle and fond bondage  
in the oppression of aged tyranny; who sways, not  
as it hath power, but as it is suffered. Come to

me, that of this I may speak more. If our father would sleep till I waked him, you should half his revenue for ever, and live the beloved of your brother, EDGAR.'

Hum--conspiracy!--'Sleep till I waked him,--you should enjoy half his revenue,'--My son Edgar! Had he a hand to write this? a heart and brain to breed it in?--When came this to you? who brought it?

**EDMUND**

It was not brought me, my lord; there's the cunning of it; I found it thrown in at the casement of my closet.

**GLOUCESTER**

You know the character to be your brother's?

**EDMUND**

If the matter were good, my lord, I durst swear it were his; but, in respect of that, I would fain think it were not.

**GLOUCESTER**

It is his.

**EDMUND**

It is his hand, my lord; but I hope his heart is not in the contents.

**GLOUCESTER**

Hath he never heretofore sounded you in this business?

**EDMUND**

Never, my lord: but I have heard him oft maintain it to be fit, that, sons at perfect age, and fathers declining, the father should be as ward to the son, and the son manage his revenue.

**GLOUCESTER**

O villain, villain! His very opinion in the letter! Abhorred villain! Unnatural, detested, brutish villain! worse than brutish! Go, sirrah, seek him; I'll apprehend him: abominable villain!