**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.

*Hiding 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!
Where is he?

**EDMUND**

I will seek him, sir, presently: convey the
business as I shall find means and acquaint you withal.

**GLOUCESTER**

Find out this villain, Edmund; it shall
lose thee nothing; do it carefully. And the
noble and true-hearted Kent banished! his
offence, honesty! 'Tis strange.

*Exit*

**EDMUND**

This is the excellent foppery of the world, that,
when we are sick in fortune,--often the surfeit
of our own behavior,--we make guilty of our
disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars: as
if we were villains by necessity; fools by
heavenly compulsion; knaves, thieves, and
treachers, by spherical predominance; drunkards,
liars, and adulterers, by an enforced obedience of
planetary influence; and all that we are evil in,
by a divine thrusting on: an admirable evasion
of whoremaster man, to lay his goatish
disposition to the charge of a star!