

Act 4 Scene 4

CORDELIA enters with a DOCTOR, along with soldiers carrying drums and banners.

CORDELIA

Alas, it's the king. Why, just recently he was seen acting as crazy as the stormy sea, singing out loud and wearing a crown of thick weeds—burdock, hemlock, nettles, cuckoo, and all the weeds that struggle against our life-sustaining wheat.

[To soldiers] Send out a hundred soldiers to find him. Search every acre of the overgrown fields and bring him here for me to see.

Some soldiers exit.

What can human medical knowledge do to restore his sanity? Whoever helps him can have all my material wealth.

DOCTOR

It is possible, madam. Rest is the best thing to comfort human nature, and rest is the thing Lear hasn't had. But there are many medicinal herbs that will help him to forget his anguish and to sleep for a while.

CORDELIA

Then, you precious herbs—you secret healing plants of the earth—may you grow as fast as my tears fall and heal the good old man's distress. Now go, go find those herbs for him, before his overwhelming anger uses up all his life and energy.

A SECOND MESSENGER enters.

SECOND MESSENGER

I have news, madam. The British troops are marching this way.

CORDELIA

We already knew this. Our troops are ready to receive them. Oh, dear father, I'm doing all this for you. This is why the great King of France listened to and pitied my persistent and pleading tears. It wasn't inflated ambition that made us invade England, but love—dear love!—and my old father's abused rights. Hopefully I will hear him and see him soon.

They all exit.