

Blindman's Bluff

selected and devised by Don Kenny  
from Shakespeare's King Lear

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Cast

Edgar (E)

Gloucester (G)

E (Enter with fanfare to DC.) There's son against father; (X UR) so I heard myself  
proclaim'd; and by the happy hollow of a tree escaped the hunt. No port is free; no place, that  
guard and most unusual vigilance does not attend my taking. While I may 'scape, I will  
preserve myself: and am bethought to make myself a wandering bard. That's something yet:  
Edgar I nothing am. (TRIP, singing, accompanying himself on the Celtic harp.)

Yet better thus, and known to be contemn'd

Than still contemn'd and flatter'd

The lamentable change is from the best:

The worst returns to laughter

(CC FF arms open upward.)

Welcome then, thou unsubstantial air that I embrace!

The wretch that thou hast blown unto the worst

Owes nothing to they blasts.

The worst returns to laughter.

(Stop UR) But who comes here? (X DL) My father, blinded and alone. (FF) World, world, oh,  
world. But that thy strange mutations make us hate thee, life would not yield to age.

G (Enter singing, overlapping the above dialogue.)

I have no way and therefore want no eyes:

I stumbled when I saw:

Full oft 'tis seen, our means secure us,

And our mere defects prove our commodities.

(Stop UR) How now! Who goes there? Is it a wandering bard? Ah, dear son Edgar, the food of they abused father's wrath! Might I but live to see thee in my touch, I'd say I had eyes again.

E (FF overlapping the above dialogue.) Oh, gods! I am worse than e'er I was. And worse I may be yet: the worst is not as long as we can say "This is the worst." How should this be? Bad is the trade that must play fool to sorrow, angering itself and others.

G (Overlapping the above dialogue. F off DL) I' the last night's storm I such a fellow saw, which made me think a man a worm: my son came then into my mind, and yet my mind was the scarce friends with him: I have heard more since. (Singing)

As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods;

They kill us for their sport.

E Bless thee, Master!

G Come hither, fellow.

E (F off DR) I cannot daub it further. And yet I must. (X CC) Bless thy sweet eyes, they bleed.

G Know'st thou the way to Dover?

E Both stile and gate, horse-way and foot-path, so, bless thee, Master!

G There is a cliff whose high and bending head looks fearfully in the confined deep: bring me but to the very brim of it, from that place I shall no leading need.

E I shall lead thee.

G When shall we come to the top of that same hill?

E You do climb up it now: look, how we labour.

G Methinks the ground is even.

E Horrible steep. Hark, do you hear the sea?

G No, truly.

E Why then your other senses grow imperfect by your eyes' anguish.

G So may it be indeed.

E Come on, Sir: here's the place: stand still. How fearful and dizzy 'tis to cast one's eyes so low! The fishermen that walk upon the beach appear like mice. The murmuring surge that on the unnumber'd idle pebbles chafes cannot be heard so high. I'll look no more, lest my brain turn and the deficient sight topple down headlong.

G Set me where you stand.

E Give me your hand: you are now within a foot of the extreme verge: for all beneath the moon would I not leap upright.

G Let go my hand. Go thou further off: bid me farewell, and let me hear thee going.

E Now fare you well, good sir.

G With all my heart.

E Why I do trifle thus with his despair is done to cure it.

G Oh, you mighty gods! This world I do renounce, and in your sights shake patiently my

great affliction off. If Edgar live, oh, bless him! Now fellow, fare thee well.

E Gone, Sir: Farewell. And yet I know not how conceit may rob the treasury of life, when life itself yields to the theft: had he been where he thought, by this had thought been past. Alive or dead? Ho, you Sir! Friend! Hear you, Sir? Speak! Thus might he pass indeed: yet he revives. What are you, Sir?

G Away, and let me die.

E Hadst thou been aught but gossamer, feathers, Sir, so many fathom down precipitating, thou'dst shiver'd like an egg: but thou dost breathe: hast heavy substance: bleed'st not: speak'st: art sound. Thy life's a miracle. Speak yet again.

G But have I fall'n, or no?

E From the dread summit of this chalky bourn. Look up a-height; the shrill-gorged lark so far cannot be seen or heard: do but look up.

G Alack, I have no eyes. Is wretchedness deprived that benefit, to end itself by death? 'Twas yet some comfort, when misery could beguile the tyrant's rage and frustrate his proud will.

E Give me your arm. Up: so. How is't? Feel you your legs?

G Too well, too well.

E This is above all strangeness. Upon the crown o' the cliff, what thing was that which parted from you?

G A poor wandering bard.

E As I stood here below, methought his eyes were two full moons: he had a thousand noses, horns welk'd and waved like the enridged sea: It was some fiend. Therefore, thou

happy father, think that the clearest gods, who make them honours of men's impossibilities, have preversed thee.

G I do remember now. That thing you speak of, I took it for a man. He led me to that place. Henceforth I'll bear affliction till it do cry out itself "enough, enough" and die.

E Bear free and patient thoughts. (Singing)

Free and patient thought bearing as we go together.

G (Singing)

Henceforth I'll bear affliction till

It do cry out enough

Enough and die, oh, henceforth.

BOTH (Singing, as E lead G by the hand, exiting.)

Bear free and patient thoughts.

I'll bear affliction till it

Do cry out enough, enough

Bearing free and patient thoughts we

Together go on.