



THE LEARS: FOOLS OF FORTUNE

by Patrick Thomas McCarthy

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The LEARS

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Characters: *5 men 2 women*

Mr. Edgar Reginald Lehman Lear – patriarch, man of business

Ms. Anneril Lehman Lear – oldest daughter

Ms. Reagan Lehman Lear – the other daughter

Mr. Cord Lear/ Ms. Cordelia Learson – youngest child

Mr. Glen Storr Esquire – business partner, family lawyer

Mr. Edgar "Ned" Storr/ Ned o' Bedlam – primary son, not straight

Mr. Edmond "Monty" Storr – bastard son, personal trainer, escort, straight

Settings: *Four rooms in homes of wealth on the heath, the heath*

Scene 1: Thanksgiving – Lear's Dining Room

Scene 2: Breaking Promises – Cord & Ned's Bedroom - The Storr House

Scene 3: Arm Wrestling – Lear's Bedroom

Scene 4: Help Me Get Dressed – Cord & Ned's Bedroom - The Storr House

Scene 5: Cordelia's Here - Lear's Bedroom

Scene 6: We Will See the Sisters – Cord & Ned's Bedroom –The Storr House

Scene 7: The Sister's Lair – The Family Room - Reagan's Home on the Heath

Scene 8: Blow Winds The Heath

Scene 9: Another Half of the Heath The Heath

Scene 10: The Foreclosed Family Room – Reagan's Home on the Heath

Scene 11: The Eternal Flame - The Heath

Scene 12: The Foreclosed Family Room – Reagan's Home on the Heath

Scene 13: Nine Months to One Year Later - The Storr House

Running Time: *95 minutes without intermission*

Synopsis

Suggested by Shakespeare's KING LEAR, this contemporary American telling has an Alzheimers addled Captain of Industry, Edgar Reginald Lehman Lear, gathering those closest to him for an advance reading of the will at Thanksgiving dinner. He has sold the family estate, and will go to live with those that love him best. Will his daughters Anneril and Reagan retain the family wealth & to what lengths will they go to do so? Will disinherited gay son Cord, reappear as home health care nurse, Cordelia Learson? And will the Storr family, Glen Storr Esquire, Edmond "Monty" Storr, and Edgar "Ned" Storr find their way into the tangle? Homicide, a blinding, poisonings, betrayal, abuse, sibling rivalries, cross dressing, arm wrestling and even loyalty, redemption & love find their way into the turbulent mix. Family drama of operatic dimensions.

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SETTING: *A house of wealth on a heath, thanksgiving dinner is about to be served. Edgar Reginald Lehman Lear will sit at the head of the table, his three children, Anneril, Reagan, & Cord will sit on Lear's left, Edmond "Monty" Storr, Glen Storr Esquire, & Edgar "Ned" Storr will sit on Lear's right. Lear is clothed in a red dressing robe over formal wear, his children's accent colors are red, burgundy, or purple. The Storr's family color is blue. Reagan dresses in mourning black with red accents.*

ACT ONE

Scene 1: Thanksgiving – Lear's Dining Room

[All except Cord are seated at the top waiting. Cord enters, dressed as a man, silencing the proceedings, & first stands behind Ned, then places a scarf around Ned's shoulders, then kisses Ned firmly on the mouth, Glen pushes him away & gestures for him to sit in the one remaining chair]

LEAR: Why is that here?

GLEN: Why is who here?

LEAR: *[Referring to Cord]* My youngest daughter.

GLEN: I thought it best that your entire family be here.

LEAR: Then why aren't my daughter's husbands here?

NED: I am here.

GLEN: To be silent. My son, Ned, is here to be silent. But you did invite him. And your daughter Reagan's invited husband is recently deceased, lest you had forgotten, and your daughter Anneril never married.

ANNERIL: I never saw the need. Too busy being a CEO. I get my needs met in other ways.

LEAR: Why did no one tell me?

GLEN: It must have slipped our collective minds, if we had any.

LEAR: Always sardonic, Mr. Storr, always sardonic, your sight unseen.

GLEN: The better to see you with.

LEAR: Sight unseen is what I wish of my youngest there, *[Points at Cord]* who I doubt is mine. Don't you wish the same of yours?

GLEN: My youngest? Ned? We have forged an uneasy truce.

LEAR: Truces have little effect on unending conflicts.

GLEN: And again, you did invite Ned, Edgar, my youngest here, named after you....

LEAR: And Monty, my most trusted, your bastard, your straight bastard, and a trusted straight bastard is always preferred.

NED: We go straight to that...

MONTY: We are amongst family here for thanksgiving...

NED: And the coming attractions of the will...

MONTY: That we were invited to attend, show some respect Neddie, little brother....

NED: Certainly, Monty, bastard brother, your wish has always been my command.

LEAR: And he's the one that took up with that? *[Pointing to Cord]*

GLEN: Yes, you don't need a scorecard for this.

LEAR: Got it. Got it. *[Pointing to Ned]* But why did I invite him?

GLEN: I'm certain I don't know. You must have had your unknown reasons.

LEAR: Certainly unknown to me. *[Laughs]*

REAGAN: And possibly unknown to you, father, I am in mourning lest you have forgotten. I've just lost everything, and I'm here for good company, a good meal and some good news.

LEAR: Good news? You want good news? Well, I've never been much good for good news. Your mother died birthing that, *[points to Cord]* your sister never married, and your husband died probably rutting some whore in questionable circumstances. My only good news is that I'm worth piles & piles of money & property & stocks & bonds & annuities & insurance policies & venture capital & this house. And you might all get some of it. How's that for good news?

GLEN: Edgar... Reginald ... *[He does not respond]* Mr. Lear, *[He responds]* here is the document you had me draw up. Let's get down to business.

LEAR: Business, mankind was my business, or maybe just immediate family is my business, or maybe not even that. Business is business. Show me.

GLEN: Show you what?

LEAR: How much each of you deserves my money. Talk to me. Sell me on it. Children first. Anneril, you're the oldest. Anneril goes first.

ANNERIL: Me? Why me?

LEAR: You are the most ancient of my offspring, & should have the most to say. And even though I never loved you most, I'm giving you an unfair advantage going first. How much do you love me, or my money? Talk to me.

ANNERIL: *[Crosses to her father, stands next to him]* Well, Daddy, I did always love you most, more than words can say, more than either my sister or brother will ever be able to say. If I were to tell you how much I loved you, it would take an entire Twilight series of novels, and that would only be a start. Or better yet, it would be a Russian novel, WAR & PEACE, paid for by the word, outlining our family life. All of my life, you, Daddy, have always been the bond of our souls, the property I would never part with. You have always been the policy by which I have lived. I have always made you my business, and I have always loved doing so. As much as a daughter can love, is less than I have loved you.

LEAR: Very clever, the business, the literary analogies. Giving me the business, so I'll give it to you. You have been lessoned very well. And how will dowdy Reagan ever be able to top that? Being in mourning & all. Give it a whirl, Reagan, dazzle me with your acumen.

REAGAN: *[Not to be outdone, crosses to her father]* Father, I only mourn the fact that I did not love you more, that I could not dazzle you with a love that outshines all others. Having divided my love by marrying, I took half of what was yours & invested it in another. A poor investment, a total loss, but now that he is gone, I can reinvest all of my love once again in you that gave me all I have and all I am. You have always dazzled me with your knowledge and power, but I am not blinded by your sun but eager to look directly into that light that only you have brought into my life.

LEAR: Who's your daddy?

REAGAN: You are father, dad....eee.

LEAR: Those MBAs are paying off, my girls are smarter than they look. Except for the last one, no MBA there, nursing school, fucking nursing school. The one I did love most, becomes a fucking nurse. But since you are here, since Glen here, I'm sure thought it was in his family's best interest to at least get you a piece of the action, why don't you have your say too, fool, heave something up, and leave it to lie here at the dinner table, before I throw you up & out again.

CORD: Father, I cannot heave my heart into my mouth. I cannot outshine my sisters in their stated love. I cannot change what I am to please your stated love. I have always & will always return the love you give me in kind. Nothing more & nothing less.

LEAR: Nothing more & nothing less?

CORD: I expect nothing more.

LEAR: Nothing shall come of nothing.

CORD: If that is what will make you happy father.

LEAR: Nothing makes me happy.

CORD: Exactly, father.

GLEN: Perhaps we can have dinner first to settle things, before we settle things.

LEAR: Nothing shall come of nothing, and it is decided now, my kingdom shall be divided...

GLEN: Edgar, you do not have a kingdom.

LEAR: My princesses shall divide all my kingdom's worth....

REAGAN: Here it comes...

ANNERIL: How many princesses, daddy?

LEAR: How many are there?

ANNERIL: I'd say there are only two.

LEAR: There are more?

CORD: You don't have to count me in.

LEAR: Who are you? What are you doing here? You weren't invited.

CORD: Mr. Storr invited me.

LEAR: The store invited you? The company store?

GLEN: Yes, I invited your son, Cord, to be here tonight for your announcements.

LEAR: I don't have a son.

REAGAN: You're right father ... dad-eee, only two princesses, not three.

LEAR: Corporations are people. Fucking people.

ANNERIL: Let's get back to dividing the kingdom.

MONTY: *[Motions for the sisters to be seated, moves them back to their seats]* Mr. Lear, since this is a business proposition & we have gathered to let you conduct your business, explain to us... in your own words.

LEAR: In my own words?

MONTY: In your own words, not those of my father.

LEAR: Explain what?

MONTY: How you will divide your kingdom sir.

GLEN: Estate.

MONTY: Kingdom.

LEAR: Monty?

MONTY: Yes, sir.

LEAR: My most trusted, on the straight & narrow...

MONTY: Yes sir.

LEAR: They are making me do things.

MONTY: I'm here to see that they don't.

GLEN: Edgar?

MONTY: Father, I am here to see that you don't.

ANNERIL: Father, tell us how you will divide the estate.

LEAR: Kingdom.

ANNERIL: Kingdom.

REAGAN: Kingdom, amongst the princesses.

LEAR: My princesses... *[Staring at Reagan]*

REAGAN: Yes, dad.... Eee... father?

LEAR: My princesses will divide everything equally, except of course *[Starts to read from the document]* the trusts for my trusted advisor, Mr. Glen Storr, and my trusted aide Cordelia Learson, who will receive funds in perpetuity for their service to me here. *[Ends reading from the document]* I have already sold this house, our ancestral home, and I will come to live with whoever loves me best until my passing when all shall be steered as to my wishes and final testament. *[Reads again]* The memorials on the heath of my wife & my youngest child, shall be maintained in perpetuity with such funds as are needed in perpetuity. I, Edgar Reginald Lehman Lear, son of a prince of industry, being of sound mind & body, do make these pronouncements without aid or force, and thereby begin my journey to settlement of my accounts. *[Ends reading again]* All this is stated, in writing, in these papers Mr. Storr has prepared, should you be interested in the details. I, Edgar Reginald Lehman Lear, still being of sharp mind & intellect, shall pursue who loves me best. We shall find these things to be self-evident.

GLEN: Is this the document you choose?

LEAR: This one? Whatever's in my head is on the paper.

GLEN: It doesn't quite work that way. You choose this one for finalizing your will.

LEAR: *[He selects the only available document]* Use this one.

GLEN: Are you certain?

LEAR: You make it right as I know you will.

GLEN: Thank you for your confidence.

LEAR: I have confidence in you as in no other, except Monty here. How could one not have confidence in the straight & narrow? I wish he was mine, instead of what I've got.

CORD: Princesses?

LEAR: What?

ANNERIL: Princesses, you have princesses.

REAGAN: Two princesses, you have two princesses.

LEAR: I have two daughters.

CORD: And a nurse.

LEAR: Cordelia? Where's Cordelia?

GLEN: I gave her the day off. It's Thanksgiving.

LEAR: Then why aren't all of you thankful?

ANNERIL: We are all very thankful.

REAGAN: To you father, for you, daddy, for all you give us.

LEAR: **[To Cord]** What about you?

CORD: I show my thanks in ways you do not know.

LEAR: You'd better start making me know.

CORD: I'm already not in the will. Will that change if I start showing thankfulness?

LEAR: You're right, won't do any good. You're not there. And you are not here.

GLEN: Edgar Reg Lear.

LEAR: I am Edgar Reginald Lehman Lear, captain of industry, making my will be known, and it shall be done on earth as it is in heaven.

NED: Give us this day our daily spread....

CORD: And forgive me my trespasses...

LEAR: As I forgive those who trespass against me.....

GLEN: And lead us not into mediation...

NED: **[To Monty]** But deliver us from evil...

ANNERIL: For thine is the kingdom...

REAGAN: And the power and the glory...

GLEN: Now & until these days shall cease...

MONTY: **[To Lear]** Amen?

LEAR: Amen. I'm not feeling well.

MONTY: I could take you to your room.

REAGAN: We haven't even eaten yet.

LEAR: You can still eat my food if I'm not here at the table.

ANNERIL: Reagan is just disappointed you won't be here to share with us.

LEAR: *[Standing]* Reagan is afraid she won't get anything.

REAGAN: Father *[Gets a look again from Lear]* Dad... eee... I just can't stand seeing you this way.

LEAR: What way?

ANNERIL: Less than what you were.

LEAR: Less? Am I less? I'm certainly not worth less. *[Picks up the document makes his way around the table]* Just look at how much I'm worth. Millions. Maybe even a billion. Glen, I'm worth a billion now aren't I? A billion. I'm a billionaire. And you all want part of me. Which parts will you get?

ANNERIL: I want your heart, father. I want your love.

LEAR: Not on the document, not part of my assets. Can't have it.

REAGAN: I want your assets then. What part of your assets can I have?

LEAR: You want my assetts? Clever girl. You'd take the very seat on which I sit. Not afraid to speak her filthy mind. I can respect that. *[To Cord]* And what about you, whoever you are, what part do you want?

CORD: I want your eyes to see who I really am.

LEAR: Sight unseen?

CORD: Sight unseen.

LEAR: You're cleverer than you look, seen with my eyes.

CORD: The better to see you with.

LEAR: Did I tell you that story?

CORD: Many times.

LEAR: Then, why can't I remember?

GLEN: Some things are better not remembered.

LEAR: Here's to memory, and how about you? [*Crosses to Ned*] What do you want?

NED: I only want the part you've already discarded.

LEAR: The refuse from my teeming shore?

NED: That which you sent away.

LEAR: Lost?

NED: Not lost, discarded.

LEAR: Discards cost me nothing.

NED: I value your discard.

LEAR: Then you cost me nothing, & something comes of this nothing, for it costs me nothing.

NED: Added value perhaps...

LEAR: I could come to like this answer, though not the answerer.

GLEN: Edgar.... Reg.... [*Lear responds to Reg this time*] ah Reg... the part I want is your head for business. I'd use it well, and all that you've taught me & given me over the years.

LEAR: My trusted friend, take my mouth, my ears & eyes, even my nose for smelling business deals. Take all of my senses for making all of the senseless make sense. And Monty? [*Gets him in a headlock*] You want this?

MONTY: You're strong sir. Strong as you ever were.

LEAR: And knows just what to say. Closest I'll ever come to having a real son. [*Kisses him on top of the head and releases headlock*] But we won't even ask you what you want. You all know what he wants.

MONTY: I want what's best for you.

LEAR: He wants it all. All those parts the rest of you have already claimed, they'll be his. He wants it all. The only worthy goal. All. So, sharpen your knives, he's at the forefront. He's positioned himself for the race. He's a winner. Who's gonna ride the winner? You, Anneril? You've already ridden him haven't you? [*Laughs coarsely*] Or you, dowdy Reagan? Your