

from: *King Lear*, Act I, Scene II

Gloucester These late eclipses in the sun and moon portend no good to us: though the wisdom of nature can reason it thus and thus, yet nature finds itself scourged by the sequent effects. Love cools, friendship falls off, brothers divide: in cities, mutinies; in countries, discord; in palaces treason; and the bond cracked 'twixt son and father. This villain of mine comes under the prediction; there's son against father: the King falls from bias of nature; there's father against child. We have seen the best of our time: machinations, hollowness, treachery, and all ruinous disorders follow us disquietly to our graves. 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 behaviour, we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and 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! My father compounded with my mother under the Dragon's tail, and my nativity was under Ursa Major; so that it follows I am rough and lecherous. Tut! I should have been that I am had the maidenliest star in the firmament twinkled on my bastardizing. Edgar —

[Enter Edgar]

Pat he come, like the catastrophe of the old comedy: my cue is villainous melancholy, with a sigh like Tom o' Bedlam. O, these eclipses do portend these divisions.

Gloucester These recent eclipses of the sun and moon are bad omens for us. Though human reason can explain such things away, nonetheless mankind has to suffer the natural consequences. Love cools off. Friendship declines. Brothers are divided. In cities there are riots; in countries, civil war; in palaces, treason; and the bond between son and father is broken. This villain of mine fits the pattern: there's son against father. The King goes against his natural instincts: there's father against child. We've had the best years: intrigue, insincerity, treachery and chaos follow us distressingly to our graves. Sound out this villain, Edmund; you'll lose nothing by it. Do it discreetly. And the noble and loyal Kent is banished: his offense, honesty! It's strange.

[Exit]

Edmund How typically stupid: when things go wrong, often through our own fault, we blame our troubles on the sun, moon and stars! As though we are villains through no choice of our own; fools by order of heaven; knaves, thieves and traitors through the dominance of a planet at our births; drunkards, liars and adulterers by compulsion from the stars; and that all our evil acts come from divine provocation! An admirable alibi for lecherous man, to blame this lustful disposition on a star! My father tumbled my mother under a waning moon and I was born under the Great Bear: so it follows that I'm rough and lecherous? Pah! I'd be what I am had the most chaste star in the firmament twinkled over my illegitimacy! Edgar —

[Enter Edgar]

— and here he comes, as predictably as the ending of an old-fashioned play. My role requires deep melancholy — with a sigh like that of a lunatic beggar. Oh, these eclipses are premonitions of disorder...