

*King Lear* by William Shakespeare

Act I, scene ii

EDMUND: (*enters, with a letter*)

Thou, nature, art my goddess; to thy law My services are bound. Wherefore should I Stand in the plague of custom, and permit The curiosity of nations to deprive me, For that I am some twelve or fourteen moon-shines Lag of a brother? Why bastard? wherefore base? When my dimensions are as well compact, My mind as generous, and my shape as true, As honest madam's issue? Why brand they us With base? with baseness? bastardy? base, base? Who, in the lusty stealth of nature, take More composition and fierce quality Than doth, within a dull, stale, tired bed, Go to the creating a whole tribe of fops, Got 'tween asleep and wake? Well, then, Legitimate Edgar, I must have your land: Our father's love is to the bastard Edmund As to the legitimate: fine word,-- legitimate! Well, my legitimate, if this letter speed, And my invention thrive, Edmund the base Shall top the legitimate. I grow; I prosper: Now, gods, stand up for bastards!