

The Tragedy of King Lear

5.1

Enter with a drummer and colours Edmond, Regan, Gentlemen, and soldiers

EDMOND

Know of the Duke if his last purpose hold,
Or whether since he is advised by aught
To change the course. He's full of abdication
And self-reproving. Bring his constant pleasure.
Exit one or more

REGAN

Our sister's man is certainly miscarried. 5

EDMOND

'Tis to be doubted, madam.

REGAN

Now, sweet lord,
You know the goodness I intend upon you.
Tell me but truly±±but then speak the truth±±
Do you not love my sister?

EDMOND

In honoured love.

REGAN

But have you never found my brother's way 10
To the forfended place?

EDMOND

No, by mine honour, madam.

REGAN

I never shall endure her. Dear my lord,
Be not familiar with her.

EDMOND

Fear me not.

She and the Duke her husband±± 15

Enter with a drummer and colours the Duke of Albany, Goneril, and soldiers

ALBANY (to Regan)

Our very loving sister, well bemet.
(To Edmond) Sir, this I heard: the King is come to his
daughter,
With others whom the rigour of our state
Forced to cry out.

REGAN

Why is this reasoned?

GONERIL

Combine together 'gainst the enemy; 20

For these domestic and particular broils
Are not the question here.

ALBANY

Let's then determine with th'ensign of war
On our proceeding.

REGAN Sister, you'll go with us?

GONERIL No. 25

REGAN

'Tis most convenient. Pray go with us.

GONERIL (*aside*)

O ho, I know the riddle! (*To Regan*) I will go.

Enter Edgar disguised as a peasant

EDGAR (*to Albany*)

If e'er your grace had speech with man so poor,
Hear me one word.

ALBANY (*to the others*) I'll overtake you.

Exeunt both the armies

Speak.

EDGAR

Before you fight the battle, ope this letter. 30

If you have victory, let the trumpet sound
For him that brought it. Wretched though I seem,
I can produce a champion that will prove
What is avouch'd there. If you miscarry,
Your business of the world hath so an end, 35
And machination ceases. Fortune love you.

ALBANY

Stay till I have read the letter.

EDGAR I was forbid it.

When time shall serve, let but the herald cry,
And I'll appear again.

ALBANY Why, fare thee well. 40

I will o'erlook thy paper.

Exit Edgar

Enter Edmond

EDMOND

The enemy's in view; draw up your powers.

He [offers] Albany a paper

Here is the guess of their true strength and forces

By diligent discovery; but your haste
Is now urged on you.

ALBANY We will greet the time. 45

Exit

EDMOND

To both these sisters have I sworn my love,
Each jealous of the other as the stung
Are of the adder. Which of them shall I take?±±
Both?±±one?±±or neither? Neither can be enjoyed
If both remain alive. To take the widow 50
Exasperates, makes mad, her sister Goneril,
And hardly shall I carry out my side,
Her husband being alive. Now then, we'll use
His countenance for the battle, which being done,
Let her who would be rid of him devise 55
His speedy taking off. As for the mercy
Which he intends to Lear and to Cordelia,
The battle done, and they within our power,
Shall never see his pardon; for my state
Stands on me to defend, not to debate. 60

Exit