

The History of King Lear

Sc.6

Enter Edmund the bastard, and Curan, meeting

EDMUND Save thee, Curan.

CURAN And you, sir. I have been with your father, and given him notice that the Duke of Cornwall and his duchess will be here with him tonight.

EDMUND How comes that? 5

CURAN Nay, I know not. You have heard of the news abroad?±±I mean the whispered ones, for there are yet but ear-bussing arguments.

EDMUND Not. I pray you, what are they?

CURAN Have you heard of no likely wars towards twixt 10 the two Dukes of Cornwall and Albany?

EDMUND Not a word.

CURAN You may then in time. Fare you well, sir.
Exit

EDMUND

The Duke be here tonight! The better, best.
This weaves itself perforce into my business. 15

[Enter Edgar at a window above]

My father hath set guard to take my brother,
And I have one thing of a queasy question
Which must ask briefness. Wit and fortune help!±±
Brother, a word. Descend, brother, I say.

[Edgar climbs down]

My father watches. O, fly this place. 20
Intelligence is given where you are hid.
You have now the good advantage of the night.
Have you not spoken 'gainst the Duke of Cornwall
aught?

He's coming hither now, in the night, i'th' haste,
And Regan with him. Have you nothing said 25
Upon his party against the Duke of Albany?
Advise you±±

EDGAR I am sure on't, not a word.

EDMUND

I hear my father coming. Pardon me.

In cunning I must draw my sword upon you.
Seem to defend yourself. Now, quit you well. 30

(Calling) Yield, come before my father. Light here,
here!

(To Edgar) Fly, brother, fly! (Calling) Torches, torches!

(To Edgar) So, farewell.

Exit Edgar

Some blood drawn on me would beget opinion
Of my more fierce endeavour.

He wounds his arm

Drunkards do more than this in sport. (Calling) I have seen
father! Father, 35

Stop, stop! Ho, help!

Enter the Duke of Gloucester [and others]

GLOUCESTER Now, Edmund, where is the villain?

EDMUND

Here stood he in the dark, his sharp sword out,
Warbling of wicked charms, conjuring the moon
To stand 's auspicious mistress.

GLOUCESTER

But where is he?

EDMUND

Look, sir, I bleed.

GLOUCESTER Where is the villain, Edmund? 40

EDMUND

Fled this way, sir, when by no means he could±±

GLOUCESTER

Pursue him, go after.

Exeunt others

By no means what?

EDMUND

Persuade me to the murder of your lordship,
But that I told him the revengive gods
'Gainst parricides did all their thunders bend, 45
Spoke with how manifold and strong a bond
The child was bound to the father. Sir, in fine,
Seeing how loathly opposite I stood
To his unnatural purpose, with fell motion,
With his prepareÁd sword he charges home 50
My unprovided body, lanced mine arm;

But when he saw my best alarumed spirits
Bold in the quarrel's rights, roused to the encounter,
Or whether ghaisted by the noise I made
Or [] I know not, 55
But suddenly he fled.

GLOUCESTER Let him fly far,
Not in this land shall he remain uncaught,
And found, dispatch. The noble Duke my master,
My worthy arch and patron, comes tonight.
By his authority I will proclaim it 60
That he which finds him shall deserve our thanks,
Bringing the murderous caitiff to the stake;
He that conceals him, death.

EDMUND
When I dissuaded him from his intent
And found him pitched to do it, with curst speech 65
I threatened to discover him. He replied,
`Thou unpossessing bastard, dost thou think
If I would stand against thee, could the reposeure
Of any trust, virtue, or worth in thee
Make thy words faithed? No, what I should deny±± 70
As this I would, ay, though thou didst produce
My very character±±I'd turn it all
To thy suggestion, plot, and damned pretence,
And thou must make a dullard of the world
If they not thought the profits of my death 75
Were very pregnant and potential spurs
To make thee seek it.'

GLOUCESTER Strong and fastened villain!
Would he deny his letter? I never got him.

Trumpets within

Hark, the Duke's trumpets. I know not why he comes.
All ports I'll bar. The villain shall not scape. 80
The Duke must grant me that; besides, his picture
I will send far and near, that all the kingdom
May have note of him±±and of my land,
Loyal and natural boy, I'll work the means
To make thee capable. 85

Enter the Duke of Cornwall and Regan

CORNWALL

How now, my noble friend? Since I came hither,
Which I can call but now, I have heard strange news.

REGAN

If it be true, all vengeance comes too short
Which can pursue the offender. How dost, my lord?

GLOUCESTER

Madam, my old heart is cracked, is cracked. 90

REGAN

What, did my father's godson seek your life?
He whom my father named, your Edgar?

GLOUCESTER

Ay, lady, lady; shame would have it hid.

REGAN

Was he not companion with the riotous knights
That tend upon my father? 95

GLOUCESTER

I know not, madam. 'Tis too bad, too bad.

EDMUND Yes, madam, he was.

REGAN

No marvel, then, though he were ill affected.
'Tis they have put him on the old man's death,
To have the spoil and waste of his revenues. 100
I have this present evening from my sister
Been well informed of them, and with such cautions
That if they come to sojourn at my house
I'll not be there.

CORNWALL Nor I, assure thee, Regan.

Edmund, I heard that you have shown your father
A childlike office. 105

EDMUND 'Twas my duty, sir.

GLOUCESTER *(to Cornwall)*

He did betray his practice, and received
This hurt you see striving to apprehend him.

CORNWALL

Is he pursued?

GLOUCESTER Ay, my good lord.

CORNWALL

If he be taken, he shall never more 110
Be feared of doing harm. Make your own purpose
How in my strength you please. For you, Edmund,
Whose virtue and obedience doth this instant

So much commend itself, you shall be ours.
Natures of such deep trust we shall much need.
You we first seize on.

115

EDMUND I shall serve you truly,
However else.

GLOUCESTER (*to Cornwall*) For him I thank your grace.

CORNWALL

You know not why we came to visit you±±

REGAN

This out-of-season threat'ning dark-eyed night±±
Occasions, noble Gloucester, of some poise, 120
Wherein we must have use of your advice.
Our father he hath writ, so hath our sister,
Of differences which I least thought it fit
To answer from our home. The several messengers
From hence attend dispatch. Our good old friend, 125
Lay comforts to your bosom, and bestow
Your needful counsel to our business,
Which craves the instant use.

GLOUCESTER I serve you, madam.

Your graces are right welcome. 130

Exeunt