

The History of King Lear

Sc.22

Enter Edmund, Regan, and their powers

EDMUND

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

EDMUND

'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?

EDMUND

Ay: honoured love.

REGAN

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

EDMUND That thought abuses you.

REGAN I am doubtful

That you have been conjunct and bosomed with her,
As far as we call hers.

EDMUND

No, by mine honour, madam. 15

REGAN

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

EDMUND Fear me not.

She and the Duke her husband±±

Enter the Duke of Albany and Gonoril with troops

GONORIL *(aside)*

I had rather lose the battle than that sister 20
Should loosen him and me.

ALBANY *(to Regan)*

Our very loving sister, well bemet,
For this I hear: the King is come to his daughter,

With others whom the rigour of our state
Forced to cry out. Where I could not be honest 25
I never yet was valiant. For this business,
It touches us as France invades our land;
Yet bold's the King, with others whom I fear.
Most just and heavy causes make oppose.

EDMUND

Sir, you speak nobly.

REGAN

Why is this reasoned? 30

GONORIL

Combine together 'gainst the enemy;
For these domestic poor particulars
Are not to question here.

ALBANY

Let us then determine with the ensign of war
On our proceedings.

EDMUND

I shall attend you 35

Presently at your tent.

[Exit with his powers]

REGAN

Sister, you'll go with us?

GONORIL

No.

REGAN

'Tis most convenient. Pray you go with us.

GONORIL *[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, 40
Hear me one word.

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

Exeunt all but Albany and Edgar

Speak.

EDGAR

Before you fight the battle, ope this letter.
If you have victory, let the trumpet sound
For him that brought it. Wretched though I seem, 45
I can produce a champion that will prove
What is avouched there. If you miscarry,
Your business of the world hath so an end.

Fortune love you±±

ALBANY Stay till I have read the letter.

EDGAR I was forbid it. 50

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

ALBANY Why, fare thee well.

I will o'erlook the paper.

Exit Edgar

Enter Edmund

EDMUND

The enemy's in view; draw up your powers. 55

He [offers] Albany a paper

Here is the guess of their great strength and forces
By diligent discovery; but your haste
Is now urged on you.

ALBANY We will greet the time.

Exit

EDMUND

To both these sisters have I sworn my love,
Each jealous of the other as the stung 60

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

Exasperates, makes mad, her sister Gonoril,

And hardly shall I carry out my side, 65

Her husband being alive. Now then, we'll use

His countenance for the battle, which being done,

Let her that would be rid of him devise

His speedy taking off. As for his mercy

Which he intends to Lear and to Cordelia, 70

The battle done, and they within our power,

Shall never see his pardon; for my state

Stands on me to defend, not to debate.

Exit