

King Lear abbreviated

Act 5, Scene 1

Introspection

Situation: Cornwall has died. His widow, Regan, shows some interest in Edmund. But Edmund has for some time been showing interest in Goneril, Regan's married older sister, and Regan doesn't like it a bit.

EDGAR: Before you fight the battle, open this letter. If you have victory, let the trumpet sound for him that brought it. If you miscarry, your business of the world hath so an end. Fortune love you.

ALBANY: Stay till I have read the letter.

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

He exits.

ALBANY: I will o'erlook thy paper.

Edmund enters.

EDMUND: The enemy's in view. Draw up your powers.

He gives Albany a paper.

EDMUND: Here is the guess of their true strength and forces by diligent discovery.

ALBANY: We will be ready.

He exits.

Edmund to himself, No. 2

To both these sisters have I sworn my love.
As if stung by a snake, each jealous of
The other. Should I take one or both or
Neither? Taking neither can be enjoyed
If you remain alive. Loving one more
Than the other angers the sister void
Of a husband, exasperating the
Sister whose husband is alive. Must we
Then use his senior position in the
Battle, letting her devise a speedy
Way to murder him. As for the mercy
He intends for Lear and Cordelia, the
Pardon shall not be seen as I depend
Not on debate, rather life to defend.