

Act III, Scene v

Gloucester's castle.

Enter CORNWALL and EDMUND

CORNWALL

I will have my revenge ere I depart his house.

EDMUND

How, my lord, I may be censur'd, that nature thus gives way to loyalty, something fears me to think of.

"How ... be censured" = *how people may judge me*

"nature gives way to loyalty" = *proper filial behavior (i.e. a child's duty to his father) must be secondary to loyalty (i.e. to the ruler Cornwall)*

"something fears me" = *I am rather frightened*

CORNWALL

I now perceive it was not altogether your brother's evil disposition made him seek his death, but a provoking merit set a-work by a reproveable badness in himself.

"I now ... in himself" = *I now see that it wasn't Edgar's malice ("evil disposition") alone that caused him to attempt his father's murder, but that Gloucester himself is one who has deserved correction (i.e. he has a "provoking merit"). This will have sparked Edgar's attempt of murder (which might still have to be considered an evil intention in Edgar and that is still to be condemned—i.e. he has a "reproveable badness.")*

EDMUND

How malicious is my fortune that I must repent to be just! This is the letter he spoke of, which approves him an intelligent party to the advantages of France. O heavens, that this treason were not or not I the detector!

"How malicious is my fortune" = *how bad my luck is*

"repent to be just" = *regret having to act loyally*

"approves him" = *proves him to be*

"an intelligent party to the advantages of" = *a spy providing information that assists*

"that this treason were not" = *I wish only that this were not treason*

CORNWALL

Go with me to the duchess.

EDMUND

If the matter of this paper be certain, you have mighty business in hand.

"If the matter ... in hand" = *If the information in this letter is correct, you have a terrible responsibility to fulfill (i.e. to execute Gloucester)*

CORNWALL

True or false, it hath made thee Earl of Gloucester. Seek out where thy father is, that he may be ready for our apprehension.

"True or false ... Earl of Gloucester" = *Whether it is true or false, it means that you will inherit the title of Earl of Gloucester*

Note the corruption of Cornwall. He does not care, finally, whether old Gloucester is guilty or innocent of treason, for in either case he is a political irritant that Cornwall wants to dispose of.

"apprehension" = *arrest*

EDMUND

[*Aside*] If I find him comforting the king, it will stuff his suspicion more fully. [*Aloud*] I will persevere in my course of loyalty, though the conflict be sore between that and my blood.

"comforting" = *giving assistance (to a known traitor)*

"persevere" = *continue*

"sore" = *sharp*

CORNWALL

I will lay trust upon thee, and thou shalt find a dearer father in my love.

"between that and my blood" = *between that loyalty (to Cornwall) and my blood relationship to my father*

Exeunt

"thou shalt ... my love" = *you will see me as a more loving father (than Gloucester has been)*