

## Act V, Scene i

### The British camp, near Dover

*Enter, with drum and colors, EDMUND, REGAN, gentlemen, and soldiers*

EDMUND

[*To a gentleman*] Know of the duke if his last purpose hold,  
Or whether since he is advis'd by aught  
To change the course. He's full of alteration  
And self-reproving. Bring his constant pleasure.

*Exit gentleman*

"Know of ... purpose hold" = *find out from the duke (i.e. Albany) if he is still committed to his most recently expressed intention*

"Or whether ... the course" = *or if he has been warned by anything ("advis'd by aught") to change his plan*

"full of alteration / And self-reproving" = *changeable and prone to scold himself. (Albany is torn between defending England, his country, and defending Lear, the true king. But defending Lear would mean supporting the French.)*

"constant pleasure" = *firm decision*

REGAN

Our sister's man is certainly miscarried.

"Our sister's man is certainly miscarried" = *Goneril's servant, Oswald, must have met with an accident*

EDMUND

'Tis to be doubted, madam.

"doubted" = *feared*

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?

"You know ... upon you" = *You know what good things I have in store for you*

EDMUND

In honor'd love.

"honor'd" = *honorable*

REGAN

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

"But have ... forfended place?" – In jealous anxiety, Regan asks if Edmund has ever committed the forbidden ("forfended") act of adultery with Goneril.

EDMUND

That thought abuses you.

"That thought abuses you" = *The thought is unworthy of you*

REGAN

I am doubtful that you have been conjunct  
And bosom'd with her, as far as we call hers.

"I am doubtful" = *I fear*

"conjunct / And bosom'd with her" = *working in conjunction with and in her confidence (i.e. of her bosom)*

"as far as we call hers" = *in the fullest possible way*

EDMUND

No, by mine honor, madam.

"endure her" – *i.e. as her rival*

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, with drum and colors, ALBANY, GONERIL,  
and soldiers*

GONERIL

[*Aside*] I had rather lose the battle than that sister  
Should loosen him and me.

"loosen" = *come between*

ALBANY

Our very loving sister, well be-met.  
Sir, this I hear: the king is come to his daughter,  
With others whom the rigor of our state  
Forc'd to cry out. Where I could not be honest,  
I never yet was valiant. For this business,  
It touches us, as France invades our land,  
Not bolds the king, with others, whom, I fear,  
Most just and heavy causes make oppose.

"Our very loving sister" – Albany speaks with heavy sarcasm.

"be-met" = *encountered*

"rigor of our state" = *harshness of our rule*

"Where" = *in a situation where*

"For" = *as for*

"touches" = *concerns*

"as France ... bolds the king" – i.e. Albany is prepared to fight the French army because its action constitutes an invasion of his territory, not because it gives support to ("bolds") King Lear.

EDMUND

Sir, you speak nobly.

REGAN

Why is this reason'd?

"Why is this reason'd?" = *Why are you giving these reasons?*

GONERIL

Combine together 'gainst the enemy,  
For these domestic and particular broils  
Are not the question here.

"Combine together" = *let us join forces*

"domestic and particular broils" = *private family quarrels*

ALBANY

Let's then determine  
With th' ancient of war on our proceedings.

"determine / With th' ancient" = *consult with the most experienced of soldiers*

EDMUND

I shall attend you presently at your tent.

"presently" = *immediately*

REGAN

Sister, you'll go with us?

GONERIL

No.

"convenient" = *urgent*

REGAN

'Tis most convenient. Pray you, go with us.

"I know the riddle" = *I can see what you are thinking.* (Goneril thinks that Regan does not want to leave her out of sight.)

GONERIL

[*Aside*] O ho, I know the riddle. [*Aloud*] I will go.

*As they are going out, enter EDGAR disguised*

EDGAR

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

ALBANY

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,  
I can produce a champion that will prove  
What is avouched there. If you miscarry,  
Your business of the world hath so an end,  
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.  
I will o'erlook thy paper.

*Exit EDGAR*

*Re-enter EDMUND*

EDMUND

The enemy's in view. Draw up your powers.  
Here is the guess of their true strength and forces  
By diligent discovery. But your haste  
Is now urg'd on you.

ALBANY

We will greet the time.

*Exit*

"ope" = *open*

"this letter" – i.e. the letter from Goneril to Edmund, regarding the would-be murder of Albany

"For him" – i.e. for Edgar

"champion" = *defender*. (Edgar seems to be setting up a medieval fighting tournament.)

"avouched" = *maintained; asserted*

"If you ... machination ceases" = *If you lose* ("miscarry"), *your action in the world likewise ends and deceptive scheming* ("machination") ends

Shakespeare includes in Edgar's speech certain suggestions of apocalypse as foretold in the Book of Revelations: the opening of a letter (suggesting the breaking of a seal), the sounding of a trumpet, the ending of the world, and most importantly the returning of a "champion." Edgar's promised return (in his next speech, he says "I'll appear again") reinforces his symbolic function as a Christ figure. Edgar, like Christ, has been "wretched" but, also like Christ, will return as the champion who will battle the evil one—Christ battling the Antichrist; Edgar, his brother Edmund.

"Draw up your powers" = *Ready your forces*

"guess" = *estimate*

"by diligent discovery" = *obtained by careful reconnaissance*

"greet the time" = *be ready to respond when the time is ripe*. (Unlike Edmund, Albany is not eager to join this battle.)

EDMUND

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 enjoy'd  
If both remain alive. To take the widow  
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  
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.

*Exit*

"jealous" = *suspicious*

"as the stung / Are of the adder" = *just as people who have been bitten are suspicious of snakes ("the adder")*

"carry out my side" = *succeed in my ambitions*

"Her husband being alive" = *with her husband still alive*

"countenance" = *authority*

"His speedy taking off" = *his quick elimination*

"to Lear and to Cordelia" = *to show to Lear and Cordelia*

"Shall never see his pardon" – Edmund darkly hints that he will have Lear and Cordelia killed.

"For my state ... to debate" = *It is important for me now to fight for my position, not to talk about it*