

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF KING JOHN

CASTING SCENES

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SCENE I (KING JOHN, QUEEN ELINOR, CHATILLON)

KING JOHN

Now, say, Chatillon, what would France with us?

CHATILLON

Thus, after greeting, speaks the King of France
In my behavior to the majesty,
The borrow'd majesty, of England here-

QUEEN ELINOR

A strange beginning: 'borrow'd majesty!'

KING JOHN

Silence, good mother; hear the embassy.

CHATILLON

Philip of France, in right and true behalf
Of thy deceased brother Geffrey's son,
Arthur, lays most lawful claim
To this fair island and the territories,
To Ireland, Poictiers, Anjou, Touraine & Maine,
Desiring thee to lay aside the sword
Which sways usurpingly these several titles,
And put these same into young Arthur's hand,
Thy nephew and right royal sovereign.

KING JOHN

What follows if we disallow of this?

CHATILLON

The proud control of fierce and bloody war,
To enforce these rights so forcibly withheld.

KING JOHN

Here have we war for war and blood for blood,
Controlment for controlment: so answer France.

CHATILLON

Then take my king's defiance from my mouth.

KING JOHN

Bear mine to him, and so depart in peace:
Be thou as lightning in the eyes of France;
For ere thou canst report I will be there,
The thunder of my cannon shall be heard:
So hence! Be thou the trumpet of our wrath
And sullen presage of your own decay.
An honourable conduct let him have:
Pembroke, look to 't. Farewell, Chatillon.

SCENE II (KING JOHN, BASTARD, FAULCONBRIDGE)

KING JOHN

What men are you?

BASTARD

Your faithful subject I, a gentleman
Born in Northamptonshire and eldest son,
As I suppose, to Robert Faulconbridge,
A soldier, by the honour-giving hand
Of King Richard knighted in the field.

KING JOHN

What art thou?

FAULCONBRIDGE

The son and heir to that same Faulconbridge.

KING JOHN

Is that the elder, and art thou the heir?
You came not of one mother then, it seems.
Why, being younger born,
Doth he lay claim to thine inheritance?

BASTARD

I know not why, except to get the land.
But once he slander'd me with bastardy.

FAULCONBRIDGE

My gracious liege, when that my father lived,
Your brother did employ my father much,--

BASTARD

Well, sir, by this you cannot get my land:
Your tale must be how he employ'd my mother.

FAULCONBRIDGE

The advantage of his absence took the king
And in the mean time sojourn'd at my father's;
Where how he did prevail I shame to speak,
But truth is truth: large lengths of seas and shores
Between my father and my mother lay,
As I have heard my father speak himself,
When this same lusty gentleman was got.

Upon his death-bed he by will bequeath'd
His lands to me, and took it on his death
That this my mother's son was none of his;
And if he were, he came into the world
Full fourteen weeks before the course of time.
Then, good my liege, let me have what is mine,
My father's land, as was my father's will.

KING JOHN

Sirrah, your brother is legitimate;
Your father's wife did after wedlock bear him,
And if she did play false, the fault was hers,
My mother's son did get your father's heir;
Your father's heir must have your father's land.

SCENE III (BASTARD, LADY FAULCONBRIDGE)

BASTARD

O me! it is my mother. How now, good lady!
What brings you here to court so hastily?

LADY FAULCONBRIDGE

Where is that slave, thy brother? where is he,
That holds in chase mine honour up and down?

BASTARD

My brother Robert? old sir Robert's son?
Is it sir Robert's son that you seek so?

LADY FAULCONBRIDGE

Sir Robert's son! Ay, thou unreverend boy,
Sir Robert's son: why scorn'st thou at sir Robert?
He is sir Robert's son, and so art thou.

BASTARD

Madam, I was not old sir Robert's son.

LADY FAULCONBRIDGE

Hast thou conspired with thy brother too,
That for thine own gain shouldst defend mine honour?
What means this scorn, thou most untoward knave?

BASTARD

Knight, knight, good mother,
What! I am dubb'd! I have it on my shoulder.
But, mother, I am not sir Robert's son;
I have disclaim'd sir Robert and my land;
Legitimation, name and all is gone:
Then, good my mother, let me know my father;
Some proper man, I hope: who was it, mother?

LADY FAULCONBRIDGE

Hast thou denied thyself a Faulconbridge?

BASTARD

As faithfully as I deny the devil.

LADY FAULCONBRIDGE

King Richard the Lionheart was thy father:
By long and vehement suit I was seduced
To make room for him in my husband's bed.

BASTARD

Madam, I would not wish a better father.
Some sins do bear their privilege on earth,
And so doth yours; your fault was not your folly:
He that perforce robs lions of their hearts
May easily win a woman's. Ay, my mother,
With all my heart I thank thee for my father!
Come, lady, I will show thee to my kin;

SCENE IV (PRINCE LOUIS, ARTHUR, AUSTRIA,
CONSTANCE, KING PHILIP, CHATILLON)

PRINCE LOUIS

Before Angiers well met, brave Austria.
Arthur, that great forerunner of thy blood,
Richard, that robb'd the lion of his heart
By this brave duke came early to his grave:
At our importance hither is he come,
To spread his colours, boy, in thy behalf,
And to rebuke the usurpation
Of thy unnatural uncle, English John.

ARTHUR

God shall forgive you Lionheart's death
But with a heart full of unstained love:
Welcome before the gates of Angiers, duke.

AUSTRIA

Even till that England, hedged in with the main,
That water-walled bulwark, still secure
And confident from foreign purposes,
Even till that utmost corner of the west
Salute thee for her king: till then, fair boy,
Will I not think of home, but follow arms.

CONSTANCE

O, take his mother's thanks, a widow's thanks,
Till your strong hand shall help to give him strength

AUSTRIA

The peace of heaven is theirs that lift their swords
In such a just and charitable war.

KING PHILIP

Well then, to work: our cannon shall be bent
Against the brows of this resisting town.
We'll lay before this town our royal bones,
Wade to the market-place in Frenchmen's blood,
But we will make it subject to this boy.

CONSTANCE

Stay for an answer to your embassy,
Lest unadvised you stain your swords with blood:
My Lord Chatillon may from England bring,
That right in peace which here we urge in war.

Enter CHATILLON

KING PHILIP

A wonder, lady! lo, upon thy wish,
Our messenger Chatillon is arrived!
What says England?

CHATILLON

Turn your forces from this paltry siege
And stir them up against a mightier task.
England, impatient of your just demands,
Hath put himself in arms:
His marches are expedient to this town,
His forces strong, his soldiers confident.
With him along is come the mother-queen,
With her her niece, the Lady Blanch of Spain;
With them a bastard of the king's deceased!

SCENE V (QUEEN ELINOR, CONSTANCE, ARHTUR)

QUEEN ELINOR

Who is it thou dost call usurper, France?

CONSTANCE

Let me make answer; thy usurping son.

QUEEN ELINOR

Out, insolent! thy bastard shall be king,
That thou mayst be a queen, and cheque the world!

CONSTANCE

My bed was ever to thy son as true
As thine was to thy husband; and this boy
Liker in feature to his father Geffrey
Than thou and John in manners; My boy a bastard!

QUEEN ELINOR

Come to thy grandam, child.

CONSTANCE

Do, child, go to it grandam, child:
Give grandam kingdom, and it grandam will
Give it a plum, a cherry, and a fig:
There's a good grandam.

ARTHUR

Good my mother, peace!
I am not worth this coil that's made for me.

QUEEN ELINOR

His mother shames him so, poor boy, he weeps.

CONSTANCE

Now shame upon you, whether she does or no!
His grandam's wrongs, and not his mother's shames,
Draws those heaven-moving pearls from his poor eyes,
Which heaven shall take in nature of a fee;
Ay, with these crystal beads heaven shall be bribed
To do him justice and revenge on you.

QUEEN ELINOR

Thou monstrous slanderer of heaven and earth!

CONSTANCE

Thou monstrous injurer of heaven and earth!
Call not me slanderer; thou and thine usurp
The dominations, royalties and rights
Of this oppressed boy: this is thy eld'st son's son,
The canon of the law is laid on him,
Being but the second generation
Removed from thy sin-conceiving womb.

QUEEN ELINOR

Thou unadvised scold, I can produce
A will that bars the title of thy son.

CONSTANCE

Ay, who doubts that? a will! a wicked will:
A woman's will; a canker'd grandam's will!

SCENE VI (MAYOR, KING PHILIP, KING JOHN)

MAYOR

Who is it that hath warn'd us to the walls?

KING PHILIP

'Tis France, for England.

KING JOHN

England, for itself.
You men of Angiers, and my loving subjects--

KING PHILIP

You loving men of Angiers, Arthur's subjects,
Our trumpet call'd you to this gentle parle--

KING JOHN

For our advantage; therefore hear us first.
These flags of France, that are advanced here
Have hither march'd to your endamage.
But on the sight of us your lawful king,
Who painfully with much expedient march
Have brought a countercheque before your gates,
To save unscratch'd your city's threatened cheeks,
let us in, your king, whose labour'd spirits,
Forwearied in this action of swift speed,
Crave harbourage within your city walls.

KING PHILIP

Lo, in this right hand, stands young Arthur,
Son to the elder brother of this man,
And king o'er him and all that he enjoys:
For this down-trodden equity, we tread
In warlike march these greens before your town,
Be pleased then to pay that duty which you truly owe
To that owes it, namely this young prince:
Then tell us, shall your city call us lord,
In that behalf which we have challenged it?
Or shall we give the signal to our rage
And stalk in blood to our possession?

MAYOR

In brief, we are the king of England's subjects:
For him, and in his right, we hold this town.

KING JOHN

Acknowledge then the king, and let me in.

MAYOR

That can we not; but he that proves the king,
To him will we prove loyal: till that time
Have we ramm'd up our gates against the world.

KING JOHN

Doth not the crown of England prove the king?

MAYOR

Till you compound whose right is worthiest,
We for the worthiest hold the right from both.

KING JOHN

Then God forgive the sin of all those souls
That to their everlasting residence,
Before the dew of evening fall, shall fleet,
In dreadful trial of our kingdom's king!

KING PHILIP

Speak, citizens, for England; who's your king?

MAYOR

The king of England; when we know the king.

KING PHILIP

Know him in us, that here hold up his right.

KING JOHN

In us, that are our own great deputy
And bear possession of our person here,
Lord of our presence, Angiers, and of you.

MAYOR

A greater power than we denies all this;
And till it be undoubted, we do lock
Our former scruple in our strong-barr'd gates;
King'd of our fears, until our fears, resolved,
Be by some certain king purged and deposed.

SCENE VII (CONSTANCE, CHATILLON, ARTHUR)

CONSTANCE

Gone to be married! gone to swear a peace!
False blood to false blood join'd! gone to be friends!
Shall Louis have Blanch, and Blanch those provinces?
It is not so; thou hast misspoke, misheard:
I trust I may not trust thee; for thy word
Is but the vain breath of a common man:
Believe me, I do not believe thee, man;
I have a king's oath to the contrary.
What dost thou mean by shaking of thy head?
Why dost thou look so sadly on my son?
Be these sad signs confirmers of thy words?
Then speak again; not all thy former tale,
But this one word, whether thy tale be true.

CHATILLON

As true as I believe you think them false
That give you cause to prove my saying true.

CONSTANCE

O, if thou teach me to believe this sorrow,
Teach thou this sorrow how to make me die.
Louis marry Blanch! O boy, then where art thou?
France friend with England, what becomes of me?
Fellow, be gone: I cannot brook thy sight:
This news hath made thee a most ugly man.

CHATILLON

What other harm have I, good lady, done,
But spoke the harm that is by others done?

CONSTANCE

Which harm within itself so heinous is
As it makes harmful all that speak of it.

ARTHUR

I do beseech you, madam, be content.

CONSTANCE

If thou, that bid'st me be content, wert grim,
Ugly and slanderous to thy mother's womb,
Full of unpleasing blots and sightless stains,
Patch'd with foul moles and eye-offending marks,

I would not care, I then would be content,
For then I should not love thee, no, nor thou
Become thy great birth nor deserve a crown.
But thou art fair, and at thy birth, dear boy,
Nature and Fortune join'd to make thee great:
Of Nature's gifts thou mayst with lilies boast,
And with the half-blown rose. But Fortune, O,
She is corrupted, changed and won from thee;
She adulterates hourly with thine uncle John,
And with her golden hand hath pluck'd on France
To tread down fair respect of sovereignty,
And made his majesty the bawd to theirs.
France is a bawd to Fortune and King John.
Tell me, thou fellow, is not France forsworn?
Envenom him with words, or get thee gone!

CHATILLON

Pardon me, madam,
I may not go without you to the kings.

CONSTANCE

Thou mayst, thou shalt; I will not go with thee:
To me and to the state of my great grief
Let kings assemble; for my grief's so great
That no supporter but the huge firm earth
Can hold it up: here I and sorrows sit;
Here is my throne, bid kings come bow to it.

SCENE VIII (KING JOHN,
CARDINAL PANDULPH, KING PHILIP)

KING JOHN

What earthy name to interrogatories
Can task the free breath of a sacred king?
Thou canst not, cardinal, devise a name
So slight, unworthy and ridiculous,
To charge me to an answer, as the pope.
Tell him this tale; and from the mouth of England
Add thus much more, that no Italian priest
Shall tithe or toll in our dominions;
Where we do reign, we will alone uphold,
Without the assistance of a mortal hand:
So tell the pope, all reverence set apart
To him and his usurp'd authority.

KING JOHN

Though you and all the kings of Christendom
Are led so grossly by this meddling priest,
Dreading the curse that money may buy out;
And by the merit of vile gold, dross, dust,
Purchase corrupted pardon of a man,
Who in that sale sells pardon from himself,
Though you and all the rest so grossly led
This juggling witchcraft with revenue cherish,
Yet I alone, alone do me oppose
Against the pope and count his friends my foes.

CARDINAL PANDULPH

Then, by the lawful power that I have,
Thou shalt stand cursed and excommunicate.
And blessed shall he be that doth revolt
From his allegiance to an heretic!
Philip of France, on peril of a curse,
Let go the hand of that arch-heretic;
And raise the power of France upon his head,
Unless he do submit himself to Rome.

KING PHILIP

Good reverend father, make my person yours,
And tell me how you would bestow yourself.
This royal hand and mine are newly knit,
Married in league, coupled and linked together
With all religious strength of sacred vows;
The latest breath that gave the sound of words

Was deep-sworn faith, peace, amity, true love
Between our kingdoms and our royal selves,
And shall these hands, so lately purged of blood,
So newly join'd in love, so strong in both,
Unyoke this seizure and this kind regret?
O, holy sir, my reverend father, let it not be so!
Out of your grace, devise, ordain, impose
Some gentle order; and then we shall be blest
To do your pleasure and continue friends.

CARDINAL PANDULPH

All form is formless, order orderless,
Save what is opposite to England's love.
Therefore to arms! be champion of our church,
Or let the church, our mother, breathe her curse,
A mother's curse, on her revolting son.

KING PHILIP

I may disjoin my hand, but not my faith.

CARDINAL PANDULPH

So makest thou faith an enemy to faith;
And like a civil war set'st oath to oath,
Thy tongue against thy tongue. O, let thy vow
First made to heaven, first be to heaven perform'd,
That is, to be the champion of our church!
But thou hast sworn against religion,
Therefore thy later vows against thy first
Is in thyself rebellion to thyself;
The peril of our curses light on thee
So heavy as thou shalt not shake them off,
But in despair die under their black weight.

SCENE IX (PRINCE LOUIS, CARDINAL PANDULPH)

PRINCE LOUIS

There's nothing in this world can make me joy.

CARDINAL PANDULPH

Before the curing of a strong disease,
Even in the instant of repair and health,
The fit is strongest; evils that take leave,
On their departure most of all show evil:
What have you lost by losing of this day?
When Fortune means to men most good,
She looks upon them with a threatening eye.
'Tis strange to think how much King John hath lost
In this which he accounts so clearly won:
Are not you grieved that Arthur is his prisoner?

PRINCE LOUIS

As heartily as he is glad he hath him.

CARDINAL PANDULPH

Your mind is all as youthful as your blood.
Now hear me speak with a prophetic spirit;
John hath seized Arthur; and it cannot be
That, whiles warm life plays in that infant's veins,
The misplaced John should entertain an hour,
One minute, nay, one quiet breath of rest.
A sceptre snatch'd with an unruly hand
Must be as boisterously maintain'd as gain'd;
And he that stands upon a slippery place
Makes nice of no vile hold to stay him up:
That John may stand, then Arthur needs must fall;

PRINCE LOUIS

But what shall I gain by young Arthur's fall?

CARDINAL PANDULPH

You, in the right of Lady Blanche your wife,
May then make all the claim that Arthur did.

PRINCE LOUIS

And lose it, life and all, as Arthur did.

CARDINAL PANDULPH

How green you are and fresh in this old world!
John lays you plots; the times conspire with you;
This act so evilly born shall cool the hearts
Of all his people and freeze up their zeal,
Plainly denouncing vengeance upon John.

PRINCE LOUIS

May be he will not touch young Arthur's life,
But hold himself safe in his prisonment.

CARDINAL PANDULPH

O, sir, when he shall hear of your approach,
If that young Arthur be not gone already,
Even at that news he dies; and then the hearts
Of all his people shall revolt from him.
Go with me to the king: 'tis wonderful
What may be wrought out of their discontent,
Now that their souls are topful of offence.
For England go: I will whet on the king.

PRINCE LOUIS

Strong reasons make strong actions: let us go:
If you say ay, the king will not say no.

SCENE X (ARTHUR, HUBERT)

ARTHUR

Good morrow, Hubert.

HUBERT

Good morrow, little prince.

ARTHUR

As little prince, having so great a title
To be more prince, as may be. You are sad.

HUBERT

Indeed, I have been merrier.

ARTHUR

Mercy on me!
Methinks no body should be sad but I:
My uncle practises more harm to me:
He is afraid of me and I of him:
Is it my fault that I was Geffrey's son?
No, indeed, is't not.
Are you sick, Hubert? you look pale to-day:

HUBERT

Read here, young Arthur.
Can you not read it? Is it not fair writ?

ARTHUR

Too fairly, Hubert, for so foul effect:
Must you with hot irons burn out both mine eyes?

HUBERT

Young boy, I must.

ARTHUR

And will you?

HUBERT

And I will.

ARTHUR

Have you the heart?
If heaven be pleased that you must use me ill,
Why then you must. Will you put out mine eyes?
These eyes that never did nor never shall
So much as frown on you.

HUBERT

I have sworn to do it;
And with hot irons must I burn them out.

ARTHUR

The iron of itself, though heat red-hot,
Approaching near these eyes, would drink my tears
And quench his fiery indignation
Even in the matter of mine innocence;
Are you more stubborn-hard than hammer'd iron?
An if an angel should have come to me
And told me Hubert should put out mine eyes,
I would not have believed him.

HUBERT

Come, boy, prepare yourself.

ARTHUR

Is there no remedy?

HUBERT

None, but to lose your eyes.

ARTHUR

Or, Hubert, if you will, cut out my tongue,
So I may keep mine eyes: O, spare mine eyes!
Hubert, please!

HUBERT

Well, see to live; I will not touch thine eye
For all the treasure that thine uncle owes:
Yet am I sworn and I did purpose, boy,
With this same very iron to burn them out.

ARTHUR

O, now you look like Hubert! all this while
You were disguised.

SCENE XI (HUBERT, KING JOHN)

HUBERT

Old men and beldams in the streets:
Young Arthur's death is common in their mouths.
And when they talk of him, they shake their heads
And whisper one another in the ear;
With wrinkled brows, with nods, with rolling eyes.

KING JOHN

Why seek'st thou to possess me with these fears?
Why urgest thou so oft young Arthur's death?
Thy hand hath murder'd him: I had a mighty cause
To wish him dead, but thou hadst none to kill him.

HUBERT

No had, my lord! why, did you not provoke me?
Here is your hand and seal for what I did.

KING JOHN

O, when the last account 'twixt heaven and earth
Is to be made, then shall this hand and seal
Witness against us to damnation!
Hadst not thou been by,
This murder had not come into my mind:
But taking note of thy abhorr'd aspect,
Finding thee fit for bloody villany,
Apt, liable to be employ'd in danger,
I faintly broke with thee of Arthur's death;
And thou, to be endeared to a king,
Made it no conscience to destroy a prince.

HUBERT

My lord--

KING JOHN

Hadst thou but shook thy head or made a pause
When I spake darkly what I purposed,
Or turn'd an eye of doubt upon my face!
But thou didst understand me by my signs
Yea, without stop, didst let thy heart consent,
And consequently thy rude hand to act
The deed, which both our tongues held vile to name.
Out of my sight, and never see me more!
My nobles leave me; and my state is braved,
Even at my gates, with ranks of foreign powers!

HUBERT

Arm you against your other enemies,
I'll make a peace between your soul and you.
Young Arthur is alive: this hand of mine
Is yet a maiden and an innocent hand,
Not painted with the crimson spots of blood.

KING JOHN

Doth Arthur live? O, haste thee to the peers,
Throw this report on their incensed rage,
And make them tame to their obedience!
Forgive the comment that my passion made
Upon thy feature; for my rage was blind,
O, answer not, but to my closet bring
The angry lords with all expedient haste.

SCENE XII (KING JOHN, SALISBURY, PEMBROKE, ESSEX)

KING JOHN

We cannot hold mortality's strong hand:
Good lords, although my will to give is living,
The suit which you demand is gone and dead:
He tells us Arthur is deceased to-night.

SALISBURY

The foul corruption of a sweet child's death!

PEMBROKE

Indeed we heard how near his death he was
Before the child himself felt he was sick:
This must be answer'd either here or hence.

KING JOHN

Why do you bend such solemn brows on me?
Think you I bear the shears of destiny?
Have I commandment on the pulse of life?

SALISBURY

It is apparent foul play; and 'tis shame
That greatness should so grossly offer it:
So thrive it in your game! and so, farewell.

PEMBROKE

Stay yet, Lord Salisbury; I'll go with thee,
And find the inheritance of this poor child,
His little kingdom of a forced grave.

Exeunt PEMBROKE & SALISBURY

KING JOHN

They burn in indignation.

Enter ESSEX

A fearful eye thou hast: where is that blood
That I have seen inhabit in those cheeks?
How goes all in France?

ESSEX

From France to England. Never such a power
For any foreign preparation

Was levied in the body of a land.
The tidings come that they are all arrived.

KING JOHN

O, where hath our intelligence been drunk?
Where hath it slept? Where is my mother's care,
That such an army could be drawn in France,
And she not hear of it?

ESSEX

My liege, her ear
Is stopp'd with dust; the second of April died
Your noble mother: and, as I hear, my lord,
The Lady Constance in a frenzy died
Three days before.

KING JOHN

What! mother dead!
How wildly then walks my estate in France!
Under whose conduct came those powers of France
That thou for truth givest out are landed here?

ESSEX

Under Prince Louis.

KING JOHN

Thou hast made me giddy
With these ill tidings. Out!

SCENE XIII (PRINCE LOUIS, CARDINAL PANDULPH, BASTARD)

PRINCE LOUIS

Look, where the holy legate comes apace,
To give us warrant from the hand of heaven.

CARDINAL PANDULPH

Hail, noble prince of France!
The next is this, King John hath reconciled
Himself to Rome;
Therefore thy threatening colours now wind up
And tame the savage spirit of wild war!

PRINCE LOUIS

Your grace shall pardon me, I will not back:
I am too high-born to be propertied,
To be a secondary at control,
Or useful serving-man and instrument,
To any sovereign state throughout the world.
You taught me how to know the face of right,
Acquainted me with interest to this land,
Yea, thrust this enterprise into my heart;
And come ye now to tell me John hath made
His peace with Rome? What is that peace to me?
I, by the honour of my marriage-bed,
After young Arthur, claim this land for mine;
And, now it is half-conquer'd, must I back
Because that John hath made his peace with Rome?
Am I Rome's slave? What penny hath Rome borne,
What men provided, what munition sent,
To underprop this action? Is't not I
That undergo this charge?
Have I not here the best cards for the game,
To win this easy match play'd for a crown?
And shall I now give o'er the yielded set?
No, no, on my soul, it never shall be said.

CARDINAL PANDULPH

You look but on the outside of this work.

PRINCE LOUIS

Outside or inside, I will not return
Till my attempt so much be glorified
As to my ample hope was promised.

Enter the BASTARD

BASTARD

According to the fair play of the world,
Let me have audience; I am sent to speak:
My holy lord of Milan, from the king
I come, to learn how you have dealt for him.

CARDINAL PANDULPH

Prince Louis is too wilful-opposite,
And will not temporize with my entreaties;
He flatly says he'll not lay down his arms.

BASTARD

By all the blood that ever fury breathed,
The youth says well. Now hear our English king;
For thus his royalty doth speak in me.
He is prepared, and reason too he should:
This unhair'd sauciness and boyish troops,
The king doth smile at; and is well prepared
To whip this dwarfish war, these pigmy arms,
From out the circle of his territories.
And you degenerate, you ingrate revolts,
You bloody Neroes, ripping up the womb
Of your dear mother England, blush for shame!

PRINCE LOUIS

There end thy brave, and turn thy face in peace;
We grant thou canst outscold us: fare thee well;
We hold our time too precious to be spent
With such a brabblers.

CARDINAL PANDULPH

Give me leave to speak.

BASTARD

No, I will speak.

PRINCE LOUIS

We will attend to neither.
Strike up the drums; and let the tongue of war
Plead for our interest and our being here!

SCENE XIV (BLANCHE)

BLANCHE

To arms? Upon thy wedding-day?
Against the blood that thou hast married?
What, shall our feast be kept with slaughter'd men?
Shall braying trumpets and loud churlish drums,
Clamours of hell, be measures to our pomp?
O husband, hear me!
Upon my knee I beg, go not to arms
Against mine uncle.
The sun's o'ercast with blood: fair day, adieu!
Which is the side that I must go withal?
I am with both: each army hath a hand;
Husband, I cannot pray that thou mayst win;
Uncle, I needs must pray that thou mayst lose;
Father, I may not wish the fortune thine;
Grandam, I will not wish thy fortunes thrive:
Whoever wins, on that side shall I lose
Assured loss before the match be play'd.
There where my fortune lives, there my life dies.

SCENE XV (HUBERT, BASTARD)

HUBERT

Who's there? speak, ho! speak quickly, or I shoot.

BASTARD

A friend. Hubert, I think?

HUBERT

Thou hast a perfect thought:
Thou art my friend, that know'st my tongue so well.

BASTARD

Come, come; sans compliment, what news abroad?

HUBERT

Why, here walk I in the black brow of night,
To find you out.

BASTARD

Brief, then; and what's the news?

HUBERT

The king, I fear, is poison'd:
I left him almost speechless; and broke out
To acquaint you with this evil, that you might
The better arm you to the sudden time.

BASTARD

Who didst thou leave to tend his majesty?

HUBERT

Why, know you not? the lords are all come back,
And brought Prince Henry in their company;
At whose request the king hath pardon'd them,
And they are all about his majesty.

BASTARD

Away before: conduct me to the king;
I doubt he will be dead or ere I come.

SCENE XVI (PRINCE HENRY, PEMBROKE, KING JOHN)

PRINCE HENRY

It is too late: the life of all his blood
Is touch'd corruptibly, and his pure brain,
Doth by the idle comments that it makes
Foretell the ending of mortality.

PEMBROKE

His highness yet doth speak, and holds belief
That, being brought into the open air,
It would allay the burning quality
Of that fell poison which assaileth him.

PRINCE HENRY

Doth he still rage?

PEMBROKE

He is more patient
Than when you left him; even now he sung.

PRINCE HENRY

O vanity of sickness!
Death, having prey'd upon the outward parts,
Leaves them invisible, and his siege is now
Against the mind, the which he pricks and wounds
With many legions of strange fantasies,
'Tis strange that death should sing.
I am the cygnet to this pale faint swan,
Who chants a doleful hymn to his own death,
And from the organ-pipe of frailty sings
His soul and body to their lasting rest.

PEMBROKE

Be of good comfort, prince; for you are born
To set a form upon that indigest
Which he hath left so shapeless and so rude.

Enter KING JOHN

KING JOHN

How goes the day with us?
O tell me, Henry, my son.

PRINCE HENRY

Badly, I fear. How fares your majesty?

KING JOHN

This fever, that hath troubled me so long,
Lies heavy on me; O, my heart is sick!
Ay me! this tyrant fever burns me up,
Weakness possesseth me, and I am faint.
There is so hot a summer in my bosom,
That all my bowels crumble up to dust:
I am a scribbled form, drawn with a pen
Upon a parchment, and against this fire
Do I shrink up.
And none of you will bid the winter come
To thrust his icy fingers in my maw,
To make his bleak winds kiss my parched lips
And comfort me with cold. I do not ask you much,
I beg cold comfort; and you are so strait
And so ingrateful, you deny me that.

PRINCE HENRY

O that there were some virtue in my tears,
That might relieve you!

KING JOHN

The salt in them is hot.
Within me is a hell; and there the poison
Is as a fiend confined to tyrannize
On unreprievable condemned blood.

SCENE XVII (KING PHILIP,
CONSTANCE, CARDINAL PANDULPH)

KING PHILIP

Look, who comes here! a grave unto a soul;
Holding the eternal spirit against her will,
In the vile prison of afflicted breath.
I prithee, lady, go away with me.

CONSTANCE

Lo, now I now see the issue of your peace.

KING PHILIP

Patience, good lady! comfort, gentle Constance!

CONSTANCE

No, I defy all counsel, all redress,
But that which ends all counsel, true redress,
Death, death; O amiable lovely death!
Arise forth from the couch of lasting night,
And I will kiss thy detestable bones
And stop this gap of breath with fulsome dust:
Come, grin on me, and I will think thou smilest
And buss thee as thy wife. Misery's love,
O, come to me!

KING PHILIP

O fair affliction, peace!

CONSTANCE

No, no, I will not, having breath to cry:
O, that my tongue were in the thunder's mouth!

CARDINAL PANDULPH

Lady, you utter madness, and not sorrow.

CONSTANCE

Thou art not holy to belie me so;
I am not mad: this hair I tear is mine;
My name is Constance; I was Geffrey's wife;
Young Arthur is my son, and he is lost:
I am not mad: I would to heaven I were!
For being not mad but sensible of grief,
My reasonable part produces reason

How I may be deliver'd of these woes,
And teaches me to kill or hang myself:
If I were mad, I should forget my son,
I am not mad; too well, too well I feel
The different plague of each calamity
Because my poor child is a prisoner.
And, father cardinal, I have heard you say
That we shall see and know our friends in heaven:
If that be true, I shall see my boy again;
For since the birth of Cain, the first male child,
There was not such a gracious creature born.
But now will canker-sorrow eat my bud
And chase the native beauty from his cheek
And he will look as hollow as a ghost,
And so he'll die; and, rising so again,
When I shall meet him in the court of heaven
I shall not know him: therefore never, never
Must I behold my pretty Arthur more.

CARDINAL PANDULPH

You hold too heinous a respect of grief.

CONSTANCE

He talks to me that never had a son.

KING PHILIP

You are as fond of grief as of your child.

CONSTANCE

Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words;
Then, have I reason to be fond of grief?
Fare you well: had you such a loss as I,
I could give better comfort than you do.
O Lord! my boy, my Arthur, my fair son!
My life, my joy, my food, my all the world!
My widow-comfort, and my sorrows' cure!

SCENE XVIII (BASTARD)

BASTARD

Coronation day! All hail King John!

Kings really drop like flies these days. But I guess that's what it's like when your country is at war. Old King Richard was assassinated when he made a state visit to Austria.

Richard, the oh so mighty Lionheart and, as some people say, my father.

Normally I should stand up there with that fancy jacket swearing an oath on the constitution. But the English succession laws do not even see me.

Because I am a bastard. All my life I have been looked down upon and treated like an outsider just because my mother and father did not enter into the holy covenant of marriage.

But King Richard's blood is running through my veins. And if they won't give me what I deserve, I will take it. I am the Bastard. And this is my story.