

KING JOHN-ABRIDGED

ACT 1 SCENE I.

KING JOHN'S palace.

Enter KING JOHN, QUEEN ELINOR, PEMBROKE, ESSEX, SALISBURY, and others, with 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 Geoffrey's son, Arthur Plantagenet, lays most lawful claim To this fair island and the territories, To Ireland, Poitiers, 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, The farthest limit of my embassy.

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.

Exeunt CHATILLON and PEMBROKE

QUEEN ELINOR

What now, my son! have I not ever said How that ambitious Constance would not cease Till she had kindled France and all the world, Upon the right and party of her son? This might have been prevented and made whole With very easy arguments of love, Which now the manage of two kingdoms must With fearful bloody issue arbitrate.

KING JOHN

Our strong possession and our right for us.

QUEEN ELINOR

Your strong possession much more than your right, Or else it must go wrong with you and me: So much my conscience whispers in your ear, Which none but heaven and you and I shall hear.

Exeunt

ACT 2**SCENE I. France. Before Angiers.**

Enter AUSTRIA and forces, drums, etc. on one side: on the other KING PHILIP and his power; LEWIS, ARTHUR, CONSTANCE and attendants

LEWIS

Before Angiers well met, brave Austria. Arthur, that great forerunner of thy blood, Richard, that robb'd the lion of his heart And fought the holy wars in Palestine, By this brave duke came early to his grave: And for amends to his posterity, 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: Embrace him, love him, give him welcome hither.

ARTHUR

God shall forgive you Coeur-de-lion's death The rather that you give his offspring life, Shadowing their right under your wings of war: I give you welcome with a powerless hand, But with a heart full of unstained love: Welcome before the gates of Angiers, duke.

LEWIS

A noble boy! Who would not do thee right?

AUSTRIA

Upon thy cheek lay I this zealous kiss, As seal to this indenture of my love, That to my home I will no more return, Till Angiers and the right thou hast in France, Together with that pale, that white-faced shore, Whose foot spurns back the ocean's roaring tides And coops from other lands her islanders, 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 To make a more requital to your love!

Enter KING JOHN, QUEEN ELINOR, BLANCH, the BASTARD, Lords, and forces

KING JOHN

Peace be to France, if France in peace permit Our just and lineal entrance to our own; If not, bleed France, and peace ascend to heaven, Whiles we, God's wrathful agent, do correct Their proud contempt that beats His peace to heaven.

KING PHILIP

Peace be to England, if that war return From France to England, there to live in peace. England we love; and for that England's sake With burden of our armour here we sweat. This toil of ours should be a work of thine; But thou from loving England art so far, That thou hast under-wrought his lawful king Cut off the sequence of posterity, Out-faced infant state and done a rape Upon the maiden virtue of the crown. Look here upon thy brother Geffrey's face; These eyes, these brows, were moulded out of his: This little abstract doth contain that large Which died in Geffrey, and the hand of time Shall draw this brief into as huge a volume. That Geffrey was thy elder brother born, And this his son; England was Geffrey's right And this is Geffrey's: in the name of God How comes it then that thou art call'd a king, When living blood doth in these temples beat, Which owe the crown that thou o'er-masterest?

KING JOHN

From whom hast thou this great commission, France, To draw my answer from thy articles?

KING PHILIP

From that supernal judge, that stirs good thoughts In any breast of strong authority, To look into the blots and stains of right: That judge hath made me guardian to this boy: Under whose warrant I impeach thy wrong And by whose help I mean to chastise it.

KING JOHN

Alack, thou dost usurp authority.

KING PHILIP

Excuse; it is to beat usurping down.

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 Geoffrey Than thou and John in manners; being as like
As rain to water, or devil to his dam. My boy a bastard! By my soul, I think His
father never was so true begot: It cannot be, an if thou wert his mother.

QUEEN ELINOR

There's a good mother, boy, that blots thy father.

CONSTANCE

There's a good grandam, boy, that would blot thee.

KING PHILIP

Lewis, determine what we shall do straight.

LEWIS

Women and fools, break off your conference. King John, this is the very sum of all;
England and Ireland, Anjou, Touraine, Maine, In right of Arthur do I claim of thee:
Wilt thou resign them and lay down thy arms?

KING JOHN

My life as soon: I do defy thee, France. Arthur of Bretagne, yield thee to my hand;
And out of my dear love I'll give thee more Than e'er the coward hand of France
can win: Submit thee, boy.

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 would that I were low laid in my grave: 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, Infortunate in nothing but in thee: Thy sins are visited in this poor
child; The canon of the law is laid on him, Being but the second generation
Removed from thy sin-conceiving womb.

KING JOHN

Bedlam, have done.

CONSTANCE

I have but this to say, That he is not only plagued for her sin, But God hath made her sin and her the plague On this removed issue, plague for her And with her plague; her sin his injury, Her injury the beadle to her sin, All punish'd in the person of this child, And all for her; a plague upon her!

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!

KING PHILIP

Peace, lady! pause, or be more temperate: It ill beseems this presence to cry aim To these ill-tuned repetitions. Some trumpet summon hither to the walls These men of Angiers: let us hear them speak Whose title they admit, Arthur's or John's.
Trumpet sounds.

ACT 3

SCENE III. The same.

Alarums, excursions, retreat. Enter KING JOHN, QUEEN ELINOR, ARTHUR, the BASTARD, HUBERT, and Lords

KING JOHN

[To QUEEN ELINOR] So shall it be; your grace shall stay behind So strongly guarded.

To ARTHUR

Cousin, look not sad: Thy grandam loves thee; and thy uncle will As dear be to thee as thy father was.

ARTHUR

O, this will make my mother die with grief!

QUEEN ELINOR (to ARTHUR)

Come hither, little kinsman; hark, a word.

KING JOHN

Come hither, Hubert. O my gentle Hubert, We owe thee much! within this wall of flesh There is a soul counts thee her creditor And with advantage means to pay thy love: And my good friend, thy voluntary oath Lives in this bosom, dearly cherished. Give me thy hand. I had a thing to say, But I will fit it with some better time. By heaven, Hubert, I am almost ashamed To say what good respect I have of thee.



HUBERT

I am much bounden to your majesty.

KING JOHN

Good friend, thou hast no cause to say so yet, But thou shalt have; and creep time ne'er so slow, Yet it shall come from me to do thee good. I had a thing to say, but let it go: I would into thy bosom pour my thoughts: But, ah, I will not! yet I love thee well; And, by my troth, I think thou lovest me well.

HUBERT

So well, that what you bid me undertake, Though that my death were adjunct to my act, By heaven, I would do it.

KING JOHN

Do not I know thou wouldst? Good Hubert, Hubert, Hubert, throw thine eye On yon young boy: I'll tell thee what, my friend, He is a very serpent in my way; And whereso'er this foot of mine doth tread, He lies before me: dost thou understand me? Thou art his keeper.

HUBERT

And I'll keep him so, That he shall not offend your majesty.

KING JOHN

Death.

HUBERT

My lord?

KING JOHN

A grave.

HUBERT

He shall not live.

KING JOHN

Enough. I could be merry now. Hubert, I love thee; Well, I'll not say what I intend for thee: Remember. **(to ARTHUR)** For England, cousin, go: Hubert shall be your man, attend on you With all true duty. On toward Calais, ho!

ACT 4

SCENE I. A room in a castle.

Enter HUBERT and Executioners

HUBERT

Heat me these irons hot; and look thou stand Within the arras: when I strike my foot Upon the bosom of the ground, rush forth, And bind the boy which you shall find with me Fast to the chair: be heedful: hence, and watch.

First Executioner

I hope your warrant will bear out the deed.

HUBERT

Uncleanly scruples! fear not you: look to't.

Exeunt Executioners

Young lad, come forth; I have to say with you.

Enter ARTHUR

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: Yet, I remember, when I was in France, Young gentlemen would be as sad as night, Only for wantonness. By my christendom, So I were out of prison and kept sheep, I should be as merry as the day is long; And so I would be here, but that I doubt My uncle practises more harm to me: He is afraid of me and I of him: Is it my fault that I was Geoffrey's son? No, indeed, is't not; and I would to heaven I were your son, so you would love me, Hubert.

HUBERT

[Aside] If I talk to him, with his innocent prate He will awake my mercy which lies dead: Therefore I will be sudden and dispatch.

ARTHUR

Are you sick, Hubert? you look pale to-day: In sooth, I would you were a little sick, That I might sit all night and watch with you: I warrant I love you more than you do me.

HUBERT

[Aside] His words do take possession of my bosom. Read here, young Arthur.

Showing a paper

Aside

How now, foolish rheum! Turning despiteous torture out of door! I must be brief, lest resolution drop Out at mine eyes in tender womanish tears. 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? When your head did but ache, I knit my handkercher about your brows, The best I had, a princess wrought it me, And I did never ask it you again; And with my hand at midnight held your head, And like the watchful minutes to the hour, Still and anon cheer'd up the heavy time, Saying, 'What lack you?' and 'Where lies your grief?' Or 'What good love may I perform for you?' Many a poor man's son would have lien still And ne'er have spoke a loving word to you; But you at your sick service had a prince. Nay, you may think my love was crafty love And call it cunning: do, an if you will: 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

Ah, none but in this iron age would do it! An if an angel should have come to me And told me Hubert should put out mine eyes, I would not have believed him,--no tongue but Hubert's.

HUBERT

Come forth.

Stamps

Re-enter Executioners, with a cord, irons, & c

Do as I bid you do.

ARTHUR

O, save me, Hubert, save me! my eyes are out Even with the fierce looks of these bloody men.

HUBERT

Give me the iron, I say, and bind him here.

ARTHUR

Alas, what need you be so boisterous-rough? I will not struggle, I will stand stone-still. For heaven sake, Hubert, let me not be bound! Nay, hear me, Hubert, drive these men away, And I will sit as quiet as a lamb; I will not stir, nor wince, nor speak a word, Nor look upon the iron angerly: Thrust but these men away, and I'll forgive you, Whatever torment you do put me to.

HUBERT

Go, stand within; let me alone with him.

First Executioner

I am best pleased to be from such a deed.

Exeunt Executioners

ARTHUR

Alas, I then have chid away my friend! He hath a stern look, but a gentle heart: Let him come back, that his compassion may Give life to yours.

HUBERT

Come, boy, prepare yourself.

ARTHUR

Is there no remedy?

HUBERT

None, but to lose your eyes.

ARTHUR

O heaven, that there were but a mote in yours, A grain, a dust, a gnat, a wandering hair, Any annoyance in that precious sense! Then feeling what small things are boisterous there, Your vile intent must needs seem horrible.

HUBERT

Is this your promise? go to, hold your tongue.

ARTHUR

Hubert, the utterance of a brace of tongues Must needs want pleading for a pair of eyes: Let me not hold my tongue, let me not, Hubert; Or, Hubert, if you will, cut out my tongue, So I may keep mine eyes: O, spare mine eyes. Though to no use but still to look on you! Lo, by my truth, the instrument is cold And would not harm me.

HUBERT

I can heat it, boy.

ARTHUR

No, in good sooth: the fire is dead with grief, Being create for comfort, to be used In undeserved extremes: see else yourself; There is no malice in this burning coal; The breath of heaven has blown his spirit out And strew'd repentent ashes on his head.

HUBERT

But with my breath I can revive it, boy.

ARTHUR

An if you do, you will but make it blush And glow with shame of your proceedings, Hubert: Nay, it perchance will sparkle in your eyes; And like a dog that is compell'd to fight, Snatch at his master that doth tarre him on. All things that you should use to do me wrong Deny their office: only you do lack That mercy which fierce fire and iron extends, Creatures of note for mercy-lacking uses.

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.

HUBERT

Peace; no more. Adieu. Your uncle must not know but you are dead; I'll fill these dogged spies with false reports: And, pretty child, sleep doubtless and secure, That Hubert, for the wealth of all the world, Will not offend thee.

ARTHUR

O heaven! I thank you, Hubert.

HUBERT

Silence; no more: go closely in with me: Much danger do I undergo for thee.

Exeunt

SCENE II. KING JOHN'S palace.

Enter KING JOHN, PEMBROKE, SALISBURY, and other Lords

KING JOHN

Here once again we sit, once again crown'd, And looked upon, I hope, with cheerful eyes.

PEMBROKE

I, as one that am the tongue of these, To sound the purpose of all their hearts, Both for myself and them, but, chief of all, Your safety, for the which myself and them Bend their best studies, heartily request The enfranchisement of Arthur; whose restraint Doth move the murmuring lips of discontent To break into this dangerous argument,-- If what in rest you have in right you hold, Why then your fears, which, as they say, attend The steps of wrong, should move you to mew up Your tender kinsman and to choke his days With barbarous ignorance and deny his youth The rich advantage of good exercise? That the time's enemies may not have this To grace occasions, let it be our suit That you have bid us ask his liberty; Which for our goods we do no further ask Than whereupon our weal, on you depending, Counts it your weal he have his liberty.

Enter HUBERT

KING JOHN

Let it be so: I do commit his youth To your direction. Hubert, what news with you?

Taking him apart

PEMBROKE

This is the man should do the bloody deed; He show'd his warrant to a friend of mine: The image of a wicked heinous fault Lives in his eye; that close aspect of his Does show the mood of a much troubled breast; And I do fearfully believe 'tis done, What we so fear'd he had a charge to do.

SALISBURY

The colour of the king doth come and go Between his purpose and his conscience, Like heralds 'twixt two dreadful battles set: His passion is so ripe, it needs must break.

PEMBROKE

And when it breaks, I fear will issue thence The foul corruption of a sweet child's death.

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

Indeed we fear'd his sickness was past cure.

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.

Exeunt Lords

KING JOHN

They burn in indignation. I repent: There is no sure foundation set on blood, No certain life achieved by others' death.

Enter a Messenger

A fearful eye thou hast: where is that blood That I have seen inhabit in those cheeks? So foul a sky clears not without a storm: Pour down thy weather: how goes all in France?

Messenger

From France to England. Never such a power For any foreign preparation Was levied in the body of a land. The copy of your speed is learn'd by them; For when you should be told they do prepare, 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?

Messenger

My liege, her ear Is stopp'd with dust; the first of April died Your noble mother: and, as I hear, my lord, The Lady Constance in a frenzy died Three days before: but this from rumour's tongue I idly heard; if true or false I know not.

KING JOHN

Withhold thy speed, dreadful occasion! O, make a league with me, till I have pleased My discontented peers! 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?

Messenger

Under the Dauphin.

KING JOHN

Thou hast made me giddy With these ill tidings.

Enter the BASTARD and PETER of Pomfret

Now, what says the world To your proceedings? do not seek to stuff My head with more ill news, for it is full.

BASTARD

But if you be afeard to hear the worst, Then let the worst unheard fall on your bead.

KING JOHN

Bear with me cousin, for I was amazed Under the tide: but now I breathe again Aloft the flood, and can give audience To any tongue, speak it of what it will.

BASTARD

How I have sped among the clergymen, The sums I have collected shall express. But as I travell'd hither through the land, I find the people strangely fantasied; Possess'd with rumours, full of idle dreams, Not knowing what they fear, but full of fear: And here a prophet, that I brought with me From forth the streets of Pomfret, whom I found With many hundreds treading on his heels; To whom he sung, in rude harsh-sounding rhymes, That, ere the next Ascension-day at noon, Your highness should deliver up your crown.

KING JOHN

Thou idle dreamer, wherefore didst thou so?

PETER

Foreknowing that the truth will fall out so.

KING JOHN

Hubert, away with him; imprison him; And on that day at noon whereon he says I shall yield up my crown, let him be hang'd. Deliver him to safety; and return, For I must use thee.

Exeunt HUBERT with PETER

O my gentle cousin, Hear'st thou the news abroad, who are arrived?

BASTARD

The French, my lord; men's mouths are full of it: Besides, I met Lord Bigot and Lord Salisbury, With eyes as red as new-enkindled fire, And others more, going to seek the grave Of Arthur, who they say is kill'd to-night On your suggestion.

KING JOHN

Gentle kinsman, go, And thrust thyself into their companies: I have a way to win their loves again; Bring them before me.

BASTARD

I will seek them out.

Exit

KING JOHN

My mother dead!

Re-enter HUBERT

HUBERT

My lord, they say five moons were seen to-night; Four fixed, and the fifth did whirl about The other four in wondrous motion.

KING JOHN

Five moons!

HUBERT

Old men and beldams in the streets Do prophesy upon it dangerously: 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; And he that speaks doth gripe the hearer's wrist, Whilst he that hears makes fearful action, With wrinkled brows, with nods, with rolling eyes. I saw a smith stand with his hammer, thus, The whilst his iron did on the anvil cool, With open mouth swallowing a tailor's news; Who, with his shears and measure in his hand, Standing on slippers, which his nimble haste Had falsely thrust upon contrary feet, Told of a many thousand warlike French That were embattailed and rank'd in Kent: Another lean unwash'd artificer Cuts off his tale and talks of Arthur's death.

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?

KING JOHN

It is the curse of kings to be attended By slaves that take their humours for a warrant To break within the bloody house of life, And on the winking of authority To understand a law, to know the meaning Of dangerous majesty, when perchance it frowns More upon humour than advised respect.

HUBERT

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! How oft the sight of means to do ill deeds Make deeds ill done! Hadst not thou been by, A fellow by the hand of nature mark'd, Quoted and sign'd to do a deed of shame, 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, As bid me tell my tale in express words, Deep shame had struck me dumb, made me break off, And those thy fears might have wrought fears in me: But thou didst understand me by my signs And didst in signs again parley with sin; 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: Nay, in the body of this fleshly land, This kingdom, this confine of blood and breath, Hostility and civil tumult reigns Between my conscience and my cousin's death.

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. Within this bosom never enter'd yet The dreadful motion of a murderous thought; And you have slander'd nature in my form, Which, howsoever rude exteriorly, Is yet the cover of a fairer mind Than to be butcher of an innocent child.

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, And foul imaginary eyes of blood Presented thee more hideous than thou art. O, answer not, but to my closet bring The angry lords with all expedient haste. I conjure thee but slowly; run more fast.

Exeunt

SCENE III. Before the castle.

Enter ARTHUR, on the walls

ARTHUR

The wall is high, and yet will I leap down: Good ground, be pitiful and hurt me not! There's few or none do know me: if they did, This ship-boy's semblance hath disguised me quite. I am afraid; and yet I'll venture it. If I get down, and do not break my limbs, I'll find a thousand shifts to get away: As good to die and go, as die and stay.

Leaps down

O me! my uncle's spirit is in these stones: Heaven take my soul, and England keep my bones!

Dies

Enter PEMBROKE, SALISBURY, and BIGOT

Enter the BASTARD

BASTARD

Once more to-day well met, distemper'd lords! The king by me requests your presence straight.

SALISBURY

The king hath disposess'd himself of us: We will not line his thin bestained cloak With our pure honours, nor attend the foot That leaves the print of blood where'er it walks. Return and tell him so: we know the worst.

BASTARD

Whate'er you think, good words, I think, were best.

SALISBURY

Our griefs, and not our manners, reason now.

BASTARD

But there is little reason in your grief; Therefore 'twere reason you had manners now.

PEMBROKE

Sir, sir, impatience hath his privilege.

BASTARD

'Tis true, to hurt his master, no man else.

SALISBURY

This is the prison. What is he lies here?

Seeing ARTHUR

PEMBROKE

O death, made proud with pure and princely beauty! The earth had not a hole to hide this deed.

SALISBURY

Murder, as hating what himself hath done, Doth lay it open to urge on revenge.

BIGOT

Or, when he doom'd this beauty to a grave, Found it too precious-princely for a grave.

SALISBURY

Sir Richard, what think you? have you beheld, Or have you read or heard? or could you think? Or do you almost think, although you see, That you do see? could thought, without this object, Form such another? This is the very top, The height, the crest, or crest unto the crest, Of murder's arms: this is the bloodiest shame, The wildest savagery, the vilest stroke, That ever wall-eyed wrath or staring rage Presented to the tears of soft remorse.

PEMBROKE

All murders past do stand excused in this: And this, so sole and so unmatched, Shall give a holiness, a purity, To the yet unbegotten sin of times; And prove a deadly bloodshed but a jest, Exemplified by this heinous spectacle.

BASTARD

It is a damned and a bloody work; The graceless action of a heavy hand, If that it be the work of any hand.

SALISBURY

If that it be the work of any hand! We had a kind of light what would ensue: It is the shameful work of Hubert's hand; The practise and the purpose of the king: From whose obedience I forbid my soul, Kneeling before this ruin of sweet life, And breathing to his breathless excellence The incense of a vow, a holy vow, Never to taste the pleasures of the world, Never to be infected with delight, Nor conversant with ease and idleness, Till I have set a glory to this hand, By giving it the worship of revenge.

PEMBROKE BIGOT

Our souls religiously confirm thy words.

Enter HUBERT

HUBERT

Lords, I am hot with haste in seeking you: Arthur doth live; the king hath sent for you.

SALISBURY

O, he is old and blushes not at death. Avaunt, thou hateful villain, get thee gone!

HUBERT

I am no villain.

SALISBURY

Must I rob the law?

Drawing his sword

BASTARD

Your sword is bright, sir; put it up again.

SALISBURY

Not till I sheathe it in a murderer's skin.

HUBERT

Stand back, Lord Salisbury, stand back, I say; By heaven, I think my sword's as sharp as yours: I would not have you, lord, forget yourself, Nor tempt the danger of my true defence; Lest I, by marking of your rage, forget Your worth, your greatness and nobility.

BIGOT

Out, dunghill! darest thou brave a nobleman?

HUBERT

Not for my life: but yet I dare defend My innocent life against an emperor.

SALISBURY

Thou art a murderer.

HUBERT

Do not prove me so; Yet I am none: whose tongue soe'er speaks false, Not truly speaks; who speaks not truly, lies.

PEMBROKE

Cut him to pieces.

BASTARD

Keep the peace, I say.

SALISBURY

Stand by, or I shall gall you, Faulconbridge.

BASTARD

Thou wert better gall the devil, Salisbury: If thou but frown on me, or stir thy foot, Or teach thy hasty spleen to do me shame, I'll strike thee dead. Put up thy sword betime; Or I'll so maul you and your toasting-iron, That you shall think the devil is come from hell.

BIGOT

What wilt thou do, renowned Faulconbridge? Second a villain and a murderer?

HUBERT

Lord Bigot, I am none.

BIGOT

Who kill'd this prince?

HUBERT

'Tis not an hour since I left him well: I honour'd him, I loved him, and will weep My date of life out for his sweet life's loss.

SALISBURY

Trust not those cunning waters of his eyes, For villany is not without such rheum; And he, long traded in it, makes it seem Like rivers of remorse and innocency. Away with me, all you whose souls abhor The uncleanly savours of a slaughter-house; For I am stifled with this smell of sin.

BIGOT

Away toward Bury, to the Dauphin there!

PEMBROKE

There tell the king he may inquire us out.

Exeunt Lords

BASTARD

Here's a good world! Knew you of this fair work? Beyond the infinite and boundless reach Of mercy, if thou didst this deed of death, Art thou damn'd, Hubert.

HUBERT

Do but hear me, sir.

BASTARD

Ha! I'll tell thee what; Thou'rt damn'd as black--nay, nothing is so black; Thou art more deep damn'd than Prince Lucifer: There is not yet so ugly a fiend of hell As thou shalt be, if thou didst kill this child.

HUBERT

Upon my soul--

BASTARD

If thou didst but consent To this most cruel act, do but despair; And if thou want'st a cord, the smallest thread That ever spider twisted from her womb Will serve to strangle thee, a rush will be a beam To hang thee on; or wouldst thou drown thyself, Put but a little water in a spoon, And it shall be as all the ocean, Enough to stifle such a villain up. I do suspect thee very grievously.

HUBERT

If I in act, consent, or sin of thought, Be guilty of the stealing that sweet breath Which was embounded in this beauteous clay, Let hell want pains enough to torture me. I left him well.

BASTARD

Go, bear him in thine arms. I am amazed, methinks, and lose my way Among the thorns and dangers of this world. How easy dost thou take all England up! From forth this morsel of dead royalty, The life, the right and truth of all this realm Is fled to heaven; and England now is left To tug and scramble and to part by the teeth The unowed interest of proud-swelling state. Now for the bare-pick'd bone of majesty Doth dogged war bristle his angry crest And snarleth in the gentle eyes of peace: Now powers from home and discontents at home Meet in one line; and vast confusion waits, As doth a raven on a sick-fall'n beast, The imminent decay of wrested pomp. Now happy he whose cloak and cincture can Hold out this tempest. Bear away that child And follow me with speed: I'll to the king: A thousand businesses are brief in hand, And heaven itself doth frown upon the land.

Exeunt

Shakespeare Globe Centre New Zealand

ACT 5**SCENE III. The field of battle.**

Alarums. Enter KING JOHN and HUBERT

KING JOHN

How goes the day with us? O, tell me, Hubert.

HUBERT

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!

Enter a Messenger

Messenger

My lord, your valiant kinsman, Faulconbridge, Desires your majesty to leave the field And send him word by me which way you go.

KING JOHN

Tell him, toward Swinstead, to the abbey there.

Messenger

Be of good comfort; for the great supply That was expected by the Dauphin here,
Are wreck'd three nights ago on Goodwin Sands. This news was brought to
Richard but even now: The French fight coldly, and retire themselves.

KING JOHN

Ay me! this tyrant fever burns me up, And will not let me welcome this good
news. Set on toward Swinstead: to my litter straight; Weakness possesseth me,
and I am faint.

Exeunt

SCENE VI. An open place in the neighbourhood of Swinstead Abbey.

Enter the BASTARD and HUBERT, severally

HUBERT

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

BASTARD

A friend. What art thou?

HUBERT

Of the part of England.

BASTARD

Whither dost thou go?

HUBERT

What's that to thee? why may not I demand Of thine affairs, as well as thou of
mine?

BASTARD

Hubert, I think?

HUBERT

Thou hast a perfect thought: I will upon all hazards well believe Thou art my
friend, that know'st my tongue so well. Who art thou?

BASTARD

Who thou wilt: and if thou please, Thou mayst befriend me so much as to think I
come one way of the Plantagenets.

HUBERT

Unkind remembrance! thou and eyeless night Have done me shame: brave
soldier, pardon me, That any accent breaking from thy tongue Should 'scape the
true acquaintance of mine ear.

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

O, my sweet sir, news fitting to the night, Black, fearful, comfortless and horrible.

BASTARD

Show me the very wound of this ill news: I am no woman, I'll not swoon at it.

HUBERT

The king, I fear, is poison'd by a monk: 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, Than if you had at leisure known of this.

BASTARD

How did he take it? who did taste to him?

HUBERT

A monk, I tell you; a resolved villain, Whose bowels suddenly burst out: the king
Yet speaks and peradventure may recover.

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.

Exeunt

SCENE VII. The orchard in Swinstead Abbey.

Enter PRINCE HENRY, SALISBURY, and BIGOT

PRINCE HENRY

It is too late: the life of all his blood Is touch'd corruptibly, and his pure brain,
Which some suppose the soul's frail dwelling-house, Doth by the idle comments
that it makes Foretell the ending of mortality.

Enter PEMBROKE

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

Let him be brought into the orchard here. Doth he still rage?

Exit BIGOT

PEMBROKE

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

PRINCE HENRY

O vanity of sickness! fierce extremes In their continuance will not feel themselves.
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, Whi ch, in their throng and press to that last hold, Confound
themselves. '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.

SALISBURY

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 Attendants, and BIGOT, carrying KING JOHN in a chair

KING JOHN

Ay, marry, now my soul hath elbow-room; It would not out at windows nor at
doors. 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.

PRINCE HENRY

How fares your majesty?

KING JOHN

Poison'd,--ill fare--dead, forsook, cast off: And none of you will bid the winter
come To thrust his icy fingers in my maw, Nor let my kingdom's rivers take their
course Through my burn'd bosom, nor entreat the north 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 unretrievable condemned blood.

Enter the BASTARD

BASTARD

O, I am scalded with my violent motion, And spleen of speed to see your majesty!

KING JOHN

O cousin, thou art come to set mine eye: The tackle of my heart is crack'd and
burn'd, And all the shrouds wherewith my life should sail Are turned to one
thread, one little hair: My heart hath one poor string to stay it by, Which holds
but till thy news be uttered; And then all this thou seest is but a clod And module
of confounded royalty.

BASTARD

The Dauphin is preparing hitherward, Where heaven He knows how we shall
answer him; For in a night the best part of my power, As I upon advantage did
remove, Were in the Washes all unwarily Devoured by the unexpected flood.

KING JOHN dies

SALISBURY

You breathe these dead news in as dead an ear. My liege! my lord! but now a
king, now thus.

PRINCE HENRY

Even so must I run on, and even so stop. What surety of the world, what hope,
what stay, When this was now a king, and now is clay? *Exeunt*