

# The Life and Death of King John

[Shakespeare homepage](#) | [King John](#) | Act 4, Scene 3  
[Previous scene](#) | [Next scene](#)

## 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*

### SALISBURY

Lords, I will meet him at Saint Edmundsbury:  
It is our safety, and we must embrace  
This gentle offer of the perilous time.

### PEMBROKE

Who brought that letter from the cardinal?

### SALISBURY

The Count Melun, a noble lord of France,  
Whose private with me of the Dauphin's love  
Is much more general than these lines import.

### BIGOT

To-morrow morning let us meet him then.

### SALISBURY

Or rather then set forward; for 'twill be

Two long days' journey, lords, or ere we meet.

*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 unmatchable,  
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 homepage](#) | [King John](#) | Act 4, Scene 3  
[Previous scene](#) | [Next scene](#)