

# The Life and Death of King John

[Shakespeare homepage](#) | [King John](#) | Act 5, Scene 2  
[Previous scene](#) | [Next scene](#)

## SCENE II. LEWIS's camp at St. Edmundsbury.

*Enter, in arms, LEWIS, SALISBURY, MELUN, PEMBROKE, BIGOT, and Soldiers*

### LEWIS

My Lord Melun, let this be copied out,  
And keep it safe for our remembrance:  
Return the precedent to these lords again;  
That, having our fair order written down,  
Both they and we, perusing o'er these notes,  
May know wherefore we took the sacrament  
And keep our faiths firm and inviolable.

### SALISBURY

Upon our sides it never shall be broken.  
And, noble Dauphin, albeit we swear  
A voluntary zeal and an unurg'd faith  
To your proceedings; yet believe me, prince,  
I am not glad that such a sore of time  
Should seek a plaster by contemn'd revolt,  
And heal the inveterate canker of one wound  
By making many. O, it grieves my soul,  
That I must draw this metal from my side  
To be a widow-maker! O, and there  
Where honourable rescue and defence  
Cries out upon the name of Salisbury!  
But such is the infection of the time,  
That, for the health and physic of our right,  
We cannot deal but with the very hand  
Of stern injustice and confused wrong.  
And is't not pity, O my griev'd friends,  
That we, the sons and children of this isle,  
Were born to see so sad an hour as this;  
Wherein we step after a stranger march  
Upon her gentle bosom, and fill up  
Her enemies' ranks,--I must withdraw and weep  
Upon the spot of this enforced cause,--  
To grace the gentry of a land remote,  
And follow unacquainted colours here?  
What, here? O nation, that thou couldst remove!  
That Neptune's arms, who clippeth thee about,  
Would bear thee from the knowledge of thyself,  
And grapple thee unto a pagan shore;  
Where these two Christian armies might combine  
The blood of malice in a vein of league,

And not to spend it so unneighbourly!

## LEWIS

A noble temper dost thou show in this;  
And great affections wrestling in thy bosom  
Doth make an earthquake of nobility.  
O, what a noble combat hast thou fought  
Between compulsion and a brave respect!  
Let me wipe off this honourable dew,  
That silverly doth progress on thy cheeks:  
My heart hath melted at a lady's tears,  
Being an ordinary inundation;  
But this effusion of such manly drops,  
This shower, blown up by tempest of the soul,  
Startles mine eyes, and makes me more amazed  
Than had I seen the vaulty top of heaven  
Figured quite o'er with burning meteors.  
Lift up thy brow, renowned Salisbury,  
And with a great heart heave away the storm:  
Commend these waters to those baby eyes  
That never saw the giant world enraged;  
Nor met with fortune other than at feasts,  
Full of warm blood, of mirth, of gossiping.  
Come, come; for thou shalt thrust thy hand as deep  
Into the purse of rich prosperity  
As Lewis himself: so, nobles, shall you all,  
That knit your sinews to the strength of mine.  
And even there, methinks, an angel spake:

*Enter CARDINAL PANDULPH*

Look, where the holy legate comes apace,  
To give us warrant from the hand of heaven  
And on our actions set the name of right  
With holy breath.

## CARDINAL PANDULPH

Hail, noble prince of France!  
The next is this, King John hath reconciled  
Himself to Rome; his spirit is come in,  
That so stood out against the holy church,  
The great metropolis and see of Rome:  
Therefore thy threatening colours now wind up;  
And tame the savage spirit of wild war,  
That like a lion foster'd up at hand,  
It may lie gently at the foot of peace,  
And be no further harmful than in show.

## LEWIS

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.  
Your breath first kindled the dead coal of wars  
Between this chastised kingdom and myself,  
And brought in matter that should feed this fire;  
And now 'tis far too huge to be blown out  
With that same weak wind which enkindled it.  
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? who else but I,  
And such as to my claim are liable,  
Sweat in this business and maintain this war?  
Have I not heard these islanders shout out  
'Vive le roi!' as I have bank'd their towns?  
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.

## **LEWIS**

Outside or inside, I will not return  
Till my attempt so much be glorified  
As to my ample hope was promised  
Before I drew this gallant head of war,  
And cull'd these fiery spirits from the world,  
To outlook conquest and to win renown  
Even in the jaws of danger and of death.

*Trumpet sounds*

What lusty trumpet thus doth summon us?

*Enter the BASTARD, attended*

## **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;  
And, as you answer, I do know the scope  
And warrant limited unto my tongue.

## **CARDINAL PANDULPH**

The Dauphin 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 apish and unmannerly approach,  
This harness'd masque and unadvised revel,  
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.  
That hand which had the strength, even at your door,  
To cudgel you and make you take the hatch,  
To dive like buckets in concealed wells,  
To crouch in litter of your stable planks,  
To lie like pawns lock'd up in chests and trunks,  
To hug with swine, to seek sweet safety out  
In vaults and prisons, and to thrill and shake  
Even at the crying of your nation's crow,  
Thinking his voice an armed Englishman;  
Shall that victorious hand be feeble here,  
That in your chambers gave you chastisement?  
No: know the gallant monarch is in arms  
And like an eagle o'er his airy towers,  
To souse annoyance that comes near his nest.  
And you degenerate, you ingrate revolts,  
You bloody Neroes, ripping up the womb  
Of your dear mother England, blush for shame;  
For your own ladies and pale-visaged maids  
Like Amazons come tripping after drums,  
Their thimbles into armed gauntlets change,  
Their needles to lances, and their gentle hearts  
To fierce and bloody inclination.

## **LEWIS**

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 brabblor.

**CARDINAL PANDULPH**

Give me leave to speak.

**BASTARD**

No, I will speak.

**LEWIS**

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

**BASTARD**

Indeed your drums, being beaten, will cry out;  
And so shall you, being beaten: do but start  
An echo with the clamour of thy drum,  
And even at hand a drum is ready braced  
That shall reverberate all as loud as thine;  
Sound but another, and another shall  
As loud as thine rattle the welkin's ear  
And mock the deep-mouth'd thunder: for at hand,  
Not trusting to this halting legate here,  
Whom he hath used rather for sport than need  
Is warlike John; and in his forehead sits  
A bare-ribb'd death, whose office is this day  
To feast upon whole thousands of the French.

**LEWIS**

Strike up our drums, to find this danger out.

**BASTARD**

And thou shalt find it, Dauphin, do not doubt.

*Exeunt*