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William Shakespeare
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KING JOHN

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The Scene: now in England, now in France

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

KING JOHN

PRINCE HENRY, *son to the king*

ARTHUR, *Duke of Britain, nephew to the king*

The Earl of Pembroke

The Earl of Essex

The Earl of Salisbury

The Lord BIGOT

HUBERT DE BURGH

ROBERT FAULCONBRIDGE, *son of Sir Robert Faulconbridge*

PHILIP THE BASTARD, *his half-brother*

JAMES GURNEY

PETER of Pomfret, *a prophet*

PHILIP, *King of France*

LEWIS, *the Dauphin*

LYMOGES, *Duke of Austria*

CARDINAL PANDULPH, *the Pope's legate*

MELUN, *a French Lord*

CHATILLION, *ambassador from France to King John*

A Citizen of Angiers

QUEEN ELINOR, *mother to King John*

CONSTANCE, *mother to Arthur*

BLANCH of Spain, *niece to King John*

LADY FAULCONBRIDGE

*Lords, Ladies, Citizens of Angiers, Sheriff, Heralds,
 Officers, Soldiers, Messengers, and other Attendants*

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[I. I.] *England. The palace of KING JOHN*

'Enter KING JOHN, QUEEN ELINOR, PEMBROKE, ESSEX, SALISBURY, with the CHATILLION of France' Attendants.

K. John. Now, say, Chatillion, what would France
 with us?

Chatillion. Thus, after greeting, speaks the King
 of France

In my behaviour to the majesty,
 The borrowed majesty, of England here.

Elinor. A strange beginning: 'borrowed majesty'!

K. John. Silence, good mother, hear the embassy.

Chatillion. 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, 10

To Ireland, Poitiers, Anjou, Touraine, Maine,

Desiring thee to lay aside the sword

Which sways usurpingly these several titles,

And put the same into young Arthur's hand,

Thy nephew and right royal sovereign.

K. John. What follows if we disallow of this?

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

K. John. Here have we war for war and blood
 for blood,

Controlment for control: so answer France. 20

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KING JOHN

I. I. 21

Chatillion. Then take my king's defiance from
 my mouth,

The farthest limit of my embassy.

K. 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,

30 *Pembroke, look to't: farewell, Chatillion.*

[*Chatillion and Pembroke depart*]

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.

K. John. Our strong possession and our right for us.

40 (*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.

'Enter a Sheriff' and speaks aside with ESSEX

Essex. My liege, here is the strangest controversy,

Come from the country to be judged by you,

That e'er I heard: shall I produce the men?

K. John. Let them approach...

Our abbeyes and our priories shall pay

This expedition's charge...

I. I. 49

KING JOHN

5

ROBERT FAULCONBRIDGE and PHILIP
his bastard brother enter

What men are you?

Bastard. Your faithful subject I, a gentleman, 50
 Born in Northamptonshire, and eldest son,
 As I suppose, to Robert Faulconbridge,
 A soldier, by the honour-giving hand
 Of Cordelion knighted in the field.

K. John. What art thou?

Robert. The son and heir to that same Faulconbridge.

K. John. Is that the elder, and art thou the heir?
 You came not of one mother then, it seems.

Bastard. Most certain of one mother, mighty king—
 That is well known—and as I think one father: 60
 But for the certain knowledge of that truth
 I put you o'er to heaven and to my mother;
 Of that I doubt, as all men's children may.

Elinor. Out on thee, rude man! thou dost shame
 thy mother,
 And wound her honour with this diffidence.

Bastard. I, madam? no, I have no reason for it,
 That is my brother's plea and none of mine,
 The which if he can prove, a' pops me out
 At least from fair five hundred pound a year:
 Heaven guard my mother's honour, and my land! 70

K. John. A good blunt fellow... Why, being
 younger born,
 Doth he lay claim to thine inheritance?

Bastard. I know not why, except to get the land:
 But once he slandered me with bastardy:
 Now whe'r I be as true begot or no,
 That still I lay upon my mother's head,
 But that I am as well begot, my liege,

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KING JOHN

I. I. 78

(Fair fall the bones that took the pains for me!)
 Compare our faces and be judge yourself.

80 If old Sir Robert did beget us both,
 And were our father, and this son like him,
 O old Sir Robert, father, on my knee
 I give heaven thanks I was not like to thee!

K. John. Why, what a madcap hath heaven lent us here!

(*Elinor.* He hath a trick of Cordelion's face,
 The accent of his tongue affecteth him:
 Do you not read some tokens of my son
 In the large composition of this man?)

(*K. John.* Mine eye hath well examinéd his parts,
 90 And finds them perfect Richard...[*aloud, to Robert*]
 Sirrah, speak,

What doth move you to claim your brother's land?

Bastard. Because he hath a half-face like my father!
 With half that face would he have all my land—
 A half-faced groat five hundred pound a year!

Robert. 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 employed my mother.

Robert. And once dispatched him in an embassy
 100 To Germany, there with the emperor
 To treat of high affairs touching that time:
 Th' advantage of his absence took the king,
 And in the mean time sojourned 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 bequeathed
 110 His lands to me, and took it on his death

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I. I. III

KING JOHN

7

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.

K. 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,
 Which fault lies on the hazards of all husbands
 That marry wives: tell me, how if my brother, 120
 Who as you say took pains to get this son,
 Had of your father claimed this son for his?
 In sooth, good friend, your father might have kept
 This calf, bred from his cow, from all the world:
 In sooth, he might: then, if he were my brother's,
 My brother might not claim him, nor your father
 Being none of his refuse him: this concludes—
 My mother's son did get your father's heir,
 Your father's heir must have your father's land.

Robert. Shall then my father's will be of no force 130
 To dispossess that child which is not his?

Bastard. Of no more force to dispossess me, sir,
 Than was his will to get me, as I think.

Elinor. Whether hadst thou rather be a Faulconbridge,
 And like thy brother, to enjoy thy land,
 Or the reputed son of Cordelion,
 Lord of thy presence and no land beside?

Bastard. Madam, an if my brother had my shape,
 And I had his, Sir Robert's his, like him,
 And if my legs were two such riding-rods, 140
 My arms such eel-skins stuffed, my face so thin
 That in mine ear I durst not stick a rose
 Lest men should say 'Look, where three-farthings goes!'
 And, to his shape, were heir to all this land,

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KING JOHN

I. I. 145

Would I might never stir from off this place,
 I would give it every foot to have this face;
 I would not be Sir Nob in any case.

Elinor. I like thee well: wilt thou forsake thy fortune,
 Bequeath thy land to him, and follow me?

150 I am a soldier, and now bound to France.

Bastard. Brother, take you my land, I'll take my chance;
 Your face hath got five hundred pound a year,
 Yet sell your face for five pence and 'tis dear:
 Madam, I'll follow you unto the death.

Elinor. Nay, I would have you go before me thither.

Bastard. Our country manners give our betters way.

K. John. What is thy name?

Bastard. Philip, my liege, so is my name begun,
 Philip, good old Sir Robert's wife's eldest son.

160 *K. John.* From henceforth bear his name whose
 form thou bearest:

Kneel thou down Philip, but rise more great—
 Arise Sir Richard, and Plantagenet.

Bastard. Brother, by th'mother's side, give me
 your hand.

My father gave me honour, yours gave land...
 Now blessed be the hour, by night or day,
 When I was got, Sir Robert was away.

Elinor. The very spirit of Plantagenet!
 I am thy grandam, Richard, call me so.

Bastard. Madam, by chance but not by truth,
 what though?

170 Something about, a little from the right,

In at the window, or else o'er the hatch:
 Who dares not stir by day must walk by night,

And have is have, however men do catch:
 Near or far off, well won is still well shot,
 And I am I, howe'er I was begot.

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KING JOHN

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K. John. Go, Faulconbridge, now hast thou
 thy desire,

A landless knight makes thee a landed squire:
 Come, madam, and come, Richard, we must speed
 For France, for France, for it is more than need.

Bastard. Brother, adieu, good fortune come to thee! 180
 For thou was got i'th' way of honesty....

[*Exeunt all but Bastard*]

A foot of honour better than I was,
 But many a many foot of land the worse....

Well, now can I make any Joan a lady.

'Good den, Sir Richard!'—'God-a-mercy, fellow'—

And if his name be George, I'll call him Peter;

For new-made honour doth forget men's names;

'Tis too respective and too sociable

For your conversion. Now your traveller,

He and his toothpick at my worship's mess,

190

And when my knightly stomach is sufficed,

Why then I suck my teeth, and catechize

My pickéd man of countries: 'My dear sir',

Thus leaning on mine elbow I begin,

'I shall beseech you'—that is question now;

And then comes answer like an Absey book:

'O sir,' says answer, 'at your best command,

At your employment, at your service, sir.'

'No, sir,' says question, 'I, sweet sir, at yours.'

And so, ere answer knows what question would,

200

Saving in dialogue of compliment,

And talking of the Alps and Apennines,

The Pyrenean and the river Po,

It draws toward supper in conclusion so....

But this is worshipful society,

And fits the mounting spirit like myself;

For he is but a bastard to the time

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KING JOHN

I. I. 208

That doth not smack of observation.
 And so am I, whether I smack or no:
 210 And not alone in habit and device,
 Exterior form, outward accoutrement;
 But from the inward motion to deliver
 Sweet, sweet, sweet poison for the age's tooth—
 Which, though I will not practise to deceive,
 Yet, to avoid deceit, I mean to learn;
 For it shall strew the footsteps of my rising...
 But who comes in such haste in riding-robos?
 What woman-post is this? hath she no husband
 That will take pains to blow a horn before her?

'Enter LADY FAULCONBRIDGE and JAMES GURNEY'

- 220 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?
 Colbrand the giant, that same mighty man?
 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.
- 230 *Bastard.* James Gurney, wilt thou give us leave awhile?
Gurney. Good leave, good Philip.
Bastard. Philip Sparrow, James!
 There's toys abroad, anon I'll tell thee more....
 [Gurney goes]
- Madam, I was not old Sir Robert's son,
 Sir Robert might have eat his part in me
 Upon Good-Friday and ne'er broke his fast:
 Sir Robert could do well—marry, to confess—