

King John

3.4

Enter King Philip, Louis the Dauphin, Cardinal Pandolf, and attendants

KING PHILIP

So, by a roaring tempest on the flood,
A whole armada of convicted sail
Is scattered and disjoined from fellowship.

PANDOLF

Courage and comfort; all shall yet go well.

KING PHILIP

What can go well when we have run so ill? 5
Are we not beaten? Is not Angers lost,
Arthur ta'en prisoner, divers dear friends slain,
And bloody England into England gone,
O'erbearing interruption, spite of France?

LOUIS THE DAUPHIN

What he hath won, that hath he fortified. 10
So hot a speed, with such advice disposed,
Such temperate order in so fierce a cause,
Doth want example. Who hath read or heard
Of any kindred action like to this?

KING PHILIP

Well could I bear that England had this praise, 15
So we could find some pattern of our shame.

Enter Constance, distracted, with her hair about her ears

Look who comes here! A grave unto a soul,
Holding th'eternal spirit against her will
In the vile prison of afflicted breath.±±
I prithee, lady, go away with me. 20

CONSTANCE

Lo, now, 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! 25

Thou odoriferous stench, sound rottenness!
Arise forth from the couch of lasting night,
Thou hate and terror to prosperity,
And I will kiss thy detestable bones,
And put my eyeballs in thy vaulty brows, 30
And ring these fingers with thy household worms,
And stop this gap of breath with fulsome dust,
And be a carrion monster like thyself.
Come grin on me, and I will think thou smil'st,
And buss thee as thy wife. Misery's love, 35
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!
Then with a passion would I shake the world,
And rouse from sleep that fell anatomy, 40
Which cannot hear a lady's feeble voice,
Which scorns a modern invocation.

PANDOLF

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; 45
My name is Constance; I was Geoffrey's wife;
Young Arthur is my son; and he is lost.
I am not mad; I would to God I were,
For then 'tis like I should forget myself.
O, if I could, what grief should I forget! 50
Preach some philosophy to make me mad,
And thou shalt be canonized, Cardinal.
For, being not mad, but sensible of grief,
My reasonable part produces reason
How I may be delivered of these woes, 55
And teaches me to kill or hang myself.
If I were mad I should forget my son,
Or madly think a babe of clouts were he.
I am not mad; too well, too well I feel
The different plague of each calamity. 60

KING PHILIP

Bind up those tresses. O, what love I note
In the fair multitude of those her hairs!
Where but by chance a silver drop hath fallen,
Even to that drop ten thousand wiry friends
Do glue themselves in sociable grief, 65
Like true, inseparable, faithful loves,
Sticking together in calamity.

CONSTANCE

To England, if you will.

KING PHILIP Bind up your hairs.

CONSTANCE

Yes, that I will. And wherefore will I do it?
I tore them from their bonds, and cried aloud, 70
'O that these hands could so redeem my son,
As they have given these hairs their liberty!'
But now I envy at their liberty,
And will again commit them to their bonds,
Because my poor child is a prisoner. 75

She binds up her hair

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,
To him that did but yesterday suspire, 80
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,
As dim and meagre as an ague's fit, 85
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.

PANDOLF

You hold too heinous a respect of grief. 90

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, 95
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form;
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. 100

[She unbinds her hair]

I will not keep this form upon my head
When there is such disorder in my wit.
O Lord, my boy, my Arthur, my fair son,
My life, my joy, my food, my all the world,
My widow-comfort, and my sorrow's cure! 105

Exit

KING PHILIP

I fear some outrage, and I'll follow her.

Exit [attended]

LOUIS THE DAUPHIN

There's nothing in this world can make me joy.
Life is as tedious as a twice-told tale,
Vexing the dull ear of a drowsy man;
And bitter shame hath spoiled the sweet world's taste, 110
That it yields naught but shame and bitterness.

PANDOLF

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. 115
What have you lost by losing of this day?

LOUIS THE DAUPHIN

All days of glory, joy, and happiness.

PANDOLF

If you had won it, certainly you had.
No, no; when Fortune means to men most good,
She looks upon them with a threat'ning eye. 120
'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?

LOUIS THE DAUPHIN

As heartily as he is glad he hath him.

PANDOLF

Your mind is all as youthful as your blood. 125
Now hear me speak with a prophetic spirit,
For even the breath of what I mean to speak
Shall blow each dust, each straw, each little rub,
Out of the path which shall directly lead
Thy foot to England's throne. And therefore mark. 130
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 snatched with an unruly hand 135
Must be as boisterously maintained as gained;
And he that stands upon a slipp'ry place
Makes nice of no vile hold to stay him up.
That John may stand, then Arthur needs must fall;
So be it, for it cannot be but so. 140

LOUIS THE DAUPHIN

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

PANDOLF

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

LOUIS THE DAUPHIN

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

PANDOLF

How green you are, and fresh in this old world! 145
John lays you plots; the times conspire with you;
For he that steeps his safety in true blood
Shall find but bloody safety and untrue.
This act, so vilely born, shall cool the hearts
Of all his people, and freeze up their zeal, 150
That none so small advantage shall step forth
To check his reign but they will cherish it;
No natural exhalation in the sky,
No scope of nature, no distempered day,
No common wind, no customeÁd event, 155
But they will pluck away his natural cause,
And call them meteors, prodigies, and signs,
Abortives, presages, and tongues of heaven
Plainly denouncing vengeance upon John.

LOUIS THE DAUPHIN

Maybe he will not touch young Arthur's life, 160
But hold himself safe in his prisonment.

PANDOLF

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, 165
And kiss the lips of unacquainted change,
And pick strong matter of revolt and wrath
Out of the bloody fingers' ends of John.
Methinks I see this hurly all on foot,
And O, what better matter breeds for you 170
Than I have named! The Bastard Falconbridge
Is now in England, ransacking the Church,
Offending charity. If but a dozen French
Were there in arms, they would be as a call
To train ten thousand English to their side, 175
Or as a little snow tumbled about
Anon becomes a mountain. O noble Dauphin,
Go with me to the King. 'Tis wonderful
What may be wrought out of their discontent
Now that their souls are top-full of offence. 180
For England, go! I will whet on the King.

LOUIS THE DAUPHIN

Strong reasons make strange actions. Let us go.
If you say ay, the King will not say no.
Exeunt