

# King John

## 1.1

*[Flourish.] Enter King John, Queen Eleanor, and the  
Earls of Pembroke, Essex, and Salisbury; with  
them Chañtillon of France*

**KING JOHN**

Now say, Chañtillon, what would France with us?

**CHAÑTILLON**

Thus, after greeting, speaks the King of France,  
In my behaviour, to the majesty±±  
The borrowed majesty±±of England here.

**QUEEN ELEANOR**

A strange beginning: `borrowed majesty'?

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**KING JOHN**

Silence, good mother, hear the embassy.

**CHAÑTILLON**

Philip of France, in right and true behalf  
Of thy deceaseÁd brother Geoffrey's son,  
Arthur Plantagenet, lays most lawful claim  
To this fair island and the territories, 10  
To Ireland, Poitou, 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. 15

**KING JOHN**

What follows if we disallow of this?

**CHAÑTILLON**

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. 20

**CHAÑTILLON**

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; 25  
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, Chañtillon. 30  
*Exeunt Chañtillon and Pembroke*

**QUEEN ELEANOR**

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 35  
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 ELEANOR** (*aside to King John*)

Your strong possession much more than your right, 40  
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, [who whispers to Essex]*

**ESSEX**

My liege, here is the strangest controversy,  
Come from the country to be judged by you, 45  
That e'er I heard. Shall I produce the men?

**KING JOHN** Let them approach.±±

*[Exit Sheriff]*

Our abbeys and our priories shall pay  
This expeditious charge.

*Enter Robert Falconbridge and Philip the Bastard  
[with the Sheriff]*

What men are you?

**BASTARD**

Your faithful subject I, a gentleman 50  
Born in Northamptonshire, and eldest son,  
As I suppose, to Robert Falconbridge,  
A soldier, by the honour-giving hand

Of Coeur-de-lion knighted in the field.

**KING JOHN** What art thou? 55

**FALCONBRIDGE**  
The son and heir to that same Falconbridge.

**KING 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.

**QUEEN ELEANOR**  
Out on thee, rude man! Thou dost shame thy mother  
And wound her honour with this diffidence. 65

**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

**KING 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.  
But whe'er I be as true begot or no, 75  
That still I lay upon my mother's head;  
But that I am as well begot, my liege±±  
Fair fall the bones that took the pains for me±±  
Compare our faces and be judge yourself.  
If old Sir Robert did beget us both 80  
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.

**KING JOHN**  
Why, what a madcap hath heaven lent us here!

**QUEEN ELEANOR**  
He hath a trick of Coeur-de-lion's face; 85

The accent of his tongue affecteth him.  
Do you not read some tokens of my son  
In the large composition of this man?

**KING JOHN**

Mine eye hath well examineÁd his parts,  
And finds them perfect Richard.  
(*To Robert Falconbridge*) Sirrah, speak:  
What doth move you to claim your brother's land?

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**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.

**FALCONBRIDGE**

My gracious liege, when that my father lived,  
Your brother did employ my father much±±

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**BASTARD**

Well, sir, by this you cannot get my land.  
Your tale must be how he employed my mother.

**FALCONBRIDGE**

And once dispatched him in an embassy  
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 meantime 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 deathbed he by will bequeathed  
His lands to me, and took it on his death  
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.

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**KING 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,	125
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.	
<b>FALCONBRIDGE</b>	
Shall then my father's will be of no force	130
To dispossess that child which is not his?	
<b>BASTARD</b>	
Of no more force to dispossess me, sir,	
Than was his will to get me, as I think.	
<b>QUEEN ELEANOR</b>	
Whether hadst thou rather be: a Falconbridge,	
And like thy brother to enjoy thy land,	135
Or the reputed son of Coeur-de-lion,	
Lord of thy presence, and no land beside?	
<b>BASTARD</b>	
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,	
Would I might never stir from off this place.	145
I would give it every foot to have this face;	
It would not be Sir Nob in any case.	
<b>QUEEN ELEANOR</b>	
I like thee well. Wilt thou forsake thy fortune,	
Bequeath thy land to him, and follow me?	
I am a soldier and now bound to France.	150
<b>BASTARD</b>	
Brother, take you my land; I'll take my chance.	
Your face hath got five hundred pound a year,	
Yet sell your face for fivepence and 'tis dear.±±	

Madam, I'll follow you unto the death.

**QUEEN ELEANOR**  
 Nay, I would have you go before me thither. 155

**BASTARD**  
 Our country manners give our betters way.

**KING JOHN** What is thy name?

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

**KING JOHN**  
 From henceforth bear his name whose form thou  
 bear'st. 160  
 Kneel thou down Philip, but arise more great:  
*He knights the Bastard*  
 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 blesseÁd be the hour, by night or day, 165  
 When I was got, Sir Robert was away.

**QUEEN ELEANOR**  
 The very spirit of Plantagenet!  
 I am thy grandam, Richard; call me so.

**BASTARD**  
 Madam, by chance, but not by truth; what though?  
 Something about, a little from the right, 170  
 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. 175

**KING JOHN**  
 Go, Falconbridge, 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 wast got i'th' way of honesty.  
*Exeunt all but the 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 e'en, Sir Richard'±±`God-a-mercy fellow'; 185  
 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 pickeÁd man of countries. `My dear sir,'  
 Thus leaning on mine elbow I begin,  
 `I shall beseech you±±'. That is Question now; 195  
 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, 205  
 And fits the mounting spirit like myself;  
 For he is but a bastard to the time  
 That doth not smack of observation;  
 And so am I±±whether I smack or no,  
 And not alone in habit and device, 210  
 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; 215  
 For it shall strew the footsteps of my rising.  
*Enter Lady Falconbridge and James Gurney*  
 But who comes in such haste in riding-robres?  
 What woman-post is this? Hath she no husband  
 That will take pains to blow a horn before her?  
 O me, 'tis my mother! How now, good lady? 220  
 What brings you here to court so hastily?

**LADY FALCONBRIDGE**

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? 225  
Is it Sir Robert's son that you seek so?

**LADY FALCONBRIDGE**

Sir Robert's son, ay, thou unreverent boy,  
Sir Robert's son. Why scorn'st thou at Sir Robert?  
He is Sir Robert's son, and so art thou.

**BASTARD**

James Gurney, wilt thou give us leave awhile? 230

**GURNEY**

Good leave, good Philip.

**BASTARD**

Philip Sparrow, James!

There's toys abroad; anon I'll tell thee more.

*Exit James Gurney*

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. 235  
Sir Robert could do well, marry to confess,  
Could a get me! Sir Robert could not do it:  
We know his handiwork. Therefore, good mother,  
To whom am I beholden for these limbs?  
Sir Robert never holp to make this leg. 240

**LADY FALCONBRIDGE**

Hast thou conspireÁd with thy brother too,  
That for thine own gain shouldst defend mine honour?  
What means this scorn, thou most untoward knave?

**BASTARD**

Knight, knight, good mother, Basilisco-like!  
What! I am dubbed; I have it on my shoulder. 245  
But, mother, I am not Sir Robert's son.  
I have disclaimed Sir Robert; and my land,  
Legitimation, name, and all is gone.  
Then, good my mother, let me know my father;  
Some proper man, I hope; who was it, mother? 250

**LADY FALCONBRIDGE**

Hast thou denied thyself a Falconbridge?

**BASTARD**



As faithfully as I deny the devil.

**LADY FALCONBRIDGE**

King Richard Coeur-de-lion was thy father.  
By long and vehement suit I was seduced  
To make room for him in my husband's bed. 255  
Heaven lay not my transgression to my charge!  
Thou art the issue of my dear offence,  
Which was so strongly urged past my defence.

**BASTARD**

Now by this light, were I to get again,  
Madam, I would not wish a better father. 260  
Some sins do bear their privilege on earth,  
And so doth yours; your fault was not your folly.  
Needs must you lay your heart at his dispose,  
Subjected tribute to commanding love,  
Against whose fury and unmatcheÁd force 265  
The aweless lion could not wage the fight,  
Nor keep his princely heart from Richard's hand.  
He that perforce robs lions of their hearts  
May easily win a woman's. Ay, my mother,  
With all my heart I thank thee for my father. 270  
Who lives and dares but say thou didst not well  
When I was got, I'll send his soul to hell.  
Come, lady, I will show thee to my kin,  
And they shall say, when Richard me begot,  
If thou hadst said him nay, it had been sin. 275  
Who says it was, he lies: I say 'twas not.

*Exeunt*