

King John abbreviated

Act 1, Scene 1

Explanation

Situation: Robert Faulconbridge provides us with some interesting background as to how the life of his older brother Philip came to be, both young men having, as we say, the same mother. Robert Faulconbridge pleads with the king to grant him the rights to his father's lands. The king changes his mind, granting Robert his request, to the gratitude of both brothers, the king knighting Philip with the revered title: Sir Richard Plantagenet.

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

King John to Robert Faulconbridge

If your brother is not your father's son,
Yet your father's wife did bear him, then one
Can say the fault was hers, a hazard borne
By husbands who marry wives. What if my
Brother, as said, did get this son, forlorn
As he may have been, and told the world I
Am the father of this calf, bred from this
Cow, and claim him for my own? This may miss
The mark, but in truth, your father well may
Have kept this calf, being none of his,
Protecting your guilty mother this way.
Your brother is legitimate. He is
The heir, my mother's son's son. Here's my hand.
Your father's heir must have your father's land.

ROBERT FAULCONBRIDGE: Shall then my father's will be of no force to dispossess that child which is not his?

PHILIP FAULCONBRIDGE: Of no more force to dispossess me, sir, than was his will to get me, as I think.

QUEEN ELEANOR: Whether hadst thou rather: be a Faulconbridge and, like thy brother, to enjoy thy land, or the reputed son of Coeur de Lion, lord of thy presence, and no land besides?

BASTARD: Madam, an if my brother had my shape and I had his, Sir Robert's his like him, I might never stir from off this place, I would give it every foot to have this face.

QUEEN ELEANOR: 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.

BASTARD: Brother, take you my land. Madam, I'll follow you unto the death.