

King John abbreviated

Act 4, Scene 1

Kindness

Situation: Following instructions from King John, Hubert prepares to burn out both of the imprisoned Arthur's eyes. He is talked out of the terrible act by the pleasant and guileless Arthur, who had earlier caused the fierce-looking but kind-hearted executioner to wilt under the stress of the request.

ARTHUR: O, save me, Hubert, save me! My eyes are out even with the fierce looks of this bloody man.

HUBERT TO EXECUTIONER: Give me the iron, I say, and bind him here. Go stand within, Let me alone with him.

ARTHUR: Is there no remedy?

HUBERT: None but to lose your eyes.

Arthur to Hubert

Have you the heart? If the heaven we trust
Chooses you to use me ill, then you must.
But will you put out mine eyes, these eyes that
Never did nor never shall so much as
Frown on you? If an angel came and sat
By me, telling me my friend Hubert has
Plans to put out mine eyes, I'd not believe
Him. Don't bind me to this chair. I'll not leave,
Wince nor speak. Let the executioner,
He who hath a stern look but gentle heart,
Return, that his compassion shown may stir
Life in yours. What if my speech could not start?
Hubert, cut out my tongue as a disguise,
Provided of course I may keep my eyes.

Arthur seizes the iron.

ARTHUR: Lo, by my troth, the instrument is cold. And would not harm me.

Hubert takes back the iron.