

Henry VI Part 1 abbreviated

Act 4, Scene 6

Father to Son

Situation: Perhaps the most powerful father-to-son talk in all of Shakespeare occurs when young John Talbot joins his father at Bordeaux and refuses to leave his father's side in the face of imminent death.

TALBOT: Fight, soldiers, fight!

Talbot to his Son

Where is John Talbot? Pause and take thy breath;
I gave thee life; now rescue thee from death.
Speak, thy father's care, art thou not weary
John? Wilt thou yet leave the battle, boy, now
That thou art sealed the son of chivalry?
Help from one stands me in little stead; thou
Can revenge my death when I am dead. I
Shall soon from age die if not today die
From some Frenchman's rage. If I stay, they gain
Nothing but the short'ning of my life one
Day. In thee thy mother dies, with the bane
Of thy youth, of England's fame, of my son.
All these and more we hazard by thy stay.
All these are saved if thou wilt fly away.

JOHN: These words of yours draw lifeblood from my heart. On that advantage, bought with such a shame, to save a paltry life and slay bright fame, before young Talbot from old Talbot fly, the coward horse that bears me fall and die! Surely, by all the glory you have won, and if I fly, I am not Talbot's son. Then talk no more of flight, it is no use, if son to Talbot, die at Talbot's foot.

TALBOT: If thou wilt fight, fight by thy father's side, and commendable proved, let's die in pride.