

King John abbreviated

Act 2, Scene 1

Insight

Situation: Wedding plans are made as the Dauphin and Blanche “join hands and kiss.” Lady Constance, however, and her son Arthur are by now nowhere to be found. It’s at this point where King John tells us of his plans for Arthur. The Bastard shares his thoughts with us.

KING PHILIP: Now, citizens of Angiers, open your gates. Let in that amity which you have made for at Saint Mary’s Chapel presently the rites of marriage shall be solemnized. Is not the Lady Constance in this troop? I know she is not, for this match made up her presence would have interrupted much. Where is she and her son? Tell me, who knows.

DAUPHIN: She is sad and grieved at your Highness’ tent.

KING PHILIP: This league that we have made will give her sadness very little cure. Brother of England, how may we content this widow lady?

KING JOHN: We will heal up all, for we’ll create young Arthur Duke of Brittany and Earl of Richmond, and this rich, fair town we make him lord of. Call the Lady Constance.

Salisbury exits. All but the Bastard exit.

Bastard to Himself, No. 2

‘Tis surely a mad world when John, to stop
Arthur, doth a part of France quickly crop,
And France, who as God’s own soldier brought zeal
To the field, whispers in the ear of that
Same purpose-changer, self-interest, the real
Bias of the world. Perhaps I shout at
This self-interest ‘cause he hath not wooed me?
Yet in this unasked hand gold coins would be
Welcome. Well, while a beggar, I will rail
And say there is no sin but to be rich;
And that time when I am rich, I shall hail
My virtue, and let the beggars’ palms itch.
Since kings choose in the self-interest they see,
Gain be my lord and I will worship thee.