

# King John

Act III, sc. 3 (line 130 - intercut)

## CARDINAL PANDULPH

Your mind is all as youthful as your blood.  
Now hear me speak with a prophetic spirit;  
For even the breath of what I mean to speak  
Shall blow each dust, each straw, each little rub,  
Out of the path which shall directly lead  
Thy foot to England's throne; and therefore mark.  
John hath seized Arthur; and it cannot be  
That, whiles warm life plays in that infant's veins,  
The misplaced John should entertain an hour,  
One minute, nay, one quiet breath of rest.  
A sceptre snatch'd with an unruly hand  
Must be as boisterously maintain'd as gain'd;  
And he that stands upon a slippery place  
Makes nice of no vile hold to stay him up:  
That John may stand, then Arthur needs must fall;  
So be it, for it cannot be but so.

**LEWIS**

*But what shall I gain by young Arthur's fall?*

## CARDINAL PANDULPH

You, in the right of Lady Blanch your wife,  
May then make all the claim that Arthur did.

**LEWIS**

*And lose it, life and all, as Arthur did.*

**CARDINAL PANDULPH**

How green you are and fresh in this old world!

John lays you plots; the times conspire with you;

For he that steeps his safety in true blood

Shall find but bloody safety and untrue.

This act so evilly born shall cool the hearts

Of all his people and freeze up their zeal,

That none so small advantage shall step forth

To cheque his reign, but they will cherish it;

No natural exhalation in the sky,

No scope of nature, no distemper'd day,

No common wind, no custom'd event,

But they will pluck away his natural cause

And call them meteors, prodigies and signs,

Abortives, presages and tongues of heaven,

Plainly denouncing vengeance upon John.

***LEWIS***

*May be he will not touch young Arthur's life,*

*But hold himself safe in his prisonment.*

**CARDINAL PANDULPH**

O, sir, when he shall hear of your approach,

If that young Arthur be not gone already,

Even at that news he dies; and then the hearts

Of all his people shall revolt from him

And kiss the lips of unacquainted change

And pick strong matter of revolt and wrath  
Out of the bloody fingers' ends of John.  
Methinks I see this hurly all on foot:  
And, O, what better matter breeds for you  
Than I have named! The bastard Faulconbridge  
Is now in England, ransacking the church,  
Offending charity: if but a dozen French  
Were there in arms, they would be as a call  
To train ten thousand English to their side,  
Or as a little snow, tumbled about,  
Anon becomes a mountain. O noble Dauphin,  
Go with me to the king: 'tis wonderful  
What may be wrought out of their discontent,  
Now that their souls are topful of offence.  
For England go: I will whet on the king.