

Family and Honor

By

Bruno Catarino

An honorable Baron, loyal to King Henry II, is faced with the decision of executing the child of his treacherous brother-in-law or risk desertion from more of his men.

Email: bcatarino@gmail.com
Phone: (+44)(0)7847649058
Alt.: (+351)913811141
Twitter: @catarino_bruno

FADE IN

INT. CASTLE - DAY

PHILLIP (27) opens the heavy door of the council room. He's richly dressed, ornamented with several valuable jewels.

He walks out with decisive steps, as if he had the final word on an argument. On the background, several lords show expressions of disapproval.

SUPER: England, 1189.

A firm nod to the guards at the door. Despite his young age, Phillip is a well respected man and very comfortable in his position of power.

As soon as he leaves the crowd, his face changes: doubt and sorrow surface.

He reaches for his gold chain, fumbles with it, it somehow offers him some comfort.

A guard on patrol salutes him.

GUARD
Baron.

Another firm nod, all doubt is gone from his face.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Good wool tapestries and painted linens cover the room. Music from a flute is audible.

ALEXANDER (5) plays the flute. He often misses some notes. A robust child, owner of a politeness and intelligence beyond his age.

He halts, but Phillip signals him to continue playing. Alexander cringes at every mistake he makes.

PHILLIP
That is good. You have improved.

Alexander takes the compliment with a bow.

PHILLIP
How do you like your new room?

ALEXANDER

It's smaller than the one in the
other castle.

PHILLIP

It is.

(beat)

Are you being properly attended?

ALEXANDER

Yes, sire.

PHILLIP

You do not need to call me sire.

ALEXANDER

Brother says I should. When will he
visit?

PHILLIP

(thoughtful)

I will order him to come and see
you once he returns.

ALEXANDER

Thank you, si-- uncle.

PHILLIP

Keep practicing. You will be a fine
bard and a great knight some day.

There's an inherent sadness as he says these words.

INT. DUNGEON - DAY

The wooden door is heavily guarded by armed man.

A complete contrast with the interior of the room: cold and naked walls, almost no light, except for a few torches.

Hundreds of similar doors extend out of sight.

Phillip walks to the only other door with guards outside. He opens the peephole: an equally rich room.

QUENTIN (16) writes on a scroll. A charming young man that favors the pen to the sword, but knows how to use both.

He doesn't notice Phillip or pretends not to notice.

INT. STAIRCASE - DAY

NOAH (38) awaits Phillip as he climbs up the stairs. Born to serve, but blunt in his words when addressing a superior.

NOAH
Sire, may I have a word?

PHILLIP
This way: less ears.

NOAH
I understand your affection for the boy, but the council is right. You must not show weakness right now. Your sister's husband is a traitor to the throne.

PHILLIP
Must a child pay for his father's crimes with his life?

NOAH
George cannot risk to lose both heirs: he will surrender. And it sends a message to others. You cannot afford to lose more men.

Phillip clearly doesn't want to hear another word.

NOAH
King Henry is already losing the war against his son. Do you know what they call him now? Lionheart. Richard Lionheart. Appropriate. The man is a lion in the battlefield.

PHILLIP
May be he has God on his side.

NOAH
Sire, that's treachery.

PHILLIP
Fear not, good Noah. Your sire swore an oath. I will fight for my King until I die. But kill an innocent child, my own blood-- I will not abandon my honor.

Phillip opens a door. Noah blocks his way in.

NOAH

Sire, you brother-in-law takes
advantage of your honor. He presses
on because he believes you will not
hurt his children. Prove him wrong.
Do not be a hostage in your castle.

Phillip moves Noah out of the way, gently.

PHILLIP

Thank you for your valuable advice
once again, old friend.

INT. SOLAR - NIGHT

Phillip removes his jewels. He handles the gold chain more
gently than the rest.

ISABELLA (21) sews on the bed. A beautiful, loving and smart
woman, happy with her role as a supporting wife.

ISABELLA

It did not go well.

Phillip shakes his head.

ISABELLA

Should I retire to my room?

He shakes his head again. She misunderstands his message,
massages his back.

ISABELLA

You are tense.

She unties his breeches, fumbles inside his clothes.

Isabella kneels, ready to pleasure him.

Phillip kneels beside her, kisses her instead. He lays his
head on her shoulder.

PHILLIP

I am weak.

ISABELLA

You are not. You are a gentle man
with a good heart.

PHILLIP

Noah is right. George knows I will
never kill the boy.

ISABELLA

And I, and many of your people,
respect you for that.

KNOCK KNOCK

ISABELLA

Not now.

Isabella clears tears from Phillip's eyes.

ISABELLA

It is not proper of a Baron to be
seen by his men while he cries.
Like a little girl.

Phillip takes no offense. He kisses her hand, thankful.

PHILLIP

The council advises against
executing Quentin.

ISABELLA

Alexander is a boy. If you execute
Quentin, George will have no hopes
of a successor for another ten
years. He will not surrender.

Phillip pours wine for himself, drinks in one go.

ISABELLA

George listens to Quentin. Talk him
into sending a message to his
father.

PHILLIP

He would smell weakness. He knows I
would not kill his son.

ISABELLA

The King would.

INT. DUNGEON - DAY

Phillip strides through the long corridor.

He peeps through Alexander's door: a woman teaches him how
to read.

Phillip asks the guards to open Quentin's cell.

INT. QUENTIN'S ROOM - DAY

Quentin reads a book. He rises when he first sees Phillip, startled, but quickly forces a challenging face.

QUENTIN
To what do I owe the visit, uncle?

PHILLIP
Your father: that treacherous creature that would rather see his children put to axe than surrender.

QUENTIN
Are you trying to scare me? Is that how you plan to win the war, uncle?

Phillip looms over Quentin, threatening.

PHILLIP
Aye, I want you to be afraid. For your brother's life.

QUENTIN
You would not dare.

PHILLIP
The King would.

QUENTIN
He will not be King for long.

PHILLIP
Careful, boy. People have been hanged for treason for less.

QUENTIN
You exult at the thought of having me murdered instead of my brother.

PHILLIP
You and your father are made of the same treacherous clay. Alexander is an innocent in this war.

Quentin ponders his words in silence.

QUENTIN
How is he?

PHILLIP
Well. He learns how to read.

QUENTIN
I will write your letter.

Phillip is taken by surprise: how does he know?

QUENTIN
That is why you are here, is it not? You want me to beg my father for his surrender, for me and my brother's sake.

PHILLIP
Aye.

QUENTIN
I wish to see my brother first, make sure he is taken care of. Then I will write your letter.

PHILLIP
(ponders on his offer)
Very well. I will have a guard escort you.

QUENTIN
(bows, mocking)
It was a pleasure to host you in my humble room, uncle.

INT. DUNGEON - DAY

Phillip whispers at one of the guards, points at Alexander's cell. The guard nods.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Noah runs after Phillip. He's covered in blood.

NOAH
Sire.

PHILLIP
Is the castle under attack?

NOAH
No, sire, but it won't be long. A scout just came back. Richard Lionheart set camp eight leagues away from the castle.

Phillip paces, distressed.

NOAH

Sire, we need your brother-in-law.
If his men attack Richard from
behind, we can flank him.

PHILLIP

Have our fastest messenger deliver
Quentin's message.

NOAH

George will not waive to a letter.
Sire, I beg of you: do what you
must to bring your brother-in-law
back to your ranks.

PHILLIP

No. I will not murder a child.

NOAH

Thousands of children will die if
the castle is invaded.

Phillip leaves Noah talking to himself.

NOAH

Sire?

INT. SOLAR - NIGHT

Phillip can't sleep.

Isabella seeks him in her sleep. He hugs her, she nestles in
his arms. He closes his eyes.

INT. SOLAR - DAY

Phillip wakes up, alone in bed. Given the dark circles
around his eyes, he didn't get a lot of sleep.

Isabella simply observes him from a bench.

ISABELLA

Noah came earlier this morning:
Richard's men are only six leagues
away from the castle.

Phillip springs from bed, dresses his clothes.

He hesitates before opening the door, comes back for his
gold chain.

ISABELLA
You are not going to battle.

Phillip opens the medallion on the chain. It has a drawing of Isabella inside.

PHILLIP
No. It feels worse than battle.

He kisses the medallion, then walks out.

INT. COUNCIL ROOM - DAY

Noah and several other knights gesture actively at one another. None of them sits anymore, their faces are red, spit comes out with every word.

Phillip simply listens from his seat, as the heated debate goes on. He clasps his gold medallion nervously.

He reads the map from the region. Beans of different colors represent the size of each faction: the castle has considerably less beans than Richard's force, but when combined with George's faction, they would be even.

Phillip finally stands up. The entire room goes quiet.

INT. DUNGEON - DAY

Phillip peeks through the peephole. Alexander plays the flute without missing a note, unaware of Phillip's presence.

Phillip closes the peephole.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Phillip prays at the altar, to a figure of Jesus Christ.

He sighs: this is pointless.

Phillip throws a bench at the figure, kicks it away after it falls on the floor.

INT. DUNGEON - DAY

A guard opens Quentin's door.

The guard guides him through the corridor.

INT. SOLAR - DAY

Phillip dresses with a fine and carefully groomed garment.
He sheates his sword into his belt.

INT. DUNGEON - DAY

The guard opens Alexander's door.

INT. CORRIDOR - DAY

Phillip strides through the corridor, not a trace of doubt
in his face.

The guards salute him, he nods back.

Phillip smiles assuringly at Noah as their eyes meet. The
old knight exhales in relief.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

The guard allow Quentin in.

ALEXANDER
Brother, you came.

Alexander jumps to his arms, Quentin welcomes him happily.

INT. DUNGEON - DAY

As he approaches Alexander's door, Phillip's resolve
weakens: his steps are shorter, he often looks at his feet.

An usual amount of men guard the door.

PHILLIP
Is Quentin with him now?

GUARD
As you ordered yesterday, sire.

PHILLIP
Aye, I did.

Phillip signals the guard to open the lock.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Quentin kneels beside Alexander's lifeless body, his hands are around Alexander's neck.

PHILLIP
What did you do?

QUENTIN
(sobbing)
I did your dirty work, uncle. You can have your peace and your honor.

PHILLIP
He was a child. Your brother.

QUENTIN
He was a casualty of war.

Phillip reaches for his sword, wroth. Quentin finally stands up, defying.

QUENTIN
You cannot kill me now.

Phillip keeps his hand on the sword, but doesn't unsheat it.

QUENTIN
I overheard the guards: Richard is just outside the castle. You need my father, I just gave him to you.

(beat)
If you kill me, he will have nothing to lose. He will join Richard and raid this castle himself. I'm untouchable now.

PHILLIP
You killed your brother to save your own skin?

QUENTIN
I saved my brother from a lifetime as a hostage.

(more assertive)
After my father swears allegiance to you, you will increase his rank. My house will always have a place at your council and at your table. My father, then me, my children, for all generations to come.

PHILLIP
You are mad.
(realisation)
Your father never intended to join
Richard.
(beat)
He sacrificed his own child for
power. And you colluded with him.

QUENTIN
Lies you should not say out loud.

PHILLIP
I will not be a hostage in my own
house.

QUENTIN
You already are. If you kill me,
your King loses the war.

Phillip considers Alexander, sprawled dead on the floor,
while he fumbles with his gold chain.

He opens the medallion, considers the picture of his wife.

Quentin grins arrogantly: he believes to be in control.

Unacceptable: Phillip goes to unsheat his sword, but stops
halfway though. His hand remains on his sword, in that
half-drawn state.

QUENTIN
Tell me, uncle, what will it be?

FADE TO BLACK