

THE SHROUD

EPISODE 1

"CRUSADE"

by

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THE SHROUD. EPISODE 1. CRUSADE.

EXT. GRAVESITE - DAY

JERUSALEM. EAST OF GOLGOTHA. 33 A.D.

A small rocky ridge. A Roman Centurion, PIRLOS, guards the entrance to a tomb.

CALLUS (O.S)
Wake up, you Greek sodomite.

A second Centurion, CALLUS, approaches.

PIRLOS
Piss off.

CALLUS
I'm here to relieve you.

PIRLOS
Took you long enough.
(removes helmet)
You were supposed to be here an hour ago.

CALLUS
Had some business in the city.

PIRLOS
Your business is Rome. Nothing else.

CALLUS
Such a stickler. The sun shines.
What do you have to winge about?

PIRLOS
Guarding a tomb for six hours. This is not how I envisioned life in the Legion.

CALLUS
We cannot all choose our place.

PIRLOS
Why are you so cheery about this?

CALLUS
(grins)
Because I just spent the last hour with a Jewish whore from the city.

PIRLOS
You're a disgrace, Callus.

CALLUS
What's the matter, Pirlos, eh?

Callus mockingly ruffles up his hair.

CALLUS
Scared of girls?

Pirlos smacks his hand away, to raucous laughter from Callus.

CALLUS
You know what your problem is,
Pirlos? You don't know how to have
fun.

Pirlos starts gathering his things to leave.

PIRLOS
Well, now it's your turn. Have fun.

CALLUS
How's the body?

PIRLOS
Same as before. Dead.

Callus approaches the tomb.

CALLUS
Help me move the stone.

Pirlos gives him a confused look.

PIRLOS
What?

CALLUS
The stone, you fool. How else are we
supposed to get inside?
(off Pirlos's baffled
look)
The General ordered us to check the
body every change of shift,
remember?

Pirlos grudgingly steps toward the BOULDER--

PIRLOS
Where's it going to go? After the
punishment that man took, I don't
think he'll be getting up any time
soon.

CALLUS

Be it so, that so-called "rabbi" had many followers, some of them zealots who would like nothing more than to rob that corpse. Now push.

The centurions plant their legs in the ground and PUSH, straining as they roll the stone just enough to get through.

Callus slips into the tomb as Pirlos goes back to his belongings, picks up his bag and spear.

PIRLOS

Gods, I can smell it from here.

Callus suddenly EMERGES FROM THE TOMB in a PANIC--

CALLUS

Where's the body?

PIRLOS

What body?

CALLUS

You idiot. The Nazarene. The body you were supposed to be watching.

Pirlos brushes past him and looks inside the tomb. Sees only an EMPTY CRYPT -- A LONG WHITE LINEN CLOTH draped across it--

PIRLOS

(stunned)

By the gods... How...?

CALLUS

The General is going to kill us.

(shoves Pirlos)

Did you fall asleep?

PIRLOS

It's impossible. The tomb was sealed the entire time.

They both stand there a beat, distraught, nervous. Callus thinks, then starts to head out.

CALLUS

I'll make up a story. Stay here until I return. Make sure no one sees this. Do you think you can do that?

But Pirlos does not answer. Mesmerized by the empty tomb.

Callus scoffs and leaves.

INT. TOMB - DAY

Pirlos steps slowly inside the tomb, glaring at the empty crypt with a sort of newfound reverence.

He gently picks up the white burial cloth. Suddenly notices something --

AN IMAGE OF A DEAD BODY -- somehow imprinted into the cloth. A bearded man. Lying in repose. Eyes closed. Signs of scourging across the body. Bloody puncture wounds on the wrists, ankles, and forehead. The iconic image of the man who had been laying in that tomb earlier that day. JESUS OF NAZARETH.

Pirlos falls to his knees. Holds the cloth up, his eyes staring at the miraculous image, enraptured... CUT TO-

TITLES: THE SHROUD

OVER BLACK:

THE YEAR IS 1342.

IN THE WEST, ENGLAND AND FRANCE ARE FIVE YEARS INTO THEIR HUNDRED YEARS WAR, THROWING MUCH OF EUROPE INTO UPHEAVAL.

IN THE EAST, MUSLIM ARMIES STILL CONTROL THE HOLY CITY.

MEANWHILE, TURKISH PIRATES CONTINUE TO WREAK HAVOC UPON CHRISTIAN TRADE SHIPS IN ANATOLIA, AS THE HOLY ROMAN CHURCH FACES MOUNTING PRESSURE TO TAKE ACTION...

EXT. MERCHANT SHIP - DAY

AEGEAN SEA. 1342.

A lone merchant galley sails across the open waters.

Several crewmen attend to their duties. Adjusting the sails. Moving cargo across the deck.

A man emerges from below deck, a well-dressed Venetian merchant named MARCELLO.

He walks across the deck. Then notices something out of place on this boat--

A monk -- young, 25, in a standard black robe, sitting by some crates, reading quietly from a small Bible. This is **GIANLUCA**.

Marcello furrows his brow, curious and confused. Then takes note of a LARGE BROWN SATCHEL which the monk clutches tightly underneath his arm.

He approaches VILANO, a fellow merchant.

MARCELLO
Since when do we transport
Benedictine monks across the sea?

Vilano shuffles a small money pouch on his belt.

VILANO
Since the Church pays us not to ask
questions.

MARCELLO
So we're taking bribes now.

VILANO
We're fabric merchants, Marcello.
Money changes hands in our
profession. Does it matter which
hands do the changing?

MARCELLO
I still don't like it. It's bad
enough trading silk with those
Grecian thieves in Constantinople,
but now we need to babysit priests?
We have enough precious cargo to
look after.

VILANO
He was going the same way.
Besides...

He points to a LARGE MAN standing by the side of the boat,
looking down at the water.

VILANO
...that's the monk's bodyguard, of
sorts. A Spaniard. Goes by the name
Corrino. He's doing the babysitting
for us.

MARCELLO
He doesn't look like Papal army.

VILANO
I think that's the point.

CORRINO suddenly spots something out in the distance. He
turns to the merchants, who spot it as well -- A LARGE SHIP--

MARCELLO
Another vessel? Out here?

VILANO

The ship's manifest didn't indicate
any other Venetian ships along this
route today.

A silent beat as they stare out at the water, confused.

As the other ship breaks through the waves, the merchants'
eyes go wide when they see its banner.

MARCELLO

CAPTAIN --

At the ship's helm, the burly CAPTAIN spins and races across
deck. Spots the other ship approaching rapidly, almost on top
of them. Notices the flag at full mast. He utters with
dread--

CAPTAIN

Turks...

Frantic, he spins toward his crew, finger pointed.

CAPTAIN

HARD TO STARBOARD! QUICKLY!

The crew members spring into action, unfurling the sails and
manning the oars.

EXT. LOWER DECK - SAME

Corrino moves urgently toward the monk Gianluca, helps him
up.

CORRINO

Hurry. Go below deck and find a
place to take cover. I will find you
once the trouble has passed.

As Gianluca heads off, Corrino holds him back a moment.
Points at the monk's satchel.

CORRINO

Protect it with your life.

Gianluca says nothing, simply nods. Then rushes through the
opening in the floorboard. Corrino slams the hatch shut
behind the monk.

EXT. MAIN DECK - SAME

The crew desperately tries to turn the large galley around,
but the much larger TURKISH WARSHIP bears down on them like a
leviathan, CRASHING INTO THE VENETIAN SHIP'S SIDE HULL and
sending men hurtling across the deck--

The Turks waste no time, THROWING LADDERS AND ROPES over the side and scale the small distance between the ships.

Several TURK PIRATES have already boarded the Venetian galley as more follow behind them, RUSHING THE VENETIAN CREW with deadly curved scimitar swords.

Marcello and Vilano scramble in a panic, racing for cover.

They dive behind some crates, hoping to evade the slaughter.

The Venetian crew try to defend themselves with shovels and crowbars, some with small knives, but they are no match for the Turks, who easily CUT THROUGH THEM IN A SAVAGE WAVE of black turbans and scimitar blades--

Behind the crates, Marcello loses his patience, makes a break for it -- and immediately BUMPS RIGHT INTO A TURK SOLDIER -- who pushes him angrily to the ground--

The Turk raises his blade for the deathblow, but a SWORD SUDDENLY BURSTS OUT FROM HIS CHEST -- the Turk falls dead, revealing CORRINO -- bloody sword in hand--

CORRINO

RUN!!

Several more Turks SWARM on Corrino, who FIGHTS THEM OFF with impressive skill--

Marcello and Vilano seize the distraction and shuffle toward the cargo hatch door at the ship's stern, but a Turk pirate BLOCKS THEIR PATH -- dark lines around intense eyes, long coiled beard -- this is **FARIK**.

EXT. QUARTERDECK - SAME

Corrino FIGHTS OFF A PAIR OF TURKS -- several Turk bodies scattered around him--

The fight has weakened him, mostly on the defensive.

One of the Turks SLASHES HIS BLADE across Corrino's calf -- who DROPS to one knee in agony--

EXT. MAIN DECK - SAME

Farik plants himself in front of the escaping merchants. Vilano desperately flails himself atop the large Turk in a futile attempt, but Farik easily DRIVES HIS SCIMITAR CLEAN THROUGH THE MERCHANT--

Marcello CRIES in vain and tries to RUN BACK the other way -- and is immediately greeted with A CURVED SWORD THROUGH HIS TORSO--

He falls dead, revealing his killer, a deadly Turk with fiercely intelligent eyes -- **HAROUN**.

Farik heads for the cargo hatch, but a DESPERATE CRY stops him in his tracks--

CORRINO (O.S)

NOOOOO--

Farik spins to find CORRINO LIMPING toward him -- but a Turkish blade suddenly LOPS HIS HEAD CLEAN OFF--

The body falls, revealing HAROUN -- bloodied scimitar in hand--

Farik coldly watches Corrino's head roll along the floorboard, then turns back toward the hatch door--

INT. CARGO HOLD - SAME

Darkness inside the hold. Silence but for the creaking of the ship.

The hatch door suddenly swings open, a shaft of sunlight beaming in.

Farik enters cautiously down the makeshift steps, blade in hand, followed by Haroun and a couple of other pirates. They move slowly and carefully through the maze of large wooden crates. Rats scurry away as they pass.

Suddenly Haroun stops. Hears something inside one of the crates.

Using the tip of his scimitar, he pries loose the bolts, then with his hand RIPS OPEN the crate, revealing--

GIANLUCA -- crouched inside the crate, dirty and shaking, clutching tight his satchel--

Haroun grabs the monk by his frock and pulls him out of the crate, tossing him to the floor -- HE RAISES HIS SWORD TO STRIKE--

FARIK

Wait--

Farik calmly enters frame. Brushes Haroun aside.

FARIK

They sent him down here for a reason.

He notes the satchel, which Gianluca guards close to his chest.

FARIK
That, perhaps?

HAROUN
What does it matter? He is one of
their Christian priests. An infidel
dog.

He raises his sword again but Farik grabs his wrist.

FARIK
We've put down enough dogs for
today. The priest comes back with
us.

Farik walks off but Haroun grabs his arm.

HAROUN
We said no prisoners.

FARIK
There is something of value here. If
not him, then what he carries.

HAROUN
The infidels have nothing to offer
us.

FARIK
Would you like to explain that to
the bey?

Haroun relents. Lets go of Farik's arm, who walks away.

FARIK
Take him to our ship.

The other pirates yank Gianluca from the floor and drag him
off.

Off Haroun, eyes burning with fury... CUT TO-

INT. PALAIS DES PAPES - DAY

AVIGNON, FRANCE

The immense Palace of the Popes. Down a long and illustrious
corridor of marble and gold, we find a pair of palace guards
escorting two older-looking men--

HENRI D'ASTI -- 55, Bishop and Patriarch of
Constantinople -- a short, balding, but stern looking man,
slow and hunched over, somewhat frail in appearance, carrying
a ledger underneath his arm

STEFANO -- 60, a Benedictine monk -- completely bald, long greying beard, emanating a tempered wisdom.

They turn a corner and are led into the PAPAL THRONE ROOM -- where we find **POPE CLEMENT VI**, 51, standing alone in the great hall, by a banquet table, holding a wine goblet in one hand and feeding himself a grape with the other. He spreads in arms in delight.

POPE CLEMENT VI

Ah, Henri of Asti. It has been too long, old friend.

He throws his arms around Henri and kisses his cheek. Henri doesn't seem as jubilant.

HENRI

Too long indeed, your Holiness.

Clement glances at Stefano.

POPE CLEMENT VI

And you must be the abbot of Monte Cassino that Henri here spoke of.

HENRI

Brother Stefano.

Stefano bends down, kisses the pope's ring.

POPE CLEMENT VI

Welcome, brother.
(walking back to the
banquet table)
Please, join me for a drink.

STEFANO

I'm afraid I don't share your taste for... excess.

Clement pours himself another drink.

POPE CLEMENT VI

You know, I counted myself among your brethren when I was a child. But as the years passed, it seemed the life of a monk did not agree with me.

Clement stops pouring. Glares at the monk.

POPE CLEMENT VI

Don't think I didn't notice your look of... disaffection, shall we say, when you walked in here. You Benedictines believe yourselves pious above all others.

STEFANO

We are above no one.

POPE CLEMENT VI

Then tell me your true feelings. I long to hear what one of your kind thinks of

(gestures around him)

all this. Say it, my pious brother. All this extravagance, this opulence, it's unbecoming of the Holy Mother Church.

STEFANO

It is unbecoming of any moral man.

Clement smirks, takes note of the subtle jab.

POPE CLEMENT VI

We are all unworthy in the eyes of the Lord God.

Henri clears his throat. Attempts to change course.

HENRI

Your Holiness, can we discuss the subject of our meeting here? The merchant ship?

POPE CLEMENT VI

(troubled)

Yes...

He turns toward the papal throne.

POPE CLEMENT VI

The situation on the Aegean coastline is worsening.

HENRI

We are losing ships to the Turkish pirates almost daily now. Trade and commerce cannot sustain this continuous financial loss.

STEFANO

And what of the human loss?

Clement smiles, irritated by the monk's sanctimonious presence.

POPE CLEMENT VI

Smyrna is a strategic city on that coastline. It's a perfect staging ground for attacks. And the Turks have had it for way too long. It is time to reclaim what is ours.

HENRI

We have four galleys stationed on their coast, maintaining some order.

POPE CLEMENT VI

Not nearly enough. We need more. Much more. The dissenting voices in the Venetian Grand Council are growing louder, and they want to know we are doing something about it.

Henri suddenly realizes what the Pope is implying.

HENRI

A crusade?

POPE CLEMENT VI

It's the only way to restore peace.

STEFANO

There is a more pressing concern, your Holiness.

POPE CLEMENT VI

Oh?

STEFANO

There was someone on that ship that the pirates took. One of our young brothers.

POPE CLEMENT VI

A monk was on that ship?

(to Henri)

Did you know about this?

HENRI

I did not deem it worth mentioning. He is surely dead by now.

STEFANO
Your Holiness, we must find him.
What he was carrying was perhaps the
most important cargo that ever
crossed the seas.

POPE CLEMENT VI
(intrigued)
What is it?

Stefano hesitates. Clement steps closer.

POPE CLEMENT VI
Well how can I decide our course of
action if vital information is
withheld?

Stefano hesitates a moment more.

STEFANO
It's... a piece of cloth.

Clement looks at Henri, snorts with laughter.

POPE CLEMENT VI
Perhaps you've spent too much time
in that monastery, abbot. You want
me to delay our holy crusade over a
piece of cloth?

STEFANO
It's much more than that--

Clement starts to usher him out.

POPE CLEMENT VI
I thank you, Brother Stefano, for
joining us today.

STEFANO
You don't understand -- this could
change the course of Christendom--

POPE CLEMENT VI
(to the guards)
Take him back to his carriage.
(waving)
Safe travels, abbot.

The guards escort him out of the room.

HENRI
Perhaps we could have heard him out,
your Holiness.

POPE CLEMENT VI
Next time you bring a guest here,
Henri, make sure she could carry a
jug of wine on her head.

Henri gives him a withering look.

EXT. SHORELINE - BESIEGED TOWN - DAWN

MORLAIX, NORTHEASTERN FRANCE. 30 SEPTEMBER 1342.

We are looking down on a MUDDY BATTLEGROUND, just on the outskirts of a nearby forest.

A LARGE FORCE OF HORSE-MOUNTED KNIGHTS and soldiers are amassed along the distant shoreline, carrying the unmistakable *fleur-de-lis* of the FRENCH banner.

We focus in on their commander, the hero of our story --
GEOFFROI DE CHARNY

He sits on his horse, stoically watching the distant forest. Age 37, dark cropped hair, thick full beard, face and armor sullied by mud and grime, haunted eyes that have seen a lifetime's worth of battle.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Just then, the OPPOSING ARMY breaks through the treeline, flying ENGLISH banners. Leading them on horseback is their general, a burly mountain man named RICHARD TALBOT.

A soldier rides up beside him.

SOLDIER
Our scouts have confirmed it. Their
leader is Geoffroi de Charny.

TALBOT
So the rumors were true. France has
indeed sent us their greatest
knight.

SOLDIER
The men await your orders.

Talbot gazes across the field.

TALBOT
Run them through. But take Charny
alive.

The soldier nods and rides off.

EXT. SHORELINE - DAY

Across the field, Charny turns to his troops.

CHARNY
Knights, today we liberate Morlaix
for France.

He raises his sword.

CHARNY
FOR FRANCE!

ALL KNIGHTS
FOR FRANCE!!!

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - SAME

THE FRENCH CALVARY CHARGES -- Charny at the lead--

Behind the first line of English soldiers, a second line of
ARCHERS DRAW BACK THEIR LONGBOWS AND UNLEASH--

Charny and his knights try to maneuver their horses as a
STORM OF ARROWS RAINS DOWN -- PIERCING THROUGH the French
army -- soldiers FLUNG OFF their horses and CRASHING into the
mud--

The English archers UNLEASH ANOTHER VOLLEY -- blotting out
the sky with ARROWS--

More bolts RIP THROUGH THE FRENCH TROOPS -- men and horses
HITTING THE MUD hard--

CHARNY AND A SQUADRON OF KNIGHTS RESIST the barrage and
penetrate the English frontline -- THE TWO ARMIES ENGAGE IN A
HAILSTORM OF BLADES--

From atop his horse, Charny CUTS DOWN A PAIR OF ENGLISH
SOLDIERS -- but another group of soldiers FIRE ARROWS into
the fray, TAKING CHARNY'S HORSE DOWN--

Charny CRASHES TO THE GROUND -- as an English soldier POUNCES
-- Charny LEAPS UP almost immediately and DRIVES HIS SWORD
ACROSS THE MAN'S TORSO--

The English press on, pushing the French line back. A French
knight DISARMS an English soldier, who falls. Before the
French man can deliver the deathblow, A SWORDBLADE PUSHES
THROUGH HIS BACK AND OUT HIS CHEST -- the French man FALLS,
revealing his killer -- TALBOT--

Charny spots Talbot across the battlefield and CHARGES --
their BLADES meet, Talbot momentarily thrown off by Charny's
rapid attack--

The French line keeps getting pressed back. Suddenly the LEAVES GIVE WAY UNDERNEATH THEM and several of them COLLAPSE INTO A MUDDY PIT--

Charny SPINS AROUND -- distracted by the SCREAMS of his men IMPALED BY SPIKES inside the pit--

Talbot seizes the advantage and STRIKES AT CHARNY -- Charny's blade taking the brunt of the swordblow, but it's enough to send Charny REELING TO THE GROUND -- his sword SLIPPING from his grasp--

He pulls himself up, unarmed, surrounded by English swordsmen. Still defiant, Charny SHOVES one of them in the chest, but another soldier CLOCKS CHARNY IN THE BACK OF THE HEAD with his sword pommel--

Charny drops to his knees, dazed.

Through the haze, he sees Talbot approach, sword in hand. Talbot lords over him for a moment, then as he DRIVES HIS FIST INTO CHARNY'S FACE... ALL GOES BLACK...

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

PIERRE-PERTHUIS, NORTHERN FRANCE

A typical autumn day. Villagers roam about, some working the soil, others collecting food at the local markets.

We focus on A FEW WOMEN, seated or knelt by the river's rocky shoreline, scrubbing and washing baskets of clothes in the water.

MORA

Does the air seem colder this year?

GENEVIEVE

We'll need to start collecting the water soon. We won't be able to do this out here much longer.

HELENE

And miss the warmth of your company?

GENEVIEVE

(giggles)

Josef can rub your cold arms as you wash his loincloth.

They all laugh. One of the ladies, however, offers only a cursory smile, as she works at her clothes with a somewhat solemn air. This is **JEANNE DE TOUCY**, 30.

Genevieve takes note of her subdued reaction, regrets the comment.

GENEVIEVE
I did not mean--

JEANNE
It's quite alright.
(off their hesitance)
Really.

They work in silence for a bit.

HELENE
An early chill will weaken the crops
again.

MORA
It will be a smaller harvest this
year. At least that's what Michel
told me.

Jeanne starts to gather her things, hoists up her basket.

JEANNE
If you will pardon me, *mesdames*.

They watch her as she walks back toward the village.

GENEVIEVE
I feel awful.

HELENE
We all say things in passing.

They go back to their task.

GENEVIEVE
It must be hard, though. Alone in
her home at night. Without even the
sound of children to keep her
company.

MORA
I don't think it helps to pity her.
After all, she knew her husband was
a soldier when they married.

HELENE
(dreamy)
A knight. How gallant.

MORA
Why did you not marry one then?

HELENE

I would rather a warm body pressed against mine, and not a memory of one.

MORA

Oh you are crude. Will they not all become memory eventually?

HELENE

God willing, they will be happy ones.

She gives Mora a mischievous, playful look. They both laugh.

Genevieve, however, looks back at Jeanne, who is now further in the distance.

EXT. VILLAGE SQUARE - DAY

Jeanne makes her way through the crowded square, basket underneath her arm, shoppers and merchants bustling around her.

VOICE (O.S)

Jeanne...

Jeanne turns to find **FATHER GABRIEL**, 40, the village priest, walking up behind her, somewhat refined and handsome.

JEANNE

Père Gabriel. I prefer Madame Toucy, if you recall.

GABRIEL

Madame Toucy. Of course. I didn't mean to disturb you. Are you alright?

JEANNE

Yes, Father. Quite.

GABRIEL

(off her basket)

Do you need help with that?

JEANNE

No, thank you. I can manage.

An awkward beat.

GABRIEL

I couldn't help but notice you were not present at this morning's service.

JEANNE

I'm sorry, Father. I'm afraid I had more... pressing matters to attend to.

GABRIEL

Yes of course.

Another awkward pause.

GABRIEL

I know it's been a long time, but Charny will be back. It's important to keep faith, do you understand?

JEANNE

I do, Father. And I thank you for your prayers.

GABRIEL

And I would encourage you to maintain your prayers as well.

She says nothing. Only offers a slight smile. Gabriel suddenly furrows his brow.

GABRIEL

On the other hand, faith can be a double-edged sword. Too much of it can blind you to the harsh realities.

Jeanne glares at him, confused.

JEANNE

What "harsh realities"?

GABRIEL

He is a soldier, after all. No matter how loud your calls to him, he will always answer the calls of his other bride.

JEANNE

And who would that be?

She knows full well the response, but she wants him to say it.

GABRIEL

France.

Jeanne nods, stung. Gabriel promptly regrets it.

GABRIEL
Madame Toucy, I just want you to
know that if you need help, with
anything--

He puts a hand on her shoulder.

GABRIEL
--I am always here.

She smiles oddly again. Nods. Then turns and goes on her way.
He calls after her.

GABRIEL
Jeanne--

She stops. Gabriel is about to say something. Then thinks
better of it and simply offers a weak hand wave.

Jeanne turns and walks off again, disappearing into the
crowd.

INT. CHARNY HOME - LATER

She enters the small, modest home. As soon as she closes the
door and drops the basket, she bursts into tears and sobs,
her public facade broken, the day's efforts pouring down her
face.

She goes to a small wooden cabinet. Pulls out a green
tunic... a man's tunic. We notice the coat of arms stitched
into the lower fabric, the Charny family crest, the name
'CHARNY' scrawled beneath it.

As her fingers softly brush over the name, tears flowing, CUT
TO--

SCREAMS AND CRIES OF AGONY--

INT. DUNGEON CELL - NIGHT

HEREFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND

Close on Charny, who slowly opens his eyes. Stirred awake by
the DISTANT SCREAMING.

He sits on the floor of a grimy, dark prison cell. He's been
stripped of his armor, wearing only simple garments, his face
still streaked with dried blood and mud. He looks down at his
hands, chained to the floor by manacles around his wrists.

A rat scurries past his foot. He flinches away.

Outside his cell, the SCREAMS AND MOANS OF ANGUISH grow
louder.

CHARNY

Hey...

He tugs at the chains. Rises to his knees. YELLS at the door.

CHARNY

HEEEYYY!!

He rattles the chains, panic rising.

CHARNY

Stop it. Do you hear me?! Let my men
go. Take *ME*.

The cries and screams grow louder still.

CHARNY

TAKE ME DAMN YOU!!

Then we hear shuffling outside the door.

The wooden slit on the door slides open, revealing an ENGLISH
GUARD outside. He peers through the slit at Charny.

CHARNY

I will do whatever you ask, just let
go of my men.

GUARD

Don't worry, Frenchman. Your turn is
coming.

The wooden slit slides shut.

Charny slowly slides back down to the floor, dejected, the
piercing cries of agony echoing through the dungeon halls.

INT. PALAIS DES PAPES - DAY

AVIGNON, FRANCE

Inside the papal throne room, Henri and Pope Clement are
hunched over a table, a map of the Anatolian coastline
sprawled across it, the pope cradling his ever-present wine
goblet.

HENRI

Our four galleys are positioned
along the coast just west of Smyrna.
If we are to have any chance of
success, we'll need to increase
their numbers tenfold at the least.

Clement ponders that a moment.

POPE CLEMENT VI
I think half that number will do.

Henri shoots him a dubious glance.

HENRI
Half? You do realize the Turkish
forces in the acropolis alone number
in the tens of thousands.

POPE CLEMENT VI
I do, my dear Henri. But I do not
intend to prolong this crusade any
more than needed.

He turns away from the map. Sips from his goblet.

POPE CLEMENT VI
If victory is not assured by sea,
then a land assault will be equally
futile.

HENRI
Your Holiness, I'm not entirely sure
I concur with this course of
action--

POPE CLEMENT VI
Good! That is why I am entrusting
you with this delicate undertaking.
I need men who will offer valid
criticism, not simply nod yes at
every turn. But as the Church is
supplying the funds for this holiest
of ventures, you will need to clear
this with Ambassador Zaccaria.

HENRI
Martino Zaccaria? Of Genoa?

POPE CLEMENT VI
Is there a problem?

HENRI
Your Holiness, I do not see a reason
for him to join us--

POPE CLEMENT VI
It's done. I've already sent a
letter informing him of our
intentions.

Henri turns away, perturbed.

POPE CLEMENT VI

We need the best men to lead this
crusade.

HENRI

Surely there are others.

POPE CLEMENT VI

There are many. But he is ambassador
to the Holy See. And a proven
fighter.

HENRI

He has never recovered from the loss
of Chios. He will seize this
opportunity to reclaim it from the
Byzantines.

POPE CLEMENT VI

Your suspicions are well noted,
Henri. But that is why you have
ultimate command of this alliance.
Zaccaria will represent the Church
in this and command the papal army,
but you will ensure he stays true to
our purpose and does not stray. Do
we have an understanding?

Henri nods, a touch of reluctance there.

POPE CLEMENT VI

I'll be issuing the papal bull
presently. You will take it to
Zaccaria and any others you recruit
in this quest.

He puts a hand on Henri's shoulder.

POPE CLEMENT VI

Go. You have much to discuss with
him. But don't let him forget who
leads this crusade.

Henri bows.

HENRI

Your Holiness.

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

VENICE, ITALY

A sizable pub in one of the seedier quarters of Venice.
Tables are crowded and rowdy.

At one table, we find three men seated, in various states of inebriation, empty and half-empty cups of ale scattered about. Two of them are typical bar SCOUNDRELS. The third is a big brawny man with a goatee in a green tunic and leather pants, a nasty scar down the side of his face. This is **BATELLO**.

He rolls a pair of dice from a wooden cup and lets out a boisterous roar. The Scoundrels scoff.

SCOUNDREL #1
Impossible.

Batello scoops up a handful of coins from a pile on the table.

BATELLO
It's just that kind of night.

SCOUNDREL #2
That's five rolls in a row.

BATELLO
Luck of the draw I guess.

A fourth man joins them at the table, roughly the same size and look as Batello, but slightly younger. This is Batello's brother, **NICO**.

NICO
Has he cleaned up the lot of you?

SCOUNDREL #1
He's about to.

Batello rolls again. He erupts into cheers.

NICO
(laughing)
I told you not to put that much down on the table.

SCOUNDREL #2
Give me that thing--

He yanks the cup from Batello, shakes it and rolls. He bangs on the table in frustration, startling the other patrons.

SCOUNDREL #2
Dammit.

Batello scoops up more coin.

BATELLO
You tried.

Nico leans discreetly into Batello's ear.

NICO

The rumors are true. The Church is planning a new crusade against the Turks.

BATELLO

Well then... how fortuitous.

He rolls. The Scoundrels scoff again at the result.

SCOUNDREL #2

I've never seen such luck.

BATELLO

These dice were blessed in holy water.

(winks)

Just so you know.

He leans in to Nico.

BATELLO

Good work, little brother. A new lucrative opportunity opens up before us.

His seedy eyes meet Nico's.

BATELLO

Make sure fate finds us a way onto that boat.

Nico wraps an arm around his brother and they bump foreheads. Nico gets up and leaves as Batello resumes the game.

EXT. ALLEYWAY BEHIND TAVERN - LATER THAT NIGHT

Batello stumbles down the alleyway, quite tipsy. He undoes his trousers and urinates.

SCOUNDREL #1 (O.S)

You thought yourself clever.

Batello recognizes the voice. He doesn't turn around, keeps pissing. Expecting this.

The two Scoundrels step into the dim moonlight.

SCOUNDREL #1

No man carries that much fortune.

BATELLO
We are all blessed in different
ways.

He zips up his pants and turns to face them.

BATELLO
I win games. You lose them.

He brushes past them and shuffles down the alleyway.

BATELLO
That's just our lot in life.

SCOUNDREL #2
You're a cheat.

Batello stops. Turns around.

Scoundrel #2 tosses the dice at Batello's feet.

SCOUNDREL #2
Those are sanded down on the
corners. You rigged it.

BATELLO
Oh how I wish I were as clever as
you say.

SCOUNDREL #1
Give us our money back.

BATELLO
Gentlemen, walk away. We're done
here.

Batello turns to leave.

SCOUNDREL #1
You think we don't know who you are?
Batello the mercenary.

Batello stops.

SCOUNDREL #1
We thought you different, but you
hired thugs are all the same. Care
not for nothing but coin. Cowards
the lot of you.

Batello's eyes narrow into slits, the woozy look giving way
to stark clarity. He turns back again to face them.

BATELLO
You best leave.

SCOUNDREL #1
 (walking closer)
 Or what?

Scoundrel #1 SLIPS OUT A KNIFE AND LUNGES--

But Batello's reflexes are razor quick -- GRABS SCOUNDREL
 #1'S KNIFE ARM and JAMS THE BLADE UP into the man's jugular
 -- BLOOD squirts--

Scoundrel #2 immediately POUNCES WITH HIS OWN KNIFE -- but
 Batello takes the dead scoundrel's knife out from his throat,
 twists the second man's arm and DRIVES THE BLADE INTO HIS GUT
 -- entrails SPILLING OUT -- it's over in seconds--

Batello drops the bloody knife.

He steps over their corpses and stalks down the alleyway.

EXT. AEGEAN COASTLINE - DAY

SMYRNA, ANATOLIA

The Turkish warship has pulled up to the harbour of a
 bustling city.

The dock is crowded with boat workers, fishermen, tradesmen;
 scrambling across the wooden planks, uncoiling ropes, tying
 the ship to the harbour, making way as the Turkish pirates
 disembark, some carrying their ill-gotten gains and
 warchests.

Farik tugs Gianluca along by a long rope tied around the
 monk's neck. Gianluca stumbles along the dock, still
 clutching his bag, as Farik pulls on the rope.

Gianluca stops a moment, taking in the splendor of the dense
 city, squinting from the bright sun above. In the distant
 horizon he glimpses a towering citadel, looming on a hilltop
 overlooking the city -- a massive stone fortress with
 catapults and weapons visible even from his vantage point.

The rope around his neck pulls him forward.

INT. SMYRNA CASTLE - DAY

Gianluca is roughly shoved to the floor.

UMUR
 What is this?

A big, imposing man stands in the center of the large
 chamber, long mustache and goatee, torso adorned with
 chainmail armor, scimitar sword strapped to his side. This is

the general and supreme commander of the Turkish army, and defacto ruler of the city of Smyrna -- **UMUR BEY.**

FARIK

A prisoner, Umur Bey, from the Venetian trade ship.

UMUR

And why is he in my court? Did we not agree -- no prisoners?

FARIK

We did, great bey, but--

Haroun quickly jumps in.

HAROUN

I told him, bey, but Farik would not listen.

FARIK

You fool, Haroun. If you would think for once with your mind instead of your sword--

UMUR

Enough!

Umur approaches Gianluca, who is still crumpled on the floor, the rope still tied around his neck.

UMUR

What is your name?

Gianluca looks up at the Turk leader. Says nothing.

UMUR

Does he not speak? Has the priest taken a vow of silence?

He gets in Farik's face.

UMUR

I ask you again, Farik, why is this Christian priest in my palace?

FARIK

(nervous)

He was not with the other men on the boat. He was hidden away. Below deck. They did not want him to be found.

Umur shifts his gaze back to Gianluca.

UMUR

So... the priest has some value.

He notes the brown leather satchel that Gianluca is clutching tightly underneath his arm.

UMUR

What is that, priest?

Umur crouches down, meets Gianluca at eye level.

UMUR

Is that why they were hiding you?

Umur casually reaches for the bag, but Gianluca flinches, fearful, like a child clutching his favorite toy. Umur relents.

UMUR

Yes... it would seem so.

Haroun grips the hilt of his scimitar, eyes bloodthirsty.

HAROUN

Why don't we just take his head and
be done with it?

Umur raises his hand.

UMUR

No. We can use him.

He motions to Farik and the other pirates.

UMUR

Take him to the cells.

Farik tugs on the rope, pulling Gianluca to his feet and dragging him off.

Haroun fumes as he confers with Umur, out of earshot of the others.

HAROUN

Great bey, I must protest this--

UMUR

Do you disagree with my decision,
Haroun?

There's some venom in his words. Haroun sulks.

HAROUN

No. Of course not.

Umur's menace drops, takes on a sympathetic tone.

UMUR

I understand your grief, Haroun.
Your son did not deserve what
happened to him.

He puts a comforting hand on Haroun's shoulder.

UMUR

We have all lost loved ones at the
hands of the Christian infidels. You
will avenge your son *inshallah*,
but we must be patient. Do you
understand?

Haroun bows, a glimmer of doubt there.

HAROUN

Yes, bey.

EXT. GARDENS, PALAIS DES PAPES - DAY

AVIGNON, FRANCE

Stefano waits nervously in the rose gardens outside the
Pope's palace.

Finally he spots Henri walking down the path.

STEFANO

Did you speak with him?

HENRI

Aye.

STEFANO

And? Has the subject been broached?

Henri joins him. They stroll peacefully down the colorful
walkway. Henri looks less than thrilled.

HENRI

It seems his Holiness remains
steadfast in our singular purpose.

STEFANO

Is there no swaying him?

HENRI

There is bitterness still in his
heart. He does not easily forget his
childhood experiences among the
monks of *La Chaise-Dieu*.

STEFANO

Surely he cannot hold that against me.

HENRI

I'm afraid when he looks upon you, he does not see the Abbot of Monte Cassino. He simply sees a man in a black robe. The same robe that scarred him all those years ago.

STEFANO

A perilous view, that is. To sweep an entire people in such a broad stroke.

HENRI

His mind will not be changed.

Stefano goes quiet for a moment. Lost in thought.

HENRI

Are you sure your monk is even alive? The Turks are not known to take many prisoners, especially men of the faith.

STEFANO

Brother Gianluca is alive, I tell you. The Lord protects him.

Henri stops him in his path.

HENRI

What does he carry? You said before it could change the course of Christendom.

Stefano hesitates again. Henri steps closer.

HENRI

You want me to risk this mission without telling me why?

STEFANO

It's a burial shroud.

HENRI

(disappointed)

A shroud. Why is your monk carrying a burial cloth?

STEFANO

When you see it, you will understand.

Henri starts to walk away.

HENRI

I don't have time for this.

Stefano grabs his arm.

STEFANO

Please, your Eminence. I do not beg often, but I beg you now. Trust me. Your faith will be rewarded.

HENRI

This is folly. You realize that.

STEFANO

Trust me.

Henri shakes his head, about to hate himself for this.

HENRI

I must leave for Genoa presently to meet with Martino Zaccaria, whom his Holiness, in his infinite wisdom, has anointed commander of the papal army. It is a task I'm dreading, so I leave you to your own task.

Stefano's eyes beam with hope for the first time.

STEFANO

You mean--?

HENRI

The Pope's mission remains unchanged. This is a crusade to retake our holy lands from the Turks. But if you can find someone to fulfill your own mission, then I will grant him passage to join our ranks.

Stefano takes Henri's hands, jubilant.

STEFANO

Your Eminence, how can I thank you--

HENRI

Just remember -- this mission of yours remains in the shadows. Only you and your chosen man must know of it, and no one else. Not even I. We cannot have our armies distracted from their main purpose. Do you understand?

STEFANO
Of course, of course.

HENRI
Now... do you have someone in mind
for this secret rescue mission of
yours?

A smile comes across Stefano's face.

STEFANO
There is someone...

INT. DUNGEON CELL - DAY

HEREFORDSHIRE, ENGLAND

Charny sits in the darkness of his cell.

Suddenly we hear the door swing open as a shaft of torchlight
illuminates his face.

Two English guards burst into the cell and pull Charny up
from the floor.

GUARD
On your feet, Frenchman. We told you
your turn was coming.

They drag him out of the cell.

INT. GOODRICH CASTLE - DAY

His wrists still chained, the guards drag Charny through a
long, high-ceiling corridor, lined with portraits and busts
of English royalty.

They turn the corner and shove him into a DINING ROOM-- where
we find Talbot seated at the end of a very long table, set
with silver plates and a candelabra. He's slicing intently
into a piece of steak.

The guards remove the chains from Charny's wrists. Charny
rubs his wrists and looks around the elegant room, perplexed.

Talbot takes a bite of his steak.

TALBOT
Do you know who I am?

Charny glances back at the guards standing behind him, unsure
how to proceed.

TALBOT

Well go on. Speak. There are no chains in here.

CHARNY

You're Richard Talbot. Second baron of House Talbot. Captain of William de Bohun.

TALBOT

(chewing)

Very good. Because I certainly know who you are, Monsieur de Charny.

He points his fork at him.

TALBOT

They say you are the greatest and most honorable knight in all of France. Nay, all of Europe. Greater than the Templars even.

CHARNY

I know not what they say. I simply serve my king.

TALBOT

Ah, and that is why we are both here, across from each other.

Talbot puts down his utensils. Stands up.

TALBOT

I will admit something to you, Sir Charny, that I have never told anyone else. Not even my dear wife.

He walks around the table. Stands nose to nose with Charny.

TALBOT

I care not for war. For the "glory" of battle.

He paces around Charny, hands behind his back.

TALBOT

Death is a fool's errand. No, I'm a man of business, you see, Sir Charny. Coin is my trade. These squabbles between the English throne and the French -- between your king and mine -- they are beneath me.

He looks up at a portait of King Edward III.

TALBOT

But war happens to be a very
lucrative business. So I am
invested.

He gestures at the hall around them.

TALBOT

It paid for all this, after all.
Which brings us to you.

He walks down the length of the table.

TALBOT

You're probably wondering why you
are standing here in this grand
dining hall, and not mounted on a
rack having your bones broken like
the rest of your men.

Charny sneers at the mention of his men's suffering.

TALBOT

Unlike them, your life has value.
When King Edward got word of who I
had in my dungeon, he saw an
opportunity.

He comes back around toward Charny.

TALBOT

You see, war costs money. And a
ransom for the greatest soldier in
all of France would fund the king's
war for a long time.

He gets in Charny's face.

TALBOT

You are free to go. There's a boat
waiting outside that will take you
to Paris. From there you can find
your way back to your homeland.

CHARNY

Who paid my ransom?

Talbot walks away.

TALBOT

Your benefactor, it would seem, has
chosen to remain anonymous. But does
it matter? I have my money. And
you're free.

CHARNY
What of my men?

TALBOT
What of them? They are no longer
your concern.

The guards start to take Charny away, but Talbot holds him back a moment.

TALBOT
You would be wise to remember this
kindness that England has shown you.

CHARNY
A shame. She could not afford the
same kindness to my men.

Talbot smiles and spreads his arms. Bows theatrically.

TALBOT
Well, we cannot all be as renowned
as the great Geoffroi de Charny.

He motions to the guards, who take Charny away.

EXT. COAST OF RIVER WYE - DAY

Charny, now in cleaner clothes and a backpack slung over his shoulder, walks down the coastline toward a waiting ferry boat, escorted by the two castle guards.

He climbs onto the ferry where other travellers are already seated; a small family, a couple of farmers, etc. A ferryman stands at the bow, ready to leave.

Charny is about to sit, but takes a last moment to look back at the castle in the distance, his eyes solemn, the memory of his men's cries still fresh in his mind.

He takes a seat as the boat pulls away from shore.

EXT. RIVER SEINE - DAY

PARIS, FRANCE

From way overhead, the dense streets and bustling squares of the French capital.

Charny's ferry drifts down the Seine, making its way toward the harbour.

Standing on the dock, a man waits, dressed in royal clothes, red fur cloak over an armored chestplate. As the boat gets

closer, a smile comes over his face. This is fellow knight and Charny's best friend, **EDOUARD DE BEAUJEU**.

The ferry finally docks, Charny the only passenger left. He disembarks, sees Beaujeu grinning at him.

BEAUJEU

By God, I thought I'd never see you again.

They embrace tightly, Beaujeu giving Charny a couple of hearty claps on the back.

CHARNY

I thought the same, my friend.

They pull away and walk down the harbour, Beaujeu's arm still around Charny's shoulder.

BEAUJEU

How, by all that is holy, did you make it out of there?

CHARNY

I thought you would know that.

BEAUJEU

What do you mean?

CHARNY

Someone put up the money for my release. I assumed it was the royal palace.

BEAUJEU

The king was not aware of any ransom.

Charny stops walking. Confused.

CHARNY

His Highness did not make payment?

Beaujeu shakes his head. Charny gazes off, more confused than ever.

But Beaujeu slaps him on the shoulder, snapping him out of it.

BEAUJEU

No matter now. You're here.

He wraps him again in a bear hug. They resume walking down the harbour.

CHARNY

Not for long. I fear the king does not await my arrival with the same elation as you, *mon cher* Edouard.

INT. PALAIS DE LA CITÉ - DAY

The immense Royal Palace. The center of the French kingdom.

Charny and Beaujeu march down an incredibly ornate hallway lined with marble pillars, Charny's feet getting heavier with every step. They turn a corner into the THRONE ROOM -- where the seat of French power awaits them.

On the throne sits the current ruler of France, KING PHILIP VI.

On the throne beside his is seated his wife, QUEEN JOAN.

A few guards with spears flank them on either side.

Beaujeu remains in the background as Charny approaches, humbled. Drops to one knee.

CHARNY

Your Highness.

KING PHILIP VI

I must say, *Monsieur de Charny*, I am relieved to find you back in Paris.

Charny reacts, not expecting such a greeting. He remains on bended knee, eyes lowered, hesitant to look the king in the eye.

KING PHILIP VI

Well? What say you?

CHARNY

My Lord, I kneel before you in shame. We have lost Morlaix. I have failed you and I have failed France. I accept whatever punishment you deem fit to inflict upon me.

A silent, tense beat.

Philip glances over at his wife. Then bursts into laughter.

KING PHILIP VI

I take it you have not heard.

Charny finally meets the king's eyes.

CHARNY

My Lord?

KING PHILIP VI

Rise, Sir Charny.

Charny stands up. Philip does so as well, steps down the throne and toward Charny.

KING PHILIP VI

After your first line fell, de Blois sent in the second and third infantry lines and captured Morlaix back from the English.

He grabs Charny's arms.

KING PHILIP VI

Your brave sacrifice, and the sacrifice of your men, allowed us this victory.

He kisses Charny on the cheek.

KING PHILIP VI

You honour us.

Flustered, Charny glances back at Beaujeu, who returns a sly grin. The bastard knew all along and let him sweat.

Charny can't hold back the smile any longer.

QUEEN JOAN

I thank you, *Monsieur* de Charny.

Queen Joan rises from her throne, steps toward them, a figure of esteemed royalty and elegance.

KING PHILIP VI

You know my wife, the queen Joan of Burgundy.

Charny immediately gets on bended knee again and kisses the queen's hand.

CHARNY

Your Grace.

QUEEN JOAN

I do hope you will dine with us tonight. Mister Beaujeu has so missed your presence at our court.

Charny stands up.

CHARNY

As much as the thought warms my heart, I'm afraid there is another place I must be.

KING PHILIP VI

Ah yes, you've been away from home for too long. No one deserves it more.

Philip pats him on the shoulder.

KING PHILIP VI

Go forth. But don't stray too far. I may call upon you again.

Charny bows.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAYS LATER

PIERRE-PERTHUIS, NORTHERN FRANCE

Jeanne walks back from the lake down the rocky shoreline, basket of clothes underneath her arm. The daily ritual.

Suddenly she stops in her tracks. Sees something in the distance.

CHARNY stands on the horizon, bag slung over shoulder, like a mirage, almost dream-like.

Jeanne drops her basket, then breaks into a run.

Charny drops his bag as well, arms open wide. Jeanne jumps into them, and Charny lifts her off her feet and spins her around.

Their lips lock in an especially long, passionate kiss.

When they finally break away, Jeanne looks at Charny's beard, tugs at it with her fingers.

JEANNE

A beard?

CHARNY

Hadn't even noticed. I'll shave it.

JEANNE

No--

She smiles. Kisses him again.

JEANNE

I like it.

He returns the smile. Loses himself in her embrace.

INT. CHARNY HOME - LATER THAT NIGHT

Charny and Jeanne lay in bed, sweaty, post coitus, both staring up at the ceiling, Jeanne's head resting on Charny's chest.

JEANNE
It seems a dream.

CHARNY
Then don't wake me.

She playfully ribs him. Then her face goes solemn.

JEANNE
For a time, I was not certain...

A wave of emotion comes over her. Charny holds her tighter.

CHARNY
I've been away too long.

JEANNE
You only do your duty. I don't know
why I grieve.

Charny lifts her chin. Looks her in the eye.

CHARNY
Because you are a caring woman. Who
loves her husband.

His lips touch hers.

CHARNY
And whose husband loves her.

She rests her head again on his chest.

JEANNE
Did you think of me?

CHARNY
You were my first thought when the
sun rose. My last thought when I lay
down to sleep. And my only thought
on the battlefield.

JEANNE
(smiles)
So talented with words you are. You
should put them down to parchment.

CHARNY
(laughs)
The thought has crossed my mind.

A silent moment. The moonlight beams through the open window.

JEANNE
The days were long. Being an object
of pity.

CHARNY
It pains me.

JEANNE
But it's done. The Lord God has seen
fit to bring us together again.

Charny's face goes dark.

CHARNY
God had no hand in this.

Jeanne looks at Charny. Gently strokes his cheek.

JEANNE
That was a long time ago.

CHARNY
It feels as though yesterday.

She looks at him pleadingly.

JEANNE
Can we not get past this?

He turns onto his side. Facing away from her.

CHARNY
I'm tired.

She reaches out to touch him, but pulls her hand away. Hurt.
An unspoken wedge between them.

The moonlight fades away as they lie in silence.

EXT. FARMLAND, CHARNY HOME - DAYS LATER

A particularly warm autumn day.

From overhead, looking down on the large farmland behind
their property. Charny toils the soil intently with a
pitchfork, most of his shirt unbuttoned, draped in sweat.

Jeanne passes nearby, heading for the house. She waves at
him.

Charny waves back at her.

Jeanne goes inside.

Charny spears the pitchfork into the dirt. Leans on it for a moment. Wipes the sweat from his brow.

He looks up at the blazing sun. Taking in the tranquillity of it all.

Finally he turns and starts to head back toward the house.

VOICE (O.S)
Geoffroi de Charny.

Charny stops. Turns around to find STEFANO approaching slowly. Hesitantly.

STEFANO
Can we talk...?

FADE OUT