

Last of the Gnostics

written by

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based on the book by

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BLACK SCREEN

SUPER: "The Albigensian Crusade took place from 1209 until 1229 in southern France. It was more of a war than a crusade, with small armies of the local nobles defending the Cathars from Catholic Crusaders. The war had many twists and turns, but the end result was always inevitable. Once it was over, the Cathars were no more. This is their story and is based on actual events."

SUPER: "Based on actual events."

SUPER: "Lombers Castle, Languedoc. 1165."

FADE IN:

EXT. LOMBERS CASTLE - DAY

A group of Catholic cardinals, bishops, and priests are seen entering the castle.

INT. LOMBERS CASTLE - DAY

A group of Catholic CARDINALS (dressed in red), BISHOPS (dressed in black), and PRIESTS (dressed in white) are sitting around a wooden rectangular table inside a large stone room. It is elegantly appointed with shiny gold candle holders, a coat of arms, and paintings on the walls.

CARDINAL

Pope Alexander has decided that we can no longer allow the heretics to influence all of Languedoc. The time has come for the Catholic Church to take action.

BISHOP

How? The Perfecti are in every town and village. They number into the thousands. The people consider them the holy ones, the Apostles of God. Each Perfecti is revered as much as we revere our Pope.

CARDINAL

The Pope understands your situation. Today we will sign an edict that

proclaims the Cathars heretics. As such they are now subject to heresy laws and punishable by death.

PRIEST

Everyone in Languedoc already knows that the Church considers the Perfecti heretics. That has not subjected them to punishment. We are powerless here in Languedoc. The nobles protect them. If I see a Perfecti walking the streets, there is no one I can inform to arrest the heretic.

BISHOP

He is right. In Toulouse there are dozens of Perfecti who walk the streets daily. Even with this edict, there is nothing I can do. The local authorities will not arrest them without the nobles consent.

CARDINAL

(grinning)

This is only the first step. We will issue the edict to let the people of Languedoc know that the Cathars are officially branded as heretics. In due time, they will be arrested and burned.

His grin turns into a mean scowl. The camera pans the men's faces, who are alarmed at what is likely to happen to the Cathars.

A noble family is bowed in prayer at a dinner table, including the LORD of the castle. Perfecti PIERRE is wearing a brown robe, and sitting at one end of the table. Everyone else is wearing bright colored clothes. On top of a red tablecloth, silver dominates the large rectangular table. There are goblets, plates, trays, knives and forks all made of silver.

PIERRE

Amen.

Everyone repeats the "amen" and begins eating.

LORD

Perfecti Pierre, what do you make of the edict in Lombers? Are the Perfecti threatened?

PIERRE

(somber)

It is quite unsettling. There have been burnings of Perfecti in Germany and Italy. I'm afraid it is going to come here one day. If the King of France ever supports the Pope, then we are truly threatened.

LORD

(perplexed)

Why do you fear the King? He has never bothered this region before. We are independent.

PIERRE

It is not the King I fear, but the Pope's ambition. The Pope requires royal power to do his bidding. He is powerless without it.

LORD

Fear not, the King is our friend.

PIERRE

(raising his chalice while grinning)

Let us toast that the King will always be our fiend.

The lord raises he chalice and they both drink.

PIERRE

(rising from his chair)

I need to look in on Margaret. Excuse me.

LORD

(smiling)

If you have time later, come by my chambers. I would like to hear about my new child.

Pierre nods and then walks out of the room.

INT. FANJEAUX CASTLE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Pierre is standing at the back of the room watching the midwife deliver the baby. The sound of labor pain and heavy breathing dominate the room. Less than a minute later, a new baby girl cries out her first breath. MARGARET holds her new baby and beams. Pierre walks close to the bed.

MARGARET

Perfecti, please bless Blanche, my sweet Blanche. Hopefully she will be a Perfecti, like yourself.

PIERRE

(bowing in prayer)

God, always look after Blanche and give her the life that she desires. Fill it with love and affection and make her dreams come true. Amen.

MARGARET

(opening her eyes)

Amen.

Pierre smiles at the beautiful baby who is staring at him.

PIERRE

Margaret, she is beautiful, like you. I hope to watch her grow up.

MARGARET

(smiling)

Oh, you will. She is going to be your student.

PIERRE

(smiling)

I need to tell the Lord of the castle about his daughter. You need to rest, Margaret. I will see you tomorrow.

INT. FANJEAUX CASTLE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Pierre walks through the stone castle looking for the lord. It is a stone hallway and every ten feet he passes a burning lantern.

INT. FANJEAUX CASTLE LORD'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

The room is much brighter from a chandelier and a fireplace. Wool carpets cover a wooden floor. The lord is sitting in an opulent chair. He is still wearing his formal attire, a bright red tunic with gold trim.

PIERRE

(smiling)

My Lord, I come with good news. You have a new daughter. Her name is Blanche.

LORD

(smiling)

Wonderful, wonderful. I am grateful that you were here tonight to bless her upon her birth. Please sit.

Pierre sat in one of the comfortable chairs.

LORD

You know, Perfecti, as a young girl, Margaret spent time at the local Perfecti Women's Home here in Fanjeaux. She wanted to be a Perfecti.

PIERRE

(nodding)

Yes, I know.

LORD

Margaret is devoted to your cause. I think she is going to want to place her first daughter in the women's home. She has already said as much. I want you to know that I oppose this because our new daughter is of noble blood. She should marry into another noble house and give birth to a future king.

PIERRE

(nodding)

I will keep your wishes in mind when I counsel Margaret. I will do everything I can to discourage her.

LORD

Thank you, Perfecti.

Pierre stands to leave the room and bows his head.

PIERRE

My Lord, thank you for your support. Without the nobles, we could not exist.

LORD

Pierre, you know that I am always grateful to have you in this house... You have nothing to worry about. We will always support the Perfecti.

EXT. FANJEAUX - DAY

Pierre is walking down the street of the small town. He is wearing a simple brown robe with sandals and a belt. People bow to him as he walks past.

Suddenly a MAN comes running to greet him. He supplicates himself on all fours and pleads, never once looking up.

MAN

Perfecti, Perfecti my mother is dying. She only has hours left. Please come and give her the consolamentum. Please, I beg you.

PIERRE

Take me to her.

Pierre follows the man down the street until they arrive at his simple wooden home. Pierre follows as the man enters the house.

INT. MAN'S HOME - DAY

Pierre follows the man into a bedroom. The Perfecti's presence makes the elderly LADY lying in bed attempt to smile. She is weak, near death, and the smile will not come.

PIERRE

Can you speak? Are you ready to give yourself to God?

LADY

(barely audible)

Yes, Perfecti. I am ready.

PIERRE

Do you agree to renounce this world in favor of God's Kingdom?

LADY

Yes.

PIERRE

Do you agree to live an ascetic life of praying, fasting and confessing? Only eating vegetables, fruits, nuts, grains, bread, and fish? Never again to eat the flesh of an animal?

LADY

Yes.

PIERRE

Do you agree to not lie, steal, condemn, harm, or satisfy bodily desires?

LADY

Yes.

PIERRE

Do you agree to live like the Apostles and give yourself to God?

LADY

Yes.

PIERRE

Do you agree to keep these commandments?

LADY

Yes.

PIERRE

Do you agree to contemplate the source
of your consciousness with a quiet
mind, searching for the nous, the
connection to God?

LADY

Yes.

PIERRE

Then let us pray.

Pierre places his hand on the hand of the elderly lady and
begins to pray silently. After he is finished, he smiles and
looks deeply into her eyes.

PIERRE

Perfecti, you have now been baptized
with the Holy Spirit. We will meet
again in the Kingdom. Go in peace.
Jesus is waiting.

Pierre bows and leaves the room. Her son is kneeling in a
corner watching in wonder. He follows Pierre out of the
room.

MAN

Perfecti, thank you, thank you so much.
I will give a donation to the women's
home.

PIERRE

(smiling)

That would be generous. Thank you.

Pierre exits the front door.

SUPER: "Fanjeaux Castle, Languedoc. 1184."

INT. FANJEAUX CASTLE - DAY

Nineteen-year-old BLANCHE sits at the lone table in the
library. The room is small with only a few dozen scrolls and

books. Lanterns on the walls and two candles on the table provide sufficient light. Spread out before her is a scroll.

Pierre enters wearing his brown robe. He smiles cheerfully and sits down opposite Blanche.

PIERRE

Good morning, Blanche. Are you ready for your lesson?

BLANCHE

(nodding)

I think I'm starting to understand Valentinus. Is he referring to our false ego when he mentions dying to our true self?

PIERRE

Indeed. Valentinus was one of the first master Christian Gnostics. He studied what Jesus had taught and those who came before Jesus, such as Plato, Socrates, and Pythagoras. All of these great Gnostics taught the same thing, that we are God. This is spelled out in the Gnostic Gospels, such as the scripture from the Gospel of Phillip, 'God is the One who is innermost of all.' Or, my favorite from the Gospel of Thomas, 'Blessed is he who is what he was before he was created.'

BLANCHE

(confused)

What could we have possibly been before we were created? God?

PIERRE

(excited)

Exactly! What else could we have been? We have always been God. That is the source of our consciousness. This is our true inner self. By contemplating on this source, we can find God, the One that is innermost of all.

PIERRE

(pausing)

A Gnostic contemplates with a quiet mind, trying to find this innermost place of our consciousness. That is where God resides. It is a place that we all share. That is the source of the oneness of life.

BLANCHE

(pointing at the stanza)

How do we kill the ego, and die to this true inner self?

PIERRE

That is the duality of life. There is the inner world of spirit and there is the external world of matter, the world in which we live. The world of matter is false, an illusion. It is completely subjective and relative. There is nothing real about it. Thus, it is the opposite of the absolute goodness of God. The inner world is absolute goodness. The external world is relative nonsense.

BLANCHE

(excited)

Is that why you say that this is Satan's world? And that God is not really here?

PIERRE

(nodding)

That's the key to Gnosis. Once you recognize that God cannot truly exist in the world of the relative, then you begin to understand that God's reality is somewhere else, in the inner world of the absolute.

PIERRE

(pausing)

What Valentinus is talking about is a metaphorical death of the false external personality. For instance, my persona as Pierre, the Perfecti, is not real. My true identity is much more

than just Pierre. For me to find that identity, I have to metaphorically kill Pierre and become my true inner self.

BLANCHE

(confused)

Is that possible?

PIERRE

Yes, simply by recognizing that my persona is false. It's no different than an actor playing a role in a play. The actor is aware that he is playing a role, but that it is only temporary. After the play is concluded, the role must be discarded for the true identity.

BLANCHE

(smiling)

That is easy to understand! I'm not really Blanche! I'm just playing Blanche. Once I die, I go back to the real me.

PIERRE

(smiling)

Even better, you can go back to the real you while you are alive today. This is done by Gnosis, the awareness of your source. Blessed is he who is what he was before he was created.

Blanche nods, but Pierre can see the confusion in her eyes.

PIERRE

Killing the ego takes lots of work, and for most of us, many lifetimes. Thus, not everyone can truly become a Perfecti in this lifetime. Attaining purity requires mastery of the ego, which is not easy. The starting point is recognizing the strength of the ego and the objective of the ego, which is to survive. Thus, attaining mastery is a battle of wills between the ego, our

false self, and our soul, which is our true self.

Pierre stopped and waited for her reply.

BLANCHE

I never realized that was the meaning of life. It makes so much sense the way you explain it. Life is all about finding God, about finding our true identity. How marvelous, yet so mystifying.

PIERRE

(smiling)

That's all we have time for today. We will talk again more tomorrow.

BLANCHE

(smiling and standing up to leave)

I can't wait!

INT. FANJEAUX CASTLE - DAY

Pierre walks into the great room in his brown robe. The LORD of Fanjeaux and his large family are seated for supper. The servants are finishing placing food on the table.

Pierre sits down and bows his head in prayer. Everyone at the table bows their head and closes their eyes.

PIERRE

Holy God, Creator, and nurturer. We give thanks and gratitude for your humble grace. Bless this family with your gentle kindness and unwavering guidance. Amen.

Everyone repeats the "amen" and begins eating.

LORD

Perfecti, what can you tell me about Ad abolendam, the Papal Bull recently announced in Rome?

PIERRE

It is a specific requirement of the local Episcopal clergy, the Catholic Church, to pursue heresy. It is now the duty of every diocese to pursue heretics and inform the local secular institutions of these offenders. Most significantly, it requires the local clergy to inform their Bishop of any known heretics in their diocese.

LORD

What effect do you think it will have in Languedoc?

PIERRE

For now, very little. Currently, there is no way for the Church to enforce heresy laws in Languedoc. However, other parts of Europe will see severe enforcement.

LORD

(smiling and drinking)

Then there is nothing to worry about.

PIERRE

(somber)

The day is approaching.

BLANCHE

(concerned)

What day?

PIERRE

Persecution. Death. Bloodshed for Perfecti. Burning at the stake.

BLANCHE

(shocked)

Why? Why does such a thing have to happen?

PIERRE

Heretics have always been persecuted by the Catholics. The Cathari have just

been fortunate to have been protected
by the nobles. It cannot last forever.

BLANCHE
(pleadingly)
Why not?

PIERRE
Because it is written as prophecy. The
Perfecti will burn and be no more.
Then, in the end times, our message
will blossom again to affect all of
mankind.

BLANCHE
(afraid)
Where did the prophecy come from?

PIERRE
They say it came from Mary Magdalene,
but probably not. The prophecy scroll
has been passed down for generations.

BLANCHE
Does the persecution have to begin now?

PIERRE
It doesn't, but the Papal Bull is the
second omen. Soon there will be a third
and final omen. The Catholic Church is
not going to let us exist for much
longer.

BLANCHE
(frantic and near tears)
Oh, my God! What was the first omen?

PIERRE
On the night you were born, your father
and I spoke about the Papal Edict of
Albi, which had just been issued...

BLANCHE
(still frantic, interrupting)
In 1165?

PIERRE

(nodding)

Yes, only a few days before you were born. The edict condemned the Cathari as heretics. I told your father that it wouldn't be much longer. For the last nineteen years, I have reminded him how lucky we have been that the Catholics have not been back.

BLANCHE

(still frantic)

They're coming for you? For the Perfecti?

PIERRE

In time. It could be one year, or it could be ten. It's impossible to know. However, I do believe the prophecy. I do believe they're coming. We are the only heretics in Europe who have been left alone. They are burning heretics everywhere else.

BLANCHE

(sobbing)

I can't believe they are going to kill Perfecti! You are not heretics. Perfecti are the Holy ones, the pure ones! You are the true descendants of Jesus. Not them!

PIERRE

(softly)

Blanche, remember that this world is Satan's. It is an evil place.

BLANCHE

(sternly)

This should not happen. They have no right to murder the Perfecti.

LORD

(calmly)

Well, you can perhaps prevent it if you marry the Lord of Laurac.

Blanche looks sternly at her father.

BLANCHE

Have you no mercy for the Perfecti?
Pierre could be burned at the stake.
They all could be burned! We must do
what we can to save them.

LORD

That is my point, Blanche. You need
resources to protect the Perfecti. The
Lord of Laurac is very wealthy. It will
be a good fortress for you. You will
have a much better chance of helping
them as a noble Countess than as
Perfecti. As you know, the Perfecti
cannot defend themselves. They cannot
shed the blood of their enemy.

The table is quiet, waiting for Blanche to respond.

BLANCHE

(determined)

Then I will marry the Lord of Laurac.
You can inform his family.

LORD

(smiling and reaching for fork)

Very well then, let's eat.

MARGARET

(concerned)

Are you sure, Blanche? Is this what you
truly want?

BLANCHE

(nodding resolutely)

Father is right. It is better for me to
help the Perfecti than to become one.
If I become a Perfecti there is nothing
I can do for them. As Countess of
Laurac I can help them.

INT. LAURAC CASTLE - DAY

Pierre and Blanche are seated together talking in a large
room. She is dressed in a beautiful gown as a Countess, he

in his brown robe. The room is decorated in regalia revealing her wealth. He is becoming old.

BLANCHE

Pierre, today I saw two Cistercian Catholic monks preaching to the people in the streets of Laurac. Is this the third omen?

PIERRE

(shaking his head)

No. The last omen will be another Papal Bull against heresy. The Cistercians are just passing through. Few will listen to them. They are not our fear. Blanche, the only thing that can jeopardize the Cathars is the withholding of support by the nobles. As long as we have their support, we will exist.

BLANCHE

(smiling)

I didn't think it was the third omen.

PIERRE

(smiling)

No. We still have more time.

BLANCHE

(looking concerned)

How do you feel today?

PIERRE

I feel fine. Why?

BLANCHE

(excited)

Why don't we walk down to the public square, and you can debate the Cistercians? I can bring the women Perfecti, and there are several men Perfecti in training here in Laurac who can come.

PIERRE

(reluctant)

Okay. I will do it for you. This afternoon we will walk to the square.

BLANCHE

(standing and smiling)

Would you like to come outside and see Joanna and Jean? Since they lost their father, you are the only man of the house. You know how much they love to see you.

PIERRE

(grinning and standing)

Sure. Let's go see them.

Blanche and Pierre walk outside.

EXT. LAURAC CASTLE - DAY

The wide expanse of green grass is beautiful. There are well-manicured plants and flowers in a large garden. Two young children, a boy and a girl, are playing with servants. JOANNA is five and JEAN three. They come running to Blanche and Pierre.

JOANNA

(smiling in his arms)

Perfecti, mother says I am going to be a Perfecti when I grow up. I'm going to wear a robe just like you!

Pierre smiles holding Joanna.

PIERRE

Joanna, are you sure you want to wear brown? I thought you liked pink?

JOANNA

I'll have to change the rules.

Everyone laughs.

EXT. LAURAC - DAY

Blanche and Pierre lead a parade of thirty people to the town square. A crowd has already assembled, listening to two

CISTERCIAN monks. When Pierre and his entourage approach they stand back and allow Pierre to enter and approach the monks.

Pierre wore his usual nondescript brown robe. His presence and stature resonated throughout the square.

PIERRE

(tersely)

You may go first.

CISTERCIAN

(reading from a scroll)

Leviticus 24-15. Whosoever shall curse God shall bear his sin. And he that names the name of the Lord, let him die. Let all the congregation stone him with stones; Acts 2-38. Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.

PIERRE

(to the crowd)

Jesus says, 'It is not I who doeth these works, but the Father within me.' And then he says, 'You shall do greater works than these.' Do you understand?

A few people nod, but there is no response.

PIERRE

(loudly)

God is within. Can it be stated any more simply than that? He does not say that you can do greater works than these, but that you shall. The key here is time. When shall you do these greater works? When will you be like Jesus? In this lifetime? Probably not. Then which lifetime will it be? The answer is simple, when you find God within.

PIERRE

(pausing and scanning the crowd)

You will never find God in the world.
As Jesus told us, God is within. The
Holy Spirit is the connection to God.
We all have this connection, or else
Jesus would not have spoken these
words.

CISTERCIAN

(with scorn)

You heretics are always searching for
God, but never finding him. If you want
to find God, then join the Catholic
Church and be baptized. Jesus Christ
will then give you admission to God's
Kingdom. That is the only finding that
needs to be done!

PIERRE

So, I'm a heretic because I'm trying to
find God? And your Church is the only
way?

CISTERCIAN

Indeed! But there's more. You spit on
the cross. You call our church the
Church of Satan. You dishonor our
baptism and sacraments. You claim Jesus
was married. You believe in
reincarnation. You're vegetarians. And,
let us not forget, you do not honor
marriage!

PIERRE

(shaking his head and looking down)

A pity. Let's not forget that we treat
women with equality, and that we give
an oath to God not to lie or steal or
condemn. I wish I could take that last
vow back and condemn you today.

The crowd laughs.

CISTERCIAN

(enraged)

This is blasphemy!

PIERRE

(looking right at the CISTERCIAN)
The only blasphemy is the denial of the
divine. Separation is a lie. We are not
separate from the Creator, from God.
All is divine, all is connected.

CISTERCIAN

You should all be rounded up and
burned!

PIERRE

Are you sure you want to kill Jesus'
descendants? Before you begin your
burning, you should make sure that some
of the perfecti are not the true
descendants. After all, doesn't your
Pope claim his authority from the
apostolic succession? It wouldn't be
good for your church if some of Jesus'
descendants existed here in Languedoc.

CISTERCIAN

You bluff. There are no descendants of
Jesus!

PIERRE

As the people know, a Perfecti does not
lie. After the crucifixion, Mary
Magdalene came to Languedoc with her
daughter Sarah. This was Jesus' child.
And they weren't the only members of
his family who immigrated to Languedoc.
There were also his cousins. Jesus'
family line goes back through the
Merovingian Kings and lives on today.

CISTERCIAN

You lie. You are a heretic.

PIERRE

If I lie, then maybe I should burn.
However, Mary Magdalene words live on.
We know our ancestry. Don't tell us
what we know and what we don't!

The people roar in approval. Pierre raises his hands to calm the crowd.

PIERRE

If the Gospel of Mary Magdalene is false, then maybe the Cathars should burn. It is the foundation of our heritage. But if it is true, and you burn the Cathars, it will be a great injustice. For those of you who allow it to happen, know that your ancestors will remember. Also, know that in place of the Cathars, all that will be left are the Catholics! There will be no more blessings from the true descendants. God's Apostles will be taken from this region. Like the rest of the world, Languedoc will begin to wither in spiritual decay. The Cathars will be gone!

Pierre turns from the monks and walks off the square. The crowd parts in silence and lets him pass. He walks alone toward the castle. Blanche and the women Perfecti follow at short distance. The crowd is shaken by his final words and remains quiet until he is gone.

SUPER: "Laurac Castle, Languedoc. 1199."

INT. LAURAC CASTLE - DAY

Blanche is sitting alone in the great room near the fire. She is dressed elegantly.

The great room is made of stone walls with a wooden floor and wooden ceiling. Carpets soak up the heat of the fire and warm the room. Tapestries on the walls also serve the same purpose. It is not an ornate room, although a beautiful coat of arms hangs over the fireplace revealing the stature of the family.

Pierre enters the room wearing his brown robe. He is now elderly.

PIERRE

(bowing his head)

Countess.

Pierre sits down opposite of Blanche.

BLANCHE

(nodding)

Pierre.

PIERRE

(solemnly)

It has happened.

BLANCHE

(apprehensively)

The third omen?

PIERRE

(nodding)

The new Pope, Innocent III, released a Bull declaring heresy a crime. There is a long list of punishments. It is really directed at you, the Cathar supporters. If they find you guilty of supporting heretics, they can take away your castle, your title, and all of your lands. If they find one of your children guilty, they can remove their ability to inherit.

BLANCHE

(shocked)

Do they really have that power in Languedoc?

PIERRE

Not yet, and not without King Phillip Augustus' support. They will need the French King's help to threaten the nobles. You have your own armies. The Church can't fight them without the King's help, or at least his tacit approval.

BLANCHE

(calm)

Will the King turn on us?

PIERRE

(nodding and solemn)

I'm sorry, Blanche. This is it, the third omen. It will come fast now. This new Pope appears to have made this law specifically for Languedoc. Where else are Cathar supporters so strong that you need a law of this magnitude? He seems determined. He will find a way to make an allegiance with the King. I have no doubt. This is the end.

BLANCHE

(hesitates)

The Papacy has been trying to get the French Monarchy to pressure us for years. Even if there is an alliance between the Pope and the King, the nobles will still support the Cathars. We are the King's vassals, but he cannot tell us what to do regarding the Cathars. There would have to be a war, Pierre. That is the only way.

PIERRE

(raises his eyebrows)

It's hard to say how the Catholics will attack heresy in Languedoc. They are going to want to arrest and burn Perfecti. They could have a Church functionary do this or a local secular group. Either way, for this to succeed, the nobles will have to support their efforts. They will need the nobles to stand down. If the Pope can get the nobles to turn in heretics, the Catholics have won.

BLANCHE

(intensely)

Damn them! This is a peaceful place. Now the Church wants to start a war so they can burn innocent Perfecti. I've never completely agreed with the Cathar belief that the world is of Satan. I can't imagine someone as evil as Satan

creating this much love and beauty. But sometimes I wonder.

Pierre grins.

BLANCHE

(calm)

I will go see the Count of Toulouse. I will tell Raymond your thoughts and the predicament that is approaching. I can't imagine him standing down. He will protect the Perfecti with his life.

PIERRE

He is a loyal supporter and our most important. Without his army, we are lost.

BLANCHE

I fear a war is coming, and many people are going to die.

EXT. LAURAC CASTLE - DAY

Pierre is walking in the castle's garden. JOANNA, Blanche's fourteen-year-old daughter, sees him and comes running.

JOANNA

Perfecti, what were you talking about at dinner last night? What is a Papal Bull?

PIERRE

(hesitating)

Joanna, I suppose you are old enough to know. You have been asking me questions about God since you were five.

JOANNA

Know what, Perfecti Pierre?

Pierre points to a bench that provides a view of the village below. The castle is on a hill above the town of Laurac.

PIERRE

Please sit.

Pierre sits next to Joanna. Behind them the castle looms. On either side of them are beautiful flower beds.

PIERRE

As you are aware, there is a Catholic Church in Laurac.

Joanna nods, listening attentively.

PIERRE

They have a church leader called the Pope, and this Pope does not like Cathars. In fact, he dislikes us so much that he has had many Perfecti killed in other countries.

JOANNA

(surprised)

Killed? What do you mean?

PIERRE

Burned at the stake. The Catholics and the Gnostics have been competing for the hearts and minds of the people ever since Jesus died on the cross. Soon after the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, where the New Testament was compiled and the modern Catholic Church came into existence, all of the Gnostics were labeled as heretics. This began the purging and burning of heretics by the Catholic Church. And it continues today throughout Europe.

JOANNA

(incredulous)

Perfecti Pierre, how can they do that?

PIERRE

They are very powerful, except here in Languedoc, where the nobles protect us. The Catholic Church believes that only their beliefs are correct, and that it is their duty to God to eliminate all blasphemy from the face of the earth.

They have labeled us as heretics, which is just another way of saying that we are blasphemers.

JOANNA

(flustered)

I don't understand. It's all so confusing.

PIERRE

(smiling)

Indeed, it is confusing. Let me try to explain. The Catholics believe that our ideas about Mary Magdalene and Jesus are wrong. For instance, they don't believe that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married, or that she brought her child to France. Therefore, they don't believe that Mary Magdalene wrote a Gospel here in France, the one that we have been studying since 30 AD. In fact, they are saying that most of our beliefs are blasphemous.

JOANNA

(intensely)

That is crazy! Our beliefs came from Mary Magdalene, which she learned from Jesus. How can they say our beliefs are wrong!

PIERRE

You are right, Joanna. Our beliefs are as solid as the ground we walk upon. We are the true descendants.

JOANNA

(calm)

I thought so. Why are they so confused?

PIERRE

The Catholics do not recognize that they are one with God. They perceive separation between themselves and God. Conversely, we believe that our soul connects us with God. This is considered heresy by the Catholics. We

believe that our spirit, our soul, is divine, and thus we are divine. This makes us one with God, and it is only delusion to believe otherwise. Conversely, the Catholics not only don't believe this, but instead believe that our soul can only be saved by the Catholic Church.

JOANNA

(intrigued)

Saved? They believe that only Catholic's are going to heaven?

Pierre nods.

JOANNA

That's utter nonsense. Mary Magdalene wasn't a Catholic, but I know she's there. They are using fear to make people be Catholics. It's a message of come to church or else.

PIERRE

(smiling)

I couldn't have said it better myself.

JOANNA

Where do they think our soul comes from? Do they think it is created at birth?

Pierre nods.

JOANNA

Oh, this is ridiculous. They don't understand, do they Perfecti?

PIERRE

(shaking his head)

They are misguided. After Jesus' death, the early Christians were split into two groups: the Gnostics of which Mary Magdalene was a part; and the Catholics, of which the Apostle Peter was the head. The Cathars descended from Mary Magdalene and are now the

last of the Gnostics. The Catholic Church evolved out of Peter's group.

JOANNA

Peter wasn't a Gnostic?

PIERRE

(shaking his head)

No. The Catholics are a lot like the Old Testament. They are God fearing. They fear that if they do not live a certain way, such as being a proper Catholic, then God will not save their soul. The Gnostics are God loving. They have no fear of God because they know that God loves them. But more than that, they know that their soul connects them to God, making them one with God.

JOANNA

(contemplates)

I can see why the Catholics are so mad at you. Your beliefs are completely different. You preach that we are God, and they preach that we aren't.

PIERRE

(smiling)

You're a prodigy, Joanna, just like your mother. Yes, you're exactly right.

JOANNA

And this difference is enough for the Catholics to want to kill the Perfecti?

PIERRE

(nodding)

Sadly, yes. I think it is coming soon. I am getting old, but you will witness it one day. Very likely, you will see the end of the Cathars and the last of the Gnostics.

JOANNA

(saddened)

That is so hard to believe. We are the true descendants, not them. There was no one closer to Jesus or understood him better than Mary Magdalene. She was the Apostle of the Apostles. How could God let Cathars be killed for following her?

PIERRE

That is a discussion for another time. Now, go have fun. It's beautiful day.

JOANNA

Just one more question. What does Cathar mean?

PIERRE

(smiling)

It's a Greek word. It means purity.

JOANNA

(smiling)

That's why they call Perfecti the pure ones!

Joanna walks away. Pierre smiles on the bench.

SUPER: "Rome, Italy. 1209."

INT. VATICAN - DAY

Seated at a finely crafted rectangular table are the POPE, along with various cardinals, BISHOPS, and advisors. The Pope is wearing white. The cardinals red, and the bishops black.

BISHOP

(speaking to the Pope)

King Phillip Augustus has finally agreed to allow a crusade in Languedoc. He will not send any of his army, but we have his approval.

POPE

We will call it the Albigensian Crusade. Who is going to lead the Crusaders?

BISHOP

Arnaud Amuary. He is the chief Abbot of the Cistercian order in Languedoc. He lives in Citeaux and knows southern France and the Cathar situation.

POPE

(nodding)

Okay. Hire enough mercenaries so that his army is sufficiently intimidating. We want Languedoc to surrender, so that we can eliminate the heretics quickly.

BISHOP

Is that the objective? We intend to eliminate the Cathars?

POPE

(coldly)

Of course. The Crusaders can go from town to town until the heretics are eliminated. The sooner they are gone, the better.

Everyone nods in agreement.

EXT. BEZIERS, LANGUEDOC - DAY

A large army of 30,000 men is shown advancing on Beziers, a town of 10,000 people. The army stops within a mile of the town walls.

The leader, AMUARY, gets off his horse and summons a few men.

AMUARY

(menacingly)

Ride into town and deliver these terms. They are to give you a list of all heretics in Beziers or else we will attack. The terms are not negotiable. They have twenty-four hours.

The group of men ride off toward town. The look on Amuary's face is bitterly cold.

EXT. BEZIERS - DAY

The group of men ride back to join the army. Amuary greets them.

AMUARY
(angrily)
Where's the list?

KNIGHT
(still on his horse)
They have closed the town's gates and will not let us enter. We yelled that we have terms to deliver, but they would not open the gates.

AMUARY
(hesitating)
Kill them all. God will know his own!

The Crusaders attack without abandon. The city is plundered. Nearly everyone is killed, including the women and children. It is vicious, with scene after scene of people being murdered with swords. Every building is searched and lit on fire. Afterward, the city is seen burning, most of it burned to the ground. Any survivor is lucky.

INT. LAURAC CASTLE - DAY

Blanche enters Pierre's room. He is elderly and lying in bed. She sits near his bed.

BLANCHE
(solemnly)
Pierre, the war has started. The Pope has unleashed a Crusade against the Cathars. It is being called the Albigensian Crusade, and he has sent an army to Languedoc. A few days ago, they attacked Béziers and plundered the town, killing nearly everyone. Yesterday, Narbonne surrendered to terms. Twenty-seven Perfecti were burned at the stake.

Pierre coughed and sat up higher in his bed.

PIERRE

(in obvious pain)

What were the terms at Narbonne?

BLANCHE

A list of all heretics. It is just as you have always said. They have come to burn the Perfecti.

PIERRE

(speaking slower than usual, with
very little energy)

How big is their army? Are there any French Royal troops?

BLANCHE

It was reported to be an army of mercenaries, quite big in size, into the tens of thousands.

PIERRE

(coughing, body trembling)

Send Joanna to Montségur for protection. Tell her to stay until the war is over. She will be safe there. Also, send someone to inform the Count of Toulouse to prepare his army. Ask the Count to confirm that King Phillip Augustus is not involved. If the King joins the Pope, we have no defense against such a large army; the nobles would have to accept terms. Hopefully, the Papal mercenaries have merely been paid for forty-five days, and then most will go home.

BLANCHE

(closes and opens her eyes, the
stress is visible on her face.)

I will go see Raymond in Toulouse. Joanna will go to Montségur. Should we evacuate the other Perfecti to Foix or Toulouse?

PIERRE

(shakes his head)

No, there will be time for that later. The Papal army will go town to town. They won't arrive here for months. And once they do, we can easily outmaneuver them here in Lauragaise with the noble's support. There are dozens of nobles in Languedoc, each with their own army. As long as the nobles resist, the Pope will have a hard time removing the Cathars.

BLANCHE

(hesitates)

Pierre, what do you think will be the outcome?

PIERRE

I don't think the Catholics will give up until the Cathars are exterminated. However, this war could have many turns and last a long time. The Pope is trying to capture a very wealthy region that has a lot of resistance. As long as the King does not intervene, it will take years to resolve. As I've told you before, as long as the nobles support us, we will remain. Once they turn their backs, we are finished.

BLANCHE

Pierre, I will never turn my back.

PIERRE

(hesitates)

Not you, Countess, the three Counts who control Languedoc.

BLANCHE

When I see Raymond today, I will tell him your thoughts.

Pierre nodded and forced a grin. His health was clearly failing. Blanche arose and left the room. As soon as she was gone, the grin left his face and was replaced by concern.

EXT. CARCASSONE - DAY

The Crusaders are seen camping outside of Carcassonne, a large walled city. A delegation on horses returns with a list of heretics. Amuary grabs the list and mounts his horse. He leads five hundred men on horses into town through the open gates with the Papal flag leading the way.

When they arrive, the town leaders are waiting, including the leader, TRENCANEL. Amuary dismounts in his colorful uniform and approaches the town leaders.

AMUARY

(menacingly)

Who is Roger-Raymond Trenchavel?

TRENCANEL

(dressed elegantly)

I am Roger-Raymond, the leader of Carcassonne.

AMUARY

(menacingly)

No more. Your town has been appropriated until the crusade is concluded. Put him in the dungeon!

TRENCANEL

(shocked)

You can't do that! I've done nothing wrong.

Several mercenaries forcibly walk him away.

AMUARY

(menacingly)

Now, to the business at hand. The heretics better be easy to find. If there are any problems, we will go door-to-door searching. A few homes just might burn by accident.

The leaders are silent and afraid. Amuary is consumed by his mission.

AMUARY

(speaking to the leaders)

We need ten men who can ride and help us find the heretics. Hurry up and choose! We are ready to begin!

AMUARY

(to one of his knights)

Build the spires and get plenty of wood. Many heretics will be burned today.

Ten volunteers stand in front of the townspeople. Amuary motions for the ten men to mount horses that are waiting. After they are mounted, Amuary mounts his horse.

AMUARY

(loudly)

The first name?

One of Amuary's KNIGHTS, riding next to him, holds the list in his hand.

KNIGHT

Jaques de Bourbon.

AMUARY

(to the volunteers)

Which direction?

They point and the army rides. Soon a heretic's house is invaded and he comes out with hands bound, wearing a brown robe and sandals.

AMUARY

(loudly)

Take him to the spires and burn the heretic!

The Perfecti is thrown onto a horse ridden by a soldier. The Perfecti makes no struggle nor voices a complaint.

Several soldiers escort the Perfecti to the spires. Once they arrive at the town center, they tie the Perfecti to a spire and light the fire.

Once the fire has begun, the soldiers re-mount their horses and hurry back to the hunt. The townspeople watch in horror as the flames engulf one of their Perfecti, who screams.

EXT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Blanche and two of her knights ride toward the gates of Raymond's castle. Behind them looms the walled town of Toulouse. They cross the moat and enter the castle.

EXT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Two of Raymond's knights meet them at the gate and allow them to enter. Once inside the large courtyard, Blanche dismounts her horse and is greeted by ANTOINE. His bright blue tunic reveals his importance.

BLANCHE

(holding out her hand and smiling)

Hello, Antoine. Nice to see you once again.

Antoine kneels on one knee and kisses her hand.

ANTOINE

(smiling)

Countess, it is always a pleasure. This way, Raymond is waiting.

Blanche is dressed in a beautiful gown which appears out of place on the back of a horse. Antoine escorts Blanche to the majestic castle entrance.

INT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

They walk through the castle. Antoine points to a room and Blanche enters. It is the Count's library, a large room with a tall ceiling and fireplace. It is entirely made of stone with thick carpets throughout the floor. There are no windows, which kept the room relatively dark, even with a large chandelier of candles. The many ancient books and scrolls on one of the wall shelves reveals that RAYMOND is erudite.

RAYMOND VI rises from his chair and approaches Blanche. He is wearing a bright red tunic embroidered with gold. His black pants end just below his knees, leaving room for his tall boots. His long unkempt locks fall down to his shoulders. She holds out her hand and he kisses it.

RAYMOND VI

Blanche, it is good to see you again.
Please have a seat.

Raymond sits in his large chair that dominates the room, and Blanche sits nearby. A scroll lays on a table next to his chair.

RAYMOND VI

What brings you to Toulouse?

BLANCHE

The Pope has begun a Crusade against the Cathars.

RAYMOND VI

(flippantly)

I know. They're in Carcassonne today, burning Perfecti.

BLANCHE

(distressed)

Has there been any resistance?

RAYMOND VI

No, although Béziers refused their terms. Those idiots, there were only two dozen Perfecti in Béziers. I would say that only twenty percent of the people of Béziers even supported the Cathars. Why did they die for something they didn't believe in?

BLANCHE

(hesitates)

Perhaps, they didn't expect a pillage. Like you said, everyone knows that there aren't that many Perfecti in Béziers.

RAYMOND VI

(disgusted)

No, I think they just didn't like the Pope. Béziers was never a Catholic bastion. Even those who didn't support the Cathars were not Catholic.

BLANCHE

Pierre said that the Cathars would exist as long as they had the support of the nobles. Do you agree?

RAYMOND VI

(grinning)

He is one of the wisest men in Languedoc, and yes, he is correct. As long as I am alive, the Cathars will exist, and when my son, Raymond the seventh is old enough, he will carry on that mission. We have strength in Languedoc. The Crusaders will not defeat us.

BLANCHE

Pierre is not worried about them. It's the French Royal army that concerns him. The King.

RAYMOND VI

(raising his eyebrows)

Why? King Phillip will never invade Languedoc. These are my lands. There is nothing to worry about.

BLANCHE

(hesitates)

Then Lauragaise is safe?

RAYMOND VI

I can defend Toulouse, but not all of Lauragaise. Laurac is likely threatened. You should evacuate the Perfecti and send them here. There will be no terms in Toulouse.

BLANCHE

(dejected)

You can protect the Cathars only in Toulouse?

RAYMOND VI

Countess, today yes, although that could change. If the Crusader army becomes smaller, then I may attack. It is hard to say, so I cannot promise anything.

BLANCHE

What about the other regions of Lauragaise? Do you think there will be any resistance?

RAYMOND VI

(hesitating)

The region of Foix to the south is protected by Peter of Aragon. Also, the Count of Comminges will defend the Comminges region to the southwest. It is not going to be easy for the Crusaders.

BLANCHE

(smiling)

Thank you, Raymond. That is all I came for. If you need anything, let me know.

Blanche stands and is ready to leave.

RAYMOND VI

It is always a pleasure, Blanche. Tell Pierre hello and to keep in touch.

BLANCHE

(sadly)

His days are short.

RAYMOND VI

I know. I didn't think he would be here when it started. He's been talking about this war for years.

BLANCHE

Since I was a child... There is so much at stake.

Raymond VI nods and Blanche turns and leaves.

EXT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

JOANNA approaches Montségur and begins the hike to the top. The imposing fortress dominates the top of the hill. Steep cliffs and then thirty-foot high brick walls protect it.

EXT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

Joanna is met at the large gate by several PERFECTI dressed in brown robes who welcome her in her matching brown robe. It is relatively empty in the courtyard for such a large fortress. She only sees two other people besides the Perfecti.

PERFECTI

Have you come to stay?

JOANNA

Yes.

PERFECTI

Come inside. We will find you a room of your own and give you a tour.

JOANNA

Thank you. It is generous of you.

They walk across a large empty courtyard and enter the main building through a door which is opened for Joanna.

INT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

Joanna is led down a long stone hallway lit by lanterns. It leads to a great room, which is empty of people. A fire burns in one of the two large fireplaces. Large rectangular tables litter the room, enough to seat more than a hundred people.

JOANNA

Where are all the people for such a large place?

PERFECTI

We came here from Carcassonne when the Crusaders arrived. You're the seventh Perfecti to arrive. I'm sure more will be arriving soon.

JOANNA

(smiling)

I'm glad you're here.

They walk through the great room and down another stone hallway to the bedrooms.

PERFECTI

You can choose a room. There are many available.

Joanna pokes her head into several of the rooms.

JOANNA

This one is fine. The bed looks soft.

Joanna walks into her new room and places her bag on the bed.

PERFECTI

Okay, we'll be back later to show you around.

Joanna nods and they leave. She sits on the bed and looks in her bag.

A few seconds later, GILBERT, a fellow Perfecti and friend of Joanna's enters her room. He walks in wearing his ubiquitous brown robe. He is in his thirties.

GILBERT

Hello, Joanna. What brings you to Montségur?

Joanna quickly rises and gives Gilbert a hug.

JOANNA

(smiling)

Gilbert! You have a new guest. My mother has sent me to live with you.

Gilbert sits in the only available chair.

GILBERT

The crusade?

Joanna nods.

GILBERT

The Pope has sent a crusading army to destroy the Cathars in Languedoc.

Béziers has been pillaged, and everyone was killed. Carcassonne surrendered, and many Perfecti were burned alive.

JOANNA

(concerned)

I'm scared. Pierre told me when I was a young girl that this day would come. He said that Gnostics have been persecuted for centuries by the Catholics. He said they would persecute us, too.

GILBERT

(grinning)

I remember Perfecti Pierre. He used to call the Catholics the Anti-Christ church because of their butchery. Yes, they've been burning Gnostics for centuries. This is nothing new.

JOANNA

Isn't it ironic? We would never lift a hand against the Catholics. Yet we are the ones who are persecuted. We have love in our hearts for them, yet they have wrath and condemnation in their hearts for us. Where did such a religion come from?

GILBERT

From a false beginning. They rejected the nous as a path to God, the most important message of Jesus. Instead, they built a religion based on a judgmental God. A God that expects everyone to be Catholic. Those who are not Catholics are to be purged.

JOANNA

So, they are killing us out of duty? They are killing us because they believe their God expects them to?

GILBERT

(nodding)

Yes. They believe they are expected to eliminate heretics. They believe it is their duty as Catholics.

JOANNA

(shaking her head and emphatic)
It barbaric. They are murderers, no better than the barbarians of the dark ages.

GILBERT

(nodding)
Only this time they hide behind Papal vestments and the so-called legitimacy of Papal Bulls.

JOANNA

And their gilded Cathedrals.

EXT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Antoine rides across the moat and enters Château Narbonnais with several fellow soldiers following. He dismounts his horse, and a servant grabs the horse's reins and takes possession. Antoine quickly walks to the castle.

INT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Antoine enters the library and stands at attention. Inside the stone room, a fire is burning, and the Count is reading in his chair. Raymond VI puts down a scroll.

RAYMOND VI

Yes, Antoine?

ANTOINE

My Lord, Simon de Montfort is now in charge of the Crusade. He is a baron from the north. Perhaps you have heard of him?

RAYMOND VI

(nodding)

He is a worthy opponent. What has Roger-Raymond Trencavel been doing?

ANTOINE

He has been arrested and placed in his own dungeon in Carcassonne. All of the Trencavel lands were confiscated by the Crusaders.

Raymond is startled by the news. He quickly rises from his chair and walks toward the fireplace.

RAYMOND VI

(contemplating)

They are audacious. Just like that, all of his lands taken? This new Pope is certainly determined.

Raymond turns to Antoine who is across the room still standing at attention.

RAYMOND VI

What else?

ANTOINE

Montfort was voted Count of Carcassonne and Béziers. However, no land was given to him. That can only be done by the Pope, in writing.

RAYMOND VI

(angrily)

And the King! We are vassals of the French Monarchy. The Pope can't ignore that fact!

ANTOINE

Yes, my Lord. Also, the army has been reduced in size. It is now less than a thousand men, with only three hundred horses.

RAYMOND VI

(surprised)

That is all? They cannot come to Toulouse with that army, and the nobles in the Carcassonne region will surely resist such a small army.

ANTOINE

Perhaps the Pope is not so wealthy?
Maybe the Crusades to the Holy lands
have emptied their treasury.

RAYMOND VI

(contemplating)

Maybe, but the Crusade will need more
soldiers. With such a small army, I
don't know what the Pope is thinking.

ANTOINE

Time will tell, my Lord.

RAYMOND VI

(looking into the fire)

Thank you, Antoine.

Antoine bows and leaves the room.

EXT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

Blanche is seen hiking up the steep incline to Montségur.
The tall walls of the fortress loom ahead.

EXT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

Blanche walks through the entrance gate. There are nearly
twenty PERFECTI in the courtyard. She walks up to one of
them.

BLANCHE

Perfecti, do you know where I can find
Joanna?

PERFECTI

(grinning)

Yes. Come with me. I will take you to
her room.

Blanche walks with the Perfecti across the courtyard towards
the main building.

INT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

Blanche enters Joanna's room and finds her daughter. It has basic furnishing, a straw bed, a lantern, a chest for her clothes, and two wooden chairs.

JOANNA
(excited)
Mother!

Joanna rises and embraces Blanche.

JOANNA
It is so good to see you. Please, sit.
You must be tired from the hike.

The Countess is wearing one of her colorful gowns and looks out of place. Joanna wears her brown robe.

BLANCHE
It was not easy for this old body.

JOANNA
Mother, you are only forty-four. That
is not old.

BLANCHE
(smiling)
I would rather be your age.

JOANNA
Would you like something to eat?

BLANCHE
Water would be nice.

JOANNA
Okay, let me get you some, and I want
to find Gilbert. He would like to hear
what you have to say. I'll be right
back.

Joanna leaves the room. Shortly later she returns with a wooden cup of water and Gilbert at her side. She hands the cup to a seated Blanche.

JOANNA

Mother, you remember Gilbert?

Blanche holds out her hand.

BLANCHE

Of course, hello Perfecti.

Gilbert kneels on one knee and kisses her hand.

GILBERT

Countess.

Joanna sits on her bed and leaves the remaining chair for Gilbert.

JOANNA

What news do you bring, mother?

BLANCHE

(seriously)

The Crusade is progressing in the Carcassonne region. Most of the towns and villages are agreeing to terms and turning over their Perfecti, many of whom have been burned at the stake. The crusading army has been reduced in size, and they are making slow progress. Also, there has been some resistance from the nobles, but nothing to stop the Crusaders.

GILBERT

Where is the resistance coming from?

BLANCHE

The fortresses of Minerve, Termes, and Cabaret. They only have small mercenary armies, nothing of the size that Roger-Raymond Trencavel had before he was arrested.

GILBERT

What about the Counts of Toulouse, Foix, and Comminges? Why have they not come to the defense of the Carcassonne region?

BLANCHE

It's not their land. At this time, they are making preparations to defend their own lands in the Lauragaise.

JOANNA

(concerned)

What about Laurac? Are the Crusaders going there next?

BLANCHE

No, Raymond said that the Crusader army isn't big enough to invade the Lauragaise. I think we are safe for now.

JOANNA

(pleading)

Then can I come home for a couple of days? I want to visit the Perfecti Women's Home in Laurac? I need to see my girls.

BLANCHE

(hesitating)

If you stay for only a few days and then return. Yes.

JOANNA

(excited)

Thank you, mother! It will feel good to be home and sleep in my own bed. It's been months.

GILBERT

I will accompany her. She will be safe.

BLANCHE

(smiling)

You are always welcome to stay at the castle, Gilbert.

GILBERT

(smiling)

Thank you, Countess.

EXT. LAURAC - DAY

Joanna and Gilbert are walking through town in their brown robes. They approach a small non-descript wooden home.

INT. PERFECTI WOMEN'S HOME - DAY

Joanna and Gilbert enter the front door. The teenage GIRLS are excited to see Joanna. They rise and come to greet her. Joanna waves to the few women in the room.

JOANNA

Hello girls! Let's go into the teaching room.

Gilbert and the girls follow Joanna.

INT. PERFECTI WOMEN'S HOME - DAY

Joanna and Gilbert and the seven teenage girls find a place to sit in the large teaching room. All of them are wearing the same ubiquitous brown robe. The wooden room is furnished only with chairs.

JOANNA

(joyously)

It is good to be back and see all of
your wonderful faces!

The girls smile. Joanna points to Gilbert.

JOANNA

This is my friend, Perfecti Gilbert.

GILBERT

Hello, girls.

The girls smile, but they are not as joyous as Joanna.

JOANNA

What is it? Is there something wrong?

GIRL

Perfecti Joanna, we are afraid. A
Crusade has started. A Crusade to kill
the Perfecti!

Joanna could see the fear in their faces.

JOANNA

(somberly)

I know. That is why I have not visited
in such a long time. I have been at
Montségur, safely behind the walls.

GIRL

Are we going to die?

JOANNA

(contemplating)

I know that my words may not soothe
you, but I am here to help you
understand. Will you be patient with me
today and try?

The girls nod.

JOANNA

Okay. Now, what have I taught you about
your soul?

Joanna waits for someone to reply.

GIRL

That it is divine and connected to God.

JOANNA

(smiling)

Yes. And what else?

GIRL

It is eternal.

JOANNA

Yes! Exactly! That is what you must
understand. Our body is not the soul's
home. Our soul resides in God's
Kingdom, which is our true home.

GIRL

Are you saying, Perfecti Joanna, that
there is no such thing as death? That
our soul is always alive in God's
Kingdom.

JOANNA

(nodding)

Yes. That is Mary Magdalene's message,
and I believe it.

GIRL

Does everyone return to God's Kingdom?

JOANNA

Yes, eventually we all do. Those who
are not ready live in God's Kingdom
must reincarnate back here. They must
be reborn into another body and
encounter Satan once again. This world
of matter is Satan's. God's Kingdom is
of spirit, and matter does not exist.
It is a place of perfection where only
absolute goodness is found.

GIRL

Why would we come here, Perfecti
Joanna? If our soul does not live here,
then why would we come?

JOANNA

(smiling)

Excellent question. We come here of our
own free will. This is something that
was taught to me by my teacher,
Perfecti Pierre, who has passed on and
returned to God's Kingdom. He told me
all about free will and why we would
choose to come here.

JOANNA

(pausing)

Every soul is a part of God and has the
potential to evolve and become more
like God. We literally have infinite
potential. However, achieving that
potential requires experiences and
lessons. This is why we come and expose
ourselves to Satan. For instance, we
come here so that we can understand
God's love. For until you experience
love's opposite, hate, you cannot truly
understand God's love.

GIRL

(confused)

Why would God do that? Why would God expose us to evil? You would think there would be a better way to learn.

JOANNA

God doesn't. We choose to come. It is our choice to learn this way.

GIRL

(defiant)

I wouldn't come! I would stay in God's Kingdom and be happy!

JOANNA

(smiling)

That is what I told Pierre. He said the soul desires expansion through experience. After meeting other souls who have incarnated and experienced Satan, we get curious about their growth and evolvment. Not only that, but we can watch other souls who are currently incarnated. We can even choose which life to live if we decide to incarnate.

GIRL

(confused)

In advance? We see the life we are going to live? Will we know everything about it?

Joanna nods.

GIRL

That sounds interesting. Then you wouldn't be afraid. You would know the outcome.

JOANNA

(nodding)

When we are here, it appears like Hell, but when we look at it from God's

Kingdom, incarnating looks very intriguing and rewarding.

GIRL

Do the Catholic's know about this?

JOANNA

(shaking her head)

No, they don't believe in reincarnation.

GIRL

(raises her hand)

So, we shouldn't be afraid of the Crusaders?

JOANNA

(shaking her head)

If the Crusaders threaten our lives, we should not fear death. The end of this lifetime is simply a destiny, a time to go home, a time to return to God's Kingdom.

GIRL

I'm not afraid of dying, but I'm afraid that Languedoc will no longer have any Perfecti.

The girls, Joanna, and Gilbert look somber.

INT. VATICAN - DAY

Seated at an unblemished large rectangular table are a group of CARDINALS, BISHOPS, and advisors. The cardinals are wearing red, and the bishops black. There are books on shelves that are adorned with golden goblets displaying wealth.

The Pope walks into the room wearing white and takes his seat at the end of the table.

POPE

(speaking to the group)

What progress are we making in Languedoc?

BISHOP

As we expected, the nobles are resisting. Montfort is currently using a trebuchet to crumble the walls of Minerve.

POPE

(looking engaged)

How long will Minerve take?

CARDINAL

About a month. It is highly fortified.

POPE

A month? How long will it take to clear all of Albige?

CARDINAL

(looking discouraged)

Perhaps six months, maybe more.

POPE

At this rate we won't get to the Lauragaise until next year. Okay, let's keep making progress.

The Pope arises and walks out of the room. The Bishops and Cardinals look at each other concerned.

EXT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

A knight rides across the moat and into Château Narbonnais. He finds Antoine in the courtyard and speaks to him. Antoine walks into the castle.

INT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Antoine enters the library and stands at attention. Raymond is reading in his chair. He puts down the scroll.

RAYMOND VI

Yes, Antoine? I thought I heard a horse cross the moat. Did you receive news from Minerve?

ANTOINE

Yes, my Lord. Montfort has nearly taken the fortress. He has built two large trebuchets and has been bombarding it for over a month. They can't hold out much longer. The walls are crumbling.

RAYMOND VI

(wincing and nodding)

Tomorrow we will ride to Minerve. I want to see this for myself.

ANTOINE

Lord, how many knights would you like to bring?

RAYMOND VI

Just me and you. I don't want to be detected.

Antoine nods and leaves the room.

EXT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Raymond VI and Antoine ride out of the castle in their knight regalia and across the moat.

EXT. NEAR MINERVE FORTRESS - DAY

Raymond VI and Antoine arrive near the fortress and dismount on an overlooking hill. Two large trebuchets are heaving hundred pound stones six hundred feet into the front wall of the fortress. Several holes are apparent from the damage. The remaining three walls are protected by sheer cliffs.

RAYMOND VI

This will be over soon. We'll stay and watch the outcome.

Antoine nods.

EXT. MINERVE FORTRESS - DAY

The Crusader army of five hundred men storm the wall. It doesn't take long for them to break through and capture the fortress. The defenders drop their swords and surrender.

The Crusaders march the inhabitants out of the fortress. The captured include a hundred knights, twenty Perfecti, and an assortment of others.

Montfort waits for the captured who march in his direction.

MONTFORT

(chillingly, in a very calm tone)

Build a bonfire and burn the heretics.
Put the knights to the sword and
release the rest.

The three groups are separated. The defending knights are immediately killed with a sword. The Perfecti are herded together and told to sit. The remaining group walks away in a daze.

EXT. MINERVE FORTRESS - DAY

Raymond and Antoine watch the outcome from their hidden location. A bonfire has been started and bound Perfecti are being thrown in one at time. They can hear the screams.

RAYMOND VI

I've seen enough. Let's go.

Raymond and Antoine mount their horses and ride off. The Perfecti continue to be thrown into the fire. Screams can be heard in the distance.

EXT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Blanche rides into the courtyard with two of her knights. Antoine is there to greet her as she dismounts. He kneels and kisses her hand, then escorts the Countess into the castle.

INT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Blanche enters the library wearing a flowing dark green gown with her hair neatly lifted on top of her head into a bun.

Raymond does not get up from his chair. He holds out an open hand and directs Blanche to the chair across from him. He is dressed in his knightly regalia.

RAYMOND VI

Hello, Blanche, have a seat. Would you like something to drink?

Blanche sits.

BLANCHE

(calmly)

No thank you, Raymond. I won't be staying long. I have come to talk about the Crusade. Raymond, the Crusaders and their trebuchets have sacked the Minerve fortress and Raymond de Termes' fortress. All of the Perfecti were burned in a bonfire.

RAYMOND VI

(nodding)

I know. I have been following it. My men have been watching.

BLANCHE

(calmly)

Raymond, Termes is one of the largest fortresses in Languedoc. If they can sack Terms, no one is safe.

RAYMOND VI

(nodding)

It is a pity that Raymond de Termes died, along with his strong mercenary army. It is also a pity that his mother and wife were both burned as heretics. As you know, they were both Holy Perfecti.

BLANCHE

(surprised, her resolve faltering)

They were my friends... The Crusaders are killing the holy ones without regard to their sanctity. How can God allow this?

RAYMOND VI

(without emotion)

Maybe the Cathars are right? Maybe this is Satan's land. Maybe it is Satan that is killing the Perfecti.

BLANCHE

(wiping her watery eyes)

Where will the Crusaders go next?

RAYMOND VI

Most likely, Cabaret. It is the last fortress with a large resistance army in the Carcassonne region. Montfort may come to the Lauragaise after that, so be prepared.

BLANCHE

(pleadingly)

Will you defend us, Raymond?

RAYMOND VI

I'm sorry, Blanche, but my place is here. I will stay and defend Toulouse from behind the walls.

BLANCHE

(afraid)

Our way of life is threatened.

RAYMOND VI

Perhaps, or perhaps not. The end has not yet been determined. Have faith, Blanche.

BLANCHE

(gets up to leave)

I need to get back before dark. Thank you for your time, Raymond.

INT. LAURAC CASTLE

Joanna and Gilbert enter the great room and make a surprise visit. Blanche rises and forces a smile. She is dressed elegantly. She walks towards them and embraces Joanna.

BLANCHE

(unhappy)

You must only stay a day or two.
Perfecti are not safe in Lauragaise
right now. Pierre-Roger, the Lord of
Cabaret has agreed to terms with the
Crusaders. He disbanded his army and
surrendered his fortress. All of Albige
is now in the hands of the Crusaders.
Montfort will likely come here next,
and Raymond is not going to defend us.

JOANNA

(confused)

Mother, why isn't Raymond going to protect
us?

BLANCHE

He's going to defend Toulouse from
behind his fortress walls.

GILBERT

He wants to keep his land. As long as
he does not attack the Crusaders, he
can always agree to terms. If he
attacks he will be excommunicated and
the Crusaders will claim his lands.

BLANCHE

(surprised)

Can the Crusaders do that?

GILBERT

(nodding)

They did it in Carcassonne to Raymond-
Rogers Trencavel. They arrested him,
and he died in irons. The same can
happen to Raymond.

JOANNA

Enough of this war talk. I'm ready to
go see my girls.

BLANCHE

Okay, but be careful. It's no longer
safe in Lauragaise.

JOANNA

Yes, mother. We will be back for supper.

BLANCHE

(smiling)

Tell them all hello and ask if there is anything they need.

JOANNA

Okay. I'll see you tonight.

Gilbert and Joanna walked out of the room in their matching brown robes.

EXT. LAURAC CASTLE - DAY

They exit the castle gates and proceed to walk down the hill to Laurac. The view is spectacular, with rolling green hills down into the valley.

EXT. LAURAC - DAY

Joanna and Gilbert are walking through the town, and each of them is holding the New Testament. A LADY sees them and prostrates herself at their feet. Joanna and Gilbert stop.

LADY

(looking at Joanna)

Perfecti, please pray for me. Please forgive my sins.

Joanna and Gilbert bow in prayer.

JOANNA

Lord, show mercy for the sins of the flesh and pardon them, for they are not our true self. Lord, show mercy for the false self, which is imprisoned in this body. The flesh is imperfect, but the spirit is perfect. Pardon our imperfections and bless the perfection of our soul. Amen.

JOANNA

(smiling)

Rise. You are forgiven.

The lady stands.

JOANNA

(smiling)

Remember, your soul is perfect, without
imperfection. The Lord will always
forgive the sins of the flesh, which
are born of imperfection. Know that you
and God are one, and that it is your
soul that connects you to God. Go in
peace and know that you cannot die,
because your soul is eternal. You only
have one destiny and that is to live
eternally in heaven with Jesus and Mary
Magdalene.

LADY

(smiling)

Thank you, Perfecti. Thank you.

Joanna nods and they continue walking.

INT. LAURAC PERFECTI WOMEN'S HOME - DAY

Joanna and Gilbert enter without knocking.

JOANNA

(joyous)

Hello girls!

The girls quickly rise to their feet and rush to meet Joanna
and Gilbert.

GIRL

(excited)

Are you going to give us a lesson?

JOANNA

(smiling)

Of course. Am I not your teacher?

GIRL

Thank goodness. It's been months, and
the other Perfecti never tell us the
interesting things you do.

JOANNA
(smiling)
I'll try to make it interesting.

Joanna waves to the girls to move to the teaching room.

JOANNA
Let's go to the back.

The girls laugh and hurry into the teaching room. Joanna and Gilbert follow.

INT. LAURAC PERFECTI WOMEN'S HOME - DAY

Everyone finds a seat. The seven girls each wore the same ubiquitous brown robe as Gilbert and Joanna, although each girl had adorned their robe in a unique manner. One girl had sewn a small butterfly on her sleeve. Another had sewn her name in small letters.

JOANNA
The last time I was here we talked
about the differences between the
Catholics and the Cathars. Would you
like to hear more?

Joanna pauses and scans the room. All of the girl's nod.

JOANNA
Okay, then let's begin. There is one
spectacular difference. It is the one
thing that truly divides us. Without
this difference, we would likely be in
agreement for most of our beliefs. And
that difference involves how we
perceive God. We believe that we are
one with God, whereas the Catholics
believe that they are separate from
God.

JOANNA
(pausing)
Does everyone understand how
significant this difference is?

GIRL
(sarcastically)

Enough to want to kill us?

All of the girls laugh. Joanna and Gilbert do not.

JOANNA

Yes, it is that significant, but it is not a laughing matter. In fact, it determines the foundation of countries. It determines if there is awareness of God or if there is ignorance of God.

The girls are now paying close attention.

JOANNA

(pausing)

The Catholics do not search within for God, because they do not believe God can be found. They think it is our folly to search. Little do they know that this is the gateway to God's Kingdom and to inner peace. Our search is what makes us Gnostics, and what gives us direct knowledge of God.

JOANNA

(scanning the room)

So, how do we come to know God?

GIRL

Through the nous. In her Gospel, Mary Magdalene spoke of the nous, our inner connection to God. There is only one consciousness and all consciousness is connected to it.

JOANNA

(nodding)

Exactly. Our souls are like spokes on a wheel, all connected to the hub, which is God's soul. The hub is like a base that connects us all. This connection allows God to hear our prayers. It also allows any two souls to communicate on a soul level. You can pray to Mary Magdalene and her soul will hear you.

GIRL

Do the Catholics know about the nous?

JOANNA

(shaking her head)

No. The Catholics believe that God is separate from us, and there is no such thing as one all encompassing consciousness that connects us all together.

GIRL

But Jesus said that the Kingdom of God is within. The nous is part of us. It is who we are.

JOANNA

(smiling)

Indeed. Our true nature is our spirit, the nous, not our body. The body is matter, but the soul is spirit. It is the spirit that gives us life. It is the spirit that connects everything.

Joanna waits for a response.

GIRL

Is this why Mary Magdalene spoke of the mind as the mischief-maker? Doesn't the mind focus on the body and worldly temptations?

JOANNA

(nodding)

Yes, it does. When you focus on the body, you focus on your personal desires. True happiness comes from a focus on God through the nous. That should be your only desire. The mischief-maker leads us astray through temptation, away from the nous.

GIRL

Is the mischief-maker the ego?

JOANNA

(nodding)

Yes, it is. Our ego is of this world, but it is not our true self. When I look at you, I do not see the real you, but an image of who I think you are. This image is your ego. The ego believes that it is real, and that the world is real. The world is not real. It is an illusion, made of matter. The physical world is not real. Only the spirit is real. Consciousness is real. The soul is real. The body is not. The world is not.

Joanna waits, but there is only silence, so she continues.

JOANNA

Focusing on the nous, our connection to the soul, allows God to show us the way. We become our own leaders. No longer do we trust the words of others, or even holy books such as the Bible. Now we lead ourselves using God's inner direction.

GIRL

Perfecti Joanna, how do we know that it is God showing us the way?

JOANNA

(looking at Gilbert)

Perhaps you should answer this question.

GILBERT

(nodding)

Sure. If you are focusing on the nous and not on the world, then it's easy to know that it is God's direction and not your ego's. However, if you focus on personal desire, then the ego will lead you astray.

GILBERT

(pausing)

So, if you want to know the difference, contemplate your desires. If you have any desire other than devotion to God

and complete contentment with your life, then the ego is leading the way. It's really quite simple. The ego is never satisfied, and the soul, the nous, is always satisfied and content.

JOANNA

Did that answer the question?

The girls nod. Joanna smiles and stands.

JOANNA

Okay, that is all for today. We will be back soon.

EXT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Antoine and several of Raymond's knights ride into Château Narbonnais. He dismounts his horse and walks determinedly toward the castle.

INT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Antoine enters the library and finds Raymond reading. He takes two strides into the room and stands at attention.

RAYMOND VI

(laying down a scroll)

What is Montfort up to?

ANTOINE

My Lord, they have seized control of the entire Albige region.

RAYMOND VI

What have you witnessed?

ANTOINE

Little, if any, resistance, my Lord. Each town has been accepting terms and giving Montfort the Perfecti. We witnessed burnings at St. Pons, Lazamet, Pézenas, and Lodève. He has not been leaving behind any of his soldiers. Instead, he has threatened to come back and pillage any town that allows heresy to return.

Raymond stands and paces back and forth in contemplation, his long hair falling to his shoulders. He speaks without looking at Antoine.

RAYMOND VI

It has taken him nearly two years to subdue Albige, and there has been very little resistance. Now he has fifty towns and villages that he must control, but he doesn't have the manpower.

ANTOINE

I agree, my Lord. There will be revolts.

RAYMOND VI

(nodding)

Until King Phillip Augustus decides on whom inherits Roger-Raymond Trencavel's land, the people will not accept Montfort and the Crusaders as the rulers. The people of Languedoc do not respect the Pope and his army.

ANTOINE

My Lord, do you expect the Crusaders to come to Lauragaise next?

RAYMOND VI

(nodding)

Yes, we need to prepare.

ANTOINE

(gravely)

There is more, my Lord.

Raymond stopped pacing and looked at Antoine with an intensity that sent a chill through Antoine. Raymond stared intently, waiting for him to continue.

ANTOINE

(gravely)

You have been excommunicated, My Lord. All of your lands have been confiscated. We heard yesterday in Narbonne, on our way back to Toulouse.

RAYMOND VI

(contemplating and angry)

I thought this might happen. They confiscated Roger-Raymond Trencavel's land. Montfort must have ambition to take all of my land, too. Pierre was right. For years he told me that war was coming to Toulouse to eliminate the Cathars. I always doubted him, even though I knew he was a wise man.

RAYMOND VI

(pausing)

Antoine, come back tomorrow morning and we will discuss our plans. If they want my lands, they will have to take them.

Antoine nods and leaves the room.

EXT. LAVAUUR - DAY

Antoine and a few of his fellow knights watch as Montfort and the Crusaders march toward Lavaur. Antoine and the knights mount their horses and ride in the opposite direction.

INT. VATICAN - DAY

The Pope is seated when a CARDINAL and an advisor approach him.

POPE

I hear that Albige has been cleared of all heretics?

CARDINAL

Yes, but now we need to add more mercenaries. We can't make a move into the Lauragaise with our present numbers.

POPE

(looking concerned)

How many do we need?

CARDINAL
At least five hundred men.

POPE
(nodding)
Okay, that's fine. When will they get to Toulouse?

CARDINAL
In a few weeks.

POPE
Keep me informed.

The two men turn and leave.

INT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Antoine takes two strides into the library and stands at attention. Raymond is reading in his chair.

RAYMOND VI
(laying down a scroll)
What news to you bring?

ANTOINE
My Lord, Montfort and the Crusaders are marching on Lavaur from the north. They have likely arrived by now. He also has a reinforcement army marching from the south towards Lavaur. I counted five hundred men with Montfort. His nearby reinforcements number a hundred men.

Raymond quickly stands and walks toward the door.

RAYMOND VI
(approaching Antoine)
We will ride immediately and cut off the reinforcements. We need to slow them down before they reach Toulouse.

EXT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Raymond VI and his army of five hundred knights ride away from Château Narbonnais. Antoine and Raymond ride side by side, leading the way.

EXT. COUNTRY SIDE - DAY

One hundred Crusader mercenaries are exposed in an open field. Raymond VI's army on horses attack and slaughter them relatively easily. Many of the mercenaries try to run away but are easily caught by the men on horses. Raymond and Antoine stay back and watch from a distance.

INT. LAURAC CASTLE - DAY

ROBIERRE strides through the castle, wearing his knightly armor. Over his long-sleeve tunic, he wore a light, steel netting that protected his chest and back for sword fighting. His clean pants were made of leather that looked more for show than fighting, as did his spotless boots.

He finds the Countess in the great room and stands at attention.

BLANCHE

(anxiously)

Have the Crusaders arrived, Robierre?

ROBIERRE

Yes, Countess. They are twenty miles north. Montfort has conquered Lavaur. One hundred Perfecti were burned in a bonfire.

Blanche closes her eyes and shudders.

BLANCHE

Was the town spared?

ROBIERRE

Yes, only the defending knights and Perfecti were killed. One hundred knights were put to the sword for resisting.

BLANCHE

(angrily)

We need Raymond to help us!

ROBIERRE

(hesitating)

Countess, he has.

BLANCHE

(surprised)

What do you mean?

ROBIERRE

Raymond's army attacked Montfort's reinforcements from the south and killed one hundred Crusaders. He has begun his defense.

BLANCHE

(smiling)

At last! I knew he would defend his lands. Ride to Château Narbonnais and ask him if he needs my soldiers or any other help.

Robierre bows and leaves the room.

EXT. TOULOUSE - DAY

Raymond and his army are behind the town walls waiting for Montfort and the Crusaders to attack.

A gate is opened and Antoine rides through. He finds Raymond among the soldiers who are camped and waiting. He dismounts his horse and Raymond approaches.

RAYMOND VI

Antoine, did you see any reinforcements?

ANTOINE

No. They have only five hundred men.

RAYMOND VI

The Counts of Foix and Comminges have arrived with their armies. Additional knights have been arriving from the nobles. We have Montfort outnumbered by more than two to one and we are behind our walls. He cannot win.

Raymond surveys the large group of knights behind the walls.

EXT. TOULOUSE - DAY

The Crusaders storm the walls using tall ladders. They are repelled with crossbows and can't break through the walls. They retreat.

Montfort is shown watching from a distance in disgust.

MONTFORT

(angry)

We are cowards, retreating in defeat.
This fight is over. We will come back
later when they are not ready for us.
Prepare to move out. We're going south
to Castlenaudry.

EXT. LAURAC CASTLE - DAY

Robierre walks out the backdoor of the castle and finds Blanche outside playing with her grandchildren in the wide expanse of green grass. She is dressed elegantly and is smiling with the children who are laughing. He is dressed in his knightly armor and is dirty from battle.

Robierre stands and waits while a servant takes the children away.

ROBIERRE

It wasn't much of a battle, Countess.
The Crusaders could not break through
the walls, and only made a few
attempts. After two weeks, they gave up
and marched south.

BLANCHE

Why did they give up so easily?

ROBIERRE

Montfort must have known that we had a
larger army. In fact, we could have
attacked him and won. The Count of Foix
was pressuring Raymond to attack after
the first week.

BLANCHE

Why didn't he?

ROBIERRE

(shrugging)

Raymond wanted to fight from behind the walls. Perhaps he was afraid to risk his position. A reinforcement army could have been waiting to counter-attack.

BLANCHE

What is to happen of Raymond's large army?

ROBIERRE

They are planning to leave Toulouse and find Montfort. There is going to be another battle.

BLANCHE

(hesitating)

Very well. Join them and keep me informed.

Robierre nods and walks toward the castle.

EXT. CASTELNAUDRY - DAY

Raymond VI and his army of one thousand knights approach Castelaudry, which is being held by Montfort and the Crusaders.

ANTOINE

Do you want to attack today?

RAYMOND VI

In the morning. Let's get a night's sleep first.

The knight's and their horses stop within sight of the walled castle and camp for the evening.

The next morning, Raymond VI and his army of one thousand knights are shown in battle, trying to break through the fortress walls at Castelnaudry to take back control from the Crusaders. Right when they break through the front gate, a group of Crusader reinforcements attacks them from the rear. Both sides are taking casualties. Raymond signals retreat, and his army withdraws.

EXT. LAURAC CASTLE - DAY

Robierre and three other knights ride into the courtyard. Dejectedly, he dismounts his horse and walks to the castle. His face and clothes are dirty from battle.

INT. LAURAC CASTLE - DAY

Robierre finds Blanche in the great room and stands at attention. She quickly walks across the room to meet him.

BLANCHE

You look like you have been fighting.
What happened?

ROBIERRE

(dejected)

Montfort invaded Castelnaudry a week ago. I was with Raymond's army when we heard the news. We quickly hurried to Castelnaudry and trapped Montfort behind the walls. The Crusaders numbered only five hundred to our thousand, and we thought we could defeat them with our superior numbers.

BLANCHE

(concerned)

Montfort won?

ROBIERRE

(nodding)

He is a skillful general and he had reinforcements. We lost nearly a hundred knights and Raymond withdrew.

BLANCHE

(concerned)

Where did Raymond take his army?

ROBIERRE

They are going back to Toulouse.
Tomorrow I will ride and join them.

BLANCHE

(nodding)

On your way to join Raymond, spread the news throughout the Lauragaise that Raymond's army endures. If the people know that Raymond is resisting, they will support him.

Robierre bows and leaves.

EXT. PENNE D'AGENAIS - DAY

Two large trebuchets are hurling large stones at a small village that is surrounded by high stone walls. The trebuchets are making slow progress. A large army of one thousand Crusader mercenaries patiently waits for the trebuchets to break through. Montfort can be seen standing next to a fire drinking from a tin cup, patiently waiting.

EXT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

Blanche is seen hiking up the steep incline to Montségur. The tall walls of the fortress loom ahead.

EXT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

Blanche enters the gates and is greeted by several Perfecti. They point to the main building and she walks toward Joanna's room. The fortress is busy with over a fifty people loitering in the courtyard. Most of them are Perfecti, wearing nearly identical brown robes.

INT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

Blanche enters Joanna's room. There is no door, only a stone entrance. Joanna sees her mother and rises to her feet. Blanche is dressed elegantly.

JOANNA

(joyously)

Mother! It has been forever. It's so good to see you.

They embrace.

JOANNA

(pointing to a chair)

Please sit. You must be tired from the hike. Are you thirsty?

Blanche sits.

BLANCHE

(sadly)

No. I'm fine.

JOANNA

(concerned)

What is it mother?

BLANCHE

It's not good. Montfort's army has been reinforced and is now bigger than Raymond's. Montfort has been going town to town, throughout the Lauragaise and accepting terms. Hundreds of Perfecti have been burned in bonfires. St. Michel de Lanes resisted, and Montfort burned it to the ground.

Joanna bows her head dejectedly.

JOANNA

(looking up)

Did they go back to Toulouse?

BLANCHE

(shaking her head)

Not since the first battle. Raymond has setup a defense and Montfort has been satisfied to conquer the rest of Lauragaise.

JOANNA

(terrified)

Oh, mother! What of Laurac? What of my girls?

BLANCHE

Three Perfecti were burned at the stake. Only men: Jean, Sebastian, and René. The Crusaders did not find the Women's home. The girls are now safe, as the Crusaders have left.

JOANNA

(angrily)

Montfort is a barbarian! I can't believe that this is supposed to be a Christian Crusade. Why is so much murder happening?

Gilbert enters the room and Joanna calms down. He touches Joanna shoulder to comfort her.

Gilbert nods toward Blanche.

GILBERT

Hello, Countess. It is good to see you.

Joanna kneels and prays silently for a few seconds and then sits.

GILBERT

(looking at Blanche)

Walking down the hall, I overheard you say that the Crusaders are pillaging Languedoc.

BLANCHE

(nodding)

There is more. Do you wish to hear it?

Gilbert nods and sits down.

GILBERT

Yes, we need to stay informed. There will be many Perfecti coming here for safety.

BLANCHE

After Tarn, Montfort turned north to the Agenais region. Agenais is virtually free of Cathars, yet it is wealthy and part of Raymond's land. Montfort found a defended fortress at Penne d'Agenais and laid siege. It began in June and lasted six weeks. The thick walls were no match for Montfort's large trebuchets.

GILBERT

Where any Perfecti killed?

BLANCHE

None. I don't think there any in Agenais.

BLANCHE

(shaking her head)

This was supposed to be Crusade, but it's turning into a war over land. He now controls nearly all of Languedoc.

GILBERT

Can Raymond hold Toulouse?

Blanche closed her eyes and contemplated.

BLANCHE

I don't know. I fear that is the next battle. If Toulouse falls, we lose our way of life. All is lost.

GILBERT

There is word that a council is meeting at Pamiers to determine ownership of Languedoc.

Blanche looks stunned by the news but does not reply.

INT. PAMIER'S COUNCIL - DAY

Ten BISHOPS along with Montfort are seated around a table. Montfort is reading a document.

MONTFORT

This does not say who owns the lands.

BISHOP

That will be decided after you have removed all of the heretics.

MONTFORT

You mean Toulouse?

BISHOP

(grinning)

Yes.

EXT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Antoine rides across the moat and enters Château Narbonnais with several fellow soldiers following. He dismounts his horse, and a servant grabs the reins and takes possession. Antoine quickly walks to the castle.

INT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Antoine enters the library and stands at attention. Inside the Count is reading. Raymond VI puts down the scroll.

RAYMOND VI

What news do you bring, Antoine?

ANTOINE

My Lord, the council has adjourned. As you predicted, the Catholic Bishops changed the laws of Languedoc. They are calling it the Statute of Pamiers.

RAYMOND VI

When does it contain?

ANTOINE

Taxation has been halted, thereby preventing you from collecting any money from your vassals...

RAYMOND VI

(angrily)

Those bastards! They did that so people can tithe to the Catholic Church. Instead of taxes going to the nobles, now they go to the Church.

RAYMOND VI

(dejectedly)

What else?

ANTOINE

The secular powers in each town and village are commanded to deliver all

heretics to the Church and confiscate their property. Also, attendance of Catholic mass on Sunday is now compulsory.

RAYMOND VI

(grunting)

They're going to try to force their religion upon us? I don't think that's going to work. Anything else in the statute, Antoine?

ANTOINE

No, my Lord.

RAYMOND VI

Well, at least they didn't give my lands to anyone. Only King Phillip Augustus has the right to do that. The King has written the Pope and told him he can have his Crusade, but the Monarchy was not giving up its sovereignty.

ANTOINE

Unless the King desires your land, my Lord.

RAYMOND VI

(contemplating)

Yes, I fear you might be right, Antoine. This Crusade could provide the King with the opportunity to lay claim to all of Languedoc.

ANTOINE

We'll just have to defeat the Crusade to prevent that from happening.

Raymond nods.

INT. VATICAN - DAY

Seated at a large rectangular wooden table are a group of cardinals, BISHOPS, and advisors. The cardinals are wearing red, and the bishops black. There are books on shelves that are adorned with golden goblets.

The Pope is seated at the end of the table.

POPE

(speaking to the group)

I am halting the crusade and we will
now use negotiations to obtain terms.

BISHOP

Your Holiness, Toulouse will never
accept terms.

POPE

You are correct. No, they will not.
However, now with the Statute of
Pamiers in place, the other nobles in
Lauragaise will abandon Raymond and
accept terms. And without taxes,
Raymond will eventually become too weak
to defend Toulouse. We will let him
weaken, and then we will attack again
if needed.

BISHOP

Divide and conquer?

POPE

(smiling)

Yes.

INT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Antoine enters the library and finds Raymond reading. He
takes two strides into the room and stands at attention.

RAYMOND VI

(looking down at his scroll)

What is it, Antoine?

ANTOINE

My Lord, the Pope has sent a legate to
Carcassonne. His name is Peter of
Benevento, and he has halted the
Crusade. All of the nobles have been
summoned to meet with him. The rumor is
that he is going to ask the nobles to
surrender and accept his terms.

Raymond dropped the scroll and got up from his chair with a look of concern.

RAYMOND VI

(concerned)

Never, but if the Counts of Comminges
and Foix surrender, I cannot defend
Toulouse.

ANTOINE

(hesitating)

Go into exile, my Lord. There is always
another day for a battle.

RAYMOND VI

(nodding)

That is good advice, Antoine. I will go
to Spain and collect mercenaries and
prepare for another battle. Let the
Pope think he has won, and he will stop
paying his soldiers. He must be getting
tired of paying for this Crusade.

ANTOINE

Yes, let him think he has won, my Lord.

RAYMOND VI

There are a hundred nobles I can count
on to support me when I return. This
war is not over!

Raymond is shown riding away from his castle by himself.

EXT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

Blanche enters the gate wearing a heavy cloak. It is a cold
day, and the courtyard is nearly empty. She walks toward
Joanna's room and enters the fortress.

INT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

Inside the fortress Blanche walks down a stone hallway where
she finds Gilbert.

GILBERT

Countess, it is good to see you. Are you looking for Joanna?

BLANCHE

Yes, do you know where she is?

GILBERT

(pointing with an outstretched arm)
This way.

Gilbert leads her down the stone hallway.

GILBERT

There is no heat in most of the rooms.
When it gets cold, the Perfecti stay in
the great room. We only return to our
rooms for sleeping.

They enter the great room and find fifty people, most in brown robes. The room is huge, with a lofted ceiling. At each end of the room, there is a large fireplace. Dozens of chairs are situated near the fires, most of which are occupied. Two rows of tables with benches are aligned in the center of the room. Many people are seated at the tables eating.

Gilbert and Blanche walk toward one of the fires at the end of the room. Joanna sees them approaching and rises. She walks to greet them and embraces Blanche.

JOANNA

Mother, it has been ages.

Gilbert points to an unoccupied table.

GILBERT

Let's go sit over here.

They walk to the table and sit down.

JOANNA

(sitting down)
What can you tell us of the Crusade?

Blanche removes her cloak sits comfortably. As usual, she is the best-dressed person in the room. She looks like a

Countess. Blanche straightens the bun on the top of her head. The ribbon around the bun is perfectly tied.

BLANCHE

The Crusade was halted several months ago. Raymond went into exile in Spain and many of the nobles surrendered. Montfort's army continues to march through Languedoc consolidating his power.

BLANCHE

I'm sorry that I did not visit this summer, but it has been much too dangerous to travel.

GILBERT

Have they been burning Perfecti?

BLANCHE

Very few, thank God. He has been busy keeping the nobles in order. They keep moving back into their castles and building their armies. All of Languedoc is becoming rebellious. The people do not support the Crusaders. We have no allegiance to the Pope, and everyone knows it.

GILBERT

What about Toulouse?

BLANCHE

Montfort has avoided it. His army is small, less than five hundred men, and Toulouse would resist, even without Raymond.

GILBERT

(nodding)

Where is Raymond? In Spain, you said?

BLANCHE

Yes, he is in Spain gathering mercenaries. However, his son, Raymond VII, is preparing to defend Toulouse. He is now old enough to fight, and he

has taken charge of the army that Raymond left behind.

GILBERT

Is the Crusade going to resume?

BLANCHE

Yes, it's very likely. The Pope has to attack Toulouse to achieve his goals. There are hundreds of Perfecti in Toulouse and he knows it. I think it's inevitable that Raymond VI and VII are going to do battle with Montfort soon.

JOANNA

(shuddering)

The Pope is slowly, methodically killing every Perfecti in Languedoc. Soon there will be none of us left.

EXT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

A courier on horse rides into Château Narbonnais. Antoine is summoned and listens to the news. Solemnly he walks toward the castle.

INT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

He finds the young twenty-two-year-old RAYMOND VII wearing his knightly battle regalia inside the great room, the largest room in the castle. He is with his young wife and several servants.

Antoine enters the room and stands at attention.

RAYMOND VII

What is it, Antoine?

ANTOINE

My Lord, we have news from Italy.

RAYMOND VII

(sternly to the others)

Please leave us.

His wife and the servants leave the room. She has to hold her gown to keep it from dragging on the floor.

RAYMOND VII

(waiting until they are alone)

Continue.

ANTOINE

The Pope has held a council at Lateran in Italy. Your father was there and pleaded for your inheritance rights. He failed. It was decided that you cannot inherit your father's land.

RAYMOND VII

(concerned)

Then who will get the land?

ANTOINE

It was not decided. Perhaps Montfort. Perhaps the Pope. Maybe even the King.

RAYMOND VII

(contemplating)

We will wait here for my father to return.

ANTOINE

Very well, my Lord.

Antoine nods and leaves the room.

SUPER: "Toulouse, Languedoc. 1217."

EXT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Raymond VI rides into Château Narbonnais with an entourage of three hundred Spanish mercenary soldiers. Raymond VII is there to greet him. Raymond VI dismounts his horse and smiles at his waiting son. Father and son hug.

Raymond VI grips his son's shoulders. The Count is wearing a clean dark blue cassock with gold embroidery, thick wool pants, and tall boots.

Raymond VI is jubilant and optimistic. He puts his arm around his son's neck, and they walk toward the castle.

RAYMOND VI
Are you ready for a big battle?

RAYMOND VII
I am ready to win, father.

RAYMOND VI
(smiling)
Good. The Counts of Foix and Comminges
are sending their armies. We will be
prepared. It is going to be the biggest
battle of the Crusade.

EXT. TOULOUSE - DAY

A battle is in progress. Montfort and the Crusaders surround Toulouse. Two trebuchets are aimed at the tall walls hurling stones. A group of Crusaders storm a wall with tall ladders and are repelled by arrows.

Montfort is shown watching from a distance. He watches as some of his men are killed, but he appears to be confident of victory.

EXT. LAURAC CASTLE

Robierre rides into the courtyard and dismounts. He hurries into the castle. His knightly clothes are clean.

INT. LAURAC CASTLE

Robierre finds Blanche in the great room and stands at attention. She is dressed elegantly.

BLANCHE
(apprehensive)
Is it over?

ROBIERRE
No, the battle continues, Countess.
Both sides now have Trebuchets and are
hurling stones at each other. Raymond's
crossbows have been effective in
preventing the Crusaders from entering
Toulouse. They fight back and forth

daily. Each side is sustaining losses.
This could go on for weeks.

BLANCHE
(apprehensive)
Who has the advantage?

ROBIERRE
I would say Raymond, since he is behind
the walls, but Montfort has a large,
determined army. It is hard to say.

BLANCHE
What would you estimate the size of each
army?

ROBIERRE
Perhaps one thousand knights on each
side. It's fairly even in numbers.

BLANCHE
(nodding)
Keep me informed.

Robierre bows and leaves the room.

EXT. TOULOUSE - DAY

The fighting continues. Suddenly a trebuchet stone strikes
and kills Montfort. The Crusaders retreat. The siege is
over. Flags are waved above the walls in Toulouse in a
victory celebration.

INT. LAURAC CASTLE

Robierre walks confidently into the great room. He speaks
before Blanche acknowledges his presence.

ROBIERRE
(excited)
Montfort is dead!

BLANCHE
(surprised)
What happened?

ROBIERRE

(excited)

The battle is over. Raymond has won!
Montfort was killed by a trebuchet
stone. The Crusaders are marching
south, defeated!

BLANCHE

(concerned)

Were there any terms?

ROBIERRE

I don't think so, but they no longer
have a general!

BLANCHE

(contemplating)

He will be replaced. It's not over,
Robierre.

Robierre felt foolish and it showed on his face.

BLANCHE

Hopefully, the new Pope will not
reinforce the Crusaders. If they stay
at their present strength, Raymond has
proven he can withstand their force.

ROBIERRE

Yes, Countess. Raymond's army is
formidable.

BLANCHE

That is all, Robierre.

Robierre bows and leaves the room.

EXT. COUNTRY SIDE

A large royal army marches through the country. The King is
in the front riding a horse. Men are holding royal flags to
mark their presence.

EXT. LAURAC CASTLE - DAY

Robierre and three knights ride into the courtyard. Dejectedly, he dismounts his horse and walks to the castle. Their knightly uniforms are clean.

INT. LAURAC CASTLE - DAY

Robierre finds Blanche sitting in the great room in one of her gowns. He enters and stands at attention.

BLANCHE

Has King Louis' army arrived in Languedoc?

ROBIERRE

(nodding)

His army is huge, Countess. He completely surrounded Marmande and then attacked. From what I saw, everyone was killed, and it was burned to the ground.

BLANCHE

(surprised)

Everyone? The women and children?

ROBIERRE

(nodding)

When Louis arrived, the Crusaders had been laying siege with a small army of two hundred men. I guess Louis wanted to set an example of what happens to resisters.

BLANCHE

(shuddered)

Could this happen at Toulouse?

ROBIERRE

We are going to find out. That is where he is now marching.

BLANCHE

Oh my God.

EXT. TOULOUSE - DAY

The gates of Toulouse are closed and the Crusaders march into position, surrounding the town. Antoine watches the Crusaders from high atop one of the walls. Then he climbs down and makes his way to Raymond VII and Raymond VI. He finds them together, both wearing their knightly battle regalia, ready to fight.

ANTOINE

My Lords, the Crusaders have encircled Toulouse. It is quite a large army.

RAYMOND VI

(determined)

Prepare the defenses. There will be no terms.

RAYMOND VII

We defeated Montfort here. We can defeat the King as well.

RAYMOND VI

(scornfully)

Bring me my sword!

EXT. TOULOUSE - DAY

The Crusaders attack the walls with tall ladders and are repelled by arrows. They cannot break into the town and must retreat.

They try several more times, but with the same result each time. They finally give up.

INT. LAURAC CASTLE - DAY

Robierre finds Blanche in the great room and speaks without being addressed. He has a smile on his face.

ROBIERRE

(excited)

Raymond won! The siege is over! The King is marching his army back to Paris.

BLANCHE
(surprised)
What happened?

ROBIERRE
Louis gave up. He didn't even build a trebuchet to break through the walls. Perhaps he is aware of the battle at Toulouse that cost Montfort his life. Or maybe he has no patience for a long siege.

BLANCHE
(perplexed)
Why would he march back to Paris when he is so close to victory?

ROBIERRE
A war with England? I don't know.

BLANCHE
He'll be back, and stronger than before.

INT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

RAYMOND VI is lying in bed, and he is near death. RAYMOND VII watches over him.

RAYMOND VI
(having trouble speaking)
You must go to Paris and agree to terms with the King.

RAYMOND VII
You would never have done that.

RAYMOND VI
(barely audible)
When I die, you will lose everything.
You have no choice but to accept terms.

Raymond VII is silent pondering his options.

INT. LAURAC CASTLE - DAY

Robierre finds Blanche in the great room. He enters the room and stands at attention.

ROBIERRE

Countess, Raymond has succumbed to old age. He died last night in his sleep.

BLANCHE

(gasping)

This is a sad day. I fear the Crusade is going to come back. Years ago the Pope declared that Raymond the seventh could not inherit his father's land. This surely will create a war.

ROBIERRE

Countess, there are rumors that Raymond junior is going to agree to terms with the King so that he can inherit his father's land.

BLANCHE

If that happens, the Crusade will continue and they will slaughter the remaining Perfecti.

EXT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

A courier rides into the courtyard and Antoine is summoned. Antoine arrives and listens without emotion, then proceeds to the castle.

INT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Antoine finds Raymond VII in the great room dressed in his embroidered regalia. He enters the room and stands at attention.

RAYMOND VII

Yes, Antoine?

ANTOINE

The Pope has officially cancelled the Crusade. He is disbanding the Crusading army. Also, the sixteen-year-old son of

Raymond-Roger Trencavel was given his father's titles of Count of Béziers and Carcassonne. Languedoc has returned to 1209.

RAYMOND VII

(contemplating)

No, Antoine, it has not. My father's lands have not been given to me. I live as an outlaw in the eyes of the Pope and perhaps King Louis. The Counts of Foix and Comminges are in the same position as myself. Legally, our lands have been usurped.

ANTOINE

You are right, my Lord. You will need to continue negotiations with the Pope. He is the one that took your father's lands.

RAYMOND VII

I will also need to negotiate with the King. I now have two powerful enemies. Either of which can mount an army larger than my own. Peace can never be assured until I have my father's lands and terms have been agreed by the Pope and the King.

ANTOINE

Your father did all that he could to protect the Perfecti and our way of life. He battled Montfort for nine years and watched as thousands of Perfecti were burned. Now you can achieve the victory he sought.

RAYMOND VII

(contemplating)

I will try, Antoine, but my enemies are strong. I would love to save God's apostles, the Perfecti, but only time will tell.

Antoine bows and leaves the room.

INT. LAURAC CASTLE - DAY

Blanche enters Robierre's room and finds him.

BLANCHE

Send for Joanna. Now that Crusade has been stopped, she will be safe here.

ROBIERRE

Yes, Countess.

Blanche leaves the room.

INT. PERFECTI WOMEN'S HOME - DAY

Joanna enters the Women's Home with a smile. The girls rush to greet her.

JOANNA

Today we are going to do something special. I saw a Dominican on my way here. All of you get ready. We are going to approach him, and I am going to debate him in public.

The girls have a look of fear on their faces.

GIRL

(terrified)

Won't he report us to the Catholic Bishop?

JOANNA

Maybe, but isn't it likely that the Catholic Bishop already knows about you? This Perfecti Women's Home is not a secret to the people of Laurac. Why should we live in fear? This is our town, not the Catholics. Let us confront the Dominican and show the people that the Perfecti are still the apostles of Laurac.

JOANNA

(sternly)

All of you get ready. I will not have my students living in fear. You are immortal divine beings! Now hurry up!

The look on the girl's faces are not as courageous as Joanna. However, without any protests, they quietly put on their shoes and prepare to go.

EXT. LAURAC - DAY

Joanna leads the way in a group of brown robes. They walk toward the town square. As they approach they can see that the DOMINICAN is still talking to a group of people. Joanna approaches the Dominican.

JOANNA

Why do you confuse our citizens?

DOMINICAN

(startled)

I only tell them the word of God.

People around the square quickly surround them. There are at least fifty people listening to the confrontation.

JOANNA

But you do not tell them that they are God. Instead, you frighten them into believing that God will judge their fate. On the one hand you say that God is a loving God. On the other, you say that God's wrath will be felt by the non-believers, that Hell awaits them. That is not true, and you are merely confusing them.

The Dominican held up a scroll.

DOMINICAN

Oh, but it is true! The scripture says, only by the Son, Jesus Christ, can we have salvation!

JOANNA

(contemplating)

No one needs salvation. We are all eternal, divine beings. What one needs

is enlightenment, the knowledge that we are God. What that scripture is trying to tell you is that Jesus was a Gnostic, and that his knowledge of his own divinity is what gave him enlightenment. We, too, can achieve knowledge of our divinity, and this will lead to our enlightenment. Faith alone does not give one enlightenment, but knowledge of God, Gnosis.

The Dominican shook his head in disgust.

DOMINICAN

And how do you find this Gnosis? You search and search and find nothing! Salvation is found in the Church through the sacraments and the love of God and his son, Jesus Christ.

JOANNA

(grinning)

The Catholic Church will not lead one to enlightenment, not in this lifetime. Maybe the next, but so will any path eventually lead one to enlightenment. Your promise of salvation after this lifetime is not correct. Everyone that comes to your church will be born again. They will reincarnate and come back until they are enlightened.

DOMINICAN

(angrily)

Your beliefs are heresy! You should be burned!

The crowd did not react to his call for damnation.

JOANNA

(stoically)

I can see that you do not want to debate. You have your Church dogma, and everything else is considered heresy. I have no problem allowing you your religion, but you will not allow me mine. So be it. Good day.

Joanna turns and walks back in the direction from which she arrived. The girls follow.

EXT. LAURAC CASTLE - DAY

A courier rides into the courtyard, and Robierre is summoned. Robierre arrives and listens without emotion, then proceeds to the castle.

INT. LAURAC CASTLE - DAY

Robierre finds Blanche in the great room. He enters the room and stands at attention.

BLANCHE
(apprehensive)
What is it, Robierre?

ROBIERRE
(hesitating)
Countess, Raymond junior has accepted terms. Languedoc is now in the hands of the King. It is over. We have lost.

BLANCHE
(stunned)
But the Crusade never even resumed! Why did Raymond junior give up so easily?

ROBIERRE
I don't know, Countess. Perhaps he didn't think he could defend Toulouse, and he chose to save himself?

BLANCHE
(angrily)
What about the Perfecti! They will now all be killed!

Robierre does not reply, but instead looks down at the floor.

BLANCHE
(sadly)
What are the terms?

ROBIERRE

They are very bad, Countess. All of the eastern provinces, including the Rhône valley, are immediately annexed to the French crown. All of Raymond's remaining property are to be inherited by the King's brother, who was betrothed to Joan, Raymond junior's only child.

BLANCHE

(shocked)

Joan is only nine-years-old! This means that all Raymond's land will be inherited by the Monarchy.

ROBIERRE

Yes, Countess. All of Languedoc is now in the hands of the Monarchy. Raymond junior is now powerless without an army. He will live out his final days in Château Narbonnais, then it too reverts to the Monarchy.

ROBIERRE

After the agreement was signed in Paris, Joan was taken to live with the royal family. They're calling it the Treaty of Paris.

BLANCHE

(shaking her head)

This is terrible. We lose the war without even a battle. The Albigensian Crusade is over and all of the Perfecti are going to be killed.

ROBIERRE

(hesitating)

I fear you are right, Countess. The Perfecti no longer have any protection.

Tears stream down Blanche's face.

BLANCHE

(wiping her eyes)

I knew this day would come. Joanna and I will go to Montségur. We will take the women from the Perfecti Women's Home with us. I will leave my son, Jean, in charge of the castle. You will stay and council him.

Robierre nods and speaks without looking up.

ROBIERRE
Yes, Countess. I will visit you.

BLANCHE
Thank you, Robierre. I would like that.

INT. COUNCIL OF BISHOPS - DAY

A group of Catholic BISHOPS are seated around a large rectangular wooden table, each wearing black with red trim. The chairs have high backs, revealing quality and expense. Three candles in shiny golden candle holders are on the table.

BISHOP
The Pope has decided to eliminate the remaining heretics in Languedoc. We are going to use an Inquisition.

BISHOP
(surprised)
A what?

BISHOP
An Inquisition. We will assign Inquirers to each parish. These Inquirers will find and question suspected heretics.

BISHOP
What about collaborators?

BISHOP
The Papal Bull of 1199, Vergentis in Senium, is still in effect. Any collaborator is subject to losing their possessions, titles, and professions. They are also subject to imprisonment

and fines. All to the discretion of the Inquirers.

BISHOP

Who will be the Inquirers?

BISHOP

Dominicans. Chosen by the Pope.

BISHOP

They are in charge, and not us?

BISHOP

That is correct. Our only role is to help them accomplish their mission.

All of the bishops nod in agreement.

INT. INQUISITION ROOM - DAY

Two DOMINICANS and several of their soldiers are interrogating several PERFECTI. The Perfecti's hands are all bound with rope. One of the Dominicans points at a Perfecti who is moved by a soldier to a chair in front of the Dominicans.

DOMINICAN

You are charged with heresy. Do you plead guilty?

PERFECTI

(determined)

No. It is you who are the heretic in God's eyes.

DOMINICAN

You do know that if you lie, I will have you killed?

PERFECTI

(fearless)

Do what you need to do.

DOMINICAN

Are you a Cathari?

PERFECTI

(nodding)

Yes.

DOMINICAN

So, you plan to answer my questions truthfully so that I will not kill you?

PERFECTI

No. I plan to answer your questions truthfully because I am a man of God.

DOMINICAN

Have you performed the consolamentum?

PERFECTI

(nodding)

Yes.

DOMINICAN

Have you provided a list of all known Perfecti that you know?

PERFECTI

No.

DOMINICAN

I thought you were going to cooperate?

PERFECTI

No. I said that I would tell the truth.

DOMINICAN

Kill this man.

The soldiers grab the Perfecti off of the chair and drags him outside. The next Perfecti is placed on the chair.

EXT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

Robierre walks up the steep hill to Montségur. The fortress looms at the top. He is wearing his knightly attire, but his grey hair reveals his age.

EXT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

ROBIERRE approaches the gate. It is only open a few feet with two knights guarding the entrance. They allow him to enter.

EXT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

Inside, the courtyard is bustling with activity. There is over a hundred of PERFECTI in their ubiquitous brown robes along with numerous knights. Robierre walks up to the nearest Perfecti.

ROBIERRE

Pardon, do you know where I can find
Blanche, the Countess of Laurac?

PERFECTI

(begins walking)

This way.

Robierre follows.

PERFECTI

(smiling)

You are new here.

ROBIERRE

Yes, Perfecti. This is my first visit.

PERFECTI

I can see from your clothing that you
are a knight. Did you fight against the
Crusaders?

ROBIERRE

Since the beginning, Perfecti.

PERFECTI

(still walking)

What is your name?

ROBIERRE

Robierre. I have been with the Countess
since I was young.

PERFECTI

Why don't you stay and help us defend the fortress. We could always use one more knight.

ROBIERRE

(smiling)

I'm too old for fighting.

They arrived at the entrance. The Perfecti opens the door and walks inside. Robierre follows.

INT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

Robierre follows the Perfecti down a long stone hallway lit by lanterns. At the end of the hallway is the large great room. On the far side is Blanche, sitting by herself in a tattered gown.

The Perfecti points to Blanche with his right arm with his palm up.

ROBIERRE

Thank you, Perfecti.

The Perfecti nods with a grin, then turns and leaves.

Robierre approaches Blanche and stands at attention. She appears tired with little vitality. Her hair is combed, but it is messy and down to her shoulders.

BLANCHE

(forcing a grin)

Robierre, it is good to see you.

ROBIERRE

(bowing)

Countess.

BLANCHE

(softly)

What news do you bring?

ROBIERRE

(dejectedly)

Countess, I'm sorry, but I bring more bad news.

BLANCHE

It's okay, Robierre. I've been expecting it.

ROBIERRE

Pope Gregory IX has expanded the Inquisition in Languedoc. It is now well organized. They are methodically hunting down the Perfecti and their supporters. He sent two Dominicans from Rome, Pierre Seilha and Guillaume Arnaud, to lead it. They have been given extraordinary powers.

BLANCHE

(hesitating)

Tell me about their methods.

ROBIERRE

Anyone suspected of being a heretic or a supporter can be arrested and their possessions confiscated. Nobles can even lose their titles. Hundreds of people have been arrested. Suspects are presumed guilty and must defend themselves from accusations. If they remain silent, they are killed or imprisoned.

Blanche shuddered.

ROBIERRE

The two Dominicans, Seilha and Guillaume, are currently in Moissac. Soon they will be in Lauragaise. I've been told that they have already burned 210 Perfecti and imprisoned numerous supporters.

BLANCHE

This is what I always feared. To remove the Perfecti they also must remove their supporters.

ROBIERRE

(hesitating)

Countess, that would include hundreds and perhaps thousands of people in Lauragaise.

BLANCHE

I know, Robierre. It won't be an easy task for this Inquisition. It will take years.

ROBIERRE

(dejectedly)

We lost, Countess.

Blanche does not reply.

ROBIERRE

I fear this is goodbye. I am too old to come back.

BLANCHE

(begins to cry)

Oh, Robierre, I will miss you. Can I hug you goodbye?

Robierre nods to Blanche and rises gingerly. He walks toward her and they embrace.

ROBIERRE

I will miss you, Countess.

BLANCHE

You have been my most loyal friend, Robierre. Thank you. Take care of Jean and my family.

ROBIERRE

I will, my Lady.

Robierre turns to leave, and after a few steps, he looks back. Blanche is still standing, watching him walk away. He only glances and then continues walking out of the great room. She watches him leave.

EXT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

Joanna watches from the top of a wall down into the valley as an army lays siege. She is afraid and hurries across the courtyard toward the monastery entrance.

INT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

Joanna hurries down a stone hallway and enters her mother's small stone room.

INT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

Joanna finds her mother sitting quietly reading a scroll. Blanche is wearing a brown robe of a Perfecti. Her tangled hair hangs to her shoulders.

JOANNA

(terrified)

Mother! The Crusaders have laid siege
to Montségur!

Blanche rises and hugs Joanna, who cries on her shoulder. They part and face each other still standing.

JOANNA

Is it over, mother? Is it really over?
We're all that's left!

BLANCHE

I know, dear. I knew they were coming.
That's why I'm here. I couldn't bear to
remain in Laurac and hear of your
death. I had to be here with you. I'm
the reason you became a Perfecti.

JOANNA

(terrified)

They're going to burn us, aren't they?

BLANCHE

(nodding)

I've dreaded this day since the
Crusaders arrived in 1209. I've always
known that Pierre was right.

Joanna started crying again and Blanche hugged her.

BLANCHE

Joanna, let's not worry about that. I will gladly jump into flames to be in God's Kingdom.

JOANNA

Yes, of course, mother. I'm not afraid to die. I meant all of the Perfecti here at Montségur. If we all die that would be a travesty. The Perfecti here are the holiest of the holy.

BLANCHE

I know my dear. We can only pray that the Perfecti have not lived in vain, that their memory will live on, and perhaps one day be rekindled.

JOANNA

Mary Magdalene's prophecy?

BLANCHE

(nodding)

I wish it could be like it used to be, when the Perfecti presided over all of Languedoc. God's holy apostles preached to the people, and we were at peace, knowing that God was amongst us.

JOANNA

(dejectedly)

I fear all will be lost. The Catholic Church has no conception of God. They have no idea that God's spirit dwells within us all. Instead, they see the Devil inside, and see us destined for Hell unless they provide our salvation. When in fact, we are all destined for God's Kingdom. They have it all wrong!

BLANCHE

I know, I know, but this knowledge cannot be suppressed forever! Eventually, a generation will arise and reveal the Catholic Church's misbegotten ways. There will come a

time when Perfecti once again walk with the spirit of God.

JOANNA

(excited)

You really believe the prophecy, don't you? That the Gnostics will be purged, yet one day in the distant future rise again?

BLANCHE

(nodding and grinning)

I do.

JOANNA

(defiantly)

Then we must prepare. We could be those Gnostics who rise again. Who is to say what our next life shall be? Maybe we will come back and show the way? I have never thought about death before, but now that I am, I think it just means rebirth. We are going to be reborn.

BLANCHE

(nodding)

I agree. I have lessons to learn. My soul has not yet been perfected. I might be called a Perfecti, but I know that I am not really one. I am not enlightened.

JOANNA

I have an idea, Mother. I am going to have a gathering to prepare everyone for our rebirth. What do you think?

BLANCHE

(smiling)

Of course, my dear. That is an excellent idea. We should prepare for our return!

JOANNA

(resolute)

Then let's begin tonight.

INT. MONTSEĞUR - NIGHT

Over one hundred Perfecti gathered in the great room. It was a sea of brown robes and mostly older faces. They sat at the tables, and Joanna stood in front of them. They listened intently to what Joanna had to say.

JOANNA

I have an idea. I know that it is an odd idea and if you do not want to stay and listen, I will understand. The idea is simply that we should prepare not for death, but for rebirth. We all believe in reincarnation, and my idea is that we should all prepare to come back together, as a group. We can be the prophecy of Mary Magdalene. We can all come back as Gnostics in the distant future, when the time is right.

Joanna paused to let everyone absorb the idea. She scanned the room, but there was only silence.

JOANNA

Is this a good idea, or is it insanity?

GILBERT

What do you mean by prepare?

JOANNA

We should all make a commitment to purify our souls between now and our awaited fate, which will likely be in a few months. While we are purifying our souls, we will ask God to bring us all back together, when the time is right for the Gnostics to rise again.

GILBERT

What do you mean by purify the soul?
How do we achieve this purification?

JOANNA

Every morning, from tomorrow forward, we will each meditate in the morning and consciously connect to the nous, to the source of life. We will open up

this doorway to the soul and tap into the purity. Each day, we will bring in a little bit more love into our lives. We will live with virtue, contentment, gratitude, and be generous with our love. We will live out our remaining days in a spiritual stupor. This way, when we cross over, we will be ready for our next life.

GILBERT

(intrigued)

So, you are asking us to have some type of spiritual quest during our remaining days?

JOANNA

(nodding)

Exactly. This is an opportunity that we should use to prepare for our future. We have to slay our demons and temptations. Life is not about hedonism or nihilism. It is about getting better, maturing as souls. We are here to become pure, and to develop mastery to become like Jesus and Mary Magdalene. This is our last opportunity for this lifetime.

Joanna paused for a response, but the room was silent.

JOANNA

(pointing at the wall on her right)

Those aren't our enemies on the other side of that wall, they are ourselves. The same energy that is the source of my soul, is the source of theirs. Have no contempt for them. Be accepting of life. Be considerate, be generous, be enthusiastic, be gentle, be grateful, and be content. Why? Because we are God!

The Crusaders are going to throw all of us into the flames. But I want you to be prepared. When you go into the flames, I want you to be thinking of

the flames of love that are burning in your heart. Have no fear. The bonfire of flames is merely the doorway back home. Take your mind, and place it in your soul, into the nous. You will feel no pain.

Joanna looked slowly at the faces around her.

One of the female Perfecti rose and put her palms together in the sign of prayer and thankfulness. Soon all of the Perfecti were on their feet, acknowledging Joanna with the sign of prayer.

Joanna smiled, and put her palms together, too, as a symbol of gratitude and togetherness.

JOANNA

(smiling)

And remember, when you pray, ask the Lord to bring us all back together like Mary Magdalene prophesied.

EXT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

In the courtyard hundreds of Perfecti are starving and looking for food. Gilbert approaches Joanna.

GILBERT

Joanna, we are out of food. I have surrendered. The Crusaders will be here soon.

Joanna nods and walks toward the main building.

INT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

Joanna walks down a stone hallway and enters her mother's small stone room.

INT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

Joanna finds her mother sitting quietly reading a scroll.

JOANNA

(solemnly)

Mother, Gilbert has surrendered. We are completely out of food. The Crusaders are coming to take us down the hill.

BLANCHE

(solemnly)

What day is it?

JOANNA

It's a day that will go down in infamy. Monday, March 16th, 1243. Why?

BLANCHE

I didn't want to be burned on a Sunday. Have the Crusaders started the fire yet?

JOANNA

(nodding)

Yes, it's a large bonfire. I think they're going to burn us together.

BLANCHE

How many Perfecti are here?

JOANNA

About two hundred.

BLANCHE

I am ready. I have said my peace to God.

JOANNA

Can you walk down the hill, mother?

BLANCHE

Yes. I am old, but I can still walk. I'll be fine.

JOANNA

(close to crying)

Oh, Mother, I wish this day would not have come.

BLANCHE

It's okay, Joanna. We are going home to God's Kingdom. You know that. We have

prepared for this day for months. Today isn't the day to weep. We should be joyous. We are going home.

JOANNA

(near tears)

Oh, I want to be joyous, but my spirit wants to stay and preach to the people. It is why I was born.

BLANCHE

Joanna, I know.

Blanche rises and hugs her now weeping daughter.

BLANCHE

Right now, right this second, I want you to forgive God and accept your fate. Let us walk to the fire together and jump in willingly. Before this day is over, we will be in God's Kingdom. For that we should be grateful.

Joanna stops crying and smiles.

JOANNA

Mother, I love you so much! Yes, I will do as you ask. No more weeping and complaining. Let us go to God's Kingdom with dignity. The Crusaders will not see fear on my face. Instead, they will see a smile of happiness.

BLANCHE

(grins)

Now that is the fearless Perfecti daughter I raised!

EXT. MONTSEGUR - DAY

A long line of Perfecti, all dressed in nearly identical brown robes, slowly walk down the steep hill toward the bonfire.

After they reach the bottom, the queue approaches the fire.

Ten feet from the fire, two Crusaders grab the next Perfecti in line, bind his hands and feet, and toss them into the fire. Many of the Perfecti break from the queue and run into the flames on their own.

Some of the Perfecti try to run, but they are captured, bound, and brought to the front of the line.

When Blanche and Joanna are within twenty feet, they both run into the flames together, holding hands. The Crusaders watch, mystified as each of them has a smile on their face as they jump into the flames together. Neither of them screams.

INT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Antoine, now reaching old age, enters the great room and stands at attention. Raymond VII is seated alone, wearing his Noble regalia.

ANTOINE

My Lord, Montségur has fallen. All of the Perfecti were burned. It is finally over. They were the last.

RAYMOND VII

(hesitating and repentant)

I let them down when I signed the Treaty of Paris. I should have fought until my death. I should never have agreed to terms.

ANTOINE

My Lord, there was nothing you could have done. Your enemies were too powerful.

RAYMOND VII

(grinning)

You humor me, Antoine. My father would have never surrendered. He would have died for the Perfecti. Now what is left? The Catholics! The people of Languedoc are not Catholics. I despise them! They have taken my lands and our God. The pure ones are gone and all

that is left are defiled priests who
want our tithes.

ANTOINE

(hesitating)

One day, my Lord, the Catholics will
meet their demise. One day there will
no longer be a Pope.

RAYMOND VII

Antoine, I hope you are right. They
deserve that, after what they have done
here.

ANTOINE

(grinning)

The Perfecti will be reborn and will
preach again.

RAYMOND VII

(laughing)

Antoine, now we're dreaming.

ANTOINE

(smiling)

But it's a good dream, my Lord.

SUPER: "In 1243, when Montségur fell, the Cathars were
nearly eliminated from Languedoc. The Inquisition remained
for several more decades finishing the job.

There was one last gasp in the late thirteenth century, when
a Perfecti named Pierre Autier began preaching in Foix. His
magnetism quickly invigorated a small Cathar movement.
Autier was burned at the stake in 1310. Autier's death was
followed by a final Inquisition, from 1318 until 1326 to
make sure there were no more Cathars in Languedoc."

FADE OUT