

Last of the Gnostics

written by

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Based on the book by

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FADE IN:

EXT. LANGUEDOC - AERIAL VIEW

We sweep over the LANGUEDOC REGION. Small medieval towns move by underneath, grand castles perched on hilltops pass fleetingly, famous local vistas take our collective breath away.

PIERRE (V.O.)

There are two worlds - the material world of Satan, and the spiritual world of God. We Cathars seek the latter.

SUPER: Based on actual events.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE --

A) EXT. SMALL VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

A PAUPER begs in the street. A PERFECTI (modest brown robe, 50s, kind smile) blesses them. Sneaks a small coin into the pauper's hand with a knowing NOD.

B) INT. FOOD KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

A group of PERFECTI and PERFECTAE dish out hot food to the needy, in exchange only for thanks.

Behind, a PERFECTAE bandages the sore knee of an ELDERLY WOMAN. She refuses the elderly woman's offered payment with a look of shock.

C) EXT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

A GRANDIOSE PRIEST dressed in finest robes collects TITHINGS from a queue of LOCALS, regardless of rich or poor.

-- END MONTAGE

CUT TO:

EXT. LOMBERS CASTLE - DAY

SUPER: Lombers Castle. Languedoc 1165 AD.

CATHOLIC CARDINALS, BISHOPS, and PRIESTS enter the resplendent castle in dressed in their red, black, and white SMOCKS respectively.

INT. LOMBERS CASTLE - DAY

Once inside a large STONE ROOM, they take their positions around an ornate rectangular WOODEN TABLE.

The decor consists of shiny GOLD CANDLE HOLDERS, a COAT OF ARMS, and FINE PAINTINGS.

It is a picture of opulence and decadence.

CARDINAL

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

BISHOP

But, 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 the Pope himself.

CARDINAL

The Pope shares your concern. Which is why, today, we will sign an edict that proclaims them as heretics. As such they will be 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.
If anything, the nobles protect
them. If I see a Perfecti walking
the streets, there is no one to
inform demand their removal.

BISHOP

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

CARDINAL

(smirks)

This is but the first step. Once
the people of Languedoc know that
the Cathars are officially
heretic, in due time, their
willingness to protect them will
fade.

The smirk becomes a mean scowl.

CARDINAL

And they will be burned at the
stake forthwith!

FOCUS ON

Bishop/Priest concerned expressions

CUT TO:

INT. FANJEAUX CASTLE - MASTER BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Noble woman MARGARET (late 20s, brunette, pained) is dabbed
with a wet towel by a MAID as she finishes giving birth to
BLANCHE.

PIERRE (40s, handsome but imperfect, curly hair) blesses
the child as she is passed across him to Margaret to lay on
her chest with instant adoration.

CUT TO:

EXT. FANJEAUX CASTLE BATTLEMENTS - EVENING

LORD FANJEAUX (30s, already graying, strong jawline, bespoke robe) walks alongside Pierre as they stop to look out over the Languedoc views.

LORD

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

PIERRE

(somber)

It is quite unsettling, my Lord. There have already been burnings of Perfecti in Germany and Italy. If the King of France ever supports the Pope, then our time here is numbered.

LORD

(perplexed)

The King has never bothered this region before. We are independent.

PIERRE

My fear is the Pope's ambition could sway the King.

LORD

The King is our friend.

PIERRE

Let's hope he remains so.

LORD

(smiling)

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

Pierre NODS.

INT. FANJEAUX CASTLE - MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

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 beautiful baby Blanche as she stares up 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 speak with my Lord and you need to rest, Margaret. I will see you tomorrow.

CUT TO:

INT. FANJEAUX CASTLE - LORD'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

The room is much brighter from the installed chandelier and a roaring fireplace. Wool carpets cover a wooden floor. The Lord is sitting in a handcrafted chair. He is still wearing his formal attire, a bright RED TUNIC with gold trim.

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 Perfectae.

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, may I extend my thanks to
you for your continued support.
Without the nobles, the Perfecti
could not exist.

LORD

Pierre, you know that I am always
grateful to have you in this
house. We will always support the
Perfecti.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER: 19 YEARS LATER [Languedoc. 1184.]

EXT. LAURAC - MARKET SQUARE - MORNING

Pierre is walking down the street of the small town. He is
wearing a simple brown robe with sandals and a belt.

He acknowledges people's revered bows as he walks past.

Nineteen-year-old BLANCHE (fair, beautiful, doe-eyed) ambles beside him.

PIERRE

Are you ready for today's lesson?

BLANCHE

We're not to go to the library?

PIERRE

Life's greatest lessons do not
always come from books.

They approach a crowd listening to two CISTERCIAN MONKS.
When Pierre approaches the crowd parts to allow him through
to the monks.

He approaches, courteously.

PIERRE

Pardon me good fellows, I didn't
mean to interrupt.

CISTERCIAN

(continues 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 vocal 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

(pauses to scan 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 at the
ground)

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.

(In jest)

I almost wish I could take that
last vow back and condemn you
today.

The crowd LAUGHS.

CISTERCIAN

(enraged)

This is blasphemy!

PIERRE

(looks directly 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

Before you begin your burning, you
should make sure 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 good 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.

ZOOM OUT -- to see CATHOLIC SCOUT (wiry, small, scarred cheek) watching Pierre. As the crowd disperses, he dons the hood of his cloak and vanishes also.

CUT TO:

INT. PAPAL PALACE - ROME - DAY

POPE LUCIUS III is seen seated at a small DRAWING TABLE. He hovers over a piece of paper as a CARDINAL looks on.

After a brief PAUSE to check the wording, the Pope signs the paper.

CARDINAL

(to the Pope)

And so it is written. We will scourge this heresy by its very roots.

The POPE nods sternly.

EXT. FANJEAUX CASTLE - FLOWER GARDEN - MORNING

Pierre walks beside a demure Blanche as she brushes a hand across the various FLOWERS. She pauses to smell one, closing her eyes.

PIERRE

You seem very pleased with
yourself today, Blanche.

BLANCHE

(nodding)

I think I'm starting to understand
Valentinus. He's 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 Jesus's lessons and
those who came before him. The
likes of Plato, Socrates, and
Pythagoras. All of these great
Gnostics taught the same thing --
that we are God. 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.

Blanche turns back and continues walking alongside Pierre.
Still enchanted by the surroundings.

PIERRE

(pausing)

That is where God resides. It is a place that we all share. That is the source of the oneness of life.

Blanche stops to pull up a WEED from a nearby flower bed.

BLANCHE

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 LAUGHS at the word, and passes the weed to Pierre. He struggles for a pocket, and so carries it. Twirling the stem between his fingertips.

BLANCHE

(excited)

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

PIERRE

(nods)

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.

They pass a compost heap and Pierre deposits the weed and brushes off his fingers.

PIERRE

(pauses)

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 even possible?

PIERRE

It's no different than an actor playing a role in a play. The actor is aware that he is playing a role, and that it is only temporary. After the play is concluded, the role is discarded.

BLANCHE

(smiling)

So, 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.

Blanche nods, but Pierre can see the confusion in her eyes. He pauses to face her. Holds out his hands. She takes them and listens.

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. 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 -- our true
self.

They part hands and Blanche crouches to examine a bee on a
nearby flower.

BLANCHE

It makes so much sense the way you
explain it, Pierre. Life is about
finding God, about finding our
true identity. How marvelous, yet
so mystifying.

PIERRE

(satisfied)

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

BLANCHE

As always, Pierre, I look forward
to it!

INT. FANJEAUX CASTLE - FORECOURT - DAY

POV Overhead

We see clusters of Knights engaged in hand-to-hand combat,
with ceremonial bunting, folk bands, and food stalls
situated around the makeshift arena. A large audience
watches on from the stands --

PAN DOWN

To the ROYAL BOX --

We see the Lord of Fanjeaux, with his wife Lady Margaret
alongside, and Blanche seated next to her, arms
interlocked.

Margaret points to one of the knights below (LORD LAURAC,
tall, muscular, longish blond hair).

As they watch, Lord Laurac withdraws his helmet after
victory and BOWS to the royal box.

Blanche GIGGLES and covers her mouth at something Margaret
says.

Pierre enters the royal box in his brown robe and sits next to Lord Fanjeaux.

LORD FANJEAUX

At last, Perfecti! We've been
awaiting your arrival. Eat, drink,
enjoy!

Pierre looks far from joyous.

Lord Fanjeaux senses his concern.

LORD FANJEAUX

Is this about the Ad abolendam?

Pierre NODS.

LORD FANJEAUX

I still don't fully understand its
meaning.

PIERRE

It is a specific requirement of
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.

The Lord fidgets in his chair, engaged in a particularly
grueling battle below.

LORD

What effect do you think it will
have here in Languedoc?

He cheers as one knight lands a crushing blow to the
other's Hauberk, causing his opponent to drop to a knee.

PIERRE

For now, very little. The Church
currently has no way to enforce
heresy laws in Languedoc. However,

other parts of Europe will see
severe enforcement.

LORD
(raise his wine cup)
Then there is nothing to worry
about.

PIERRE
(somber)
Not for now, but the day is
approaching.

We PAN OUT to see Margaret and Blanche have been listening
in. Blanche leans across so she may be heard.

BLANCHE
(concerned)
What day?

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

BLANCHE
(shocked)
Surely such a thing won't be
allowed 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
I don't see 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
(suspicious)

Where did this 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

What was the first omen?

PIERRE

A few days before you were born, the Papal Edict of Albi was issued, condemning 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 returned.

The gravity of the situation strikes Blanche's expression.

BLANCHE

That means they'll be coming for you, dear Pierre?

Lord Fanjeaux stops watching the tournament and focuses on the exchange.

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 being burned at the stake everywhere else.

An upset Blanche fights back tears as she continues.

BLANCHE

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

I know but this still shouldn't happen. They have no right to murder the Perfecti!

Lord Fanjeaux points down to the arena.

LORD

You should 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.

Silence descends. Blanche looks down below as the Lord of
Laurac's arm is raised, and he is declared champion.

CLOSE UP of Blanche's face.

BLANCHE

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

Lord Fanjeaux smiles and leans forward to fetch a piece of
meat from the feast before them.

LORD

Very well, then let's eat.

Margaret pulls Blanche close and WHISPERS.

MARGARET

(concerned)

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

BLANCHE

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.

ACT TWO

Super: Laurac Castle - 1198 AD.

EXT. LAURAC CASTLE GROUNDS - DAY

The wide expanse of green grass is beautifully manicured. A myriad of plants and flowers thrive in a large WALLED GARDEN. Two young children, a girl and a boy, are playing with servants. JOANNA is five and JEAN three. They run, giggling, to the older figures of Blanche and Pierre.

JOANNA

(leaps into Pierre's 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.

Pierre LAUGHS.

BLANCHE

I'm sure you will. Now, go play
with your brother. I need to speak
with Pierre.

Pierre sets Joanna down. She runs off to rejoin Jean.

PIERRE

Countess. You called to see me.

Blanche signals for him to sit beside her on a nearby bench. Pierre accepts the invitation.

BLANCHE

It happened, didn't it --
The third omen?

Pierre places his hands on his lap and NODS solemnly.

PIERRE

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.
Countess. You called to see me.

BLANCHE

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

Will the King turn on us?

Pierre's expression says as much.

PIERRE

I'm sorry, Blanche. This is it. It
will come fast now. The 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

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 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 out heretics, the Catholics have won.

BLANCHE

Pierre, my husband may have recently passed, but you know you will always have Laurac support.

Pierre NODS.

PIERRE

I know, my dear. But I do not wish for you to suffer on our account.

Blanche stands now. Paces.

BLANCHE

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 couldn't imagine someone as evil

as Satan creating this much love
and beauty. But, now I wonder.

Pierre SMILES forlornly. Blanche stops and turns, her arms
gesturing wildly.

PIERRE
Don't be afraid, Blanche. Remember
all I have taught you.

BLANCHE
I'm not afraid for myself, Pierre,
but I fear a war is coming, and
many people are going to die.

Pierre follows her gaze to the playing children.

PIERRE
The King has not turned, yet.

BLANCHE
So, we still have some time?

PIERRE
Some.

BLANCHE
Good, then let us make the most of
it.

Blanche runs after the children. Pierre follows, albeit
slightly slower.

FADE DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER: Papal Palace - 1208 AD

INT. PAPAL PALACE - ROME - DAY

BISHOP
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
Who will lead the Crusade?

BISHOP

Arnaud Amaury, Chief Abbot of the Cistercian order in Languedoc. He lives in Citeaux and knows southern France and the Cathar situation.

POPE

Very well. 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? To eliminate the Cathars?

POPE

(coldly)

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

EXT. LAURAC CASTLE - GARDENS - DAY

Pierre is walking in the castle's garden. Joanna (now 15) sees him and runs to greet him.

JOANNA

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

PIERRE

(hesitating)

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

JOANNA

Know what?

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 the beautiful flower beds.

PIERRE

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

Joanna nods, attentive.

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)

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)
Blasphemers?

PIERRE
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.

JOANNA
That is crazy! Our beliefs came from Mary Magdalene, which she learned from Jesus. How can they we're wrong?

PIERRE
The Catholics believe that our soul can only be saved by the Catholic Church.

JOANNA
(intrigued)
They believe that only Catholics are going to heaven?

Pierre nods.

JOANNA
They are using fear to make people Catholic. It's a message of come to church or else.

Pierre taps Joanna on the knee.

PIERRE

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

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

Joanna smiles and turns to leave. Stops -- turns back.

JOANNA

What does Cathar mean?

PIERRE

It's a Greek word. It means purity.

JOANNA (SMILING)

So, that's why they call Perfecti the pure ones!

Joanna walks away. Pierre smiles and looks out onto the CATHOLIC CASTLE in the distance. His eyes narrow as it comes into focus.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CATHOLIC CASTLE - NIGHT

As members of the Catholic Church look on, we see KNIGHTS and MERCENARIES assemble in large numbers.

Overly pleased Cardinals, Bishops, and Priests nod to each other, with self-satisfied grins.

We see a piece of coinage handed to a mercenary by Bishop ARNAUD AMAURY - lifting his fine robe to keep it from the horse-churned grass underfoot.

As the mercenary kisses his hand, a KNIGHT approaches on horseback.

ARNAUD AMAURY
(to the knight)
Where's the list?

KNIGHT
They have closed the town's gates
and will not let us enter.

Arnaud walks furiously across the churned grass, his robe now getting soiled and ruined.

He climbs atop a nearby podium and addresses the masses with a gnarled SHOUT.

AMUARY
Kill them all. God will know his
own!

EXT. BÉZIERS - CONTINUOUS

In the town of Beziers, knights and mercenaries attack civilians indiscriminately.

MONTAGE --

A) A woman drops to her knees and pleads with a knight on horseback as he looms over her and her children with a sword to hand. The knight rears the horse up and swings down with a sword --

B) A school building is set on fire as panicked women run around and SCREAM in terror. Children can be seen dying at the windows.

C) Local men attempt to gang up and fight back, but are slain as they approach by laughing and infinitely better equipped mercenaries.

D) Straggling survivors flee the town gates, weeping as they look back at their hometown ablaze and in tatters.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. LAURAC CASTLE - DAY

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

BLANCHE

(solemnly)

Pierre, the Pope has unleashed a Crusade against the Cathars. They're calling it the Albigensian Crusade. An army has been sent 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 COUGHS and sits up higher in his bed, in obvious pain.

PIERRE

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

(slowly)

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 coughs as his raised arm trembles.

PIERRE

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.

BLANCHE

I will go see the Count of Toulouse and tell him of the predicament 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. Ask him 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 blinks, the rising stress visible on her face.

BLANCHE

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. 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.

BLANCHE

(hesitates)

Pierre, what do you think the outcome will be?

PIERRE

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, my dear Countess, but the three Counts who control Languedoc.

BLANCHE

When I see Raymond today, I will ask for his word.

Pierre forces a smile, but as Blanche leaves the room - the smile soon fades to concern.

EXT. CARCASSONE - DAY

The Crusaders are seen camping outside of Carcassonne, a large walled city. A delegation on horseback returns with a list of heretics.

Amaury 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 TRENCANEL (40s, elegantly dressed, defiant).

Amaury dismounts in his colorful uniform and approaches.

AMAURY

You are Trencavel?

TRENCANEL

I am the leader of Carcassonne.

AMAURY

(menacingly)

Not any more. Your town has been appropriated until the crusade is concluded. Put him in the dungeon!

TRENCAVEL

(shocked)

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

Several mercenaries forcibly lead him away as Trencavel kicks and complains.

The remaining leaders are silent and afraid.

AMAURY

Your heretics better be easy to find. If there are any problems, we will go door-to-door. A few homes just might burn by accident.

He paces along the line and sneers at each as he speaks.

AMAURY

Volunteer ten men to round up the heretics. Hurry and choose, we are ready to begin!

AMAURY

(to a nearby knight)

Build the spires with plenty of wood. Many heretics will burn tonight!

CUT TO:

EXT. CARCASSONE - TOWNHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A PERFECTI MAN is dragged from his home with hands bound, wearing a brown robe and sandals.

AMAURY

Take the heretic to the spires and burn him!

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

CUT TO:

EXT. CARCASSONE - TOWN CENTRE SPIRES - CONTINUOUS

Several soldiers escort the Perfecti to the spires. Once they arrive at the town center, they tie him up 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 their Perfecti is engulfed by flames and SCREAMS.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Blanche and two knights ride horseback toward the gates of a large castle. Behind them, the walled town of Toulouse looms large. They cross the expansive MOAT and enter the castle grounds.

EXT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Two knights meet them at the gate and grant entry.

Once inside the large courtyard, Blanche dismounts her horse and is greeted by ANTOINE (stocky, middle-aged, bright blue tunic).

She offers her hand to him.

BLANCHE

Hello, Antoine. Nice to see you
once again.

Antoine kneels on one knee and kisses her hand.

ANTOINE

Countess, it is always a pleasure.
This way -- Raymond is awaits your
company.

Antoine escorts Blanche into the majestic castle entrance.

INT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

They walk through the castle until they reach a doorway.
Antoine gestures to go inside.

INT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - LIBRARY

Inside the large room we notice a tall ceiling and fireplace, thick carpets throughout the floor. There are no windows, so the room is relatively dark, even with a large CANDLE CHANDELIER.

Many ANCIENT BOOKS and WEATHERED SCROLLS adorn the shelves.

RAYMOND VI (40s, tanned, strong eyebrows) 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.

Long unkempt brown locks fall down to his shoulders.

Blanche 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 map scroll lays on a table next to his chair.

RAYMOND VI
I can guess what brings you to
Toulouse.

BLANCHE
The Crusade against the Cathars
has begun.

Raymond points to Carcassonne on the map.

RAYMOND VI

I hear they're in Carcassonne
today, burning Perfecti.

BLANCHE

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

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

RAYMOND VI

Pierre is one of the wisest men in
Languedoc, so I'd be inclined to.
As long as I am alive, the Cathars
will exist, and when my son is old
enough, he will continue 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

(scowls)

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

BLANCHE

(hopeful)

Then Lauragais is safe?

Raymond draws around Toulouse on the map, then waves his quill across Lauragaise around it. He draws a cross through Laurac.

RAYMOND VI

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

BLANCHE

(dejected)

You can only protect Cathars in Toulouse?

RAYMOND VI

As of today, yes, although that could change depending on the size of the Crusader army. I cannot promise anything.

BLANCHE

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

He circles Foix. Then points down to Comminges.

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 needed to know. If you need anything from me in return --

Blanche stands 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. To be honest, I didn't
think he would still be here when
it all 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.

CUT TO:

INT. LAURAC CASTLE - PIERRE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Blanche enters abruptly with a lantern as Pierre sleeps.
She hesitates then wakes him.

BLANCHE
Pierre? Pierre!

Pierre opens his eyes, startled.

BLANCHE
I am sorry, Pierre, but Joanna,
Jean - where are they?

Pierre blinks as the lantern shines directly in his
concerned face.

PIERRE
You sent them to Montsegur?

BLANCHE
They were to leave tonight, but
their chaperones say they failed
to meet them. Where have they
gone, Pierre!?

PIERRE

They are on their way to becoming
Perfecti now, Blanche. They will
be wherever their calling has
taken them.

Blanche's panic subsides a little. She takes Pierre's hand
in hers.

BLANCHE

I'm sorry Pierre. That's my ego
talking. I will trust in God's
plan.

Pierre smiles, then groans.

PIERRE

So must I, dear Blanche.

Her eyes widen, understanding his meaning.

BLANCHE

No, Pierre. Not yet. I need you.

PIERRE

You have everything you need.

Pierre closes his eyes. Blanche sits with him as the
lantern flickers, until it burns out.

Blanche rests her head on the bed and CRIES.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOIX - MARKET SQUARE - NIGHT

Illuminated by a lantern of her own, Joanna addresses
townsfolk -- all bleary yet wild-eyed and afraid.

JOANNA

We don't have much time. Follow my
friend, Perfecti Gilbert - he will
show you an escape route we have
planned. We will reconvene in
Montsegur. Hurry!

She points them in the direction of the waiting GILBERT (brown robes, early 30s, boyish features) across the square.

CUT TO:

As they reach Gilbert, he guides them through a trapdoor down into a set of TUNNELS.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOUSES - FOIX - NIGHT

Two Mercenaries knock, then kick in doors in the night. They grow frustrated as house upon house is empty.

MERCENARY #1

They must know we're coming. Find them!

Mercenary#2 turns to the assembly of other knights and mercs outside.

MERCENARY #2

Spread out. Head to the market square.

BACK TO:

EXT. FOIX - MARKET SQUARE - MOMENTS LATER

Joanna has started her speech again as more half-dressed townsfolk stumble onto the market square.

JOANNA

...hurry!

She turns to see Gilbert hurriedly instructing people down into the underground tunnel.

As an old woman struggles to keep up with the small procession, we see Mercenary #2 appear around the corner.

He scans the area with his lantern -- Finally shining it toward --

The old woman finally gets to Gilbert, where he leads her down the tunnel, then shuts the TRAPDOOR behind them.

Joanna ensures they are gone, before she flees the scene just in time.

MERCENARY #2

Over there!

CUT TO:

EXT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - BATTLEMENTS - DAY

Antoine finds Raymond VI surveying his manor.

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 of Roger-Raymond Trencavel?

ANTOINE

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

Raymond rubs his temples.

RAYMOND VI

(contemplating)

Just like that? The new Pope is certainly audacious -- and determined.

Raymond turns to Antoine.

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.

RAYMOND VI

(surprised)

Prepare our army. Let's show them they cannot hope to take Toulouse so easily.

ANTOINE

As you wish, my Lord.

CUT TO:

INT. PAPAL PALACE - ROME - AFTERNOON

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

POPE

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

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

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 - GROUNDS - DAY

Antoine BARKS orders at the assembled ARMY in front of him. It is made up of several skilled knights, but the majority are civilians still in training.

Raymond VI approaches, his casual attire replaced by regal armory.

RAYMOND VI

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

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.

As the men talk they fail to see Blanche arriving behind them. She wears a FLOWING GREEN GOWN with her hair neatly lifted on top of her head in a bun.

BLANCHE
Detected by whom?

They wheel around in surprise.

RAYMOND VI
Let's hope whoever it is they are
not as stealthy as you, Countess.

BLANCHE
You are assembling your army. Does
this mean you are to defend us,
Raymond?

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

BLANCHE
Our way of life is threatened. My
friends are being killed. Are we
to be next?

RAYMOND VI
The end has not yet been
determined. Have faith, Blanche.

CUT TO:

INT. LAURAC CASTLE - GREAT ROOM - AFTERNOON

Joanna and Gilbert enter the great room.

Blanche rises, surprised and beaming.

She walks towards them and embraces Joanna.

BLANCHE
Joanna! Thank God you are safe.
You can only stay a day or two
before you finally head to
Montsegur. Please. Perfecti are no
longer safe in Lauragais. Montfort

will likely come here next, and
Raymond cannot defend us.

Joanna's smile disappears in an instant.

JOANNA

He told you that?

BLANCHE

He'll 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 still agree to
terms. If he attacks, he will be
excommunicated, and the Crusaders
will claim his lands.

BLANCHE

(surprised)

Can they do that?

GILBERT

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. Keep your
wits about you.

JOANNA

Yes, mother. We will be back for
supper.

BLANCHE

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

JOANNA

Okay. I'll see you tonight.

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. 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

(sternly)

I will not have my students living in fear. You are immortal divine beings! Now hurry up!

CUT TO:

EXT. LAURAC - TOWN SQUARE - 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 holds up a crumpled SCROLL.

DOMINICAN

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

JOANNA

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 shakes 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

(mockingly)

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 murmurs.

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.

EXT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Raymond VI watches as the now skilled civilians and knights spar on the Chateau grounds.

He APPLAUDS as one of them, a YOUNG MAN, plants a long-serving knight firmly on his back.

Antoine rides into scene on horseback and dismounts next to Raymond.

RAYMOND VI

What have you learned?

ANTOINE

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

RAYMOND VI

And what of a resistance?

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 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

Yes, but we are now fully prepared!

ANTOINE

(gravely)

There is more, my Lord.

Raymond stops pacing -- looks at Antoine with intensity.

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

I thought this might happen. 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

If they want my lands, they will have to take them.

FOCUS ON

Raymond VI stern and determined FACE.

RAYMOND

Let's take a ride out to introduce ourselves.

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

How many do we need?

CARDINAL
At least five hundred men.

POPE
Then you shall have them. When
will they reach Toulouse?

CARDINAL
In a few weeks.

POPE
Keep me informed.

The Pope stands and storms out.

EXT. TOULOUSE COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Raymond VI and his army of five hundred knights ride through wide open fields, until they reach an open field containing a band of one hundred CRUSADER MERCENARIES.

MONTAGE --

A) Mercenaries flee as Raymond's Army plunge swords into their back.

B) The YOUNG MAN (turned knight) single-handedly takes down three mercenaries in combat.

C) Raymond VI and Antoine look on as their army lays waste to the last remaining Mercenaries who plead unsuccessfully for their lives.

INT. LAURAC CASTLE - BATTLEMENTS - DAY

ROBIERRE (30s, muscular, piercing blue eyes, Gallic nose) strides along the battlements wearing a HAUBERK over a long-sleeve TUNIC, clean LEATHER TROUSERS and spotless BOOTS.

He finds Blanche staring out across the countryside.

BLANCHE
(anxiously)

Have the Crusaders arrived,
Robierre?

ROBIERRE
Yes, Countess. They are twenty
miles north.

He points out to a spot in the distance.

BLANCHE
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's help!

ROBIERRE
(confused)
We have already received it,
Countess.

BLANCHE
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 makes his exit.

EXT. TOULOUSE TOWN WALLS - 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 but 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 before him.

EXT. TOULOUSE TOWN WALLS - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The Crusaders storm the walls using tall ladders. They are
repelled repeatedly with crossbows.

A trebuchet is rolled into position and launches large
stones. They impact the Toulouse walls, but make little
dent.

Antoine ROARS in defiance from behind the wall.

One Crusader breaks over the wall, but falls with a SCREAM
into a chaotic mob below.

If the fall didn't kill him, the knights below ensure he is dead with a flurry of kicks and blows.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOULOUSE - OUTER PERIMETER - MOMENTS LATER

MONTFORT (40s, moustache, snarling lips) watches from a distance in disgust.

He talks to his SECOND-IN-COMMAND.

MONTFORT

(angry)

We are cowards, retreating in defeat. We'll come back later when they are ill prepared. Prepare to depart south to Castlenaudry.

SECOND-IN-COMMAND

Yes, my Lord.

DISSOLVE TO:

Super: Six Months later

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.

JOANNA
(joyously)
Mother! It feels like forever
since I last saw you.

They embrace.

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

Blanche sits.

BLANCHE
No, I'm fine.

JOANNA
(concerned)
What is it mother?

BLANCHE
Montfort's army has been
reinforced and is now bigger than
Raymond's. Montfort has been going
town to town, throughout the
Lauragais 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
Did they go back to Toulouse?

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

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! How dare they call themselves Christian!

Gilbert enters the room and 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

(to Blanche)

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

BLANCHE

There is more. Do you wish to hear it?

Gilbert nods and sits down.

GILBERT

We must 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
Were any Perfecti killed?

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

BLANCHE
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 closes her eyes.

BLANCHE
I don't know. If Toulouse falls, we lose our way of life. All is lost.

CUT TO:

Super: Pamiers, France - 1212 AD

INT. PAMIER'S COUNCIL - DAY

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

MONTFORT
This does not yet say who owns the lands.

BISHOP
That will be decided after you have completed your mission.

MONTFORT
You mean Toulouse?

BISHOP
(grinning)
Yes.

INT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Antoine finds Raymond VI in the library studying a scroll.
He places it down as Antoine stands to attention.

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
What 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
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. The King has
written to 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 with a smile.

RAYMOND VI
Indeed, we shall!

INT. VATICAN - DAY

The same group of Cardinals, Bishops, and Priests listen
humbly as POPE INNOCENT III speaks.

POPE

I am hereby halting the crusade.
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, 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
required.

BISHOP

Divide and conquer?

POPE

Exactly.

INT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS GROUNDS - DAY

Raymond VI takes aim at a PARTRIDGE with a bow and arrow.
He nails it on the first attempt and watches it fall
clumsily to the ground.

RAYMOND

Yes! -- Still the best archer in
Toulouse, am I not, Antoine?

Antoine takes the opportunity to step out of the shadows
and approach.

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 drops the bow and arrow.

RAYMOND VI

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

ANTOINE

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

RAYMOND VI

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

ANTOINE

Yes, let them grow complacent.

RAYMOND VI

There are a hundred nobles I can
count on to support me when I
return. This war isn't over!

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

WIDE ANGLE

A COURIER on horseback rides across the moat bridge toward
Château Narbonnais and stops outside the main gate beside
Antoine.

Inaudible words are exchanged before Antoine slips the
courier a coin and sends him on his way.

Antoine turns and solemnly walks toward the castle.

INT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - GREAT ROOM - DAY

Antoine approaches RAYMOND VII as he talks with his YOUNG WIFE (demure, coy) and several SERVANTS.

As Raymond turns to face him, Antoine stands at attention.

RAYMOND VII

I know that look all too well.
What troubles you, 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 across the floor.

RAYMOND VII

(once 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 strokes his chin as he paces past Antoine to the other side of the room, pivots, and does the same again.

RAYMOND VII

Then who will get the land?

ANTOINE

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

RAYMOND VII

We will await my father's return.

ANTOINE

Very well, my Lord.

Antoine nods and leaves the room.

SUPER: Toulouse, Languedoc. 1217 AD

EXT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

Raymond VI rides into Château Narbonnais with an entourage of three hundred SPANISH MERCENARIES. Raymond VII waits for his father to dismount his horse, then embraces him tightly.

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 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.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - DAY

The same scene, only this time engulfed in a large-scale battle.

WIDE ANGLE ON

The Crusaders surround the Chateau. Two trebuchets are aimed at the tall walls, hurling behemoth stones.

ZOOM IN TO SEE

A group of Crusaders storm a far wall with tall ladders and are instantly repelled by arrows.

A few SCREAM in anguish as they fall away from the wall to their deaths.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOULOUSE - OUTER PERIMETER - MOMENTS LATER

Montfort is shown watching from a distance. He flinches as some of his men are killed, but remains confident.

POV OVERHEAD

From above we follow trebuchet stones flung in both directions.

Knights and Mercenaries scatter as they deliver retaliatory blows.

PAN DOWN

Several epic duels between opposing forces. We see the YOUNG MAN training previously locked in combat with a RUGGED MERCENARY.

After a grueling sword fight, he loses his weapon. As the Rugged Mercenary winds up to deliver a fatal blow, Raymond VII rides in and runs him through with a large sword.

He pulls the Young Man up onto horseback, and they make their exit together through the crowded battlefield.

BACK TO:

EXT. TOULOUSE - OUTER PERIMETER - CONTINUOUS

Montfort barks orders at the surrounding army as he watches victory slip away.

He turns to his Second-In-Command.

MONTFORT

Bring me Raymond's heads on a stick and his son's to match!

SECOND-IN-COMMAND

We'll get them, my lord.

As Montfort storms away, we hear a warning CRY.

Suddenly a trebuchet stone flies across screen and wipes Montfort from the spot. Only his boot remains.

Second-In-Command YELLS for help, but it is clearly a helpless situation.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TOULOUSE - OUTER PERIMETER - DAY

Second-In-Command, now on horseback gestures frantically for the army to retreat.

SECOND-IN-COMMAND

Fall back!

We watch the hundreds of Crusaders flee Toulouse, first from ground level, then --

POV OVERHEAD

Crusaders spill from the town and into the countryside as fast as they can until they disappear from view.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOULOUSE TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Flags are waved as a jubilant procession walks through the town.

CUT TO

EXT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - CONTINUOUS

Flags billow in the wind above the Castle Walls in a victory celebration.

INT. LAURAC CASTLE - GREAT ROOM - EVENING

Robierre strides across the room and speaks before Blanche can even acknowledge 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 blushes.

ROBIERRE
Sorry, my Lady.

BLANCHE
Don't be. 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

Thank you, Robierre. You may be excused.

Robierre bows and leaves the room.

CUT TO:

INT. PAPAL PALACE - ROME - MORNING

BANG

POPE HONORIUS III's fist hits the large table, making the assorted clergymen wince and look anywhere but at him.

POPE HONORIUS
They will ALL burn for this!

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER: Toulouse - 1222 AD

EXT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Raymond VII emerges from a room and closes the door gently.

Antoine waits for him to speak.

RAYMOND VI
My father has passed. He asked me to thank you for your years of service before he departed this world.

ANTOINE
My condolences for your loss, my Lord. He was a great man.

RAYMOND VI
Indeed he was, Antoine.

ANTOINE
I will announce three days of mourning for his -- your, people.

RAYMOND VI
No, Antoine. There will be one day of mourning. Then we are to return

to our training. One day, the
crusade will return, and we will
be prepared.

FADE DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER: LANGUEDOC - 1226 AD

INT. LAURAC CASTLE - GREAT ROOM - DAY

An older, weary-looking, Blanche plays with her
grandchildren in the great room as Robierre enters,
excitedly.

ROBIERRE

Raymond won! The siege is over!
The King presently marches 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 remembers
the battle at Toulouse that cost
Montfort his life. Or maybe he has
no patience for a long siege.

BLANCHE

(perplexed)

Why would he retreat to Paris when
he is so close to victory?

ROBIERRE

There are rumors of a war with
England?

BLANCHE

Something seems off. I will travel
to Toulouse to speak with Raymond
myself. Please prepare an
entourage at once.

Robierre bows and leaves the room.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - NIGHT

Blance sits atop horseback with Robierre and half a dozen other rides by her side.

After a wait, the drawbridge gate opens and out steps Antoine.

ANTOINE

Countess, apologies for keeping you waiting. Raymond is unable to speak with you at this time.

BLANCHE

It has been a long trip at this hour. Perhaps Raymond would care to tell me why?

ANTOINE

That is all I am to say, Countess. You are of course all welcome to stay overnight in the guest quarters.

BLANCHE

For what? If Raymond is not to speak with me, then I no longer consider myself a welcome guest.

Blanche turns her horse in disgust and gives Robierre the NOD. He leads them away from the Chateau.

CUT TO:

SUPER: PARIS, FRANCE - 1229 AD

EXT. MEAUX OFFICE OF THE CROWN - MORNING

Raymond walks up the steps to a grand building flanked by Antoine.

As he reaches the top, he turns and walks back down half a dozen steps.

Then stops again.

Antoine struggles to keep up or make sense.

ANTOINE

My Lord?

RAYMOND VII

Be honest with me, Antoine. What would my father do?

ANTOINE

You are not your father, my Lord.

RAYMOND VII

That is what troubles me.

ANTOINE

He would want you to do what is right for your future, my Lord.

Raymond considers the words, then turns to head back inside.

RAYMOND VII

Wait out here for me, Antoine. I don't want you to bear witness.

CUT TO:

INT. MEAUX OFFICE OF THE CROWN - MOMENTS LATER

Inside a large but sparse room with just a signing table and a singular chair, Raymond meets BLANCHE DE CASTILE with a brief barely-courteous NOD.

BLANCHE DE CASTILE

You have made the right choice, Raymond of Toulouse.

RAYMOND VII

I haven't signed it yet.

BLANCHE DE CASTILE

If you prefer, we can keep your land and titles and you can return to your castle. For now, at least.

RAYMOND VII

Then is it really a choice?

Raymond sits at the chair, lifts a PEN and signs the Treaty before him.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAURAC CASTLE - GARDEN - DAY

Robierre walks alongside Blanche as she LAUGHS and plays with her grandchildren.

BLANCHE

You didn't come out here to play with us, so do share, please Robierre.

ROBIERRE

(hesitates)

Countess, Raymond of Toulouse has accepted terms. Languedoc is now in the hands of the King. It is over. All is 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 dire, 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

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

ROBIERRE

Yes, Countess. 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

(shakes her head)

We lose the war without even a battle. The Albigensian Crusade is over and all of the Perfecti will be killed.

ROBIERRE

(hesitating)

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

Tears stream down Blanche's face.

BLANCHE

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 ornate chairs have high hand-carved backs, and three candles in shiny golden candleholders center the table.

BISHOP

The Pope has decided to eliminate the remaining heretics in Languedoc via 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 at the discretion of the Inquirers.

BISHOP

Who will be the Inquirers?

BISHOP
Dominicans. Chosen by the Pope.

BISHOP
They are to be in charge -- 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
Young Perfecti, who is then moved by a soldier to a chair
in front of the Dominicans.

DOMINICAN
You are charged with heresy. Do
you plead guilty?

YOUNG 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?

YOUNG PERFECTI
Do what you need to do.

DOMINICAN
Are you a Cathari?

YOUNG PERFECTI
(nods)
Yes.

DOMINICAN

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

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

DOMINICAN
Have you performed the consolamentum?

YOUNG PERFECTI
Yes.

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

YOUNG PERFECTI
No.

DOMINICAN
I thought you were going to cooperate?

YOUNG 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 captive Perfecti is placed on the chair, and the process begins again.

DISSOLVE TO:

SUPER: MONTSEGUR - 1243 AD

INT. MONTSÉGUR FORTRESS - COMMUNAL ROOM - NIGHT

An aged Blanche looks on with pride as Joanna hosts a debate with the assembled Perfecti.

JOANNA

Our body is not the soul's home.
Our soul resides in God's Kingdom,
which is our true home.

PERFECTAE #1

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

Joanna excitedly paces the open square in the center of the
room.

JOANNA

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

PERFECTAE #1

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.

PERFECTAE #2

If our soul does not live here,
then why would we come back?

JOANNA

(smiling)

Excellent question. This is
something that was taught to me by
my teacher, Perfecti Pierre who
has long since passed and returned
to God's Kingdom.
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.
For until you experience love's

opposite -- hate, you cannot truly understand God's love.

PERFECTAE #2

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.

PERFECTAE #3

(defiant)

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

JOANNA

That's what I said to Pierre once. 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.

PERFECTAE #1

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

Joanna nods.

PERFECTAE #2

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.

PERFECTAE #3

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

CUT TO:

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 burdening age.

EXT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

Robierre approaches the gate. It is only open a few feet with two knights guarding the entrance. They check his credentials and 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
What is your name?

ROBIERRE
Robierre. I have been with the Countess since I was a young man.

PERFECTI
Why don't you stay and help 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 FORTRESS - DAY

They walk together down a long stone hallway lit by lanterns. At the end of the hallway is another doorway, to --

INT. MONTSÉGUR FORTRESS - COMMUNAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

On the far side we meet an aged Blanche, sitting by herself in a TATTERED GOWN far removed from her previous attire.

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

ROBIERRE
Thank you, Perfecti.

The Perfecti nods and leaves.

Robierre approaches Blanche and, by habit, snaps to attention.

Blanche appears tired with little vitality, but manages a smile and warm embrace.

BLANCHE

Dearest Robierre -- it is so good
to see you.

ROBIERRE

(bowing)

Countess

BLANCHE

And so it comes to pass?

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 leads Robierre from the room so as not to startle
the assembled Perfecti.

INT. MONTSÉGUR FORTRESS - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

BLANCHE

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 shudders.

BLANCHE

And where are the inquisitors now?

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 hundreds of 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

It will not take long enough, Countess.

Blanche does not reply.

ROBIERRE

I fear this is goodbye. I am too old to return across those mountains.

Tears well up in Blanche's eyes.

BLANCHE

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

Robierre nods.

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. They exchange a final nod of respect, both knowing this will be the last time they see each other.

EXT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

Joanna watches from the top of a wall down into the valley as the royal army surrounds the fortress.

We watch as legion upon legion of mounted knights, infantrymen on foot, and several trebuchets are maneuvered into position.

Gilbert creeps up behind and settles in beside her.

GILBERT

We cannot possibly withstand their assault.

JOANNA

Withstand it? Gilbert, we should welcome it.

Gilbert looks confused. Joanna, energized.

CUT TO:

INT. MONTSÉGUR FORTRESS - JOANNA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Joanna prepares for bed as Blanche enters her room.

BLANCHE

They wait for sunrise. They feast while we prepare to die.

INT. MONTSÉGUR - DAY

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

JOANNA

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

BLANCHE

At my age, I'm not afraid to die, my child. But if all the Perfecti die, that would be a travesty.

JOANNA

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

BLANCHE

(smiling)

Pierre taught you so well.

JOANNA

Mary Magdalene's prophecy. 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)
The Gnostics will be purged, yet
one day in the distant future rise
again. You must believe that.

Blanche's proud eyes dwell on Joanna for a BEAT.

BLANCHE
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
I agree. 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.

INT. MONTSÉGUR - COMMUNAL ROOM - NIGHT

Over one hundred Perfecti gather. Some half-asleep and
already in their night robes. They listen intently as
Joanna speaks.

JOANNA
We should prepare not for death,
but for rebirth. We all believe in
reincarnation, so let's plan 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 pauses to let everyone absorb the idea. She scans the room, but there is only silence.

JOANNA

We must keep the faith, even in
such dire times.

(beat)

Especially in such dire times.

Gilbert shuffles on the floor. Joanna looks at him as he raises his hand.

JOANNA

Gilbert, my friend...

GILBERT

What do you mean by prepare?

JOANNA

We should make a commitment to
purify our souls. While we are
purifying our souls, we will ask
God to bring us all back together,
when the time is right.

GILBERT

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.

Another OLDER PERFECTI raises their hand.

OLDER PERFECTI

It is to be a spiritual quest?

JOANNA

Exactly. This is not the end, but an opportunity 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 -- to develop mastery like Jesus and Mary Magdalene. This is our *last opportunity* for this lifetime.

Joanna pauses for a response, but the room remains silent.

JOANNA

(pointing at the wall)

Our enemies are not on the other side of that wall, but ourselves. The same energy that is the source of my soul, is the source of theirs. Have no contempt for them. Be accepting of all life. Be considerate, be generous, be enthusiastic, be gentle, be grateful, and be content. Why? Because we are God! The Crusaders may well throw 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 is merely the doorway back home. Take your mind, and place it in your soul, into the nous. You will feel no pain.

Joanna looks slowly at the faces around her. MURMURS spread throughout the room.

Joanna looks to her mother, Blanche, who smiles with pride.

Another FEMALE PERFECTI rises and put her palms together in the sign of prayer and thankfulness.

Many others follow her lead, until all acknowledge Joanna with prayer.

Joanna SMILES and put her palms together too.

JOANNA

Remember to ask the Lord to bring
us all back together like Mary
Magdalene prophesied.

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. MONTSEGUR FORTRESS -- MONTAGE

A) INT. MONTSEGUR FORTRESS - COMMUNAL ROOM - DAY

Groups of Perfecti pray in silence against the backdrop of Trebuchet Stones pounding the fortress walls outside with a DEEP boom they simply ignore.

B) EXT. MONTSEGUR FORTRESS - DEFENSE WALLS - DAY

Exhausted Perfecti are too tired to load their own Trebuchet due to hunger. A group collapses beside the device, unable to continue. Instead of panic, they simple move into prayer where they lay.

C) EXT. MONTSEGUR FORTRESS - COURTYARD - AFTERNOON

Gilbert hands out the last remaining food supplies to a mother and her young children.

As they take the final LOAVES and VEGETABLES, they smile and give thanks.

D) INT. MONTSEGUR FORTRESS - JOANNA'S ROOM - MORNING

Blanche, Joanna, and her children pray together. No tears, no fear, just contentment that they are together.

A KNOCK on the door. Joanna answers to see Gilbert's face. She simply smiles and NODS and guides the children out of the room for him to lead away.

INT. MONTSEGUR FORTRESS - JOANNA'S ROOM - DAY

JOANNA

Gilbert has surrendered. The
Crusaders are coming to take us
down the hill. It is time.

BLANCHE
What day is it?

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

BLANCHE
Good. I didn't want to be burned
on a Sunday. 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.

JOANNA
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. We are going home.

JOANNA
I only wish my spirit could stay
and preach to the people. It is
why I was born.

Blanche rises and hugs her daughter.

BLANCHE

Before this day is over, we will
be in God's Kingdom. For that we
should be grateful.

Joanna SMILES.

JOANNA

Mother, I love you so much! 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. MONTSÉGUR MOUNTAINS - DAY

POV OVERHEAD

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

PAN DOWN

We see only calm Perfecti faces -- some hold hands, some
sing, many pray. Some even smile at the increasingly
confused and unsettle line of Royal infantry flanking the
mountains.

CUT TO:

EXT. MONTSÉGUR MOUNTAINS - DAY - CONTINUOUS

We see several nobles dressed in luxurious clothing
watching the procession. Again, with a mixture of disdain
yet jealousy at the total faith and lack of fear on
display.

Finally, the march reaches the large bonfire at the bottom of the main hill.

A queue forms before it.

PAN ACROSS

Hundreds of Perfecti faces. Mostly calm, resolute. No one cries, no one runs. They all just look straight ahead as the flames illuminate their skin.

Mothers and fathers embrace each other and their children.

Then they wait.

Confounded, TWO CRUSADERS look at each other, hesitant, until we hear a CRY.

ROYAL GUARD (O.S.)

Burn them!

The Two Crusaders grab the first Perfecti in line, bind his hands and feet, and toss him into the fire.

A BLOOD CURDLING SCREAM causes anxiety to ripple through the queue of Perfecti.

Midway along, Joanna NODS to Blanche.

They push their way through the queue to get near the front and begin to RUN.

SLOW MOTION

We watch the duo clasp hands and run together as fast as Blanche's aging legs will allow.

The TWO CRUSADERS watch on, slack-jawed, other Perfecti watch with pride as the two keep running toward the bonfire and --

LEAP INTO THE FLAMES

CLOSE UP

Their smiling faces, full of love for each other as they hit the flames and disappear.

SILENCE

Now, instead of being dragged by the TWO CRUSADERS, many more Perfecti break from the queue and run into the flames of their own accord.

We PAN OUT as another, and another Perfecti run into the flames gleefully --

DISSOLVE TO BLACK:

INT. CHÂTEAU NARBONNAIS - GREAT ROOM - DAY

Antoine, now reaching old age, enters the great room to where 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 bows his head with a SIGH.

RAYMOND VII

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

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

ANTOINE

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 moves to leave the room.

ANTOINE

The Perfecti will be reborn and
will preach again.

RAYMOND VII

Antoine, now I fear we may be
dreaming.

Antoine pauses before leaving the room. Turns, SMILES.

ANTOINE

But it is a good dream, my Lord.

CUT TO:

EXT. LANGUEDOC - AERIAL VIEW

We SWEEP over the Languedoc region again from the skies,
across the countryside and see the towns and castles pass
by.

SUPER:

"When Montségur fell, the Cathars were all but eliminated
from Languedoc. The Inquisition remained for several more
decades finishing the job."

CUT TO:

EXT. FOIX - MARKET SQUARE - DAY

We meet PIERRE AUTIER (30's, charming, handsome) as he
preaches in the Market Square to a small following.

SUPER:

"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."

CUT TO:

EXT. FOIX - PIERRE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

We see Pierre relax as he is arrested and carted away by more Royal guards in the middle of the night.

SUPER:

"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 Cathars remaining in Languedoc."

FADE TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

A YOUNG WOMAN (similar looking to a young Joanna) walks into a coffee shop. It is crowded. Many of the people there are looking at their iPhones.

She finds a YOUNG MAN (similar looking to a young Gilbert) at table and sits down across from him

JOANNA

I had a dream last night. You were in it.

GILBERT

What was it about?

JOANNA

We were Cathars during the Albigensian Crusade in the thirteenth century. They burned us in a bonfire.

GILBERT

(intrigued)
Who burned us?

JOANNA
The Catholics.

GILBERT
That sounds ghastly.

JOANNA
(looking seriously at
Gilbert)
I think we incarnated to bring
back the Cathars. We need to look
into it.

GILBERT
(stunned)
What?

JOANNA
(grins)
Find out what you can about the
Cathars. Use your AI program. See
if there is any connection between
then and now.

GILBERT
(nods)
Sure. I can do that. What if there
is a connection?

JOANNA
(smiles)
Let's hope it was only a dream.
Did you order me a Macha?

GILBERT
(smiles back, clearly in
love)
Of course.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END