

THE SHROUD

EPISODE 8

"AT THE HOUR OF OUR DEATH"

by

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THE SHROUD. EPISODE 8. AT THE HOUR OF OUR DEATH.

INT. CALAIS CASTLE — NIGHT

Close on RENTI, bloody and in chains, being led by ENGLISH GUARDS through a dark narrow tunnel. Behind Renti follow RIBEMONT and the other FRENCH CAPTIVES, also in chains.

As they approach a bright doorway at the end of tunnel, Renti squints and covers his eyes, then steps through into the

GRAND DINING HALL

The very definition of opulence. A long massive table laid out with all manner of decadent food and drink, on gleaming silver trays, plates, and cutlery, over a fine tablecloth.

Renti and the other prisoners are stunned and confused, as they take hesitant steps further into the dining hall.

VOICE (O.S)

Please, come in, come in.

Renti turns toward the voice -- KING EDWARD III -- standing at the head of the table, flanked by a few ARMED GUARDS who watch closely in the corner.

KING EDWARD III

Don't be shy.

Renti still hesitates as he steps closer to the table. The King encourages them forward.

KING EDWARD III

This is no trick. I give you my word.

He gestures toward the table.

KING EDWARD III

Sit, sit.

The guards approach. Renti and the others flinch, but then relax as the guards pull out keys and unlock their chains.

They all take their places at the table, sitting down, Renti and Ribemont casting suspicious glances around them, as the King addresses them.

KING EDWARD III

I gathered you all here this night
not as my prisoners, but as my
guests.

He raises a glass.

KING EDWARD III

Let us begin with a toast then. To the new decade. Let us ring in the new year, the year of our Lord thirteen hundred and fifty, with an eye toward peace and prosperity between our great nations.

The men cast wary glances at each other, then drink from their wine glasses.

Edward puts his glass down, notices their trepidation.

KING EDWARD III

What happened here earlier tonight was unfortunate. But I share this meal with you so that you may know that the blame lies not with any of you.

He walks slowly around the long table.

KING EDWARD III

After all, you are merely soldiers. Following orders.

The men's eyes follow Edward as he walks past them.

KING EDWARD III

No, the blame lies with the one who gave the orders. The man who commanded all of you to march with him into this city. To take it by cover of night.

The men look at each other. Cast their heads down in shame.

KING EDWARD III

Your general. The man who you would follow to the ends of the earth. The greatest soldier, the greatest fighter, the greatest knight France has ever known. A man of unflinching honour and virtue. A true God-fearing man.

Renti suddenly notices a remarkable absence at the table.

RENTI

Sir... where is Lord Charny?

King Edward gives a subtle smile.

KING EDWARD III
It seems your fearless leader could
not join us this evening.

We push in on a metal grate in the corner of the room.

KING EDWARD III
But rest assured...

INT. DUNGEON CELL - SAME

CHARNY sits against the wall inside a small dingy cell,
wrists chained to the floor, looks up at the metallic grate,
hearing every word in the dining hall above.

KING EDWARD III (O.S)
...he is in the room with us, in
spirit, listening to our every word.

Off Charny, eyes burning with rage and regret... CUT TO-

TITLES: THE SHROUD

EXT. PERTHUIS CHAPEL - DAY

18 MONTHS LATER

An overcast day in the small town.

INT. CHAPEL - DAY

FATHER DESCARTES is folding his robe, carefully placing it in
a cabinet.

VOICE (O.S)
Father Descartes...

Descartes turns to find GABRIEL standing at the door.

DESCARTES
Gabriel?

GABRIEL
I was wondering if I may have a
word... if you're not too busy of
course.

Descartes gestures at the table.

DESCARTES
Of course. Please.

They sit.

GABRIEL

I have spent many months turning this over in my mind. I do not come to this decision brashly.

Descartes waits patiently.

GABRIEL

I wish to resume my duties in the Church.

DESCARTES

I see.

GABRIEL

I've never formally declared my excommunication. Therefore, if you'll allow me, I would like to take up residence here again.

Descartes is about to say something, but Gabriel quickly cuts in.

GABRIEL

I do not expect to take your place -- my former place -- as chaplain. I will start again as a servant. Tending to whatever chores you require.

DESCARTES

Gabriel --

Gabriel suddenly slides off his chair and drops to his knee.

GABRIEL

Please, Father... I humbly beg of you. I spend my days drifting in a void. Lacking structure. Lost of purpose.

He grabs Descartes' hands.

GABRIEL

I need this. Please.

DESCARTES

Do you want this because of what you lost? Or because of what you will gain?

Gabriel stammers, confused.

GABRIEL

I...I...

DESCARTES

We do not seek the Lord to forget
our pain. We seek him to embrace it.
To embrace hurt. Loss. Tragedy. All
these things he will help you
endure. But you must want to endure
it with him. Not run from it.

A tear rolls down Gabriel's cheek.

GABRIEL

I fear he will not take me.

DESCARTES

He takes all... if you are willing.

Gabriel forces a smile. Falls into Descartes's open arms, who
holds him comfortingly.

INT. WINDSOR CASTLE - DAY

LONDON, ENGLAND

AMERIGO walks into the throne room to find King Edward
waiting for him.

Amerigo takes the knee.

AMERIGO

My king.

KING EDWARD III

Spare me, Roman.

Amerigo stands up, nervous.

KING EDWARD III

You did as I asked. Played your
part. So as promised, I shall spare
you.

Amerigo breathes a sigh of relief.

KING EDWARD III

Your brother will also be freed.

AMERIGO

Thank you, your Grace.

KING EDWARD III

Let it not be said I am not a man of
my word.

He stands up. Steps closer.

KING EDWARD III
But you will not walk away fully
pardoned.

Amerigo gulps. Steadies himself.

KING EDWARD III
You gave Charny the keys to our
city. This will not be so callously
brushed aside.

AMERIGO
As I would not expect it to be.

KING EDWARD III
Quiet.

Amerigo closes his mouth.

KING EDWARD III
You will be allowed to keep Charny's
money. But you are to be stripped of
your title. No longer captain of
Calais. Your coat of arms shall also
be abated.

AMERIGO
My king, do you not know what this
will do to my family--

KING EDWARD III
I said silence.

Amerigo immediately purses his lips.

KING EDWARD III
Your position will be moved to the
town of Fretun, where you shall
guard the keep there.

He leans in to Amerigo.

KING EDWARD III
What do we say in the face of such
mercy?

AMERIGO
Thank you, my king.

KING EDWARD III
Get out of my sight.

Amerigo bows. Quickly slips out of the throne room.

INT. DUNGEON CELL - CALAIS CASTLE - NIGHT

Charny sits in his cell, scrawling words onto a piece of parchment.

The guards suddenly open the cell door, making way for the BLACK PRINCE to step inside. He looks down at Charny's paper.

BLACK PRINCE
You've made good use of that.

CHARNY
It's my atonement. My guide. For those who wish to learn from my mistakes.

The Black Prince snatches the paper from his hands.

BLACK PRINCE
(reading)
"Book of Chivalry"?
(scoffs)
This is rich. Coming from the one who now sits in a dungeon because of his dishonour.

CHARNY
We are all of us imperfect before the eyes of God.

BLACK PRINCE
Some more than others.

Charny scowls, clenching his manacled hands into fists.

The Prince throws the paper back at Charny.

BLACK PRINCE
The new king of France has paid your ransom. You're free to go.

He motions to the guards, who pull Charny up from the ground and unlock his chains.

CHARNY
John?

BLACK PRINCE
Quite a hefty sum too. Seems he's a more enterprising man than his father ever was.

He suddenly makes a motion of remembering something.

BLACK PRINCE

Also, I am sorry to hear of your
friend, the Lord Edouard de Beaujeu.
I understand you were close.

Charny tilts his head, his attention caught.

BLACK PRINCE

Oh, you didn't hear? Seems he fell
in battle at Ardres, just a
fortnight ago.

Charny turns his gaze away, overcome by a flood of sorrow.

BLACK PRINCE

Don't feel so bad, my lord. His army
did eventually win the battle
against us. Unfortunately he could
not revel in their victory.

Charny's grief turns to anger, makes a fist, which the Prince
catches sight of.

BLACK PRINCE

Careful, Charny. You wouldn't want
to gamble away your newfound
freedom, would you.

Charny takes a deep breath, steels himself. He's about to
step past the Black Prince toward the exit, but the Prince
grabs his arm.

BLACK PRINCE

Practice what you preach, Charny. Or
you'll find yourself at the end of
my sword again soon.

He leans in closer.

BLACK PRINCE

And perhaps next time, I will not be
so kind.

Charny glares grimly at him, then walks out the cell door.

EXT. TOWN OF FRETUN, FRANCE — NIGHT

25 JULY 1352

A quiet night in this northern French town. In the distance
we can see a GUARD TOWER jutting up among the rest of the
smaller forts.

INT. TOWER BED CHAMBERS - SAME

Amerigo lays in bed with his MISTRESS, whom he lays on top of, climaxing.

He lets out a groan and rolls off of her, laying on his back. She sidles up to him, running her hand over his chest.

MISTRESS
You ravage me like an animal of
late.

AMERIGO
It relieves me.

He kisses her forehead.

AMERIGO
You relieve me. From the troubles
of this backwater hellhole.

MISTRESS
You would not have found me were it
not for this "hellhole".

AMERIGO
A balm indeed. In an otherwise
festering sewer in which the king
has banished me.

She sits up, mounts him.

MISTRESS
There is some light in this sewer.
You are still a respected commander
in one of the king's territories.

She leans over to kiss him.

MISTRESS
And you have me.

He grins sadistically, wraps his arms around her waist, when suddenly--

CHARNY COMES BURSTING THROUGH THE DOOR, SWORD DRAWN -- Renti, Ribemont, and a few men behind him.

The mistress screams as she jumps off the bed.

CHARNY
Leave. Now.

The mistress runs naked out the room.

Charny grips Amerigo's throat. Hauls him out of bed.

AMERIGO
(pleading)
Wait, Charny, I beg you--

CHARNY
Save your pleas for later. You will
need them.

He throws Amerigo at his men, who drag him off.

INT. PALAIS DES PAPES - AVIGNON, FRANCE - NIGHT

Inside a dimly lit bed chamber, POPE CLEMENT VI lies on his deathbed, pale and feverish, face gaunt, already resembling a ghost. Servants tend to him, while a few cardinals stand by his bedside, whispering prayers and offering benedictions.

STEFANO steps solemnly into the room, his gaze on the dying pope.

Clement opens his eyes weakly, notices Stefano who has just entered. He motions feebly at the cardinals.

POPE CLEMENT VI
Leave us...

The cardinals glance warily at each other.

POPE CLEMENT VI
For but a moment.

The cardinals bow and leave Stefano alone with the pontiff. Stefano moves in by his bedside.

STEFANO
Holiness... I am sorry...

POPE CLEMENT VI
Perhaps the Virgin Mary cannot hear
my voice in this final hour, but it
is I who am sorry.

Stefano says nothing, lets the pope speak his last thoughts.

POPE CLEMENT VI
When my dear Henri brought you to
me, I shunned you outright. Not for
what you said, but for who you were.

Stefano nods. Understands.

POPE CLEMENT VI

I suppose it's no secret that my past with the Benedictine Order has been... less than joyful. But I was wrong to cast you in with that lot, despite wearing their robes. Do you forgive me?

Stefano smirks sadly.

STEFANO

I would not be a servant of Christ if I did not follow his example.

Clement closes his eyes, relieved.

STEFANO

But you do recall the reason I came to you in the beginning.

Clement opens his eyes, suddenly feeling unsettled.

STEFANO

The Lord Geoffroi de Charny has retrieved the shroud, which my holy brother Gianluca kept guard over and gave his life for.

Clement opens his mouth to speak, but Stefano continues.

STEFANO

The holy relic was left at the Abbey of Saint Denis for safekeeping. Sir Charny has revealed to me his intention to build a church in his fiefdom of Lirey, to honour the shroud, and the newfound faith which it has brought him.

POPE CLEMENT VI

Abbot, this is setting a dangerous precedent...

Stefano leans in close.

STEFANO

The shroud has power, Holiness. The world must see it for themselves.

POPE CLEMENT VI

The Church of Saint Peter cannot be built on lies, abbot.

STEFANO

No, Holiness...

He turns to leave.

STEFANO

...it will be built on faith.

Stefano makes the sign of the cross, then walks out of the room, leaving the dying pope to ponder his last moments on this mortal coil...

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

SAINT-OMER, FRANCE

A MASSIVE CROWD OF TOWNSFOLKS AND VILLAGERS are gathered in the town square, assembled before the large COURTYARD of the city's CASTLE.

Suddenly from the courtyard doors emerges Amerigo, bloodied and chained, being dragged by French soldiers to the place of execution.

The crowd boos and throws rocks and tomatoes at Amerigo, as the soldiers rip off his shirt and tie his arms wide apart to wooden beams.

Charny stands stoically by the courtyard gates, Renti and Ribemont at his side, watching with grim indifference.

A castle guard steps up on the stage before the crowd.

GUARD

For being a traitor to the sworn
word, the accused Amerigo of Pavia
is sentenced to be tortured to
death.

The crowd erupts into cheers as someone tosses a head of lettuce which bounces off Amerigo's head.

A pair of soldiers, on either side of Amerigo, pull out their BRANDING IRONS from the steaming hot coals.

Amerigo's pulse quickens as the soldiers plunge the hot irons into his ribs. Amerigo SCREAMS in agony, almost drowned out by the cheers of the crowd as his flesh sizzles.

The soldiers press the irons against his torso, chest, and back again and again, tearing off chunks of burnt flesh as they pull the irons away. Amerigo's screams surpass the cheers and taunts of the crowd.

The soldiers untie Amerigo and drop him to the ground, yelling as his smoking flesh scrapes the wood.

One of the soldiers raises a HUGE AXE, the crowds cheering at the sight of the instrument.

Off to the side, Charny watches impassively.

The soldier brings down the axe, chopping off Amerigo's left arm. Amerigo cries out in agony again as the soldier holds up the severed arm for the cheering crowd to see. The soldier chops off his right arm, to more cheers.

Amerigo, looking up at his executioner, barely conscious from the pain, chokes up blood as the soldier LOPS OFF HIS HEAD with one clean blow. His head rolls off as the crowd revels in the bloody justice.

Satisfied, Charny turns away from the bloody spectacle and goes back into the castle.

INT. OMER CASTLE - SAME

Renti and Ribemont follow Charny inside.

RENTI

Now we can take his tower in Fretun
and claim it back from the English.

CHARNY

NO --

Charny stops. Turns around.

CHARNY

We will not attack Fretun nor its
tower. The matter has been settled
here. Today.

RIBEMONT

Oudart is right, lord. The man was a
traitor. You are well within your
right to capture the tower.

CHARNY

And where is the honour in that?

Charny calms down. Steps closer.

CHARNY

A hard lesson was learned in Calais.
War is bloody and futile enough as
it is. If men do not act with
honour, then what is the point of
all this, *hmm?*

Renti and Ribemont exchange remorseful glances.

CHARNY

This was a personal argument between two men. There will be no more reprisals. No more revenge.

He puts reassuring hands on their shoulders.

CHARNY

You may disband the men, as we discussed. Our work is done here. I have other matters to settle back home.

INT CHATEAU DE VERGY — DAY

BURGUNDY, FRANCE. 1354.

Inside a lush palace, we find an impeccably dressed man standing before a mirror, as his servants tend to his garments and carefully dress him. This is GUILLAUME III DE VERGY, lord of House Vergy.

Guillaume slaps a servant's hand away from his leg, who holds a threading needle.

GUILLAUME

Will you stop poking holes into me?

VOICE (O.S)

Still short with the house staff I see?

Guillaume spins to find his young daughter standing in the doorway, **JEANNE DE VERGY**.

GUILLAUME

I did not become lord of House Vergy to be prodded at and dressed like some invalid.

JEANNE DE VERGY

You play the part well, father.

Guillaume approaches her, in awe.

GUILLAUME

My God... such a vision of beauty. Like your mother.

JEANNE DE VERGY

I should hope so. The maids fashioned this dress by hand. With fabric brought from the *palais* in Paris itself, I'm told.

GUILLAUME

Let's hope it works its magic on its intended audience.

Guillaume turns away, toward a drawer filled with gold rings and other assorted jewelry.

JEANNE DE VERGY

And tell me again, why must I be the one to work this magic?

GUILLAUME

The new church in Lirey has been seeing quite an influx of pilgrims for months now, to witness this "shroud". I've taken the liberty to arrange this meeting with the church's owner, in order to secure funding for its continued work.

JEANNE DE VERGY

And why must I be there?

GUILLAUME

We need to make alliances with other houses, Jeanne, if our lineage is to prosper. The founder of this Lirey church -- Geoffroi de Charny -- is a man of considerable wealth and influence. He owns several properties in northern France. Commands a great army. He's a member of the royal council, and the Company of the Star. The man is practically a king in all but name.

JEANNE DE VERGY

So this has nothing to do with the shroud? As you promised me? But instead to display me as your prop?

Guillaume steps toward her, grips her arms.

GUILLAUME

My child, the Lord guides us in everything we do. If an alliance with this Charny is in his plan for us, then who are we to deny his will?

Jeanne nods, gives him a quick empty smile.

EXT. ST MARY OF LIREY CHURCH - DAY

The newly built church under a grey, overcast sky. A small line of PILGRIMS and WORSHIPPERS stand outside the doors, waiting to get in.

INT. LIREY CHURCH - SAME

The shroud hangs carefully on a mural just above the altar, the image of the buried Christ in plain view, engraved on the cloth.

Worshippers kneel before the display, some in reverence, others as if in a trance.

INT. CHURCH CHAMBERS - SAME

We see Charny from the back, in a regal red fur cloak, arranging some documents in the small office.

VOICE (O.S)

My lord...

Charny turns, revealing a slightly older, weathered face, flecks of grey sprouting from his thick beard, his forty-nine years beginning to show.

A church DEACON stands at the door.

DEACON

The guests have arrived.

Charny nods, as the deacon makes way for Guillaume and Jeanne, who enter with a solemn humility.

GUILLAUME

Monsieur de Charny, I am
Guillaume, of House Vergy. A
pleasure to finally make your
acquaintance.

CHARNY

Geoffroi. Please.

GUILLAUME

Of course. This is my daughter,
Jeanne de Vergy.

Charny gives a slight bow.

CHARNY

A pleasure, *madame*.

Jeanne smiles, taken by this humble gesture.

GUILLAUME

We are honoured to be making this contribution to your holy church.

He looks around the room.

GUILLAUME

I take it your accountants will be joining us presently to minister the transaction?

CHARNY

I tend to my own affairs here, Lord Vergy.

GUILLAUME

Yes, of course. I did not mean to imply--

Charny brushes it off with a wave. Gestures at the table.

CHARNY

Pay it no mind. Please, sit.

JEANNE DE VERGY

Is it really the burial shroud of the Lord Jesus Christ?

Charny stops. Guillaume shoots her a vicious glare. Then turns apologetically toward Charny.

GUILLAUME

Please forgive my daughter. Her tongue can be a little... sharp.

Charny smiles. Then looks at Jeanne.

CHARNY

That is a matter of faith.

JEANNE DE VERGY

Do you believe it is?

Guillaume shoots her a deadly look again.

CHARNY

With all my soul.

Jeanne gives a subtle nod, taken by his quiet piety.

EXT. GARDENS - LATER THAT DAY

Jeanne walks alone through the flower gardens behind the church. She stops, leans over to smell a tulip.

CHARNY (O.S)
They grow well...

She turns, startled, to find Charny standing not far off.

CHARNY
...even in this harsh climate.
Against their very nature.

JEANNE DE VERGY
As if there is a larger force at
work here.

Charny smiles. Steps closer.

CHARNY
You get my meaning. As I noticed
back there. You seemed to understand
my intent with the church better
than your father.

JEANNE DE VERGY
He's a good man, my father. But he
can be pragmatic. Cold. His world is
business.

CHARNY
And yours?

JEANNE DE VERGY
My interests are more... ethereal...
in nature.

Jeanne gives him a curious look.

JEANNE DE VERGY
I must say, you are not what I was
expecting.

CHARNY
How so?

JEANNE DE VERGY
Most of the barons and lords I've
met are serious. Ambitious.
Obsessed with the accumulation of
wealth and power. They view those
beneath them as subjects. Women even
lower.

She steps closer. Looks up into his eyes.

JEANNE DE VERGY

But you're not the same as them. You are humble. And kind. I see you treat your people in the church as friends and equals.

Charny smiles. Lowers his head.

CHARNY

I had a wife, years ago. Her name was also Jeanne. Our marriage was... strained, at times. But she never lost sight of her faith... in God, and in us. When she died, I was in an English prison. Not being there to hold her hand when she passed is the biggest regret of my life... one I can never forget.

He chokes up, the memory hitting him. Jeanne wells up, taken by his emotion.

CHARNY

Despite what happened between us, she was the greatest person I've ever known. She was...

He looks up, eyes glassy with tears.

CHARNY

...my friend.

Despite the tears, he smiles.

CHARNY

I see the same goodness in you.

He gently takes Jeanne's hand, kisses it in a gallant, knightly gesture.

CHARNY

I hope we can be friends as well, Jeanne de Vergy.

As he turns and walks away, leaving Jeanne flustered...

CUT TO— **A MONTAGE** -- SHOWING A PASSAGE OF TIME...

-- Charny and Guillaume shake hands, closing the deal. Guillaume looks toward Jeanne, who smiles happily.

-- Charny and Jeanne getting married before a priest, in a small ceremony inside the church

-- Jeanne in the throes of childbirth

-- And as Charny sits at Jeanne's bedside, proudly holding their newborn baby boy, CUT TO-

EXT. GRAILLY ESTATE - DAY

GASCONY, FRANCE

A small band of ENGLISH SOLDIERS arrive on horseback before the large spacious grounds of a wealthy estate.

INT. ESTATE - SAME

In a luxurious dining hall we find LORD JEAN III DE GRAILLY, in conference with THOMAS, EARL OF WARWICK. They stand over a map of western France sprawled out on the table.

WARWICK

The English garrison is holding on to Breteuil, but we have received word that King John is making moves to take it back.

GRAILLY

Should we send reinforcements then?

WARWICK

That is up to Edward's son, the Black Prince, who I hear is making inroads in the south.

GRAILLY

Then how are we to defend our borders here if the Prince is away on raids in the south?

VOICE (O.S)

Because the south is where our greatest prize lies, gentlemen...

The men turn to see the BLACK PRINCE enter the hall, a contingent of soldiers at his back.

The men immediately bow.

GRAILLY

My lord prince.

WARWICK

Lord, what prize do you speak of?

BLACK PRINCE

France's shining beacon. Their precious capital.

He steps closer, a glint of mania in his eye.

BLACK PRINCE

Paris...

INT. CHARNY MANOR - LIREY, FRANCE - DAY

Inside his armoury, Charny is fitting on his chestplate and buckling his armoured belt.

Jeanne stands in the corner, watching him with concern.

JEANNE DE VERGY

Must you go?

CHARNY

Word came directly from the king. I cannot disobey.

JEANNE DE VERGY

Is the battle certain?

CHARNY

Depends on the outcome of the parley. But I will do everything in my power to steer the parties toward a peaceful resolution. I promise you.

JEANNE DE VERGY

Must the king call on you? Have you not done enough for France?

CHARNY

The Black Prince has been raiding towns in the south for months, heading dangerously close to Paris. The King wants all available knights to join the garrison at Poitiers.

Jeanne moves to Charny, takes his face in her hands. Charny stops fitting his armour.

JEANNE

Geoffrey, promise me you will come back to your son.

Charny looks into her eyes.

CHARNY

I promise you.

She kisses him. They hold the kiss for a long moment.

INT. NURSERY - MOMENTS LATER

Charny, in full armor and cloak, sword at his side, steps slowly into the room. Looks down at his child's crib, his INFANT BOY sleeping soundly inside.

CHARNY

Look after your mother.

He very lightly touches his child's cheek with his finger.

CHARNY

Be a good man.

EXT. WOODED HILL - ARMY CAMP - DAY

POITIERS, SOUTHERN FRANCE

THE ANGLO-GASCON ARMY is entrenched on the forest hill overlooking Poitiers, soldiers making preparations for battle, some digging pits while others forming barricades.

A Cardinal, in the standard red robes of the Curia, rides up on horseback. This is HÉLIE DE TALLEYRAND-PÉRIGORD. He dismounts and enters toward the main tent.

INT. TENT - SAME

Talleyrand steps inside to find a gathering of lord, nobles, and army commanders assembled around a table, representing both the English and French sides.

On the English side sits the Black Prince, Warwick, Grailly, SIR JOHN CHANDOS, and others.

On the French side sitting opposite is KING JOHN II, his army lieutenants ARNOUL D'AUDREHEM and JEAN DE CLERMONT, Charny, Ribemont, some archbishops and other nobles.

TALLEYRAND

Men, I thank you all for meeting today, under the grace of God, that we may yet leave here with lives spared.

BLACK PRINCE

A comforting thought, Eminence, but too late I'm afraid.

TALLEYRAND

What?

John glares coldly at the Black Prince.

KING JOHN II

The battle will no longer be
delayed, Eminence.

TALLEYRAND

Did you not even entertain the
thought of truce?

BLACK PRINCE

I agreed to extensive concessions,
Eminence, in exchange for free
passage to Gascony. But the good
king here simply refused.

KING JOHN II

Did you really believe -- after
devastating so much of France,
leaving our towns in ruins and our
children orphaned -- that we would
tamely allow you to escape
untouched?

TALLEYRAND

This is a tragedy in the eyes of the
Lord. His Holiness Pope Innocent the
Sixth has wished that all parties
come to an agreement that would pave
the way for a lasting peace.

A heavy silence in the room, as the men tensely fidget in
their seats.

Charny's voice suddenly breaks through the silence.

CHARNY

Lords, might I suggest a compromise.

The assembled men all turn toward Charny.

CHARNY

As it seems we march once more
toward certain bloodshed, let us
avoid what transpired at Crecy years
ago.

He stands up, looks at the Black Prince.

CHARNY

I make offer that we fight you, a
hundred against a hundred, choosing
each one from his own side.

The English nobles glance at each other.

WARWICK
Trial by combat?

CHARNY
This way, whichever hundred meet
their defeat, all the others can
rest assured they will leave this
field alive and let the quarrel be.

The men exchange agreeing glances, nodding and coming around.

CHARNY
I think that it will be best so, and
that God will be gracious to us if
the battle be avoided in which so
many valiant men will be slain.

The Black Prince raises an eyebrow, considering the offer.

KING JOHN II
No.

They all turn to King John, who stares unflinching at the
Black Prince.

KING JOHN II
We will fight them all. And we will
kill them all.

The Black Prince's face morphs into a scowl of rage.

BLACK PRINCE
So be it.

He gets up, as the other English nobles follow suit.

They leave the tent, as Charny futilely watches them leave.
He turns his ire toward his king.

CHARNY
You would willingly sacrifice our
own men?!

KING JOHN II
We outnumber them three to one.
Victory is all but assured.

CHARNY
Your father would never have shown
such hubris.

King John stands up, faces Charny. But Charny stares him
down, ready to throw a punch.

Still fuming, Charny brushes past Talleyrand and exits the tent.

EXT. TENT - SAME

Charny steps outside, marching furiously. Stops. Looks up at the sky. Closes his eyes.

Feels the breeze on his face. Takes in the calm moment before all goes to hell.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAWN

19 SEPTEMBER 1356

Eerily silent, as the opposing French and English armies are arrayed in battle formation, facing each other across a massively wide open field outside Poitiers.

A large FRENCH ARMY OF ROUGHLY SIXTEEN-THOUSAND MEN stand facing a significantly smaller ANGLO-GASCON FORCE OF ABOUT SIX THOUSAND.

ON THE ENGLISH LINE

At the head of the Anglo-Gascon force stands the Black Prince, watching the other side with a keen eye.

ON THE FRENCH LINE

Across the field, King John sits astride his horse, along with a massive line of horse-mounted knights.

ENGLISH LINE

Suddenly the Black Prince motions some of his soldiers to back up, widening the distance between them.

FRENCH LINE

King John narrows his eyes, watches the movement curiously. Clermont speaks up.

CLERMONT

The English are withdrawing.

KING JOHN II

In full battle formation? Are they mad?

Audreheem rides up to the king.

AUDREHEM

We cannot allow them to escape.

John nods. Motions to his front line.

KING JOHN II
FIRST DIVISION -- CHARGE!!

ENGLISH LINE

The Black Prince smiles insidiously as he watches the French line charging forward.

BLACK PRINCE
Steady, men, and stand ready!

FRENCH LINE

King John turns to his line of CROSSBOWMEN, who stand crouched behind large pavise shields, and raises his arm.

KING JOHN II
BOWMEN -- LOOSE!

A BARRAGE OF CROSSBOLTS ARE UNLEASHED -- blotting out the sky, as they DESCEND ON THE FRONT REGIMENT OF ENGLISH INFANTRY -- some CRACK THROUGH pale wooden shields while others PIERCE flesh and bone--

ACROSS THE BATTLEFIELD

The Black Prince mounts his horse and rides quickly toward the GASCON ARCHERS stationed behind a nearby marsh.

BLACK PRINCE
Quickly, target their crossbowmen.

ARCHER
What about the incoming calvary?!

The Black Prince sneers furiously.

BLACK PRINCE
The crossbowmen -- NOW!!

The Gascon archers immediately REDIRECT THEIR LONGBOWS toward the line of French crossbowmen, as the Black Prince gives the signal.

BLACK PRINCE
AT WILL!!

THE ARCHERS UNLEASH -- ARROWS arching through the skyline like death missiles --

The French crossbowmen CROUCH FOR COVER behind the pavise shields as SCORES OF ARROWS THUNK along the wood and metal --

some crossbowmen RACE FOR MORE ADEQUATE COVER, ARROWS RIPPING through torsos, legs, heads, and throats --

BLACK PRINCE
AGAIN!!

WARWICK
Lord, the French calvary approaches.

The Black Prince sneers again, rides back toward the front line. He glares at the charging FRENCH MEN-AT-ARMS, quickly gaining on horseback.

WARWICK
Shall we charge?

BLACK PRINCE
Hold.

WARWICK
My lord--

BLACK PRINCE
I said *HOLD!*

Warwick watches worryingly at the approaching French force.

The English frontline infantry brace themselves, SHIELDS UP, white knuckling their swords and axes.

BLACK PRINCE
NOW!!

With the French mounted calvary practically on top of them, the English infantry suddenly TUG ON HIDDEN ROPES--

THE FRENCH HORSES GO STUMBLING OVER THE ROPES INTO FRESHLY DUG PITS -- leaves and twigs used as cover BLOWN ASIDE as the THUNDEROUS sound of COLLAPSING STEED AND MAN SHAKES the battleground --

King John and his lieutenants watch with dread.

KING JOHN II
Dear God...

CLERMONT
What now?

John passes his gaze over his WOUNDED AND DEAD CROSSBOWMEN, groaning on the ground, corpses pierced with arrows.

He WAVES FORWARD his next line.

KING JOHN II
SECOND DIVISION -- CHARGE!!

A SECOND LINE OF MEN-AT-ARMS BEGIN THE CHARGE ACROSS THE
BATTLEFIELD -- roughly four thousand soldiers RACING on foot
--

The Black Prince watches nervously, dismounts from his horse.

GRAILLY
We will not be able to avoid this,
Sire.

The Black Prince PULLS OUT HIS SWORD--

BLACK PRINCE
CHARGE!!!

Warwick and a force of English infantry CHARGE FORWARD behind
the Prince -- ROARING A BATTLE CRY as they RACE to meet the
oncoming French division --

THE GROUND RUMBLES WITH SIX THOUSAND RACING MEN -- As both
armies quickly close the distance between them, Talleyrand
makes the sign of the cross...

TALLEYRAND
Lord God have mercy.

Among the French knights sitting in wait, Charny watches the
battlefield with growing distress.

BOTH CHARGING DIVISIONS FINALLY COLLIDE -- A CHAOTIC FLURRY
OF STEEL, SWORDS, AND AXES BATTERING ON SHIELDS --

Warwick CLEAVES HIS WAY through the melee -- barely able to
find his footing among the ABSOLUTE CRUSH OF ARMoured MEN --

Clermont CUTS DOWN a Gascon soldier, as nearby Grailly SPLITS
A FRENCH KNIGHT down the middle with his axe --

TIME SLOWS as the brutal fighting rages on... as scenes of
SLOW-MOTION CARNAGE show a passage of time, DISSOLVE TO...

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - HOURS LATER

SCORES OF DEAD AND DYING on the smoking battlefield, as
POCKETS OF FIGHTING still keep raging.

Back in the French camp, Ribemont approaches Charny.

RIBEMONT
That's three divisions and the
English are still showing
resistance.

CHARNY
It's as I feared--

He passes his gaze over the carnage beyond.

CHARNY
John seriously underestimated the
Gascon strategem.

They watch with dread as John raises his arm.

KING JOHN II
FOURTH LINE -- CLOSE IN --

The fourth division steps forward, TWO THOUSAND MEN-AT-ARMS
with spears and swords raised.

Then John turns, locks eyes with Charny.

KING JOHN II
PORTE-ORIFLAMME!!

Charny nods, steps forward, Ribemont and the rest of his
knights behind him.

Charny unfurls the sacred banner of the ORIFLAMME -- RAISES
THE GILDED LANCE UP HIGH and moves past the troops toward the
front of the line.

ACROSS THE BATTLEFIELD

Face spattered with mud and blood, the Black Prince sees
Charny holding aloft the Oriflamme.

Behind the Black Prince, Warwick glares at the banner with
dread.

WARWICK
The French will give no quarter from
here.

The Black Prince grins.

BLACK PRINCE
Where's your spirit, Warwick? John
is desperate.

One hand on the Oriflamme, Charny slips on his helmet with
his other hand and BELLOWS ACROSS THE BATTLEFIELD --

CHARNY
TAKE NO PRISONERS!!

His knights behind him RAISE THEIR SWORDS AND LANCES -- CHEER
and ROAR as they begin the CHARGE ACROSS THE FIELD --

The Black Prince and the Anglo-Gascon forces SPRINT FORWARD to meet the charge head-on --

BOTH ARMIES CRASH TOGETHER AND ENGAGE IN GRUESOME BATTLE ONCE MORE --

The Black Prince MOVES THROUGH THE FRENCH RANKS like a man possessed, catches sight of Charny behind the rear flank--

BLACK PRINCE
CHARNY!!!

Charny LOCKS EYES with the Black Prince, his face contorting into a scowl of fury.

They both PLOW THEIR WAY THROUGH the cluster of fighting soldiers, CHARGING AT EACH OTHER like bulls--

THEIR WEAPONS FINALLY CLASH -- Charny SWINGING THE ORIFLAMME LANCE as the Black Prince SWERVES IT ASIDE with his swordblade --

CHARNY RUSHES HIM -- holding the Oriflamme horizontally in both hands, RAMMING IT INTO THE BLACK PRINCE -- sending the English lord CRASHING TO THE GROUND --

Charny quickly FLIPS THE LANCE OVER -- the speartip pointing downward, and DRIVES IT TOWARD THE GROUND -- but the Black Prince ROLLS OVER -- narrowly avoiding the deadly blow, then sinks his boots into the mud and pulls himself up, BULLDOZING INTO CHARNY'S CHEST--

Charny STUMBLES back, quickly SWINGS THE LANCE into the side of the Prince's helmet with a LOUD CLANG, dazing him -- Charny uses the opening and DRIVES THE ORIFLAMME THROUGH THE BLACK PRINCE'S SHOULDER --

The Prince SCREAMS with both pain and fury as he KICKS CHARNY IN THE GUT -- Charny STUMBLES BACK, pulling the lance out from the Prince's shoulder...

The Black Prince regains his footing and is about to charge him, when an English soldier SLAMS INTO CHARNY -- cutting off his attack...

The Black Prince watches with dread as AN ENGLISH SWORD PLOWS THROUGH CHARNY, BURSTING OUT FROM HIS GUT --

BLACK PRINCE
NOOOOO--

The Black Prince tries to charge forward, wanting Charny for himself, but is immediately OVERWHELMED BY A CLUSTER OF TROOPS -- He RESISTS futilely, watching as MORE SWORDS PIERCE CHARNY FROM ALL SIDES --

BLACK PRINCE
DAMN YOU ALL--

Charny, STILL HOLDING the Oriflamme banner high, FALLS to one knee -- AS ANOTHER SWORD PIERCES HIS SHOULDER --

He pulls off his helmet, clutches the Oriflamme HIGHER as ANOTHER SWORD BURSTS FROM HIS CHEST --

As the final sword PULLS OUT, Charny gurgles up blood, still on one knee, his arm shaking as he HOLDS the Oriflamme...

CHARNY
For the glory... of God...

The Black Prince watches with horror as Charny finally COLLAPSES TO THE GROUND...

Face smeared with mud, only the whites of his eyes visible, the Black Prince is RUSHED OFF THE BATTLEFIELD by his troops, as the Prince glares regretfully at Charny's body laying on the ground...

As the battle rages on around him, we pull up from Charny's body, his lifeless eyes staring up at us, as we ASCEND higher and higher from the battlefield... and slowly ALL GOES BLACK...

EXT. FRANCISCAN CONVENT -- DAY

ONE MONTH LATER

A calm, quiet, grey day. A light rain falls.

We see a small, unassuming convent, somewhere on the outskirts of Poitiers.

A hooded monk approaches down a dirt road, in humble Benedictine robes.

He stops before the convent, pulls down his hood, revealing STEFANO, now seventy-four, his beard longer and pure white.

He looks up at the cross chiseled above the door.

INT. CONVENT -- SAME

He steps inside. Into empty darkness.

He approaches a makeshift GRAVE, partly covered with a stone lid, but mostly covered over in dirt. A WOODEN CROSS is pitched into the dirt.

Stefano drops to one knee, looks at the name scrawled on the cross -- CHARNY.

He makes the sign of the cross. Then takes off the small crucifix from around his neck.

STEFANO

The world will know your sacrifice,
when they look upon the shroud you
have given them.

He kisses the crucifix and sinks it into the dirt by Charny's grave.

STEFANO

Requiescat in pace, my friend.

From overhead, looking down on Stefano kneeling before Charny's peaceful grave... we FADE OUT...

THE END

King John II was captured by the Black Prince and taken to England as his personal prisoner, where he was eventually ransomed and released after drafting the Treaty of Brétigny in 1360. He died four years later, having reigned over one of France's most disastrous periods in history.

Meanwhile, the Black Prince returned to England to a hero's welcome, where he went on to fight many more wars and campaigns for King Edward III. He died before his father and never succeeded him as king. He is recognized today as one of the most successful commanders of the Hundred Years War.

After Umur Bey's death, his brother Hizir Bey was anointed ruler of Smyrna in his place. The city, however, remained in Christian hands until the Turco-Mongol conqueror Tamerlane won it back from the Latins in December 1402.

The remains of Geoffroi de Charny were exhumed in 1370, transported to Paris, and reburied there, given a hero's tomb in the city's prestigious church of the Celestines. To this day he is exalted as one of Europe's most admired knights, a model of chivalry and honour. He is still widely associated with the first sightings of the shroud.

After Charny's death, his widow Jeanne de Vergy appealed to have Charny's estate passed over to their son, Geoffrey II de Charny. They continued to hold showings of the shroud to the faithful, despite repeated protests by the clergy. It was acquired by the House of Savoy in 1453, and eventually moved to the Cathedral in Turin as property of the Catholic Church, where it remains to this day.

While worshippers view the shroud as a source of faith and inspiration, its authenticity continues to be debated to this day. Whatever its origins, it remains the single most studied artifact in human history.

THE SHROUD