

THOMAS OF LONDON

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The Bedford Falls Company

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REVISED DRAFT
November 11, 2003

THOMAS OF LONDON

FADE IN:

INT. WALLINGFORD CASTLE - GREAT HALL - NIGHT (DAWN)

A KING'S THRONE. High-backed, ornately carved, medieval.

In a large, torch-lit room, BENCHES and ARMCHAIRS are in place for an important gathering. A MAN in CHURCH ROBES carefully adjusts the throne's alignment

He is THOMAS BECKET - mid-thirties, tall, handsome, intense.

Closely watching him is churchman JOHN OF SALISBURY, also mid-thirties, but shorter in height, softer in features.

JOHN

Enlighten me, Thomas. How will three inches in the placement of a chair alter the outcome of a treaty?

THOMAS

Details, John. All great things are won or lost by inches.

Thomas carefully lines up an ARM CHAIR facing the throne like a golfer planning a crucial putt.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

This is the first time Henry of Normandy and King Stephen will have seen each other away from the battlefield.

(moving armchairs)

The old king is weak in his left eye. If I un-center his throne he may favor the beautiful lady Eleanor with his gaze and therefore soften any dormant hatred young Henry's presence might awaken.

JOHN

The king could just as easily turn his head a degree.

THOMAS

But he has a battle scar below his right ear that makes it... unpleasant.

Thomas backs away from the arranged chairs. John is impressed.

JOHN

Thomas Becket: Master of kings and noblemen.

THOMAS

If I truly were, John, I wouldn't be moving furniture.

(to ATTENDANTS)

Pull all the noble benches back *two feet*.

The ATTENDANTS moves the benches away from the throne.

JOHN
Oh, they'll love you for that.

INT. WALLINGFORD CASTLE - NIGHT (DAWN)

A corridor bustling with ATTENDANTS, SERVANTS preparing for a great event. JOHN sees THOMAS looking toward the window - the coming of dawn.

JOHN
He's late, isn't he?

A commotion outside - a MAN'S SHOUTING echoes through the halls.

THOMAS
(smiles, wryly)
I think he's arrived.

Thomas moves to the window bringing us a stunning vista, the lights of a THOUSAND CAMPFIRES along the river plane flickering out with the sunrise while below in the

CASTLE COURTYARD

a MAN ON HORSEBACK - among KNIGHTS and ATTENDANTS - shouts at the castle. This is HENRY of Anjou, Duke of Normandy.

HENRY
Tell your king he can't hide the crown
under his pillow. His successor is here!
With an army in the field! Rested,
bored, and waiting for my orders!

Thomas barely masks a deep panic. He sprints down the hallway.

INT. A DARK ROOM - NIGHT (DAWN)

THOMAS bursts in, stops his sprint at the sight of BEGGARS, shivering, wheezing, sitting on a bench in a row.

An ELDERLY MAN, in simple church robes, washes with bare hands the FEET of these poor men with steaming water poured from a pitcher.

He is THEOBALD - the Archbishop of Canterbury.

THEOBALD
Thomas. You've come to help.

A CHURCHMAN simmers a huge POT OF SOUP, breaks LOAVES OF BREAD.

THOMAS
By helping your grace preserve peace in
England. Henry is here and agitated and
needs reassurance.

In the silence we can hear the DISTANT SHOUTING.

THEOBALD
I'll go. When I finish.

The aging archbishop looks at Thomas, anxious and impatient.

THEOBALD (CONT'D)
I can't leave them wanting.

THOMAS
If *Henry* leaves, there will be no treaty.

THEOBALD
Then go to him, Thomas.

THOMAS
I have no authority except as your archdeacon.

THEOBALD
You have your words. Go to him.

Theobald moves to another pair of dirty feet, washes them. Thomas runs back out.

EXT. WALLINGFORD CASTLE - COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

THOMAS stops, collects himself at the threshold before stepping out.

KNIGHTS and various ATTENDANTS mill about while HENRY - a fiery young man of twenty years - remains mounted on a HORSE as restless and agitated as he is.

He looks down at THOMAS making his way through to him.

HENRY
Should I know you?

THOMAS
My lord, I am Thomas Becket, Archdeacon of Canterbury. We met briefly at the Council of Rheims.

HENRY
Convey my regrets to his grace. The soon to be deposed king has changed his mind and will not sign his treaty.

THOMAS
My lord, his grace has not yet heard this unfortunate news. Where did you?

A NOBLE WOMAN approaches through the crowd that parts for her.

She is Henry's wife ELEANOR OF AQUITAINE - mid-thirties and beautiful, in fact stunning.

ELEANOR

From the Duke of Cornwall who heard it
from the Duke of Leicester, who heard it
from--

HENRY

--I will not be made a fool! What I
can't have by treaty, I'll take by siege!

THOMAS

My lord, I assure you. You surrender no
honor by entering his majesty's castle.

HENRY

Only to be insulted in his council?!

THOMAS

If so, an angry and indignant exodus by
you will make a far stronger impression
than *this* display.

Thomas sweeps his hand past the array of the bored and waiting
KNIGHTS and ATTENDANTS.

ELEANOR

Henry. He's right.

Henry calms, considering it. JOHN emerges from the castle with BREAD
and WINE. Thomas eyes him gratefully.

JOHN

Details.

Thomas pours a CUP, lifts it to Henry. But Eleanor takes it instead -
drinks it in one lift.

ELEANOR

Come inside, Henry. You can practice
your angry exodus over breakfast.

Thomas pours another cup, again raises it to Henry. The young duke
dismounts instead.

He takes the cup from Thomas, raises it to him slightly, then drinks.

INT. WALLINGFORD CASTLE - GREAT HALL - DAY

The empty chairs and benches are now filled with DUKES, EARLS,
KNIGHTS, and BISHOPS - all England's power in one place.

On the throne slouches KING STEPHEN - only 58 years old, but
completely broken - frail and bitter.

In armchairs in front of him are HENRY (Duke of Normandy) barely able
to sit still and the Duchess ELEANOR - poised and pretty.

THOMAS and JOHN stand with Archbishop THEOBALD who bows before King
Stephen with a ROLLED PARCHMENT in his hand.

THEOBALD

Your majesty. We at the See of Canterbury sincerely regret the recent and untimely death of your son.

STEPHEN

Yes.

(he coughs)

I'm sure your wine cups were flowing with regret. The wretched King Stephen, the usurper of the Angevin line, no longer has an heir to pass his crown. "God's will be done." Isn't that your opinion?

THEOBALD

God's will is only for God to know. This staff and miter give me no special power to divine it more than any other man.

CLOSE ON - HENRY

watching as King Stephen's eyes seem to rest on Eleanor. She smiles graciously. Henry notices, doesn't like it.

THEOBALD (CONT'D)

But every man has in his breast a heart, and what is right, what pleases God resonates within even when it is difficult, and flows against every impulse and desire.

STEPHEN

You're speaking into an empty hole, bishop. I have no such thing as a heart.

Henry stands with his armchair and moves it right next to his wife. King Stephen looks hatefully at Henry.

HENRY

(he grins)
Cousin.

The king stares long at Henry. John shoots a glance to Thomas.

STEPHEN

Give your treaty to my clerk, Archbishop. I will consider it.

There's a shudder in the room. A whisper. Henry rises, threatening.

HENRY

You've already agreed! We stopped the battle because you agreed! I am your successor.

Henry snaps his fingers. An ATTENDANT brings him his sword. The KING'S KNIGHTS close in - weapons ready.

Thomas steps forward, suddenly, kneels before the king.

THOMAS
Your majesty!

The room falls silent.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
I have no doubt your heart was lost with your only son. But you still have a name rooted deep in your noble ancestry.

STEPHEN
No one cares about a noble ancestry, Archdeacon, like a man without one.

THOMAS
If you put your seal on this treaty today, you'll remain king for the rest of your life in a country at peace.

STEPHEN
The rest of my life!
(he coughs, his voice struggles)
My line will end with me! I will be a dynasty of one!

THOMAS
Only by blood. Your majesty, if you embrace this today, the common people will know little of it. But there is a multitude of English kings yet to be born who will know and understand what you've given up for peace. They will honor your name and bestow it upon their sons and successors. Your majesty's blood indeed won't flow past your own death, but your name will sit atop a long line of royal "Stephens" who will remember the first not as a great conqueror, but as a great king who laid down his sword and ambition for the good of England.

The room is silent as the king considers what Thomas has said.

HENRY
(whispers to Eleanor)
If I ever name a son "Stephen," please cut my throat.

ELEANOR
You won't have to ask.

STEPHEN
My name is nothing, and will be forgotten. But I am tired of battle. Give me the damn thing.

Thomas waves his hand, a small table is brought before the king, the PARCHMENT unrolled in front of him. RED WAX is poured onto it; the king pushes down his SEAL.

STEPHEN (CONT'D)

Henry, you are now, by law, my son. The crown will be yours. I only wish I could live to see the weight of it break your spine, as it has mine.

HENRY

I thank you for the good wishes. Father.

STEPHEN

Thank me when I'm dead.

(rising)

Until then, keep your ass out of my chair.

Stephen is helped away from the throne, disappears into the bowels of the castle.

INT. WALLINGFORD CASTLE - CORRIDOR - DAY

Celebration and relief. As NOBLEMEN and CHURCHMEN let out into the halls, HENRY and ELEANOR stand before ARCHBISHOP THEOBALD.

ELEANOR

Your grace has groomed a great talent. We are thankful for it.

HENRY

Amazed. I'm never heard of such a churchman.

THEOBALD

I will relay your gratitude. Thomas is very important to the church and the see of Canterbury.

HENRY

Then, as I will one day be king, he'll be important to me. I wish to know him better, and extend my gratitude personally.

THEOBALD

His church duties can't be neglected.

HENRY

They won't be. I promise. He'll catch up with your party before you reach the cathedral gates.

Theobald looks down the corridor to Thomas looking at him.

EXT. HENRY'S CAMP - NIGHT

The camp is alive with firelight and jubilation - a tent city of hard men celebrating. Singing and drinking in the open air. Men dancing with men. A COCK FIGHT leads to a FIST FIGHT, and a new round of wagers.

Riding in, THOMAS takes in every detail with a visceral awe, it being so different from life in the church. A KNIGHT takes his horse, another escorts him on foot to:

INT. HENRY'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

As large and high as a circus tent. Inside, a CELEBRATION FEAST. This is Henry's inner circle, KNIGHTS and BARONS eating, drinking, laughing, and kissing the YOUNG WOMEN on their laps, some of them already naked.

THOMAS'S EYES are drawn to these new sights. HENRY watches him from the middle of it.

HENRY
Knights! Barons! Cover your ladies and
watch your words! The church is here!

Henry looks carefully at Thomas taking it all in.

HENRY (CONT'D)
Or is it?

THOMAS
My lord, I come alone.

HENRY
Thank God. I owe this man much!
(to Thomas)
Come sit by me.

Thomas sits at the table by Henry who pours him a CUP OF WINE.

HENRY (CONT'D)
(raising his cup)
To King Stephen! Long may he reign!

The knights spit out their wine.

HENRY (CONT'D)
(low voice)
I jest only slightly, Thomas. I've made
so many promises and alliances in my
battle for the crown, I fear they'll all
seek an impossible repayment--

THOMAS
--on the day of your coronation.

HENRY
Yes.

The young duke seems pleased to be understood. Thomas notices some Barons and Knights have quieted to eavesdrop.

THOMAS

You should have faith, my lord, that those who supported you did so for the good of England and not for any personal gain.

The Barons who hear this LAUGH, pass it on to those who didn't.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

(louder)

Because they should know that the crown is laid on the king's head by God's hand. He rules by a divine right. Whatever sustenance a king takes for his journey should mean little more to him than the bones on this table. It's spent food. Waste.

Thomas makes eye contact with the Barons. They appear offended.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

My lord, you rise to the throne clean.

HENRY

Oh, Thomas. You're my kind of churchman.

A YOUNG WOMAN suddenly wraps her arms around Henry, caressing his neck and shoulders.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Ah, the touch of an angel. My wife left for the continent this evening, and I miss her already. Will our God in Heaven damn me for simply taking comfort?

THOMAS

When I see him next, I'll ask.

The woman laughs. Henry notices Thomas looking at her.

HENRY

(to girl)

You like my new friend? He wears the robes of a churchman, but I fear he's confused underneath them - and craves "clarity" in the worst way.

The woman touches Thomas's face and neck, gently and seductively. Henry looks closely, sees the archdeacon is overwhelmed.

HENRY (CONT'D)

That's enough.

(he grins)

For now.

INT. HENRY'S TENT - NIGHT

KNIGHTS AND BARONS

Boire! Boire! Boire! Boire!

A drinking game. WINE is poured from a leather bag in a long stream that THOMAS catches in his open mouth. Henry is amazed.

HENRY

Look at him! Where did he learn?!

Thomas gags, spits out in a spray, wipes his mouth.

THOMAS

I'm a novice! You should see the Archbishop!

They all laugh.

EXT. HENRY'S CAMP - DAY

HENRY and THOMAS sit next to each other watching "Gameball." This is a brutal contest - American Football without rules.

A BARON runs for the goal like a halfback with a stuffed PIG BLADDER under his arm - KNIGHTS blocking with fists and elbows. But when he passes forward to a teammate, Henry rushes into the game.

HENRY

Mine!!!

Thomas is amazed, enthralled, and terrified to see Henry leap forward, *intercept the pig bladder* and run with it.

HENRY (CONT'D)

The goal, Thomas! It's ours!

Thomas stands - confused, reluctant. Henry hurls the ball to him.

He catches it, takes one step, then sees a WALL OF KNIGHTS barreling toward him.

Thomas panics, throws it away. The knights stop in their tracks, laugh until they see Henry leaping forward to catch it again, sliding headlong through the mud between two VERTICAL POSTS, scoring to a loud CHEER.

Henry leaps into Thomas's arms in celebration, covering him with mud.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

A HUNTING HAWK glides fast over the TREETOPS, zeroing in on a FLOCK OF HERON taking flight from a RIVER.

THOMAS tries his best to keep up with HENRY galloping through and between the trees, laughing, shouting.

Henry rears his horse back as the HAWK tucks its wings, dives straight down to the heron flock. Thomas catches up to see one bird ripped mid-air by TALONS.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

THOMAS and HENRY trot out to where the HAWK holds the struggling HERON in the grass.

HENRY
I can't imagine it!

THOMAS
I didn't, my lord. It's true.

HENRY
You're a rich merchant's son, but you trade sweet youth for slow death in the holy church.

THOMAS
If you'd been there to put it that way, perhaps I wouldn't have.

HENRY
I'd have brought you back to life with one night at a tavern. I may still.

Henry dismounts, walks over to the struggling bird.

THOMAS
My father had just lost everything. The London fire. Civil war. Without land or noble title, even a respected commoner could find himself a beggar. He brought me to an old neighbor who had become Archbishop of Canterbury. His grace Theobald took me into his house.

HENRY
Thus your half-hearted piety.
(he laughs)
An *empty stomach* was your religious calling.

THOMAS
It called loudly.

Henry picks up the wounded heron letting the hawk fly back to his arm.

HENRY
Poor Thomas. Your life was written for you, but not by your own hand.
(bittersweet smile)
I can't imagine it.

Henry snaps the heron's long neck, slings it over his saddle.

EXT. HENRY'S CAMP - DAY

Quiet now. The TENTS are being taken down in the background while HENRY and THOMAS sit out in the open, engrossed in a game of CHESS.

Thomas makes a move, looks at Henry who furls his brow.

HENRY

Thomas Becket. You've done something no one else has ever dared. You've beaten me.

Henry grins, but then looks around to what's left of the camp.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Our fun is over. I go to the continent and wait for Stephen to die. You go to church and-- What on earth do you do there anyway?

THOMAS

Thrilling things, my lord. My horse can't gallop fast enough to bring me home.

EXT. CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL - DAY

THOMAS rides slowly in through the CATHEDRAL GATE. Every LABORING MONK stops to look at him. A CHURCHMAN named ALEXANDER approaches him with forced curiosity.

ALEXANDER

(Welsh accent)

Hello, sir. Have you come for the archdeacon post? Our last one disappeared on the highway. Aye, I fear the worst.

Thomas dismounts, thrusts the REINS in Alexander's hands.

INT. CANTERBURY - ARCHBISHOP'S CHAMBER - DAY

CLOSE ON - A QUILL

dipping in ink, scratching words across PARCHMENT. THOMAS and JOHN write at a table while Archbishop THEOBALD reads through some documents. A CHORUS of MONKS sing afternoon VESPERS in the distance.

INT. A BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

A simple room filled with MOONLIGHT. JOHN lies awake in his bed across from THOMAS in his.

JOHN

I don't see it, Thomas. How could a dirty old camp ever compare to this palace? You must have prayed for the hour of your return.

Thomas smiles at the joke.

THOMAS

It was extraordinary, John. Henry has in him the spirit of twelve men - an insatiable appetite for living - and a wit so sharp it could cut you in half.

John sits up to look at Thomas reflecting.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

And he has not fear.

JOHN

I still don't see it.

THOMAS

What?

JOHN

How you'll ever stay here after being there.

Thomas thinks about it plaintively, nods slightly.

INT. A CASTLE CHAMBER - DAY (DAWN)

Thunderous intercourse. Gauzy BED CURTAINS barely conceal HENRY rising and falling between the legs of a WOMAN.

HENRY

Oh God, God!

On all sides of the shaking CANOPY BED stand PALACE ATTENDANTS - pretending not to notice.

EXT. CASTLE CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

TWO GUARDS outside the door keep the same straight face while hearing SOUNDS of PASSIONATE SEX.

TORCH LIGHT approaches - someone coming around the corridor that makes them flinch. It is Henry's wife ELEANOR - stunning in her fine dress, full ENTOURAGE.

GUARD #1

She's back.

Eleanor stops directly in front of them, hears inside:

HENRY (O.S.)

God Almighty! Thy kingdom come!

GUARD #2

My lady... He's... *praying.*

She stares, waits. The guards step apart, let her pass into:

INT. CASTLE BED CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

ELEANOR stops beside the bed, watches HENRY come to a loud climax.

HENRY
Aaaaaahhhh!!!!

The LADIES IN WAITING gasp. Henry's ATTENDANTS keep their gaze straight as Henry rolls off his partner - fully satisfied.

ATTENDANT
My lord. The Duchess of Normandy.

Henry pulls the bed curtains aside to see his wife. A moment of uncertainty. (How will she react?)

The naked YOUNG WOMAN screams. But Henry grins, unashamed.

HENRY
Rise and shine! My darling wife has come home to wake me!

He jumps out naked, opens his arms to Eleanor with a big grin. She glances down.

ELEANOR
Henry... You're already risen.

Henry laughs loud, turns suggestively to the WOMEN attending Eleanor. They look away, embarrassed

HENRY
How was the Aquitaine? Still all there, I hope.

The NAKED WOMAN tumbles out of bed, fumbles to kneel before Eleanor.

ELEANOR
Dress her. Feed her. Send her away.

The Attendants wrap a cloth around the frightened young woman, take her barmaid's dress out of the room with her.

ELEANOR (COND'T)
Henry. A messenger from King Stephen intercepted us near La Rochelle.

HENRY
Ohh...? And what does the old goat have to say now?

Henry steps into a steaming bath already prepared for him.

ELEANOR
Very little. The king is dead.

She watches Henry take it in. Slowly, but broadly, he grins.

HENRY
Long live the king.

ELEANOR
Get yourself cleaned, Henry, and your
mind prepared. We fought too many days
to get to this one.

HENRY
And you still look as beautiful as when
we started. Ravishing!

Without taking his eyes off her, Henry thrusts his arms up.

HENRY (CONT'D)
What a wonderful and glorious day!

The attendants wash him.

INT. ARCHBISHOP'S BEDCHAMBER - DAY

THOMAS holds the Archbishop of Canterbury's VESTMENTS up to the early morning sun - inspects every thread.

He brushes off a spot, moves to the next HOLY GARMENT.

INSERT CARD:

Westminster Abbey - London, England

December 19, 1154

Behind him, JOHN, ALEXANDER and several other CHURCHMEN remove THEOBALD's dress robe -

- and then his GOAT'S HAIR UNDERSHIRT revealing REDNESS and BLISTERS.

An empathetic gasp in the room. Alexander brushes away the TINY INSECTS from the old man's back.

ALEXANDER
Aye. Someone's been feedin' a wee bit
more than the poor this morning.

THOMAS
Your grace this ceremony needs your full
concentration.

THEOBALD
And it will have it.

Thomas takes the HAIR SHIRT from Alexander, shakes it out.

THOMAS
If there were one day to give yourself a
rest from this infernal penance...

The room is dead quiet as Theobald takes the Hair Shirt back from Thomas - puts it again over his reddened skin.

THEOBALD
It wouldn't be today.

Theobald nods to the other churchman who bring to him his Holy Vestments - his SILKEN ALB, SULPICE, MITER and STAFF.

INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - DAY

MONKS' VOICES sing full and loud for the CORONATION CEREMONY.

A glorious sight. The abbey is packed with BISHOPS, DUKES, EARLS and BARONS all in their finest clothing and jewelry that glistens from the sunlight streaming through colorful stained glass.

The melodic CHORUS reverberates off stone walls as the most anticipated part of the stately PROCESSION enters the church.

THREE GILDED SWORDS

are carried upright by THREE KNIGHTS - the THIRD SWORD with the blade strangely broken in half.

Behind the swords, HENRY - dressed handsomely as a Norman Duke - walks toward the apse and altar.

THOMAS AND JOHN

sit together toward the back of the cathedral craning their necks to see around the TALL HEADWEAR of the BISHOPS in front of them.

JOHN
I think his grace hoped Henry might have some time to mature before his ascension.

THOMAS
His grace is always waiting for something. If he didn't wait to make us bishops, we could see better now.

JOHN
But then we'd have to wear those ugly hats.

Henry stands in the center of a triangle formed by the KNIGHTS holding the THREE SWORDS - reciting his oath facing each sword.

HENRY
I, Henry of Anjou, Duke of Normandy,
swear to protect and make peace with the
holy Church
(turning to another sword)
Swear to bring justice to the people of
England
(turning to BROKEN SWORD)
Swear to be in all ways merciful, as our
God in Heaven is merciful.

HENRY' SHIRT

is removed. An AGING HAND pours HOLY OIL on his head, then onto his bare chest and arms. It is THEOBALD who gently rubs the oil into Henry's skin as he recites:

THEOBALD

O God, who rules over your people in love, grant unto this your servant Henry our King, the spirit of wisdom and government, that being devoted unto you with all his heart, he may so wisely govern this kingdom.

A TUNIC is lowered over Henry's bare trunk. ROYAL ROBES are wrapped around his shoulders.

CLOSE ON - THE CROWN

sparkling jewels in gold, being blessed at the altar by Theobald before he carries it over to Henry - putting it on his head.

DISSOLVE TO:

HENRY

crowned and seated in the THRONE before the assembled - looking over to

ELEANOR

whom we finally see regal, beautiful, and crowned in the throne next to him.

The assembled stand now and line up in front of the new monarchs according to feudal rank - one by one falling to their knee.

DUKE OF CORNWALL

I, Richard, Duke of Cornwall, do swear my allegiance to your majesty the king.

CORNWALL moves over to say the same to the queen.

P.O.V. - THOMAS

watching this from the back of the line, whispering to John.

THOMAS

These two switched to Henry's side near the end of the civil war...

DUKE OF LEICESTER

I, Edmund, Duke of Leicester, do swear my allegiance to your majesty the king.

Thomas's eyes follow the two DUKES as they follow the line back.

THOMAS

They'll corner the king tonight, remind him that the noble families still control most of England, then tell him everything he's expected to do to remain king.

They now watch ARCHBISHOP ROGER of York and BISHOP GILBERT of Hereford bowing before the king.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

In the meantime, I hear whispers our old friend Roger is plotting to move the primacy of England from Canterbury to York - while Bishop Gilbert prays daily for Theobald's death, so that he might soon replace him.

JOHN

Men of God, through and through.

THOMAS

When they pass, hold out your leg.

CLOSE ON - HENRY

restless, annoyed at the hollow adulation. But his expression brightens as THOMAS now bows before him.

THOMAS

I, Thomas Becket of London, Archdeacon of the See of Canterbury, swear my allegiance to your majesty the king.

HENRY

(whispers)

After this morning, Thomas, I'm lucky to be standing.

THOMAS

Thankfully, my lord. You're sitting.

Henry lets out a LOUD LAUGH that turns every head. We follow Thomas as he moves on to QUEEN ELEANOR.

THOMAS

(bowing to her)

I, Thomas Becket of London, Archdeacon of the See of Canterbury, do swear my allegiance to your majesty the Queen.

ELEANOR

Thank you, Thomas. Your wise counsel has been appreciated.

The Queen grasps Thomas's hand, whispers.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

I need you to watch over him tonight.

THOMAS
Your majesty. I will.

Eleanor lets go his hand, relieved.

INT. WESTMINSTER PALACE - GREAT HALL - NIGHT

A huge CORONATION BANQUET - long tables of the highest born of 12th Century England. But there is tension in the air, whispering, uncertainty how power will come to rest. At the CHURCH TABLE

THOMAS and JOHN OF SALISBURY

sit with THEOBALD among the other BISHOPS of the realm. Thomas looks around at these ornately-dressed high men of the church, gossiping, glancing out the corners of their eyes.

We MOVE ACROSS the banquet hall filled with BARONS, DUKES, EARLS, and KNIGHTS trying to look like they're only here to have a good time.

HENRY and ELEANOR

are at the dais table, eating with careful dignity and impeccable manners, as though every eye in the room were on them. The king can barely stand it, whispers to Eleanor:

HENRY
What do you say we strip off our clothes
and have our way on the table?

She grabs him under the table. His eyebrows rise.

ELEANOR
Keep it covered, my king. The noble
wives may riot for what they can never
have.

Henry laughs, his eyes finding SEVERAL NOBLEMEN staring back at him, not laughing.

CLOSE ON - A STAGED DANCE ROUTINE

staid and dreadfully choreographed, accompanied by LUTES, FLUTES, and a MONOTONOUS DRUM.

Henry shifts in his chair again and again until he can take it no longer. Finally, he jumps up onto the table.

HENRY
No! No! No! You dare to call that
dancing?!!

The king jumps down among the DANCING COUPLES and shows them how it's done. He's a natural as he swings from woman to woman.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Live it up! Move with abandon! How do you want the English to be known? As the dullest breed in Christendom?

Henry waves up the tempo to the MUSICIANS, then waves in more dancers.

In a minute he's brought the party up to speed with the more and more KNIGHTS and NOBLEMEN joining in with their LADIES, the king moving through them all, hooking arms between them.

CLOSE ON - ELEANOR

smiling at the sight of her husband transforming the crowd.

CLOSE ON - THOMAS

grinning at the same sight, but painfully aware he's stuck among the CHURCHMEN glued to their seats.

Thomas sees something: The DUKES of CORNWALL and LEICESTER coming together to approach the king. He bows his head to THEOBALD.

THOMAS

Your grace. I beg to be excused.

CLOSE ON - HENRY

in the middle of the dance, swinging one woman around in circles, then another. The dance finally comes to an end with a loud APPLAUSE.

Henry circles around with his arms raised in triumph - but then sees CORNWALL and LEICESTER standing in front of him.

CORNWALL

Your majesty, may we have a moment?

HENRY

Now that you've spoiled this one?

THOMAS

(interrupting)

My lord. It's time.

The king looks relieved to see Thomas. The Dukes push their way closer. Thomas catches Eleanor's stare - she nods her support to him.

HENRY

Time for what?

THOMAS

His majesty's after dinner prayer.

HENRY

Ah, yes.

LEICESTER
You can't simply leave.

HENRY
I certainly will. Are you attempting to stand between a king and his God?

Thomas clears a path for Henry. Cornwall and Leicester stare bitterly at Thomas.

The king comes back suddenly, waves to the MUSICIANS, starts up the dance again, then leaves with Thomas.

EXT. WESMINSTER PALACE - COLONNADE - NIGHT

HENRY is livid as he climbs the stairs quickly with THOMAS and two attending KNIGHTS.

HENRY
Well done, Archdeacon Becket.
(looking back)
Insolent bastards! "*May we have a moment?*" Let's hear 'em speak that way with my sword in their throats.

THOMAS
They also have swords, my lord. And you, too, have a throat.

Thomas glances around, sees the DUKES have come out of the great hall to keep an eye on Henry and Thomas.

HENRY
I'll challenge them all! Right here. Right now! The jackals think they own me.

Henry grabs the handle of his sword, heads back. Thomas holds him.

Thomas leads Henry into:

INT. ROYAL CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS

Passing through, THOMAS takes a candle from the altar.

HENRY
I hope you were joking about those prayers. I'm in no mood.

Thomas takes Henry into the RECTORY - a small room for the Chapel Priest to prepare for services. He looks for another exit.

THOMAS
I thought this went through.

Henry opens a WINDOW - cold air blows in. He looks out.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Your majesty. We're too high up.

The king leaps up onto the window sill and hurls himself out.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Your majesty!

The king lands, rolls, jumps back to his feet.

HENRY
Come on, Thomas! Legs bent, arms out!

Thomas just stares down at him, unsure.

HENRY (CONT'D)
Did you forget what it's like to be a
boy?
(looking at him)
Or did you never know?

Thomas climbs awkwardly on the sill, hesitates.

HENRY (CONT'D)
Honestly! What's the worse that can
happen?!

Thomas leaps, landing on the snowy ground with a loud SNAP.

THOMAS
That, my lord. I think I heard my leg
break.

Henry reaches down into the snow, pulls up a BROKEN BOARD. He laughs heartily.

INT. PALACE STABLES - NIGHT

THOMAS and HENRY sneak through the stables with TWO HORSES. Thomas stops suddenly, looks at the king.

THOMAS
My lord, you're the king. How can you go
out unattended?

HENRY
Atop a horse, Thomas. Atop a horse.

Henry puts his boot in the stirrup.

THOMAS
Wait. Please.

He takes off Henry's robes, grabs a stable keeper's TUNIC which he puts over Henry's head. He messes up Henry's hair, puts a LEATHER CAP over it.

THOMAS (COND'T)
Perfect.

EXT. LONDON STREETS - NIGHT

HENRY'S LAUGH can be heard as he and THOMAS gallop between the buildings, across the canal, and into the dark streets of London.

INT. RIVER TAVERN - NIGHT

A rough place filled with COOKING SMOKE and DRINKING MEN - laborers, craftsmen, traders, and mercenaries from all over England and Europe.

THOMAS and HENRY pass through the labyrinth of rooms. Thomas watches the young king - lets him take the lead.

A few stares. One MAN looks at Henry threatening. Henry doesn't look away.

HENRY
(Scottish accent)
Say there, sir. Can you tell me what a weary Scotsman must do to get a plate of haggis and a cup of ale?

A few more stares, none friendly. Thomas appears nervous, uncertain. He puts his hand on the king to lead him away, but Henry wraps his arm around his shoulder.

HENRY (CONT'D)
All the way from MacDuff we've come! On trader boats, one to the other, down the North Sea and up the river Thames!

A MIDLANDER stands up, stares.

MIDLANDER
Your face is... familiar.

Thomas steps forward, going with the king's flow.

THOMAS
Of course it is, laddy. This man is famous in the land.

MIDLANDER
Famous--?

THOMAS
Poet! A Troubadour, if you will. A purveyor of fine words and rhyme for the most discriminating ears.

HENRY
Aye, that's it.
(does a turn)
Grand stories of kings and conquerors!

MIDLANDER

A clown for the bloodsucking nobility!
That's what you are.

Now the whole room is watching. Henry pushes forward, as though he were going to fight. Thomas holds him back.

THOMAS

Sir, you are mistaken. My friend entertains only for his majesty the king.

MIDLANDER

The king?
(he spits)
Is it true his legs dangle from the throne?

The room erupts in laughter.

HENRY

Tis true, he is young, but not an inch smaller than what you see in front of you.

ANOTHER MAN

I heard he was crowned in a high chair.

MIDLANDER

Easier for the nobles to push over!

More laughter. Henry grins, but it's starting to get to him.

HENRY

I assure you, King Henry will not be pushed.

MIDLANDER

He won't, will he? Let him visit the heart of England, "laddy," where men of name and title have built themselves fortresses - hundreds of illegal and unchartered castles from which they raid the homes of the poor, ignoring that there is such a thing as a king in England.

(spits again)

No law. No justice. No life for an honest man.

(to Henry)

But you, sir, carry a plump purse.

The man draws a SHORT SWORD. Thomas gently pulls Henry back.

THOMAS

Calm down, laddy. We're all honest men here. My friend has fought hard and suffered much to have such a purse.

Thomas gently moves the blade away; the Midlander points it harder.

MIDLANDER

He'll suffer more to hold onto it. So
will you--

Henry kicks the man in the groin - yanks the Short Sword from his hand and swings it to stop TWO OTHER MEN drawing on him.

A quick stalemate. Henry keeps the sword ready as do the others. Thomas surveys the situation. With a knife, he cuts the HEAVY COIN PURSE from the king's belt - holds it high.

THOMAS

Food and drink for alla ya! We'll feast
till the cock crows!

He tosses the heavy Coin Purse to the TAVERN KEEPER. A loud cheer in the tavern.

Henry stares, then grins, going along with it. He thrusts the short sword into the table next to the groin-aching Midlander - kisses the man on the cheek.

TWO WOMEN

pretty and young, make their way through the crowd - sidle up to Thomas and Henry.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Ah! Come, Angels! Help us forget the
wicked world!

Henry doesn't waste a second swinging the girl onto his lap, pouring ale into his mouth and onto her breasts.

The other girl wraps her arms around Thomas who is overwhelmed by her touch. She playfully kisses his face, bites her ear, but gets nothing in return.

INT. TAVERN ROOM - NIGHT

Small. Sparse. One bed with a lot of movement under the covers, LAUGHING.

HENRY

Dive in, you fool. Find your way to
Heaven.

We pull back to see Thomas sitting at the window sill, looking out, deep in thought.

HENRY (CONT'D)

(laughing)
Your king needs you! That's an order!

THOMAS

I'm afraid, my lord, it's my order that
prevents it.

Thomas touches the cross on his robes. Henry gives up, buries his head under the covers.

INT. TAVERN ROOM - DAY (DAWN)

The girls are gone - THOMAS and HENRY sit on the bed, the king eating scraps of meat off a plate.

HENRY

Your order doesn't prevent it. I know plenty of indulgent deacons.
(looking at Thomas)
Why's it so difficult, Thomas? Do you really believe God above is watching and judging your every move?

THOMAS

If I tell you "yes," my lord, I commit the sin of lying. If I tell you "no," I commit the sin of heresy.

HENRY

Try committing the sin of fornication. It's much more fun.

Henry goes back to eating.

HENRY (CONT'D)

My God, Thomas. You think too much.

THOMAS

My lord, I was thinking about what that man said.

HENRY

See? My point proven.

THOMAS

How the people of England have fallen victim to raiders sheltered in hundreds of squatty, ugly, illegally constructed, thieving castles in the countryside of England.

HENRY

All this while you could have been thrusting?

THOMAS

I was imagining knocking them down.

HENRY

Perfect! See? She would've loved that!

THOMAS

And you, my lord, boldly reasserting the authority of the crown all over England, as it was in the time of the first Henry, your grandfather.

Thomas sees it in Henry's face, the lure of the idea.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Sire, you could do it. You should do it.

HENRY

I can't. There isn't a nobleman in England who isn't one way or more invested in this thievery. It would be the last thing I did in this life.

THOMAS

Not if the common people of England came out to celebrate their destruction - and rallied behind their royal liberator.

Henry starts to object, but catches himself.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You saw this night the hatred in just one man who'd been wronged. Imagine his passion times thousands. Tens of thousands.

HENRY

The mob is a dangerous dog to let loose.

THOMAS

But a potent one, on the leash of a king. A king of all England - with a nobility humbled by his brazen and *unexpected* use of power.

Thomas pauses to let this sink into Henry. It does.

EXT. LONDON STREETS - NIGHT

THOMAS and HENRY ride through the quiet and dark streets - the sky turning gray with the impending sunrise.

THOMAS

We'd need to move quickly, mobilize a small, fast army. Archers, machinists, and knights loyal to the king. I could organize the repairing and repacking of the siege engines and get them ready for travel along with tents, light provisions, some quick horses, the royal falcons.

HENRY

Falcons?

THOMAS

Naturally. There's good hunting up North.

Henry laughs at that, looks over at Thomas.

HENRY
Thank you, Thomas. I fear I'm very much
going to miss you.

Thomas can barely hide his disappointment. Henry spurs his horse.
They both gallop back to the palace.

INT. KING'S BEDCHAMBER - DAY

HENRY stands before ELEANOR being dressed for the morning.

HENRY
What if the plan fails? What then?

ELEANOR
Then you'll be drawn and quartered by the
noblemen of England.

Henry looks at her, taken aback by her bluntness.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
It mustn't fail.
(a beat)
Don't be weak. It nauseates me.

HENRY
Watch your tongue, Madame. You're
speaking to the king.

She touches his face, gently, reverently.

ELEANOR
King *Henry*.

HENRY
(he smiles)
I like that. Say it again.

Instead, she kisses him. He melts in her arms.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
(whispers)
King Henry, the second!

He kisses her back, passionately, sexually.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Duke of Normandy.

He pulls her down onto the bed, devouring her neck and breast. He
snaps his fingers. The attendants leave.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Count of Anjou!

He pulls her dress up over his head.

INT. GREAT HALL - DAY

THOMAS stands between THEOBALD and JOHN OF SALISBURY in the same banquet room, now empty and quiet.

HENRY stands over a LARGE MAP spread out on the floor. (ENGLAND and part of FRANCE, crudely drawn but recognizable.)

HENRY

These castles, that were built hastily and without charter by errant noblemen, have laid waste to the country, allowed for thievery against the common people, and have stood as reminders that the king of England is weak.

Queen ELEANOR sits on a THRONE across from the churchmen.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Our intention is to destroy them all, bring every shire of England firmly under the rule of the crown - or die trying.

THEOBALD

This is a new course, your majesty. A bold one.

HENRY

(glancing to Thomas)

Yes, it is. It came to me in the wee hours.

(stepping over map)

And to this English venture we bring mine and my queen's holdings in France forever vulnerable to the whims of King Louis. We have a kingdom on two continents. It must now be saved from both anarchy and invasion.

THEOBALD

We agree with any strategy that frees the people of England from these many years of abuse. Your majesty's objectives are ambitious and righteous.

ELEANOR

To achieve them, your grace, we ask for sacrifice - from everyone.

THEOBALD

Saving our duty to God, we will sacrifice what's asked of us.

HENRY

Good. Because we've made the first decision of our new reign: to restore the office of "Chancellor of England" to what it was in the time of my grandfather - the closest and most trusted advisor to the king and keeper of the Seal of England.

The king presents a SILVER OBJECT from his pocket. It has a handle and an IMPRINTED FACE for pressing into wax.

THEOBALD

The position will be a high honor. The noblemen of England will lay themselves down just to be considered.

HENRY

No, your grace. We'll lay them down.
(he laughs)

The men you've educated in your household far surpass in knowledge and intellect our finest names in England.

Henry walks past Thomas and John.

THEOBALD

My men have been educated for a life in service to God.

HENRY

Yes. Save one, whom I wish to serve *me* instead.

Henry is looking directly at Thomas who can't believe it, wasn't expecting this.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Your grace, I ask your permission to name Thomas Becket my Chancellor of England.

This is a shocker, better than bishop, better than anything he could have imagined. Theobald says nothing.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Can you argue honestly he's not more suited for this than what you had planned?

Theobald smiles slightly.

THEOBALD

He is. I release him with my blessing.

Thomas is breathless, he opens his mouth to speak, but nothing comes out.

THEOBALD (CONT'D)

Your majesty has performed a miracle. You've made Thomas Becket speechless.

Thomas falls to one knee in front of the king. Henry puts the SILVER SEAL into his hand.

EXT. PALACE COLONNADE - DAY

Various Canterbury CHURCHMEN surround THOMAS who is nervous, uneasy looking THEOBALD in the eye. He takes a breath to speak, but Theobald gently touches his lips.

THEOBALD
This is an unexpected turn. But a son of
the holy church having the ear of the
king is, I expect, a good turn.

Theobald grasps Thomas's shoulder. The old man's eyes tearful.

THEOBALD (CONT'D)
Make it so, Thomas.

Theobald kisses Thomas gently on the cheek, then leaves, escorted down the colonnade by the other churchmen.

SIMON
A churchman with an ear to the king?

ALEXANDER
Perhaps there's a special fornication
prayer he can whisper.

The others leave. Thomas is alone with John. An awkward, uneasy parting.

JOHN
Who among them will be as good a friend
to me?

THOMAS
Canterbury's only a day's ride, John.

John smiles, bittersweet.

JOHN
I fear it's farther than that.

He gives Thomas a long tight hug, then leaves him standing there alone.

INT. A TENT - DAY

THOMAS stands naked while a wool tunic is put over his head by ATTENDANTS.

He winces slightly as his feet and are laced up with CHAIN MAIL, followed by his ARMS and HEAD. When his torso is draped with the metal garment, his legs nearly buckle at the surprise weight of it.

He balances himself again as his HANDS are put into chain mail MITTENS, while a woolen COAT is lowered over the entire ensemble.

Just when he thinks he's done, a ROUNDED HELMET is put over his head leaving only his eyes exposed.

He reaches for his SWORD, can't find it. An attendant puts it in his hand. He looks at the sharp blade, then slides it into its sheath.

EXT. BATTLE CAMP - ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The camp bustles with activity, anticipation of battle. Fully armored, THOMAS walks out from the tent to where HENRY waits with several KNIGHTS.

HENRY

Thomas! Have you never had the pleasure of wearing chain mail? I haven't seen you move that stiffly since we walked out of the brothel!

(LAUGHTER among KNIGHTS)

And that was after only one kiss!

With the help of more ATTENDANTS, Thomas struggles to mount his horse, but finally does to a loud CHEER.

EXT. ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

CLOSE ON - THOMAS

mounted on horseback in his BATTLE ARMOR, a PARCHMENT in his hand.

THOMAS

(shouting)

This castle built without royal charter, is hereby ordered - removed!

Pulling back, we see Thomas is next to HENRY in front of an army of ARCHERS and MOUNTED KNIGHTS and a solid row of wooden SIEGE ENGINES, catapult-like "Trebuchets," Medieval Artillery.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You will not be given another invitation to vacate! We recommend you accept this one!

On REVERSE ANGLE we see the "CASTLE" - not a romantic fairy-tale vision but a squat, box-like STONE KEEP built on a mound and surrounded by a spiked WOODEN FENCE from which

A SINGLE ARROW is launched, landing in the dirt in front of Henry's horse.

HENRY

They're not getting the message, Thomas.
(looking back, ordering)
Send them a warning!

A TREBUCHET swings its arm, hurls a bowling ball-sized STONE two hundred yards to the castle keep.

The stone *bounces off the corner*, breaking in half. We hear LAUGHING and CHEERING coming from behind the castle fence.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Perhaps we need to raise our voices.

Henry spurs his horse, gallops back to the SIEGE ENGINES.

A HUGE BOULDER

is rolled by ten MEN into the SLING of the catapult. An ENGINEER making slight adjustments SEXTANT-LIKE DEVICE doubles back at the size.

ENGINEER

Sire, this projectile is too heavy for the engine! It won't lift!

Thomas rides up next to Henry.

THOMAS

Fill pouches with rocks and sand, and strap them tightly to the counterweight.

Henry nods to the Engineer who scampers to accommodate.

HENRY

My God, Thomas. What kind of church does England have that teaches weapons engineering?

CLOSE ON - LEATHER BAGS OF SAND

and rock, hastily tied onto both sides of the long arm.

Henry snaps his fingers, points. The pin is pulled. The LONG WOODEN ARM swings, hurls the HUGE BOULDER across the field.

It SMASHES the ENTIRE WALL of the block castle, revealing the frantic movement of people inside - finally heeding the warning to vacate.

Now it is HENRY'S ARMY that CHEERS until a huge VOLLEY OF ARROWS comes from the fence, piercing several soldiers, *one ending up in Thomas's shield*.

HENRY

Oh, now I'm *really* angry.
(to soldiers)
Charge, on my orders!
(to Thomas)
You, stay back.

Thomas appears both relieved and disappointed. Henry raises his sword, then lowers it.

THE LONG ROW OF SIEGE ENGINES

simultaneously hurl 30 to 40 BOULDERS over the pasture, destroying in one CRASH what's left of the STONE KEEP.

THE SMALL ARMY

charges across the field

HENRY guarded on all sides by FOUR KNIGHTS.

They charge through the gates of the spiked wooden fence - right into pitched battle. Horse to horse. SWORDS swinging in a tight space.

THOMAS

watches from a distance, sees a STRAY ATTACKER has breached his wall of knights in the tight and confused battle. Henry fights valiantly, but is in a corner.

Thomas gallops suddenly toward the fray, sword swinging in a frenzy, shouting like an armored madman directly towards the king's attacker.

THOMAS

Aaaaaaagggggggghhhhhh!!!!!!

HENRY

Praise God! He's possessed!

Henry's attacker backs away at the wild and chaotic swings of Thomas's sword.

The castle defenders also back away, finally fleeing to the CHEERS of the king's army.

Thomas catches his breath, and Henry's amazed stare.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Where did that come from?

THOMAS

I can't say, my lord.

(grins)

But it got me here.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

HUGE SIEGE STONES crash into a succession of WALLS - each one different - the destruction thunderous, unrelenting.

A volley of FLAMING ARROWS, hundreds flying in formation, find their marks on a FORTRESS FENCE, setting it afire.

HENRY rides along the outside with launching ARROWS to pick off stragglers.

As the structure becomes enveloped in flames, he comes around to THOMAS doing the same.

A CONVOY of MOUNTED MEN

and HORSE-DRAWN WAGONS bursts out from the burning fortress - heading straight for a break in their lines.

THOMAS

They think they're going somewhere.

HENRY

You have to love it. It's so...
Optimistic.

HUNDREDS of CURIOUS PEASANTS have gathered around the perimeter of the field. The convoy steers away from them, then away again.

They're trapped, there's no way out. In the center of the meadow, the thieving NOBLEMEN frantically unhitch their WAGONS and mount the free horses, galloping out through the trees, forsaking their treasure.

HENRY and THOMAS

gallop past the abandoned WAGON laden with VALUABLES, stopping before a growing CROWD OF PEASANTS watching in awe and amazement, moving in around them.

THOMAS

Royal subjects of England! Your long nightmare is over! The day is new again and you are free from capricious attack, free from the whims of the rich and well-armed, and secure in your family and property for as long as *God's anointed ruler reigns on this land!*

A gasp through the crowd - as though a long lost father had returned. PEASANTS fall to their knees.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I present to you *Henry* - your king!

A PEASANT

Blessed sovereign.

HENRY

Get up! Get on your feet and take it!
It's yours!

They hesitate at first, but then run to the abandoned WAGON, pushing it over, tearing it apart.

COINS and TREASURE are spilled, PEASANT HANDS frantically grabbing as much as they can carry away.

INT. A TENT - HENRY'S CAMP - NIGHT

THOMAS looks out the tent to see the DUKES of CORNWALL and LEICESTER ride into the camp along with an entourage of KNIGHTS and BARONS.

THOMAS

My lord, you'll be *shocked* to learn who's coming to visit.

INT. HENRY'S TENT - NIGHT (LATER)

The DUKES, BARONS, and KNIGHTS now stand before HENRY sitting calmly in a chair feeding bits of RAW MEAT to a FALCON on his arm.

THOMAS stands next to him.

BARON #1

Our homes are filled with our cousins and nephews whose castles were destroyed by your campaign.

BARON #2

Your majesty has created anarchy in the kingdom!

HENRY

The castles were anarchy!

The falcon flutters its wings. The tent remains silent as Henry feeds another scrap to his falcon.

CORNWALL

If you continue with this destruction, you'll see a total rebellion by the nobility.

HENRY

And who will I see *leading* this rebellion?

CORNWALL

No one wishes it, but unless your majesty sues for peace straight away, it may be too late to prevent.

Henry takes a long stare at Cornwall.

HENRY

Here are my terms. If the noble families of England see to the destruction of those properties they know to be unlawful, and if they vacate those castles they know to belong to the king, I will allow them to keep their vast dukedoms, their inflated titles, their palatial homes, and their beautiful wives.

THOMAS

That's a very generous offer, my lord. Are you sure about the wives?

HENRY
Don't talk me out of it, Thomas. I'm
feeling charitable.

THOMAS
(whispers to the noblemen)
Take it - before his mood changes.

EXT. HENRY'S CAMP - NIGHT

CORNWALL, LEICESTER, and the other BARONS ride out of the camp,
defeated.

EXT. LONDON - DAY

A huge CROWD erupts with CHEERS as THOMAS and HENRY pass through the
CITY GATE at the head of their worn and haggard army.

Street after street are filled with jubilant Londoners. The
adulation is intoxicating.

THOMAS
That "dangerous dog" is licking your
hand.

Henry smiles, grabs Thomas's hand.

As they turn toward Westminster Palace, Henry notices in the crowd
the angry MIDLANDER from the Tavern.

The king stops the procession with a wave of his hand. The Midlander
bows his head before the king.

HENRY
(Scottish accent)
Lift your head, laddie! Let us see that
ruddy face!

The Midlander looks up, quivers - an eerie recognition.

THOMAS
'E remembers us!

HENRY
Am I still the clown of your thieving
noblemen?!

The Midlander is flustered, can barely shake his head. Henry takes
from his purse a GOLD COIN - tosses it to the man.

HENRY (CONT'D)
(own voice)
Make your way home, friend. Once again,
it's yours.

The Midlander looks to the king and coin with a deep gratitude.

Thomas and Henry ride on the gates of the palace to where a MOUNTED MESSENGER rushes up alongside the king.

Thomas pulls back a step, lets the king hear his news alone. Henry shouts suddenly.

HENRY
It happened! God bless it! My arrow
shot straight!

Henry gallops into the palace gate. Thomas spurs his horse, gallops after him.

INT. WESTMINSTER PALACE - DAY

SERVANTS and ATTENDANTS rush to get out of the way as HENRY sprints through the palace and up the stairwell, THOMAS right behind.

THOMAS
What news, my lord? What happened?

HENRY
(grins, grabs his crotch)
I hit the mark!

Henry bursts through a door. It closes behind him, leaving Thomas outside.

INT. QUEEN'S CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

ELEANOR is being bathed. The ATTENDANTS part for him as HENRY rushes over to the queen, puts his hand on her modestly round PREGNANT BELLY just below the surface of the water.

HENRY
(kisses her)
My queen. I forgot how beautiful you
are.

He dunks his head in the water to kiss her belly.

HENRY (CONT'D)
Be a boy! Ha-ha! Be a boy!

INT. PALACE CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

THOMAS waits at the door hearing Henry's excitement. He backs away from the closed door.

INT. GREAT HALL - NIGHT

A PRIVATE DINNER - ELEANOR and THOMAS laugh while HENRY acts out battle stories.

HENRY

There I was, my guard in disarray, my horse wedged back into the fence, my lips sputtering curses, when I see it. A vision on the horizon. The Lone Horseman of the Apocalypse!

(doubles over laughing)

His eyes were ablaze, two fiery suns. His long shiny sword, perfectly brilliant in its lack of use, swinging every which way like the scythe of a drunken reaper.

He falls to his chair, laughing.

HENRY (CONT'D)

You should've seen the poor bastards. They all thought they'd gone to hell with the devil himself.

ELEANOR

Masterful, Henry. I couldn't have dreamed a better outcome.

HENRY

Neither could I. But here it is.

Henry raises his goblet to Thomas. So does Eleanor.

THOMAS

Thank you. And let me raise my cup to your good news.

(he drinks)

I pray your child will be born healthy and *masculine*, and in an England where his parents are only loved, feared, and respected.

ELEANOR

We'll need more than a prayer, Thomas. Our nobility may have retreated only to regroup, and strike back at us.

THOMAS

Indeed, your majesty. That's exactly why I've put my mind to a way we can force them into further submission.

Thomas rises from the table. A CLERK brings him a bundle of long "PIPE ROLL" DOCUMENTS.

HENRY

Look at him, Eleanor. He never stops!
(to Thomas)
Didn't I command you to sleep more?

THOMAS
 (spreading them out)
 The tax records were incomplete and
 poorly kept under King Stephen, but I've
 been able to piece them together with
 what we confiscated on our campaign.

HENRY and ELEANOR look them over, but they are too vast and
 confusing.

HENRY
 What do they say?

THOMAS
 That there isn't a noble family in
 England that doesn't owe us dearly.

Henry and Eleanor glance at each other, pleased to hear this.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 I recommend you have the Sheriffs of each
 Shire demand every penny due from every
 one of them. They'll squeal like pigs
 for sure, but will soon find they lack
 the heavy coin to plot conspiracy. And
 the crown will collect a lot of money.

HENRY
 How much?

Thomas points to a FIGURE he's written down. Henry and Eleanor look
 at it, then look at each other: "*He's good.*"

INT. NORTHAMPTON CASTLE - GREAT HALL - DAY

THOMAS stands along before a room crowded with angry NOBLEMEN, the
 same PIPE ROLLS spread out in front of him.

THOMAS
 The king is indeed here, but indisposed.

NORFOLK
 This is an outrage! A man of no title, a
 commoner standing in for a king?

THOMAS
 My title is "Chancellor of England."
 Your title is Earl of Norfolk, and you
 owe the king
 (checking pipe roll)
 eight hundred and seventy-three pounds
 silver.

NORFOLK
 That's a fair portion of my estate!

THOMAS
 I presume not the fairest.

EARL OF SUFFOLK

These sums you're demanding are enormous.

THOMAS

But are they illegal or unprecedented?

Silence in the room.

BARON

This tax has not been collected in twenty-three years!

THOMAS

We apologize for that. And assure you you'll never again have to store the king's revenues inside your personal treasuries.

More outrage in the room. Thomas waves his hand.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

And in consideration of this inconvenience, the king has generously promised to forgo all interest on monies you had little choice but to hold for him.

INT. KING'S BEDCHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

HENRY and ELEANOR (she is very pregnant) peer out through an interior window, silently laughing over the NOBLES' booing and whining at Thomas's offer.

NORFOLK

But the church already forbids the collection of interest!

THOMAS

Well, then. We are happy the church agrees with us.

More booing and whining.

HENRY

My God. Our Thomas is becoming *bold*.

ELEANOR

Taking the shape of his royal mold, my dear.

She kisses Henry on the temple; he grins, proudly.

HENRY

I think he's ready for his royal gift.

INT. THOMAS'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

End of a long day. ATTENDANTS leave THOMAS for the night. He takes the candle to his bed, the dim light revealing a beautiful YOUNG WOMAN standing there in a sheer gown.

He looks back to the door - is this a mistake? - then back to her.

YOUNG WOMAN
My lord. Should I undress?

Thomas touches shoulder, kisses her gently on the lips. He pulls away uneasily, as though he'd been too forward.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
It's okay.

She puts her fingers through his hair and, as she brings her lips to his, all resistance breaks away. His first real kiss is passionate and unrelenting. He carries her to the bed where her gown falls away.

Without hesitation or reservation, THOMAS makes love to her.

INT. THOMAS'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT (DAWN)

The first light of morning reveals THOMAS sound asleep in bed with the YOUNG WOMAN. Far away, CHURCH BELLS RING. Then more RINGING in another part of London. And then, still more.

Thomas opens his eyes, hears faintly a BABY CRYING, the first breaths of a newborn in a distant room. He rises in his bed, hears:

HENRY (O.S.)
A BOY! WE HAVE A BOY! HA-HA! WE HAVE A
BOY!

Thomas jumps to his feet, fumbles to get his DRESS ROBES over his head. He runs out the door.

INT. QUEEN'S CHAMBER - NIGHT (DAWN)

ATTENDANTS, MID-WIVES, and warm candlelight fill the room where ELEANOR is laid up in the bed, sweating from delivery, HENRY holding the NEWBORN BABY.

HENRY
Louis of France abandoned my beloved
wife, cast her out, and divorced her for
bearing him only daughters! And now--

Henry brings the baby over to Eleanor's arms.

HENRY (CONT'D)
My Queen, we have an heir. We have a
future.

Eleanor can't hold her cool demeanor, lets the tears flow freely.

ELEANOR

We do.

From outside, CHURCH BELLS continue ringing, near and far, all over London. Henry takes the baby to the window.

HENRY

Hear that, my boy? They're ringing for you.

He sees THOMAS standing at the door.

HENRY

Thomas. Come here and meet the next king of England. We're calling him "Henry."

THOMAS

My lord... That's a splendid name.

INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - DAY

THEOBALD performs the BAPTISM ceremony before the HIGHEST NOBILITY and the ROYAL FAMILY that includes THOMAS.

As the Archbishop sprinkles holy water on the INFANT while speaking in Latin. HENRY leans close to his Chancellor, whispers:

HENRY

Thomas, I'm hurt. You haven't said a word about your little visitor.

THOMAS

She was lovely, your majesty. I thank you.

HENRY

She told me you were like a stud horse in Spring. A massive and mighty ship in a stormy harbor. She said if she can't have you again, she's going to hurl herself into a convent.

Thomas gasps out a laugh. Theobald glances to him sternly. So does Henry with exaggeration, as though he had nothing to do with it.

EXT. WESTMINSTER PALACE - CHANCELLERY - DAY

A WALL OF BABY GIFTS - Gilded and Jewel-encrusted rattles, high-chairs, cradles - silken clothing and bedding.

THOMAS walks along the shelves while a CLERK (Herbert of Bosham) writes everything down.

THOMAS

Mahogany Cradle from the Duke and Duchess of Leicester. Silver feeding spoons from the Earl of Northumberland. Gilded Rocking Horse from the King of Scotland.

Herbert notices JOHN OF SALISBURY has snuck up behind Thomas and shadows him - he motions the clerk to keep his secret.

JOHN

What a load of junk.

Thomas look around, moved to see his friend.

THOMAS

John!

(embraces him)

How long have you been behind me?

JOHN

Most of our lives. Which of these treasures did you give them?

THOMAS

Oh... None. I haven't nearly the means to compete with this.

JOHN

Poor Thomas. Even on the inside, you're outside.

But Thomas doesn't laugh.

THOMAS

I can never really be inside.

JOHN

Thomas. You can't be any closer to the king than you are now.

(he laughs)

The office of "queen" is already spoken for.

THOMAS

I'm little more than a novelty to both of them. But the royal mind will grow bored with my act, and then one day I'll be scribbling alone in the Chancellery straining to remember a time when I was favored.

John looks at him, can't believe what he's hearing.

JOHN

Not even God almighty has the power to satisfy you, Thomas Becket.

(a beat)

You haven't asked what I'm doing here.

THOMAS

What are you doing here?

JOHN

Thank you. I've been granted access to the palace archive for a manuscript Rome has commissioned me to write about politics in modern Christendom. I'm thinking your contributions to royal power will make for a good chapter.

THOMAS

Not too short a chapter, I hope.

John looks at his friend with a mixture of disbelief and pity.

JOHN

You know... I may have something that will please the king and queen--

Thomas grabs John, pulls him behind the row of shelves.

THOMAS

What? Tell me.

JOHN

--more than every one of these gilded trinkets. I got it last week in France. But it must be given right away, or else it will spoil.

THOMAS

If it's some runny French cheese--

John shakes his head, grins. Thomas raises his fist.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Do I have to beat it out of you?

INT. KING'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

ELEANOR holds the BABY next to HENRY while THOMAS presents them with a rolled-up PARCHMENT tied with a RIBBON BOW.

THOMAS

I scoured the kingdom, searched the highest hill and the lowest valley, laid awake scores of nights letting my mind imagine a gift for my King and Queen that is worthy of such a great event as the birth of your son.

HENRY

Thomas... You didn't have to.

THOMAS

Don't worry, sire. Luckily, it didn't cost me a shilling. But it *may* cost you a fortune.

ELEANOR
What a novel way of giving.

HENRY
But bold, and daring. I like it already.

THOMAS
A drink first.

Thomas pours the wine. They lift their cups.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
To Henry!

HENRY
Thank you. Don't mind if I do.

THOMAS
(waving them to stop)
No. I mean Henry, the future king of
England.

ELEANOR
That's more like it.

THOMAS
(filling his cup again)
What am I thinking? A new toast: To the
upcoming marriage of your strong and
handsome son Henry to the fairest
princess in all the land.

HENRY
Thomas... He's a little young.

THOMAS
But his age is perfect as his bride-to-be
still drinks from the nipple. She is
indeed small--
(pulling RIBBON from the
parchment)
--but her dowry will be large and render
the borders of this kingdom impenetrable,
secure for hundreds of years.

Thomas unrolls a MAP in front Henry and Eleanor.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Four castles of Vexin that border your
dukedom--

HENRY
--in France! You fool, you're talking
about King Louis!

THOMAS
Indeed I am.

ELEANOR
Have you gone mad? His daughters are
born to me!

HENRY
Are you proposing our son marry his half
sister and commit incest?

THOMAS
He wouldn't be the first. But no; his
bride won't share a drop of his blood.

HENRY
But how--? Louis's new wife hasn't yet--

Henry stops. Thomas grins.

HENRY (CONT'D)
She has...?

ELEANOR
A daughter?

Thomas bows with flourish, sits down. Henry eyes widen. Eleanor
covers her mouth.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
This can't be true.

THOMAS
Her majesty was born two weeks ago -
christened secretly as the poor king is
furious with disappointment.

HENRY
Ha! Ha! It's his loins that are filled
with girls.

Henry pulls Eleanor to her feet, dances her around the room.

HENRY (CONT'D)
It's his loins! It's his loins!

THOMAS
He's afraid that unless his baby girl
marries royalty--

HENRY
Prince Henry of England!

THOMAS
--he will be without a male heir to pass
his crown.

ELEANOR
King Louis is a delicate man, and very
jealous.
(grasping Henry's hand)
For good reason.

HENRY
How best do we make this approach?

ELEANOR
Woo him like a woman.

Henry laughs loud.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Send an ambassador to Paris in the
grandest style.

THOMAS
Inspired, your majesty. A parade of a
hundred knights with stewards, squires,
pages and scores of wagons carrying fine
furniture and carpets, silks and
draperies - all the luxuries due our
brother, the king of France, the father
of our future queen.

Eleanor strokes her baby's head, looking at Thomas.

ELEANOR
What about the Pope? A royal engagement
won't be considered legitimate without
his blessing.

HENRY
He won't give it. The old man prays at
bedtimes for a weak England.

THOMAS
His holiness will give his blessing *after*
the betrothal contract is already sealed.
He'll have little choice.

Eleanor smiles at the notion, nods. Henry grins to Thomas.

HENRY
Get her.

INT. CHATEAU DE VINCENNES - DAY

CLOSE ON - KING LOUIS VII

enthroned at the Royal Court of France. From his tired, bitter face
we move to his pretty 17 year-old ELDEST DAUGHTER, and then to his 7
year-old MIDDLE DAUGHTER, and then to his

6 MONTH-OLD INFANT DAUGHTER whom an ATTENDANT takes from the arms of
her ROYAL MOTHER who attempts stoicism but can't fake it - it hurts.

The attendant brings the crying baby to THOMAS standing before them.

EXT. CHATEAU DE VINCENNES - DAY

THOMAS emerges with the CRYING INFANT where we finally see the long procession of waiting HORSES, CARRIAGES, WAGONS, and mounted KNIGHTS receding into the distance.

INT. POPE'S PALACE - DAY

CLOSE ON - A PARCHMENT

an official document, held by aging hands, decorated with ROYAL SEALS - and the RIGHT FOOTPRINTS of a BABY and a TODDLER .

We PULL BACK to see the POPE on his papal throne wearing full vestments and a dour, angry expression.

He looks up at THOMAS holding a BABY wrapped in a wool blanket.

POPE
Are you the messenger for a king who has
no fear of consequences?

Thomas hesitates.

POPE (CONT'D)
Or is this your doing?

THOMAS
Your holiness. There was never any doubt
you would approve - the fruit of this
union being an England and France at
peace, under one Christian king.

POPE
Don't lull me with fairy tales! Was this
your doing, or the *king's*?!

The baby CRIES LOUD at the Pope's shouting. Thomas soothes her by gently brushing her cheek with the backs of his fingers.

THOMAS
Your holiness, if I tell you it's the
king's, I reveal myself disloyal. If I
tell you it is my doing, I reveal myself
insubordinate.

The Pope smiles. This is a live one.

POPE
Take your prize back to Henry and tell
him it will yield him nothing for many
years. His precious castles are ordered
held by the Knights Templar until the
bride and groom are of a proper age to
marry.

Thomas kneels before him and - still holding the blanketed, crying baby - kisses the pontiff's ring. The Pope yanks away his hand.

POPE (CONT'D)
 You're a skilled avoider and maker of
 fools, Thomas Becket. But don't fool
 yourself that I'll never unsheathe my
 sword and let it fall upon your head.

Thomas lifts his head, looks the old man in the eye.

POPE (COND'T)
 I will.

EXT. OUTSIDE LONDON - DAY

Cold and snowy. A LONG PROCESSION (horse-drawn wagons, knights, and
 carriages) approaches the city gates - weary from long travel.

HENRY gallops out from the city to meet them. The procession stops.
 THOMAS rides out from the others. Henry smiles seeing him.

EXT. LONDON STREETS - DAY

HENRY and THOMAS ride through the streets at the head of the weary
 procession (horse-drawn wagons, knights, and carriages).

HENRY
 I take it he wasn't pleased.

THOMAS
 Let's say, your majesty, I won't be
 expecting an invitation to the Pope's
 Christmas dinner this year.
 (a beat)
 It all went exactly as expected.

Henry grins, satisfied.

MOMENTS LATER

Henry stops, jumps off the horse in front a large new TOWN HOUSE.

THOMAS
 Why are we stopping, my lord? Who lives
 here?

The king looks at Thomas closely, grins.

HENRY
 Someone very dear to me.

THOMAS
 May I continue to the palace, sire? I'm
 dead tired, cold, and starving.

HENRY
 You may not. Get off your horse and come
 with me.

Thomas reluctantly dismounts.

INT. TOWN HOUSE - DAY

A private home. Spacious and finely furnished - as good as it gets in the 12th Century.

HENRY

Where is the master of the house?!

Henry's voice reverberates, but no answer. Thomas looks around at all the finery.

THOMAS

Your friend has good taste. The tapestries and furniture are exquisite.

HENRY

None purchased without my approval.
(calling out)
Where is the lord of this manor?!

Thomas looks to the NERVOUS SERVANTS standing in a line. In the great room, a TABLE is set with a LARGE MEAL prepared.

THOMAS

The servants appear apprehensive.
Perhaps some ill has befallen this man.

HENRY

God forbid, that would break my heart.

THOMAS

Sire, the smell of dinner is teasing my empty stomach. May we call on him later?

HENRY

You may call on him now. Snap your fingers.

Thomas goes along with it, snaps his fingers. The servants immediately attend to Thomas, taking off his coat, leading him over to the place of honor at the table, and washing his hands in a bowl.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Welcome home, Thomas Becket.

Thomas looks around - dumbstruck - thoroughly surprised.

THOMAS

My lord. You've caught me off guard.

HENRY

Ha! You're not the only one with tricks up his sleeve!

THOMAS

What can I say for such a gift?

HENRY
 Say you'll have me over to dinner, you
 fool! I'm famished!

Henry leaps over the table and lands on the chair next to Thomas.

INT. THOMAS'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The new home comes alive with a raucous BANQUET - KNIGHTS, FRIENDS,
 and ATTENDANTS - a manly gathering ungoverned by court and custom.

Henry leans over to Thomas's ear.

HENRY
 Next time you have to be gone for so
 long, do me a favor.

THOMAS
 What, my lord?

HENRY
 Send someone else!

THOMAS
 Happily, I will.
 (a beat)
 Actually, your majesty, I've been meaning
 to speak with you about that. I could
 manage the chancellery more efficiently
 if I had some assistance.

HENRY
 Get all help you need.

THOMAS
 The help I need is John of Salisbury.
 But he remains nestled at the bosom of
 the church.

HENRY
 Ah, yes. John. An excellent writer.
 There's no earthly reason he can't be
plucked from the church's soft bosom.
 (laughs heartily)
You were.

INT. THOMAS'S HOUSE - DAY

JOHN and THOMAS come in from the snow into the palatial home. John
 looks around with wide eyes as though seeing a cathedral for the
 first time.

JOHN
 Praise God... I'd say you live like a
 king, but the palace isn't this nice.
 (looking around)
 Where's your room?

THOMAS
Which one?

JOHN
You have two?

THOMAS
I have all of them.

John looks at him confused.

JOHN
This entire building... For you.

THOMAS
And my beloved guests when they come to visit.

Thomas snaps his fingers. A SERVANT takes John's CLOAK from his shoulders, takes it away with his bag.

INT. THOMAS'S HOUSE - VARIOUS ROOMS - DAY

THOMAS is taking JOHN from room to room.

THOMAS
The cabinets were all carved in Venice, brought over the Alps in pieces and assembled inside the house.
(moving into next room)
I'm told the carpets were carried from the Orient on Silk Road camels, except this one running along the hall. It belonged to the Saxon King Alfred.

They head down the stairs, Thomas pointing to a LARGE TAPESTRY hanging in the GREAT HALL.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
And this tapestry belonged to the Conqueror himself. It hung in the chambers where the Domesday Book was prepared.

John looks at it all as though disoriented, uncomfortable.

AT THE LONG TABLE

a servant puts down GOLD CUPS fills them with WINE. Thomas notices John looking at the mound of paperwork: ROLLS, QUILLS and INK WELLS.

THOMAS
What I can't finish at the chancellery comes home.
(a beat)
It's gotten overwhelming, John. I need someone to help me.

JOHN

May I suggest a team of Mandarin scribes
brought over on the Silk Road?

Thomas raises his cup to the joke. John's meets it.

HENRY (O.S.)

WHERE IS THE LORD OF THIS MANOR?!

Thomas looks past John at HENRY coming through the front door still riding his HORSE.

Henry gallops down the long hall directly toward the table. John is stunned - Thomas, nonchalant.

The king *leaps his horse over the table*, knocking down the CANDELABRA - igniting the ROLLED PARCHMENTS.

THOMAS

Excellent stride, your majesty.

Thomas tosses VASE WATER over the FIRE on his table, puts it out.

HENRY

I hope those papers weren't important.

THOMAS

What's important is that you feel free to jump your horse in my house.

He dismounts, gives Thomas a big kiss on the cheek.

HENRY

Do something about that wall, Thomas.
It's too close to the table.

THOMAS

I'll have it removed immediately.

The king laughs loud. Thomas looks at John who stands there frozen. He's never seen anything like this.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You remember John of Salisbury, personal secretary to the Archbishop of Canterbury?

JOHN

Your majesty.

John bows deep. Henry looks at Thomas, laughs.

HENRY

Stand up, John and talk to me.

John does, but is a bit overwhelmed.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Your essays on Cicero and Augustus were brilliant and made my schooling less tedious. I'm grateful.

JOHN

Your welcome, your majesty. I mean--

HENRY

You're a churchman, John. Can you hear my confession? I had the most exquisite encounter yesterday evening, and I need to tell someone every detail.

THOMAS

You can tell me, sire. I can't absolve you, but I may applaud.

JOHN

Your majesty, I'm not actually a priest. Like Thomas, I haven't yet taken--

HENRY

All those vows of poverty, chastity, monotony.

JOHN

Yes - no, monotony isn't a vow.

Silence.

THOMAS

Just a consequence of all the others.

Henry guffaws. KNIGHTS come into the house, break the awkward moment.

HENRY

Good then, join the party!

Henry looks to Thomas: This guy is not getting it.

INT. THOMAS'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A raucous party, more crowded, more raunchy than the first. MUSICIANS play over the laughter and drinking of a dozen KNIGHTS (including REGINALD FITZ-URSE) and BAR MAIDS.

A NAKED WOMAN sits on the lap of HENRY near where

JOHN

tries to eat his meal, averting his eyes as best he can, but every line of sight has a woman's BARE BODY PART in it.

Even THOMAS has a woman slung across him; but he watches John empathetically, disappointed at how much his friend stands out in this crowd.

FITZ-URSE

I don't think our little churchman has ever seen a woman unclothed.

A KNIGHT

Not since his mother cast him off from the tit.

Henry throws Thomas a knowing glance - whispers into the NAKED WOMAN'S EAR.

She slides off Henry, plops herself right in John's lap and starts kissing him all over the face and mouth.

HENRY

Now, John. I remember with some interest your theory of the "body politic." Could you remind me of the details?

JOHN

Yes, your majesty.
(while being kissed and fondled)
The king is the head of the body, the church is the soul, the judges are its eyes and ears, the soldiers and clerks, its hands, and the peasants are its feet.

HENRY

(clapping)
Bravo.

The whole room cheers for John, except Thomas who sees how uncomfortable he is. The king waves his hand and the naked woman returns to his lap.

John uses the distraction to retreat from the gathering, Thomas watching him ascend the stairs to his room.

INT. THOMAS'S HOUSE - DAY (DAWN)

The next morning. JOHN comes down the stairs to where KNIGHTS are laid out - drunk and asleep on the floors and tables, some intertwined with WOMEN.

He walks through and over the sleeping bodies, looking for:

JOHN

Thomas...?

No answer. John makes his way toward where he sees a HORSE is just inside the front door - *his* horse, with THOMAS holding the reins.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Thomas. This isn't my way.

John smiles to Thomas bittersweet.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I never thought it would be yours.

Thomas kneels to hold the stirrup for his friend, leads the horse and rider out the door into the snow covered streets. John waves "good-bye" without turning around.

Thomas comes back into the house to see HENRY standing there, drawing up his drawers.

His face is stern until he offers an exaggerated smile.

HENRY

Great idea, don't you think?

INT. THOMAS'S HOUSE - DAY

THOMAS sits with HENRY and the hung-over KNIGHTS - most of them now awake and picking their breakfast from table scraps.

REGINALD FITZ-URSE - a large, burly man you wouldn't want to meet in battle - has a WOMAN still wrapped around him.

FITZ-URSE

The problem with these churchmen is they have their heads in Heaven so much they don't care what's happening on Earth.

HENRY

I don't care where their heads are, as long as their obedience is with the king.

Fitz-Urse and the other knights look at each other.

FITZ-URSE

If it were only so. Have you heard, sire, that gangs of monks have been offering spiritual guidance to traveling parties, then raping and robbing them when far from any magistrate?

THOMAS

Your majesty, these criminals were captured.

FITZ-URSE

And immediately returned to the church for *ecclesiastical* punishment.

KNIGHT

Kitchen duty and prayer, no doubt.

The knights laugh. Henry doesn't. Thomas sees it.

FITZ-URSE

It's not just the lower orders that flout your authority. Bishop Hilary of Chichester just yesterday sailed from England to France.

THOMAS

The duties of a bishop require travel to the continent.

FITZ-URSE

With the *his majesty's permission*, Archdeacon Becket. That has always been the unwritten custom. Or have you also forgotten?

THOMAS

I don't need legal instruction from a base knight, Fitz-Urse.

HENRY

(simmering)

On what business was he traveling?

FITZ-URSE

The business of telling everyone who will hear that a king has no right to charter an abbey without the permission of the Pope.

INT. WESTMINSTER PALACE - KING'S CHAMBER - DAY

HENRY paces like a caged animal, THOMAS trying his best to calm him.

HENRY

A bishop! A damnable bishop undermining my authority, coming and going as he pleases as though the king--

He picks up a STOOL - hurls it crashing against the STONE WALL.

HENRY (CONT'D)

--were nothing more than a customs clerk!

THOMAS

My lord, I'll bring Bishop Hillary to the palace. You can tell him what is acceptable under your rule.

Henry sits at the table - writes an order on a PARCHMENT.

HENRY

Coming home to a pile of rubble will tell him everything he needs to know.

THOMAS

Your majesty, I fear... Ordering the destruction of his home--

HENRY

--will bring him closer to God. He'll no longer have material comforts to distract his prayers. My seal.

Henry looks at Thomas who hesitates, as though ready to say something.

But instead he hands Henry the silver SEAL OF ENGLAND. Henry presses it over the RED WAX leaving an impression - a king on his throne.

HENRY (CONT'D)
Deliver the order.

INT. PALACE STABLES - DAY

THOMAS reluctantly hands the same PARCHMENT to a MESSENGER, but whispers conspiratorially.

THOMAS
Ride leisurely. Rest often. Eat and
drink well at every stop.

He hands him a SATCHEL of COINS. The messenger mounts his horse, tips his cap with a grin.

INT. QUEEN'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

ELEANOR sits at a table signing and sealing documents by candlelight. A lone SECRETARY helps. HENRY paces in front of her.

HENRY
Everything we worked for will fall away,
if we allow them to ignore our authority.

ELEANOR
It's the church, Henry. They've been
doing this for a thousand years.

HENRY
Not anymore. Not in *my* England.

Eleanor adjusts her pregnant body in the chair.

ELEANOR
If you're looking to anger the Pope and
have him rescind his blessing for our
son's wedding, go ahead, punish the
bishop harshly. Perhaps we won't need
those precious Vexin castles after all.

Henry calms hearing that, looks suddenly uneasy.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Henry... Tell me you haven't.

INT. THOMAS'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A LOUD KNOCK on the door. The SERVANTS open it to reveal HENRY - upset, desperate. He walks right in to THOMAS who has come to the door.

HENRY
I've made a mistake. I don't know what
to do.

THOMAS
Come in.

CLOSE ON - A PARCHMENT

Thomas unrolls on the table.

HENRY
The rescinding order... You've already
prepared it!

THOMAS
It needs only your seal.

He pours hot wax on the document, hands Henry the seal.

HENRY
It'll never catch up with the first.

THOMAS
Herbert! It's time!

Henry puts his seal on the document. Thomas blows on it to harden
the wax.

HERBERT OF BOSHAM, Thomas's clerk, emerges from the servants' room,
dressing quickly. Henry can hear Thomas whisper to him.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Ride at night. Ride in rain. Ride as
though the apocalypse were tomorrow.

HERBERT
Yes, my lord.

Thomas hands Herbert the document along with a PURSE OF COINS.
Herbert races out the door to the stables.

Thomas looks at the king who seems both amazed and disturbed.

THOMAS
If your order against the bishop were
indeed your true heart, it would have
been executed exactly as you wished. I
suspected it wasn't.

HENRY
Then why didn't you tell me?

THOMAS
I tried.

HENRY

Tried? Did you grab my ear and shout into it, "This will unify the clergy against you!" If you *know something to be true*, you have speak it loudly. You have to fight for it.

THOMAS

My lord. I didn't think it my place--

HENRY

--You're the Chancellor of England! You can't always be pleasant and diplomatic. You can't always make peace. And if *I* can't trust you to stand on your judgement... I'm lost.

(a beat)

Thomas. You're my friend.

THOMAS

As you are mine, and also the king.

Henry calms, holds his head as if it ached.

HENRY

This can't happen again.

THOMAS

It won't. I apologize.

HENRY

No. This marriage dowry is too important to leave at the mercy of our friendly relations with Rome. We need it delivered to us immediately.

Henry paces, thinks, laughs nervously.

HENRY (CONT'D)

When the Pope spoke of a "proper age to marry," I don't suppose he meant two and three years old.

THOMAS

If the king believes two and three are proper ages for the betrothed to marry, what does the Pope matter?

HENRY

He'll damn us all to hell when he hears of it.

Henry looks at Thomas, waits for his answer.

THOMAS

Not if he also hears the wedding ceremony was performed by the highest spiritual authority in all of England.

Henry thinks it through, his face finally softening with hope.

HENRY
Make it happen, Thomas.

INT. CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL - DAY

THOMAS stands in the shadows of the transept watching in profile THEOBALD performing mass. JOHN helps him at every step of the ceremony, ready to catch him if he falls back.

Thomas watches uncomfortably as the Archbishop's hand shakes pouring the wine. John steadies it, glances down the transept at Thomas slipping out through the door.

EXT. CATHEDRAL COURTYARD - DAY

THOMAS waits outside by the towering CATHEDRAL watching THEOBALD moving very slowly along the side of the it, led by JOHN.

The old man glows seeing Thomas.

THEOBALD
You've come.

He embraces him, then takes hold Thomas's arm for support. Thomas glances to John who nods, steps away to let them be alone.

EXT. CHURCH MILLERY - DAY

Bushels of WHEAT are unloaded off wagons by MONKS to be milled into flour. There is a lot of wheat and a lot of work. Theobald stops here.

THEOBALD
No civil war. No rapacious noblemen.
The poor are fewer. And the harvests
more bountiful.
(a beat)
This was won by your sword, Thomas. And
our king's.

THOMAS
The kindest fruits oft grow from the
manure of brutal necessity.

Theobald smiles at that, continues walking.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Your grace, the king and queen believe
this same peace and security depend on
the marriage of their first-born son--

THEOBALD
--Thomas. Do you know why I never raised
you to bishop, even while I knew you were
more capable than all the others?

THOMAS

Your grace, I stopped wondering that long ago.

THEOBALD

I was waiting to see you act here.
 (touches his heart)
 And hopeful that one day you'd stop resisting what I know flows richly in you.

THOMAS

What have I resisted?

Theobald looks long at Thomas. We see tears in his eyes, finally voicing what he'd kept to himself.

THEOBALD

Your goodness.

THOMAS

I'm doing good for England. Just as you said--

Theobald touches his lip.

THEOBALD

You know what is - and what isn't; and you'll understand when you let go of the thing that brought you here today. I regret now I'll never see that.

THOMAS

My lord, I will see you again soon.

THEOBALD

Not at the wedding of infants.

Thomas is ready to press the point, but can't.

THOMAS

The king will be disappointed.

THEOBALD

The king should be ashamed for abusing the innocent and disgracing the holy sacrament of marriage - as should his Chancellor who arranged it.

Theobald smiles slightly, poignantly.

THEOBALD (CONT'D)

Good-bye, Thomas.

He lets go, walks away on his own.

THOMAS

Your grace. I'll come back here again, for no other business than to see you.

Theobald turns back, smiles with gentle skepticism.

THEOBALD
Nothing would bring me greater joy.

INT. CHURCH RECTORY - DAY

CLOSE ON - FINGERNAILS

being filed and polished. We see the hand belongs to BISHOP ROGER of York whom we saw at the coronation. He is in full VESTMENTS and stands before THOMAS.

THOMAS
Your grace, the king and queen are grateful for your service in this matter.

The MITER is presented to Bishop Roger. He puts it on his own head.

BISHOP ROGER
Gratitude, Thomas Becket, is more than words filtered through the lips of a... clerk.

Thomas looks as though he might run him through with the staff.

THOMAS
A private audience for you will be arranged.

INT. A CHURCH - DAY

A TWO YEAR-OLD GIRL in a white BRIDAL DRESS walks up the aisle of a near-empty CHURCH.

INSERT CARD:

November 2, 1160

The small girl is blank-faced, confused, unable to understand what she is doing as she takes her place next to

A THREE YEAR-OLD BOY (Young Henry) at the ALTAR. BISHOP ROGER begins the marriage mass in Latin.

HENRY looks at THOMAS seated next to him in the back of the small church.

HENRY
(whispers)
Pray my son doesn't wet the wedding bed.

Thomas watches the infant BRIDE face the infant GROOM, holding hands under a WHITE CLOTH laid down by Bishop Roger.

THOMAS
Pray God forgets this by judgement day.

Henry is taken aback, looks at Thomas who smiles to cover his apprehension. The king looks past him to where

JOHN OF SALISBURY

stands waiting at the church door. Henry nudges Thomas to look. Thomas's eyes meet John's.

INT. CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL - DAY

CLOSE ON - THEOBALD'S PROFILE

his body laid out along the choir under a BLACK SHROUD - a white EPISCOPAL CROSS across the chest.

JOHN OF SALISBURY is holding up the edge of the shroud for THOMAS to see his former master for the last time. JOHN'S HANDS shake as he can barely contain his own grief.

Thomas takes the shroud from his friend's hands - gently lays it back over Theobald's face.

JOHN

You've been chosen to speak.

THOMAS

Why? I have nothing prepared, John. I didn't expect to be asked.

JOHN

He expected you would.

John looks intensely at Thomas with tear-reddened eyes. He's not getting out of this.

INT. CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL - DAY

THOMAS looks out at the silent cathedral filled with England's best, HENRY and ELEANOR in the seats of honor in the front pew.

THOMAS

Before I came to serve the kingdom, I acted as Archdeacon, secretary and closest confidant to Theobald, Archbishop of Canterbury. I had apprenticed in his household, in all, twelve years - the last thousand days and nights in his close company, drafting appeals, arguing cases before the episcopal courts, traveling to Rome on the business of the See of Canterbury. He expected much of me, even in our final meeting, and I struggled hard to meet every expectation. But now he is with God - and I fear a disappointing report.

Thomas looks down for his next words. Henry shuffles in his seat. JOHN raises his lowered head to look at his friend.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

And now we are poorer without the example of his life. A life that if we could all live as gently, and as charitably, we would never again lift our eyes to the promise of Heaven - it would be among us.

Thomas remains at the altar, then returns to his seat next to the king. Henry grasps his hand.

INT. CATHEDRAL CRYPT - NIGHT

The Burial Crypt. THOMAS is with JOHN and the other *churchmen* as MONKS lower Theobald's shrouded body into the tomb.

The HEAVY LID - carved with the likeness of Theobald - is lifted and carried over crypt. The monks lay it on top, sealing the tomb.

INT. HENRY'S BEDCHAMBER - DAY

Archbishop of York ROGER and Bishop of London GILBERT standing before the KING and QUEEN.

BISHOP ROGER

Leave Canterbury vacant, your majesty. The income from the church land will come directly to the crown.

BISHOP GILBERT

And the Primacy of the English church will move from Canterbury to York!

BISHOP ROGER

It is a natural ascension, my lord.

BISHOP GILBERT

It's sacrilege and heresy! His grace Augustine founded the English church in Canterbury; the primacy has remained there for seven hundred years!

(to Henry)

Without the person of an archbishop the property of the church is vulnerable to adventurous neighbors.

HENRY

The Broc family.

BISHOP GILBERT

And others of their kind. The See must be filled immediately, but by a man loyal to both church and crown.

(a beat)

I humbly submit myself to your consideration.

HENRY

Thank you, bishops. You may humbly leave us now.

The bishops bow, then leave.

HENRY (CONT'D)

That man would be a never ending headache. All of them have gotten used to doing whatever they damn please. At least Theobald moved slowly.

ELEANOR

Henry. The choice could not be more clear.

HENRY

My dear, I'm blind. Lead me to it.

He looks at her, sees it in her face.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Oh. No... I can't lose him.

ELEANOR

For us, Henry. For our legacy. For everything we've struggled to achieve.

Eleanor rises from her chair, leans over Henry with an intense and seductive gaze.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

With Thomas Becket as our Archbishop of Canterbury, we will own the church, we will eradicate its interference, we will dictate its cooperation. We will be completely free to rule.

Henry looks into, warming to the idea.

HENRY

I fear you underestimate him. He has a mind of his own, you know.

ELEANOR

I know that mind, Henry, every line and facet. It will *never* turn away from you.

Henry looks long into his wife's eyes.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Never.

INT. THOMAS'S HOUSE - DAY

THOMAS and HENRY at the long table.

The king stares at Thomas's profile as he works, perhaps considering how best to bring up something difficult and important.

THOMAS

Your majesty. I've been thinking about a replacement for Theobald.

HENRY

Have you?

THOMAS

It's my duty as Chancellor. The array of choices is fraught with peril. The solution, I believe, lies in trust, and building on an existing friendship.

HENRY

(he smiles)

Thomas, I'm so relieved.

THOMAS

The man I'm thinking of understands our objectives. He's been educated in the church, but his knowledge of politics, and the hard ways of the ruling a kingdom are unmatched by any other in England.

HENRY

Except the king.

THOMAS

Of course. There's only one inconvenience.

HENRY

Let me guess. He's not yet taken the orders of the priesthood.

THOMAS

Yes, your majesty. I, too, am relieved. I see we're of the same mind.

HENRY

How long will it take for an ordainment?

THOMAS

I'm confident I can squeeze it into the span of a week.

HENRY

This is so amusing. I thought you'd resist.

THOMAS

He might. Not me.

HENRY

He? I don't understand.

THOMAS

He may resist this appointment seeing it as a political move. The man is incorruptible.

(he grins)

We should know. We tried.

Henry's face falls, disappointed.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Your majesty. I recommend you appoint John of Salisbury to take Theobald's place as Archbishop of Canterbury.

Thomas waits for the "yes." It doesn't come.

HENRY

No.

THOMAS

My lord, why?

HENRY

Because he's incorruptible.

THOMAS

Sire?

HENRY

Thomas, we have an enormous opportunity with this vacancy. Your John of Salisbury would ruin it.

THOMAS

John is a brilliant scholar. Not even the smallest detail of Canon Law is unknown to him.

HENRY

But Canon Law isn't our law, is it? Their's is written. Our's remains oral tradition, unwritten custom, malleable and weak against the church's.

Henry rises from the table.

HENRY (CONT'D)

But now, we can write our own, Thomas. Finally commit to parchment a common law of England that is known and obeyed by everyone - churchman and the nobleman - obedient, and in our control.

THOMAS

I don't see it, your majesty. What replacement for Theobald would be so cooperative?

Henry wipes off a GOLD PLATE, holds it up to THOMAS'S FACE.

He slowly lowers it, reveals Thomas is shocked. Henry grins.

THOMAS

I-- My lord. I don't desire any change.
I can't imagine a life better than the
one I have.

HENRY

You'll keep everything, Thomas. The
food, the furniture, the banquets, the
maidens. You'll remain my chancellor.

THOMAS

Thank you. Thank God.

HENRY

While you also serve as Archbishop of
Canterbury - the first man of the English
Church.

(looking at him)

I'm giving you the best of both worlds.

Thomas stands, walks around the table, quietly thinking.

THOMAS

My lord. What if I can't serve both?

HENRY

Trust me, you will. And it will be a
wonderful thing.

But Thomas still can't hide the shock from the blow.

THOMAS

I'm honored, sire. But I'm skeptical
we'll secure the necessary approval from
the bishops of England and the monks of
Canterbury.

HENRY

If we can persuade the Pope to allow the
wedding of infants, we can do this.

Henry takes a drink, lets out a laugh.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I can't wait to see their faces.

INT. CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL - DAY

A full cathedral in full splendor. Another star-studded ceremony -
the most important since Henry's coronation. A CHORUS of MONKS'
VOICES swells as--

--we move down a ROW OF BISHOPS' FACES dismayed, disgusted, in
stunned disbelief.

At the ALTAR, he BISHOP OF WINCHESTER conducts the consecration MASS,
THOMAS -wearing only a simple gown - lying prostrate on the floor.

The "archbishop-elect" is surrounded by a dozen ASSISTANT BISHOPS, their many hands laying a heavy GOSPEL BOOK on his chest. Bishop Henry reads from it in Latin.

CLOSE ON - THE MANY HANDS

now touching Thomas on the head along with Bishop Harry.

BISHOP OF WINCHESTER
Receive now the Holy Ghost!

CLOSE ON - THOMAS

now standing so we can see his reluctant expression.

The ROBES of the Archbishop, the same worn by Theobald, are blessed one at a time, then put around Thomas's shoulders.

They weigh heavily on him - his expression burdened with dread, guilt, and apprehension.

BISHOP OF WINCHESTER
May constancy of faith, purity of love,
and sincerity of peace abound in you.

The PASTORAL STAFF is blessed, then put in Thomas's hand.

BISHOP OF WINCHESTER (CONT'D)
That as shepherd of the church, you may
always exercise justice with meekness and
never neglect strictness of discipline
through love of tranquility.

The BISHOP'S RING is blessed, then put on Thomas's finger.

BISHOP OF WINCHESTER (CONT'D)
That you may never forget your fidelity
to the church.

Finally, the BISHOP'S MITER (the pointed hat) is placed on Thomas's head.

BISHOP OF WINCHESTER (CONT'D)
That as the wearer of this helmet of
protection and salvation you may oppose
opponents of truth, and be their sturdy
adversary.

Thomas, in full vestments, climbs the eight steps to the carved-out THRONE OF STONE.

CLOSE ON - HENRY

smiling, having made eye contact with his new archbishop.

INT. ARCHBISHOP'S CHAMBER - DAY

JOHN OF SALISBURY, ALEXANDER LLEWELYN, and the rest of the CHURCHMEN present at the king's coronation are assembled in what was once Theobald's room.

They watch quietly as the STAFF, MITER, and then CEREMONIAL VESTMENTS are removed from THOMAS. His DRESS ROBES are up on him - the Archiepiscopal Cross on his chest.

Thomas looks upon the faces he knows so well. None of them are happy except HERBERT OF BOSHAM, standing among them, clearing his throat to be noticed.

THOMAS

Herbert of Bosham will be joining us from the Chancellery of London. He will be acting for me as I did for Theobald.

ALEXANDER

Letting you down and breaking your heart?

SIMON lets out a burst of laughter, then covers his own mouth. Thomas looks sternly at Alexander.

THOMAS

The Lord is indeed mysterious, Alexander, as he attached so large a mouth to so small a wit.

Thomas extends his RING HAND for Alexander to kiss. Everyone watches to see what he'll do. He kisses the ring, reluctantly.

The churchmen file out. John looks at Thomas, makes an adjustment on his robe so that the cross is straight.

JOHN

It was crooked.

THOMAS

John. I'm still spending much of my time in London. I want you to use this chamber as your own.

JOHN

Your grace. It's not my place.

THOMAS

It should have been.

JOHN

Why? The king isn't my friend.

Thomas smiles. John looks at him for a long moment.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I believe the right man was chosen.

THOMAS

Don't, John. If you hold out hope for me, I'll break your heart. Nothing is more certain.

John smiles, bows respectfully. Thomas grasps his shoulder.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LONDON STREETS - DAY

CROWDS line the streets as HENRY (wearing his crown) and THOMAS (wearing his Archbishopal Dress Robes) ride side by side at the head of the PROCESSION - ELEANOR in an open carriage behind them.

As they reach the PALACE GATES they turn around to face the crowd. They grasp their hands and hold them high over their heads.

The crowd goes wild.

INT. WESTMINSTER PALACE - KING'S CHAMBER - DAY

THOMAS is assisted by his secretary, HERBERT OF BOSHAM, as he presents to HENRY.

THOMAS

These are the tax rolls for the last year.

HENRY

Are we still rich?

THOMAS

Shamefully. And getting richer.

Thomas puts aside the ROLLS OF PARCHMENT, lays down another SET OF DOCUMENTS.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

As you requested, before we set down the customs in written law, I've compiled a list by jurisdictional bishopric of priests, monks, and abbots accused of capital crimes who remain under the protection of the church.

This document the king looks at carefully.

HENRY

Have arrest warrants written and sent to your bishops before our first council.

Henry sits back, looks at Thomas.

HENRY (CONT'D)

"Your bishops." Honestly, Thomas, how can you not love hearing that?

THOMAS

If they were truly mine, I could keep them from raising hell over this.

HENRY

Let them.

(a beat)

Sit down, for God's sake.

Thomas takes a seat with Henry. Herbert leaves.

HENRY (CONT'D)

There are few perfect moments in this wretched life. I hope you're fully enjoying this one.

THOMAS

I am, my lord.

HENRY

Liar. I can see you all tight and controlled.

(mimics a scrunched-up face)

Breathe it in! Live it! It won't last, and you'll despise yourself in the dark times for watching it wisp away.

Thomas offers the king a big wide smile. They both laugh.

INT. CANTERBURY - ARCHBISHOP'S BEDCHAMBER - DAY

CLOSE ON - THOMAS

standing shirtless in a room full of CHURCHMEN - JOHN, ALEXANDER, SIMON, JAMES and HERBERT preparing his VESTMENTS for the formal dressing.

John presents the goat's HAIR SHIRT.

JOHN

To punish your flesh and remind you of your devotion to God, does your grace wish to wear the hair-cloth shirt under your robes?

Thomas looks at John as though he were insane. Alexander snickers.

THOMAS

Have Alexander wear it for me, and write a sermon on its torments.

Thomas raises his arms. John lowers the silken ALB over him.

A finely embroidered ROBE is laid over the alb, then the SHAWL over the robe.

The MITER is brought to Thomas on a pillow by Alexander. Thomas puts it onto his own head takes the long SHEPHERD'S STAFF from Alexander's hand. The dressing is complete.

SIMON

That was the fastest yet.

ALEXANDER

Aye. All that prayer and reverence used to really slow his grace down.

THOMAS

I just had a vision, Alexander - of you under a leaky church roof in Northwest Wales.

Alexander bows his head. John presents the PROCESSIONAL CROSS.

JOHN

Your grace needs to choose someone to have the great honor.

Thomas looks at the faces of his churchmen, some eager to be chosen, some not. Alexander definitely looks away.

INT. WESTMINSTER PALACE - DAY

CLOSE ON - ALEXANDER

carrying the PROCESSIONAL CROSS in front of THOMAS into the COUNCIL OF BISHOPS - not looking at all happy.

The BISHOPS don't look all that happy either, watching the king's chancellor in the robes and miter of the Archbishop.

Thomas takes his place at the focus of the council, JOHN OF SALISBURY by his side. Before he has a chance to speak, BISHOP GILBERT of London rises without permission.

BISHOP GILBERT

(waving a DOCUMENT)

This is an outrage! Surrendering the officers of the church to secular justice is a gross violation of Canon Law!

Gilbert's impertinence sets off an avalanche of unchecked shouting.

BISHOP HILARY

What protection do we have?

BISHOP WILLIAM

Do you expect us to behave as mere subjects of the king?

THOMAS

As you are subjects, I expect--

Thomas is shouted down. More outrage. John whispers to Thomas.

JOHN

May I address the council, your grace?

Thomas waves, "go ahead." John walks out to the center of the of noisy council.

JOHN

You are the violation of Canon Law! Your insolence in this chamber is a mortal crime as you owe your complete allegiance to Thomas Becket, the legally elected Archbishop of Canterbury.

The room is stunned, including Thomas.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Whether you like it or not, you will surrender those criminals you hold to your bosom because defying the order of his grace will put your immortal souls in jeopardy. And I will gladly argue any such suit of excommunication against any one of you to his holiness the Pope himself.

John sits back down. The room remains quiet.

INT. ARCHBISHOP'S BEDCHAMBER - DAY

THOMAS looks closely at JOHN helping him remove his vestments.

THOMAS

That knocked the wind out of them.

JOHN

Every so often they need a good kick. Next time it should be your foot.

THOMAS

You support what I proposed?

John looks at Thomas as though choosing careful words.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

It's me, John. You can speak freely.

JOHN

Thomas... Your grace. We in the church have always had a great deal of influence over the common man. Sheriffs, barons, dukes, and kings covet that influence, and may now accuse any of us of a capital crime.

THOMAS

An accusation is only that.

JOHN

But the words of the powerful are persuasive, and control of the church, desirable - and all but the most courageous and self-sacrificing clergyman will cower at the possibility of being accused - and adjust his sacred mission to serve those who have power.

John takes a long look at Thomas thinking it over.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Thomas. You can't continue to please the king and not bring this house to ruin.

THOMAS

If you believe so, why did you agree to his majesty's request?

JOHN

Because your grace ordered it.

INT. CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL - DAY

A full mass with THOMAS in full vestments, reciting the liturgy in Latin.

CLOSE ON - A PARISHIONER

opening his mouth for the "Body of Christ" - looking at Thomas as though he were the Almighty himself.

The next PARISHIONER does the same - young men, old women, children, rich and poor take the communion from him with faces of full belief.

EXT. CATHEDRAL COURTYARD - DAY

THOMAS steps out from the Archbishopal Palace to find a SMALL CROWD of TOWNSPEOPLE near where his HORSE is held.

TOWNSMAN

(bowing)

Thank you, your grace - for everything you have done with the king, and everything you *will* do with God.

He takes Thomas's hand, kisses his RING.

Thomas moves through the reverence of the others, mounts his horse, sees JOHN watching him from across the courtyard.

He rides over to where John oversees the loading of a wagon - BAGS OF GRAIN - jugs of OIL and WINE - sides of smoked meats.

JOHN

Some barons in Northumberland are starving their tenants into harsher terms of service.

THOMAS

And all this is for their victory banquet?

JOHN

Of course. One works up a hearty appetite grinding one's heel into the neck of a peasant. I trusted your grace would agree to this charity.

Thomas nods, notices John looking at the TOWNSPEOPLE inside the gate.

JOHN (CONT'D)

They look to you, Thomas.

THOMAS

It's the costume. Not me.

JOHN

Yes. And it's a pity.

Thomas spurs his horse, gallops out the gate.

INT. WESTMINSTER PALACE - KING'S CHAMBER - DAY

The end of a long workday. THOMAS and HENRY sit exhausted amidst PARCHMENTS, PENS, and INKWELLS.

HENRY

What so far?

THOMAS

(flipping through pages)
 "Trial procedures..." "Jurisdiction of shire courts..."

HENRY

Easy, safe, and uncontroversial. Nothing that concerns your precious church.

Thomas looks at Henry, takes a new piece of parchment, dips his pen.

THOMAS

All right. What offends us most?

HENRY

Appeals. Every bishop who disagrees with the smallest of rulings takes it all the way to the Pope and it takes forever.

THOMAS

The bishops will tear their hair and pound the floor if they can't go to the holy father.

HENRY

They can. But *only* with the king's permission.

Thomas writes it down.

THOMAS

What if an appeal is against the king, or one he favors?

HENRY

Oh please, Thomas. You know I'd be fair.

THOMAS

But will your son when he's king? Or your grandson?

HENRY

All right, then. What would you suggest to curb the abuse of appeals?

Thomas thinks for a long moment.

THOMAS

Lock the Pope in a closet and carry it back to England. Then, when a bishop wants to appeal, say: "Look, I have the old man right here. What do you say, your holiness? Thumbs up or thumbs down?" That would hasten the process, my lord.

Henry laughs.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

You approve, then.

HENRY

I approve of dropping the holy closet in the English Channel.

THOMAS

As Archbishop of Canterbury, it's perhaps best I not be the one to suggest that remedy.

Henry laughs harder, but sees Thomas has become serious.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

My lord, it's better for us if I'm not the one to propose *any* lessening of church liberty.

HENRY

Are you fearful what your "friends" will think?

THOMAS

You're my friend. Everyone in England knows that. Many resent it.

HENRY

Let them.

THOMAS

If the bishops of England rebel from my authority, we'll *both* lose control of the church.

Thomas sees disappointment in Henry's face.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

However, your majesty, I have an idea.

(rising from table)

Propose in open council some modest restraints on church liberty based on, as you've said, existing, but unwritten English custom. You choose which two or three new laws you want most. Of course the bishops will all whine and moan. But, after they've tired themselves out, you'll win; and the new laws will carry their seals.

HENRY

Then another three laws, another year later?

THOMAS

Possibly sooner.

HENRY

We'll be old men by the time we're through.

THOMAS

I'll be old. You'll be satisfied.

Henry nods with half-hearted enthusiasm.

HENRY

I'll be satisfied, Thomas, only if you send a messenger to your home to order a large meal prepared. I'll notify Sir Reginald Fitz-Urse we're having a banquet, and the king and his archbishop will be needing... *entertainment*.

INT. THOMAS'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A PARTY of MEN, drinking, eating, shouting, kissing, and fondling of half-naked WOMEN.

THOMAS descends the stairs in his dress robes. REGINALD FITZ-URSE stands and shouts.

FITZ-URSE

Watch your words and cover your ladies, knights! The church his here!

HENRY guffaws with laughter.

FITZ-URSE (CONT'D)
What's it going to be, priest?

The room quiets to listen.

THOMAS
In matters of pleasure, let it be known I
strictly follow the word of our Lord.
(BOOS and HISSES)
I judge not, lest I be judged. And the
moment I am without sin, I will certainly
cast the first stone.
(LAUGHTER and CLAPPING)
Until then, I will retire to my chamber
so that I may hear the confession of any
sweet soul who longs for absolution.

Thomas winks to a YOUNG WOMAN (the same he was with before) sitting
on the lap of a knight.

FITZ-URSE
Hear my appeal first, Archbishop!
(Thomas stops)
Why, in Heaven's name, does your holy
church need so much earthly land? Why
should my neighbor, Bishop William,
control a hundred hide and myself barely
one?

THOMAS
Charity, my good knight. Our acres feed
the poor. But I promise you, Sir
Reginald, if your fortunes should ever
turn, I will fill your begging bowl
myself.

Henry guffaws with laughter, slaps Fitz-Urse on the back. Thomas
climbs the stairs to his room.

FITZ-URSE
Perhaps if there wasn't so much charity,
there wouldn't be so many poor.

Cheers of agreement in the room. Thomas stops on the balcony.

THOMAS
This is a cruel truth, knight. We are
not a cruel kingdom.

HENRY
Neither are we cruel to our friends who
bring us such bounty. Perhaps your
church, Thomas, can part with a few
acres, here and there, for gratitude.

Henry raises his cup to Thomas who nods uneasily to his king.

INT. THOMAS'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

The YOUNG WOMAN from the party throws herself on THOMAS in a passionate embrace. He kisses her with an angry vigor - a man trying to put his mind somewhere else.

In the dim candlelight, they roll onto the bed; soon skin to skin. But what should accelerate, slows to a stop.

YOUNG WOMAN
What is it, my lord? Too much drink?

Thomas kisses her again in a frustrated attempt. But it is no use. He holds her, looks at her, his hands tense with emotion.

THOMAS
Think of the time we were last together,
and tell his majesty it was tonight.

She looks at him curiously, disappointed. He grabs a PURSE OF COINS, rolls it tightly into her hand.

INT. CLARENDON - GREAT HALL - DAY

A rustic hunting lodge holds a tightly packed council, and the WHISPERS and MURMURS of angry bishops.

INSERT CARD:

Council of Clarendon - January 17, 1164

THOMAS and HENRY sit across the long room from each other in full vestments and regalia while two dozen ENGLISH BISHOPS crowd around reading from (and gasping over) a single PARCHMENT.

Thomas throws Henry an "I told you so" glance.

BISHOP WILLIAM
A bishop may not appeal to the Pope
without permission from the king?

BISHOP HILARY
And no baron or tenant-in-chief may be
excommunicated without the king's prior
consent?

Henry rubs his head as though it already ached. JOHN OF SALISBURY glares at Thomas, but stays silent.

BISHOP WILLIAM
Your highness, it renders our single
defense inert! Unusable!

THOMAS
It only makes it difficult. As it should
be to prevent abuse.

ALEXANDER

(whispers)

His grace would be so proud today.

Thomas looks sharply at Alexander, rises to speak.

THOMAS

None of these laws is new! They are only three of many customs practiced in the time of our grandfathers, neglected under the rule of a weak king. Now that we have a strong king--

BISHOP WILLIAM

--We need a strong church!

More SHOUTING, defiance from the bishops. Henry boils over.

HENRY

Give it to me!

An ATTENDANT brings the PARCHMENT over to Henry. He tears it up angrily, throwing the pieces on the ground.

A HUSH of relief. The room is silent.

HENRY (CONT'D)

(livid)

The customs of England are the foundation of this kingdom. Before we can proceed a moment further, we need to establish and secure your complete and total allegiance to this foundation.

John looks to Thomas uneasily, as though he could see where this was going.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Therefore, I humbly demand that all present offer his solemn oath to obey, honor, and to live by these very customs as I trust they've been obeying, honoring, and living by them all these years.

A whisper of uncertainty. John stands to speak.

JOHN

Which customs, your majesty? There are many, and many changed over time, and many contradicting each other.

HENRY

That's why we're here. To put an end to that confusion.

JOHN

But how can we be sure we're not putting our sacred oath to some obscure custom long forgotten?

THOMAS
Because we trust our king.

JOHN
Then, as the humble secretary to the Archbishop, let me be the first to offer my full allegiance to the customs of England.

Thomas relaxes. Henry appears satisfied.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Excepting those that may conflict with my duty to God.

The great hall is dead quiet.

HENRY
I'm confused, John of Salisbury. How can your obedience be "full" yet have an exception?

JOHN
If your new laws are consistent with our duties, there will be no contradiction.

Henry simmers, looks from John to Thomas. BISHOP ROGER of York notices the dissension, rises quickly to speak.

BISHOP ROGER
My lord, I am prepared to offer my full allegiance to any and all customs of the realm, without exception.

BISHOP GILBERT also rises - won't be outdone.

BISHOP GILBERT
The See of London offers the same, your majesty.

All eyes turn to Thomas now, including Henry's, his look saying "Don't let me down."

HENRY
Your grace...? What say you?

THOMAS
I commit my full allegiance to the customs of England.

JOHN
(whispers)
Thomas. Don't.

THOMAS
Without exception.

HENRY
 (to the bishops)
 So says the Archbishop of Canterbury, the
 primate of England. Is there any among
 his suffragan bishops who put condition
 on their allegiance?

The BISHOPS shake their heads, mumble "no."

HENRY (CONT'D)
 Today, in England, the state and the
 church are wedded - unified and
 harmonious. All that remains to
 consummate this marriage is for each
 bishop to put his seal on a new document
 which we will now write and lay before
 you.

Henry rises from his throne, motions Thomas to leave with him.

INT. CLARENDON LODGE - GREAT HALL - DAY

The once crowded hall is now empty.

THOMAS stares at a PARCHMENT filled with writing and crowded with WAX
 SEALS. HENRY relaxes with a cup of ale.

HENRY
 Oh, Thomas. It doesn't get better than
 this. What you thought would take years
 was achieved in a day; and now we control
 our destiny. Thank you.

Thomas's secretary, HERBERT OF BOSHAM, puts a ball of RED WAX into a
 steaming cup of water.

HENRY (CONT'D)
 I couldn't have done it without you.
 Though I could have done without your
 impertinent friend John.

Herbert takes the wax ball from the water, shakes it dry and puts it
 on the document. He brings the METAL SEAL to Thomas's hand.

HENRY (CONT'D)
 Hurry with that. There's good hunting in
 these woods.

Henry notices Thomas not putting the seal down into the wax. Thomas
 looks to Herbert who leaves.

HENRY (CONT'D)
 The wax will cool and harden, Thomas.
 Lay down your seal.

THOMAS
 If I do, my lord, his holiness the Pope
 will excommunicate me.

Henry sits up to look at Thomas, then lets out a laugh.

HENRY

Oh, Thomas. Don't trouble yourself. He'll never go against you because he'll never go against me. Without my support, he knows he's nothing - an Italian priest!

THOMAS

With this, he'll have no choice. He'll have to strike back.

Henry finally looks at Thomas, sees this is very real.

HENRY

It's a risk a subject takes for his king.
(rises angrily)
My God, Thomas. Are you the same man who raced across a battlefield to save me?

THOMAS

As I would again, my lord, I swear. I'd sooner die in your presence than be banished from it.

HENRY

That priest has no power over whom I choose to put in front of me!

THOMAS

You couldn't be seen with your friend damned to hell by holy writ! The moment you did, you'd feel your power slip away. My lord, I beg you. Let this go without my seal.

HENRY

Thomas. This is outrageous! How could I *be seen* with a friend who openly disobeyed me?

THOMAS

Because we won't present it that way. It's a brief procedural disagreement that will never be spoken of again, and be soon forgotten. Your laws will be obeyed all the while, and then forever more.

HENRY

It's feigned allegiance! I've never known such a thing.

THOMAS

I have. Please trust me, my lord. I know these politics. It's the only way to negotiate an impassible strait.

Henry says nothing else, watches Thomas take the hard WAX BALL off the document.

INT. CLARENDON - GREAT HALL - NIGHT

ELEANOR leans over the same document and the waxy spot where Thomas's seal should have been. She is livid.

ELEANOR
You let him leave?

HENRY
Did you expect me to cling to his gown?

ELEANOR
Arrest him!

HENRY
Arrest *Thomas*?

ELEANOR
As you would any man who disobeyed his weak and sentimental king.

HENRY
It's not him! Don't you see? It's that churchman John, whispering in his ear. Undermining him. Turning his head away.

ELEANOR
My poor Henry. It's Thomas Becket who whispers in *your* ear. Every night. From *my* pillow.

Eleanor stares coldly at Henry, let's it penetrate.

INT. CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL - DAY

A full cathedral. MONKS sing VESPERS for the assembled masses.

INT. ARCHBISHOP'S RECTORY - DAY

JOHN silently helps THOMAS dressing for Mass - brings each VESTMENT to him.

THOMAS
Say it, John.

JOHN
What, your grace?

THOMAS
What you're thinking. How the king's new laws will bring this house to ruin.

JOHN
They put a wall around us. They bind our hands and leave us at the mercy of those who would destroy our mission, raid our property, and cast away our good works.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

They set England adrift from Christendom,
and leave the faithful of our country
with only a king to hear their prayers.

Thomas exhales, stares ahead as he listens to the vespers.

THOMAS

I've always been able to make peace.

JOHN

Then make it, your grace. Put your seal
on the Constitutions of Clarendon,
indulge yourself in a lavish celebration
with the king in your opulent house, then
face the Pope's excommunication like a
man.

Thomas doesn't so much as smile at the joke.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Or you could always take the radical step
of siding with the church you're sworn to
protect; and fight these laws with every
fiber in your soul.

(looking at Thomas)

And let go a friendship that was merely
the instrument of your true calling.

THOMAS

It was never my calling, John.

John gives Thomas the MITER (bishop's headpiece) to put on his own
head.

A BANGING on the cathedral door. COMMOTION outside.

EXT. CATHEDRAL COURTYARD - DAY

THOMAS comes out half-dressed in his vestments to see FOUR KNIGHTS:
REGINALD FITZ-URSE, still mounted, the other three recognizable from
the banquets at Thomas's house.

FITZ-URSE

Where is John of Salisbury?!

THOMAS

Preparing for services. What is this?

FITZ-URSE

(reading from parchment)

For the crime of subversion and
conspiracy against the king and the laws
of England, John of Salisbury is hereby
banished from the realm by order of his
majesty, Henry, King of England.

(to Thomas)

You remember *him*.

Fitz-Urse motions the knights to go inside. Thomas blocks the door.

THOMAS

If you enter a house of God for such purposes, I will damn your souls to hell!

FITZ-URSE

Without the king's permission, Thomas Becket, you can't excommunicate a dog.

The knights move again, but Thomas strikes with his fists, knocking down one, stealing his SWORD and swinging it towards Fitz-Urse, who rears back to avoid the blade.

JOHN

Your grace!

JOHN comes out, along with several TOWNSPEOPLE who have seen their archbishop wielding the sword. John grasps his friend's hand, takes the sword from him.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Not here, Thomas.

THOMAS

In Sens, France. Go there. I'll send word to the Pope you're coming.

John nods "yes," mounts a horse brought to him by Alexander. Thomas watches helplessly as John rides out the gate surrounded by the four knights.

EXT. ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

THOMAS rides as fast as he can down a snowy road.

INT. WESTMINSTER PALACE - GREAT HALL - NIGHT

THOMAS walks angrily through dark halls, his face snow-flecked and frozen, coming into the great hall where a long table has been set for men who have eaten and left.

Only HENRY remains, eating alone, his back to Thomas coming in.

If there was any anger left in Thomas, it dissipates here.

HENRY

I was expecting you might show up. Your old room has been prepared. You can stay tonight.

Thomas stands there, looking at his back.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I dismissed them all for boring me to death.

Henry finally turns around, looks at Thomas standing there.

HENRY (CONT'D)
 Sit down. Warm yourself up. There's
 plenty here. There's always plenty.

THOMAS
 Your majesty. Recall your order against
 John.

The king just looks at him. Thomas sits down across from him.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 Please.

Henry nods halfheartedly, goes back to eating.

HENRY
 I miss you, Thomas.

THOMAS
 I'm here, my lord.

HENRY
 Are you?
 (a beat)
 Word spread quickly among your bishops.
 Thomas Becket refused to put his seal on
 the king's laws. Now they all want to
 peel off their own. Some are already
 scribbling appeals to the Pope. It's a
 mess, all because--

Henry throws down his food.

HENRY (CONT'D)
 We had it in our hands, Thomas, and you
 let it go.

THOMAS
 My lord, I know a way the bishops can be
 brought back to us like dogs jumping for
 a bone.

HENRY
How? With what bone?

Thomas takes of his ARCHIEPISCOPAL RING, holds it out to Henry.

THOMAS
 They all want this.

HENRY
 What are you saying?

THOMAS
 That this thing you've given me is
 keeping us apart, and will tear down
 everything we've built together. Please,
 your majesty, I appeal to you as king;
 let me relinquish it and be what I was.

Henry nods gradually, holds Thomas's hand.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

The Pope will not likely object, but I will still need to see him, then come home and help you choose my successor.

EXT. ENGLISH CHANNEL - DAY

A small BOAT on choppy water is pulled onto a sandy beach by its CREW. HERBERT OF BOSHAM and ALEXANDER stumble off, kiss the sand.

THOMAS steps calmly off the boat, walks past them up the shore.

EXT. FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

THOMAS rides at the head of this small delegation of ALEXANDER and HERBERT. He stops at seeing someone ahead on the road.

A lone horseman. JOHN OF SALISBURY. Thomas rides up to him, but sees he's none too happy.

JOHN

If the rumors are true, your grace, please turn around.

THOMAS

There's no other way to bring you home.

JOHN

Then leave me here! Whispers of your resignation have already reached the pricked ears of certain bishops. The wolves rushed here to present themselves.

THOMAS

Who? Which ones?

INT. PALACE OF THE POPE - SENS, FRANCE - DAY

CLOSE ON - BISHOP GILBERT and BISHOP ROGER

bow their heads to the episcopal throne, directly across from THOMAS and JOHN. The POPE stares at them all, his eyes coming to rest on Thomas.

POPE

Our noble Archbishop of Canterbury. I trust you had a pleasant journey here.

Thomas sees there's no love lost between them.

THOMAS

Yes, your holiness.

POPE

To what do I owe the pleasure of this visit?

Thomas reaches for his ARCHIEPISCOPAL RING, then notices Bishops Roger and Gilbert staring at it like hungry wolves.

POPE (CONT'D)

Is there something you wish to say to me outside the company of your English brethren?

THOMAS

Yes, your holiness. Considering our station, a private audience would be appropriate.

The Pope waves his hand. John, Bishop Roger, and Bishop Gilbert reluctantly leave.

Thomas stands alone before the Pope who smiles.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Your holiness, I am not a pious man and have never pretended to be. My election was forced. I'm not right nor fit for this office. Humbly I ask you to accept my resignation.

Thomas puts forward the ring. The Pope just looks at it.

POPE

How are the bride and groom? Still fed from the spoon?

Thomas doesn't answer.

POPE (CONT'D)

You and your king have crushed me. My blessing for that marriage was forced and has been a black stain on my reputation. Now there are rumors of discord in your London palace; and you are here, begging for relief.

(he smiles)

Don't you see the beauty of it? The symmetry? Only I have the power to accept your resignation. I am choosing to refuse it.

The Pope looks closely at Thomas's reaction - seems to enjoy it.

POPE (CONT'D)

You are the Archbishop of Canterbury and shall remain so until the day you die.

THOMAS

Your holiness, please. The king is expecting me--

POPE

--The king is not your lord! I am.

(a beat)

And you, Thomas Becket, are a servant in my manor.

THOMAS

Then, I will return to England as your servant, and convey to his majesty--

POPE

--You will convey *nothing*, not a word.

The Pope rises from his Papal Throne, stares down at Thomas.

POPE (CONT'D)

I am ordering you and your traveling party to be sequestered here in France, at the Abbey of Pontigny.

(he smiles)

My son, you need to be separated from temptation, conflict, and the base pleasures of this world. You need time to reflect, and to meditate, and to pray.

Thomas barely stands, the wind kicked out of him.

POPE

I wonder what your friend will think of it.

EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - DAY

It is freezing outside but HENRY doesn't feel the bite of the cold as he paces in front of BISHOP GILBERT and BISHOP ROGER, just arrived.

HENRY

You're lying! He *couldn't* have!

BISHOP GILBERT

He did, your majesty. He remains in France under the protection of his holiness.

HENRY

Liar!

BISHOP GILBERT

(waving a LETTER)

The Pope's own words say he is.

Henry grabs Bishop Gilbert by his robe, throws him and his letter down to the snowy ground.

BISHOP ROGER

Your majesty.

(stepping over Gilbert)

(MORE)

BISHOP ROGER (CONT'D)

It was clear to all of us there that Thomas Becket *never* intended to resign his post as he promised you. He insisted on a private audience with the pontiff where he conspired behind closed doors--

BISHOP GILBERT

(brushing himself off)
--using his position as Chancellor to undermine your authority--

ELEANOR

He will not!

Eleanor standing in the colonnade, watching Henry stand there, writhing on his feet like a jilted lover.

HENRY

(difficult)
He is...no longer Chancellor. He is no longer welcome in England.

BISHOP GILBERT

But, your majesty. He is Archbishop of Canterbury. You can't take that away.

HENRY

His title remains. But his realm--

Henry waves his hand, no longer able to hold his composure. Bishop Gilbert looks to Roger, uncertain of the meaning.

But Roger has no uncertainty.

INT. SALTWOOD CASTLE - NIGHT

The DUKE OF CORNWALL stands at the head of a long table, LEICESTER at the opposite end - the sides lined with others we recognize as disgruntled NOBLEMEN.

CORNWALL

God has blessed us with a lovers' quarrel. The king is wounded, and in no mood to protect anything that reminds him of the man who broke his heart.

LAUGHTER at the table. Leicester unrolls a large MAP OF ENGLAND on the table in front of the nobles - puts his pudgy finger on "Canterbury."

LEICESTER

Canterbury's holdings have grown plump, and should be the first eaten.

EXT. CANTERBURY COURTYARD - DAY

SIMON oversees the loading of BAGS OF GRAIN and SIDES OF MEAT onto wagons when the THUNDER OF HORSES can be heard approaching.

The MONKS stop loading food, look to Simon.

INT. CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL - DAY

JAMES is performing a MASS when he hears SHOUTING and CRYING outside. He moves down the central aisle, sees outside:

NOBLEMEN commandeering the horses and wagons, throwing everything of value into the wagons, herding LIVESTOCK out through the gates while--
--the CANTERBURY CHURCHMEN are herded with whips into the center of the courtyard. James rushes out to help, but is quickly overpowered, thrown in with the others.

EXT. CHURCH FIELDS - DAY

PEASANTS harvest the wheat with swinging scythes until a ROW OF KNIGHTS gallops across the field, sending them running for their lives.

A MONK stands his ground with his blade - but is quickly killed by the swinging sword.

EXT. PORT OF SANDWICH - DAY

JAMES, SIMON and a dozen or so CANTERBURY CHURCHMEN are pushed down the dock, WHIPS cracking at their backs as they are literally thrown into a RICKETY OLD BOAT.

SIMON lands in the icy water, flounders to the CHEERS of the NOBLEMEN. James pulls him into the boat as it pushes off from shore.

NOBLEMAN #1
Bon voyage, priests!

NOBLEMAN #2
When you see your archbishop, kiss his ring for me.

EXT. ABBEY OF PONTIGNY - DAY

Wearing monastic robes now, THOMAS and JOHN swing scythes in the field along with the abbey MONKS, also harvesting wheat. It's beautiful and idyllic, and Thomas couldn't be angrier.

THOMAS
This is what the Pope wanted, all along. *

John looks at him ripping the scythe over the wheat. *

THOMAS (CONT'D) *
For there to be a division between Henry *
and me. *
(swinging the scythe) *
As long as England is split *

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)
 (swinging again)
 his holiness has power over it.

*
 *

JOHN
 How very holy of him.

CLOSE ON - BUNDLES OF WHEAT

being tied by THOMAS and JOHN - one after another.

EXT. ABBEY MILL - DAY

THOMAS and JOHN carry the BUNDLES from the field and stack them in the mill, then march back to get more.

INT. ABBEY OF PONTIGNY - GREAT HALL - DAY

The end of a long, hard day. ROWS of MONKS pack benches, slurping and groaning, eating a LIQUIDY GRUEL - supertime at the abbey.

THOMAS and JOHN sit tight among them. Thomas lifts the wooden spoon to his lips, but can't bring it any further.

INT. ABBEY DORMITORY - NIGHT

THOMAS and JOHN sleep on STRAW MATTRESSES in the corner of a floor crowded with SNORING MONKS.

THOMAS
 (whispers)
 John. Will you hear my confession?

JOHN
 Speak, my son. What troubles you?

THOMAS
 I'm filled with an unholy desire for my soft London bed. I long for good food, the fun of a banquet, and the company of vulgar men. And vulgar women. Everyday and night, I dream of sin.

While Thomas is speaking, John notices that ALEXANDER has entered the dormitory, desperate and disturbed. John sits up. Thomas stops speaking.

INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

THOMAS sits on his straw mattress before JAMES and the other banished CHURCHMEN of Canterbury.

JAMES
 The lashes from the whip became inflamed. We purchased a cart to carry Simon here, but he succumbed to fever on the road.

THOMAS

Who remains in Canterbury?

JAMES

The monks of Christ Church are surviving on winter stores. But all our lands have been seized by the Broc family. Throughout England, the king has done nothing to protect the church.

JOHN

The bishops have no defense! They can't excommunicate these pirates without the king's permission!

Thomas nods, deep in thought.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You need to strike back, your grace. With *everything*.

THOMAS

The punishment has already been rendered.

The churchmen look at each other. What?

THOMAS (CONT'D)

With this act, the king has lost himself the people of England - the people who loved him, and were his only protection against the noble families. That I were there to have advised him differently.

JOHN

You're dismissed, Thomas. He doesn't want you there anymore.

THOMAS

I could've prevented that, too.

EXT. ABBEY OF PONTIGNY - GRAVEYARD - DAY

THOMAS deep in a hole, digging a GRAVE while the others watch. ALEXANDER moves to help, but JOHN stops him, shakes his head.

CLOSE ON - SIMON'S BODY

wrapped tightly with cloth and lowered in.

EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - DAY

HENRY and his twelve year-old son HENRY do battle with WOODEN SWORDS while ELEANOR watches with eleven year-old RICHARD in her lap.

HENRY

It's not simply blocking and thrusting, boy.

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

Look at your enemy - yes, that's me! -
anticipate my moves, look far ahead to
wield the death blow.

Henry knocks the boy's sword high in the air, then lays him down with
the wooden point.

Approaching from the palace, the DUKES of CORNWALL and LEICESTER.

HENRY (CONT'D)

What's this? Didn't I order them to wait
in my chamber?

The king and queen exchange a bothered glance.

MOMENTS LATER

the Dukes are there filling the air with complaint. *

CORNWALL

Your majesty, we're not pretending to be
paupers, nor do we wish to live as ones.
But I too have a son to whom I wish to
pass my dukedom.

DUKE OF LEICESTER

And you have surpluses in your royal
treasury. *

HENRY

Because *I* have armies keeping order in
Wales, Kent, and Northumberland! If any
of you gentlemen would join your king, I
wouldn't have to purchase soldiers!

Young RICHARD pushes his wooden sword into Cornwall's belly.

CORNWALL grabs the toy sword as though he might break it. He catches
the king's stark glance, pushes it away.

CORNWALL

Our knights will join your majesty, as
soon as their obligations allow. *

Cornwall and Leicester stare long at the king. They bow, then head
toward their horses.

HENRY

Thomas and I could have cut them to their
knees without lifting our swords. *

ELEANOR

Our life is this now. There's no going
back to how it was when he was here.

HENRY

Madame. I've already reconciled myself
to ruling alone.

ELEANOR

Then why do you keep his home furnished
and attended?

HENRY

For when I may wish to use it myself.

ELEANOR

It looks weak, Henry. They think you're
waiting for his return.

Henry stares at the two noblemen riding out the gate.

HENRY

Let them.

EXT. FRENCH VILLAGE - DAY

THOMAS and JOHN distribute LOAVES OF BREAD to VILLAGERS and PEASANTS
trying their best to keep the loaves dry.

John notices the people whispering to each other, pointing at Thomas.

JOHN

They're talking about you.

John speaks to them in French. They shout long sentences, point
again to Thomas.

JOHN (CONT'D)

They've heard: you're the man who traded
the riches of a prince and the friendship
of a king for the plain life of a monk.

THOMAS

Traded? At the point of the Pope's
sword.

Thomas looks at the awed and expectant eyes in the crowd.

JOHN

Don't spoil a good myth with the truth.
(he grins)
You have a following, Thomas.

THOMAS

I count twelve.

John raises an eyebrow at that. Thomas opens another bag of bread.

EXT. FRENCH VILLAGE - DAY

CLOSE ON - COVERED BODIES

carried out from a CHURCH to an open BURIAL PIT in the yard. On
their horses nearby, THOMAS looks icily at JOHN.

JOHN

There aren't enough priests. With the pestilence, too many are buried without last rites - without hope of Heaven.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Mats double as beds in this overcrowded church hospital. The room reverberates with crying, moaning. The smell is ghastly for anyone just walking in.

THOMAS ritually performs the last rites in Latin with the confidence of someone doing this for the first time.

PATIENT

Thank you, father.

As Thomas finishes with one dying patient - old, young, women, and children - a VILLAGER rushes him to the next most urgent.

Finally there is a SMALL GIRL, perhaps seven years old.

The villager shakes the child's shoulder, shouts in French to wake her; but she can't be wakened.

The Villager quickly leads Thomas to the next patient, but Thomas stays looking at the girl who seems only to be sleeping.

Her face is covered and she is carried quickly out of the room.

An OLD MAN touches Thomas's hand - his face covered with pox.

OLD MAN

Father. Please.

Thomas again administers last rites in Latin.

EXT. FRENCH COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

THOMAS and JOHN ride quietly along the road.

JOHN

My lord, is your saddle comfortable?

Thomas throws a nasty glance.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I was concerned this long ride might be chafing your skin. How about your arm? Is it worn and aching?

John makes the "last rites" *motion of the cross*.

THOMAS

Not too worn to knock you off your horse.

*

They keep riding quietly.

FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD

they come to a CROSSROAD where a long LINE OF PEOPLE are traveling. John and Thomas pass alongside these REFUGEES, in their direction.

TRAVELER #1

Kind sirs. Would we find the Abbey of Pontigny down this road?

THOMAS

(slowing his horse)

Yes. Less than a mile. You're from England?

TRAVELER #1

The only part of England I call home is ahead of me.

TRAVELER #2

It's become a cruel country, sir. The noblemen have unleashed their wrath on the people, and taken revenge on the Holy Church.

TRAVELER #2

But the Archbishop of Canterbury is at the end of this road.

John raises an eyebrow to Thomas.

THOMAS

His grace, Thomas Becket, is exiled. What do you hope he'll do when you see him?

TRAVELER #1

Fair, sir. We know him to be a great man. He will tell us what to do.

John looks again to Thomas, then back to the crowd.

JOHN

More than a dozen, wouldn't you say?

Thomas gallops forward down the road. The line of REFUGEES seems endless.

EXT. ABBEY OF PONTIGNY - DAY

JOHN follows THOMAS riding into the grounds of the ABBEY where REFUGEES have already arrived and settled.

He dismounts his horse among them, but no one knows who he is. They are a ragged lot, tending to their tired and sick children and elderly, holding their hands out desperately to passing MONKS.

JOHN

Thomas. They're here for you. Say something.

THOMAS

Whatever I say here will surely get back
to the king.

John looks at him, exasperated. But Thomas is not unmoved by the presence of so many desperate people, and the sight of more coming in. He stops a passing MONK.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Have the abbot feed them from our purse;
have him announce the Archbishop is taken
ill and will see them when he can.

The monk nods, runs off.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

He's lost control of his kingdom, John;
and *this* is the consequence. An open
wound bleeding into France.

(looking at people)

It will only get worse... I have to make
him understand this: he needs me home.

*
*
*

Thomas stands there thinking, then looks at John.

*

INT. WESTMINSTER PALACE - GREAT HALL - DAY

ALEXANDER stands before HENRY and ELEANOR. The young churchman is nervous; the king and queen do nothing to make him feel otherwise.

HENRY

He wants me to have my son Henry crowned
king in my lifetime?

ALEXANDER

And soon, your majesty. His grace
believes an early coronation will
discourage those "adventurous noblemen"
who might lay claim to your succession.

Alexander keeps his head lowered, glances up to see how the royal couple are taking this.

ELEANOR

(whispers)

He's right... Even a thousand miles away
he knows how to manipulate.

HENRY

Because he knows the customs of England
dictate that *only* the Archbishop of
Canterbury may perform the coronation of
an English King!

ALEXANDER

Aye, and his grace allowed me to inform your majesty he'd be more than willing to come here and perform this service - if you would be so kind as to invite him home. And me. And John.

HENRY

Tell your Thomas I had already thought of his clever remedy, but didn't feel it worth rewarding one who'd betrayed me.

ALEXANDER

Ahem... Your majesty, if I may. As I've known his grace for many years, it is my firm opinion that he would sooner betray his God than his king.

HENRY

I will consider his offer, as you should consider rowing quickly back to France.

Alexander bows, then bows again, then leaves. Henry stands, circles his chair, brooding. He stops, thinks of something.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Is it a custom of *England* that Canterbury crown a new king, or a custom of the church?

ELEANOR

My lord, it's whatever you decide.

Henry nods, a smile rising on his face.

INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - DAY

A full CORONATION CEREMONY. Swelling CHORUS. An overdressed NOBILITY. YOUNG HENRY - fifteen years old now - is robed and seated on the throne.

The royal SCEPTER and ORB are put into his hand (the latter he fumbles and nearly drops). Finally, the CROWN comes, but it is not held by Thomas, the Archbishop of Canterbury. It is

BISHOP ROGER OF YORK

who lowers the crown onto young Henry's head.

In the audience, ELEANOR grasps HENRY's hand at the moment of crowning. He smiles with satisfaction.

EXT. PALACE OF THE POPE - DAY

CLOSE ON - THE POPE

simmering with anger. THOMAS stands before him.

POPE

A great insult has been delivered to you.

THOMAS

A brilliant insult, your holiness. Having Roger of York perform my sacred duty was inspired treachery. Part of me wishes I'd been the one to recommend it.

POPE

It's *your* duty to respond harshly on behalf of the holy church - to those who took part, and those who continue to injure us.

THOMAS

Your holiness, please consider. If I excommunicate Henry, reconciliation will be forever impossible.

The Pope looks as though he happily couldn't care less.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Perhaps this harsh action would best come from someone "higher" in the church.

POPE

It will come from you, Thomas Becket. You are my bishop, and this is my order. Your immortal soul will hang in the fire if you refuse.

Thomas stands there, staring at the man.

INT. MONASTIC CHURCH - VÉZELAY - DAY

The church is crowded with PILGRIMS, MONKS, and NUNS craning their necks, standing on tip-toe to see the Archbishop of Canterbury light another CANDLE.

THOMAS holds the lit candle out in front of him.

THOMAS

Bishop Roger of York. For performing the sacred coronation against the established rights of Canterbury, you are hereby cast out from the holy church and doomed to eternal damnation.

Thomas turns the candle upside down, then throws it to the floor. A faint gasp in the church. JOHN helps Thomas light another candle.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Ranulf de Broc, for laying hands on the possessions of Canterbury, you are hereby cast out from the holy church and doomed to eternal damnation.

He inverts the candle and throws it down on the floor where we follow it down to see

DOZENS OF CANDLES

extinguished and laid about like bones on a plate.

Thomas lights one more candle - holds it lit for a long moment. He looks into the flame as though directly at the king.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Henry... for surrendering the English church to its enemies, and letting them lay it to ruin, you are hereby...

(he stares at the flame)

...warned. If there is any hope for your eternal soul, you must embrace us as your friend and equal.

Thomas lifts the lit candle and places it in the holder above him.

EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - NIGHT

HENRY angrily mounts his HORSE while a KNIGHT runs alongside him.

KNIGHT

Your majesty. You musn't go out there. They're armed and angry.

HENRY

Open the gates!

KNIGHT

You can't be in the presence of the excommunicated!

Henry spurs his horse, rides quickly to the GATES that open to reveal

A MASS OF NOBLEMEN - holding TORCHES, feverishly waving PARCHMENT PAPERS like bidders on a trading floor.

CORNWALL

Your majesty, under Article Four of your Constitutions, I request your permission to appeal this judgement to the Pope.

More shouting and waving of parchment. Henry rides his horse into the center of the noble mob.

HENRY

I can't have half my government leaving England!

CORNWALL

We have lost all authority in our manors and holdings. We cannot take the holy communion.

LEICESTER

God forbid, if any one of us should die while the order remains, we will be damned to hell.

Henry seizes an EXCOMMUNICATION ORDER from a flailing hand.

HENRY

This is not God's word! It is nothing more than the childish scribbling of a frustrated priest!

CORNWALL

An evermore popular priest.

LEICESTER

Why were you spared, your majesty?

CORNWALL

There are rumors this was planned!

LEICESTER

There are rumors your conflict with the archbishop is pretend.

Henry circles his horse, sees there are rumor-believing faces in the crowd.

He rears his horse back gallops off into the dark streets of London.

INT. THOMAS'S HOUSE - NIGHT

HENRY is alone in Thomas's dark house. He looks at the place exactly the way Thomas left it. The table where they ate and worked and had banquets - all the fine furnishings he gave to Thomas.

He seems to be remembering every good moment he had there until he turns around and we follow him out the door--

EXT. THOMAS'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

--where the HOUSE is now surrounded by the excommunicated NOBLEMEN and their knights.

HENRY

Take it! It's yours!

The house is invaded. The king rides away, then turns around to see the house looted by the torch-wielding nobles and knights.

Henry sits there alone, outside the crowd, watching rolled-up CARPETS and TAPESTRIES, FURNITURE, and PRECIOUS TABLEWARE being taken from the house as the glow of a FIRE rises inside.

INT. PONTIGNY - BEDCHAMBER - DAY (DAWN)

THOMAS sits on his bed, listening to JOHN with his head down.

JOHN

Take it as good news, your grace. You no longer have any material possessions to weigh down of your immortal soul.

THOMAS

Roll up your tongue, John, before you trip on it. Again.

(a beat)

I'm ready to speak with the people on the subject of our king.

EXT. ABBEY OF PONTIGNY - DAY

THOMAS makes his way to the edge of the roof overlooking the encampment crowded with REFUGEES rising for the day. Some see him, but regard him curiously.

THOMAS

(shouting)

Many of you have waited weeks to see Thomas Becket, the man who wielded the sword of excommunication over the island of England.

(random CHEERS in the crowd, everyone looking now)

The man who brought to their knees those of noble birth who would purchase the favor of holy bishops with the very gold they plundered from the holy church! The man who, with that sword, severed the bonds of communion with God from those who lay to ruin your only hope and protection in this life.

(silence, anticipation)

I am that man!

The crowd ROARS. Thomas seems overwhelmed by the power of it.

INT. DORMITORY - CONTINUOUS

A lone MONK quickly writes down every word Thomas is saying on a ROLLED PARCHMENT.

BACK TO SCENE

THOMAS (CONT'D)

I stand here today filled with anger and a desire to bring that holy sword down on the neck of our king.

(more CHEERS)

But let me resist.

(MORE)

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Let me remember that I love his majesty,
and am a witness to his true heart. He
is *not our enemy*. His place is with us
fighting those dukes and earls who, many
years ago, held and bounced him on their
knees - and now wish to again.

INT. KING'S BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

HENRY sits on his bed, the same ROLLED PARCHMENT in his hand.

HENRY

(reading)

"I ask my friend and king not to be their
noble instrument, but to draw his own
sword against them, so that I need not
lift mine again."

(a beat)

He spared me. Twice.

ELEANOR

Send him a thank you.

Henry looks up from the parchment into ELEANOR's face, tight with
anger.

HENRY

You are a cold woman. I want to see him.

ELEANOR

Henry. No.

HENRY

He can't be ignored! There were
thousands there, all hanging on his every
word. The dog is his to hold.

ELEANOR

He can't be trusted not turn it on us.

HENRY

He *hasn't*. As long as he's away, they
keep coming. The clever move is to
reconcile. He's given me the
opportunity.

Henry looks at his reluctant queen.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Why are you fighting what makes perfect
sense?

ELEANOR

Because it sickens me to imagine you once
again his boy.

*

Henry throws her a sharp stare. Eleanor takes his hand in hers.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
 Bring him home cautiously, if not coolly.
 Don't ever let him feel safe, or he will
 take the advantage. And if you value
 having a head on your neck, don't let
 your noblemen see you offer him the "kiss
 of peace."

EXT. FRENCH COUNTRY ROAD - DAY (DAWN)

THOMAS and JOHN ride at the head of a long delegation of CHURCHMEN.
 There's excitement in the air. Something momentous is going to
 happen.

EXT. PORT OF BOULOGNE - FRANCE - DAY

THOMAS and JOHN stop with their delegation at the edge of a wide
 plane overlooking the windswept English Channel.

THE NOBILITY OF ENGLAND

is spread out along the perimeter - HENRY, front and center. John
 looks to Thomas looking at what's before him.

THOMAS
 If he were to offer the "kiss of peace"
 today, the nobility would see it as a new
 alliance against them. They would strike
 us both down on this field, then carry
 their loyalty to the French crown.

JOHN
 Then how can we go home without a public
 reassurance from the king?

THOMAS
 Our friendship must at first seem weak
 and uncertain, then quietly gain
 strength.

John looks at Thomas hesitating.

JOHN
 You're nervous.

THOMAS
 Henry is my lord. I feel somehow, I've
 been unfaithful.

JOHN
 He's a man, Thomas. Your lord isn't.

Thomas looks at John, then rides out alone.

We follow him as Henry gradually comes into clearer view, taking off
 his LEATHER HAT as they approach each other - it is the same hat he
 wore when they snuck out together.

They stop their horses next to each other, look awkwardly.

THOMAS

I know that hat, your majesty. Have you been sneaking into taverns without me?

HENRY

(sad at the memory)
Not in too many years. I'm afraid now it wouldn't afford me much disguise.

A silent moment. Henry looks at Thomas.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Thomas... You look tired, and old.

THOMAS

I'll have to take your word, my lord. Mirrors are scarce at the monastery.

HENRY

As well they should be, given the look of most monks. What I would do to have you back where you belong.

(smiles, bittersweet)

But you weren't there to talk me out of burning it down. I needed Thomas Becket, to help me solve the problem of Thomas Becket.

THOMAS

My lord. Forgive me for my absence.

HENRY

No, forgive me. Let me promise you I'll rebuild and replace every nail and timber, and fill it to its former glory.

THOMAS

Your majesty, I will live for that day.
(his voice cracks)
And will welcome you to it, and your horse.

HENRY

I'm inviting you home to England, Thomas. To crown my son properly, and help me guide him in the arts of kingship.

Thomas is overwhelmed - a flood is breaking in him.

THOMAS

Oh, my liege--

Thomas dismounts and bows down to Henry who climbs down himself, helps Thomas back to his feet - an awkward moment as Henry looks back at the line of NOBLEMEN.

HENRY

No. Stand up, my friend. I'm the one
who should bow.

(glancing back)

Look at them all looking, interpreting
every move like pagan priests. *

THOMAS

They'll sit more comfortably the moment I
rescind their excommunications. *

HENRY

(looking at them)

Let 'em wait. *

THOMAS

They fear us together. *

Standing close, they look at each other. An awkward moment. Henry
hesitates, tries to form the words. *

THOMAS (CONT'D)

No, my lord. You can't. *

HENRY

But you need it. *

THOMAS

It would be seen as a hasty return to the
way things were. *

(a beat)

Your word is my protection. The "kiss of
peace" we'll save for a day when we're
both strong again. *

The king looks at Thomas with admiration and relief. This is what
he's missed.

He kneels, holds the stirrup for Thomas to mount his horse. Thomas
does. Henry mounts, too.

They look at each other once more, then ride away separately.

EXT. PORT OF SANDWICH - DAY *

CHEERING CROWDS are lined up along the road as THOMAS rides out from
the dock in front of JOHN OF SALISBURY, ALEXANDER and the other
returning CHURCHMEN. *

It is an intoxicating display, and Thomas takes it in with a personal
pride that has been long deprived.

EXT. ROAD TO CANTERBURY - DAY *

The snow-covered road gets tighter and the CROWDS closer as the
delegation rides to then stops at the CITY GATES. *

Thomas gets down from his horse, walks into the city on foot. The crowd cheers even louder.

JOHN

You know the German Emperor became legend walking a hundred snowy miles just to see the Pope.

(a beat)

Of course he was barefoot.

Thomas looks up at John still mounted. He takes off his SANDALS. The crowd cheers louder again as he walks along the icy ground, his face barely hiding the brutal discomfort.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Cold, isn't it?

THOMAS

It's torture.

Thomas continues walking icy ground, dreading each step, until the CATHEDRAL comes into view, bathed warm sunlight.

He stops for a moment, takes a deep breath, unexpectedly moved by the sight. He walks faster toward it.

EXT. LONDON STREETS - DAY

*

HENRY and his entourage ride through the familiar but empty LONDON STREETS. FITZ URSE and another KNIGHT give the king the latest news.*

FITZ-URSE

He took his sandals off at the City Gate and walked barefoot to the Cathedral.

*

HENRY

Why on earth for?

FITZ-URSE

For the crowd, your majesty.

KNIGHT

To show his deep humility and remorse for their suffering.

FITZ-URSE

They loved what they saw.

Henry rides silently.

HENRY

How many were there?

FITZ-URSE

Thousands at the port. Thousands more along the road into Canterbury.

KNIGHT

Where he barely spent a night's rest.

FITZ-URSE

Who can say how many more are greeting him
as he is now traveling England?

Henry keeps riding up the *empty streets* of Southampton.

EXT. ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

THOMAS rides with JOHN and ALEXANDER into a town swelling with people. Hundreds push toward him, hands reaching up to touch him, desperation in hollow eyes.

EXT. BURY ST. EDMUNDS - CATHEDRAL - DAY

No crowds, just a BISHOP and various CHURCHMEN following THOMAS as he surveys the thin cathedral supplies. He reaches into BINS, scrapes out a handful of grain.

THOMAS

Have you requested assistance from the
northern parishes?

BISHOP

They've all been pillaged, your grace.
Every bishop is asking help from the
next.

They come across a MILKING COW laid out on its side, its stomach distended. Thomas looks to John - this is worse than he expected.

THOMAS

Time to look the devil in the eye.

INT. SALTWOOD CASTLE - NIGHT

THOMAS sits at long table, staring into the eyes of his enemies:
CORNWALL, LEICESTER - the whole gang. *

THOMAS *

My proposal is that each of you, along
with your landed knights, contribute a
very modest portion of your bountiful
harvest for the general relief of the
English peasant. Consider it a small
investment that will ensure us all a
healthy and peaceful kingdom - and
greatly please his majesty. *

CORNWALL *

Pleasing his majesty has been *your*
desire, not ours. *

THOMAS

Then accept my proposal selfishly. If the people taste no relief, they will rebel, and you'll lose everything.

*
*
*
*

LEICESTER

They will rebel, only if led.

*

CORNWALL

Is that intention, Thomas Becket? To lead your own army?

LEICESTER

I remember you were once mighty swift with a sword.

THOMAS

Only the king may raise an army against errant and thieving nobleman.

CORNWALL

And *he* seems strangely... Disinclined.

Thomas looks at them without answering.

CORNWALL

Why need you do anything? Wait through the winter. Dispense your meager charities and your pathetic hope of Heaven.

LEICESTER

Your blessed poor will soon find their way there.

A titter of laughter around the table. Thomas looks ready to kill any one of them.

Instead, he gets up and leaves. The men look at each other.

NOBLEMAN

If he links arms with Henry, we *will* lose everything.

LEICESTER

There's too much distrust. A new storm will blow into the king's temperament and blow away any chance of a lasting marriage.

Agreement around the table. Bishop Roger shakes his head.

CORNWALL

Let us blow it in ourselves. I don't wish to wait on the weather.

INT. CANTERBURY - CATHEDRAL - DAY (DAWN)

Early morning. THOMAS sits alone in the empty cathedral, staring at the altar. John approaches quietly, sits down behind him.

THOMAS

I could always find a way out, John.
I've never known a problem that didn't
have a key to be found, a crack I could
slip through. But this situation is
cruelly sealed on all sides. I'm trapped
in it.

JOHN

You're trapped because you're not that
man anymore.

Thomas turns around to look at him.

JOHN (CONT'D)

One who escapes from boxes, with illusion
and cleverness, in the court of the king.
(a beat)
You've never lived as one whose faith was
in humanity, and a God more powerful than
any one man.

Thomas stares at John. Outside a ROOSTER CROWS.

JOHN (CONT'D)

It's morning. You asked me to wake you.

Thomas nods.

INT. DARK ROOM - DAY (DAWN)

WARM WATER is poured over a filthy, FROSTBITTEN FOOT in a room where
THIRTEEN BEGGARS sit waiting.

JOHN holds the CANDLE while THOMAS puts his hand on the filthy foot
with hesitation, as though performing this task for the first time.

JOHN

I think ol' Theobald may rise from the
dead just to see you doing this.

Thomas smiles, washes clean the man's foot, feels him shivering.

He looks at the beggar's face - one EYE is covered over completely in
SORES - his teeth chattering.

Thomas takes off his ROBE and wraps it tight around the shivering
man, looks into his open eye that is tearful.

BEGGAR

Thank you. Thank you, your grace.

Thomas moves on to the next beggar.

THOMAS

Stop smiling, John. I have more robes
than space in my closet.

Thomas goes on to the next man. In the distance, a ROOSTER CROWS. *

INT. KING'S BEDCHAMBER - DAY (DAWN) *

HENRY and ELEANOR are served breakfast at the table. They eat
silently, say nothing to each other until: *

HENRY

He went to them trying to make peace.
One has to admire it. *

Eleanor's expression darkens at the mention of Thomas. *

ELEANOR

Henry. You mustn't think of him anymore.
For your sake, put your heart only with
your family. Not just your queen and
children, but your cousins and uncles. *

HENRY

They are not-- *

ELEANOR

--They are your only blood now - united
and strong with hatred. You can't win on
any side except theirs. *

Henry gets from the table, agitated. Eleanor continues eating.
Henry calms, sits down again to eat. *

INT. ARCHBISHOP'S CHAMBER - DAY

The room is cold. THOMAS and JOHN sit huddled around the table,
ACCOUNTING LEDGERS open in front of them.

JOHN

You need to see him and make it clear. *

He's the *only* one who can help our
situation. *

THOMAS

He can't. I've told you. *

JOHN

Stop protecting him! Don't squander the
power given you! Make the king fear
Thomas Becket more than he does those who
hold our property! *

(softens) *

It's no longer your place to counsel
Henry. Your place is here. *

Thomas considers it - then, finally, nods.

EXT. WESTMINSTER PALACE GROUND - DAY

THOMAS rides in alone into the palace grounds, bustling with preparations for a long trip. WAGONS are packed. HORSES saddled.

Everyone working stops at seeing the Archbishop ride by. Thomas dismounts near the palace entrance, ties his own horse.

INT. WESTMINSTER PALACE - DAY

The place is empty, and Thomas walks through it like a man remembering better times.

He passes the chancellory, looks into its empty rooms.

INT. WESTMINSTER PALACE - CHAPEL - DAY

THOMAS finds the chapel empty, wind blowing in from outside. He looks around, then heads into the RECTORY where he finds HENRY looking out the window.

HENRY

I saw you coming, Thomas. My first thought was to jump out the window and greet you, but it seemed higher than I remembered.

THOMAS

Did you forget what it's like to be a boy?

Henry nods poignantly. Thomas moves close to him, looks out the window at the travel preparations.

HENRY

We're having our Christmas on the continent. Always traveling. The only way I can keep the nobles behaved is by keeping myself everywhere. But I'm tired of it. Dead tired, Thomas.

Thomas takes a breath to speak, but holds back.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I can't give you what you came for.

THOMAS

The kiss of peace.

HENRY

(he nods)
Our boat is no longer seaworthy. If I were to embrace you publicly, all of England would tip over.

THOMAS

No, your majesty. The people would cheer us together.

HENRY

They would cheer *me* only for holding your hand. How long could I expect before you let go?

THOMAS

My lord, I would never.

HENRY

You have already.

Henry looks long at Thomas.

HENRY (CONT'D)

I've done everything I can to get back your land. But the lot of the sick and starving masses seems trivial when the whole kingdom hangs.

THOMAS

My lord, they are the kingdom. I wish I'd understood that sooner and could have made it clear. If you come back to them, England will be saved, as will its Church.

HENRY

No! It's impossible! I'm completely boxed in! If I stand tall for you the nobility will cut the crown from my head!
(he softens)
If I don't, I'll lose you completely.
Tell me what to do, Thomas.

Thomas looks long at Henry - sees there's no way out. TRUMPETS sound for the impending departure.

HENRY (CONT'D)

They await me.

Henry leaves, Thomas reaches out for his arm.

THOMAS

Henry. My lord. Something tells me I will not see you again in this life.

HENRY

My *word* is your protection. You said so. Are you calling me a traitor?!

THOMAS

God forbid I would ever.

Thomas backs away, lets Henry go.

INT. ARCHIEPISCOPAL PALACE - NIGHT

THOMAS undresses for bed. JOHN is there watching him.

JOHN
Thomas, I fear the situation. You've made too many enemies, while securing no protection.

Thomas nods. He knows.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Go back to France, your grace. Help us all by staying well.

Thomas looks at John as though forming an answer, but doesn't.

INT. ARCHBISHOP'S CHAMBER - DAY

JAMES and HERBERT OF BOSHAM stand before a seated THOMAS.

THOMAS
I'm sending you back to the continent to solicit relief from his holiness.

James and Herbert look at each other.

HERBERT
You want us to get on our knees and beg money from the Pope?

Thomas rises, kisses both James and Herbert on the cheek.

THOMAS
Until our lands are returned, we are all beggars.

EXT. CATHEDRAL COURTYARD - DAY

HERBERT and JAMES trot out the gate. A MONK closes it - looks closely at who is leaving.

INT. CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL - DAY

*

In full robes, THOMAS performs a MASS in Latin.

He moves down a line of the faithful, PEASANTS and TOWNSPEOPLE, offering each communion, the body of Christ.

He stands before the assembled. PEOPLE wait on his first word.

THOMAS

I am a man who has indulged every pleasure, every vanity, and temptation of the flesh - a man who treasured the attentions of the powerful and longed for luxury. Having such a man lead you has brought ruin to God's house. It has crumbled His walls, and left the English church open to pillage by those who see the people's comfort and salvation as mortal threats to their noble claims. I can never take back the way I've lived; but I can do one good thing today. I can resist the temptation to save myself, to retreat from this storm and wait securely on a peaceful shore. I can choose to stay and fight, to reclaim everything I've lost for you. I promise you here - as long as I carry this tired body - I *will*.

He steps down, and walks out of the Cathedral.

EXT. PORT OF BOULOGNE - DAY (DAWN)

A TRANSPORT BOAT comes to PORT letting off BISHOP ROGER, BISHOP GILBERT and several others who gallop off the boat and into the countryside.

INT. BUR-LE-ROI CASTLE - NIGHT

The Royal Christmas Court. The great hall is filled with feasting nobility warmed by a huge YULE LOG burning in the fire pit. At the

KING'S TABLE - a lone TROUBADOUR strums a LUTE and sings a plaintive song in French to HENRY and ELEANOR.

The Queen looks over to her husband to see he is moved, saddened - perhaps by the song, perhaps by some deeper longing.

She puts her hand on his and he looks at her suddenly, as though awakened from a reverie. She takes back her hand.

A COMMOTION in the back of the hall. The Troubadour continues singing even as the ENGLISH BISHOPS make their way toward the king.

BISHOP ROGER

News from England, my lord. Conspiracy. Thomas Becket is speaking out against your rule, rallying the crowds to resist you and your laws.

Henry waves his hand. The music stops.

HENRY

What did he say?

BISHOP ROGER

Those who were there report he promised
to stay in England and fight you
(reading from a LETTER)
"as long as he carried this tired body."
The people were moved - and many.

Henry takes the letter, reads it. The Dukes of CORNWALL and
LEICESTER now join the plotters standing around the king.

BISHOP ROGER (CONT'D)

There is more, your majesty. He has sent
his closest men, Herbert and James on a
secret mission to the Pope.

HENRY

And you're sure it is against me?

CORNWALL

Has he asked your permission? As he must
under the Constitutions of Clarendon?

HENRY

No.

BISHOP ROGER

Has he notified you at all? As he would
if he truly were your friend?

Henry rises from his chair, steps around it. (This is getting to
him.)

BISHOP ROGER (CONT'D)

My lord, you were closer to Thomas Becket
than any man alive, but I have known him
longer, since we were brothers in
Theobald's household. He rises through
flattery, and feigned affection; and he
will never stop until England is his--

*

Henry lunges, grabs Bishop Roger by the throat.

*

HENRY

--Liar! It *can't* be Thomas! He did none
of these things!

*

*

*

Bishop Roger stumbles back, but catches himself, stands erect

*

BISHOP ROGER

Perhaps I'm mistaken. Perhaps your
majesty honestly trusts him with
everything you've ever cared for in this
world. Perhaps you have perfect faith
Thomas Becket will *never* lead his crowds
against you.

*

*

*

*

*

*

*

He looks to Eleanor, perhaps hoping to hear otherwise.

*

HENRY

Eleanor. Tell me he's wrong.

*

Eleanor chooses her words carefully - as though she knew what weight each carried.

ELEANOR
I see all the pieces coming together...
Brilliantly.

HENRY
This is vile.

Henry writhes with heartbreak.

HENRY (CONT'D)
You let this happen!

He points his finger at the men standing in front of him.

HENRY (CONT'D)
What miserable drones and traitors have I
nourished in my household--!!!

Henry's THUNDEROUS VOICE echoes throughout the great hall.

HENRY (CONT'D) (O.S.)
Who let their lord be treated with such
shameful contempt, by this low-born
priest!

The hall is dead quiet. Henry hobbles away, followed by attendants.

EXT. FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

The first hint of winter dawn silhouettes FOUR MOUNTED KNIGHTS under an old and BARREN TREE.

BISHOP ROGER stands between them putting heavy PURSES OF COINS into each of their gloved hands.

BISHOP ROGER
Sail to England separately. If one or
two of you is intercepted, the others may
still succeed in their mission. Go
quickly. Before his royal temper cools.

The knights ride off across the snowy field.

INT. QUEEN'S CHAMBER - DAY (DAWN)

The sun is just rising as HENRY paces nervously in front of ELEANOR.

ELEANOR
If Thomas Becket has been slandered, if
his words and actions were misunderstood,
let him come to you and say so.

HENRY
I fear it's too late.

ELEANOR

Do you think anyone would lay a hand on a man they all know you have this weakness for?

HENRY

After what I said...

ELEANOR

Your temper is famous, Henry. Your regrets... predictable. Stand by your words this time. Let Thomas come to you.

Henry looks at her, reluctantly nods his head.

INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY (DAWN)

SILVER WINE CUPS - used for the EUCHARIST - have been set up across the table in front of JOHN OF SALISBURY.

THOMAS

Sell them, discreetly. In Dover, where you won't be known.

Thomas puts them into a cloth bag, gives it to John.

JOHN

They won't buy us many days.

THOMAS

Call them priceless relics. Make up a tale about how they were used by some great saint some time.

John smiles at this - looks at Thomas for a long moment - a moment of hesitation.

THOMAS (CONT'D)

Go, John. I'll stay close to the cathedral. No one will hurt me there.

John backs away, walks out into the morning sun.

INSERT CARD:

December 29, 1170

EXT. CATHEDRAL GROUNDS - LIVESTOCK PEN - DAY

Animals roam freely in their pen. ALEXANDER holds a WOODEN BUCKET. THOMAS scrapes the bottom for a handful of GRAIN, sprinkles it on the frozen ground among the CHICKENS and ROOSTERS that peck away at it.

Several LARGE HOGS push their way in, sniffing around the snow and dirt.

ALEXANDER
 Cornwall! Leicester! Shoo! You've
 already been fed!

Alexander herds the hogs away. Thomas laughs loud.

THOMAS
 You named them after the dukes?!

Alexander grins. Thomas takes a step right into a pile of HOG SHIT - it covers his foot and sandal. Alexander covers his mouth.

THOMAS
 (shaking his foot)
 Perhaps this would be a good morning to
 visit the Broc family castle.

ALEXANDER
 Aye, and take a long walk on their fine
 silk carpets.

EXT. ENGLISH ROAD - DAY

JOHN rides alone on a cold, snowy road. He stops his horse for a moment, looking up the road to see FOUR KNIGHTS galloping toward him.

REGINALD FITZ-URSE (from Thomas and Henry's parties) and three other KNIGHTS surround him on the road.

JOHN
 I'm unarmed.

FITZ-URSE
 Good.

Fitz-Urse draws his SWORD, swings it quickly toward John, ripping the REINS from his hands. The HORSE throws John backwards on the ground, the BAG of silver cups clattering in his hand.

FITZ-URSE (CONT'D)
 Good-bye, priest.

Fitz-Urse takes John's horse by the reins as the knights gallop on toward a distant TOWN.

John's heart sinks as he gets up, finally realizes:

JOHN
 Thomas...

He runs as fast as he can on the road toward the town.

INT. CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL - DAY

The cathedral reverberates with the singing of vespers as ROWS OF MONKS proceed into the central nave.

INT. ARCHIEPISCOPAL CHAMBER - DAY

The SINGING is fainter here as THOMAS silently puts on his vestments with the help of one ATTENDANT.

EXT. ENGLISH TOWN - DAY

A HORSE TRADER inspects the SILVER CUPS, scratches his head. JOHN can't wait, jumps onto one of his HORSES.

HORSE TRADER
Stop! Negotiate!

John spurs the horse, gallops away.

INT. ARCHBISHOP'S CHAMBER - DAY

THOMAS glances toward the window. (Did he hear something?) He walks over, sees FOUR BLACK HORSES standing riderless in the courtyard below.

This is strange. The sounds of SCUFFLING and WHISPERS confirm something unusual is happening. A handful of CHURCHMEN rush in.

ALEXANDER
My lord, you must get to the church this minute!

They grab him, take him out.

INT. PASSAGEWAY - DAY

The MONK and CHURCHMEN rush THOMAS through the dark passageway.

INT. CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL - DAY

The VESPER SONG breaks into a cacophony as fear permeates the church. The MONKS break ranks of their lines while

THE HEAVY CHURCH DOOR is barred and bolted shut. BANGING on the door echoes off the stone.

ALEXANDER
Your grace. Hide in the crypt. You'll be safe until nightfall.

Thomas sees in their faces the gravity, the fear. He shakes his head.

THOMAS
Open the door.

ALEXANDER
My lord, no. Don't do this.

The cathedral reverberates from more loud banging. The CHURCHMEN look again to the archbishop.

THOMAS (CONT'D)
Open the door! This is a church, not a castle!

The bolt is pulled. The bar is lifted. LIGHT from the afternoon sun bursts into the dark cathedral casting long shadows of FOUR KNIGHTS.

They march in, SWORDS drawn with CHAIN MAIL and SHIELDS.

FITZ-URSE
 Where is Thomas Becket, traitor to king and kingdom?!

The MONKS and CHURCHMEN step back. Thomas steps forward, alone.

THOMAS
 Here I am. No traitor to my king. But a priest of God.

Three of the knights step up to the unarmed archbishop - their faces hidden by helmets glistening from the light of the open door.

THOMAS
 Who sent you? If you're here on his majesty's order--

FITZ-URSE
 We're here on his desire.

THOMAS
 Show me the document.

FITZ-URSE
 There is none. Only his words.

A stab in Thomas's heart. Disbelief.

THOMAS
 Then I'll go to him.

FITZ-URSE
 He hopes never to see you again.

KNIGHT #2
 His majesty wished you away, priest.

FITZ-URSE
 And we've come here to grant his wish. Come outside.

THOMAS
 No. Whatever you plan to do to me, you'll do right here.

The helmeted Fitz-Urse grabs Thomas, tries to pull him out, but is no match for his strength.

The other knights look back nervously. PEOPLE from the town are slowly streaming in through the open door.

KNIGHT #3
Hit him! Hit him where he stands!

Fitz-Urse swings his sword. Thomas ducks to avoid the blow, falls to one knee.

EXT. CANTERBURY STREETS - DAY

JOHN gallops through the empty streets and in through the open gate of the CATHEDRAL GROUNDS where PEOPLE are crowded outside the door, fearful of what they're hearing inside.

John jumps off his horse, pushes his way through.

INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

FITZ-URSE swings again, grazing THOMAS'S SCALP. DROPS OF BLOOD fall into Thomas's open hand. He makes a fist.

THOMAS
Get out! Out of this house, you pimp!

Thomas thrusts his fist into Fitz-Urse's neck. KNIGHT #2 raises his sword to strike again, but is suddenly knocked over by ALEXANDER *who throws himself between the knights and Thomas.*

ALEXANDER
Help us! In the name of God! Someone!

But no one else comes. Alexander raises his arm to block the next SWORD swung at Thomas.

BLOOD spills from his deeply cut ARM.

Alexander stumbles, a pleading look revealed by a stream of sunlight.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)
...your grace?

Thomas looks with horror at Alexander's ARM gushing blood. He looks to the KNIGHTS keeping the crowd away.

JOHN pushes through the crowd, but is stopped suddenly at the *point of Fitz-Urse's sword.*

FITZ-URSE
How much more blood, Thomas Becket,
before you give us what we came for?

John futilely pushes against the blade. Thomas raises his hand to stop him - holds him with a strong gaze.

THOMAS
 (ironic smile)
 Tell him I tried.

Thomas falls to his knees. Fitz Urse grins - raises his sword.

JOHN
 No!!!

THOMAS
 Into your hands, oh merciful God, I
 commend my spirit.

Thomas lays his forehead on the floor. John struggles forward.

JOHN
 THOMAS!!!

The SWORD BLADE slices downward through the light. It strikes the stone floor, breaking in two.

CLOSE ON - THE BROKEN SWORD BLADE

flying upward from the floor, drenched in BLOOD. SCREAMS and CRIES - from the dark recesses and from the TOWNSPEOPLE who have come inside.

The bloody SWORD BLADE falls to the floor - CLATTERING to silence.

The FOUR KNIGHTS look at what they've done; one holds a BROKEN SWORD.

FITZ URSE
 Let's go, knights. This one won't rise
 again.

The killers retreat quickly, disappear into the daylight.

CLOSE ON - ALEXANDER

on the floor with a bleeding arm, weeping at the horror he sees in front of him. He tears at a strip of WHITE CLOTH from his undershirt, then another.

John kneels down to the mess on the floor that was once his friend.

THE MONKS gradually emerge from the dark recesses.

TOWNSPEOPLE come in cautiously through the door, some screaming, crying at sight of the body they see only from a distance in the large POOL OF BLOOD,

John refits the CROWN of THOMAS'S SKULL to his bleeding head.

EXTREME CLOSE-UP - THOMAS'S EYES

staring skyward. JOHN holds the crown of the skull in place as the weeping ALEXANDER wraps the WHITE CLOTH around the forehead, then slowly closes Thomas's eyelids over his heavenly stare.

John breaks down, weeps, touches the cheek and lips of his old friend.

JOHN
Dear God, let him rest.

*
*

John undoes the collar on Thomas's robe, as though to make his fallen friend more comfortable.

*

He sees the SKIN near the neck RED with RASH. John opens another button, more blood-red skin.

*
*

John pulls the robes all the way open to reveal Thomas's the HAIR SHIRT crawling with LICE.

*
*

A GASP in the crowd nearby. John trembles at the full realization, as does Alexander.

*
*

ALEXANDER
His grace. He wears the hair cloth.

*
*

John rips the Hair Shirt open revealing RED, BLISTERED SKIN on his chest. He's holds Thomas's dead hand, tight.

*
*

JOHN
Oh... my friend. Take comfort.

*
*

The MONKS push closer, whisper, can't believe what they're seeing.

*

More townspeople crowd around the scene - weeping and wailing.

*

A CLOTH

is torn from a sleeve and dipped solemnly in the POOL OF BLOOD, then another cloth, and another.

We move from the scene, over the heads of the CRYING TOWNSPEOPLE and the PROSTRATE MONKS out the open door-

EXT. CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL - CONTINUOUS

--to the CROWD gathering outside the cathedral grounds as the FOUR KNIGHTS ride away out the gate.

Whispers of the news are followed by the SCREAMS and CRIES, some people falling to the ground in despair.

We move out through the town where all eyes are looking or moving toward the church - still yet to learn what has happened. On the DISTANT CRYING we

CUT TO:

INT. ARGENTAN CASTLE - KING'S CHAMBER - DAY

HENRY wails - his pain is unbearable as he gasps for air - struggling to stay on his feet in front of ELEANOR closing the door to his room.

ELEANOR
Don't let anyone see you like this.

HENRY
He laid his head on the floor! They cut
his skull in half...

ELEANOR
I agree. It was sloppy.

He looks up at her, unable to believe what he's heard.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)
Henry. He would have risen above you.

HENRY
You're a monster... A Gorgon! You
wanted this!

She looks at him now with a steely resolve.

ELEANOR
Not inside the church.

HENRY
You were jealous! Dark and dank
jealousy! Because I
(he gasps)
loved him.

ELEANOR
Henry. When have you known me to be that
thing? When I felt the wetness of your
barmaids in our wedding bed? When I
heard the endless rhythm of your
thrusting while I delivered your second
son? When I interrupted you ...
(her voice quivers)
on the very morning of our sacred
coronation? I buried deep and long ago
that "jealous" thing for the sake of what
we could build together, and what we
have. *Nothing* will take that down.

HENRY
Get out...! GET OUT!

Henry covers his head in grief. He's done with her.

ELEANOR
Nothing.

Eleanor backs away to the door where their two sons, RICHARD (13) and JOHN (12) have opened the door to watch their father grieving.

EXT. ARGENTAN CASTLE - DAY

ELEANOR rides away on horseback in the center of CARAVAN of WAGONS, CARRIAGES, and KNIGHTS. As the CHILDREN'S CARRIAGE passes, their father's WAILING can again be heard through an open castle window.

INT. PALACE OF THE POPE - SENS, FRANCE - DAY

THE POPE is seated in his papal throne at the focus of an episcopal court. BISHOPS and ROYAL EMISSARIES attend. JOHN OF SALISBURY is also there.

POPE

Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, was a warrior for God and a true martyr of the holy church.

The Pope catches John's skeptical eye, returns a cautionary glance.

POPE (CONT'D)

His murder in the holy cathedral of Canterbury will be remembered until the day of judgement as an infamous act of depravity and treachery. Yet, today we choose not to excommunicate King Henry of England. The lands of the English Church have been returned. The offensive laws have been repealed. And his words on Christmas day, in the year of our Lord, eleven hundred and seventy, reveal pettiness and careless scorn, but do not prove clearly a desire for murder. Only King Henry knows what was in his heart the moment he spoke those words, and for what sin he must answer. In the eyes of Almighty God, his soul is his own to judge and save.

The Pope stands from his papal throne and leaves the assembled.

EXT. A COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

A TRAVELER walks a dirt road alone. We follow him until his road reaches a larger HIGHWAY where HORSES and HORSE CARTS move people in the same direction.

INT. A FRENCH CHURCH - DAY

JOHN OF SALISBURY speaks emotionally to a packed church.

JOHN

It is said a single drop of Thomas Becket's blood can cure the blind and heal the sick. No one would have laughed louder at that than my friend, while silently wishing it to be true.

(MORE)

JOHN (CONT'D)

From the mantle of sainthood he would have galloped away; and cringed at any suggestion he was a Holy Warrior. Thomas thought himself vain and prideful, and was mostly correct, until he became unable to look away from the suffering of others. It was this weakness that killed him. He died because he loved.

EXT. PORT OF BOULOUGNE - DAY

The port is packed like never before with PILGRIMS trying to get on one of the HUNDREDS OF BOATS crossing to England. It is a mob scene of the WALKING WOUNDED, the sick carried on crude STRETCHERS.

INSERT CARD:

Millions journeyed to the tomb of the murdered Archbishop of Canterbury. For 300 years, it was the most visited holy shrine in all of Europe.

We pan up from the port to the ENGLISH CHANNEL with BOATS spread out over and receding into the horizon.

INSERT CARD:

In 1173, Thomas Becket of London was declared a saint.

EXT. CANTERBURY STREET - DAY

Pouring rain. The streets of Canterbury are already crowded with people walking, or pulling carts, or carrying the COTS of the SICK AND BEDRIDDEN toward the cathedral.

Among the crowd of pilgrims is HENRY - barefoot, in plain clothing, *
his entourage behind him. He is worn in his face - older, with no *
trace of joy.

As Henry climbs the stairs to the cathedral door. A HOODED MONK *
closes and latches the cathedral door behind him. *

INT. CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL - DAY

The cathedral is dead quiet except for HENRY'S wet BARE FEET on the stone floor.

He is walking between TWO ROWS of HOODED MONKS, fifty on each side, each one holding a WHIP.

In front of him is a TOMB with the carved figure of an ARCHBISHOP in full vestment. Hanging above is a blood-stained GOAT'S HAIR SHIRT. *

Henry looks down from the bloodstained garment to the carved profile of THOMAS before him. He nods. Two monks tear his shirt off. He is bare-skinned as he kneels.

The pain of the first WHIP catches him by surprise, but he stops his own cry. Then the next WHIP, then the next.

HENRY
Harder! Damn you all, harder...

The TWO ROWS OF MONKS move up toward the prostrate king, each side taking a turn lashing on his bare back.

CLOSE ON - THE CATHEDRAL DOOR

through the crack of which we can see an EYE straining to see inside.

WHISPERED VOICE
He's getting the whip!

*

EXT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

The WHISPER of this news spreads through the crowd as a SQUIRE leads a lone HORSE to the front steps of the cathedral.

INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

CLOSE ON - HENRY'S PROFILE as the final WHIP hits his back.

Sweat drips from his face and it appears he may throw up. He uses every ounce of strength to put one hand over the other until his face is close to the carved face of THOMAS BECKET.

Still trembling, he kisses Thomas's stone lips performing the "Kiss of Peace" on the face of the tomb.

HENRY
Forgive me, Thomas...

He stays there for a moment, then stands straight. An ATTENDANT is there holding his CROWN.

Henry lifts it and with trembling hands - puts the crown on his own head. Another ATTENDANT is holding his ROYAL ROBE but hesitates before putting it on his back.

Henry nods and we see for the first time the MUTILATED SKIN on his back at the moment the robe covers it.

EXT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

The heavy door opens into blackness as HENRY comes out, the crowd parting, awed by the sight of him in crown and robe.

He descends the steps with a forthright purpose, then mounts his horse with forced strength.

INSERT CARD:

Despite armed rebellions from his nobility, his queen, and

his sons John, Geoffrey, and Richard "The Lionhearted," Henry wore the crown for twenty more years.

We follow Henry his horse the through streets of Canterbury, the crowd looking up at their king, in awe of his presence.

INSERT CARD:

He continued writing judicial reforms, created a jury system for resolving disputes, is considered to be the founder of English Common Law, and one of his country's greatest kings.

Passing through the CITY GATE into the open countryside, Henry glances up at the clearing sky. A HAWK is circling overhead.

He watches it, following as it flies forward. He brings his horse to a quick trot at the sight, but then slows again, letting the hawk disappear into the clouds.

FADE TO BLACK

INSERT CARD:

In 1189, Henry II of England died alone.

THE END