

PERUSAL SCRIPT

**AT CANOSSA:
The Pope, The Emperor,
And the Marchioness**

by
Eric Samuelsen



Newport, Maine

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AT CANOSSA: The Pope, The Emperor, and the Marchioness

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CHARACTERS (3m 1f)

Henry IV, Holy Roman Emperor—27 when these events took place. At the peak of his powers, a good deal smarter than he looks.

Pope Gregory VII, formerly, the monk Hildebrand—his birth year is disputed, but he was at least 49 when these events took place, and could have been as old as 62. Ascetic, bitter, uncompromising.

Hugh of Cluny—Abbot of Cluny, later St. Hugh The Great. 53 when these events took place.

Matilda of Canossa, Marchioness of Tuscany—31, recently and happily widowed from Godfrey The Hunchback, who she had assassinated.

TIME: Winter of 1077

PLACE: Outside Matilda's castle of Canossa in Northern Italy.

NOTE: If any language exceeds that of local community/institutional standards, you may substitute other words for those spoken, but only regarding the specific words themselves. Concepts and ideas must remain.

INVESTITURE AT CANOSSA by Eric Samuelsen. 3m 1f. Period or modern costumes. Exterior of a castle, maybe a garden. About 90 minutes. It is 1077. The Holy Roman Emperor, The Pope, the Abbot of Cluny, and the Marchioness of Tuscany. A schism presents itself, the fracture of a Church that may be even greater than the one with Byzantium. Will there be war? Will it further divide the Kingdom of God and the region of Europe? Does the contrition of an Emperor mean that The Holy Roman Empire will endure, even through bribes, scandal, celibacy, crusades? Who will prevail: German, Roman, Tuscan, Swabian, English, Norman, Aragonese, Catalan, Provençal? This crossroads of history may have been the first sexual revolution — in minutiae — the beginnings behind the Crusades, the results of William conquering Anglo-Saxon England, and the foment of the roar of a Church heard around the world. A Marchioness fights to have a choice in marriage. An Emperor longs to have control over an empire. An Abbot strives to keep the Church (and its followers) pure through celibacy. And Pope Gregory tries to balance the things of God where balance may not be possible. This is a hard hitting, adult play with themes and language meant for mature audiences. **ORDER #3283**

Eric Samuelsen taught at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio before joining the faculty at Brigham Young University in 1992. He became head of the Playwriting program at BYU in 1999. He has also taught as an adjunct faculty member in the Religion department. He retired from BYU in 2012.

As a playwright, Samuelsen has had twenty-seven plays professionally produced in Utah, Indiana, Louisiana, New York, and California. Some of his plays include *Gadianton*, which has seen three professional productions across the country, *A Love Affair with Electrons*, *Family*, *The Plan*, and *The Way We're Wired*. He is resident playwright at Plan-B Theatre Company in Salt Lake City, who designated their 2013-14 season a 'Season of Eric, including productions of six of his plays.

He is a member of the Playwrights' Circle, and the Dramatists Guild. He is three-time winner of the Annual Award in Playwriting offered by the Association for Mormon Letters (AML) and he became president of AML in 2007. In 2013 the organization awarded him the Smith Pettit Award for his lifetime work as a playwright.

He has been a staff writer for the on-line satirical magazine *The Sugarbeet*. He was also featured in the book *Conversations with Mormon Authors*, edited by Chris Bigelow. He is a noted Ibsen translator, and has also published scholarly articles on 19th and 20th century Scandanavian Theatre, and more recently, on LDS drama and film. He blogged at *Mormoniconoclast.com*. Eric died in September of 2019 after a long battle with polymyositis. This has left a huge hole in the Theatre Community within, and outside of, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.



<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/1b/Canossa-three.jpg>

(The Pope Gregory, Mathilda, and Henry IV)

(HENRY IV, Holy Roman Emperor, enters, exhausted, barefoot. He is carrying a rucksack, which he takes off. Looks around, finds a place to hide it. He kneels in the snow, wearing a thin shirt and trousers without imperial markings. He stares up at the castle. Waits. Waits some more.)

HENRY: Wait him out. Just wait ... him out.

(With a glance up at the castle, he sits, stretches one leg out, wiggles his toes. Stretches the other leg, one eye looking out. Looks around. Quickly does a few deep knee bends. Looks back at the castle. Sighs.)

(Enter HUGH of CLUNY. Energetic, intelligent, dressed modestly, as a monk. Sees HENRY, and immediately grasps the situation.)

HENRY: Hello?

HUGH: Your imperial majesty?

HENRY: Hugh?

HUGH: The same.

HENRY: Is he there? Do you know?

HUGH: I assume you mean... ?

HENRY: His Holiness, the Pope. Gregory, seventh of his name.

HUGH: You call him Gregory?

HENRY: I do.

HUGH: Not Hildebrand? Not false monk?

HENRY: I call him Gregory. I call him Holy Father. As you can see, I stand here, penitent.

HUGH: Yes.

HENRY: Having, you'll note, walked barefoot in the snow, over the Alps. Barefoot. Here. To Canossa.

HUGH: Well played.

HENRY: Only if he's here.

HUGH: You repudiate your letter, one presumes?

HENRY: Why else would I walk barefoot, in the snow...?

HUGH: *(Amused)* Over the Alps. Yes. Impressive.

HENRY: But I can't bang on the door. He needs to see me, come to me.

HUGH: I've only just arrived myself.

HENRY: Canossa, they said. Consulting with Matilda at Canossa.

HUGH: They?

HENRY: Reports.

HUGH: Spies.

HENRY: Intelligence sources. You have them as well. You know the contents of my letter.

HUGH: You sent it to every king, prince and duke in Christendom.

HENRY: You knew of it before I sent it.

HUGH: Well, the Cluniac network ...

HENRY: Indeed. My clerk, let's say.

HUGH: How is Geoffrey?

HENRY: In mortal danger, if Gregory isn't here.

HUGH: Well, then, let's hope he is.

(Looks around.)

Canossa. I thought the plan was to meet in Augsburg.

HENRY: Where he intends to crown a new emperor.

HUGH: So you headed him off.

HENRY: He's the holy pontiff. By the law of the Church, he cannot turn away a penitent sinner begging for absolution.

HUGH: Oh, I get all the nuances. Canossa Italian, not German. Owned by the Marchioness, his most fearsome supporter.

(Looking him over.)

Barefoot, in dead of winter. You've been well advised.

HENRY: And you know by whom.

HUGH: Geoffrey does good work. Hairshirt?

HENRY: *(Indicates an undergarment.)* As you can see.

HUGH: Good.

HENRY: That's the worth of a Cluniac clerk. If you can put up with secret letters and intrigue.

HUGH: One does hate surprises.

HENRY: Well, it's good advice wasted, if the Pope isn't here.

HUGH: I rather think he is. He left Rome before you left Speyer. I assume Geoffrey's with your armies?

HENRY: Close enough to come if summoned.

HUGH: That could be a problem, don't you think?

HENRY: A day's march.

HUGH: If I sound mistrustful, you must forgive me. Your letter...

HENRY: I was angry.

HUGH: It showed.

HENRY: Geoffrey advised against it. I wrote it myself. In my own hand.

HUGH: It was ... ill considered.

HENRY: I've had leisure to consider it. Here's what I believe. I believe he's in there. I believe he sees me, and is considering his counter-move. He can't refuse to meet me, but he can hope I give up.

HUGH: I think that's all likely. You'd like me to ... give him a nudge.

HENRY: You're Hugh of Cluny, Father Abbot of the largest monastic order in Christendom.

HUGH: And your godfather.

HENRY: And his best friend.

HUGH: I rather think the Marchioness Matilda...

HENRY: At least, his ally.

HUGH: Both your allies.

HENRY: It's more than that. He needs me. He doesn't know it, but he does. And he needs the support of Cluniacs.

HUGH: Which I freely give.

HENRY: What now? Advise me.

HUGH: You hardly seem in need of it. You think you've outmaneuvered him, and you may very well have done.

HENRY: Do you want war?

HUGH: Ah. Don't push. He's the Pope. He answers to God. You, I believe, answer to him.

HENRY: I answer to ... God. Yes. Through His earthly representative.

HUGH: He invested you.

HENRY: I was three at the time. I could hardly have protested.

HUGH: But you were invested. That presumes fealty.

HENRY: If freely given.

HUGH: That's what this is about, of course. Investment. Consecration, ordination, setting apart. Placing. An act of authority by one and submission by another. Who owes what loyalty to whom.

HENRY: Fealty.

HUGH: A political word. But yes, a patchwork of obligations.

HENRY: On ever-shifting ground.

HUGH: Well, don't argue your case with me.

HENRY: I'm helpless now. Barefoot and unarmed.

HUGH: And I believe I commended you for your prudence.

HENRY: You'll mediate?

HUGH: (*Modestly.*) I'm his 'best friend,' I'm your godfather. I thought I would see if I could make myself useful.

(Glancing up.)

Bow your head. Humbly.

(Startled, HENRY does.)

I'm remonstrating with you. Trying to persuade you to leave. It needs to look convincing.

HENRY: Yes, good.

HUGH: (*Gesturing angrily.*) You, Henry, Holy Roman Emperor, fourth of that name, now stand excommunicate. Upon the elevation to the papacy of Hildebrand, whose views on Church governance you detest, you wrote a letter, calling him a 'false monk' and sent it to various kings and princes. Much of your army has deserted, soldiers being especially unwilling to risk death if it means eternal damnation for dying in the service of Anti-Christ. But if you can convince him of the sincerity of your penitence and receive absolution, you remain on the throne, free again to do as you please. I'm going to hit you now.

HENRY: Go ahead.

(HUGH hits him; HENRY falls over, selling it.)

HUGH: I'm marching away in a huff. Oh, look, here comes Matilda. I'll delay my angry departure a bit. You don't have to kneel. It's snowing. Standing there, barefoot, I think may be sufficient.

HENRY: Good. Thanks.

HUGH: Nasty day for it. Your feet must be freezing.

HENRY: They are.

HUGH: Mind you don't catch your death. That would be ironic, would it not?

(Enter MATILDA)

MATILDA: Your Grace. Hugh.

HUGH: My lady.

(He bows.)

MATILDA: Cousin.

(They briefly embrace, she kisses him on the cheek.)

HENRY: Marchioness.

MATILDA: Your imperial majesty. We could do this all day, you know, we have enough titles between us.

HENRY: You're looking well.

MATILDA: You look awful. Nicely done.

HENRY: Thanks.

MATILDA: Well, look, he's there, and he doesn't want me to let you in. Shame, that, I've got a feast laid on.

HENRY: His Holiness is there? With what forces?

(HUGH, quick intake of breath at this blunder. MATILDA: is amused.)

MATILDA: Mine.

HENRY: Well, I'm not leaving.

MATILDA: I didn't suppose you were. What now?

HENRY: I have come in an attitude of penitence...

HUGH: Barefoot, even.

MATILDA: I noticed.

HENRY: In an attitude of penitence... to submit myself ...

MATILDA: Henry, we know all that...

HENRY: To submit myself to the authority of His Holiness, the Pope. To submit and repent. And beg his

forgiveness.

MATILDA: Fine. Yes. Meanwhile, my feast...

HENRY: I'd prefer to begin negotiations.

MATILDA: I have duck. It doesn't keep. Come up, we'll eat by the main door. I'll feed you both, then we'll all of us talk, see if we can sort this out.

HENRY: Hugh?

HUGH: I've been asked to mediate.

MATILDA: To which end, I offer you my castle's hospitality.

HUGH: The feast should wait, I think.

HENRY: Tell him that I have an army, but encamped some distance off. As a guarantee of his safety.

MATILDA: Well, I've been telling him he needs to talk with you. I've told him over and over. He's really very cross with you.

HENRY: I'm not leaving. I'll die first.

MATILDA: So dramatic. You want to do this here? In the snow and cold?

HENRY: I think this is rather a good spot for a mediation, yes.

MATILDA: How about instead I muster my knights, drag you inside.

HENRY: Then that becomes the story. Does it not?

HUGH: We're all of us trying to prevent war.

MATILDA: War is upon us.

HUGH: And by speaking together, perhaps we can head it off?

MATILDA: Excuse us.

(She briefly confers with HUGH. With a backward look at HENRY, HUGH heads into the castle. She shouts to HUGH.)

Oh, and tell my steward the dinner's off. His Holiness has eaten; the rest of it's to be given to the soldiers.

(HUGH: acknowledges with a wave.)

HENRY: You could go inside as well.

MATILDA: No thank you.

HENRY: You don't have to keep an eye on me.

MATILDA: I'm comfortable enough here.

HENRY: It's snowing.

MATILDA: Goodness! I hadn't noticed!

HENRY: I am unarmed.

MATILDA: I'm not. I've got a dirk in my apron, and a dagger strapped to my ankle.

HENRY: That's more like it.

MATILDA: More like what?

HENRY: You. The Matilda I know. Up to now, you've seemed oddly... cordial.

MATILDA: Have I?

HENRY: Since Godfrey's death. I wasn't sure what sort of reception awaited me.

MATILDA: Until allegiances have been sorted out, I thought I could at least be friendly. And you were my favorite cousin.

HENRY: But you're not on my side.

MATILDA: I'm not on anyone's side yet.

HENRY: Nonsense. You're on Hildebrand's side, always and forever.

MATILDA: Gregory. Personally, yes, I'm with him. But politically?

HENRY: Will you choose? Take a side?

MATILDA: Can you really see me picking you over Hildebrand?

HENRY: Gregory.

MATILDA: Yes.

HENRY: You really don't have to stay out here.

MATILDA: If you must know, I'm taking any excuse to keep out of the castle.

HENRY: Why is that?

MATILDA: It stinks.

HENRY: Stinks?

MATILDA: Well, no surprise. It's full of shit.

HENRY: (*Sympathetically.*) That can happen.

MATILDA: What would you know of it? I doubt you're ever in the same place a week at a time.

HENRY: I've had longer residencies.

MATILDA: But that's your job, isn't it? Dashing about? Putting down rebellions. Investing bishops here, collecting offerings there. And taxes. Reminding counts and prelates to whom they owe fealty.

HENRY: Not in dead of winter, much.

MATILDA: We'd been here, in Canossa, five months already, a solid month longer than is comfortable. All those courtiers, jesters, minstrels, knights, footmen, lancers, spearmen, archers, ladies in waiting. Eating and shitting, the whole lot of them. I think that's all we humans are, actually. Machines to turn food to shit.

HENRY: It's a problem in camp as well.

MATILDA: Ha! You can always dig latrines. Not us castle-dwellers. Shit builds up. Fills the keep, overwhelms the garderobes, clogs every cistern. The stench overwhelms your nostrils, dawn to dusk. I've always said, you can't get by with fewer than three castles, and never stay at any past four months.

HENRY: But then the Pope...

MATILDA: We'd have been gone a month before he bothered us. No, just an old fashioned snow storm. Kept us trapped inside. To shit our lives away.

HENRY: I may as well confess—the wind shifted an hour ago, but until then...

MATILDA: Ah, so you're aware of our predicament. Get us to Ferrara, or Portovenura, we'd be fine. Leave behind a cleaning crew, find another refuge. But meanwhile, we have an entire papal retinue as guests.

HENRY: Yes.

MATILDA: He's got to come out eventually. He's got to.

HENRY: That's what I'm counting on.

(Pause.)

Marchioness. Speaking of latrines...

MATILDA: And now you're going to bring up Godfrey.

HENRY: Your husband.

MATILDA: My bitterest enemy.

HENRY: My finest commander.

MATILDA: Which is why defeating him in battle was so immensely satisfying.

HENRY: You waited until he was squatting over a latrine...

MATILDA: I heard that!

HENRY: Your hand directed the spear, if it didn't actually strike.

MATILDA: Delightful news, I must say. Godfrey the hunchback, step-brother and husband. As morally repugnant as he was physically repulsive. Dead.

HENRY: A brave and loyal knight.

MATILDA: Father to my daughter. As far as he knew. And his death was peculiarly undignified. I've heard.

HENRY: You're enjoying this, aren't you? My humiliation.

MATILDA: Henry, your Grace, pardon, what do you think I've been doing the last few days? Pleading your case. I don't want all of Christendom at war.

HENRY: Neither do I.

MATILDA: We'll see. Meanwhile, you're emperor. I owe you fealty.

HENRY: And if he chooses a new emperor?

MATILDA: Depends on who it is. Anyway, one barrier to our friendship is gone. Godfrey's dead.

HENRY: I know you were ... ill suited.

MATILDA: Yes, there's the word for it. Ill-suited. If he hadn't employed a food taster, I'd have been rid of him years ago.

(He chuckles at this.)

You think I was joking?

HENRY: I know you weren't. That makes it funnier.

(She curtsies at this, he bows.)

You're still a striking looking woman.

MATILDA: I still have my teeth. That's something.

HENRY: Fealty, though. It comes back to that.

MATILDA: We all owe fealty to God.

HENRY: Who chose me to rule.

MATILDA: And chose him Holy Pontiff. Over you.

HENRY: In spiritual affairs. When governing, I am responsible for him, over him.

MATILDA: I admit it's complicated.

HENRY: But you owed fealty, swore obedience even, to your lawful husband.

MATILDA: I did. And marriage is surely a sacrament.

HENRY: Yes. Certainly, yes. Very important.

MATILDA: And you've honored your married vows to Berta by sleeping with every woman within reach, from duchesses to serving wenches. You're famous for it; it's the one thing above all that women in our circle know about you. I know personally of nine women you've seduced, and I'm stuck out here in the shadow of the Alps.

HENRY: And you had your husband stabbed to death in a latrine.

MATILDA: Yes, well. The first time he hit me, I realized I had two choices. Cower in submission, or hit him back harder. The next day, when again he became angry, I thought I might try hitting him first. That worked even better. You know what your soldiers call me?

HENRY: I've heard. An ugly nickname. Unfortunate. And untrue. I have always found you most attractive.

MATILDA: You never made a move. In that direction. I assumed I was too ugly for you.

HENRY: Not at all.

MATILDA: Why not, then?

HENRY: You carry a dirk in your apron, and a dagger strapped to your ankle. Plus, we're cousins.

MATILDA: Common enough level of consanguinity. If we married, no one would raise an eyebrow.

HENRY: We were too close as children. It would feel... weird.

MATILDA: It would indeed.

HENRY: And ... I heard your affections were ... otherwise engaged.

MATILDA: *(scoffs.)* That old ... canard. Look, you're sure you don't want some duck? You've been here for hours...

HENRY: Marching for days.

MATILDA: I've heard.

HENRY: Three days.

MATILDA: Officially then, three days, fine. My point: You must be famished. And I don't like food going to waste.

HENRY: Best if I remain fasting.

MATILDA: I suppose. Ah, look. Hugh seems to have weaved his magic.

(From the castle, we see HUGH, with POPE GREGORY, who is clearly furious as he walks straight up to HENRY, stands in front of him, arms crossed. HENRY falls to his knees.)

GREGORY: All right. Fine. I'm here. What do you have to say to me?

HENRY: Bless me Father, for I have sinned.

GREGORY: All right, go on.

HENRY: It has been four days since my last confession.

GREGORY: Then what are you doing here?

HENRY: Your Holiness.

GREGORY: Oh, so you call me that now, do you? You acknowledge me?

HENRY: I do.

GREGORY: As Bishop of Rome?

HENRY: And most high Pontiff.

GREGORY: And my name?

HENRY: Gregory. By the grace of Holy God, seventh of that name.

GREGORY: You wrote otherwise.

HENRY: I did. I freely acknowledge it, and my error in doing so.

GREGORY: And you repent you of it?

HENRY: In abject horror of the sins I committed.

GREGORY: And barefoot, I see.

HENRY: Yes. Mortifying the flesh, which led me so far astray.

GREGORY: Nonsense. Rubbish. How big a fool do you take me for? You should repent for even trying this.

HENRY: Your Holiness. I come to you in an attitude of penance, abjuring Satan and his works, and in humblest supplication, I ask you to hear my confession, and grant absolution for my sins.

GREGORY: You do, do you?

HENRY: Humbly. Penitently.

GREGORY: No. Not a chance. I don't believe a word of it. So glib. Every answer meticulous.

HENRY: I speak in utter contrition.

GREGORY: All right. You wrote a letter. Why?

HENRY: Why, your Holiness?

GREGORY: Why did you write it? Why call me 'false monk?'

HENRY: I was seduced by the wiles of Satan.

GREGORY: In what way?

HENRY: I beg your pardon?

GREGORY: How did Lucifer manifest himself? In what guise?

HENRY: Thoughts, your Holiness. Thoughts in my mind, transferred to my arm, to pen, to paper.

GREGORY: And now, when similar thoughts ... encroach?

HENRY: I mortify the flesh that gave them room.

GREGORY: Prove it.

HENRY: Must I?

GREGORY: Prove it. Now. Let me see your back.

HENRY: As you please, your Holiness.

(He takes off his shirt. His back is covered with welts.)

GREGORY: All right. And a hairshirt.

HENRY: Yes, your Holiness.

GREGORY: So, another detail.

(HENRY puts his shirt back on.)

HENRY: I do most sincerely regret...

GREGORY: Yes, fine, you're filled with regret. You've been well prepared, I'll give you that. Hugh.

HUGH: Yes, your Holiness.

GREGORY: How long were you with his camp?

HUGH: I only just arrived.

GREGORY: Here, now, yes. But you were at his camp?

HUGH: No, your Holiness.

GREGORY: It's a mortal sin, to lie to your confessor.

HUGH: I know that.

GREGORY: All right. But you're Hugh of Cluny, you surround yourself with acolytes. Cluniacs.

HUGH: Our order is...

GREGORY: You have someone in his camp.

HUGH: Of course.

HENRY: Geoffrey, Your Holiness. He has prepared me for my confessional.

HUGH: We hide nothing from you, Your Holiness.

GREGORY: Prepared you? For confessional? Did he hear your confession, then? You are a father monk, authorized to hear confession, prescribe penance, grant absolution.

HUGH: Yes.

GREGORY: And your Geoffrey?

HUGH: A Father.

GREGORY: So you could have confessed to him!

HENRY: I could have, I suppose.

GREGORY: But instead you decided to stage this ... snowy farce.

HENRY: My sin did not merely offend God. I injured *you*. I harmed *you*, Your Holiness. I could not feel as though I fully repented until I asked for your personal forgiveness.

GREGORY: That's not a necessary part of penance.

HUGH: Indeed not, Your Holiness. But the Emperor felt a personal burden of sin, requiring a personal appeal.

GREGORY: I know what you're trying to do. Both of you, Marchioness and Father Monk, Matilda and Abbot Hugh of Cluny. I know! You've turned against me.

HUGH: I have not.

GREGORY: Then take my side.

HUGH: I am on the side of the Church, Catholic and Universal, as I have ever been. But this sinner is my godson, and I owe him fealty as well.

GREGORY: You've turned politician. Trying to prevent a war.

MATILDA: I'll admit to that readily enough.

HUGH: As do I.

GREGORY: This is not about a single Christian and his oh-so-convenient examination of conscience. It's politics. This...

(gestures)

...this! This, is nothing but politics. A big act.

HUGH: That may be. I cannot help but feel, though, that our mission is blessed by the Prince of Peace.

GREGORY: No! I will make that determination. I will! There are worse things than war that could befall us.

HUGH: Worse than war?

GREGORY: Yes! Worse, much worse!

HUGH: If this war comes, it will be not be a small one, nor easily contained.

GREGORY: And if God wills it!?!?

HUGH: Then we will patiently await God's will.

GREGORY: Good. Yes. War is *not* the worst that could happen.

MATILDA: And what, in your view, would be ...

GREGORY: The damnation of souls! Falsehood! Eternal death to all those misled by Satan!

MATILDA: We might be looking at that as well.

GREGORY: That, *that* is what I am here to prevent!

MATILDA: Well, while you're at it, how 'bout if we stop a war too.

GREGORY: At what cost? At what loss of men's eternal souls? What comes after?

MATILDA: I don't know, your Holiness. I don't see that far. I've seen war, and it sickened me.

HUGH: As it sickens all who behold it.

GREGORY: How about you? Henry? Are you sickened by war too? Or is that like asking a smith if he feels sickened when he shoes a horse.

HENRY: I am a soldier; I fight; I kill. Since I was thirteen. It is an ... ugly necessity.

GREGORY: All right. Do you agree that war beckons?

HENRY: If we cannot, through our decisions, prevent it.

GREGORY: It's your business. Do you want it prevented?

HENRY: Very much so, your Holiness.

HUGH: And right now, this moment, war seems inevitable. Unless...

GREGORY: I relent. He repents and I relent.

HUGH: That is how I see the situation.

GREGORY: But. You also concede that I, *that I* am capable of seeing further, are capable of seeing truer.

MATILDA: Well, you're the Pope. Your judgments are infallible.

GREGORY: Infallible, yes! Infallible! Mark you, Marchioness, infallible.

HUGH: Which does not mean incapable of error.

(GREGORY stands horrified.)

GREGORY: (Sputtering) You ... you ...

HUGH: Sententio professio Cephas. You are Peter, Cephas, and on this rock will I build my Church, and hell itself shall not prevail against it.

GREGORY: Yes! Peter, Cephas!

HUGH: Divine revelation is itself Trinitarian, as befitting God from whom it is received. Scriptorum, Magisterium and Tradition. Scripture, Inspiration, History. And it can only be ex cathedra when regarding the Church itself.

GREGORY: No! You err! I have resolved this, in my Dictatus Papae!

HUGH: I am familiar with...

GREGORY: You know its precepts! First: that the Roman Church was founded by God himself.

HUGH: Indeed. Second, that the Roman Pontiff alone can be considered Universal.

GREGORY: And third. Third! That I alone—*alone!*—can depose or reinstate bishops.

HUGH: Or your legate can, fourth.

HENRY: All the way to twenty-first. That the Roman Church has never erred, and that it never will err, from now till all eternity.

GREGORY: I forget that you can read. Yes. Dictatus Papae. Dictates of the Pope and Papacy.

HUGH: But eighteen, your Holiness. Eighteen. That no one but the Pope may retract any sentence. No one but you. But that you can, yourself, retract any statement. Does that not suggest the possibility of ... missteps? Misstatements?

MATILDA: Plus, Gregory, some of us have known you for a good long time. You're a man; you wipe your arse as all men do.

GREGORY: All right.

(Deep breath.)

I'll admit, I'm angry.

HUGH: We know that, your Holiness.

GREGORY: I know you both to be loyal to the Church. I'm sorry if I intimated otherwise.

MATILDA: We're here. I'm here. And made my castle yours. But this is ultimately a matter for a Pope and Emperor. You two, Henry and Gregory. Sort this out, while I fetch you something to eat.

(Starts to go. Turns back.)

If we're Christians here, we should all wish for peace.

GREGORY: I am here to save men's souls. I'm indifferent to our bodies.

MATILDA: *(Under her breath.)* Not what it looked like earlier, tucking into that duck.

GREGORY: I can excommunicate you as well, Marchioness!

MATILDA: You are protected by my armies!

GREGORY: They will obey me.

MATILDA: You think so? I wouldn't want to put that to the test, if I were you.

GREGORY: I can promise eternal life...

MATILDA: And I can withdraw my knights from your service.

HUGH: *(Smoothly stepping in.)* I believe that what the Marchioness intended to say...

MATILDA: *(Comes back.)* No. Don't speak for me, Hugh, it's annoying. Your Holiness; you claim this is all a political ploy, that Henry's confession is politically motivated. Very well; let's talk politics.

GREGORY: Candor, at last.

MATILDA: We're on a knife's edge here, Gregory.

GREGORY: You address me as Your Holi...

MATILDA: I'm going to call you Gregory, and you're going to like it. And even 'Gregory' feels strange in my mouth. We've known each other too long to hide behind titles.

GREGORY: Go on.

MATILDA: All right. Henry is Holy Roman Emperor; he commands forces from Rugen to Modena, and from Cologne to Provence.

GREGORY: And I command the Church.

MATILDA: For now. There's a synod of German bishops meeting at Worms, ready to declare you anti-Pope. Again. That's in part what you're facing—schism in the Church. *Again.* And if it comes to war? Florence may join you, Venice will almost certainly join him. You'll lose Aquitaine, he may lose Languedoc. With William in England now, who knows where he'll fall; I doubt he's lost his appetite for conquest, and with him comes Flanders. Normandy's got William's boys slitting each other's throats; whoever wins will join the opposite side of their father, I think. Aragon and Catalonia will follow Toulouse, and join Provence. And: the key, I need hardly remind you, will almost certainly be Tuscany. Sitting right between you, in Rome, and him, in German lands. Tuscany.

HUGH: And Tuscany means you, Marchioness.

MATILDA: Yes. So you'd better be nice to me.

GREGORY: And you remain loyal.

MATILDA: To the Church? Yes! To the Papacy? Certainly. To you personally? When have I ever given cause to doubt it? But when I see you making a mistake of this importance...

GREGORY: I am Bishop of Rome!

MATILDA: Having never previously served as a bishop, or even a priest. You've been a monk, and a curia administrator. Tread lightly.

GREGORY: I am Pope.

MATILDA: And behind that certainty? Do I hear doubt?

GREGORY: You do not.

MATILDA: Well, try that then. Might be good for you.

GREGORY: Doubt?

MATILDA: Doubt. Otherwise known as humility. As for me, I've lent you my castle, so you could talk it out. Both of you. That's where I stand; don't make too much of it. Look, I was going to get food for you, you keep making me argue.

(Heads off.)

HUGH: Your Holiness. We are just twenty years past a Grand Schism. Was not your Dictatus written in response to it? We've lost Byzantium; we've lost Constantinople. The Body of Christ is divided. Deplorable, unnecessary, unsupportable tragedy, no? Is the next step really to be further schism? A German church, an Italian one?

GREGORY: We are the Roman Church.

HUGH: And Henry is Roman Emperor, only located, permanently, in German lands. But 'only Rome is universal?' You wrote that as an answer to the Eastern Church, am I not right?

GREGORY: What about Matilda? Tuscany would not support me?

HUGH: I expect she hasn't decided.

GREGORY: What of Cluny? You'd join the Emperor?

HUGH: As with the Marchioness, I haven't made up my mind.

GREGORY: You would risk excommunication...

HUGH: I would risk hell itself to hold the Church together.

GREGORY: Even against me?

HUGH: We have been friends all our lives. I love you like a brother. He is my godson. I love both of you. But I would set that love aside, if that's what it took to save the Church.

GREGORY: And I would excommunicate you both, Matilda and Hugh, my two closest friends.

HUGH: We know. Can we not discuss this as leaders? As men of Christ?

GREGORY: I am your Pope. We can only save the Church if you stay loyal to me!

HUGH: I don't know that to be true.

GREGORY: Decide. Declare. Tell me, here and now. Where do you stand?

HUGH: Here. In the snow, here and now. Here.

GREGORY: No! I want your loyalty, your personal loyalty...

HUGH: This is too important for personalities.

GREGORY: *(Pause.)* And you insist that's not disloyal?

HUGH: I represent no party, no soldiers, no nation on earth. I am here in Christ's name, on His Holy errand. I am here to make peace; I will not take sides otherwise.

GREGORY: And that's it, is it. That's what the Papacy has come to. Impudence and insolence from every monk and abbot.

HUGH: I do not believe that you have heard insolence from my lips, your Holiness. Candor, yes, and my most careful analysis.

GREGORY: *(Glares, then relents.)* All right.

HUGH: Listen to wisdom, your Holiness. There's a deal to be made here, one good for the Church and the Empire. Don't spurn it.

MATILDA: *(Entering.)* Here we go; the duck's gone, but I do have bread. Henry, I know you're fasting, but I have a skinful of wine, if it's not gone to vinegar. And bread for when you want it.

HENRY: Thank you Marchioness. Not yet.

MATILDA: So? Progress?

(No answers)

HUGH: What is the year?

MATILDA: The year? Why in the world...

HUGH: To make a point. All right. 1077. MLXXVII. But it wasn't so long ago when it was 1000. Anno Domini. Just ... M. M, for Mary, for Martyrs, M for Matthew and for Mark. It seemed ... auspicious, did it not? For Christ's holy return? And throughout Christendom, fasting, and fervent prayer, and

confession and repentance. And belated blessed death to the Jews, Your Holiness. Slaughtered in Christ's holy name, in similitude of His death on the Cross.

GREGORY: I hadn't been born. My father remembered it, and I've heard tales. My grandfather barely survived it.

HUGH: And did survive by converting, and dedicating his son, your father, to Christ.

GREGORY: You are the only people on earth who know that side of my history.

HUGH: And then it was past. And still, Christ did not return. "Even so, I come quickly," he said, but 'quickly' means in *His* Holy time, *His* Divine patience. We'd gotten it all wrong, all of it, and most especially when we attacked Jewish villages and burned their synagogues. We crucified our Lord yet again. Committed violence towards the least of his brothers. And still He delays His coming. And still we wait.

GREGORY: And men, disheartened, chose dreadful men as Pontiffs, chose whoring fool after whoring fool.

HUGH: We don't seem to read His will very clearly, do we?

MATILDA: We sure don't.

HUGH: You say you are willing to risk war, to risk further schism. If such be God's will. And none of us question God's will in this matter. If war there must be, then war must needs come; if His Will requires schism, then so be it. Glory be to His Holy Name. But can we not work for peace?

(A pause. GREGORY nods toward HENRY.)

GREGORY: I don't think he's sincere.

HUGH: What if he's not?

GREGORY: It's my role as confessor...

HUGH: To hear his good confession. But if he lies, if he *is* insincere, we still avert war, do we not? By being here, by meeting, by saying the words we say, whatever our intentions. If he lies, then let God judge him. Let him roast in the exquisite torment of hell for all eternity, let demons rend his flesh, let fiery darts burn out his eyeballs and demons rip out his liver, and all the rest of it. Does it matter, here and now, how sincere he is? May I suggest that it behooves us all to seek a peaceful resolution?

HENRY: Meanwhile, I'm here. I've confessed; I will confess longer if you wish.

(GREGORY stares at HUGH and MATILDA.)

GREGORY: *(Decision turns to HENRY.)* You repudiate your letter?

HENRY: I do.

GREGORY: You acknowledge me as Bishop of Rome and High Holy Pontiff.

HENRY: I do.

GREGORY: As Pope Gregory, seventh of that name?

HENRY: I do.

GREGORY: You wrote as dictated by Lucifer, as urged by Satan, as prompted by the Father of Lies?

HENRY: I did.

GREGORY: And you abjure and reject Satan and all his wiles?

HENRY: I do.

GREGORY: And confess that you were invested by this office, that you owe fealty to this calling?

HENRY: I do.

GREGORY: And you stand now, conscience clear of any deception or intention to deceive.

HENRY: Without guile, or intention to deceive.

GREGORY: *(Pause. Reverts to anger.)* No. No, you're trying to deceive, everything about you is intended to deceive. You are a, what's the word, a histrione...

HUGH: An actor.

GREGORY: Histrione. We see it in churches. Priests who fancy themselves Christ himself.

HUGH: Does not the priest, in a sense, transubstantiate...

GREGORY: You know what I mean. Pretending. Moaning and sighing, rolling their eyes, as though they are, themselves, in person, suffering on the Holy Rood. Holding a thorn in their palms, stabbing themselves and revealing, Holy Jesu!, wounds on their hands. It's become quite the problem. One priest administers the eucharist properly, without a lot of hysterics, and sees his congregants walking three miles down the road to celebrate mass with someone more dramatic. It's mass; it's not supposed to be some kind of show.

HUGH: The Regularis Concordia...

GREGORY: Yes! Specific instructions were given, guidelines offered. Still. We see it. The histrione/Priest. It's another problem I mean to correct.

HUGH: Properly so.

GREGORY: And you say: actors? There are such people?

MATILDA: I've seen them. Actors. Rather like minstrels. Rather jolly: they cavort about, whapping each other with sticks on the rump, and falling over most amusingly. And sometimes saying quite wicked and funny things about ... well, people like us. Yourself excepted, Father Hugh.

(HUGH nods serenely.)

GREGORY: I get the picture. People who go about pretending they're someone they're not. The very pattern of sinful pretense and hypocrisy. Not stalwart Christians, forthrightly themselves! No, sneaking skulking frauds, *actors*. Histriones. They should be denied the Holy Sacraments.

HUGH: They are.

GREGORY: And a good thing, too! Actors.

(Spits.)

That's you. Pretending. Pretender.

HUGH: And I repeat, your Holiness. If that's so ...

GREGORY: He's damned. All right. So you stand now, Henry, Holy Emperor of Rome, before your superior, the Bishop of Rome, and declare your willingness to subject yourself to Church discipline.

HENRY: Absolutely.

GREGORY: Without hesitation, without reservation?

HENRY: In all matters.

GREGORY: Including the matter of holy investiture.

(Pause.)

Do you swear, now, before the Holy Office and Person of the Pope, to obey Church discipline in regards to investiture.

(Pause.)

HUGH: *(Under his breath.)* Come on, lad.

MATILDA: Henry...

GREGORY: Do you swear allegiance and fealty to me, to the Pope, to the Church, in regards to investiture?

HUGH: One word, and it's done...

GREGORY: Do you, Henry, swear allegiance to me in regards to investiture?!?!?

(A pause)

HENRY: Well, I thought perhaps we could talk about that.

(HUGH and MATILDA: violent explosion of breath.)

GREGORY: I knew it! I knew it! I knew this was a false confession!

HENRY: Your Holiness!

GREGORY: So smooth, so practiced, every answer perfect...

HUGH: Your Grace, could we perhaps...

MATILDA: That's it, that's all, what was I thinking? You're a bigger fool than I ever...

GREGORY: Deceiver! Liar!

HUGH: Your Holiness, if you will allow us briefly to remonstrate...

MATILDA: This is *the* issue, Henry. The *only* issue...

HUGH: This could mean war, lad, you know that? You do know that, right; this is war.

HENRY: I just want to talk about it.

MATILDA: I won't support you, you know that, you just lost Tuscany, and with me, you've also lost...

GREGORY: You remain excommunicate!

HENRY: Hugh, come on...

HUGH: Your Holiness...

GREGORY: No! No contrition, no repentance, no examination of conscience. We have one issue before us, one, one issue alone, and on that issue...

HUGH: But if you will allow us to...

GREGORY: If this leads to war, God will hold you responsible, if this leads to schism, the souls lost will be on your ledger...

HUGH: Give us one more chance to...

MATILDA: Henry, you fool...

HENRY: Where do you get your water?

(A pause. They all stare at him, at a new HENRY, relaxed, curious.)

HUGH: What?

HENRY: I've never been to Rome, as you know. It's strange, isn't it? You said it, Hugh: I'm Emperor of Rome, Holy Roman Emperor. But I've never actually been there. Nor my father. Nor his. All of us Emperors of a place we've never visited. But you've been there, Father Hugh. You've told me of it. And I wondered. Where does Rome get its water?

MATILDA: He's lost his mind.

GREGORY: I don't have to listen to...

HUGH: Hear him out.

(GREGORY: glares at him, but does not leave.)

HENRY: I've heard—I don't know this, but this is what I've heard—that Rome once had great water. Huge aqueducts, bringing fresh, sweet, clean spring water into the city. And that those aqueducts can still be seen. But they don't work anymore.

HUGH: It's true.

GREGORY: This is pointless, you are falsely penitent, you will suffer the pains of hell.

HENRY: And I'm still excommunicated. And our differences remain.

GREGORY: Our differences! Our differences; you make it sound like some neighborhood squabble. You reject the authority of God's Church on ... what are you doing?

(As HENRY has gone to where he hid his shoes.)

HENRY: *(Sitting to put on his shoes.)* So we're done. Our business is concluded. I'm still excommunicated, the German bishops will meet, our armies gearing up for combat. It's over. Right?

GREGORY: Over.

(Starts to head back to the castle.)

HENRY: So I thought we might still have a conversation.

GREGORY: Why?

HENRY: My army's a day's march away. I doubt I could get there today. You could leave right now, and still face several days journey to Rome. We have a moment, have we not?

GREGORY: Our business is concluded.

HENRY: And I won. You could kill me, I suppose, or try to, but I doubt the Marchioness would allow it. You don't want this castle sacked, do you?

MATILDA: I could hold you for ransom.

HENRY: My men have begun their march here. They'll be here soon enough. Matilda, you said something of a wineskin?

MATILDA: Um... all right. Bread?

HENRY: Thank you, I'm absolutely famished.

(Breaking off a piece.)

So, Gregory, even if you did kill me, or you Matilda, it would make no difference. Conrad, my son, and heir, is but three years of age, but my lieutenants have their orders and will fight on his behalf. In fact, it will be easier to recruit. You can't excommunicate a three-year old, and men won't mind fighting to avenge his martyred father, or to depose an anti-pope. And my bishops remain at Worms, ready to act. So from here, I'll leave, head north, probably have to fight Rudolf of Swabia. I think he thinks he's got

my job; we'll see. And you'll leave going south.

(Stands, takes a few tentative steps.)

That's much better.

GREGORY: So you're prepared. For war.

HENRY: I've just won the war.

MATILDA: How do you figure?

HENRY: The issue is recruitment. I didn't need to be forgiven, I just needed to be seen as having asked for it. Hundreds saw me, walking barefoot across the Alps; I made sure of taking my shoes off when approaching a village. You rebuffed me; that's on you.

HUGH: We will witness, we will describe your insolence, your intransigence.

HENRY: And it will be seen as so much war-time misinformation. No, my bishops will meet, and the new pope will be the one best answer to a pope who is ... deliberately pig-headed.

HUGH: Your Grace...

HENRY: Soldiers won't serve an excommunicate. But when we're both excommunicates, when we're both serving *a* Holy Pontiff, elected by *some* bishops, German or Roman, it'll be easy enough to rebuild my army. And I don't lose on the battlefield.

GREGORY: We'll see who loses, we'll see who wins.

HENRY: In the meantime, could we not ... talk?

GREGORY: You are an enemy to God. Number 26: he who is not at peace with the Church shall not be considered Catholic.

HENRY: That's you as well as me, Hildebrand; we'll both be enemies to *a* Pope.

HUGH: Gregory, your Grace.

HENRY: Of course. Sorry, your Holiness. One last time: We both need to be off soon. But surely we have a few minutes first to talk.

MATILDA: About water?

HENRY: Well ... yes. Matilda, you're right, this bread is delicious. I don't suppose you have a cheese as well?

MATILDA: This one's pretty mild, if you scrape off the mold.

HENRY: Thank you, I'm very grateful.

GREGORY: You're going to sit there, eating bread and cheese, drinking wine... !

HENRY: I'm going to walk about first, get some circulation in my feet. Hugh, you've told me, Rome, the

city is one huge ruin. Didn't you say that? Massive buildings, homes, coliseums even, room enough for a million people. A million. Inconceivable number, that one. And you told me that you doubt there are, what, thirty thousand living there now? Living in cracked and broken structures, living in whatever buildings still keep out the rain. What was it you said that one time?

HUGH: Remind me.

HENRY: Rome was sacked ...

HUGH: Five hundred years ago. But they still haven't gotten around to cleaning up the mess.

HENRY: That's it. But perhaps you can't. It's just too big a project.

HUGH: No doubt, your Grace.

(As HENRY strips off his hairshirt.)

HENRY: Glad to be rid of that thing.

MATILDA: Your back?

HENRY: A trick from Geoffrey; stripe it with nettles, and it looks rather like lacerated flesh. Rome, then. A million souls. And they could live there, all in one place, because they had water. And you don't anymore.

GREGORY: This is pointless.

(But he doesn't leave.)

HENRY: What would you say my job is, Hugh? I'm Holy Roman Emperor; what does that mean?

HUGH: Stability, I'd say. Holding the empire together.

HENRY: Yes! And from the age of thirteen, that's what I've done. Whether it's Slav pagans invading Hamburg, or war against the Lutici and the Margrave of Saxony, or Otto of Bavaria, or Berthold of Carinthia. Or Rudolf of Swabia. Petty rebellions, revolts and conflicts; every count and princeling, it's pull on the armor, mount the horses, and off to war again. Do you know the hardest part?

MATILDA: *(When no one else speaks up.)* What?

HENRY: I have no fixed city from which to rule. Where I am, that's my kaiserpfalz; I'm not allowed a single castle.

MATILDA: Mixed blessing, that.

HENRY: Oh, is the wind shifting again? Sorry.

MATILDA: We're off soon enough.

HENRY: To your own castle, so you know the route. But do you know how hard it is just to find places? Say I'm in Mainz; that's not difficult to find, it's right on the Rhine. But finding a Swabian army from

there? Hardly any roads, terrible maps. You end up just asking people; ‘did you see an army anywhere around here?’

HUGH: I imagine that’s so.

HENRY: But then, every once in awhile, you find a road. And I mean a real road, smoothly paved, even, straight. Even overgrown, it’s so much better than the goat paths we normally use. Or cutting our way straight through a forest. And they’re old, ever so old. A thousand years old. They’re Roman.

GREGORY: All right.

HENRY: What happened to us? What went wrong? I’m Holy Roman emperor? And I feel like a real Roman would spit if he saw us, disgusted at our ... presumption.

GREGORY: I still don’t see how...

HENRY: I want to fix things. I want to get back to where we were; Romans, an Empire. Water, and roads...

HUGH: Yes.

HENRY: A man could once walk, from Gaul to Brittainia to Rome to Numidia, all in perfect safety, and all on good roads.

MATILDA: A dream, now.

HENRY: Yes! And we simply cannot ever make that happen now. You know that as well as I do. No possible way.

MATILDA: Why not?

HENRY: There’s not time. Look at me now—I had to deal with this, and Rudolf of Swabia had always fancied himself emperor, and took this opportunity to try to seize power, so I have to put him back in his place. Another war. And no sooner will that crisis be over than there will be five more waiting.

HUGH: True enough.

HENRY: I feel like I’m in a village, thatched roofs everywhere, and a fire starts. And I dash from hut to hut, doing what I can, and meanwhile four more fires demand my attention.

MATILDA: I know that feeling. And you can’t stay anywhere. Shit piles up.

HENRY: And I look at you. Hugh. At Cluny.

HUGH: Well, your Grace...

HENRY: How many monasteries have you founded?

HUGH: Nine hundred. Perhaps more. I correspond with them, but couldn’t give you an exact total.

HENRY: I don’t suppose there’s more wine?

MATILDA: *(Hands him another skin.)* Here.

HENRY: Thanks.

21 more pages to the end of the script