

TIMELINE

screenplay by
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based on the novel by
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previous screenplay by
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EXT. NEW MEXICO DESERT -- DAY

An endless, flat desert landscape. A Mercedes drives down an absolutely straight two-lane road.

INT. MERCEDES -- DAY

The DRIVER struggles to stay awake. He fiddles with the stereo to change the CD. Suddenly -- a shape appears in the driver's peripheral vision. He snaps his head up to see a man lying on the road in front of him. The driver slams on the breaks as hard as he can --

EXT. MCKINLEY HOSPITAL -- DAY

The Mercedes skids to a stop outside the small hospital.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM -- DAY

The driver of the Mercedes is talking to a nurse as the man who was lying in the road is rushed off in a stretcher.

MERCEDES DRIVER

(frantic)

I didn't hit him. I swear. He was just lying in the middle of the highway!

INT. EXAMINATION AREA -- DAY

Two DOCTORS and four nurses swarm around the man from the road. They remove a filthy brown tunic which covers the man from head to toe. An oxygen mask is placed over his nose and mouth

DOCTOR 1

He's bleeding internally.

DOCTOR 2

From what? There's no sign of trauma.

The heart monitor alarm SOUNDS.

CUT TO:

EXT. ITC CORPORATION -- BLACK ROCK, NEW MEXICO -- DAY

A cluster of buildings set against rocky desert foothills.

INT. ITC CORPORATION -- DAY

JOHN GORDON, a well-built man in his 40s, strides down the hall with a serious look on his face. His bearing and gait suggest a military background. Gordon pushes open a door marked "Robert Doniger, Chairman" and walks past two secretaries without so much as a nod.

INT. DONIGER'S OFFICE -- DAY

ROBERT DONIGER, 38, talks on the phone with his tennis-shoe clad feet up on an enormous desk. As a kid he got beaten up regularly for being a geek. The cheerleader he asked to his high school prom laughed in his face. As of 11am this morning his net worth was 6.3 billion dollars.

Gordon enters and motions for Doniger to hang up. Doniger puts his hand over the receiver.

DONIGER

(curt)

What?

GORDON

Taub's dead.

Doniger's face completely changes.

DONIGER

(into phone)

Got to call you back.

Doniger hangs up.

GORDON

He landed in the middle of Route 37. Motorist saw him, brought him to McKinley. Doctors couldn't figure out what the hell was wrong. His heart kept stopping...he was bleeding internally. So they did an MRI.

Doniger shuts his eyes...

GORDON

It showed the walls of his heart weren't lined up right. Almost as if it had been sliced into layers and put back together, only a tiny bit off. Of course they promptly concluded their MRI machine was broken.

DONIGER

Jesus. We can't let them do an autopsy.

Doniger thinks for a moment.

DONIGER

Get the body. He's got no relatives. We've got power of attorney. Get the body. Tell them he's...his religion requires that we bury him right away.

GORDON

And if they balk?

DONIGER

We gave McKinley two million dollars last year. They won't balk.

CUT TO:

EXT. DORDOGNE RIVER VALLEY, FRANCE -- DAWN

We look out over a large-scale archeological excavation of a medieval town (CASTELGARD). Just beyond the excavation, above ground, are the remains of monastery. At the edge of the site are several trailers.

The sky is still mostly black. In the east the black is just giving way to deep blue and purple. It's 4:20 am. And dead silent. Not even the birds have begun to chirp.

FIND a tent off by itself, away from the trailers. We hear stirring -- and then a man emerges from inside. His name is ANDRE MAREK (35). He is tall and strong. He surveys the stillness and quiet of the world around him and he seems pleased.

SERIES OF SHOTS -- MAREK -- DAWN

Marek does a series of stretches, then pushups and sit-ups.

He walks among the ruins of the monastery. The sky to the east is a fiery orange now. The sun is just below the horizon.

INT. KATE ERICSON'S TRAILER -- DAWN

KATE ERICSON (29) lies in bed with CHRIS HUGHES (21). Kate is attractive, but not beautiful. Chris could be a male model. Judging from the twisted sheets and the sweat on their unclothed bodies, they've been up for a while...

KATE

We can't keep doing this....

CHRIS

Why not?

KATE
I feel so guilty every time.

CHRIS
See, now, you need to talk to a shrink
about that.

There's a twinkle in Chris's eyes when he says things like that.

KATE
(rolls her eyes)
I've got to get up.

Kate is perpetually anxious. Chris is perpetually laid back.

CHRIS
The meeting isn't for three hours.

KATE
I have to get ready. I have to
prepare for it.

Chris suppresses a smile.

KATE
What? I have responsibilities. You
don't take anything seriously.

CHRIS
Not much.
(innocent voice)
But I'm still young. I'm finding
myself. And, thankfully, I have an
older, wiser...more responsible woman
to show me the ropes.

Chris is a complete smart-ass. But he takes such glee in it you
can't help but like him. Kate smiles, shakes her head, as she
walks to the shower.

EXT. SMALL HILL -- DAWN

Marek stands atop a small hill adjacent to the excavation site
and watches the sun rise.

The moment is broken by the SOUND OF A GENERATOR kicking on
nearby. He turns, looks with disdain at the trailers behind him.

A moment later a PIERCING ALARM CLOCK goes off in one of the
trailers. He throws up his hands in disgust.

EXT. CASTELGARD EXCAVATION SITE -- MORNING

Kate makes her way to one of the pits. She's wearing a gray sweatshirt bearing the orange and black shield of Princeton University.

The pit is covered with a large tarp to protect both the artifacts and lights and equipment underneath it. Kate climbs down the ladder and flips on the switch to the generator. It CLANGS to life.

VOICE

Ahhh! Turn it off.

Kate spins to see Marek.

KATE

You scared the shit out of me, Andre.

MAREK

I hate the sound of that thing.

KATE

What are you doing in here so early?

MAREK

Looking for someplace quiet.

Kate flips off the generator.

KATE

Sorry.

MAREK

It's amazing how hard it is to find that, even out here. You have to get up at four a.m.

There's a flash of something in Kate's eyes. Marek catches it.

MAREK

Yes, I saw Chris go into your trailer.

KATE

Oh, God.

She's mortified.

KATE

Oh, God.

Marek grins.

MAREK

(fucking with her)

Now, technically you're his boss, right? Or are you his teacher? Is he getting course credit for working on this dig?

KATE

Stop it. Stop. I'm so embarrassed. Oh... I have to end it.

(beat)

I was lonely and I just.... Don't you ever get lonely...eight months out here?

MAREK

All the time.

(sees she's taking
this really hard)

I'm not judging you, Kate. He's a good-looking kid. You guys like each other. There's nothing wrong with that. And don't worry -- I'm not going to say anything.

KATE

God, if the Professor found out...

MAREK

He will, eventually. He'll deal with it.

KATE

How come you never have anybody out here? I see the way women look at you. Plus, you've got the accent. American girls love that.

Marek smiles. There is a breezy comfort between these two, almost as if they were brother and sister.

MAREK

I'm not very good at casual relationships. If I do it, I tend to do it all the way. And I have to be dragged into it. Believe me.

KATE

By what?

MAREK

Forces beyond my control.

KATE

Has it ever happened?

A beat.

MAREK

Once.

KATE

And?

MAREK

It ended.

KATE

Why?

MAREK

You'd have to ask her that. It was her decision.

Kate looks at her friend. She catches the briefest glimpse of emotion in his eyes before he turns away.

CUT TO:

INT. FIELD LABORATORY TRAILER -- DAY

PROFESSOR EDWARD JOHNSTON is 62 years old, but he has the energy-level of one of his undergraduates at Princeton. He wears a tweed jacket. Even in the field. Right now, the Professor is chatting with his technologist, the good-natured, if slightly nerdy, DANIEL STERN (30s).

STERN

The arches.

Stern points to a topographic map of the site on the wall.

THE PROFESSOR

The ones we think are from the original monastery.

STERN

Exactly. I was able to date four samples from the dirt around the arches. They came back around 1220. Which is before the original monastery was even built, right?

A puzzled look on the Professor's face.

THE PROFESSOR

Yeah...almost 100 years before...

A long pause... And then a light bulb goes off.

THE PROFESSOR

Wait a minute...

(suddenly excited)

The soil...is it mostly decayed wood?

STERN

How did you know that?

THE PROFESSOR

I love what I do, Dan. I love it.

EXT. CASTELGARD EXCAVATION -- DAY

Graduate and undergraduate students work in various pits. FRANCOIS DONTELLE (early 20s) an undergraduate from the University of Paris pokes his head out of one of the pits.

FRANCOIS

Hey, we found something! Hey!

MOMENT'S LATER

Marek makes his way down into Francois's pit.

MAREK

What is it?

FRANCOIS

You've got to see it for yourself. I can't believe it....

Francois leads Marek past several undergraduates to Chris, who shakes his head like he's in complete disbelief. He steps out of the way to reveal a half-buried skeleton -- a skeleton wearing a three-pointed black pirate's hat, an eye patch, and holding a plastic pirate's sword. The students crack up.

CHRIS

(through laughter)

I had no idea pirates made it so far inland in France.

Chris realizes that Marek isn't even smiling.

CHRIS

Come on, Andre -- this might not rate a full belly laugh from you, but it definitely rates a smile.

MAREK

You just contaminated the site.

CHRIS

Oh, give me a break. It was a joke.

Kate arrives.

KATE

What's going on?

Marek points at the pirate skeleton. Kate gives a half smile, but like Marek she hardly sees this as uproariously funny.

MAREK

Anything that comes out of that site that's not from the right time period calls everything else into question.

Marek looks at Kate -- as if he expects her to weigh in as well. Chris looks to Kate too -- only he's expecting her to give him support.

KATE

It just makes us look bad. Like we bend the rules for fun. And if we'd bend them for fun, then maybe we'd bend them for other reasons...

CHRIS

You guys have no sense of humor.

(beat)

For the record, we documented the find fully before we did this. I'm not a complete idiot.

Chris hands her a roll of film and a detailed diagram -- then walks away.

INT. PROFESSOR'S TRAILER -- DAY

The Professor's desk is piled high with books and papers. A laptop is open, connected to the internet. Marek and Kate stand with the Professor.

THE PROFESSOR

I know.

He points at the pirate gear on a nearby table.

THE PROFESSOR

I talked to him about it. You two were right to come down hard on him -- that's your job as the site managers. But don't worry too much. In the scheme of things it's not that big of a deal, especially since they'd already documented everything. By the

(MORE)

THE PROFESSOR (CONT'D)
way, I pulled almost the identical stunt when I was on my first dig. I was 19. Except it was a Red Sox uniform. I think Chris knows that story.... Anyway, we've got bigger, more exciting fish to fry, which I'll tell you about at group meeting.

EXT. CASTELGARD EXCAVATION -- DAY

A grassy field with several pits around it. The entire excavation crew is here -- 15 people. The Professor is addressing them. His Socratic instincts have already taken over:

THE PROFESSOR
Who can tell me what happened on November 1st 1380? Undergraduates only.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT
Siege of La Roque.

ANOTHER UNDERGRADUATE
The day La Roque fell. The day the French finally vanquished, once and for all, the English laying claim to land in this part of France.

THE PROFESSOR
Excellent, Tanya. I see somebody actually read the books you were supposed to before you came here.
(beat)
Who can tell me why the castle fell? The English army was three times the size of the French one and yet the castle still fell.

Total silence.

THE PROFESSOR
Come on, people. Nobody can tell me why La Roque fell in that crucial siege?

Marek and Kate smile at the Professor's method. They know what he's about to say next:

THE PROFESSOR

Well that's good because nobody knows. One theory is that a secret passageway into La Roque was built during the castle's original construction in the early 1200s and that the French finally discovered the passage on November 1, 1380 and used it to surprise the defending English army. Most historians have discounted that theory as far-fetched.

(beat)

Not any more. We just dated the arches Kate and her crew uncovered recently in Pit 3. They were built in the early 1200s, long before the monastery above them. Dan Stern did tests on the soil there and he found that it's nearly 100% decomposed timber. Stone arches with a lot of timber between them. That smells like a tunnel to me....

The Professor tips his hat to Kate.

THE PROFESSOR

Congratulations to Kate and her crew.

The others give a quick round of applause.

THE PROFESSOR

In other news, at 2 p.m. I'm off to the airport to go visit our benefactor, Mr. Doniger, in New Mexico. Any of you clowns need to see me before Saturday you've got an hour.

LATER -- EXT. CASTELGARD EXCAVATION -- DAY

The meeting has broken up. People are back in their pits.
FIND Kate and Chris together, out of earshot from the others.

CHRIS

You're going to publish a book on this. You're going to get tenure. You're going to be an academic star...

Kate isn't looking at him. She's looking at the ground. Finally she looks up at him.

KATE

We have to stop seeing each other.

CHRIS

What do you mean?

KATE

I'm breaking up with you.

That stops Chris cold. The smile fades from his face.

CHRIS

What? Why?

KATE

I'm eight years older than you.
You're my dissertation advisor's
son.... You know why....

Chris just stares back at her, totally stunned.

CHRIS

Step-son...

KATE

You know what I mean.... It can't
work....This is hard for Kate, but she's doing her very best not to show
it... There is a long pause.

KATE

Say something.

CHRIS

(numb)

What's there to say. You've obviously
already made up your mind. Doesn't
seem like it was a very tortured
decision, either...Chris looks at her for a moment, then turns and walks away. He
looks like he's just been punched in the gut.STAY ON KATE -- a beat -- then tears well up in her eyes.
Whatever her mind is telling her, her heart is clearly not in
this decision.

CUT TO:

EXT. PIT #1 -- DAY

A small handwritten sign on a wood post labels this pit
"Castelgard Manor House." Chris, Francois, and Marek have just
uncovered a large metal ax. It is dual-bladed, with each blade
facing opposite directions. Francois takes pictures and Marek
scribbles some quick notes in the log as Chris lifts the ax out
of the dirt. Chris struggles with its weight.

CHRIS

You know the guy who invented this thought he was a genius.

(mock infomercial voice)

"One blade gets dull, no problem. Just turn this ax around and you can keep chopping wood for another whole week. Peasants, serfs, even the log cutter to the king can use this Amazing Discovery..." And all was well in the kingdom -- for about two days - - until some poor jackass went out to chop wood...

(demonstrating)

...and promptly impaled himself in the back with the spare side of his ax.

Francois is laughing. Marek is amused.

CHRIS

By the way this thing weighs a fricking ton.

MAREK

Imagine swinging it with one arm. That's how they did it.

CHRIS

No way.

MAREK

And this ax wasn't used to chop wood. It was used to chop people. During battle. That's why it's two sided.

(beat)

Can you imagine the damage this thing did?

Marek pretends to be holding the ax. He swings it back and forth as if engaged in a fierce battle. At the end he brings the invisible ax up high and then down with all his might and a loud grunt.

MAREK

Yah!

We get the sense that Marek's imaginary foe has just died a horrible death. Chris looks over at Francois.

CHRIS

(like a 15 year-old would say it)

Psycho.

EXT. NEAR TRAILERS -- DAY

Chris and Marek clean the newly discovered battle ax on a work table. Marek notices that Chris is watching Kate, as she works in the distance. She's obviously still very much on his mind.

MAREK

If it means anything...she's taking it pretty hard. You want to talk about it.

CHRIS

Not really.

EXT. EXCAVATION -- DAY

Marek and Stern eat lunch outside. Francois climbs out of the "Castelgard Manor House" pit and walks towards them quickly.

FRANCOIS

I think you should look at this.

Marek eyes him suspiciously.

FRANCOIS

I'm not setting you up for a joke this time. Promise. We just broke through to some kind of underground chamber.

EXT. PIT #1 -- "CASTELGARD MANOR HOUSE" -- DAY

Kate and Marek shine a flashlight through a three-foot wide hole at the base of a freshly dug trench. Through the hole they can see a partially collapsed room.

MAREK

We've got to get inside fast. If there are any artifacts in there, they're already getting destroyed.

FRANCOIS

Why?

MAREK

It's the first time they've been exposed to outside air in 600 years. Paper, cloth, paint. They all get destroyed within a few hours.

KATE

We go in there and the ceiling collapses, we'll get buried alive.

MAREK

You losing your nerve, Kate?

That's all he has to say. We see the expression on Kate's face change. She's going.

SAME -- TWENTY MINUTES LATER

Kate and Marek are lowered with ropes through the hole in the ground into the buried room. They are outfitted with breathing apparatuses, head-mounted flashlights, and two-way radios.

INT. BURIED CHAMBER

The ceiling is already partially collapsed in several places. Mounds of dirt cover the floor, along with the remains of a several pieces of burned furniture.

KATE

What do you think?

MAREK

This place burned to the ground.

KATE

There's nothing about that in the historical record.

Some dirt breaks loose around the ceiling -- pebbles fall, then dirt around it. Kate and Marek spin to look at it. They could be buried.... Then it stops. They both take deep breaths...

MAREK

People like us make the historical record, Kate, doing things like this.

Kate spots a slight protrusion in a mound of earth. It's surface has a faint sheen. She brushes it with her hand, picks it up.

KATE

Look. Some sort of documents. And wrapped in oilcloth, they just might be intact.

MAREK

Oh, this is beautiful.

KATE

Take them. Get them up to Stern so he can start preserving them.

Marek takes the bundle of documents and walks toward the opening. On his way there he spots something shiny on the floor, something reflecting in the sunlight streaming through the hole...

MAREK

Wait a minute.... What the hell is
this?

EXT. EXCAVATION -- DAY

Kate and Marek are out of the chamber. They pull Francois and Chris over to a work table, out of earshot from the rest of the group.

Marek removes a cracked glass lens from his pouch. He places it on a work table, then looks up at the two undergraduates as if he expects a response.

CHRIS

What?

Chris and Kate avoid eye contact. They're uncomfortable around each other, not sure how to act, still in pain from the breakup.

MAREK

We found it in the chamber.

CHRIS

So?

Marek looks into Chris's eyes. Then into Francois's.

MAREK

Guys, this isn't funny.

CHRIS

What the hell are you talking about?

KATE

You guys didn't drop this in that
hole?

Chris and Francois look at each other, then back at Kate and Marek.

MAREK

It's a bifocal lens.

CHRIS

Okay....

KATE

Nobody's been in that room for six
hundred years. Except for you two.

FRANCOIS

We didn't go in.

CHRIS

I'm missing your drift here. Maybe I'm stupid but...what the fuck are you two getting at?

MAREK

Nobody's been in that room since the 1300s.

CHRIS

I heard that part.

MAREK

Bifocals weren't invented until 1785. And since this one says Bausch and Lomb on the side I'm going to go out on a limb and guess it's even more modern than that...

INT. WORK TRAILER -- DAY

Marek and Kate.

KATE

Maybe the Professor put it in there. As a test of something.

MAREK

How? That hole wasn't there until this afternoon. The Professor's been gone a day and a half.

KATE

Maybe Chris and Francois found the hole a few days ago. Maybe they told Professor Johnston and he decided to test us--

MAREK

Kate -- no way. It contaminates the site. For real this time. Before any pictures. Before any documentation. The Professor would never do that and you know it. Did you call him?

She nods.

KATE

Cell phone didn't go through. I left a voice mail. I called Doniger's office too. Left a message with his secretary.

CUT TO:

INT. ROBERT DONIGER'S OFFICE -- ITC CORPORATION -- DAY

Doniger sits with John Gordon.

DONIGER

One of his graduate students just called here. The girl, Kate Ericson.

GORDON

What did you tell her?

DONIGER

I didn't take the call.

CUT TO:

EXT. EXCAVATION -- DAY

Marek and Kate stand together, looking out at all the pits, at the dozen people working amongst them.

MAREK

Someone's playing a trick on us. It's as simple as that.

KATE

I don't think it's Chris. Or Francois. I really don't.

Marek doesn't look like he agrees with her. A beat.

KATE

I can't stop thinking about him, Andre.

Marek looks at her. Just then, Daniel Stern approaches. He looks like he's just seen a ghost.

INT. FIELD LABORATORY TRAILER -- DAY

Computers and scientific instruments cram the trailer. Stern points at the stack of parchment documents Kate and Marek recovered from the underground chamber. The oilcloth has been removed and set aside.

STERN

I examined each of the documents. One by one.... They were lists of what was stored in the room at various times. Nothing special, nothing unusual. Then...at the bottom of the pile...I see this:

Stern pulls out a parchment, places it on the table. In a hastily written scrawl it reads:

Help Me.
E. A. Johnston
4/7/1357

STERN

In case you're wondering, that's the
Professor's handwriting.

Marek and Kate look back at him.

STERN

I'm assuming this is a clever prank,
of course. But one that's easily
disproved. So I carbon-date the ink.

Stern slides a white piece of paper across the table. It reads:

AD 1361 ± 47 years.

Marek looks at the piece of paper. Stares at it. Kate does too.

STERN

I repeated the test three times.

(beat)

If the Professor really wrote
that...he wrote it 600 years ago.

MAREK

Your machine's broken.

STERN

If it were broken, the date should
come up wildly different each time you
do a separate test.

Marek and Kate just stare at Stern.

STERN

I sent samples out to the labs in Les
Eyzies and Toulouse. I told them it
was urgent.

CUT TO:

INT. OUTER OFFICE OF ROBERT DONIGER -- ITC CORPORATION -- DAY

One of Doniger's two secretaries is on the phone.

DONIGER SECRETARY

I'm sorry, Miss Ericson he's in a
meeting right now. No. Well I
don't know where he is, but I'm sure
he's just fine...

CUT TO:

INT. PROFESSOR'S TRAILER -- DORDOGNE VALLEY -- DAY

Kate hangs the phone up. Looks at Marek.

KATE

Same run around from ITC. I left
another message on the Professor's
cell.

INT. DONIGER'S OFFICE (INNER OFFICE) -- ITC CORPORATION -- DAY

Doniger and John Gordon.

GORDON

We're going to have to tell them
eventually.

DONIGER

(snaps back)

Don't tell me what I have to do.

GORDON

We need them, Bob. If we're going to
pull this off I don't see any other
way.

INT. PROFESSOR'S TRAILER -- DORDOGNE VALLEY -- DUSK

Marek holds the cracked bifocal lens he recovered from the
underground room up to his eye, then he compares that lens to the
lens from a pair of glasses on the Professor's desk. Kate
watches him.

MAREK

It's the same prescription...

EXT. EXCAVATION -- DUSK

Chris sits alone watching the sun set. He stares out at it, his
face revealing pain and loneliness.

EXT. NEAR MAREK'S TENT -- DUSK

Kate and Stern come up behind him.

STERN

We got the results from the labs in
Les Eyzies and Toulouse. The ink is
600 years old...

KATE

We've got to tell the others.

MAREK

Not everybody. Not yet. For now,
just Chris and Francois.

INT. THE PROFESSOR'S TRAILER -- NIGHT

Marek, Kate, Stern, Chris, and Francois are crowded into the small trailer around a speaker phone. Muzak is playing. Everybody is waiting.

The music ends and a taught voice comes on:

DONIGER (PHONE V.O.)

This is Bob Doniger. Mr. Marek?

MAREK

Yes. And four of my colleagues are here with me. We're calling about Professor Johnston. We are concerned for his safety. Is he missing?

DONIGER

No. We know exactly where he is.

Something in his tone sends a shiver down Marek's spine. The others' too.

MAREK

Then can we speak to him?

DONIGER

Not at the moment, I'm afraid.

CHRIS

You're kinda dancing around the question, Mr. Doniger, don't you think? Maybe I can help you focus: tell me where my step-dad is or I'm calling the FBI and reporting a kidnapping.

Dead silence on the line.

KATE

Mr. Doniger?

DONIGER

Be at the airport in Bergerac in eight hours. There'll be an ITC jet waiting for you. I'll be on it. If you want to speak to Professor Johnston you'll have to fly back to New Mexico with me, so pack your overnight bags.

Everybody looks at each other. Then there's a click on the other end of the line. Doniger has hung up.

EXT. AIRPORT AT BERGERAC -- DAWN

A corporate jet touches down.

EXT. TARMAC -- DAWN

From afar we see Doniger outside the plane greeting each member of the group (Marek, Kate, Stern, Chris, and Francois).

INT. CORPORATE JET -- DAWN

The plane has just taken off. Doniger looks out the window as the ground recedes below them. Marek and the others could care less about what's outside, they're looking at Doniger.

MAREK

Are you going to tell us what's going on?

DONIGER

I think you already know, Mr. Marek. Don't you?

MAREK

I have a piece of six-hundred-year-old parchment with the Professor's writing on it. In six-hundred-year-old ink.

DONIGER

Yes, you do.

MAREK

But I have trouble believing it.

DONIGER

At this point, it's simply a technological reality. It's real. It can be done.

MAREK

Time travel?

Doniger sits back in his chair, lets the question hang out there for a moment, then, with a self-satisfied smile:

DONIGER

Yes, Mr. Marek. Time travel.

The group sits in a stunned silence...

KATE

So the Professor...you're saying--

DONIGER

Professor Johnston is, right now, in the year 1357, somewhere in the Dordogne Valley. He's stuck there. He got separated from the people he went back with. Time ran out and they had to return.

KATE

This is some elaborate joke you and the Professor cooked up, isn't it? You two are old friends from when you were teaching at MIT. The Professor's notorious for--

DONIGER

It's not a joke, Miss Ericson. I'm hoping you'll take a trip to the 1300s to help us find him and get him back here safely.

More silence.

MAREK

How...? How does it work? How is it possible?

DONIGER

The first thing you have to do to understand anything in modern physics is discard the notion that the way we perceive the world through our senses corresponds to ultimate reality. Cause it doesn't.

CHRIS

Meaning?

DONIGER

Quantum mechanics says that a thing can be in two places at the same time. String theory says there are eleven dimensions, not three. Two years ago, physicists shot a beam of light into a room and recorded the fact that the light beam left the room before it entered.

CHRIS

Huh?

DONIGER

Exactly. My point is simple, in physics, things aren't what they seem. Not even close. Even the most basic ideas we use to make sense of the world in every day life -- things like "a cause has to occur before it's effect" -- get overturned pretty quickly when you start studying what the laws of nature really are.

(beat)

Have any of you heard of a wormhole before?

KATE

In a Star Trek episode.

MAREK

It's like a trap-door in the cosmos that leads directly to another time and place.

DONIGER

Yeah, more or less. Well, they exist. We found the first one in 1999. Since then we've found eight more. Only one of them has remained stable enough for us to traverse it on a regular basis. That particular wormhole leads to the Dordogne River Valley in 1357. It wasn't an accident that I called my old friend, Professor Johnston, two and a half years ago and offered to fund a full-scale dig in the Dordogne.

KATE

(turning to Stern)

Are we sure this isn't a joke?

Doniger smiles.

STERN

Wormholes are predicted by string theory, but only at the sub-atomic level. We're talking billions of times smaller than the head of pin. The idea that you could fit a human being through them is...it's absurd...

DONIGER

You can't fit a piece of paper through a telephone wire either -- but you can send a fax.

The group stares back at Doniger. What this man is saying is crazy.

CHRIS

He just wants to fax us back to the 14th century. What's the big deal?

STERN

This is mind-boggling. You're saying you break us down into a stream of electrons...

DONIGER

$E=MC^2$ right, Dr. Stern? You're a physicist. Energy and matter are just two sides of the same coin. We're used to turning matter into energy. We do it all the time when we burn gasoline or wood. It's a little trickier to turn energy into matter, but we've figured out how. That's how we reconstruct you on the other side of the wormhole.

The cabin is very quiet.. None of the students knows quite how to react.

DONIGER

Theories and explanation only go so far. You need to see this with your own eyes. In a few hours, you will.

EXT. ITC CORPORATION, BLACK ROCK, NEW MEXICO -- DAY

A helicopter lands in front. Doniger steps out, followed by Marek and the rest of the group.

EXT./INT. ITC CORPORATION -- DAY

Doniger leads the others towards the front door of the building. He limps slightly. John Gordon is standing, waiting for them. Along with another man, Stephen Kramer, ITC's Chief Technologist.

DONIGER

This is, John Gordon. He's a retired Army general. He's the number two man here at ITC. He led the trip back with the Professor. And this is Stephen Kramer, our Chief Technologist.

GORDON

Gomez is ready to do the test-run if you want to give them a demonstration.

INT. ITC CORPORATION -- DAY

Doniger leads the group through a double set of steel blast doors. Security cameras are mounted everywhere. The group moves into an industrial-looking metal cage. The doors close behind them and the cage begins to descend.

DONIGER

We're going down 1500 feet. The machines are at the base of an old mine.

STERN

That's to shield the process from any outside influences? Radio waves. Stray electromagnetic interference.

CHIEF TECHNOLOGIST

We don't like taking any chances. We also use a great deal of water shielding as you'll see below.

KATE

Why did you allow the Professor to go back? Why let him in on this secret you've been keeping from the whole world? There must have been a reason.

Gordon looks at Doniger, who nods, granting Gordon permission to explain.

GORDON

This chip around my neck, we call it a "marker." It's like the key that we use to open the wormhole and hold it open when we're in the past. It's what allows us to recall the travel devices and return home. All the second-generation markers have an eighteen-hour expiration time on them.

DONIGER

The first generation markers, which we discontinued a month ago had no expiration time.

(holds up an old
chip, double the
size of Gordon's)

That means the old markers held the wormhole open the whole time we were in the past. I lost one of these markers three months ago. I fell and broke my leg and they rushed me back to present day to get medical treatment.

(reveals shin cast)

At first we weren't particularly worried about the marker. It takes a fingerprint ID to activate so we weren't worried about some medieval peasant showing up in our transit room or anything. But there was something we didn't realize.

MAREK

What?

DONIGER

When a wormhole stays open for too long it seems to allow energy to slip from the present into the past.... It's difficult to explain, but we think if it keeps happening it could cause changes to the earth's climate.

CHRIS

(wise-ass)

Like maybe another Ice Age or something?

DONIGER

Actually, yes. That's what the models predict.

Doniger's face is expressionless. He's dead serious.

FRANCOIS

Oh, that's nice. That's great...

There's a beat of silence while everyone takes this in.

DONIGER

Of course as soon as we realized all this we sent a team back to try to recover the marker, but they couldn't find it. So we sent a second team back with a tracking device. The tracker showed the open marker was sitting inside the manor house at Castelgard. Somebody had obviously picked it up. Maybe they mistook it for a piece of jewelry. Who knows?

GORDON

That's why we needed help from the Professor. See, we'd never stepped out into the world. We'd never moved more than a hundred yards from the time machines. And we knew that without expertise in the social and political environment of the day we wouldn't survive very long, much less be able to talk our way inside that manor house to get near the open marker.

INT. UNDERGROUND BUNKER -- TIME-TRAVEL LAUNCH AREA

The group exits the elevator and moves through a pair of massive glass doors which are filled with water. Then through a second set of doors and into an enormous, brightly lit, cavernous space.

They move out onto a metal passageway, suspended fifty feet above the floor. Below them are a group of cage-like devices at the center of a maze-like pattern of semi-circular, water-filled walls.

KATE

Are those...?

Doniger nods. The group looks down at the machines.

KATE

They're not what I expected.

MAREK

How did you lose the Professor?

CHRIS

Yeah, that's a pretty big screw up, don't you think?

Doniger looks at Gordon, who bristles:

GORDON

The Professor decided the way to gain access to the manor house was to pose as a wealthy scholar on route to the University at Bologna in Italy. He would say that his entourage was attacked by robbers on the road and ask for a day of hospitality. He felt our ignorance of medieval customs would raise too many questions so he asked us to stay hidden. If anybody discovered us we'd claim to be survivors from his entourage.

CHRIS

So what happened?

GORDON

He didn't return. Our markers were about to expire. We had to leave.

MAREK

Are you sure he's still alive?

GORDON

The last time we saw the Professor he was walking with the Lord Oliver, the English nobleman who controls Castelgard. They seemed to be having a friendly conversation. So I have to believe the Professor's still alive.

Marek looks over at Kate.

KATE

The history books say Oliver was a pretty good guy. He had a reputation for hospitality and compassion.

INT. CONTROL BOOTH -- DAY

Jammed with computers. The group looks down at the time machines through thick glass windows.

Two men in medieval garb step onto the transit floor below, go to the center of the maze structure and get into separate cages.

CHIEF TECHNOLOGIST

Each machine can safely handle two people, but we always send everyone in their own machine just to have redundancy in case of a malfunction.

DONIGER

Gomez and Baretto are ex-marines. The two of them and John here will accompany whoever travels back to help us find the Professor.

TECHNICIAN

Field buck.

Doniger looks at a computer screen which shows an undulating three-dimensional surface with a jagged upswing in the middle.

STERN

What's that?

DONIGER

(physicist to physicist)
Because our field-sensing equipment is so sensitive we're able to detect subtle discontinuities in the local magnetic field. We register them up to two hours before an event. It means the machines are returning here.

KATE

What machines?

DONIGER

(pointing down at Gomez and Baretto)

Theirs.

KATE

But...they haven't left yet.

DONIGER

I know. It doesn't make sense. Look, quantum mechanics is just so counterintuitive. It's like that beam of light I was telling you about that left the room before it entered the room.

Doniger sees that Gomez and Baretto are inside the cages. They give the thumbs-up. The Chief Technologist gives them thumbs-up back.

CHIEF TECHNOLOGIST

Here we go.

A dense array of green lasers fire toward the center of the time machines putting dozens of green spots on the faces and bodies of Gomez and Baretto. The lasers then begin to rotate around the two men making green horizontal streaks across their bodies. The

men stand motionless as the cages rotate rapidly around them -- spinning faster and faster.

The group jumps at a SUDDEN RAPID CHATTERING, like a machine-gun.

DONIGER

That's the clearance check: infrared sensors verify the space around the landing sight. We need an open area about the size of a basketball court in order to safely land or take off with the time machines.

In the transit room a spinning ring descends from the top of each machine.

DONIGER

Now watch closely. It's fast.

Deep violet lasers shoot out from a thousand points on the machine. The two ex-marines seem to glow white-hot for an instant, and then a burst of blinding white light flashes inside the machine.

Everyone covers their eyes for a moment...and when they look back they see that the machines are smaller -- they have pulled away from the cables they were attached to at the top.

Then another flash, and another, and another -- each time the machine is smaller afterwards. Within seconds the machine has reduced to the size of a marble on the floor -- and then, with one final flash it disappears...

KATE

We're supposed to do that?!

The group stares in amazement.

FRANCOIS

What does it feel like?

DONIGER

I'm not going to lie to you. It's painful. But the pain only lasts three to four seconds.

STERN

Have the machines ever malfunctioned?
Has anybody ever--

DONIGER

We've never had an injury in the transmission process.

The CAMERA FINDS Gordon, who looks away when Doniger says that. Gordon's afraid his expression might give away the truth...

A series of rapid flashes appear on the floor of the transit room.

STERN

What's that?

DONIGER

They're coming back.

STERN

Already?

CHIEF TECHNOLOGIST

This was just a preliminary check. To make sure the wormhole is stable and calibrate the landing site.

With each rapid-fire flash the time machines grow larger. The group stares down at the transit floor in awe. The flashes stop. A mist swirls around the two time machines. Then the two ex-marines step out of the machines and wave up to the control booth.

KATE

Incredible...

EXT. ITC CORPORATION -- DAY

The archeologists confer outside, away from Doniger and Gordon.

STERN

I'll be honest with you, when Doniger said they'd never had an accident, that nobody'd ever been injured or killed...I didn't buy it. With a technology this sophisticated it's...

CHRIS

What are we supposed to do, leave my step-dad there, just because it's risky. I'm going.

ON KATE -- looking at him. A woman looking at the man she loves. Even if she's denying it to herself.

MAREK

Even if the Professor wasn't stuck there, this is a chance to do something that's...just unimaginable... Doing this is really living life. To the absolute fullest...

A beat. Stern shifts uncomfortably.

STERN

I just...personally...I can't do it.
But I wouldn't jump out of a plane
either. You probably do that for fun.

Marek shrugs -- doesn't everybody skydive for fun?

MAREK

You're a physicist, Dan. You'd be
lost back there anyway.

(beat)

Kate?

KATE

Scares the hell out of me, but...if my
going will help save the Professor...

She smiles nervously. Chris watches her.

KATE

It'll definitely be a story for the
grandkids.

CHRIS

(instinctively
protective)

Wait a minute. It's the Middle Ages.
They didn't treat women very well back
then. It's a lot more dangerous for
her to go then for us.

MAREK

They didn't treat anybody very well
back then.

KATE

And actually, a lady is more likely to
get the benefit of chivalry, to be
treated with a sort of deference.

Chris doesn't respond. He looks away.

MAREK

Here's the thing, Chris: Kate's
architecture background, her area of
expertise... She's the only one of us
who will be able to find her way
around if we go into Castelgard or the
monastery. We need what she knows.

Chris nods unenthusiastically. Marek looks at Francois.

MAREK

Francois?

Francois has been keeping his mouth shut.

MAREK

We need somebody who speaks French. Castelgard and La Roque were both held by Lord Oliver and the English in 1357. But most of the surrounding countryside was held by the French. If we run into them and we can't speak to them fluently...

FRANCOIS

I'll go.

Francois pats his brow. He's obviously very nervous.

MAREK

Are you sure?

FRANCOIS

I'm sure.

INT. TRANSIT PREPARATION ROOM -- ITC CORPORATION

Marek, Chris, and Francois put on medieval garb.

MAREK

Like this.

Marek shows Chris and Francois how to roll the top of their medieval linen underwear up into their belt so (with no elastic band) the underwear will stay up.

CHRIS

If we make it back from this trip I'm taking this idea straight to Armani.

There's a knock on the door. Doniger enters.

DONIGER

Can I speak to you for a minute, Andre?

EXT. HALLWAY -- ITC CORPORATION

Doniger and Marek.

DONIGER

I don't think Chris should go.

MAREK

He has to.

DONIGER

Look, you're an obvious choice with your knowledge and your physicality. I understand what Kate and Francois add in terms of knowledge. But Chris...he has no particular skills...and, frankly, he seems a little immature.

MAREK

He has to go.

DONIGER

Why?

MAREK

It's his step-father back there. His only family, really. He never knew his real father. His mom died when he was 12. The Professor's all he's got.

INT. TRANSIT READY ROOM -- ITC CORPORATION

Through the window we can see the transit chamber. Kate and Francois stand in medieval garb. They look scared. The reality of what they are about to do is really sinking in.

The sounds of the TICKING CLOCK nearby are heightened. We can hear their HEARTS THUMPING. Fast and furious.

MOMENTS LATER

Marek and Chris have joined Kate and Francois in the Ready Room. Gordon is handing each of them a leather pouch. In the background we can see Gomez and Baretto preparing their gear.

GORDON

In the pouches you'll find a few modern items. Several medicines -- antibiotics, etc. Fire-starting cubes. They're waterproof. Just pull the string. A bottle containing ethyle dihydride. Spray it in someone's face and they'll be unconscious within six seconds.

CHRIS

That's all we have to defend ourselves?

Gordon holds up a dagger.

GORDON

This too. It's what they use to eat with, but if necessary it can be used to defend yourself.

CHRIS

Against a sword? Yeah, okay.

(beat)

I hope you guys have something a little more substantial. Like maybe a handgun or two.

GORDON

We don't. We can't risk it.

FIND Baretto across the room.

BARETTO

(to himself)

Fuck that, General.

He glances inside his medieval coat where two grenades are hidden from view.

BACK TO Gordon, completely oblivious:

GORDON

We bring modern weaponry back there, something that isn't quickly biodegradable...God forbid we lose it...we could change the course of history. In any case our main defense back there is to avoid conflict. If we get in real trouble, we hit the markers and get out.

(beat)

That's all I've got. Does anybody else have any questions?

Nobody says anything. But we hear rapid HEARTBEATS again, getting quicker and quicker....

GORDON

All right, let's do it...

INT. TRANSIT CHAMBER

Everyone is strapped into their individual time machines. They are in a circle, facing each other. Marek, Kate, Francois, Chris, Gordon, Gomez, and Baretto.

TECHNICIAN'S VOICE (SPEAKER V.O.)

Twenty seconds.

CLOSE on the archeologists: Marek wears a slight smiles. He actually looks invigorated. His three colleagues aren't faring quite as well. They're scared shitless.

TECHNICIAN'S VOICE (SPEAKER V.O.)

Ten seconds.

Francois is sweating profusely, barely keeping it together.

Kate crosses herself. She tries to calm herself with yoga breaths.

The sound of POUNDING HEARTBEATS....

TECHNICIAN'S VOICE (SPEAKER V.O.)

Five seconds.

Chris looks over at Kate. Their eyes meet.

TECHNICIAN'S VOICE (SPEAKER V.O.)

Four...

CHRIS

I love you, Kate.

TECHNICIAN'S VOICE (SPEAKER V.O.)

Three...two...

Tears well up in Kate's eyes...

TECHNICIAN'S VOICE (SPEAKER V.O.)

One.

KATE

I love you--

A BLINDING FLASH -- And a SUCKING ROAR cut Kate off --

Her eyes go wide as she watches Chris and the others pull away from her at mind boggling speed. From Chris's perspective the same thing is happening.

Another BLINDING FLASH --

Everything else around Chris is getting larger and larger -- huge, massive.

The floor is the size of a city block, then a huge field, then an endless black desert. And now the ridges in the floor become cliffs -- the cliffs close in -- blackness....

CUT TO:

INT. CONTROL ROOM

Stern watches as his friends shrink rapidly toward the floor and then disappear into the mist at the floor of the transit chamber.

Silence. They are gone.

CUT TO:

BLACKNESS

Silence, and then in the distance, glaring white light. Coming closer. Fast.

And then sounds rising to a roar.

And then massive shapes, a hundred miles high. But they are shrinking fast -- incredibly fast --

Now we see the shapes are trees -- giant trees. Five miles high. A mile high. A thousand feet high. Five hundred feet --

EXT. A CLEARING SURROUNDED BY FOREST -- DAWN

Through a ground-hugging mist we see Kate doubled over in pain. Next to her is Chris and Marek in the same condition. And Francois.

MAREK

(through gritted
teeth)

I think we made it.

FRANCOIS

Oh, shit-- Jesus Christ--

Now we see Gordon, Gomez, and Baretto. Everyone is here. Everyone made it.

GORDON

Get out of your machines and the pain
will go away quicker.

Everyone gets out of their cages, which promptly fade from view.

GORDON

The machines are drifting away from
present time. Don't worry about that.
It's normal. They'll come back when
we call them. Welcome to 1357
everyone.

Kate looks over at Chris. Their eyes meet.... They smile at each other through the pain... The intimate smile of two people in love...

INT. CONTROL ROOM -- ITC CORPORATION

A technician notices an amplitude swing on one of his monitors.

TECHNICIAN

Field buck.

STERN

Already? They're coming back already?

DONIGER

No. Remember, we register field bucks up to two hours before they return. This is good news. It probably means they find the Professor quickly, recover the marker, and come back.

EXT. CLEARING -- DAWN

Marek looks all around him, a sense of wonder in his eyes.

MAREK

Look at size of these trees. Smell the air.

GORDON

There's more oxygen in the air. The earth is covered by forest instead of concrete.

A flight of huge birds flies overhead. Marek watches them. He is completely enthralled by his new environment.

A faint rumbling sound breaks Marek's reverie --

ON KATE: She notices the same rumbling, then something else, twigs snapping --

FRANTIC VOICE

Hide, woman!

Kate spins to see a boy break through the wall of foliage.

BOY

For the sake of God! Hide!

The boy's face is red with exertion. He is covered in sweat. His accent is unmistakably French.

Kate stands frozen..

BOY

Hide!

As the boy passes her, he shoves her hard toward the woods.

The rumbling has become distinct. Men on horses. Coming fast.

Now everything happens with lightning speed. Seven fully-armored knights gallop into the clearing.

(Note: These are decidedly not "knights in shining armor." Their armor is filthy and dented. Misshapen from previous battle. And there is absolutely nothing "romantic" or "chivalrous" about them. These men are vicious, pitiless soldiers.)

Our group scatters toward the surrounding forest. Gomez was standing right where the knights entered the clearing though. He doesn't have a chance. The lead rider, who wears a black plume on his helmet, draws his sword and swings it hard--

Gomez's head is severed from his body. The fleeing body literally keeps running, a few more ghostly steps then it collapses.

Seeing all this from behind a nearby tree, Kate gasps loudly-- Horror fills her eyes.

ON MAREK, thirty feet from Kate: he sees Gomez's head get cut off.

ON KATE: A hand comes from behind her. Covers her mouth. A petrified instant, then she sees that it is Chris.

CHRIS

Shhh. Come on...

FIFTY FEET AWAY

Francois cowers behind a thorn bush. Gordon goes to him.

GORDON

Just stay low. Don't move. I'll be back.

Gordon slinks away, leaving Francois alone. The Frenchman is terrified.

EDGE OF THE CLEARING

Baretto stands behind cover. He watches as the knights move through the forest, swords at the ready --

BARETTO
(low voice)
Time for a taste of the New World,
motherfuckers.

He pulls out a grenade.

FWOMP! -- An arrow slams into his shoulder! Baretto is caught completely by surprise.

BARETTO
Fuck!

Baretto pulls the arrow out of his shoulder. Sees the wound is bad so he reaches for his marker and hits the button on the side. His time machine slides back into view in the clearing. He sprints for it, pulling the pin on his grenade as he does.

He winds up to throw the grenade when-- FWOMP! FWOMP! Two more arrows strike him with incredible force in the back.

Baretto staggers forward, the grenade still in his hand. He falls into the time machine, which vanishes in a flash of white light.

CUT TO:

INT. TRANSIT CONTROL ROOM -- ITC CORPORATION

A technician's eyes go wide.

TECHNICIAN
Whoa! Field buck. A big one.
They're coming back, right now.

Stern looks at Doniger with concern.

STERN
There's no way they found the
Professor that fast.

Doniger doesn't know what to say. The flashes of white light have already begun --

TECHNICIAN
It's Baretto. He's injured.

Doniger and Stern see Baretto on the floor of his machine. There's blood everywhere.

STERN
Jesus--

FIND the grenade as it rolls out of Baretto's lifeless hand.

BOOM! -- The grenade explodes.

The massive water-filled shields around the transit pad shatter. Water sprays and sloshes everywhere. The window to the control room cracks and pits like a car windshield hit with a thousand shots from a pellet gun--

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST -- DAWN

The fleeing boy rushes through the woods. A knight on horseback is in close pursuit.

The boy runs into dense underbrush. The knight follows, slashing at the tangle of foliage.

On the other side of underbrush the boy emerges, his clothes torn by thorns.

An instant later the knight emerges--

THUMP!

A heavy tree branch swings out of nowhere and slams into the chain-mailed torso of the knight -- sending the man flying backward off his horse--

The boy spins to see this because he didn't swing the branch -- it was Marek.

The knight grunts as he hits the ground. But he is up quickly and he charges Marek with his sword held high.

Marek dives out of the way of a ferocious swing of the sword. Then another. Marek's only advantage is mobility. With no armor at all he can move faster than the knight -- but the knight's sword moves like lightning.

SWOOSH! The blade misses Marek's head by a fraction of an inch. Marek is thrown off balance and falls to the ground.

The knight raises his sword for the death blow--

Marek sees the sword flash in the sun -- sees the blade coming down -- his eyes widen -- and his right leg flashes out and clips the knight in the knee.

The knight falls sidewise and Marek springs towards him with the speed of a coiled rattle snake.

Next thing we know, the knight is lying still. Marek rolls off the top of him. Marek's dagger is embedded, handle deep, in the man's chin. From the angle, it's a safe bet that the tip of the dagger is well into the knight's brain stem.

Marek's arm and chest are covered in the man's blood and sweat. Marek stares at the blood. Stares at the dead man.

Marek is horrified at what it really means to kill another man.

His fantasies about medieval warfare, the romanticized notions he's had since adolescence, the ones we saw when he and Chris found the battle ax earlier, they are all no longer...

He stares at the blood...

VOICE

Irishman?

It is a lilting French voice. Marek spins to see the boy who's life he has just saved.

Only the boy's torn clothes reveal...

...cleavage...

The fleeing boy is in fact a young woman in disguise.

Marek's eyes move from the woman's chest to her face. Her hair had been pulled back tightly before, but crawling through the underbrush has pulled it free. It is shoulder length. Dark brown. Marek stares at it. At her face.

He is still in shock from the killing, making it especially hard for him to process what he is now looking at...

MAREK

You're a woman....

YOUNG WOMAN

Why did you help me, Irishman?

MAREK

Irishman?

Marek looks at this woman. He looks into her eyes, only now realizing that he finds her beautiful...

YOUNG WOMAN

You must go.

MAREK

There are more of them.

YOUNG WOMAN

You must go. They will kill you for what you have done. Myself they will spare.

MAREK

I can't leave you alone.

YOUNG WOMAN

They will spare me. Find your friends and hide near the river. I do not wish to watch you die for your bravery...

Marek just looks back at her. He is completely captivated by this woman...

YOUNG WOMAN

Irishman, go!

Her tone shakes Marek out of his somewhat trance-like state.

YOUNG WOMAN

Go! They will spare me.

CUT TO:

INT. TRANSIT CONTROL ROOM -- ITC CORPORATION

STERN

What the hell was that? What happened?

Stern picks himself up off the floor. Equipment is shorting out all around him. Doniger gets up and looks down at the transit room.

DONIGER

(to the Chief
Technologist)

I think that asshole brought a grenade back with him.

STERN

What?

DONIGER

Baretto -- he brought a grenade back to 1357. Something must have happened back there. He pulled the pin. How he ended up back here. With that grenade. About to explode. Dr. Stern, I have no fucking idea....

STERN

What about the rest of them? With the transit room like this... Can they come back?

Doniger looks at him. The Chief Technologist looks at him.

STERN
They can't come back? They're stuck
there?!

DONIGER
We can make repairs...

STERN
How fast?

Doniger just looks back at him again. No answer.

STERN
What if they need to come back before
you're done?

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST -- MORNING

Marek crouches low as he makes his way through the dense forest.

LOW VOICE
Andre...over here.

Marek turns to see Gordon in the bushes, motioning towards him.

GORDON
(noticing the
blood)
Jesus-- What happened? Are you okay?

Marek nods. He's still dazed by everything that happened....

MAREK
I killed a man.
(beat)
The boy they were chasing -- it was a
woman in disguise.

Gordon looks at him, processing all this.

MAREK
Where are the others?

GORDON
Baretto and Gomez didn't make it. The
others are okay. They're hiding
behind those rocks.

Marek looks toward the rocks.

GORDON

We don't have enough space to call the machines here and we can't go back to the clearing. They've got it staked out.

MAREK

Yeah, I saw.

GORDON

We could try to wait them out here, but I think it's safer to move.

MAREK

The woman said we should hide by the river.

Gordon nods.

GORDON

Let's hope she knows something we don't. Here -- take this.

He hands Marek a small religious locket.

GORDON

St. George on the outside. Patron saint of England. It opens like this.

Gordon presses and twists in a particular order and the "loket" opens revealing a high-tech electronic tracking device.

MAREK

What is it?

GORDON

It tracks the open marker. If we get within fifty feet of the marker you'll feel the locket vibrate. Press this button and a microwave pulse will destroy the open marker's circuitry.

MAREK

I almost forgot that was one of the reasons we came here....

GORDON

We need to complete this mission, Andre. There's a lot at stake.

MAREK

Why is it covered in blood?

GORDON

Gomez was wearing it. I have one, so did Baretto. Tie it to your belt, out of view. Come on, let's get out of here...

MOMENTS LATER

The entire group (Andre, Gordon, Chris, Kate, and Francois) moves cautiously through the forest. Hyper-vigilant. Hyperaware.

Suddenly -- the knights on horseback appear out of nowhere -- on three sides. They charge the group.

GORDON

Come on!

The group takes off in the only direction they can.

They run for no more than four seconds before Andre, who is in the lead, pushes through a section of thick brush to find...

...a 120 foot cliff.

A second later the others careen through the bushes to see it.

CHRIS

Oh, shit...

The pounding of horse hooves is drawing closer and closer...nearly on top of them.

MAREK

Jump. Jump!

The Dordogne river is below them.

FRANCOIS

What if it's not deep enough?

MAREK

Come on!!

Marek is the first to go. He plummets downward. Gordon follows him.

Marek splashes hard into the river below. From this high it's like hitting concrete. Gordon splashes into the water next to him.

Kate and Chris lock eyes, grab hands and jump. A moment later they slam into the water.

Francois is left alone. He clenches his fist tightly. He can't make himself do it.

WHOOSH! WHOOSH! WHOOSH! Arrows careen through the bushes, narrowly missing Francois.

He grits his teeth...closes his eyes...and jumps...

A moment later, a knight slashes through the brush to find the cliff ledge empty...

EXT. DORDOGNE RIVER -- MORNING

Francois' head pops up from underwater. He gasps for breath. The current of the river is much stronger than it looks. He is swept downstream.

He's still gasping for breath when he spots Marek crawling up on the bank of the river a few hundred feet ahead of him, just around a bend in the river.

EXT. BANK OF THE RIVER -- MORNING

Marek and Gordon help Chris and Kate up onto the river bank. Francois crawls ashore twenty feet away, spitting out water.

MAREK

Everyone okay?

Nods all around. Marek cautiously crawls up the embankment to get a view of the landscape beyond it.

MAREK

My God...

We don't see what he sees, but he turns around to the others... There's a look of wonder in his eyes... Everyone crawls up to where Marek is. We MOVE WITH THEM up and over the embankment where they see...

A spectacular vista of Castelgard village, along with it's impressive fortified manor house. A quarter-mile up the hill from the town is the ornate monastery. Here it is -- all of it -
- in three-dimensions.

Kate smiles, then laughs... For a brief moment there is genuine joy on her face.

KATE

I can't believe it. I've spent five years trying to picture this place.

MAREK

Five years...

Dozens of villagers and soldiers seem to be leaving town with livestock and other belongings. It is not an orderly procession, and it's not a frenzied exodus either. It's just that everyone seems to be leaving.... Several men stand outside the manor house loading a horse-drawn cart with framed paintings and rolled tapestries.

KATE

Where is everyone going?

Kate, Marek, and the others, all looking out at the stunning sight of Castelgard, are oblivious as several soldiers sneak in behind them.

MAREK

I can't figure it out.

The soldiers silently aim their crossbows at the backs of our protagonists....

Chris senses something and turns around. His eyes go wide...

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD NEAR CASTELGARD -- MORNING

Chris, Kate, Marek, Gordon, and Francois are chained behind an oxcart moving toward Castelgard. They trudge through ankle deep mud.

CHRIS

(to Kate)

I thought you said the guy in charge of this place had a reputation for hospitality.

Kate doesn't say anything.

FRANCOIS

Maybe this is medieval hospitality...

SOLDIER

Be silent!

The soldier hits Francois across the back with a long club. He spills forward into the mud. Then he slams Chris repeatedly until he falls too.

KATE

Stop it! Stop it!

The soldier turns to Kate and threatens her with the club. She cowers from him.

Francois pulls himself up quickly. Chris tries to get up but the chains attached to his wrists pull him off balance before he can stand. He is dragged by his arms, face down, through the mud. The soldiers laugh.

EXT. MANOR HOUSE COURTYARD -- DAY

The house is fortified and surrounded by a heavy wall. Marek, Chris, Kate, Francois, and Gordon stand in chains in the courtyard.

A large, strong, man in his forties (LORD OLIVER) enters the courtyard followed by several knights. There are several prominent scars on Oliver's body. This man is a warrior first and foremost. A man who has achieved his position by ruthlessness and brute force, not inheritance.

LORD OLIVER

I am Lord Oliver. Who speaks for you?

MAREK

I do, my Lord. Andrew.

LORD OLIVER

You speak strangely...like another who crossed my lands three days ago, the Irishman, Edward de Johnes. Do you know of him?

MAREK

He is my master, sir. Our caravan was attacked by bandits.

LORD OLIVER

So he told me.

MAREK

You have provided him hospitality?

LORD OLIVER

I have. And he returned my hospitality with insult.

That catches Marek off guard. He tries to hide his concern.

Oliver scans the rest of Marek's group...focusing on Francois.

LORD OLIVER

Who is this one? My soldier informs me that he speaks with the accent of a Frenchman.

MAREK

Lord, he is an interpreter we hired to accompany us.

Oliver nods...then thinks for a moment...

LORD OLIVER
Lock them in the tower. Except for
the Frenchman. Kill him.

MAREK
My Lord, no. He is valuable to us...

Oliver draws a dagger and slits Francois' throat.

Chris gasps. Marek's eyes widen. The group is in shock.

LORD OLIVER
Do not question my decisions.

There is a brief choking, gurgling sound, then Francois collapses
in a bloody heap.

ON CHRIS: as he looks down at his best friend... Francois eyes
close... Chris can't stand to look any more.

LORD OLIVER
(to Marek)
I am at war with the French. Their
leader, Arnaut, has sent many spies
into my midst. Perhaps you too are a
spy?

Oliver touches the tip of his dagger to Marek's neck. Francois'
blood drips onto Marek's chest...

CUT TO:

A HEAVY WOODEN DOOR

It is opened from the outside, letting in bright light. Guards
push Marek roughly into the room. Kate, Chris, and Gordon are
shoved in behind him.

The door slams shut. When they look up they see the Professor...
He is speechless.

KATE
You're alive!

PROFESSOR JOHNSTON
I...I'm....Why are you here?

GORDON
We asked them to help us find you.

Chris hugs his step-father.

CHRIS

It hasn't worked out quite the way they planned. Francois's dead. So are two marines who were escorting us.

PROFESSOR JOHNSTON

Francois? How?

MAREK

Oliver killed him because he had a French accent.

(beat)

I'm the one who convinced him to come back with us....

Marek is clearly broken up with guilt...

KATE

It's not your fault, Andre...

MAREK

No...it is. It is... I told him we needed a French speaker... and...

KATE

Andre...

(to the Professor)

Oliver's not exactly the man the history books make him out to be.

PROFESSOR JOHNSTON

No...

GORDON

What happened? Why didn't you come back to meet us?

PROFESSOR JOHNSTON

Oliver put me under house arrest.

GORDON

Why?

PROFESSOR JOHNSTON

I told him I was a scientist on my way to Bologna, like we talked about. He was suspicious. He thinks everyone's a French spy. So he asked me to demonstrate my skills. I used one of the fire-starting cubes. That was a mistake. From then on he saw me as useful. Tried to draft me into service as a military engineer. I said I had to leave. He said "no" and put me under guard.

Marek glances out the narrow slot windows of the tower. He can see the town of Castelgard is almost abandoned now. Dozens of peasants, craftsmen, and soldiers make their way out toward the forest.

MAREK

Why the exodus? Is Arnaut planning an attack?

PROFESSOR JOHNSTON

Tonight. Oliver's moving everything to La Roque to prepare for a siege. The French already control most of the countryside and the monastery.

Gordon has pulled out his St. George locket and opened it. The high-tech tracker inside reveals that the open marker is close by, though not within the fifty feet target area that would allow it to be remotely destroyed.

GORDON

The open marker is close. It's almost in range.

PROFESSOR JOHNSTON

I don't care about the marker anymore. I just want to get us out of this place. Do you understand me? Doniger can send back another team to get the marker later. It's his problem.

KATE

(points out window)

Closest place with enough room to recall the time machines is that field out there, past the outer wall.

GORDON

It's getting there that's the problem.

Marek checks the marker around his neck. When he holds his thumb on the back of the marker a tiny digital countdown fades up beneath the opaque white area atop the marker. It reads 13:07:09.

MAREK

We've got thirteen hours left.

CHRIS

We should be able to figure a way out of here by then. We're from the 21st century. We've got 650 years of knowledge on these bastards.

GORDON

We may be from the 21st century, but we're still locked in a tower, sixty feet off the ground. There are three guards outside...

THE PROFESSOR

What about the disabling spray?

GORDON

Guards took everything in our leather pouches, took our daggers...

Through the window, Marek sees a woman dragged into the courtyard by the knight we saw earlier with the black plume on his helmet. Black Plume thrusts the woman in front of Lord Oliver.

MAREK

It's her...

It's the French woman Marek helped this morning, the woman who was dressed like a boy.

She stands before Oliver, a defiant look in her eye.

Oliver hits her across the face so hard she falls over.

Marek is enraged by the sight. His compatriots have now crowded around the window as well.

Down in the courtyard, the French woman pulls herself up and stands before him again, still defiant.

LORD OLIVER

You, French, are such proud people.

FRENCH WOMAN

Yes. So you should know that my brother will never bargain with an English dog like you -- even for my life.

Oliver hits her again. She topples over.

Oliver is well over six feet tall. This woman might be five foot four. And he is hitting her full force.

LORD OLIVER

Your life is not the only thing that can be taken from you, woman...

Oliver turns to the knight with the black plume.

LORD OLIVER

Bring her to my chambers.

INT. TOWER ROOM

Kate shudders. Marek's eyes darken as he stares down at the courtyard. He turns to the Professor.

THE PROFESSOR
Arnaut's sister. Oliver's holding her
as a bargaining chip.

MAREK
What's her name?

THE PROFESSOR
I don't know.

Marek watches the French woman get dragged off. He can't take his eye off her. He can't stand what's happening to her...

In the meantime, Kate is standing at the window closest to the door. She reaches her hand out to feel the stones and the mortar on the outside.

KATE
I have an idea.

Chris knows exactly what she's thinking.

CHRIS
Are you nuts?

KATE
I've rock climbed before.

CHRIS
On a gym wall, with a safety line.

Only now does Marek turn back from the window, from watching the French woman, to see what the others are talking about...

THE PROFESSOR
That's a sixty foot drop, Kate.

KATE
What're our alternatives? Wait for
that monster down there to kill us. I
can climb around, go through the
window in the stairwell. I'll be
behind the guards.

CHRIS
Then what? You're going to overpower
two guards by yourself?

INT. HALLWAY -- OUTSIDE TOWER ROOM -- DAY

Three guards pass the time with a dice game.

INT. TOWER ROOM -- DAY

Kate is climbing out the window.

CHRIS

Kate--

KATE

No. You're going to say something
that'll make me lose my nerve.
Don't...

ON THE PROFESSOR'S FACE: something about the conversation between
Chris and Kate, the emotions, seems to go beyond what we'd expect
between colleagues...

She pulls her whole body out over the ledge... Chris can't look.

EXT. TOWER -- DAY

Kate hangs off the edge of the tower wall. If she falls, she's
dead. Period. It's six stories straight down, onto limestone.

INT. TOWER ROOM -- DAY

Chris is coming undone.

EXT. TOWER -- CLOSER ON KATE -- DAY

Kate hugs her body tight to the stone. Gently, gently, she
unclenches her left hand and slides it across to find another
hand hold.

The mortar around her right hand grip starts to crumble away.
Her left hand grabs for a hand hold. Nothing...

Her right hand is slipping. Her left hand searches frantically.

Her right hand breaks free-- Her left hand clamps onto
whatever's there... Not much.

She's slipping again.

Her right hand thrusts for a new hold. It's solid. Thank God.
She's okay...

But she's hyperventilating. Her nerves are shot to hell...

EXT. COURTYARD -- DAY

A guard patrols the otherwise empty courtyard. If he looks up -
- that's all he'd have to do -- Kate will be discovered.

INT. HALLWAY -- OUTSIDE TOWER ROOM -- DAY

A loud commotion from the room containing our group.

MAREK'S VOICE

You son-of-bitch! No wonder Oliver
suspects us... If he finds us with
this he'll kill us...

The guards have stopped playing cards.

GORDON'S VOICE

He won't know how to use it.

EXT. TOWER -- ON KATE -- DAY

She hears the arguing...tries to ignore it...tries to
concentrate. Her left hand moves close to the window sill.

INT. HALLWAY -- OUTSIDE TOWER ROOM -- DAY

The guards are at the door listening.

MAREK'S VOICE

Destroy it before he finds it.
Destroy it you son-of-a-bitch!

We can here the sounds of furniture flying. Other members of the
group are screaming.

GORDON'S VOICE

No! We need it!

The guards draw their swords and open the door.

GUARD

Back away--

Before he gets all the words out, Marek and Gordon pounce on him
from either side.

They slam him down so hard his head splits open on the stone
floor.

The second guard can't believe it.

Marek picks up the first guard's sword and swings it at the second guard, who yells out for the third guard in the hallway...

INT. HALLWAY -- OUTSIDE TOWER ROOM -- DAY

The third guard rushes to the door of the room.

An iron torch holder slams him in the back of the third guard's unhelmeted head. He drops.

Kate stands behind him. Ready to swing again if need be.

INT. TOWER ROOM -- DAY

The second guard can't believe his eyes as the third guard splats onto the floor next to him.

He turns his head slightly -- and that's the only opening Marek needs. He sword slashes into the guard's midsection. The guard stumbles. Marek hits him again. The guard tries to swing back. Marek dodges it and, like a man possessed, drives his sword into the man's belly.

The guard falls into a bloody heap.

The room is silent for a beat. Everyone looks at Marek.

GORDON

Jesus Christ, Andre...

Marek stares down at the dead man. He has killed two men in the last six hours...

Chris hugs Kate.

GORDON

(turning to Kate)

Good climbing.

(to group)

Let's get out of here.

MAREK

I can't go with you. I have to help that woman.

GORDON

What?

MAREK

She saved my life when she took the blame for killing that knight.

GORDON

You saved her life first. You can't solve her problems. You can't change this place.

MAREK

He's going to rape her...

Suddenly, we can hear the sounds of guards yelling in the distance.

GORDON

There's no way you'll get her out alive. And even if you do, what are you going to do, bring her back to the 21st century. Think! Think about this.

MAREK

I'll help her get to the French lines. Then I'll call my machine and go home.

GORDON

Andre, we need you. We're going to have to fight our way out of this field. You're not just putting your own life at risk, you're putting all of ours--

MAREK

Now you're not thinking. I'm the diversion for your escape. The guards are going to be a lot more worried about stopping me than chasing you...

The sounds of the guards are getting closer.

GORDON

Fuck!

Gordon and Chris are both armed with swords now, from the other two dead guards...

MAREK

Good luck. I'll see you in the future.

Marek runs down the hall, towards the main part of the manor house.

GORDON

(to the group)

Come on.

CUT TO:

THE PRESENT -- INT. CONTROL ROOM -- ITC CORPORATION -- DAY
Technicians swarm around the launch pad making repairs.

STERN

How much longer?

DONIGER

Calm down, Daniel.

STERN

My friends are stuck back there! I'm
not going to be calm!

CHIEF TECHNOLOGIST

Dr. Stern, we're almost there. Five,
maybe ten minutes.

Stern rubs his face, nerves are shot, ready to puke from anxiety.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARAPET -- DAY

A BOWMAN stands guard scanning the horizon for the possibility of
the early arrival of the French. He is no older than seventeen.
Bad case of acne.

A sword glints as it appears from nowhere at his neck.

MAREK

I don't want to kill you. But I won't
hesitate if I have to.

Marek takes the soldier's quiver of arrows first, then his
dagger, and long bow.

MAREK

Where's the French woman?

BOWMAN

Who are you?

MAREK

Where is she? Where are Oliver's
chambers?

BOWMAN

(scared, he points)
There. And to the left.

MAREK

How many guards?

BOWMAN

Two.

MAREK

If you're lying to me--

BOWMAN

No, sir. I swear it.

There is an awkward pause.

MAREK

I can't leave you conscious.

BOWMAN

Of course not, sir. I understand.

MAREK

Turn your head.

The bowman obeys. Marek slams him with the butt of his sword.

Hard.

Only it doesn't work. The guy just grunts in pain. Grits his teeth and grabs his ear...

MAREK

Sorry.

BOWMAN

It's okay.

Marek sheepishly motions for the guy to turn his head again. The guy does, his face scrunched up, knowing what's coming.

CUT TO:

INT. PASSAGEWAY -- DAY

CHRIS

Close it! Close it! Close it!

Chris dives back through an archway. Gordon and the Professor slam down an iron portcullis.

Chris's sword is broken in half.

GORDON

How many?

CHRIS

Six. With those frigging spiked things. The ones you swing.

CLANG!

A morning star (spiked iron ball attached to a chain) slams into the iron grate. A soldier snarls from the other side.

Chris runs around the corner to:

GORDON

(to Kate)

You know the layout of this place, right?

KATE

From the ruins.... I don't--

GORDON

Well you're all we've got. Figure out how we get out of here--

CLANG! CLANG! The soldiers keep smashing the portcullis just a few feet away, around the corner.

CHRIS

The guy who had our pouches went into a room at the north end of the courtyard.

(points out window)

If we can get them back we'd have an advantage.

Kate looks where Chris is pointing.

KATE

(overwhelmed)

I think that's the scrivener's room.... It's connected to the library. I mean, it should be...

(realizing)

Professor. The room where you left us the note. It's the library, right?

PROFESSOR JOHNSTON

Yes.

KATE

Do you know how to get there from here?

PROFESSOR JOHNSTON

No...

CLANG! CREAK! The portcullis is coming apart--

Kate looks at where they are. Two hallways they could go down. A staircase leading up or down. Four options...

GORDON

Kate--

KATE

I don't know! I'd just be guessing--

GORDON

Then guess! We can't stay here!

KATE

Shit!

She's paralyzed. She's coming apart. CLANG! CREEEEAK! So is the portcullis--

CHRIS

Look at me.

Chris is remarkably calm. He looks into her eyes.

CHRIS

You know this place. You do. What does your gut tell you to do?

And something about Chris's calm voice amidst the shouting, the clanging, the twisting tortured metal -- something about his voice and his eyes shut all that out --

KATE

Up.

Kate points up the staircase.

CHRIS

Up?

KATE

That's what my gut tells me...

Chris looks at her. Up to get down and out?

CHRIS

Okay...then we go up...

CUT TO:

INT. ANOTHER PASSAGEWAY -- DAY

A large oak door with thick iron hinge straps. Two GUARDS stand out front.

WHOOSH! UGGH! An arrow hits one of the guards square in the chest. His sword drops. He clutches for the arrow...

The second guard raises his sword ready to fight. He sees Marek forty feet away at the end of the hallway. Longbow up. Another arrow loaded.

Marek walks down the hallway -- holding the armed bow on the guard.

MAREK

Do you want to live? Then don't make a sound.

GUARD

Intruder!

Uggh! An arrow slams into him. Hard. Goes right through him and pins him to the oak door. (These bows are designed to fire 300 yards. Marek let that one fly from about twenty feet.)

The guard looks at him in shock.

Marek looks back, shrugs, as if to say, "I told you so." The guard falls to the floor.

Marek reaches down and searches for the man's keys. He can hear the footsteps of approaching guards...

He spins to see a knight running around the corner at the other end of the hall -- the knight with the black plume. Marek raises his bow -- lets an arrow fly...

It whooshes down the long hall.

Black Plume dives to the floor.

Marek loads another -- lets it fly. Whoosh.

Black Plume hugs the floor, starts backing up now.

Marek shoots another arrow down the long hall.

Black Plume ducks back around the corner.

Marek goes to the oak door. Reaches into the pocket of the dead guard and removes a set of keys. Unlocks the door and enters. Three feet in front of him is a heavy velvet curtain (a draft protector). He pulls it open to see...

Lord Oliver's bed chambers...

...and a dagger thrusting toward his face.

Marek slams himself to the wall, grabs the arm, and thrusts his sword upward into--

He stops dead. His sword is an inch from the French woman's face.

FRENCH WOMAN

Irishman--

Her hands are bound together with rope and her waist is chained to an iron eyelet on the wall.

They look at each other...

Had Marek caught himself a quarter-second later she'd be dead.

MAREK

I'm here to help you escape.

Marek uses the guard's keys to unlock her chains.

CUT TO:

INT. DARK, NARROW PASSAGEWAY -- DAY

Kate leads the group down the passageway. They are moving in the direction of the library. Only they are two stories above it.

CUT TO:

INT. OLIVER'S BED CHAMBERS -- DAY

Marek cuts the rope that binds the French woman's hands.

FRENCH WOMAN

I don't even know your name, Irishman.

MAREK

It's Andre. Andre Marek.

She smiles at him.

FRENCH WOMAN

I'm Lady Claire de Cervole.

Marek can't take his eyes off her.

LADY CLAIRE

Why do you risk so much to help me?

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY -- DAY

Kate leads the group down a wooden staircase into the library.

KATE

There. In there.

Kate points at a closed door.

Chris and Gordon move to either side of it. Throw it open.