

THE PROLOGUE

Speaking Parts: *Philip the Fair of France (Philip), Pope Clement (Clement), Lord Constable (L.C.), Jacques DeMolay (J.D.)*

Additional guards may be used through interpretations of blocking and movement.

If desired, there may be one or two throne chairs in a prominent position. Royal bodyguards are stationed around the chamber. Philip's and Clement's attendants precede and follow them, but remain at a respectful distance. Philip and Clement are engaged in earnest conversation, and their words become audible as they approach the throne chair(s).

Philip As it were through our efforts that they didst reach thine exalted purpose, they shouldst demonstrate thy gratitude to us by granting our demands!

Clement But Sire, is it not folly to further antagonize the Templars when their assistance and their wealth are essential to the success of the crusades we contemplate?

Philip It is not our custom to beg for that which we have the power to seize! Our coffers are empty while those of the Templars overflow! Dost thou dream that we shall hesitate to...

L.C. *(Interrupting)* Your Majesty, a cavalcade of Templars stands at the gates. One, who makes claim to be Jacques DeMolay, Grand Master of the Templars, states that he has but this moment arrived after a long and arduous journey from Cyprus, in response to an invitation from your Majesty to offer counsel and advice for a new crusade and seeks immediate audience to obtain further knowledge thereof.

Philip What force brought he?

L.C. His escort numbers two hundred knights armed and armored.

Philip *(Addressing Clement)* See how he flaunts his power?! This escort exceeds all bounds of reason for one of his rank. Canst thou doubt that this royal following is a deliberate affront and challenge to our authority?

L.C. *(Hesitantly)* Sire, 'tis whispered that he transports a vast treasure to the Templar stronghold and that he hath convened this escort to protect it.

Philip *(Turns to Clement and engages in empathetic whispered dialogue, with Clement agreeing reluctantly to Philip's demand at last. He then turns to Lord Constable and says...)* Bid the Templars welcome in our name and offer them food and refreshment in the great hall with all courtesy. When they hast dismounted and are taking their ease, inform Jacques DeMolay that we have granted him the honor of a private audience and conduct him alone into our presence. Then thou shalt withdraw and deliver this signet to the Captain of the Guard with our command that the train and escort of Jacques DeMolay be seized and await our pleasure. If the Templars resist, use any measures necessary to carry out our command.

Lord Constable bows, then leaves

Lights may fade and then return to prior brightness to indicate passage of time. Any other techniques of blocking or using of music or lights may be used to indicate this time passed.

Lord Constable escorts DeMolay in and brings him before Philip and Pope Clement, either of which may be standing or sitting down. Lord Constable bows and then leaves. Jacques DeMolay bows, then drops cloak, revealing sword.

Philip What means this, Jacques DeMolay? Dost thou dare come armed into the presence of thy king? Was it fear of armed violence that thou didst not lay aside thy sword?

J.D. Sire, armed violence is not feared by ones who hast met and conquered honest foes. Far more to be feared are the subtle thrusts from jealous unseen hands that pierce the spirit rather than the body. This blade, long borne through the gage of battle, has never been surrendered; yet, since thou fearest it, I will place it in thy keeping. Guard my sword well. May its touch give thee strength to defend the right. In good time, return it to me as I deliver it to thee - undefiled, and if..

Philip *(Interrupting angrily)* Jacques DeMolay, thy presumption becomes thee not. We will countenance arrogance from no one, especially not from those who seek our favor.

J.D. Nay Sire, I seek not thy favor. From afar have I come at thy request to offer counsel in the planning of a new crusade, the details of which still remain unknown to me. Wouldst thou call is presumption did I ask thee to make thy purpose known?

Philip *(Angrily)* Have a care Jacques DeMolay, least our anger cause us to forget our purpose. *(Calmly now)* Verily do we plan a new crusade, one in which an army so vast, so well equipped and trained, so powerful and united under a single command that it will sweep before it all resistance and will drive the infidel from our holy places. Thus we have planned, and we shall permit nothing to balk our aim. We lack but gold to accomplish it. It is known that thine Order hath vast treasures - treasures which should be shared by the state and church. As head of the Templars it is in thy power to open thy coffers to us, and, in return for thy service, receive from thy King his gratitude and undying favor. Think well upon it, for what we requested before, we now demand. Dost thou still refuse?

J.D. Yes Sire, on mine honor as a knight. For two centuries has the honor of the Templars been kept absolute. Dost thou think that I would betray it now? This crusade of which thou speakest is not to free the holy land, but a campaign for thy glorification. Is it envy of our Order, that thou dost demand that which rightfully ours, or dost thou emulate the highwayman by the roadside and take by force that which thou hast not the wit to earn? Rather than be a party to thy scheme, I would willingly die, preserving mine honor - though to speak of honor in thy presence were but wasted breath. Thy threats fall on barren soil, O King, and though death awaited me, still would I refuse thy demands.

Philip DeMolay, thou art indeed stubborn. *(Addressing Clement)* See if thou canst make this fool be sensible. Mayhap thy reasoning will be more to his liking.

Clement Jacques DeMolay, thou art summoned to atone for thine Order's treasons against the state by turning over to us its accumulated riches.

(Lord Constable enters and nods that Philip's commands have been carried out and returns the signet)

Thy brethren are even now being thrust into dungeons, from which duress they may never emerge, save by leave of our most beloved sovereign, Philip the Fair. Thine escape is impossible. Should his Majesty so will, thine own life is forfeit - abandoned to torture, lingering agony and inevitable death. Consider the position in which thou art placed and yield to our demands while thou canst still gain liberty for thy brethren and reward for thyself. Come, what sayest thou?

J.D. Vile and scheming villain - masking thy treachery beneath the cloth. Thy black heart and soul have been bought, and they belong to him. Though thou playest Judas-goat, I will not play sheep. The coin with which thou couldst purchase my allegiance has never been minted, nor will it ever be. *(Addressing Philip)* Sire, canst thou have sunk so low? In good faith we came hither, never dreaming thou couldst be so vile as to betray our confidence. If that be royal honor as thou see-est, might thou take counsel from those whom thou persecute? My comrades are innocent of any wrongdoing. If thou must have vengeance, let thy wrath fall upon me.

Philip Thou dost well to speak of vengeance, DeMolay, for while we can reward, so also can we punish, and it is our pleasure that thy fortitude shall be tested. Thou shalt be imprisoned. Mayhap thy silent meditations upon persuasions awaiting thee in the chamber of torture may cause thee to regret that thou didst not grasp the opportunity we have offered thee, for it is our will that the Templars shall be destroyed.

J.D. Sire, with honor preserved, prison has no terrors, and though the dungeon may become my tomb, I would die with content, knowing that I still retain the respect of my comrades. True it may be that thou hast the power to destroy our Order, but remember, O king, that I defy thee and that neither promise of reward nor threat of death can bend me to thy will.

Philip Away with him!

(Lord Constable and guards, if used, move to seize DeMolay and is rejected)

J.D. Nay! As head of the Knights of the Temple, I am not wont to be led. Treacherously disarmed I may be, and about to be imprisoned, but I am still Grand Master. My name will be revered!

DeMolay exits with Lord Constable behind. Clement leaves with his guards, if used. Philip takes DeMolay's sword and leaves with his guards, if used.