

The Fourth Nail

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ACT ONE. SCENE ONE

A ROW OF SHOPS. EACH WITH A SINGLE DOOR ON GOLDEN LANE BENEATH THE CASTLE OF PRAGUE. AS LIGHTS UP, ONE SHOP ROTATES REVEALING LABORATORY WITHIN. A STRANGE MAN SCUTTLES ABOUT IN THE NEAR DARKNESS. HAIR WILD, A LONG RATTY GOWN, TALKING UNDER HIS BREATH, CHUCKLING, STOPPING ABRUPTLY TO SNIFF THE AIR. TOUCHING THE LAB EQUIPMENT, TURNING RETORTS TO NEW ANGLES, CHECKING MEASUREMENTS, PATTING THE OCCASIONAL ALEMBIC

ARNOLDUS, ALCHEMIST

This one? **(HAND MOVING TOWARD A VIAL, INSPECTS COLORED CONTENTS)** Yes? Yes? Anyone? No? **(PAUSE)** No, not this time. No, not now. I thought there for a second but.. **(TALKING TO THE VIAL TAKES A SIP)** Nothing? Caress of the cheek...view of the deep... Nothing? Sorry, not your fault, not at all. **(SCUTTLES ON. TALKS TO EQUIPMENT AS HE PASSES)** Concentrate, darlings, concentrate. If you don't, who will. **(TO ANOTHER PIECE OF EQUIPMENT)** You! Are you ready? **(TOUCHES IT)** I think not....(Listening) What's that? Do I detect a wish for a catalyst? A tincture of the Red, perhaps? **(TURNING AWAY)** Don't we all wish, darling, sitting here as we are. **(SCURRY TO ANOTHER)** Bubble less, work more. Time ticks away infinitely but we, made of clay, I'm afraid, do not. **(TOUCHING ALEMBIC HE TOUCHED BEFORE)** Not hot yet, my dear. Bring yourself along. Yearn for the moment. Make it up if you have to. IMAGINE. But just get there. I can't do everything myself, you know. Two way street...two way street.**(CHUCKLING. STOPPING AND TALKING TO NO ONE IN PARTICULAR)** I had a dog once who would howl in the presence of a true saint. **(LISTENS CAREFULLY. SCURRIES OFF STOPPING AT COLLECTOR ON TABLE)** Hrrnrmm. He was a dreadful watchdog, I'll tell you. Howling day and night. Gave everyone the benefit of the doubt. **(MOVING AND LOOKING)** Time, time, time....there is not enough. A-n-d, is a joke the best use of it? Eh? Anybody? **(LOOKING TO VIALS FOR ANSWER)** Ha!! **(TAKES A SIP FROM A VIAL. SMACKS HIS LIPS. PAUSE)** Here it is, here it is. **(LOOKING INTO MOUTH OF VIAL)** Taken as a hole, mankind has great depth. **(SCUTTLES OFF)** Where is it? It's time almost. Has to be. I can feel it. A certain day, a sideways glance, you think you're in love, but its just your questions reflected in her eyes. And what is the question, the only question. How should I ask it not to fall away from the knowing of it? And the answer - what distillation of rare element, what happy accident recognized in moonlight, at the hands of this poor alchemist. Find the question, ask it in the true form and the answer becomes apparent - IF you can see. They go together everywhere, the hot and cold, the salt and sour, the question and its answer - a parent, each of them, to the child, a young Trismagistus, oh, so pure of heart, on his road of transcendence. **(ACCUSINGLY AT THE LAB EQUIPMENT)** If we knew what to look for. If we just knew. If my dog were here he would be howling for me, he would. **(LAUGHING)** I know he would. He travels in the presence of a saint at every turn. But we, we can't howl for everyone really.

(BLESSING PIECES OF EQUIPMENT) I bless you and you and you, SO GIVE ME THE ANSWER. **(HE FOCUSES ON A SINGLE VIAL. HE BECOMES STILL AND WALKS TO IT)** Aha!! Is this the one then? Thick without being stupid. One can only hope. **(DRINKS IT QUICKLY. VOICE CHANGES. HIS BODY BECOMES ERECT AND STIFFENS)** Another century hurtles toward its end. The rumble, the rancor of these last months perhaps loudest of all. Mysterious signs, auguries of darkness, fears of death and a holy war hangover. Where is the true voice of the divine? Lord, Maker of Heaven and earth. Come to this place. **(STARTS TO GIGGLE AS POTION STARTS TO WEAR OFF. BEGINS TO SING)** "Oh they say from this valley you are going" **(TAKES ANOTHER SWIG. STRAIGHTENS)** You are the gold, the immutable, unalterable, true fortune I seek. Let me conjure you to deliver us from this imperfect earth. Come down into the city, come down and make it holy once again. I dare you. I dare you to **appear.** **(POTION WEARS OFF. HE GIGGLES, BODY DROOPING AGAIN, KISSES A RETORT)** Hear anything. I thought I heard something...a tinkling...a blueing breath against the glass. Something sulphurous? I wonder who's coming to the party? Are the napkins out? I hope they have an answer. Hope is such a beautiful bird, just barely seen in the trees ahead, with a song to pierce the heart. **(TURNS AGAIN TO OTHER EQUIPMENT)** Are you hot yet, darling. Getting there, getting there. Do I hear my dog, or the hounds of Hell? Oh, this dark, dark world. **(GIGGLES AGAIN AND COLLAPSES BEHIND A TABLE. LIGHTS OUT ON THE LAB, WHICH ROTATES BACK TO SHOW FRONT FACADE WITH RED DOOR)**

SCENE 2

ENTER ON GOLD STREET, A CRUSADER, BERTHOUD, FILTHY AND TATTERED AFTER THE ARDUOUS JOURNEY BACK FROM JERUSALEM. CHAIN MAIL BROKEN AND BENT, SWORD, CHIPPED ON THE BLADE, HANGS FROM HIS BELT. HE IS DRAGGING A LARGE HEAVY BAG. EXHAUSTED.

BERTHOUD

(Kneeling to the ground and kissing it) Yes ! Yes! Ah, thanks be to God, we're home at last in the cool shadow of the castle. How many days, oh, how many days did I dream of the safety of these walls. Thank God. Oh, thank God. **(Turning and calling offstage)** Here we are, Baldwin!! Home. Home. Home at last. **(Nearly weeping)** God wills it, Baldwin. Praise be...Baldwin? Baldwin?

BALDWIN

(Enter Baldwin, a shorter, fatter knight. Also tattered and beat up, dragging a smaller bag behind him. Depressed, tired to death) Yes, yes, I'm coming, Berthoud.

BERTHOUD

We've made it. We're here, Baldwin.

BALDWIN

Praise be. Home at last.

BERTHOUD

Are you pouting again, Baldwin. What? What about now?

BALDWIN

You know, Berthoud.

BERTHOUD

I know? How could I know what you're pouting about this time. You've been pouting the entire Crusade. From Prague to Palestine and back.

BALDWIN

Oh yeah. Sure.

BERTHOUD

Your title should be "Sir Lower Lip of God", Baldwin.

BALDWIN

Please

BERTHOUD

Saint Peter could have built his church on that fleshy platform.

BALDWIN

That's not funny.

BERTHOUD

Well I'm past caring. I don't understand you, Baldwin. Two years we've spent fighting in the Holy Land, four months of that awaiting ransom in a Saracen dungeon. Finally we're home safe, both in one piece, and you stand there with this hang-dog look. What is it this time? Go on, tell me.

BALDWIN

Let me have one of them, Berthoud.

BERTHOUD

One what, Baldwin? One what? ...No, I don't believe it...you're still not going on about that, are you?

BALDWIN

I want one.

BERTHOUD

No !! I've told you a thousand times. No, no, no, no.

BALDWIN

C'mon, Berthoud. Just one.

BERTHOUD

How can you even ask me?

BALDWIN

I deserve to have one of them.

BERTHOUD

You *deserve* one? Ha!!

BALDWIN

I do.

BERTHOUD

I am not breaking up a matched set. I told you that. No!! Absolutely not ! The thumbs of St. Margaret are mine.

BALDWIN

Greedy bastard

BERTHOUD

Me? Greedy bastard!? With St. Michael as my witness, Baldwin, I have offered you any number of relics.

BALDWIN

Second rate merchandise.

BERTHOUD

Second rate? O.K. That's it. That's absolutely and finally it. I won't be maligned by you any longer. Take any of my best stuff. Go **on...** **(Baldwin reaches for Berthoud's bag)** Except the thumbs of St. Margaret.

(Berthoud rummages in his own bag) Here...greedy bastard am I. After all I've done for you. Unbelievable. Here, look at this.

BALDWIN

What is it?

BERTHOUD

What is it? You don't even recognize a blessed event right under your nose. It's birdseed from the pocket of St. Francis of Assisi, you dolt. Go on, it's yours.

BALDWIN

(Scowling) Pah !!

BERTHOUD

No? It's not good enough? **(BALDWIN SHAKES HEAD)** Of course it isn't. Then here, wait a moment....Ah!!...How about this precious beauty.

BALDWIN

What is it?

BERTHOUD

The widow's peak of John the Baptist. **(Baldwin turns away in rejection)** Alright, alright. **Here....(Brings Out a small shriveled object and places it in the palm of his hand.)** One of my most precious relics.

BALDWIN

Get that away from me. It's disgusting.

BERTHOUD

It's a grape from the Last Supper. Have you no sense of history?

BALDWIN

It's all shriveled up.

BERTHOUD

That's what happens to them when they get old. It's a raisin now, Baldwin. It's a tiny miracle.

BALDWIN

That's not what I want.

BERTHOUD

What you want? You should be ashamed of yourself.

BALDWIN

I should have a thumb of St. Margaret.

BERTHOUD

They were given to me, Baldwin. I found them at the burning bush.

BALDWIN

I saw the smoke first.

BERTHOUD

We saw it at the same time.

BALDWIN

I pointed it out.

BERTHOUD

Yeah, like a little snot-nosed kid. "Look, Bertie, look! Smoke over the hill ! Bertie !! Bertie!!" Any idiot could see the smoke rising over the hill, Baldwin. If you hadn't been so busy pointing, and ooohing and aaaahhing, you might have gotten there first.

BALDWIN

You hit my horse !!

BERTHOUD

So what ! Don't blame me for religious zeal. I was transfixed by the flaming bush.

BALDWIN

It was only smouldering when I got there.

BERTHOUD

Now you would even doubt the miraculous bush, Baldwin? Appalling!! And after the great flood when only puddles remained, would you have doubted Noah!? Would you, Baldwin. I bet you would have.

BALDWIN

I ... I...

BERTHOUD

Well?

BALDWIN

I'm only saying that when I arrived only a thin wisp of smoke rose. No flames.

BERTHOUD

No ! I saw a conflagration of heavenly proportions. I galloped 'round the hillock to the blessed spot. I saw columns of flame rising skyward, driving an army of infidels away. And then a deep voice spoke out of the cloudless sky: "Welcome untainted knight. Here at the burning bush, wondrous thumbs await you.

BALDWIN

I didn't hear that.

BERTHOUD

Only the pure of heart are privy to angels, Baldwin.

BALDWIN

Pure of heart? Well, if you are so pure of heart, share the thumbs, Berthoud.

BERTHOUD

The voice didn't say that I had to.

BALDWIN

Our agreement, when we left on the crusade, was to share everything.

BERTHOUD

That was about gold and treasure, not sacred relics, Baldwin.

BALDWIN

We said EVERYTHING, Berthoud. Relics are part of everything.

BERTHOUD

Relics transcend everything, Baldwin. They're not just bits of flesh or bone or wood or stone. Relics are diamonds of devotion and reverence, blessed by the Holy Spirit, immersed in the power of God, keys to the invisible doors of heaven.

BALDWIN

You only need one thumb to get into heaven, Berthoud.

BERTHOUD

What?

BALDWIN

Only one thumb for heaven. Yep.

BERTHOUD

Who told you that?

BALDWIN

Bishop Clematis told me.

BERTHOUD

Bishop Clematis? Ha. Clematis is an idiot, Baldwin, and he's only Bishop because his mother is cousin to the king and willing to pay a hefty price for the purple hat. He's no more a Bishop than that donkey out there. He doesn't even speak Latin. He does have a nice mistress though.

BALDWIN

He has the blessing of the Pope, Berthoud.

BERTHOUD

And so does his mistress, Baldwin.

BALDWIN

Berthoud !!

BERTHOUD

Ahhhh !!

BALDWIN

He's our Bishop, Berthoud.

BERTHOUD

You can have him. I'll take the mistress.

BALDWIN

Well, he explicitly says one thumb will do

BERTHOUD

Certainly true for him, knowing where his other thumb is most of the time.

BALDWIN

Berthoud, hold your tongue, or you'll burn in hell.

BERTHOUD

I'll say what I like. I'm protected by my holy relics.
(Walking away)

BALDWIN

Then pleeeeeease, Berthoud, just one itty-bitty thumb. You brought back bags and bags of relics.

BERTHOUD

No. As my sword has spilled the blood of a thousand infidels, Baldwin, it is out of the question.

BALDWIN

(PICKING UP A SMALL STICK ON THE GROUND WHILE BERTHOUD IS NOT LOOKING) Well. Then I'll not be able to give you a piece of the one special relic which I have in my possession that you do not have, which I was going to do, because of our friendship.

BERTHOUD

What are you talking about. You don't have anything I don't have.

BALDWIN

Well, I do, Berthoud. One thing.

BERTHOUD

What's that?

BALDWIN

A piece of the true cross.

BERTHOUD

The true cross? **(LAUGHS)** That's impossible. I've been with you every moment....

BALDWIN

Well, if you remember, Berthoud...

BERTHOUD

There was never any time when....

BALDWIN

If you remember, Berthoud, if....you....remember.....there was one day that we were not together; that day you were out slaughtering the Saracen children. Remember?

BERTHOUD

Well...yes...there was that day.

BALDWIN

I had a very bad cold that day and stayed in bed. Remember?

BERTHOUD

Vaguely. Yes. So what?

BALDWIN

Well, toward noon of that day I felt better and went for a short walk...

BERTHOUD

Yes?

BALDWIN

Well...as I returned home, I passed a filthy beggar crumpled against a wall, his body covered with open sores and all sorts of indescribable filth.

BERTHOUD

So.

BALDWIN

Well...as I passed, he cast his puss-encrusted eyes upon me and cried for "water" and I don't know why, but I opened my canteen and splashed a few drops of water on his face...from a safe distance, mind you.

BERTHOUD

What the hell does this have to do with your so called "piece of the cross", Baldwin.

BALDWIN

Well...the beggar then whispered, "Bless you Sir Knight, your gift gives me the strength to reach for my own salvation." And with that, he reached within his rags, took this piece of wood out from beneath his filthy shirt, kissed it and murmured, Ahhh, the true cross!"

BERTHOUD

So what. They've been murmuring that for centuries. I don't believe it. Another charlatan.

BALDWIN

I didn't believe him either, Berthoud. No, I didn't. But just as his hand touched the piece of wood the open sores all over his face and body dried up and disappeared.

BERTHOUD

No.

BALDWIN

And then his eyes...which had been crusted with yellow pus...became clear and sparkled, a deep sky blue.

BERTHOUD

My God, Baldwin, really?

BALDWIN

Then...then...then his shriveled and twisted hands, they were more like claws really, began to shake violently, uncontrollably.

BERTHOUD

By St. Michael's sword!!

BALDWIN

Then, then he clapped them together three times and - miracle of miracles - they became still, rose slowly **in** front of the beggar's face and opened delicately like, like flowers - became straight and strong, the fingers tender, the nails clear, clipped and shiny.

BERTHOUD

Heaven help us

BALDWIN

And his hair, his dung coated hair, began to vibrate and move like the Medusa's head.

BERTHOUD

This is the Devil's work, Baldwin.

BALDWIN

No, heavenly, Berthoud, heavenly, for the writhing mass shook itself free of filth and became a waterfall of raven-black, silky locks which flowed down past his shoulders.

BERTHOUD

Saints preserve us !

BALDWIN

His back straightened, his shoulders broadened, his chest swelled.

BERTHOUD

Unbelievable !!

BALDWIN

He stood in front of me, resplendent in a shirt of silver chain-mail, hands on hips, legs apart, a beaming smile on his face. Young again, Berthoud, and he was gorgeous !!

BERTHOUD

Incredible, Baldwin...and you witnessed this.

BALDWIN

I witnessed it and it was incredible.

BERTHOUD

But....but... with powers like that, why would he give you his piece of the true cross?

BALDWIN

Ah..I...I...didn't say he gave it to me. **(BEAT)** He didn't give it to me. I...I..I asked to see it... but he shook his head "no"...and started to put it back in his pocket, so I pulled out my sword and cut his head off.

BERTHOUD

You did?

BALDWIN

Of course I did.

BERTHOUD

So much for the raven-black silky locks.

BALDWIN

That's for sure. And I did it for us, Berthoud.

BERTHOUD

For us, Baldwin?

BALDWIN

Yes, Berthoud.

BERTHOUD

The two of us?

BALDWIN

Yes, Berthoud.

BERTHOUD

Then, Baldwin, it is a wonderful deed you have done. (**TRIES TO GENTLY TAKE THE PIECE OF WOOD**) And retribution will not follow you for this. It's no foul deed to liberate holy relics from hands that would abuse them. Think of it. Using the blessed cross to attain the beauty of the flesh. Silken locks. Oh, vanity does not go unpunished, does it, Baldwin, Child of God.

BALDWIN

No, it certainly cannot, Berthoud. God wills it!!

BERTHOUD

Well said, Baldwin. God wills it and God bless you your glorious works. This is another miracle.

BALDWIN

Yes, Berthoud, and better than an old grape.

BERTHOUD

Old grape? (**GESTURE FROM BALDWIN**) Oh, yes ! Of course! Forget about that. But wait a moment...why didn't you tell me about this miracle when I returned from massacring the Saracen children.

BALDWIN

Well, you were pretty excited about your day's slaughter.

BERTHOUD

I suppose I was. Yes. But after that?

BALDWIN

I was saving it, Berthoud, to share with you...on your birthday.

BERTHOUD

Really? Baldwin, that is so thoughtful. I apologize about St. Margaret's thumbs. I don't know what came over me. The Devil lurks in every shadow, does he not?

BALDWIN

He may very well.

BERTHOUD

Well...you certainly can have one of Margaret's thumbs.

BALDWIN

Bless you, Berthoud, your generosity.

BERTHOUD

No, please, I am blessed with your friendship.

BALDWIN

And may I...

BERTHOUD

Yes, Baldwin?

BALDWIN

May I have the right thumb? The one her torturers pierced with a silver nail.

BERTHOUD

Well, I....really Baldwin...you're asking a lot now...

BALDWIN

(LOOKING CAREFULLY AT THE PIECE OF "THE CROSS") My goodness !!

BERTHOUD

What is it?

BALDWIN

I didn't notice the bloodstain at this end before.

BERTHOUD

Bloodstain? Where? Give it to me Let me see

BALDWIN

I'll hold it.

BERTHOUD

Let me...

BALDWIN

I'll hold it, Berthoud...Child of God. **(THEY LOOK AT IT UNDER BALDWIN'S CONTROL)** Right here, see it. If you catch the light just right. Here.

BERTHOUD

Where....Yes, oh yes. Oh my, my!! It's there. There it is, it's right there. But very faintly.

BALDWIN

It is faint to be sure. But it's there. It's there. **(FALLS TO KNEES)**

BERTHOUD

(FALLS TO KNEES) Yes, I see it. It's there. Right there.

BALDWIN

God wills it. The blood of our Savior.

BERTHOUD
 Yes, God wills it, the blood of our Savior It's there and I
 ...would...love...

BALDWIN
 Would you like this end of the stick, Berthoud?

BERTHOUD
 I would, dear Baldwin.

BALDWIN
If... (HOLDING UP HIS RIGHT THUMB AND WRIGGLING IT)

BERTHOUD
 Alright. Alright. Certainly, you can have the thumb with the
 nail hole.

BALDWIN
 Thank you, gracious Berthoud. I will divide this divine
 miracle for us.

BERTHOUD
 Let me.

BALDWIN
 No, I'll do it.

BERTHOUD
 Careful with my precious cross, Baldwin.

BALDWIN
 I am, I am.

BERTHOUD
 Let me do it

BALDWIN
 I got it.

BERTHOUD
 Just be careful.

BALDWIN
I am!! (BREAKS THE WOOD INTO TWO VERY UNEVEN PIECES) Ahh,
 there it is.

BERTHOUD
 Just remember, the piece that has the blood on it is mine.
 Where is it. Let me see !

BALDWIN
 (CHECKING PIECES) Alright. Here. I'm afraid it's the short
 end of the stick, Berthoud.

BERTHOUD

Just let me have it, Baldwin, c'mon, let me see, let me see.
(BALDWIN CAREFULLY HANDS THE PIECE OF STICK TO BERTHOUD)
 Ahhhhh. Oh, look! The Holy Blood of Christ. Right here.
 Right here in my hand. Bless you, Baldwin, Child of God.

BALDWIN

And bless you, Berthoud, Child of God.

BERTHOUD

Incredible. Priceless. I can feel its power surging through
 me, Baldwin. By the Lance of St. James, how's my hair?

BALDWIN

What?

BERTHOUD

My hair!

BALDWIN

Your hair?

BERTHOUD

My hair, my hair. Is it growing longer, silkier? Any change
 in color? Darker?

BALDWIN

Oh, no, no. Not yet, anyway. Could I have my thumb now?

BERTHOUD

Of course you can. I'll get it for you right away. **(PUTS THE
 PIECE OF WOOD IN HIS SHIRT)** Rest against my heart, precious
 moment. **(LOOKS AT BALDWIN, CHANGE OF RHYTHM)** Will you bring
 in the rest of the bags while I fetch your thumb from its
 special place, Child of God?

BALDWIN

Of course, Child of God.

**BALDWIN EXITS. BERTHOUD WAITS UNTIL HE IS OFFSTAGE AND THEN
 DUMPS OUT THE CONTENTS OF THE BAG HE HAS WITH HIM. IT IS A
 PILE OF THUMBS.**

BERTHOUD

Ah, here we are. Thumbs, thumbs and more thumbs. I don't know
 what it is, God forgive me, I just have a thing about thumbs.
(WALKING AROUND THE PILE) Such sensuousness of shape, such
 power to pick and choose one to the next, without discarding,
 without relinquishing! **(TOUCHING THUMB TO EACH FINGER IN
 SUCCESSION)** And the law of opposition states : no thumbs, no
 grasping, no grasping, no building, no building, no
 civilization. Look how many thumbs I have. I must be the most
 civilized man alive !

(LAUGHS OUT LOUD, THEN CATCHES HIMSELF, CONSCIOUS OF BALDWIN NEARBY) What will they give me for my pretty little thumbs in this, the last year of the century, 1099, the last year of the world so they fear. And here I am, arriving just in time from the Holy City, the center of the universe, with thumbs for them to suck for salvation. Thumbs that grasped the cloak of Jesus, netted fish from the Sea of Galilee, hoisted cups at the Last Supper. These are rare thumbs, expensive thumbs. Now...**(PERUSING THE MOUND OF THUMBS)**...where is our Saint Margaret. Oooh, Margaret, sweetheart. I know you're hiding in here somewhere. **(PICKS UP A THUMB)** Is this you? No, much too calloused and coarse. Must be a working thumb, a grasping thumb, a thumb grown crooked with toiling day after day. Stiffened first in pain and now in death. The thumb of a farmer or a stonemason, but no thumb of a Saint. No, it's not our Margaret. **(THROWS IT BACK ON THE PILE)** Oooohhh, now here's better. But the fingernails are chewed right down to the quick. Won't work for Margaret; too messy, too anxious. **(LOOKING IT OVER CAREFULLY)** Perhaps Daniel in the lion's den? That's it! The bible says those lions never touched him, and so say I, but in the first few moments of growling glances and clawing questions, who wouldn't chew a little? Who wouldn't chew a lot!! Waiting for the Lord's Will to reveal itself. A testament to faith and human frailty. Perfect. The price just rose on this special sliver. **(SETS IT DOWN CAREFULLY. LOOKING FOR ANOTHER TO BE MARGARET)** Ahhhhh, maybe this one here. No, a little too pink and puffy. Cuticle's too soft. Water damaged I'd say. More the thumb of a butcher or a fisherman. Or a Bishop trying to wash his sins away. Not the type of thumb that matched its twin in shaping prayer day and night, night and day. Ahhh, what's this vision before me? Hello. This baby drumstick will do nicely. Yes it will. Long, contemplative, smooth without asking for notice, humble from all sides and yet elegant in its architecture. The cuticle is exquisite, not a mark. This thumb exudes wisdom and righteous suffering. May I call you Margaret? Good. Now then, we must thrust just a little more suffering upon you for the needs of the day. **(HE DRILLS A HOLE IN THE CUTICLE WITH THE TIP OF HIS DAGGER)** Now, that didn't hurt much, did it. No. Just a little pinprick. Nothing like the suffering you enjoyed on your way to eternal happiness. There we are. The genuine article. Thumbs enough to quench the religious thirst of every sucker in Bohemia. Well, maybe not enough thumbs for that, but certainly enough to make this lowly knight a wealthy man. Ohhh, please, Berthoud. I want this one. I want that one. Don't push, sweet children of God. The pick of the crop for each and every one. Genuine thumbs of just about any Saint you can think of, and a few Saints I will have created myself. **(BAG FLIES IN FROM OFFSTAGE. BERTHOUD SCOOPS THE REST OF THE "RELICS" BACK INTO THE BAG AS BALDWIN ENTERS WITH A THIRD BAG)**

BALDWIN

By the breath of the Saints, there's a little box out there on my mule that must be yours, Berthoud. I don't remember loading it and it's too heavy for me to lift off by myself. What is it?

BERTHOUD

(SHARPLY) Did you open it, Baldwin?! Did you....

BALDWIN

No, Berthoud, I didn't open it. What is it?

BERTHOUD

Never mind, never mind. We'll get that box later. Here, I've got your thumb. **(BALDWIN RUSHES OVER TO HIM)**

BALDWIN

Let me **see. (GIVES BALDWIN THE THUMB AND THEN BEGINS TO INSPECT HIS PIECE OF THE CROSS)** Oh, it's so beautiful. The most beautiful thumb ever. Look at this hole, Berthoud. Have you ever before in your life seen anything like it?

BERTHOUD

No, Baldwin, never.

BALDWIN

My god, I can see right through it. Look at this...look...how the light comes through when I hold it up.

BERTHOUD

I know, I know. It's an amazing revelation.

BALDWIN

The light from the day is gathered up and thrust through the hole like a thunderbolt.

BERTHOUD

Trust me, Baldwin. I gave you a miracle.

BALDWIN

It's illuminating that red door across from us, Berthoud.

BERTHOUD

Yea, Yea.

BALDWIN

See it! Look....it's beginning to glow.

BERTHOUD

Don't strain your eyes too much, Baldwin.
(EXPLOSION BLOWS RED DOOR OFF. BOTH KNIGHTS KNOCKED TO THE GROUND. THICK SMOKE ISSUES FROM THE OPENING. BALDWIN LOOKS AT ST. MARGARET'S THUMB. AGHAST.)

BERTHOUD
What the hell's happening?

BALDWIN
Holy smoke Did I do that?

BERTHOUD
Did you do what?

BALDWIN
Well, I was pointing Margaret's thumb at that door...

BERTHOUD
At which door?

BALDWIN
I didn't mean it.

BERTHOUD
Which door?

BALDWIN
The door that blew off.

BERTHOUD
My ears, my poor ears.

BALDWIN
It wasn't my fault! Honest, Berthoud. You gotta believe me.

BERTHOUD
(HOLDING EARS) AHHHHHH !!

BALDWIN
Please, Berthoud.

BERTHOUD
OK Sssshhhh !! It's OK

BALDWIN
I swear I didn't do it.

BERTHOUD
Calm down, Baldwin. Calm down. Let me see the thumb. I may have given you the wrong one by mistake. Give it back to me.

BALDWIN
No, it's mine.

BERTHOUD
Just let me see it!!

BALDWIN
No. **(A LONG WAIL ISSUES FROM THE BLOWN OUT DOORWAY)**

ARNOLDUS, ALCHEMIST

AHHHHHHHH !!

BALDWIN

(BOTH FREEZE) Mother of God! What was that?

BERTHOUD

How would I know, you started this. Let's get our bags and get the hell out of here.

ARNOLDUS, ALCHEMIST

Ahhhhhhhhhh!!

BERTHOUD

(DIVING BEHIND BAGS) You had to go and blow the door off. You idiot! This is all your fault.

BALDWIN

I didn't do anything. Honest I didn't. You should put warnings on these relics, Berthoud.

BERTHOUD

Don't start blaming me, Baldwin.

ARNOLDUS, ALCHEMIST

Ahhhhhh

BALDWIN

Berthoud !!

BERTHOUD

Get down !!

BALDWIN

What...

BERTHOUD

Quiet! **(PEERING OUT AGAIN)** This is not good.

ARNOLDUS, ALCHEMIST

Ahhhhhhhh !!

BALDWIN

What. Did you see it.

BERTHOUD

No, I didn't see it. But I'm afraid you may have opened a portal to Hell with that damned thumb of yours.

BALDWIN

Mine? You gave it to me...what should we **do...** **(GRABBING BERTHOUD)** Mother of God. Mother of God.

BERTHOUD

Don't grab me when you say that. **(PUSHING HIM AWAY AND
LOOKING NERVOUSLY AT THE SMOKING HOLE IN THE WALL)**

BALDWIN

But I didn't summon it. I couldn't have. I swear I didn't.
Here, take the thumb back. I don't want....

BERTHOUD

Don't come near me with that thing.

BALDWIN

God forgive me. Please forgive me. Please Please

BERTHOUD

Alright, alright, that's enough, Baldwin. We've been in tough spots before. Pull it together. How could we have known where "dear Margaret" was spending her free time. We'll be alright. Have you forgotten. I have here in my possession, a piece of the true cross with the blood of Christ our Saviour clearly visible, thanks to you, Child of God. **(RUMMAGING FOR THE
PIECE OF THE CROSS)**

BALDWIN

Oh God, Child of God.

BERTHOUD

Where is it. **(SEARCHING FOR HIS PIECE OF THE CROSS)** It was right here.

ARNOLDUS, ALCHEMIST

Ahhhhhhh !!

BERTHOUD

The Devil is at work again. I can't find it. Help me look, Baldwin !!

ARNOLDUS, ALCHEMIST

Ahhhhhhh!!

BALDWIN

Berthoud !!!

BERTHOUD

(FINDING HIS "PIECE OF THE CROSS") By the Lance of Antioch!!

BALDWIN

No, no, Berthoud, stand behind me. I'll blast it again with St. Margaret's thumb.

BERTHOUD

No, you fool, we'll use the power of the blood of our Savior.

BALDWIN

Believe me, Berthoud. I think we should stick with the thumb.

BERTHOUD

Stand behind the cross, you idiot.

BALDWIN

The thumb, please, Berthoud.

BERTHOUD

The cross, dammit. Put that down.

BALDWIN

No, I won't let you. **(GRAPPLING FOR THE RELICS)**

BERTHOUD

I'll show you.

BALDWIN

Let go of me.

BERTHOUD

I've wanted to do this ever since we left Jerusalem.

BALDWIN

I'll squeeze until you die.

BERTHOUD

I'll rip your head off.

BALDWIN

Blasphemer

BERTHOUD

Murderer

BALDWIN

Child-killer.

BERTHOUD

Mutilator of women. Ahhhh, don't point that thing at me.

BALDWIN

You'll rot in hell!!

BERTHOUD

Not without you I won't. **(A TALL CLOAKED FIGURE EMERGES FROM THE SMOKING DOOR)**

ARNOLDUS, ALCHEMIST

AHHHHHHHHHHHHH !!!

BOTH

Ahhhhhhhhh!!! (BERTHOUD AND BALDWIN FAINT. THE TALL CLOAKED FIGURE WALKS SLOWLY OUT OF THE BLASTED DOORWAY, HIS SHOULDERS SLUMP, HIS HEAD DROPS SLIGHTLY AND HE WALKS OFF DOWN THE STREET.