

DIABOLI

Story Treatment

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1280 AD - At the height of the Holy Crusades, A ruthless Queen battles for Jerusalem and the world becomes a more dogmatic and dangerous place. A local priest stumbles into a village with both of his eyes burned out and claims that he was praying in solitude and saw the Devil in a crevice.

Francis, the atheist son of a devout fisherman, has 2 younger siblings Henry and Gisela, who inherited their father's piety. The youngest, Henry, is a gifted soldier and is eager to join the fight to reclaim the Holy Lands. In a tournament joust Henry accidentally injures the Queen's nephew Godric. The bishops see it as an assault on Gods anointed family and sentence him to death. Godric vehemently protests, but to no avail. Francis must watch as his little brother is executed and vows vengeance on Godric and the church.

Over the next month natural disasters become mysteriously more frequent. Severe earthquakes and volcanic eruptions wipe out many cities. This leads to hunger, starvation and mass migration of millions of people. The religious leaders invariably agree it is God's wrath, but each faith is unequivocal about the fact that OTHER is to blame. The entire continent mobilizes their respective militaries to fight for what resources remain.

As the city is squeezed the people become desperate and volatile. The anointed Queen, fearing revolt, uses the faith to implement draconian religious authority. Francis and his father are subjected to severe taxes and harsher punishments as people are dragged from their homes and crucified for any perceived slight against the faith. Francis's father falls ill and is near starvation when the church discovers Francis is hiding food for him. As punishment his ailing father is brought out for a brutal lashing. Tensions in the city are at a breaking point.

Meanwhile, with their main army occupied in the north, Godric is prematurely appointed to lead a battalion to fight an enemy in the south. All the city's fighting age men including Francis are drafted to serve under Godric, but feeling overwhelming guilt for Francis' brother, Godric promises he will protect him. Regardless, Francis harbors a deep and simmering resentment.

Before he leaves for war, his father's dying wish is for Francis to let go of his anger. He gives him his golden cross and tells him "Man is sinful, but GOD is good" but Francis is too overcome with grief to hear it. Meanwhile Godric is tormented by nightmares about being devoured by the Devil for his sins.

On the road to war the real toll of the damage comes into focus. Godric's Army is surrounded by thousands of refugees desperate for food, but Godric barely has the provisions needed for his own men and when he refuses to feed the people they attack. The army has no choice but to slaughter hundreds of civilians. Francis is horrified at this so-called "Christian" behavior and for his abstention is mocked and harassed. He snaps back and insults the soldiers and their God to the point of heresy. Only by Godric's grace is he not killed by his comrades.

The opposing armies finally meet and line up across a field as the ground begins to shake. Both see it as a prophetic of their inevitable victory. Godric gives an impassioned speech to his men about the inevitability of God's justice, but Francis thinks about his brother, father and imminent death in battle, he can no longer bear it. Another explosion from a nearby mountain draws everybody's attention and Francis seizes the moment. He runs up to Godric in a rage and stabs him.

In the chaos the armies run at each other, but another tremor is followed by a catastrophic volcanic eruption. Both armies are in shock as debris and huge rocks crush hundreds of men... but the worst has yet to begin. Another massive rumble reveals something enormous emerging from the volcano. Nobody can believe what they are seeing. It is some sort of thousand-foot-tall molten creature. Horror and panic sweeps through the armies who are now trying to escape the eruption with their lives.

Godric is seriously injured but able to stand and he is the first to realize what they have unleashed. The literal Devil Incarnate. SATAN HIMSELF.

Francis too has come to the overwhelming revelation that everything his father told him was true. The Devil and therefore God...is REAL. And he just tried to murder a man. Godric tries to rally the army to flee but is horrified to find that 75% of his men are dead already. Most are burned alive and merged into the Devil's enormous body. As Francis sees an enemy run at a crippled Godric, he feels overwhelming guilt and comes to his rescue. Francis fights off the attacker and slings Godric onto the back of a horse. Together they ride back to the city.

When Godric arrives at the capital, he relays to the bishops the truth of what he has witnessed but they assume he must be delusional. Francis corroborates but as a low-born is quickly silenced. Godric grows weaker and despite the medicus's best effort he dies.

As other retreating soldiers arrive, Francis is swiftly imprisoned for his thoroughly witnessed treason, and set to be executed after being "purified by pain". In his cell Francis is still shellshocked by what he has seen. His father was right, "Man is sinful, but GOD is at least... real?"

On the following day Godric's body is prepared for burial as his family prays around him... They carefully anoint his torso and dress him in fine linens, when his eyes... miraculously... open! His mother faints and the bishop's gasp. They lift his shirt to see his injuries subsided and for all in the room it's clear that his resurrection is an act of God.

The bishops bring this joyous news to the Queen, but she sees his resurrection as an imminent threat to her already tenuous power. She claims heresy, and has the Bishops, Godric and his family arrested and jailed with Francis. Seeing Godric alive, Francis is dumbstruck as Godric looks at him with forgiveness in his eyes. Godric knows that he has been given his last chance to redeem himself.

The ground shudders and the Queen peers out a tower window and sees the unthinkable. A thousand-foot-tall creature is heading towards the city and he is preceded by millions of citizens desperate to get inside the city walls. The Queen is overwhelmed and out of fear she releases Godric and the Bishops so they can form a plan. Godric pleads with the Queen to at least allow the women and children in the city, but she refuses to risk any more instability and thousands are crushed by the mob.

Watching this happen, Godric now knows that humanity is doomed but it steels his resolve. He tells Francis to take his family and flee the continent by boat so that a WITNESS can live on. Francis does not believe he is remotely qualified to represent the faith and pleads with him to escape with them, but to no avail. Godric says goodbye to his inconsolable family and to the man who was in practice and in spirit, his savior.

Believing in Godric's singular divinity the bishops prepare him for a final assault on Satan. They equip him with the holy relics and pray that he fulfills the prophecy of revelations by "throwing Satan into a lake of fire and sulfur." It is agreed that the men must climb his 1000-foot-tall body and strike Satan in his "eye". An inconceivable task for a beast that size.

Francis prepares his ship; Godric prepares his armor. One is the last hope for spreading the word of God and the other is the last hope to defeat the Devil. BOTH must succeed to save the soul of humanity.

As the Queen flees by ship, Godric and thousands of men ride out silently to one of Satan's enormous legs covered in writhing tortured bodies. Thousands try to ascend, and thousands fall to their death. After a 4-hour fight and climb Godric reaches the center of Satan's head. With his last bit of strength, Godric attempts to strike Satan with the holy relic. The ground erupts and the clouds' part. Godric succeeds! Golden rays of light shine onto Satan's body as he crashes into an enormous lake of fire and sulfur. Godric returns as the savior of humanity... but it is a

bittersweet victory, as there is no food in the capital and the surrounding lands are a lava-covered waste. Humanity's clock is ticking.

After weeks at sea nearly everyone who escaped by ship including the Queen are killed by violent storms or dehydration. Only a few including Francis make it to a seemingly verdant undiscovered land but upon arrival a group of pagan hunters kill and eat most of the invaders. As a last desperate effort Francis pleads the word of God to the heathens... to no effect. But when their leader notices Francis's father's gold cross, they trade his token for his life and the life of a small cadre that includes Godric's family.

The capital city survives until the last of the food runs out and Godric can finally rest. Emaciated but content, he lays down in a golden light and reunites with his maker.

Across the ocean Francis becomes the only surviving prophet and although the human species is set back 10,000 years, in the barren waves of lava small tree sprouts from the cracks. A tiny insect drinks nectar from its flower and the planet is reset in God's image.

THE END