

Scene Three

(JACQUES and ISABELLE are with their local priest, FATHER GILBERT. He's showing them a parchment.)

START

FATHER GILBERT. This was just sent to me from the bishop in Vaucouleurs. He was apparently very impressed with Joan.

ISABELLE. So she did meet him?

FATHER GILBERT. Oh yes. Let me read you a bit, "I declare that by the authority of the church and Jesus Christ, that she is a pious, pure, and godly young woman."

ISABELLE. Well, that's good t'know.

FATHER GILBERT. He also goes on to confirm that she's a virgin. Also nice to know.

ISABELLE. They inspected her...?

FATHER GILBERT. It's a routine procedure, all done very properly. But listen to this - "This young woman possesses extraordinary charismatic powers for one so young, naïve, and unrefined. This can only be attributed to her saintly visitations which I have found to be authentic."

(JACQUES, who can't read, looks at the parchment.)

JACQUES. That's what it says?

FATHER GILBERT. Yes. It's in this section right here.

ISABELLE. So this bishop believes her. About Saint Catherine an' all.

FATHER GILBERT. Oh yes he does. In fact, he goes on to say that he's quite certain that she's the Maid referred to in the prophecy.

JACQUES. So it's a prophecy now? Sounds to me like some folk tale gotten out of hand.

FATHER GILBERT. No, no. It's very well known in the upper ecclesiastical community.

JACQUES. This is all written down somewhere.

FATHER GILBERT. Yes. It's referred to in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*.

JACQUES. You seen it?

FATHER GILBERT. No, the text is kept in a vault in Rome.

JACQUES. So you never seen them words, you never read them for yourself.

FATHER GILBERT. Jacques, please. I'm not some backwater priest. I've studied in Paris, I know my holy texts.

ISABELLE. Jacques don't mean any disrespect, Father. We're both in a bit of a shock.

FATHER GILBERT. Of course, I understand.

ISABELLE. So you really do think our Joan is this Maid person?

FATHER GILBERT. Yes, Isabelle, I do.

JACQUES. Seems Joan told you about these visions and you didn't seem none too impressed.

FATHER GILBERT. I wouldn't say that I wasn't impressed. I just believe in proceeding with caution with young girls who can be rather fanciful. But you know, Joan has always struck me as having a special presence.

ISABELLE. So you really think she has it.

FATHER GILBERT. Oh yes. I remember this one time - I was walking back through the square and there were some boys throwing rocks at a lame cat. And your Joan, who was just a little bit of a thing, she picked up that cat and faced off those boys and said, "The next stone that's thrown, let it pass through me."

ISABELLE. You remember that cat, Da. She brought it home.

JACQUES. Yuh, drowned it.

FATHER GILBERT. I hope you both know that you have an extraordinary daughter.

ISABELLE. Well we done our best to raise her up right, haven't we Da?

JACQUES. (To **FATHER GILBERT.**) So what're you sayin' here? You sayin' our daughter's to join an army and liberate France?

FATHER GILBERT. Apparently, yes.

JACQUES. Oh come on off it, Father, you really believe that?

FATHER GILBERT. I don't think God means for Joan to actually go into battle, of course not. Her role will be symbolic. We're a depressed country, there's no real leadership and I believe that it's God's plan to use Joan to inspire the army to victory.

ISABELLE. She'll be someone to go along and keep the troops cheerful.

FATHER GILBERT. Exactly.

ISABELLE. That makes sense, don't it, Da?

JACQUES. Soldiers are swine, Izzy. She could end up on the side of the road raped with her belly slit, you thought 'a that?

FATHER GILBERT. I understand your concern, Jacques. Of course soldiers can be vulgar but Joan is the Virgin Maid and even the crudest knight will be kneeling in front of her asking for her blessing.

ISABELLE. So you think Saint Catherine will keep her safe.

FATHER GILBERT. Absolutely. She's on a righteous path and God and his saints will protect her.

JACQUES. You guarantee that? Can you get that in writing on your fancy parchment there?

FATHER GILBERT. It's a matter of faith, Jacques. But if you're having any conflicts about your trust in God, we should talk about that.

JACQUES. My faith is solid enough.

ISABELLE. It's just hard for us not to worry about what could happen to our girl, I think that's what Jacques is tryin' to say.

FATHER GILBERT. Here's a suggestion. Why don't you send one of her brothers to go along with her as a family chaperone.

JACQUES. Can't spare the labor.

FATHER GILBERT. If you need to hire some extra hands, I can have the church provide the funds.

ISABELLE. That's very generous, Father.

JACQUES. Don't think so.

FATHER GILBERT. Jacques, your family doesn't have a choice. It's God's will. I hope you both understand that.

ISABELLE. Yes. We do.

FATHER GILBERT. And just so you know, word about Joan is spreading. I've already had quite a few pilgrims stop by the church, asking where she lives – of course, for your family's sake, I didn't say. But you should be prepared for more people coming through here. They'll know who you are and they'll be watching you. If they feel just a pinch of disbelief coming from any of you, that could be disastrous for Joan, do you understand?

ISABELLE. Yes, Father.

FATHER GILBERT. And Jacques, there's no need to beat Joan anymore.

JACQUES. Wasn't plannin' to.

FATHER GILBERT. Good. As I said, she has a greater Father to obey now.

ISABELLE. Thank you for comin' by, Father. We don't want to take up any more 'a your time.

FATHER GILBERT. I'll give you as much of my time as you need. We have some extraordinary days ahead of us. Bless you both, my dears.

END

(FATHER GILBERT touches ISABELLE's head in a blessing. He considers doing do the same for JACQUES but thinks better of it and leaves.)

ISABELLE. Oh Jacques. It's real.

JACQUES. Don't be so gullible, Izzy. He wants to use our daughter to put his parish on the map. And he's sayin' my soul's on the line if I won't go along with his scheme? How bloody dare him.

ISABELLE. Fine, you'd rather believe that your daughter's a lunatic? She ain't a flighty girl, Jacques. She ain't like that fairy tree crowd who get hysterical every time they see a leaf move. She takes after you. She don't