

TQC ACT I, Scene 2 - “The Talisman”

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From the Play: *Triffina and the Queens of Conomor*, ACT I, Scene 2

Genre: Drama

Author: Justy Fairfield

Characters:

Bishop Gildas - A leader of the Church in Brittany and personal confessor to King Conomor of Cornwall and *Domnonée*. *Middle-aged*.

Dame Destiny – The Primordial Orchestrator of Fate, disguised as a middle-aged nun.

Setting: *On a remote rampart of Castle Domnonée in Brittany, on a dark night in the year 548 CE.*

Background: *Eight years after hearing the prophecy foretelling his tragic fate, King Conomor, now a widower five times over and still childless, charges his personal confessor, Bishop Gildas, to travel to Vannetais to ask for the hand of Princess Triffina in marriage. Fearing for her safety, Gildas agrees to meet with a mysterious nun (actually, Dame Destiny in disguise) who claims to possess a talisman that he hopes might offer the latest prospective queen protection.*

BISHOP GILDAS

How cold this night is. — and dark! Shadows thrash like giants who steal the stars and leave an empty sky! Will a humin soul be next? How I wish this unnatural business was over with!

(BISHOP GILDAS hears a noise off-stage.)

BISHOP GILDAS

What’s that?!

(The DAME DESTINY's voice is heard in the darkness.)

DAME DESTINY

Bishop Gildas?

BISHOP GILDAS

Who's there?

DAME DESTINY

She whose message you received.

BISHOP GILDAS

Come into the light, Sister.

(DAME DESTINY, disguised as a nun, steps into the light from Stage Left.)

BISHOP GILDAS

Are you alone?

DAME DESTINY

(Nods) As you requested. Why did you insist we meet in so desolate a place?

BISHOP GILDAS

Our topic demands secrecy. Did you bring the talisman?

DAME DESTINY

Right here.

(Dame Destiny removes a small pouch from her pocket and holds it before him.)

BISHOP GILDAS

May I?

(BISHOP GILDAS motions to take it, but DAME DESTINY pulls it back away from him.)

DAME DESTINY

First, tell me: Is it true that your king intends to marry again?

BISHOP GILDAS

It is. I leave for the Court of Vannetais tomorrow, there to ask for the hand of Princess Triffina.

DAME DESTINY

Hasn't Conomor been wedded many times before?

BISHOP GILDAS

(Sighs) In these past eight years he has buried five queens, all victims of grievous accidents.

DAME DESTINY

Poor ladies! And Conomor! — He must think himself accursed in love!

BISHOP GILDAS

(Nods) Triffina's own protest, I fear! *(Earnestly)* Still, I must bring back a willing bride for His Majesty.

DAME DESTINY

I'm sorry, Good Bishop, but under the circumstances, the charm I possess would be of no use to her!

BISHOP GILDAS

Why not?!

DAME DESTINY

It has power to warn its wearer only of intentional harm. But if the queens of Conomor die accidental deaths —

*(DAME DESTINY shakes her head and puts
the pouch back in her pocket.)*

BISHOP GILDAS

Surely, it's worth taking a chance! -- considering the greatness of the persons involved!

DAME DESTINY

I'd sooner give it to a pauper for whom I knew it would do some good!

*(DAME DESTINY begins to walk away.
BISHOP GILDAS grabs her by the arm.)*

BISHOP GILDAS

Wait! *(Hedgingly)* What if their deaths were not accidental?

(DAME DESTINY breaks away and glares at him.)

DAME DESTINY

Speak plainly.

BISHOP GILDAS

What if they were murdered?

DAME DESTINY

(Looking him straight in the eye) Then someone has much to answer for.

BISHOP GILDAS

(Casts his eyes downward and nods) Someone will.

DAME DESTINY

It is said Conomor gained his throne through bloodshed.

BISHOP GILDAS

Thrones are often lost the same way.

DAME DESTINY

Did Conomor shed his queens' blood?

BISHOP GILDAS

(Turns away) A confessor damns his soul by confessing!

DAME DESTINY

Many things can damn a soul, Bishop. — Perhaps things you are concealing now? But it's your choice. You can take *his* secret to *your* grave!

BISHOP GILDAS

What sort of nun are you to press me so?!

*(DAME DESTINY takes out the pouch
and swings it before his eyes.)*

BISHOP GILDAS

All right! The truth is Conomor murdered each of his queens — after learning she was with child!

DAME DESTINY

Why?!

BISHOP GILDAS

Because of a prophecy foretold to him some years ago that he would die through his own son's betrayal. — A prophecy he insists he had from Dame Destiny, Herself!

DAME DESTINY

(Smiles to herself) And one he has clearly taken to heart!

BISHOP GILDAS

(Shakes his head) A Christian prince consorting with ancient powers!

DAME DESTINY

(Slyly) Imagine that!

BISHOP GILDAS

Will you now give me the talisman?

DAME DESTINY

Of course!

*(DAME DESTINY hands him the pouch.
BISHOP GILDAS looks inside.)*

BISHOP GILDAS

A ring?!

DAME DESTINY

An *onyx* ring. Offer it to the princess as an engagement gift. The stone will glow if she be in danger.

BISHOP GILDAS

(Looks at the ring, considering) Do I now consort with ancient powers?

DAME DESTINY

(Impatiently) If you don't want the charm —

BISHOP GILDAS

I do! God forgive me.

DAME DESTINY

But remember, Bishop, it can only warn the princess of danger; it cannot protect her from it.

BISHOP GILDAS

Triffina's fate is now in Christ's hands!

DAME DESTINY

Then may Christ not wash his hands of her so swiftly as you do!

*(Pause. They look each other straight in the eye.
BISHOP GILDAS looks away first, as if he has seen
something in this nun's glance that terrifies him.)*

BISHOP GILDAS

I must prepare for my journey.

DAME DESTINY

And I must continue on mine.

*(DAME DESTINY watches as BISHOP GILDAS,
walking slowly, exits Stage Right. She turns
and exits Stage Left.)*

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