

INT. WESTMINSTER HALL - DAY

King Henry scowls like the man he is.

GEOFFREY
Which brings us to the matter of
murage.

Middle-aged merchant GEOFFREY of Cornhill speaks out in a serious but whiny voice.

GEOFFREY
Now, murage was paid in the years
1254 and 1255...

Geoffrey stands on a flight of steps which span one end of a great hall. He speaks to a gathering of barons -- and bishops -- and townsmen like himself. Perhaps a hundred in total, all well-dressed for a chilly winter's day.

GEOFFREY

Ten pounds of silver was handed
over by the city, and yet no work
was done on the London walls.

Baron Nicholas Seagrave shares Geoffrey's concerns. He keeps a close eye on the King -- who sits on a throne on the upper level -- beyond two flanking tables of courtiers.

GEOFFREY

I might also mention sundry demands
for tallage.

Earl Simon sits closest right of the throne. Baron Despensers sits opposite. With a velvet bag on a chain round his neck.

GEOFFREY

As well as the arbitrary excisions
of the Queen.

SEAGRAVE

Quite so!

GEOFFREY

Then there was the grim business of
the 1258 Westminster Fair.

The King sighs aloud. Who is this dreary little man?

KING

I thought the purpose of this...
assembly was to make final
arrangements for my son!

No-one says otherwise. The King is confused.

KING

Why this litany of past taxation?

GEOFFREY

I just thought I should mention it.
While we're assembled.

Cheeky Geoffrey. The men around him approve.

SIMON

(to King, privily)
And we are pleased.

The King hears Simon well enough. He is not pleased.

But what can he do? Simon looks straight past him.

KING
So be it, Geoffrey of...

GEOFFREY
Cornhill, your majesty. Geoffrey of
Cornhill. Master mercer.

KING
Geoffrey of Cornhill. Please.
Continue with your oration.

Seagrave marvels at the new order of things.

GEOFFREY
Now, the Westminster fair was
proclaimed by royal command...

Towards the rear of the hall, Geoffrey's voice fades.

SEAGRAVE
... In the year of the last great
famine. When corn was two shillings
a quarter...

At the back of the hall, Scottish lords BAILLOL, COMYN and
BRUCE stand close to the main door.

BAILLOL
Can you imagine King Louis putting
up with all this?

Comyn chuckles aloud. The idea is ridiculous.

Beside him, the door swings open. A royal herald enters.

BRUCE
I heard there was once a similar
assembly in Spain. Or was it
Sicily?

The herald strides up to Simon. Not the King.

BRUCE
Perhaps, Lord Comyn, we shall one
day see such things in Scotland?

Lord Comyn sees Simon rise from his seat.

COMYN
Aye, Bruce. If we ever get back to
Scotland.

Simon bounds over to the Scots. In some haste.

SIMON

Good morrow, gentle knights.
Enjoying our proceedings?

COMYN

You know, Leicester. I'm not
entirely sure what's happening.

SIMON

I'll say what's happening! The Earl
Gloucester is in the building.

INT. WESTMINSTER CHAMBER - MOMENTS LATER

GLOUCESTER

And I say you act as a tyrant!

Simon struggles to take Gloucester seriously.

SIMON

Have you been reading books again?

GLOUCESTER

No. Why do you ask?

SIMON

Gilbert. We are missing out on talk
of murage.

GLOUCESTER

The tournament will take place as
proclaimed! Your sons will join me
at Dunstable on Shrovetide.

SIMON

(straight, serious)

The ban is the order of our King.

GLOUCESTER

Our King? Or your puppet? I hear
Despenser wears the royal seal
around his neck.

Simon does not say otherwise.

GLOUCESTER

The ban is your decision,
Leicester. Do not deny it!

SIMON

The King seeks only the release of
his son. He wishes nothing to
impede this. Nothing. If you had

(MORE)

SIMON (CONT'D)
come from Tonbridge when summoned
you would know that.

Gloucester pauses for thought. He didn't know that.

SIMON
That is why he has renewed the
prohibition of tournaments. That is
why only yesterday I ordered my son
and heir back to Kenilworth.

Gloucester didn't know that either.

GLOUCESTER
And what of Simon?

SIMON
He has returned to Pevensey.
(sighs)
How can I be a tyrant? I can barely
control my own family.

Gloucester backs down. Perhaps he's been too hasty.

SIMON
Anyway, how is Tonbridge? I trust
you keep your arms prepared?

GLOUCESTER
Why so?

SIMON
We don't want another pair of
brothers causing trouble? Do we?

Simon says no more. Gloucester turns away. Thinks of
something else. Looks shifty as he does.

GLOUCESTER
You know, it may be that William of
Pembroke did not kill my father. It
may be the guilty man was hung.

SIMON
Did you hear that at the Tower?

Gloucester looks alarmed. How did Simon know that?

SIMON
How is the Prince?

GLOUCESTER
In health. He plays a great many
games of chess.

And Simon knows why. He turns to leave with a smile.

SIMON

Well, then? Shall we go and hear
the voice of the communitas?

GLOUCESTER

No, no. There's something I have to
say. It's why I came to see you.

Oh? Simon suspects trouble incoming.

GLOUCESTER

I stay not in Westminster. I go
West. This very day.

Simon's suspicions are confirmed.

GLOUCESTER

I wish to visit my new vassal
holdings in Wales. The knights of
my household await me outside.

Simon darkens. He senses trouble indeed.

SIMON

Perhaps you also wish to visit
Baron Mortimer? At Wigmore Castle?

GLOUCESTER

Mortimer is sworn to the peace. Is
he not?

SIMON

He swore to go to Ireland. Did he
not?

EXT. ODIHAM - DAY

Six fierce dogs bark and rear around a HANDLER.

The man grasps a leather satchel. Full of bloody meat. He
casts out lumps of flesh. Onto grassy ground.

The dogs chase after the meat -- and wolf it down.

The handler throws them more. Plenty for all.

Simon and Eleanor ride by at the walk.

SIMON

Make sure they get a good run,
George.

HANDLER

They will, my lord.

Simon and Eleanor ride away from George and the dogs -- into peaceful parkland -- with trees in springtime blossom.

ELEANOR

So when do you leave for the West?

SIMON

As soon as Parliament is done. The court will move to Hereford.

ELEANOR

Hereford? Between Gloucester and Wigmore?

Eleanor spies a fine host of daffodils.

ELEANOR

And reassuringly close to Wales?

Simon knows what she means.

ELEANOR

My brother will hate every minute. He will hate you more than ever.

SIMON

I have prepared an itinerary that visits every shrine *en route*. That should keep him happy.

Eleanor pulls up. Her husband does likewise.

ELEANOR

You know I have written to the Abbess of Montargis?

Simon did not know this. He does now.

ELEANOR

I can think of no better place of retirement. If you should...

Die? Perish? Fall? Simon knows her mind again.

SIMON

My heart. 'Tis not for us to know His will.

ELEANOR

Greathead said he knew.

So he did. Simon listens well.

ELEANOR

Sweetest husband, I know why you
banned the Dunstable tournament. If
Gloucester had gone full of
strength, and Mortimer did
likewise...

What could Simon have done?

ELEANOR

And that's with the exiles still in
Flanders. What shall be your
situation when they return? As they
will.

SIMON

I have my sons. Even if all England
turns against me, I have my sons.

ELEANOR

And who has the King's son? You
won't see off Edward with relics
and masses.

SIMON

Henry will mind him close.

Enough said. They move on together.

SIMON

Did you know Edward came to
Parliament last week?

Husband and wife ride away -- beneath clear blue skies.

SIMON (O.S.)

I don't think he wants any more
trouble. He knows the rules of the
game now.