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HIST 100-5

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Unification Under the First Crusade

Time Travel (Alisha)

I ended up in Constantinople during the year 1096 A.D. with my fiancé because I lost a game of rock-paper-scissors. Let me clear the confusion from my previous statement with a very brief explanation of what led to that event.

Victor, my fiancé, and I were working in our office over some documents from Rome during Constantine’s rule when a colleague of ours, Dr. Adams, walked into the room. He was laughing and going on about how some researcher from a company in California, Dr. Fetty, had sent an ad to our company wanting two people to go to her lab to be sent back in time for the sake of satisfying her curiosity of how modern people would deal with the past. Dr. Adams wondered what idiots would be crazy enough to actually agree to do that experiment.

Since you already read my first statement, you already know that Victor and I are those idiots.

Victor immediately asked for the ad and called up Dr. Fetty while Dr. Adams and I stood in complete shock. Before I knew it, we were meeting with Dr. Fetty and discussing where we would like to go with Victor talking animatedly about the First Crusade. I managed to snap out of my stupor and argue for a time period in which there was indoor plumbing, but Victor argued about how amazing it would be to see all different classes of people uniting under a single cause. Dr. Fetty quickly ended the disagreement by having us do a competition of rock-paper-scissors, a game of which I have never won against Victor.

After the time period was decided, Dr. Fetty asked us what status we would like to have while we were in Constantinople. Before Victor could make any suggestion, I said that we would be wealthy foreigners from England and our disguises would simply be that Victor is the heir to a successful weapon making business and I was his soon to be wife. Dr. Fetty explained that all we would need to do was take a pill to arrive in 1096 A.D. Constantinople and that us being there and interacting with people would have no affect on the current timeline. I am not sure how we would not have an affect on time, but she assured us that we would simply be wiped from the minds of those we meet after we leave. Realizing what time it was, Dr. Fetty had to attend to other business and told us we would keep in contact and go over more information about the time period we would be traveling to in several meetings throughout the month.

Once our departure day arrived, Dr. Fetty handed us two sets of pills with one taking us to 1096 A.D., the gathering of the First Crusade, and the other taking us back to her office in case we wanted to leave early or in any kind of trouble. Dr. Fetty wished us the best on our early “honeymoon” and sent us away with the only instruction of recording our travels.

I know I was terrified of leaving the present to go back to a time period in which I hardly knew anything about as I just studied the bare minimum about the Crusades to get my various degrees, but Victor seemed ecstatic as he smiled and said,” Bottoms up!”

We both swallowed our pills and before I knew it I blacked.

First Impressions (Alisha)

We opened our eyes and found ourselves standing on a beaten path that leads down into the Constantinople. Despite everything Dr. Fetty had taught Victor and I about Constantinople and the First Crusade, it does not do the actual time any justice. I want to simply stand and enjoy the view of the town with the Mediterranean Sea in the distance, the seven hills, and what I believe to be the Hagia Sophia, but Victor is already grabbing my hand and pulling me down the path. On our journey down into the sprawling city I notice that our clothes have mystically changed to fit the eleventh century and I suppose it is a part of whatever crazy science Dr. Fetty worked into those pills of hers. Also, I watch as a man guides a large flock of sheep down the hill towards the gate and I suppose he is leading them to their deaths at the slaughterhouse. Or is this time period one in which animals are still killed outside?

I shake away that harrowing thought and choose to focus on the city before me. We easily slip through the gates and past a beggar to find ourselves in the midst of a large marketplace. To say there were a tavern or two with a grocery shop would do the actuality of the situation little justice. There were taverns everywhere, probably more than in the large town I grew up in, which is a testament to the town’s thriving business or unique drinking problem I suppose.[[1]](#endnote-1) Victor finally releases my hand as we stand off to the side of the street and asks, “Do you want to get something to eat before exploring the city?”

We both had to skip breakfast on account of Dr. Fetty’s orders of no food ten hours before the consumption of the first pill or we’d experience terrible nausea, so we were both fairly hungry. “I could definitely go for some of your infamous grilled cheese, but I’ll settle for whatever looks the most appetizing.”

Victor guides me over to the nearest tavern and this is where things get interesting. My fiancé happens to be very clumsy and despite us wanting to keep a low profile to observe the people, he trips over his own feet and lands face first on the floor of the tavern, which of course gains everyone’s attention. As I go to help Victor up, keeping in mind to scold him later, a man’s voice says, “Are you alright there, sir?”

I look up to see a very regal looking man with dark hair eyes standing above us. He reaches out for Victor and pulls him to his feet in which Victor remarks, “I am now. Thank you, I am Victor and this is Alisha.”

The man smiles and says, “It is nice to meet travelers from such a great distance. I am Hugh, the son of Henry the First of France.”

Victor does an awkward bow, which makes Hugh laugh, before asking, “What brings you all the way from France to Constantinople?” I want to smack Victor for his lack of knowledge at the moment as one of the only things I could easily recall from the lectures we took before coming here were the leaders of the First Crusade.

Hugh does not seemed bothered by the question as he answers, “I am here with my men from France to meet up with other leaders before heading to Jerusalem to reclaim it in the name of the Lord. How about yourselves?”[[2]](#endnote-2) Victor is quick to respond, “We are here to join as well!”

The French noble gestures to myself and asks, “Is this one of those women who are following the armies? I have heard about this kind of behavior from my men.” I have no idea what he is saying, but Victor takes initiative and says, “Yes, she is with me.” Hugh smirks and retorts, “Ah, so your own personal prostitute.”[[3]](#endnote-3)

My first reaction is to slap Victor because I obviously cannot slap a man of noble descent, even though it was him to call me a prostitute. Although, if Dr. Fetty’s logic behind her pills is correct I could slap him and he would not remember any of it. I snap out of my thoughts and quickly remark, “I am here to partake in the journey as well.”

Then Hugh’s face breaks out into a large grin as he pats my shoulder and says, “Remarkable! You shall greatly please the Lord with your service!”[[4]](#endnote-4) I am slightly confused by his statement, but I simply smile and try to avoid making eye contact with Victor who is gently caressing his cheek which is a bright red. Hugh invites us to dine with him and he even offers to pay for us, but we tell him we have more than enough money to spend while in Constantinople. He seems pleased with our company and even invites Victor to join him tomorrow on his trip to see Emperor Alexios concerning funds for the army and resources for the long trip. Victor hesitates at first, but I manage to persuade him by telling him what an honor it would be to join the noble Hugh on his trip. Victor meekly agrees in the end and Hugh says that he will collect him in the morning outside of this tavern.

After we finish our meal, we part ways with Hugh and head outside to wander about Constantinople and enjoy our time there. As we walk out of the tavern I notice the man guiding the sheep earlier taking them into a small building in the marketplace.[[5]](#endnote-5) I turn my gaze from the animals and I apologize to Victor saying, “I did not mean to hit you, I was just surprised at the accusation. I knew women were never viewed as much, but I did not know it was like this in the time the campaigned for the Lord.” Victor accepts my apology and admits he was surprised at the social hierarchy as well. It seems that even if everyone was claiming to be fighting in the name of the Catholic faith that immoral actions still occurred and were somewhat expected. That standard is filthier to me than the litter that fills the corner of the streets, which is not as bad as in modern times, but it seems that no matter the time, people become lazy and let the trash rest in the streets.

Victor approaches a man and asks him where we could find a good view of the city and the man gives directions to a small park just outside of the city called the Aretai.[[6]](#endnote-6) We make the short trek outside the city and follow the man’s directions that leads us to a small hilly plain with various statues and stone benches. One statue immediately catches my interest as it seems to portray a man in Roman regalia. When I walk over to the statue I find it has a small inscription where it describes the Roman hero Hercules and gives some details on his heroics.[[7]](#endnote-7) Despite the Roman empire falling about 500 years before the First Crusade, it still makes its presence known here in Constantinople in some old park.

Even though it is only early in the afternoon, Victor and I both decide that it would be best to retire to an inn for the night to rest up for the day ahead of us and to review what we know about the First Crusade and Constantinople as it seems that we do have as good a grasp on the situation at hand as we thought we would have. It is rather easy to find an inn with the number of taverns about as everyone needs a place to stay after a good drink, so we settle for one right across from the tavern in which we met Hugh. For the rest of the afternoon Victor and I review our knowledge to prepare him with his morning with Hugh and at dinnertime Victor runs to one of the nearby shops and brings back a simple meal of bread and cheese. It does not compare to the food back home, but it is one of the most normal things about this whole day so it brings some much needed comfort.

A Walk to the Palace (Victor)

I leave Alisha behind in the inn early in the morning to go and meet Hugh to accompany him to the Emperor’s palace. Alisha says that she might go for a short walk, but she would be waiting for me in the room before I returned. I reminded her to stay safe and to find me if anything happened in my absence, she simply scolded me for worrying too much before pushing me out the door saying that I should not keep French royalty waiting. Following her wishes I head outside and walk towards the tavern from yesterday. Hugh has not arrived yet so I take this moment to reflect upon everything that has happened so far, especially the little comment I accidentally insinuated about my fiancé being a prostitute. Luckily my cheek had not bruised and of course what mattered the most was that Alisha did not hold a grudge against me. I know I did not know any better, but I am the one responsible for bringing us here instead of some time period that was a least a bit kinder. I thought I knew the First Crusade, but apparently, I only really understood the battles and their progression, not this social structure.

I notice Hugh making his way towards me, so I decide to meet him halfway in the street as I say, “Good morning, Sir Hugh.” Hugh smiles brightly as he says, “Good morning to you as well, Sir Victor. Are you ready to head to the palace?” I nod and prepare to start walking, but Hugh quickly stops me and hails a wagon for the two of us to ride in as it is apparently a much longer walk than I anticipated. On this ride of ours I try to focus anywhere except for on Hugh’s face as he has a very intimidating gaze despite how cheery he asks towards me, but he continually starts conversation, so I feel the need to look at him to maintain eye contact. We talk about simple topics, but, just as the palace comes into view, Hugh begins to ask more about Alisha and I’s status.

Hugh begins with a simple question, “So are you and Alisha very well off?” I reply with the status that Alisha came up with about me inheriting a successful blacksmith business, so we have plenty to take care of ourselves while on the crusade. Then he asks, “Now, did you and Alisha leave behind your children in favor of pursuing faith?”[[8]](#endnote-8) I almost choke at his implication that Alisha and I have children, not to say that I do not want to have kids in the future after we are married, but I manage to respond, “We do not have any children at the moment. Alisha and I are going to be wed soon.” Hugh congratulates me on my upcoming wedding to Alisha and I thank him for his blessing. I never thought I would have a man from the eleventh century bless my marriage, but I guess it just happened. We fall into a somewhat comfortable silence until we reach the palace of Emperor Alexios. Once we arrive, Hugh is allowed his audience with Emperor Alexios while I am directed to one of the many gardens of the palace. I forget the name of it, but it was very pleasantly trimmed and had a beautiful view of the land leading up to the sea in the distance.

Hugh comes to collect me and he seems to be in a very good mood as he has a big grin plastered on his face. Once we get back into the wagon, I ask, “You seem to be in a good mood, Sir Hugh, may I ask why?” His grin gets even wider as he exclaims, “My meeting with Emperor Alexios went very well, more so than I could have possibly imagined. He has given me such a generous donation of money and even some soldiers to add to my small army.”[[9]](#endnote-9) I congratulate him on his successful meeting and then I ask, “What will you do with this money?”

I should not have asked that question looking back on it, but I did and ruined the entire trip, causing it to be much shorter than originally intended. Hugh answered my question with a mischievous glint in his eyes as he said, “Why some of it I will keep for myself and then I will split the rest among my men.” I quickly follow-up his answer asking, “But you are supposed to share that money among all of those within your army, correct? The poor and rich?”[[10]](#endnote-10)

Hugh smile changes into one that seems to be mocking my naivety as he says, “What matters in the end is whether or not we reclaim Jerusalem from the wretched Islamic. No one will care if I keep an extra coin or two to myself. We all have our own cause for partaking in this crusade, correct?”[[11]](#endnote-11) I cannot help but interject, “But what about fighting in the name of God and what is right? Are you not supposed to help the poor to find their stability with supporting them monetarily?”

This is when I notice Hugh’s behavior towards me drastically changes from playful to intimidating. The smile disappears from his face as he remarks, “Do you really believe that everyone joining this journey to Jerusalem is doing it out of good faith? Does the thought of gaining some wealth along with supporting a righteous cause seem that bad?”[[12]](#endnote-12) I start to argue, “But that does not make for a good leader or example to the-” The French noble immediately cuts me off and says, “How dare you continue to bash my honor as a leader! I will hear no more of it from you! Here I thought a man of similar status would understand, but I suppose a foreigner like yourself cannot, despite saying he himself is here in the name of God.” Our conversation stops there and both of us continue on in silence while the tension seems to build as we ride in silence. I simply sit mystified at the situation that just unfolded before me. How did such a religious cause become so tainted with greed? Or had I simply been blinded by the faith side of the crusades? When I return to modern times I am going to dive deeper into what went on in the background of the First Crusade to better understand the meaning behind Hugh’s words.

As soon as we arrive back at the tavern I go to leave, but Hugh stops me by grabbing my arm and saying, “I would be careful of your tongue, Sir Victor. It might get you in trouble with the wrong people.” He releases me and I immediately dash for the inn across the street. Despite the looks I get from several people at the inn, I run down the hallway to Alisha and I’s room. I walk in to find Alisha waiting for me like she said

1. Mango, Marlia Mundell. "The Commercial Map of Constantinople." *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 54 (2000), 199. Constantinople was known for the many businesses it had at the time of the eleventh century, especially the number of taverns and grocers, which is one of the reasons that the leaders of the first Crusade met in Constantinople before setting off for Jerusalem. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. August. C. Krey, *The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eyewitnesses and Participants*, (Princeton: 1921), 78-79. Hugh the Great of France was the first to arrive in Constantinople of the noble leaders and he brought a small army of men with him. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Kostick, Conor. "WOMEN AND THE FIRST CRUSADE: PROSTITUTES OR PILGRIMS?" *The Social Structure of the First Crusade* (Brill, 2008), 271-272. During the First Crusade there were a lot of women who would follow the soldiers to relieve them of their stress and for their own pleasure. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. *Ibid*. Women who were actually among the ranks of the pilgrimage for the cause of the Crusade were greatly praised and rejoiced over for their service. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Mango, Marlia Mundell. "The Commercial Map of Constantinople." 199-200. Despite Alisha’s worries, animals that were to be killed were slain inside of buildings instead of out in the open. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Maguire, Henry. "Gardens and Parks in Constantinople." Dumbarton Oaks Papers 54 (2000), 254. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. *Ibid.* It was noted by Christopher of Mytilene that there was a statue of the Roman hero Hercules located at Aertai. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. Kostick, Conor. "WOMEN AND THE FIRST CRUSADE: PROSTITUTES OR PILGRIMS?" *The Social Structure of the First Crusade* (Brill, 2008), 273. Usually when a wife left to join the crusade she would leave the children behind with a large sum of the wealth in order to join her husband, which is why Hugh would ask if Alisha and Victor had any kids as he already learned that Alisha was not there to serve Victor’s passions. [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. Kostick, Conor. "THE LEADERSHIP OF THE FIRST CRUSADE." *The Social Structure of the First Crusade* (Brill, 2008), 255. The emperor often gave out donations to the leaders of the crusade in hopes of raising a strong army of men, and usually the leaders, such as Hugh, would be expected to divide the wealth among the ranks of the men. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. Kostick, Conor. "PAUPERES AND THE FIRST CRUSADE: FROM ANTIOCH TO JERUSALEM." (Brill, 2008), 133. What Victor is referencing here is how the Bishop Adhémar told those of wealth that they could not be saved if they did not help the poor by sharing any wealth gained equally among the soldiers of the army despite their social status of being rich or poor. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. *Ibid*. Despite the claims of religious authority that those who were greedy or mistreated the poor would not obtain God’s graces, many of high authority and status would let their greed consume them to ensure that no matter the outcome of the crusade the would have money in their pocket to support themselves. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. Cahen, Claude. "An Introduction to the First Crusade." *Past & Present*, no. 6 (1954) 26. Many people joined the First Crusade in the name of faith or because of greed. It was a way in which the poor could hope to gain money to support themselves while under the guise of good faith. [↑](#endnote-ref-12)