

Scene 3

Marsilion's throne room/area now in French hands, with rough benches pushing the floor cushions aside.

On one bench THREE JUDGES sit. FRENCH SERVANTS hold ropes tied to GANELON'S wrists and ankles; one of them is the visible TROUBADOUR. BRAMIMONDA stands in the back near a bandaged NAIMON. OJER watches everything.

CHARLEMAGNE occupies Marsilion's throne, resting his feet on the leopard skin now spread on the floor. He holds the glove; it stirs somber memory of Roland.

**CHARLEMAGNE**

Judges, now rule upon Ganelon's fate.  
You have heard perfidious deeds portrayed,  
how twenty thousand soldiers he betrayed,  
how France and her Peers fell victims to hate.

**GANELON**

Opposing Roland? I've nothing concealed.  
True father's wealth he'd earlier disposed;  
after my marriage, only then disclosed.  
But traitor? Denied. No treason revealed.

**JUDGE**

We must decide behind earnest debate.

**GANELON**

I ask you all, I beg please hear me out.  
By the King I was loyally knighted;  
Roland against me the Peers incited,  
led them to derision in drunken shouts.  
Challenges were passed before the King's ears.  
As messenger sent, they hoped to my grave,  
but thanks to my wits I returned unscathed.  
No treason -- my turn in duel with Peers.

**JUDGE**

Perhaps this decision still held in doubt.

**GANELON**

Pinabel, friend, be my deliverance!

*Enter PINABEL, a mighty  
brawler, as ALL except  
CHARLEMAGNE, GANELON and the  
JUDGES back away from his  
sword and swagger.*

**PINABEL**

As your second, each accuser I'll greet.  
Your sentence repealed by bloody defeat  
if guilt adjudged instead of innocence.

**JUDGE**

*(to others of the tribunal)*

Greatest with sword his prowess admitted.  
If our decree makes a head meet hatchet  
Pinabel would put us in our casket.  
Our stand must be Ganelon acquitted.

*(to CHARLEMAGNE)*

Sire, nothing can cure Roland's affliction.  
We urge Ganelon's freedoms be restored.  
By him you will be forever adored.

**CHARLEMAGNE**

Are all in my realm without conviction?

*A weak man physically even  
before the wound yet never  
lacking in loyal resolve,  
NAIMON limps up.*

**NAIMON**

Let not these tribulations dissuade you  
for I do not breathe without your consent.  
My loyal labors shall never relent,  
expressly when serpents would persuade you.  
Roland sworn officer in your service;  
no royal plan by Ganelon murdered.  
Through Caliph's presence, Ganelon perjured.  
I judge him guilty, to death I promise,  
befitting those forsaking royal trust.  
Any oppose this, my sword to refute.

**CHARLEMAGNE**

My friend, I forbid you enter dispute;  
too recent your wound on battlefield's dust.

*NAIMON yields to  
CHARLEMAGNE's wish and sits.*

**PINABEL**

*(a bully)*

**None step forward. So this noisy trial closed.  
Now other issues be addressed instead.  
Since the marches' lord, good Roland, is dead,  
who will be awarded the northern coast?**

*OJER kneels before  
CHARLEMAGNE and takes the  
glove from him. Then OJER  
takes a rope attached to  
GANELON's wrist and drapes  
the slack around GANELON'S  
neck -- a symbolic noose.*

**NAIMON**

**I believe my second has staked a claim.**

*OJER draws a battle axe to  
challenge PINABEL.*

**PINABEL**

**Ojer the Dane to prove Ganelon's guilt?  
Foolishness ended when his blood is spilt.**

**CHARLEMAGNE**

**In truth, the victor points the loser's blame.**

*PINABEL'S flashy moves and  
feints draw no return strikes  
from OJER, who relentlessly  
advances, moving only as  
needed to block PINABEL's  
true blows. PINABEL's nerve  
wavers.)*

**PINABEL**

**Naimon, urge surrender from your second.  
I'll pledge my service, render you fealty,  
gladly render my wealth in penalty,  
make kingly peace with Ganelon pardoned.**

NAIMON

That offer I can answer without pause:  
Never reward Ganelon's felony  
through absolution of his villainy.  
'Tis you the one should abandon the cause.  
Pinabel, bold, still innocent of crime,  
with king I'll intervene to call you friend.  
But Ganelon bent fair scale to such end  
his punishment undiminished by time.

PINABEL

*(echoes of Roland's pride)*

Once challenge made, it cannot come unsaid.  
Dearer to me than my mortal heart beat  
no man alive give me cause to retreat.  
Rather I'd die than have cowardly fled!

*OJER strikes his only blow;  
PINABEL dies.*

JUDGE

*(quickly changing sides)*

Ganelon guilty! His fate to be grim.  
Sentence all to death who share his treason!

CHARLEMAGNE

From your own lips hear pronounced the reason.  
My soldiers, hang them from the highest limb.

\*\*\*\*\*End of Excerpt\*\*\*\*\*