

whom he had betrothed to Ivanko, and gave her in marriage to Chrysos. By such tricks he regained Pelagonia and Prilep and caused Kamytzēs to withdraw from Thessaly, partly because he was defeated in battle and partly because he decided to flee. Finally, Alexios forced him out of Stanon, to which he had escaped as an impregnable refuge. Aglow with such successes, he imagined that he would be invincible for a long time to come and thus was free to remain at home, and he returned to Byzantion. At this time [spring 1202], he took Strummitsa, using guile to surround Chrysos, and concluded a peace treaty with Ioannitsa.<sup>1432</sup>

Up to now, the course of our history has been smooth and easily traversed, but from this point on I do not know how to continue. What judgment is reasonable for him who must relate in detail the common calamities which this queen of cities endured during the reign of the terrestrial angels?<sup>1433</sup> I would that I might worthily and fully recount the most oppressive and grievous of all evils. But, since this is impossible, I shall abbreviate the narration in the hope that it will be of greater profit to posterity because moderation has been exercised in reporting the sufferings, thereby mitigating excessive grief.

[536] Emperor Alexios had deposed his brother Isaakios from the throne; it is necessary that we do not lose sight of his incarceration altogether. Alexios, unmindful of the indelible disasters suffered by the masses (nor does Vengeance sleep forever, but takes delight in the chronic changes [in government] and eagerly pursues those who perform lawless acts, pouncing swiftly and noiselessly), provided his brother, who was confined at the Double Column which stands on the shore near the straits, with a comfortable existence, and no one was denounced for sailing across to him. Anyone who wished to do so, and especially from among the race of the Latins, sailed up to Issakios. Made privy to secret designs aimed at opposing and overthrowing Alexios, he posted letters to his daughter Irene, who shared the marriage bed with Philip, king of the Germans at that time, and urged that he be avenged as a father; and replies winged their way thence, advising him what to do.

Later, the emperor released Issakios's son, Alexios, from prison and allowed him to move about freely. When he was about to march out against the *protostrator* and had taken up quarters at Damokraneia<sup>1434</sup> [c. September 1201], he took Alexios along as a companion in travel. The latter, presumably following his father's instructions, negotiated his escape with a certain Pisan, the captain of a huge round ship. The Pisan waited for the opportune moment to put out to sea without delay, concealing his tracks in the teeming waves.<sup>1435</sup> As soon as the weather was favorable for sailing, the ship unfurled her sails and, borne along by a fair breeze, ran ashore on Avlonia on the Hellespont, where its small boat put in at Athyras to pick up Alexios. To escape detection, it was filled with a load of sand to be used as ballast in the ship, which supposedly had been emptied of its wares. Alexios arrived from Damokraneia, entered the boat, and was transferred to the ship. When his escape became known, the emperor dispatched men to search through the ship, but they failed to capture Alexios; by clipping his hair round about and donning Latin raiment, he was able to mingle with the throng and escape the notice of his pursuers. When he reached Sicily, his presence was made

known to his sister, who dispatched a considerable bodyguard. She embraced her brother and beseeched her husband Philip to do his utmost to succor her father, who had been deprived of both sight and power by his kinsmen, and to help her brother, who was homeless and without a country and wandered about like the planets, taking with him no more than his body.<sup>1436</sup>

Besides these events, others come to mind which must not be overlooked. The Angelos brothers were guilty of poor administration of state affairs in other ways as well, as we have already recounted;<sup>1437</sup> particularly obsessed with the love of money, they were not content with enriching themselves from legitimate sources of revenue, nor did they hold on to the wealth they amassed but poured it out with both hands on the excessive indulgence of the body and costly ornamentation. Moreover, they enriched courtesans and kinsmen who were utterly useless to the state. Not only did they glean and fleece the Roman cities, inventing novel taxes, but they also taxed the members of the Latin nations in their midst. Often disregarding the treaties made with the Venetians, they mulcted them of monies, levied taxes on their ships, and raised the Pisans against them. One could see both nations joining in battle, at times inside the City, and at times on the open sea, with one side prevailing and then the other, each taking turns pursuing the other and being plundered.

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The Venetians, who recalled their ancient treaties with the Romans, could not endure seeing the friendship pledged to them being awarded to the Pisans. It was evident that they were gradually turning against the Romans, waiting for the opportune moment to even the score. Moreover, Alexios, in his niggardliness, refused to give them the two hundred pounds of gold still owed them from the fifteen hundred pounds which Emperor Manuel had agreed to repay the Venetians for the monies he had confiscated when he had arrested them.<sup>1438</sup>

The doge of Venice, Enrico Dandolo,<sup>1439</sup> was not the least of horrors; a man maimed in sight and along in years, a creature most treacherous and extremely jealous of the Romans, a sly cheat who called himself wiser than the wise and madly thirsting after glory as no other, he preferred death to allowing the Romans to escape the penalty for their insulting treatment of his nation. And all the while he pondered on how many evils the Venetians associated with the rule of the Angelos brothers [Isaakios II and Alexios III], and of Andronikos before them, and prior to him of Manuel, who held sway over the Roman empire. Realizing that should he work some treachery against the Romans with his fellow countrymen alone he would bring disaster down upon his own head, he schemed to include other accomplices, to share his secret designs with those whom he knew nursed an implacable hatred against the Romans and who looked with an envious and avaricious eye on their goods.<sup>1440</sup> The opportunity arose as if by chance when certain wellborn toparchs were eager to set out for Palestine; he met with them to arrange a joint action and won them over as confederates in the military operation against the Romans. These were Marquis Boniface of Montferrat, Count Baldwin of Flanders, Count Hugh of Saint Pol, Count Louis of Blois,<sup>1441</sup> and many other bold warriors who were as tall as their lances were long.

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Within three full years [actually April 1201–July 1202] one hundred

and ten horse-carrying dromons and sixty long ships were built in Venice, and more than seventy huge round ships were assembled (one much larger in size than the others was called *Kosmos* [*Mundus*]). One thousand cavalry clad in full armor and thirty thousand bucklers divided mostly into heavy-armed foot soldiers, especially those called crossbowmen, were commanded to board them.<sup>1442</sup>

Once the fleet was ready to put out to sea, evil was heaped upon evil, and wave after wave rolled in upon the Romans, for Alexios, the son of Isaakios Angelos, was supplied with letters from the pope of elder Rome [Innocent III]<sup>1443</sup> and Philip, king of Germany,<sup>1444</sup> that pledged their profound gratitude to these piratical gangs if they would welcome Alexios and restore him to his paternal throne. Later, when Alexios appeared, and most willingly, before the fleet,<sup>1445</sup> his presence was thought to provide not only an opportune camouflage for sailing out to plunder the Romans but also a specious reason for sating the Venetians' avaricious and money-loving temperament. As they were all-cunning in their ways and troublemakers, they laid hold of Alexios, who was juvenile in mind rather than in age, and prevailed upon him to agree under oath to demands which were impossible to fulfill. The lad consented to their requests for seas of money and, in addition, agreed to assist them against the Saracens with heavy-armed Roman troops and fifty triremes. What was even worse and most reprehensible, he abjured his faith and embraced that of the Latins and agreed to the innovation of the papal privileges and to the altering of the ancient customs of the Romans.

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Releasing the stern cables [2–8 October 1202], the fleet sailed down to Zara and laid siege to the city [11–24 November 1202]<sup>1446</sup> for supposedly violating ancient treaties, following the instructions of Dandolo, doge of Venice. The Roman emperor Alexios, who had received information over a long period of time as to the movements of the Latins, was disposed to do nothing better on behalf of the Romans; his excessive slothfulness was equal to his stupidity in neglecting what was necessary for the common welfare. When it was proposed that he make provisions for an abundance of weapons, undertake the preparation of suitable war engines, and, above all, begin the construction of warships, it was as though his advisors were talking to a corpse. He indulged in after-dinner repartee and in willful neglect of the reports on the Latins; he busied himself with building lavish bathhouses, leveling hills to plant vineyards, and filling in ravines, wasting his time in these and other such activities. Those who wanted to cut timber for ships were threatened with the gravest danger by the eunuchs who guarded the thickly wooded mountains, that were reserved for the imperial hunts, as if they were sacred groves, gardens, so to speak, planted by God.<sup>1447</sup> And instead of rebuking these foolish men,

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the emperor, taken in by their prattle, gave his approval. After the Latins had conquered Zara, they landed at Epidamnos, and their fellow passenger Alexios was proclaimed emperor by the Epidamnites. When [Emperor] Alexios was convinced of the certainty of the report of these events, he was like the proverbial angler, who, on being smitten, recovered his senses.<sup>1448</sup> Accordingly, he began to repair the rotting and worm-eaten small skiffs, barely twenty in number, and mak-

ing the rounds of the City's walls, he ordered the dwellings outside pulled down. *Alexios Angelos*

The Venetian fleet set out from Epidamnos and put in at Kerkyra, where they delayed their voyage for twenty days [4–24 May 1203]. When they realized that the citadel was unassailable, they unfurled their sails and made for Constantinople,<sup>1449</sup> for the Westerners had long known that the Roman emperors concerned themselves with nothing else but carousing and drunkenness,<sup>1450</sup> with making Byzantis another Sybaris celebrated for its voluptuousness.<sup>1451</sup> After an exceptionally fair voyage (for the breezes out of the deep, ever gentle and swelling the sails, wafted their ships on their way), they appeared before the City while scarcely anyone took notice. They put in at Chalcedon (which lies on the opposite side of the straits from Peraia, to the east and a little below the Double Column); first came the transports propelled with oars, and shortly afterwards the warships arrived under sail and rode at anchor at a distance beyond an arrow's shot from the land. The dromons touched at Skoutarion.<sup>1452</sup> [542]

The Romans who appeared on the nearby hills and stood along the shore discharged missiles against the warships, but to no avail, since most of these were unable to cover the distance and fell into the sea. Another contingent kept watch to the north around Damatry<sup>1453</sup> to check the charges of the Latin knights. But again, nothing useful was accomplished: they made no attempt to attack the enemy forces, and when the latter charged them, they rose up and scattered.

Not many days had elapsed before the Latins, realizing that there was no one to oppose them on land, came ashore. The cavalry moved out a short distance from the sea, and the long ships, dromons, and round warships<sup>1454</sup> moved inside the bay. Both the land and sea forces mounted a joint attack against the fortress, to which the Romans customarily fastened the heavy iron chain whenever an attack by enemy ships threatened, and forthwith they assailed the fortification. It was a sight to behold the defenders fleeing after a brief resistance. Some were slain or taken alive, and others slid down the chain as though it were a rope and boarded the Roman triremes, while many others lost their grip and fell headlong into the deep. Afterwards, the chain was broken,<sup>1455</sup> and the entire fleet streamed through. As for our triremes, some were overpowered on the spot, and those forced to shore suffered damage after they were emptied of their men. The evil took many forms, such as has never entered the heart of man.<sup>1456</sup> It was the month of July of the year 6711 [5–6 July 1203]. [543]

After a brief respite to lay down strategy [6–9 July 1203], the Latins—those in the long ships as well as the horse, together with the foot soldiers who preceded them—appeared [10–11 July 1203] before Kosmidion,<sup>1457</sup> where they met some slight resistance from the Romans around the bridge located nearby and around the place called Trypetos Lithos [Pierced Stone].<sup>1458</sup> The warships, long ships, and dromons put in nearby, and the army pitched a camp divided in part into trenches and wooden palisades around a hill from which the buildings of the Blachernai palace complex that faced west were visible. At the foot of this hill there lies an

open courtyard that extends southwards to the wall erected by Emperor Manuel to safeguard the palace and touches the sea in the direction of the north wind. The defenders on the wall could see the raised tents and could almost converse with those within who faced Gyrolimnē.<sup>1459</sup>

[544] The Latins were separated from us, not by palisade and camp, but by the City's walls. Emperor Alexios had long before set his heart on flight, and fully determined to do so, he bore no arms whatsoever, nor was he seen to offer resistance to the enemy without, but instead sat back as a spectator of the events taking place and ascended to the lofty "apartments of the Empress of the Germans," as they are called. His close friends and kinsmen assembled a cavalry force and a small contingent of infantry and sallied forth at intervals to show that the City was not wholly desolate of manpower. On the spur of the moment, both sides mounted special cavalry charges many times during the day, and knight competed with horseman in the throwing of the javelin with the excitement and zeal wrought by bravery; in these actions our deeds were not ignoble. Moreover, the infantry forces sallied forth into the open courtyard which we have mentioned and attacked the enemy. The imperial palace was damaged by stone-throwing engines, and at times the stone weights discharged from the walls of the City struck down the adversaries.

[545] On the seventeenth day of the month of July, the enemy's land and sea forces resolved to fight even more boldly to achieve their end, or else, failing in this, to come to terms; the combatants were utterly beguiled by both rumors that were fluttering about. Bringing up their warships, the Latin naval forces positioned them opposite Petria.<sup>1460</sup> The ships were covered with ox hides to make them impervious to fire, and the halyards were fashioned into scaling ladders with rungs made of line and lowered and again raised high by cables bound to the masts. When the land forces had strengthened the wall-storming battering ram and deployed crossbowmen in many places, the signal was given to commence hostilities. The horrendous battle that followed was fraught with groanings on all sides. The heavy-armed troops who surrounded the battering ram broke through the wall and gained access to a passageway within which led down to the sea to a place called the Emperor's Gangway, although they were bravely repulsed by the Roman allies, the Pisans and the ax-bearing barbarians, and the majority returned wounded. When those in the ships approached the walls, using the light boats, they cast anchors onto the shore from the scaling ladders, raising the ladders, which were suspended from the stern cables, over many sections of the walls. They then engaged the defenders on the towers and easily routed them, since they were fighting from a higher vantage point and discharging their missiles from above.

The enemy troops who occupied the section of the wall set fire to the adjoining houses, dispersing the dwellers in many directions. It was a piteous spectacle to behold that day, one that required rivers of tears to counterbalance the fire's extensive damage: everything, from the hill of Blachernai to the Monastery of Evergetēs, was burned to ashes, and the fire's rush reached the district called Deuteron [Second].<sup>1461</sup>

When Alexios saw the pitiable plight of the queen of cities and the affliction of the people, he at last took up arms. And he saw the masses

bristling with anger, heaping abuse upon him, and hurling insults against him, for by choosing to remain safe inside the palace and resolving to offer no assistance to the defiled City, he had emboldened the enemy even more. In allowing the conflict to reach the walls (a thing which until now had never happened), it was as though he had not realized that forethought is superior to afterthought, that it is better to anticipate the enemy than to be anticipated by him, that the body does not recover its health by succumbing to an excessively grievous illness. Alexios marched out from the palace, followed by many horsemen and a highborn infantry regiment from among the flower of the City that had hastened to join him, and when the opponent's land forces suddenly beheld this huge array, they shuddered. Indeed, a work of deliverance would have been wrought had the emperor's troops moved in one body against the enemy, but now the nagging idea of flight and the faintheartedness of those about him thwarted Alexios from what needed to be done. To the joy of the Romans, he drew up the troops in battle array and moved out, ostensibly to oppose the Latins, but he returned in utter disgrace, having only made the enemy more haughty and insolent. In their arrogance the Latins pursued the routed Romans on their flight back and brandished their spears.

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Alexios entered the palace and made ready his escape. It was as though he had labored hard to make a miserable corpse of the City, to bring her to utter ruin in defiance of her destiny, and he hastened along her destruction. He communicated his scheme to several of his female chamberlains and relatives and to Irene, from among his daughters, and collected one thousand pounds of gold and other imperial ornaments made of precious gems and translucent pearls. He then set out about the first watch of the night [17–18 July 1203] and rode on to Develton,<sup>1462</sup> where he had made preparations for his arrival. This miserable wretch among men was neither softened by the affection of children nor constrained by his wife's love, nor was he moved by such a great city, nor did he, because of his love for his life and his cowardice, give thought to anything else save his own salvation, and even this was doubtful, since he had to quit so many provinces and cities and all his kin.<sup>1463</sup>

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Alexios reigned for eight years, three months, and ten days. In matters of warfare, he was as described, and neither was he wholly polished in the administration of public affairs (I do not mean to say that he was altogether inclined to neglect his duties). He did not, however, merit scorn in other areas. He surpassed all others in the mildness of his manner; neither was he inaccessible, nor did he repel anyone with a ferocious mien and supercilious glare and by snarling, but anyone who wished to do so could approach and petition him, and, sometimes, one could contradict him without placing restrictions on oneself in speech. He shunned, moreover, those who slandered one another as well as the flatterers. Conscience-stricken because he had acted lawlessly against his brother, he feared his fate and dreaded avenging Justice who unceasingly surveys the affairs of mortals; as a result, he suffered heartfelt contrition. Troubled in spirit,<sup>1464</sup> he was distraught and distressed and aggrieved. If it be exceedingly difficult for emperors not to cut down the ears of corn which overtop the rest,<sup>1465</sup> and not to leap brutally upon those who have of-

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fended them, then one could see that Alexios was rich in such virtue. He did not drive a stake into the eyes to implant darkness or prune the limbs of the body as though they were grapevines, to become a butcher of men. As long as he wore the gloom-stained purple, no woman put on black, mourning a husband whom black Death<sup>1466</sup> had enfolded. Neither did fire flash from his eyes like rays from gems, nor did he abuse others with insults so that teardrops the size of round pearls should fall.

## VII. *The Second Reign of Isaakios Angelos, Together with His Son Alexios*

**T**HUS Alexios, driven away by no one, rode on to Develton. It is grievous for a wife and beloved consort to do harm instead of providing assistance, according to the maxim of an emperor who suffered greatly because of the advice of a female chamberlain.<sup>1467</sup> But being a womanish man, it was a troublous matter and the worst thing possible, for what order given by him, even though leading to grief and extreme danger, would not command obedience? This indeed clashed with the interests of the Romans who were ill-fated to have effete and dissolute emperors who pursued a life of pleasure. Deeming it difficult to overpower necessity, they found their fear for their own lives altogether intolerable. [549]

But Alexios traveled the road he had chosen; the people in the palace of Blachernai viewed Alexios's escape as exceedingly insufferable and were thrown into a state of confusion and consternation because of the impending disaster, for they believed that there was nothing and no one to put off and check the Latins who were encamped nearby from making an imminent armed assault against the City and penetrating inside the walls. Supposing Alexios's kinsmen and his close friends, and even Empress Euphrosynē, to be guilty of treason, they did not offer them the throne; but because they could not resist the savage sweep of events, they turned to Isaakios, Alexios's brother, and they who were being buffeted by tempestuous waves saw in him who was incarcerated within the palace their last hope. When the eunuch Constantine [Philoxenitēs], the minister of the imperial treasuries, had assembled the ax-bearers and discussed with them what needed to be done and was assured of the support of a faction that agreed that Isaakios should quickly assume the reins of empire, he had Empress Euphrosynē seized, her relations were taken prisoners, and Isaakios proclaimed emperor [17–18 July 1203]. He who had been blinded was ordained to oversee all things and was led by the hand to ascend the imperial throne. [550]

Isaakios immediately dispatched messengers to his son Alexios and to the chiefs of the Latin host [18 July 1203] to inform them of the flight of his brother and emperor. They, however, made no changes in their expectations of the City; neither would they send Isaakios's son to him as requested by his father before Isaakios agreed to fulfill all the promises Alexios had made them.<sup>1468</sup> These were, as related earlier, that none of the extravagant pledges to provide the Latins with glory and gain was to be held back. Doing everything to insure against failure in ascending the



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paternal throne, Alexios, a witless lad ignorant of affairs of state, neither comprehended any of the issues at stake nor reflected for a moment on the Roman-hating temperament of the Latins. Having purchased his entrance into the City by the overturn of the imperial majesty, he was deemed worthy to sit on the throne with his father as co-emperor. The entire citizenry, therefore, ran in a body to the palace in order to behold the son with his father and to pay homage to both.

Not many days later [between 19 July and 1 August 1203], the Latin chiefs presented themselves at the palace together with their distinguished nobility.<sup>1469</sup> Benches were set before them, and they all sat in council with the emperors, hearing themselves acclaimed as benefactors and saviors and receiving every other noble appellation for having honored the power-loving Alexios in his childish actions, and, moreover, for coming to his and his father's aid in their time of adversity. In addition, they enjoyed every kindness and courtesy. Amusements and dainties were contrived for them, for Isaakios, taking possession of what little was in the imperial treasury and taking into custody Empress Euphrosynē and her kinsmen, whom he robbed with both hands, lavishly bestowed the monies on the Latins.

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But since the recipients considered the sum to be but a drop (for no nation loves money more than this race nor is there any more ravenous and anxious to run to a banquet) and were ever thirsting after libations as copious as the Tyrrhenian Sea, in utter violation of the law, he touched the untouchable, whence, I think, the Roman state was totally subverted and disappeared. Because money was lacking, he raided the sacred temples. It was a sight to behold: the holy icons of Christ consigned to the flames after being hacked to pieces with axes and cast down, their adornments carelessly and unsparingly removed by force, and the revered and all-hallowed vessels seized from the churches with utter indifference and melted down and given over to the enemy troops as common silver and gold. The emperor himself was in no way incensed by this raging madness against the saints, and no one protested out of reverence. In our silence, not to say callousness, we differed in no way from those madmen, and because we were responsible, we both suffered and beheld the most calamitous of evils.

The city rabble, not proceeding of its own accord on a laudable course of action, or following the advice of others to do what was best, since the enemy had already poured over the Roman provinces, senselessly razed and reduced to ashes the dwellings of the Western nations situated near the sea, making no distinction between friend and foe. Not only were the Amalfitans, who had been nurtured in Roman customs, disgusted by this wickedness and recklessness but so also the Pisans who had chosen to make Constantinople their home. As soon as Emperor Alexios was seen to flee, these nations fed on high hopes that mitigated much of their grief. By taking flight and being succeeded as emperor by Isaakios, Alexios reconciled the Pisans with the Venetians, having contrived even this against us; sailing across the Peraia where the enemy was encamped, they shared tent and table with their former adversaries, and with one mind they agreed on all things.<sup>1470</sup>

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On the nineteenth day of the month of August in the sixth indication

of the year 6711 [1203],<sup>1471</sup> certain Frenchmen (of old they were called Flemings), Pisans, and Venetians sailed with a company of men across the straits, confident that the monies of the Saracens were a windfall and treasure trove waiting to be taken. This evil battalion put into the City on fishing boats (for there was no one whatsoever to resist their sailing in and out of the City) and without warning fell upon the synagogue of the Agarenes called Mitaton in popular speech; with drawn swords they plundered its possessions.<sup>1472</sup> As these outrages were being committed senselessly and beyond every expectation, the Saracens defended themselves by grabbing whatever weapon was at hand; aroused by the tumult, the Romans came running to their assistance. Not as many arrived as should have, but soon, after fighting on the side of these men, the Latins were compelled to withdraw. The latter abandoned hope of resisting with weapons and learned from experience the use of fire; they proposed to resort to fire as the most effective defense and the quickest course of action to subdue the City.

And, indeed, after taking up positions in a goodly number of locations, they set fire to the buildings. The flames rose unbelievably high above the ground throughout that night, the next day, and the following evening as they spread everywhere. It was a novel sight, defying the power of description. While in the past many conflagrations had taken place in the City—no one could cite how many and of what sort they had been—the fires ignited at this time proved all the others to be but sparks. The flames divided, took many different directions and then came together again, meandering like a river of fire. Porticoes collapsed, the elegant structures of the agorae toppled, and huge columns went up in smoke like so much brushwood. Nothing could stand before those flames. Even more extraordinary was the fact that burning embers detached themselves from this roaring and raging fire and consumed buildings at a great distance. Shooting out at intervals, the embers darted through the sky, leaving a region untouched by the blaze, and then destroying it when they turned back and fell upon it. The fire, advancing for the most part in a straight course driven by a north wind, was soon observed to turn aside as though fanned by a south wind, to move aslant, turning this way and that way as it unexpectedly charred and burned everything. Even the Great Church was endangered. Indeed, all the buildings lying in the direction of the Arch of the Milion and adjoining the gallery of Makron, and the structure also called The Synods<sup>1473</sup> came crashing to the ground, for neither the baked brick nor the deep set foundations could withstand the heat, and everything within was consumed like candlewicks.

The first kindling of the fire, therefore, began at the synagogue of the Saracens (the latter is situated in the direction of the northern section of the City sloping toward the sea next to the church built in the name of Hagia Eirenē, and, spreading breadthwise to the east, it abated at the Great Church; in the west it extended to the district called Perama, and thereafter it burst forth, enveloping the breadth of the City, and expended its fury at the City's southern walls. The most extraordinary thing of all was that the fire, advancing gradually and leaping over the walls, so to speak, ravaged the dwellings beyond, and flying embers burned a ship sailing by. The so-called Porticoes of Domninos were also reduced to

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ashes, as well as the two covered streets originating at the Milion, one of which extended to the Philadelphion.<sup>1474</sup> The Forum of Constantine and everything between the northern and southern extremities were similarly destroyed. Not even the Hippodrome was spared, but the whole section towards the demes as well as everything leading down to [the harbor of] Sophia was engulfed in flames which extended to Bukanon and thence to all structures adjacent to the district of Eleutherios.<sup>1475</sup>

The flames, encompassing the City from sea to sea<sup>1476</sup> and dividing it as by a great chasm or a river of fire flowing through her midst, made it perilous for loved ones to join one another unless they crossed over in boats. The majority of the City's inhabitants were stripped then of their possessions as the flames reached out to those who were taken by surprise; those who had transferred their goods to other places of shelter also failed to salvage them. The fire, taking a winding course and moving in zigzag paths and branching off in many directions and returning to its starting point, destroyed the goods that had been moved. Woe is me! How great was the loss of those magnificent, most beautiful palaces<sup>1477</sup> filled with every kind of delight, abounding in riches, and envied by all.

[556] In the face of these most horrendous events, both Emperor Isaakios and his son Alexios were not in the least appalled. They prayed for the end of all things, these firebrands of the country, flaming in visage, thus personifying the incendiary angel of evil.<sup>1478</sup> Even before the conflagration had completely abated, a collection of sacred treasures again was made, more exhaustive than before, and melted down. The Latin host used the gold and silver provided them for their bodily needs as though they were profane metals and offered to sell them to whoever wished to buy. Considering themselves to be guiltless (for they were not ignorant whence came the monies awarded them), since they were only receiving what was owed them, they brought down the wrath of God on the Romans who prize their private possessions while defiling what belongs to God.

Since there was need for Alexios to receive assistance from the Latin forces as well (for his uncle, the former Emperor Alexios, having left Develton, occupied Adrianople, and delivered over the empire which he had repudiated to those who lusted insanely for power, neither desired nor dared to attempt to recover his throne), he induced Marquis Boniface to accompany him as his fellow general, but only after agreeing to pay sixteen hundredweight of gold.<sup>1479</sup> Marching out against [his uncle] Alexios [19 August 1203], he compelled him to flee more rapidly and much farther than before. He went the round of the Thracian cities, subjugating and then gleaning them (for his troops yearned to draw water often from the golden streams, and like those bitten by a venomous serpent whose poison causes intense thirst, they drank but could not be sated), and moving down as far as Kypsella, he returned to the palace [11 November 1203]; all the conspirators who had cooperated with his uncle Alexios in the blinding and removal of his father from the throne were hanged.

[557] Isaakios impatiently awaited the opportunity to vent the rancor which had long smoldered in his breast against those who had treated him so abominably; and he did not cease speaking ill of his son, especially since he observed his own authority gradually slipping away from him and passing over to his son. He choked with rage at the transposition of

names in the public acclamations; his son, taking precedence, was hailed with loud shouts which resounded through the palace while he followed, like an echo, the more spirited filial acclamations. Unable to influence events in any way, he mumbled under his breath; revealing the secrets of the innermost recesses of his heart, he defamed his son, contending that his usefulness was spent, that he was not at all trained in self-control, that his character had been formed by the worst habits, and that he kept company with depraved men whom he smote on the buttocks and was struck by them in return.

Not in vain or without cause did Isaakios inveigh against his son, for the latter committed many more outrageous offenses and sullied the majestic, all-glorious name of the Roman empire. With a few of his followers, he crossed over to the tents of the barbarians, where he engaged in drinking bouts and passed the day playing at dice. His playfellows, removing the gold-inlaid and bejeweled diadem from his head, put it on their own, and placed on Alexios a shaggy woolen headdress of Latin wool-spinning provenance.<sup>1480</sup>

Not only was Alexios deemed an abomination by sensible Romans for passing his time with the Latin nobles in such activities, but also his father, Isaakios, was no less despised as he busied himself with portentous delusions and unceasingly heeded the divinations and oracles more ineffable than those of his first reign. If he imagined himself to be sole ruler as before, he also shamelessly contended that he would unite the East with the West, girding himself with universal rule. He expected that at that time he would rub the blindness from his eyes, shed the disease of gout like the snake's slough, and be utterly transformed into a godlike man. Therefore, the most cursed of the monks (who let their beards grow full like a deep cornfield, these God-haters who, to their shame, don the habit dear to God and chase after royal banquets where they gulp down fresh and fat dishes) joined in establishing him by word as sole ruler as they dined with him and were served wine of a fine bouquet, unmixed with water. At times they embraced his gnarled hands, and, touching them to his eyes, they prophesied that these would be restored and strengthened as never before. He was, so to speak, utterly delighted by such sayings and leaped with joy at these ribald jests as though they were infallible prophecies.

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The devotees of astrology were also admitted to his presence and he submitted to their counsels. He resorted to other measures, such as removing from its pedestal in the Hippodrome the Kalydonian boar, bristling up the flowing hair on its back, and placing it in the Great Palace in the belief that he could thus forestall the onrush of the swinish and reckless populace of the city.<sup>1481</sup>

The wine-bibbing portion of the vulgar masses smashed the statue of Athena that stood on a pedestal in the Forum of Constantine, for it appeared to the foolish rabble that she was beckoning on the Western armies.<sup>1482</sup> She rose to a standing height of thirty feet and wore a garment made of bronze, as was the entire figure. The robe reached down to her feet and fell into folds in many places so that no part of the body which Nature has ordained to be clothed should be exposed. A military girdle tightly cinctured her waist. Covering her prominent breasts and shoulders

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was an upper garment of goatskin embellished with the Gorgon's head [the aegis]. Her long bare neck was an irresistible delight to behold. The bronze was so transformed by its convincing portrayal of the goddess in all her parts that her lips gave the appearance that, should one stop to listen, one would hear a gentle voice. The veins were represented dilated as though fluid were flowing through their twisted ways to wherever needed throughout the whole body, which, though lifeless, appeared to partake of the full bloom of life. And the eyes were filled with deep yearning. On her head was set a helmet with horsehair crest, and terribly did it nod from above.<sup>1483</sup> Her braided hair tied in the back was a feast for the eyes, while the locks, falling loosely over the forehead, set off the braided tresses. Her left hand tucked up the folds of her dress while she pointed her right hand toward the south; her head was also gently turned southward, and her eyes also gazed in the same direction. Whence they who were wholly ignorant of the orientation of the points of the compass contended that the statue was looking toward the west and with her hand was beckoning the Western armies, thus erring in their judgment and misapprehending what they beheld.

[560] As the result of such misconceptions, they shattered the statue of Athena, or, rather, guilty of ever-worsening conduct and taking up arms against themselves, they discarded the patroness of manliness and wisdom even though she was but a symbol of these. The emperors busied themselves in no more important task than the collection of monies as there was no satiating the recipients: the more they were given, the greater was their gold lust. There were citizens, indeed, who were in travail over the collection of taxes. As this was not proceeding equably (for the disgruntled populace, like a vast and boundless sea lashed by a wind, were seething with insurrection), they put an end to this scheme and milked by selection those who were reputed to be very rich, not as required to make butter,<sup>1484</sup> but in order to appease the ravenous hunger of the Latins. The heavy golden movables of the Great Church, together with the silver lamps, were removed and consigned to the flames, and simply thrown to the dogs for meat,<sup>1485</sup> and there was an unholy mingling of the profane with the sacred.

Nothing, however, was accomplished by these lawless measures. The exactors of money, who delighted in the simplemindedness of the Romans and mocked the stupidity of the emperors, wished to relieve them of some of their precious possessions and to compel others to carry these off, while others were to come forward to lead them to gold and some were to prepare to receive the spoils, and to do this without stopping. The chiefs of the hosts appeared in turn before the luxurious estates around the megalopolis, the holy temples along the Propontis, and the most splendid imperial edifices, where they took up arms one after the other, stripped them of everything within, and put these buildings to the torch. Not a single structure was spared by these barbarians who were borne by the Fates and hated the beautiful.<sup>1486</sup>

They sailed many times over to the shores of the City [December 1203 to January 1204] and gave battle.<sup>1487</sup> Victory smiled in turn upon the Romans and did not favor the enemy with invincibility on all sides. Whence the City's populace, acquitting themselves like men, pressed the

emperor to take part with the troops in the struggle against the adversaries, as they were patriots, unless indeed he was siding with the Romans with his lips only and had inclined his heart to the Latins.<sup>1488</sup> The promises made proved to be ineffectual; Alexios could not bring himself to take up arms against the Latins, thinking this to be unnatural and inexpedient, and his father, Issaakios, encouraged him to ignore the idle talk of the vulgar populace and to bestow the highest honors on those who had restored him to his country. Those who were left of the imperial family concurred in these views, a matter of companions pleasing their comrade Alexios.<sup>1489</sup> Some who associated with the Latins as comrades ignored the citizens' deliberations as old wives' gossip, being quicker to avoid battle with the Latins than an army of deer with a roaring lion.

Of all men, only Alexios Doukas (who, because his eyebrows were joined together and hung over his eyes, was called Mourtzouphlos as an adolescent by his companions), contriving to win the throne and the citizens' favor, dared to give battle against the Latins. Displaying his valor beyond a doubt, he engaged the enemy at the site called Trypetos Lithos and round about the arch leading thither [7 January 1204].<sup>1490</sup> None of our own commanders who were present made any attempt whatsoever to come to his assistance because they were forbidden to do so by the emperor. Alexios Doukas's mount stumbled and slipped to its knees, and the entire enemy force would have fallen on the polemarch had not a band of youthful archers from the City who happened to be present stoutly defended him.

The City populace, finding no fellow combatant and ally to draw the sword against the Latins, began to rise up in rebellion and, like a boiling kettle, to blow off steam of abuse against the emperors, and their long suppressed and hidden sentiment surfaced to the light of day. It was the twenty-fifth day of the month of January in the seventh indiction of the year 6712 [25 January 1204] when a great and tumultuous concourse of people gathered in the Great Church; the senate, the assembly of bishops, and the venerable clergy were compelled to convene thither and deliberate together as to who should succeed as emperor. We were entreated earnestly to speak spontaneously on this matter, to the effect that an attack be launched forthwith against the emperors and another elected to the throne. But we made no attempt to nominate a candidate before the assembly, for we realized full well that whoever was proposed for election would be led out the very next day like a sheep led to slaughter, and that the chiefs of the Latin hosts would wrap their arms around Alexios and defend him. The multitude, simpleminded and volatile, asserted that they no longer wished to be ruled by the Angelos family, and that the assembly would not disband unless an emperor to their liking were first chosen.

Knowing through bitter experience the obstinacy of men, we kept our silence, and in our unhappiness we let many tears flow down our cheeks, foreseeing what the future likely held in store for us. They anxiously groped for a successor to the throne, and on impulse proposed as emperor now this scion of the nobility and now that one. Tiring finally of the rabble-rousers and demagogues among them, they exhorted several members of our rank to put on the crown. Alas and alack! What could have

been more heartrending and grievous than the trial of that time, or more absurd and mindless than the fatuity of those assembled? "Thou hast raiment; be thou our ruler,"<sup>1491</sup> was all that was required. It was only on the third day that, seizing a certain youth whose name was Nicholas and surname Kannavos, they anointed him emperor against his will [27 January 1204].<sup>1492</sup>

[563] When Emperor Alexios heard of these events (for Isaakios lay breathing his last, the extensive predictions of sole rule having proved false, dissolving like the dream of feverish sleep), he summoned Marquis Boniface to examine with him the present circumstances, and they both concluded that it was necessary to bring Latin forces into the palace to expel the new emperor and the populace who had elected him in assembly.

As soon as these deliberations were detected, Doukas seized the opportunity to begin the rebellion over which he had travailed. Taking along many of his kinsmen, he won over the eunuch in charge of the imperial treasuries, a worthless fellow who succumbed to the preferment of dignities and was unable to resist the temptation of unjust gain. Assembling the ax-bearers, he told them about the emperor's intention and convinced them to consider taking as the right action that which was desirable and pleasing to the Romans. In consequence, the emperor's overthrow was acted out in this wise.<sup>1493</sup>

Doukas visited the emperor in the dead of night [27–28 January 1204] (he was more easily recognized than anyone else, as he had been honored with the dignity of *protovestiaros* and wore on his feet buskins that differed in color from most). Swayed by passion, he announced to the emperor that his blood relations as well as a host of nameless men, but above all the barbarian contingent armed with axes, were standing at the doors after making furious assaults, eager to tear him to pieces with their hands because it was obvious that he was of one mind with the Latins and was dependent on their friendship. Terrified and taken aback by this news, he pleaded to be spared this fate. Doukas threw an ample robe over the emperor which covered his body down to his feet and escorted him out through a little-known postern into the pavilion within the palace complex, ostensibly to save him.

[564] The emperor, shortly after these things had taken place in this wise, expressed profound gratitude and softly chanted the verse of David directly applicable to Doukas, "For in the day of mine afflictions he hid me in his tabernacle: he sheltered me in the secret of his tabernacle."<sup>1494</sup> He followed with other verses from the psalms of David: "His lips are deceitful in his heart, and evil has he spoken in his heart,"<sup>1495</sup> and "To me they spoke peaceably but imagined deceits in their anger."<sup>1496</sup> With his legs secured by irons, he was cast into the most horrible of all prisons and thus "made darkness his secret place"<sup>1497</sup> as Doukas decked himself with the imperial insignia [28 January 1204].

Following these events, one faction assembled before Doukas and saluted him as emperor with the customary acclamations: another sided with Kannavos, who had remained in the temple; he was a man who was gentle by nature, of keen intelligence, and versed in generalship and war and its business. Inasmuch as the worst elements prevail among the Constantinopolitans (for truth is dearer to me than my compatriots), Doukas

grew stronger and increased in power, while Kannavos's splendor grew dim like a waning moon. Not long afterwards, he was overpowered by Doukas's armed troops and thrown into prison, receiving no assistance from his subjects, all of whom had dispersed immediately following Doukas's proclamation [2 or 6 February 1204].<sup>1498</sup>

Twice Doukas offered Alexios the cup that quenches life; but when the lad proved more vigorous than the poison, secretly taking antidotes, Doukas cut the thread of his life by having him strangled, squeezing out his soul, so to speak, through the straight and narrow way, and sprang the trap<sup>1499</sup> leading to hell. He had reigned six months and eight days.



## VIII. *The Reign of Alexios Doukas, Also Called Mourtzouphlos*

ONCE Doukas had clearly won the throne by a cast of the die, he longed painfully for changes in the affairs of the state and thought to stir up everything. He was extremely clever by nature and arrogant in his manner, and he believed dissembling to be the mark of shrewdness. He shirked the role of benefactor in all things for as long as the cycle of Meton,<sup>1500</sup> saying that he did not deem it prudent in an emperor to allow things to happen on their own and in a haphazard fashion, but that his actions should be characterized by protracted circumspection. He was impelled toward such judgment of his own accord, contending that nothing that needed to be done escaped him, that he had well in hand all issues. Following him about as his assistant was the feeble shadow of his father-in-law Philokalēs, and in order to place him at the head of the senate, he dismissed me as logothete of the *sekreta*, without even the benefit of a specious excuse, and promoted him in my place. This man, wholly unprepared to make himself known and precariously exceeding propriety because of inordinate ambition, did not sit together with men of high rank. Some he fooled by affecting the gout, as if his brain had flowed down into his feet<sup>1501</sup> with the disease, and so, with his wits wandering, he neglected his duties. [565]

Because the emperor Doukas found the imperial treasury neither full nor half-full, but completely emptied out, he reaped where he sowed not and gathered where he had not strawed,<sup>1502</sup> grievously afflicting those who were formerly girded with the highest offices under the Angelos family, who were elevated as *sebastokrators* and *kaisars* to exalted dignities, and their confiscated monies he applied to public needs. [566]

In rashly resisting the Latins, he surpassed all others; he shored up the City's sea walls with beams, provided the land walls with fortifications, and rekindled the army's courage with his own example. Moreover, clasping sword in hand and armed with a bronze mace, he would beat back the enemy's sallies, and when they made sporadic sorties in search of provisions, he would appear suddenly before them of his own free will.

Such deeds endeared him to the citizens, although he was extremely distrustful of, and uncompromising towards, his blood relations; nurtured in stupidity and reared in softness, spurning uplifting austerity and prudent behavior even as sick bodies avoid medical treatment, they exalted themselves and were hardened. They turned away from Doukas's rebuke and indignation (for he had by nature a hoarse but resounding bass voice) as they would from the taste of raw octopus, or a meal of hellebore, or a drink of bull's blood, and they deemed his destruction a matter of divine retribution.

Therefore, when Baldwin, count of Flanders, ravaged the lands around Phileas and collected tribute thence, the emperor marched against him. As the Romans were moving out and the enemy troops returning from their battle array, they met in close combat. The Romans were paralyzed by fear and took to impetuous flight; the emperor, left all alone, very nearly perished, and the icon of the Mother of God, which the Roman emperors reckon as their fellow general, was taken by the enemy.<sup>1503</sup>

Not only were these events dreadful, but those that followed were much worse than expected and most calamitous. In the larger ships frightful scaling ladders were once again fabricated and all manner of siege engines were constructed. Banners were flown on top, and huge rewards were offered those who would ascend to give battle.

A measure of the horrors was about to begin, others were already under way, and still others were to follow; the deliberations on amity were disregarded, wholly ignored. Certain wicked Telchines<sup>1504</sup> frequently confounded the negotiations. The doge of Venice, Enrico Dandolo, electing to discuss peace terms with the emperor, boarded a trireme and put in at Kosmidion. As soon as the emperor arrived there on horseback, they exchanged views on the peace, paying no heed to anyone else. The demands made by the doge and the remaining chiefs were for the immediate payment of five thousand pounds of gold<sup>1505</sup> and certain other conditions which were both galling and unacceptable to those who have tasted freedom and are accustomed to give, not take, commands. These demands [568] were deemed to be heavy Laconian lashes<sup>1506</sup> to those for whom the danger of captivity was imminent and universal destruction had erupted, while the doge loudly again declared what had been stated earlier, that the conditions were quite tolerable and not at all burdensome. As the conditions for peace were being negotiated, Latin cavalry forces, suddenly appearing from above, gave free rein to their horses and charged the emperor, who wheeled his horse around, barely escaping the danger, while some of his companions were taken captive. Their inordinate hatred for us and our excessive disagreement with them allowed for no humane feeling between us.

Thereupon [8 April 1204], the enemy's largest ships, carrying the scaling ladders that had been readied and as many of the siege engines as had been prepared, moved out from the shore, and, like the tilting beam of a scale's balance, they sailed over to the walls to take up positions at sufficient intervals from one another. They occupied the region extending in a line from the Monastery of Evergetēs to the palace in Blachernai, which had been set on fire, the buildings within razed to the ground, thus stripping it of every pleasant spectacle. Observing these maneuvers, Doukas prepared to resist the enemy. He issued instructions for the imperial pavilion to be set up on the hill of the Pentapoptēs monastery whence the warships were visible and the actions of those on board were in full view.

As dawn broke on the ninth day of the month of April in the seventh indiction of the year 6712 [9 April 1204], the warships and dromons [569] approached the walls, and certain courageous warriors climbed the scaling ladders and discharged all manner of missiles against the towers' defenders. All through the day, a battle fraught with groanings was waged. The Romans had the upper hand: both the ships carrying the

scaling ladders and the dromons transporting the horses were repulsed from the walls they had attacked without success, and many were killed by the stones thrown from the City's engines.

The enemy ceased all hostilities through the next day and the day after, which was the Lord's day [Sunday, 10–11 April 1204]; on the third day, the twelfth day of the month of April, Monday of the sixth week of the Great Lent, they again sailed towards the City and put in along the shore. By midday our forces prevailed, even though the fighting was more intense and furious than on the preceding Friday. Since it was necessary for the queen of cities to put on the slave's yoke, God allowed our jaws to be constrained with bit and curb<sup>1507</sup> because all of us, both priest and people,<sup>1508</sup> had turned away from him like a stiff-necked and unbridled horse. Two men on one of the scaling ladders nearest the Petria Gate, which was raised with great difficulty opposite the emperor, trusting themselves to fortune, were the first from among their comrades to leap down onto the tower facing them. When they drove off in alarm the Roman auxiliaries on watch, they waved their hands from above as a sign of joy and courage to embolden their countrymen. While they were jumping onto the tower, a knight by the name of Peter entered through the gate situated there. He was deemed most capable of driving in rout all the battalions,<sup>1509</sup> for he was nearly nine fathoms tall<sup>1510</sup> and wore on his head a helmet fashioned in the shape of a towered city. The noblemen about the emperor and the rest of the troops were unable to gaze upon the front of the helm<sup>1511</sup> of a single knight so terrible in form and spectacular in size and took to their customary flight as the efficacious medicine of salvation. Thus, by uniting and fusing into one craven soul, the cowardly thousands, who had the advantage of a high hill, were chased by one man<sup>1512</sup> from the fortifications they were meant to defend. When they reached the Golden Gate of the Land walls, they pulled down the new-built wall there, ran forth, and dispersed, deservedly taking the road to perdition and utter destruction. The enemy, now that there was no one to raise a hand against them, ran everywhere and drew the sword against every age and sex. Each did not join with the next man to form a coherent battle array, but all poured out and scattered, since everyone was terrified of them. [570]

That evening the enemy set fire to the eastern sections of the City not far from the Monastery of Evergetēs; from there the flames spread to those areas that slope down to the sea and terminate in the vicinity of the Droungarios Gate. After despoiling the emperor's pavilion and taking the palace in Blachernai by assault without difficulty, they set up their general headquarters at the Pantepoptēs monastery. The emperor went hither and yon through the City's narrow streets, attempting to rally and mobilize the populace who wandered aimlessly about. Neither were they convinced by his exhortations nor did they yield to his blandishments, but the fiercely shaken aegis filled all with despair.<sup>1513</sup>

To continue with the remaining portions of my narrative, the day waned and night came on, and each and every citizen busied himself with removing and burying his possessions. Some chose to leave the City, and whoever was able hastened to save himself. [571]

When Doukas saw that he could prevail nothing,<sup>1514</sup> he was fearful

lest he be apprehended and put into the jaws of the Latins as their dinner or dessert, and he entered the Great Palace. He put on board a small fishing boat the Empress Euphrosynê, Emperor Alexios's wife, and her daughters, one of whom he loved passionately [Evdokia] (for he had frequently engaged in sexual intercourse from the first appearance of hair on his cheek, and he was a proven lecher in bed, having put away two wedded wives<sup>1515</sup>) and sailed away from the City [night of 12–13 April 1204], having reigned two months and sixteen days.

When the emperor had fled in this manner, a pair of youths sober and most skillful in matters of warfare, these being Doukas<sup>1516</sup> and Laskaris,<sup>1517</sup> bearing the same name as the first emperor of our faith [Constantine], contested the captaincy of a tempest-tossed ship, for they viewed the great and celebrated Roman empire as Fortune's prize, depending upon the chance move of a chessman. They entered the Great Church, evenly matched, competing against each other and being compared one with the other, neither one having more or less to offer than the other, and they were deemed equal in the balance because there was no one to examine them and pass judgment.

[572] Receiving the supreme office by lot, Laskaris refused the imperial insignia; escorted by the patriarch to the Milion, he continuously exhorted the assembled populace, cajoling them to put up a resistance. He pressed those who lift from the shoulder and brandish the deadly iron ax, sending them off to the imminent struggle, reminding them that they should not fear destruction any less than the Romans should the Roman empire fall to another nation: no longer would they be paid the ample wages of mercenaries or receive the far-famed gifts of honor of the imperial guard, and their pay in the future would be counted at a hair's worth.<sup>1518</sup> Thus did Laskaris, but not a single person from the populace responded to his blandishments. The ax-bearers agreed to fight for wages, deceitfully and cunningly exploiting the height of the danger for monetary gain, and when the Latin battalions clad in full armor made their appearance, they took flight to save themselves [early morning of 13 April 1204].

The enemy, who had expected otherwise, found no one openly venturing into battle or taking up arms to resist; they saw that the way was open before them and everything there for the taking. The narrow streets were clear and the crossroads unobstructed, safe from attack, and advantageous to the enemy. The populace, moved by the hope of propitiating them, had turned out to greet them with crosses and venerable icons of Christ as was customary during festivals of solemn processions. But their disposition was not at all affected by what they saw, nor did their lips break into the slightest smile, nor did the unexpected spectacle transform their grim and frenzied glance and fury into a semblance of cheerfulness. Instead, they plundered with impunity and stripped their victims shamelessly, beginning with their carts. Not only did they rob them of their substance but also the articles consecrated to God; the rest fortified themselves all around with defensive weapons as their horses were roused at the sound of the war trumpet.<sup>1519</sup>

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What then should I recount first and what last<sup>1520</sup> of those things dared at that time by these murderous men? O, the shameful dashing to earth

of the venerable icons and the flinging of the relics of the saints, who had suffered for Christ's sake, into defiled places! How horrible it was to see the Divine Body and Blood of Christ poured out and thrown to the ground! These forerunners of Antichrist, chief agents and harbingers of his anticipated ungodly deeds, seized as plunder the precious chalices and patens; some they smashed, taking possession of the ornaments embellishing them, and they set the remaining vessels on their tables to serve as bread dishes and wine goblets. Just as happened long ago, Christ was now disrobed and mocked, his garments were parted, and lots were cast for them by this race; and although his side was not pierced by the lance, yet once more streams of Divine Blood poured to the earth.<sup>1521</sup>

The report of the impious acts perpetrated in the Great Church are unwelcome to the ears. The table of sacrifice, fashioned from every kind of precious material and fused by fire into one whole—blended together into a perfection of one multicolored thing of beauty, truly extraordinary and admired by all nations—was broken into pieces and divided among the despoilers, as was the lot of all the sacred church treasures, countless in number and unsurpassed in beauty. They found it fitting to bring out as so much booty the all-hallowed vessels and furnishings which had been wrought with incomparable elegance and craftsmanship from rare materials. In addition, in order to remove the pure silver which overlay the railing of the bema, the wondrous pulpit and the gates, as well as that which covered a great many other adornments, all of which were plated with gold, they led to the very sanctuary of the temple itself mules and asses with packsaddles; some of these, unable to keep their feet on the smoothly polished marble floors, slipped and were pierced by knives so that the excrement from the bowels and the spilled blood defiled the sacred floor. Moreover, a certain silly woman laden with sins, an attendant of the Erinyes, the handmaid of demons, the workshop of unspeakable spells and reprehensible charms, waxing wanton against Christ,<sup>1522</sup> sat upon the synthronon<sup>1523</sup> and intoned a song, and then whirled about and kicked up her heels in dance.

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It was not that these crimes were committed in this fashion while others were not, or that some acts were more heinous than others, but that the most wicked and impious deeds were perpetrated by all with one accord. Did these madmen, raging thus against the sacred, spare pious matrons and girls of marriageable age or those maidens who, having chosen a life of chastity, were consecrated to God? Above all, it was a difficult and arduous task to mollify the barbarians with entreaties and to dispose them kindly towards us, as they were highly irascible and bilious and unwilling to listen to anything. Everything incited their anger, and they were thought fools and became a laughingstock. He who spoke freely and openly was rebuked, and often the dagger would be drawn against him who expressed a small difference of opinion or who hesitated to carry out their wishes.

The whole head was in pain.<sup>1524</sup> There were lamentations and cries of woe and weeping in the narrow ways, wailing at the crossroads, moaning in the temples, outcries of men, screams of women, the taking of captives, and the dragging about, tearing in pieces, and raping of bodies heretofore sound and whole. They who were bashful of their sex were led

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about naked, they who were venerable in their old age uttered plaintive cries, and the wealthy were despoiled of their riches. Thus it was in the squares, thus it was on the corners, thus it was in the temples, thus it was in the hiding places; for there was no place that could escape detection or that could offer asylum to those who came streaming in.

O Christ our Emperor, what tribulation and distress of men at that time! The roaring of the sea, the darkening and dimming of the sun, the turning of the moon into blood, the displacement of the stars—did they not foretell in this way the last evils?<sup>1525</sup> Indeed, we have seen the abomination of desolation stand in the holy place,<sup>1526</sup> rounding off meretricious and petty speeches and other things which were moving definitely, if not altogether, contrariwise to those things deemed by Christians as holy and ennobling the word of faith.

Such then, to make a long story short, were the outrageous crimes committed by the Western armies against the inheritance of Christ. Without showing any feelings of humanity whatsoever, they exacted from all their money and chattel, dwellings and clothing, leaving to them nothing of all their goods. Thus behaved the brazen neck, the haughty spirit, the high brow, the ever-shaved and youthful cheek, the bloodthirsty right hand, the wrathful nostril, the disdainful eye, the insatiable jaw, the hateful heart, the piercing and running speech practically dancing over the lips. More to blame were the learned and wise among men, they who were faithful to their oaths, who loved the truth and hated evil, who were both more pious and just and scrupulous in keeping the commandments of Christ than we "Greeks."<sup>1527</sup> Even more culpable were those who had raised the cross to their shoulders, who had time and again sworn by it and the sayings of the Lord to cross over Christian lands without blood-letting, neither turning aside to the right nor inclining to the left, and to take up arms against the Saracens and to stain red their swords in their blood; they who had sacked Jerusalem, and had taken an oath not to marry or to have sexual intercourse with women as long as they carried the cross on their shoulders, and who were consecrated to God and commissioned to follow in his footsteps.

[576] In truth, they were exposed as frauds. Seeking to avenge the Holy Sepulcher, they raged openly against Christ and sinned by overturning the Cross with the cross they bore on their backs, not even shuddering to trample on it for the sake of a little gold and silver. By grasping pearls, they rejected Christ, the pearl of great price, scattering among the most accursed of brutes the All-Hallowed One.<sup>1528</sup> The sons of Ismael did not behave in this way, for when the Latins overpowered Sion the Latins showed no compassion or kindness to their race. Neither did the Ismaelites neigh after Latin women,<sup>1529</sup> nor did they turn the cenotaph of Christ into a common burial place of the fallen, nor did they transform the entranceway of the life-bringing tomb into a passageway leading down into Hades, nor did they replace the Resurrection with the Fall. Rather, they allowed everyone to depart in exchange for the payment of a few gold coins; they took only the ransom money and left to the people all their possessions, even though these numbered more than the grains of sand.<sup>1530</sup> Thus the enemies of Christ dealt magnanimously with the Latin

infidels, inflicting upon them neither sword, nor fire, nor hunger, nor persecution, nor nakedness, nor bruises, nor constraints. How differently, as we have briefly recounted, the Latins treated us who love Christ and are their fellow believers, guiltless of any wrong against them.

O City, City, eye of all cities, universal boast, supramundane wonder, wet nurse of churches, leader of the faith, guide of Orthodoxy, beloved topic of orations, the abode of every good thing! O City, that hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury!<sup>1531</sup> O City, consumed by a fire far more drastic than the fire which of old fell upon the Pentapolis!<sup>1532</sup> “What shall I testify to thee? What shall I compare to thee? The cup of thy destruction is magnified,” says Jeremias, who was given to tears as he lamented over ancient Sion.<sup>1533</sup> What malevolent powers have desired to have you and taken you to be sifted?<sup>1534</sup> What jealous and relentless avenging demons have made a riotous assault upon you in wild revel? If these implacable and crazed suitors neither fashioned a bridal chamber for thee, nor lit a nuptial torch for thee, did they not, however, ignite the coals of destruction?

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O prolific City, once garbed in royal silk and purple and now filthy and squalid and heir to many evils, having need of true children! O City, formerly enthroned on high, striding far and wide,<sup>1535</sup> magnificent in comeliness and more becoming in stature;<sup>1536</sup> now thy luxurious garments and elegant royal veils are rent and torn; thy flashing eye has grown dark, and thou art like unto an aged furnace woman<sup>1537</sup> all covered with soot, and thy formerly glistening and delightful countenance is now furrowed by loose wrinkles. I shall forego describing those who set words to the music of the lyre and sang of thy calamities and, drunk with wine, turned thy tragedy into a comedy, making a profession out of the farcical recitation of thine afflictions: blows struck with the fist and the foot, bruises, moreover, and black eyes inflicted upon thee every hour of the day; for by God’s will thou hast provoked to jealousy the foolish nations, or rather, those people who are not truly nations<sup>1538</sup> but obscure and scattered tribes, and if thou didst not give birth to the majority of them, thou didst, however, raise them up and provide them with the fat of wheat.<sup>1539</sup>

“Who shall save thee? Or who shall comfort thee?<sup>1540</sup> Or who shall turn back to inquire after thy welfare?”<sup>1541</sup> Thus spake the much-wailing Jeremias. Who shall dress in thy former raiment? When shall thou hear those divinely inspired words: “Awake, awake, stand up, O City, that hast drunk the cup of my fury and the cup of calamity.<sup>1542</sup> Put on thy strength, put on thy glory.<sup>1543</sup> Shake off the dust and arise. Put off the band of thy neck.<sup>1544</sup> Enlarge the place of thy tent, and of thy curtains.<sup>1545</sup>

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Fear not because thou hast been put to shame, neither be confounded because thou wast reproached,<sup>1546</sup> and all that go by the way have clapped their hands at thee; they have hissed and shaken their *heads* and have said, “This is the city, the crown of glory and of joy of all the earth,”<sup>1547</sup> and, “How does the city that was filled with people sit as a *widow*, and how has she, princess among provinces, become tributary?”<sup>1548</sup> For thy God has said, “For a little while I left thee, but with great mercy will I have *compassion* upon thee. In a little wrath I turned away my face, but with everlasting mercy will I have compassion upon thee.”<sup>1549</sup> Perhaps,

thou shalt sing out to God with David, "O Lord, according to the multitude of my griefs within my heart, thy consolations have gladdened my soul."<sup>1550</sup>

[579] Who shall be set over thee as another Moses to renew all things, or who shall restore thee as another Zorobabel? When shall the time come for thee to gather thy children from the four winds to which we have scattered,<sup>1551</sup> even as hens which love their chicks gather them under their wings.<sup>1552</sup> And now we cannot freely gaze upon thee, face to face, nor joyously cling to thee as to a mother and openly pour out for thee a libation of tears as many as the eyes wish or can, but flying cautiously around thee like sparrows whose mother and source of nourishment has been taken captive and whose nest has been scattered to the winds, we emit piteous and mournful cries; expelled far from thy nesting places, hungry and thirsty, shivering in squalor, often close shorn because of lice, our souls wasting away because of our afflictions, we are no longer able to find the way back to our homes in the City, but roam far and wide like fickle migratory birds and the planets. In other words, although we are apart, we are united to thee, and being separated, we are intertwined like those who are joined together in spirit even though removed in body, and suffer, moreover, the same anguish as experienced by some animals when beholding their own kind ensnared by hunters and confined within a glass cage. Those animals, gazing upon the sight of their fellow beast, visible in the clarity and brightness of the vessel, are wholly unable to come into physical contact with it. For this reason they vainly circle the receptacle in dismay, bewildered by the captive beast's countenance so dramatically altered from its former appearance. And we likewise wish to cast our eyes upon thee and to draw near, for we have been altogether deprived of clasping thee wholeheartedly to our breast and of boldly embracing thee as in former times, kept asunder by the barbarian forces as though by a solid body much more impervious than glass.

"Why hast thou smitten us, Lord, and there is no healing for us?"<sup>1553</sup> We know, O Lord, our sins, and the iniquities of our fathers. Refrain out of mercy, destroy not the throne of thy glory.<sup>1554</sup> Chasten us, O Lord, *that our soul may not be removed from thee*, but with judgment and not in wrath, lest thou make us few. Pour out thy wrath upon the families that have not called upon thy name.<sup>1555</sup> Lord, thou art our Father; we are clay, *and thou our potter*, and we are all the work of thine hands.<sup>1556</sup> Behold, and look on our reproaches. Our inheritance has been turned away to aliens, our houses to strangers.<sup>1557</sup> Turn us, O Lord, to thee, and we shall be turned.<sup>1558</sup> Most useful and timely are these scriptural verses in describing similar calamities.

[580] But now even my power of speech fails me, like a body which, united to the soul as her attendant, succumbs and dies together with thee, O nurturer of the word! One ought to dedicate to thee copious lamentations with muted tears and stifled groaning and refrain from continuing the sequence of this history. For in a land long alienated from letters and completely barbarized, who dares sing out the Muses' melodies?<sup>1559</sup> Nor should I be singing out the accomplishments of the barbarians, nor passing on to posterity military actions in which Hellenes were not victorious. For if Hippocrates of Kos, who was promised huge sums of money by the king



of the Persians to visit the cities under his rule in order to tend to those who were sorely afflicted with disease, absolutely refused to give ear to the summons and allowed the barbarians to go to ruin,<sup>1560</sup> how then can I devote the very best thing and the most beautiful invention of the Hellenes—history—to the recounting of barbarian deeds against Hellenes?

But let these, like the incendiary of the temple of Artemis in Ephesos,<sup>1561</sup> be gone out of sight and out of hearing,<sup>1562</sup> not even meriting a greeting from us until the iniquity has passed away<sup>1563</sup> and God be entreated concerning his servants.<sup>1564</sup> For it cannot be that our God shall forget forever,<sup>1565</sup> nor shall he in anger shut up his tender mercies<sup>1566</sup> and be well pleased no more,<sup>1567</sup> but he both wounds and heals, kills and restores to life.<sup>1568</sup> If he does send the teeth of wild beasts with the rage of serpents creeping on the ground,<sup>1569</sup> he also breaks the jaw teeth of the lions and crushes the dragon's head.<sup>1570</sup> If he breaks the reed, he also rebukes the wild beasts of the reed.<sup>1571</sup> If some glory lies in chariots and some in horses,<sup>1572</sup> yet a horse is vain for safety,<sup>1573</sup> and neither is he well pleased with the legs of a man.<sup>1574</sup> If he shows his own people hard things and gives them to drink the wine of astonishment,<sup>1575</sup> he also prepares a table in the presence of them that afflict us and offers the cup of gladness which brings cheer like the best wine.<sup>1576</sup> If he gathers the scourgers from the ends of the earth and from them that are on the sea afar off,<sup>1577</sup> and cries out through the great preacher and prophet, "Giants are coming to fulfill my wrath, rejoicing at the same time and *dancing*; for they are blessed and I bring them,"<sup>1578</sup> he inflicts upon them even more violent blows and flogs the worst among them with afflictions, showing no partiality whatsoever. He either uses these as instruments for the ruin of cities and to effect public calamities and as pitiless executioners of men, or, as the physician of souls, he uses the majority of them in nursing the sick and as healing remedies whose nature is evident to the wise. The nurses either perished with the patient, or, once the sick recovered, they withered away for lack of something to do; and the curative medications that healed the infirmity were excreted together.

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I affirm that what is needed is not a writing of divorcement given us by God, nor should we consider the ensuing horrors a grafting of the barbarians as a wild olive tree into our good olive tree.<sup>1579</sup> What is needed is a small chastening<sup>1580</sup> which God knows how to lay on, in which excess is foregone and all things are not permitted to the tempters, but those who are sorely tried are spared. Indeed, if in their actions they [the Latins] did not know the limits of wickedness and were impiously arrogant towards him from whom they received the power to flog, like Nabouzardan, the captain of the guard, they consigned the city of God to the flames and carried away the liturgical vessels as booty,<sup>1581</sup> and like Baltasar who reveled in these vessels,<sup>1582</sup> profaned the altars and mocked the Holy Mysteries; the suffering [Roman] on the other hand, accusing himself at the beginning of his defense,<sup>1583</sup> fervently called upon God to be his comforter.

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In expectation of God's love for mankind, we ought to sing out with David, "Remember us, O Lord, with the favor thou hast to thy people; visit us with thy salvation that we may behold the good of thine elect, that we may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that we may glory

with thine inheritance,"<sup>1584</sup> knowing full well that in the end the ungodly shall be overlooked and flogged, and that for those who hope in the Lord their chastisement shall be accompanied by the call to repentance and consolation.