Trembling, Charles Peyton took his first apprehensive steps out of his horse-drawn cart. High above him, in the early morning sky, ominous storm clouds gathered like a giant herd of black sheep. Whispering through the leaves of towering oak trees, a warm wind swept across the land and over Charles’ pale face. Carefully, he edged his feet forward, negotiating his way between miniature boulders and thick, treacly puddles of muddy water.

Charles, who was a thin man with ragged clothing, had been travelling for days. He was on a quest and knew exactly what it was that he had to do…

The King (Henry VIII) was preparing for war and had chosen Charles to spy and gather information about the French! Although Charles wasn’t a brave man, he took on this job with pride and was intent on doing his king proud.

“Where on Earth can they be?” Charles muttered to himself. He scanned the local landmarks, trying to find out where he was. When he saw something he recognised (a pristine ivory tower far in the distance), he felt a little more comfortable. As determined as a marathon runner, Charles set off.

Not long after his departure, he heard the unmistakable sound of growling dogs. The sound was getting closer. Louder. Scarier. Suddenly, in front of Charles stood two towering strangers clutching short metal leads which stopped four vicious terriers from bounding towards him and causing him harm.

“Who are you?” asked one of the strangers curiously.

“I’m, erm,” Charles thought for a moment, “I’m Francis” he finally said.

“Where are you from?” the other stranger replied.

“Well, not from around here…”

Because they were suspicious, the two men looked at each other and confirmed what each of them had thought… Charles was an enemy.

Charles considered turning and running, however; he also considered the terrible pain that would greet him if the teeth of one of the brutal dogs met his tender flesh. His mind was made up… he surrendered.

A few hours later, Charles found himself in a dingy, cold and terrifying cell. He called out for help but no reply came. He thudded on the heavy wooden door, trying to capture someone’s attention; still there was no reply. He sat in the corner and began to sob. Great, salty tears trickled from the corner of each of his eyes, streamed down his face and onto his dirty linen shirt.

Minutes passed, then hours…days. Spying through the miniscule keyhole, Charles noticed that his captors were gathering all of their terrifying weapons, supplies and fiercest warriors. He overheard them excitedly discussing an attack… an attack on England! He had to let Henry know, he simply had to, but how?

Charles had given up. He was defeated. He simply couldn’t go on. Until… from the tiny barred opening, which was the window, he heard a whistle. Like a timid mouse, Charles peered out, looking for the source of the sound.

“Hello?” Charles whispered, “Is somebody there?”

“Stand back!” came the rushed reply.

“What? Why?” Charles questioned.

“Just move!”

Charles, who was now incredibly confused, heard a creaking noise which got louder and louder until one of the bars pinged out of the window frame like an elastic band. Alarmed, excited and relieved, Charles hurriedly clambered through the opening of the window and into the safety of his fellow countrymen.

Presently, there was no time to explain what he had found out whilst imprisoned in the beautiful (yet horrifying) ivory tower. Rushing through the heavily planted forest, dodging miniature boulders and treacly puddles of muddy water, Charles and his rescuers were aware of the vicious terriers and a mass of fierce warriors following close behind.

After miles of zigzagging across an unknown landscape, with danger hot on their heels, they eventually reached the safety of water. One by one they scrambled into their waiting boats and left the screaming hoard and barking dogs behind. Charles questioned which was more frightening: the dogs or the men?

After a day of travelling, the troupe returned to King Henry. Charles divulged all of the information he had gathered whilst in France and was rewarded richly (with glistening gold and luscious land) by the king himself.

The battle that followed is history…