

DAVINCI'S DEMONS

"The Hanged Man"

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May 20, 2012

Pink Rev: May 31, 2012

Pink Rev: June 18, 2012

Pink Rev: July 9, 2012

Blue Rev: July 9, 2012

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"The Hanged Man"

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INT. MITHRAEUM - NIGHT

1

We are in a shadowy cave. CANDLES burn before an ALTAR featuring a winged, LION-HEADED FIGURE with twin serpents coiled around it. An AGING TURKISH MAN sits before it, motioning to a water pipe.

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)

Will you smoke with me, DaVinci?

LEONARDO DAVINCI (25), fit and handsome, sits opposite him.

DAVINCI

That depends on what's in the pipe.

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)

A mixture of tobacco and black hellebore. The flower is mildly poisonous and is rumored to induce visions and summon demons.

DAVINCI

I believe in neither.

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)

Then why do you struggle so hard to keep both at bay?

(off DaVinci's unease)

Demons exist. You can embrace them or ignore them at your peril.

Al-Rahim brings the mouth-piece to his lips and inhales deeply. He then passes it to DaVinci, who follows suit.

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM) (CONT'D)

History is a lie that has been honed like a weapon by people who have suppressed the truth. Centuries from now, your own history will also be suppressed.

DAVINCI

To what end?

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)

The knowledge you are destined to learn will upend the established order of things.

DAVINCI

How could you possibly know that?

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)

You've heard the phrase 'time is a river'? What most fail to grasp is that the river is circular. In this way, the future is a book that can be read like any other.

(beat)

One man's death opens the doorway for the birth of the next. Would you like to know how this particular doorway opened?

DaVinci slowly nods, apprehensive. Al-Rahim seems pleased.

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM) (CONT'D)

Be forewarned, then. Some doorways lead into darkness.

2 EXT. SFORZA CASTLE - DAWN 2

To establish. A formidable castle. CHURCH BELLS are ringing.

SUPER TITLE: "MILAN - EIGHT DAYS EARLIER"

3 INT. SFORZA CASTLE - THE DUKE'S BED CHAMBER - DAWN 3

A NAKED MAN pisses into a chamber pot. This is GALEAZZO SFORZA (30s), Duke of Milan. Nursing a hangover. A fearsome MEDUSA SHIELD (decorated and lacquered with real bits of lizards and snakes and bats) is proudly displayed on a wall.

Sforza yawns, pulls a curtain, flooding the room with light.

ON THE CANOPIED BED,

A TEENAGED BOY, completely naked and tangled in the sheets. Sforza whisks them away, tossing some crumpled clothes at him.

SFORZA

Out you go, boy! Get on with you!

The boy quickly gathers his things and hustles towards the bedchamber door. But as he reaches for the handle --

SFORZA (CONT'D)

Not that way, fool! Would you have the entire household know I'm bugging the Cardinal's nephew?

Sforza pulls on a mounted bracket, opening a SECRET PASSAGE. As the boy slips inside, Sforza SLAPS him on the rump. Then, as an afterthought, he flings some coins at him. Sforza closes the panel and opens the bedchamber door.

SFORZA (CONT'D)

CICCO!

CICCO SIMONETTA (60s), the Duke's sober chancellor appears.

SFORZA (CONT'D)

What day is it?

CICCO

March 30th.

Sforza blinks back at him, uncomprehending.

CICCO (CONT'D)

Palm Sunday. High Mass was to commence ten minutes ago. The Duchess and your children are already waiting at the Church.

SFORZA

Balls.

(hopefully)

Could you round me up some coddled eggs? I have a beastly hangover and my bowels are in a tumble.

Cicco responds with a withering stare. Sforza relents.

SFORZA (CONT'D)

Right. Be dressed in but a moment.

The Duke steps away and we note a RING on Cicco's finger, bearing the same lion-headed figure that was on the altar.

3A

INT. SFORZA CASTLE - THE DUKE'S BED CHAMBER - LATER

3A

Duke Sforza, now dressed, stands with Cicco, flanking the Medusa shield mounted on his wall. Sforza pauses for a moment, admiring the shield. He's ready.

SFORZA

Christ. Let's get this travesty over and done with.

4

EXT. STREETS OF MILAN - DAY

4

Sforza, having rallied and dressed in his finery, hurries to the Gothic church with Cicco and his BODYGUARDS in tow.

5 INT. CHURCH OF SANTO STEFANO - DAY

5

As CHURCHGOERS enter, they are frisked for weapons at the door. Among them; THREE NOBLEMEN, who appear to have nothing on them other than their MISSALS and a CRUCIFIX.

The men open their missals. Each missal contains a thin, METAL PAGE with a triangular design stamped into it.

The men pop the triangles from the pages like puzzle pieces. Then, with practiced efficiency, the pieces are snapped together to form a PYRAMIDAL-SHAPED DAGGER BLADE.

VISCONTI, the group's leader, removes his crucifix and screws it into the base of the blade, creating the dagger's "hilt".

SFORZA (O.S.)

At ease, people! I've arrived!

All heads turn as Sforza enters. He smiles, glad-handing -- avoiding eye-contact with his furious wife, BONA. As he nears the Point of the Innocents, Visconti approaches as if to embrace him. Sforza waves him off, whispering:

SFORZA (CONT'D)

Begone, you artless fuckwit. This is my moment.

VISCONTI

And thanks to the Secret Archives, it's the last you will ever enjoy!

Visconti THRUSTS the dagger into Sforza's throat. Sforza sinks to his knees, BLOOD fountaining from his throat. As Sforza's bodyguards rush forward, mayhem consumes the church.

6 EXT. HILLS ABOVE FLORENCE - DAY

6

We are at the edge of cliff overlooking Florence. It is windy and HAWKS can be seen riding the thermals. Across a valley, the CONVENT OF ST. ANTHONY hugs a hillside.

VANESSA (O.S.)

Tell me a secret, Leonardo.

ANGLE ON LEONARDO DAVINCI

Tall, handsomely disheveled, with an insatiable curiosity and an ever-present NOTEBOOK attached to his belt by a chain. At the moment, he is SKETCHING someone with his RIGHT HAND --

VANESSA (19), a small-boned beauty, WHO POSES NAKED on a rock. Her hair is braided with ribbons and blows in the wind. Behind them, a wagon with a LARGE OBJECT beneath a tarp.

VANESSA (CONT'D)

What was your earliest memory? Or better yet, your greatest fear?

DaVinci checks an HOURGLASS beside him. He reaches for a glass of wine with his RIGHT HAND, then starts a NEW SKETCH of Vanessa with his LEFT HAND.

DAVINCI

In my case, the two go hand in hand.
I was six months old.

VANESSA

No one remembers back that far.

DAVINCI

Perhaps I'm unique, then. My
mother put me in a cradle out in
the field. She left me for a
moment and a falcon flew down.

(beat)

A Lanner falcon, as it turns out.
Rarely seen on this side of the
Adriatic. I can still picture it.
Perched there, looking at me.
Almost as if it were trying to
reveal some kind of mystery.

A BRIEF MEMORY FLASH

DAVINCI'S MOTHER, in silhouette. Then the LANNER FALCON
arriving, tilting its head, studying the BABY.

VANESSA

Regarding what?

DAVINCI

I never found out. My mother threw
a stone at the bird and drove it
away. Yet as clear as that memory
is; the one aspect I can never
properly recall is my mother's face.

(a stark confession)

I can draw anything I've seen, even in
passing. But when it comes to my
mother, all I see is a void.

VANESSA

Surely you've seen her since.

DAVINCI

No. She disappeared that night.
And I've been trying to recall her
face ever since.

VANESSA

Well, if that's your innermost
secret, you're not so unique. All
men are searching for their
mothers. That's what guides you
between our thighs.

DAVINCI

I pay you to pose, Vanessa. Not plumb the depths of my character.

VANESSA

If you expect me to bare my figure for you, I expect you to bare your soul in return. So tell me -- is there nothing else you fear?

DAVINCI

(kissing her)

Only imperfection, Sister.

DaVinci eyes his sketch -- Vanessa from the waist up. Though it's a perfect likeness, he CRUMPLES it up. For he is plagued by the knowledge that much of what he *conceives* will never be *properly executed*. Then:

NICO (O.S.)

Maestro!

A breathless young man crests the path behind them. This is NICO (15), DaVinci's exuberant apprentice. DaVinci glances at his hourglass. The sands have all fallen.

DAVINCI

You're late, Nico.

NICO

What? You're the one that's late. Verrocchio's been looking everywhere for you --

DAVINCI

He can wait. We've an experiment to conduct and you're meant to play a principle role in it. Come --

But Nico is frozen, staring at Vanessa's naked form.

VANESSA

Hello.

DAVINCI

They're called breasts, Nico. Every woman possesses them.

DaVinci heads for the wagon, tugging Nico along.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)

This is Vanessa, newly liberated from the Convent of St. Anthony.
(nodding to the convent)

(MORE)

DAVINCI (CONT'D)

I needed someone to do light studies on.

NICO

Did the Abbess know she'd --

DAVINCI

-- have her generous mounds flapping about in the wind? No. Nor does she know that her former charge's virginity is no longer, in the strictest legal sense, *intact*. Help me with these ropes.

DaVinci unties the canvas shroud, and with Nico's help, quickly pulls it from the wagon bed, revealing --

A LARGE, BAT-WINGED "KITE",

Constructed of linen stretched on a wooden frame. Essentially, a Renaissance hang-glider. The kite is attached via rope to a hand-cranked drum mounted onto the wagon bed.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)

How much do you weigh, Nico? About one hundred pounds?

NICO

(growing uneasy)

A hundred and twenty six, I think.

DAVINCI

Close enough. Climb into that harness, would you?

Nico reluctantly climbs up and begins harnessing himself in.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)

Today, we are attempting to ascertain whether or not this kite can provide the necessary wind-resistance to support your weight.

NICO

What if it can't?

DAVINCI

Then your noble sacrifice will help us amend Aristotle's treatise on gravity. Vanessa, would you mind prancing about for a moment?

Vanessa, having now shrugged on a see-through shift, complies, happily pirouetting about as the wind whips her beribboned hair to and fro. DaVinci seems pleased.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)

You see, Nico? Those weighted ribbons allow me to calculate the strength and direction of the wind --
(squinting as he thinks)
In this case, I'd say about twenty knots, and shifting westerly, which will require a slight adjustment --

DaVinci SLAPS the horse, guiding the wagon towards the cliff.

NICO

Wait, WAIT! What if your calculations are wrong?

A GUST OF WIND catches the kite's "wings", lifting Nico from the wagon. He SCREAMS and the rope begins uncoiling. DaVinci cranks the drum. The kite rises thirty feet.

VANESSA

You're flying, Nico!

And for a moment, we shift into "DA VINCI VISION". A wire-frame overlay appears atop the kite, outlining the MECHANICS of its flight. The world as he sees it. For this is another of his gifts; the ability to perceive the inner workings and engineering principles underlying virtually any mechanism.

But now, the drum is spinning so fast that DaVinci can't keep up with it. Worse, friction is creating WISPS OF SMOKE.

Alarmed, DaVinci activates a HAND-BRAKE, but the device FAILS. He looks about the wagon, forced to improvise. Then he seizes a WORD and DRIVES it cross-wise through the drum.

The rope stops unspooling. With an effort, DaVinci reels Nico back in. Once Nico is safely back in the wagon, he quickly unbuckles himself. DaVinci claps him on the shoulder.

DAVINCI

Welcome back to terra firma, Nico!

Nico smiles, feeling faint. DaVinci sniffs the air, then looks to Nico's crotch.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)

It would appear you pissed yourself while you were aloft, Nico.

Nico looks down. Indeed, he has. He looks up, embarrassed.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)

No worries. I brought an extra pair of leggings just in case.

DaVinci reaches into the wagon, producing a pair of leggings. He tosses them at Nico, then smiles at Vanessa.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)

Shall we be off, then, Sister?

7

EXT. OLD MARKET/PONTE VECCHIO - DAY

7

DaVinci and Nico stroll through the chaotic streets. There are VENDORS hawking their wares from stalls. BEGGARS, GUILDSMEN, MERCHANTS, various ANIMALS.

ON THE DOCKS AT THE ARNO RIVER,

A ship has come in. WORKMEN unload exotic beasts; CAMELS, ELEPHANTS, A GIRAFFE. VISITORS from foreign lands disembark, including a tall, TURKISH MAN (50s), shrouded in a BLUE ROBE.

NICO

God I hate this place --

DAVINCI

Where else could we practice our flights but in Florence?

DaVinci helps Nico up. They keep moving.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)

Any other city, we'd be burnt at the stake for our efforts. But here? I'm just another free-thinking heretic. Chaos, culture, it's all celebrated within these walls.

Nico takes it all in, wide-eyed, frequently dodging around obstacles. Just then, a STRAY PIG races by, knocking him on his ass. As he sits, he notices that he's fallen in shit. DaVinci helps Nico up as they keep moving --

DAVINCI (CONT'D)

Case in point, Nico. You need to be nimble-footed. Not endlessly sleepwalking, with your mouth stupidly agape. Florence demands only one thing of its people; to be truly awake.

(stopping in mid-stride)

Like that angelic vision. I'd pay good money to disturb her slumber --

ANGLE ON LUCREZIA DONATI (20S),

Trailed by TWO SERVANTS clutching bundles of flowers.
Lucrezia is stunning.

NICO
 Keep walking, Maestro. That's
 Lucrezia Donati.

DAVINCI
 Lorenzo de Medici's mistress. I'm
 well aware of who she is.

NICO
 Well he'll break you on the wheel
 if he catches you looking at her.

DaVinci keeps gazing at her, smitten. And then, for an
 instance, Lucrezia's eyes connect with his. He LAUGHS.

DAVINCI
 But what if she's caught looking at me?

Just then, a COMMOTION draws their attention as a MERCENARY,
 bearing a BLUE SERPENT on his surcoat GALLOPS by them. The
 mercenary reins in his steed just before the Medici Palace.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)
 Bad tidings from Milan, Nico.

NICO
 How can you tell?

DAVINCI
 That serpent on the rider's surcoat is
 the *Biscione*, the Sforza family emblem.
 If he was bringing *good* news, he'd have
 dressed in the more traditional red and
 white shield of Milan.

(pondering)
 No, whatever the message is, Lorenzo
 won't be happy with it.

8 INT. MEDICI PALACE - MAIN GATE - DAY 8

SERVANTS lead the rider through a bustling courtyard, passing
 HANDLERS feeding an OSTRICH (part of the Medici menagerie) --

9 INT. MEDICI PALACE - COUNTING HOUSE - DAY 9

-- into an inner-sanctum housing scores of CLERKS. This is
 the heart of the Medici banking empire. Abaci beads CLACK as
 COINS are counted, recorded in ledgers, and stored in caskets.

ANGLE ON LORENZO MEDICI (40),

de facto ruler of Florence. Despite having the face of a boxer, Lorenzo is a shrewd and sober man, who dresses simply.

His brother, GIULIANO (28), is the opposite; handsome, dashing, flamboyant. *A bon vivant.*

Hovering between these two polarities is GENTILE BECCHI (50s), the Brothers' stern, yet protective advisor. He carries a LEDGER, stuffed with papers.

The rider presents Lorenzo with a wax sealed scroll. Lorenzo reads it, then erupts from his chair, KICKING OVER a chest.

LORENZO

Out! OUT!!! All of you!

The money counters exit. Lorenzo paces, grave.

LORENZO (CONT'D)

The Duke of Milan is dead.
Assassinated.

BECCHI

By whose hand?

LORENZO

Visconti and two others.

GIULIANO

(derisively)

An honor killing, then. They say the Duke *deflowered* his niece. Sforza was a pig of epic appetites.

LORENZO

But he was our pig. His armies were the only thing keeping Rome's ambitions in check.

(shaking his head)

This was no honor killing. I sense the Vatican's hand behind this. The timing is just too perfect --

BECCHI

If you're right, this will upset the balance of power in Italy, Lorenzo.

LORENZO

Upset? My God, Becchi. This all but decapitates the concept and shits down its throat!

Lorenzo collapses back into his chair, disheartened.

LORENZO (CONT'D)

We need to shore up public support.

GIULIANO

Easter holiday is nearly upon us.
Let's throw a carnival. Allow the
people of Florence to celebrate the
end of Lent as they do its *arrival*.

BECCHI

Drunken revelry? That's how you
propose we handle this?

GIULIANO

The more flamboyant the pageantry,
the stronger we appear.

LORENZO

We're not fucking peacocks, Giuliano.
A carnival's all well and good, but
if it has no teeth behind it, we
might as well slit our own throats.

SIXTUS (PRELAP)

Are you frightened?

10 INT. PAPAL APARTMENTS - BATH AREA - NIGHT

10

POPE SIXTUS IV (60s), avaricious and imposing, floats in a bath of rose petals. An ALTAR BOY rests in the water alongside him. Sixtus has a delicate knife pressed against the poor youth's throat.

ALTAR BOY

No, Most Holy Father.

SIXTUS

Lying is a sin, my dear boy. It
separates us from God's grace.

ALTAR BOY

(correcting himself)

Yes, I'm frightened --

Sixtus reaches his free hand between the boy-man's legs.

SIXTUS

But that is also a lie, isn't it?
At least, a *partial* one. A venial
sin, perhaps.

(MORE)

SIXTUS (CONT'D)
(pressing the knife deeper)
So which statement is correct?

Now the youth is terrified. He doesn't know how to answer.

SIXTUS (CONT'D)
Speak, child. Your future here at
the Vatican depends on it.

The youth stammers, dry-mouthed. Sixtus' eyes are alight with mischievous delight. He moves his face closer to the youth's, until their lips are nearly touching, and whispers:

SIXTUS (CONT'D)
The proper answer would be --

Just then, we hear a COMMOTION outside the room as --

ROLAND (SWISS GUARD) (O.S.)
Your Graces, his Holiness has
forbidden --

-- the DOORS BURST OPEN and THREE MEN enter, having bullied their way past the SWISS MERCENARIES standing guard.

First is COUNT RIARIO (30s), bastard son of Sixtus. Handsome, composed, oddly devout. Capable of committing brutal acts in order to forward Rome's agenda. Then --

FRANCESCO PAZZI (30s). Short, slender, and pale. A schemer and rival of the Medicis who perceives insult at every turn.

Next is LUPO MERCURI (50s), Curator of the Secret Archives.

MERCURI
Our men succeeded! Sforza's dead.

At this, Sixtus removes the knife, heaving his bulk from the bath. Mercuri and the others seem unfazed by what they've stumbled in on.

FRANCESCO PAZZI
Florence is ripe for the picking,
your Eminence. Trust me.

SIXTUS
You know this *how*, Francesco --?

RIARIO
We've an agent within Lorenzo's
ranks. The Medicis are throwing a
carnival in a pathetic bid to win
the peoples' favor.
(forcefully)
(MORE)

RIARIO (CONT'D)

They're weak, your Holiness. This is your chance to strike.

SIXTUS

Not *mine*, nephew. The Lord's.

RIARIO

Forgive the imprecision of my words.

MERCURI

There is another reason for haste. The Turk has arrived in Florence. He's after the Book of Leaves.

The news galvanizes Riario. Sixtus nods, shrugs on a robe, hurries from the chambers. After a beat, Riario looks to --

-- the youth, sunk low in the bath, trying to be inconspicuous.

RIARIO

I'm truly sorry.

ALTAR BOY

Why --?

RIARIO

Because you can't have heard this.

Riario picks up the knife and SLASHES the boy's throat. The boy sinks face-first amongst the rose petals, his BLOOD spreading like an ink blot.

11 EXT. VERROCCHIO'S STUDIO - VIA DELL' AGNOLO - DAY 11

A *bottega*, which opens onto the busy street. CHILDREN scamper outside as dogs, pigs, and chickens wander freely about.

12 INT. VERROCCHIO'S STUDIO - GROUND FLOOR - DAY 12

An industrious workshop filled with APPRENTICES and LIFE MODELS, crowded with easels, sculptor's turntables, and firing kilns.

ANDREA "TRUE EYE" VERROCCHIO (50S),

DaVinci's mentor and friend, hovers at the back. He seems pained and apologetic, doing his best to appease --

-- Gentile Becchi and Giuliano Medici, who look annoyed.

GIULIANO
Do you have the plans for the
columbina or not?

VERROCCHIO
We do. And they're breathtaking.
I put my finest man on the job.

BECCHI
Then produce these miraculous
renderings and let us evaluate them.

VERROCCHIO
Unfortunately, I can't.

GIULIANO
Because they don't exist!

Giuliano grabs Verrocchio by his collar, drawing him close.

GIULIANO (CONT'D)
By God, man, if you think you can
defraud the House of Medici --

VERROCCHIO
No, no, no, they exist, I promise
you! They're in this chest!

Verrocchio gestures to a LARGE TRUNK, secured at the front
with an elaborate, multi-dial COMBINATION LOCK.

BECCHI
Open it.

VERROCCHIO
I can't. It's locked.

GIULIANO
(unsheathing his sword)
Then I'll take my sword to it --

Verrocchio and his staff shrink back in fear, SCREAMING.

VERROCCHIO
WAIT!!!

Giuliano stays his hand. Verrocchio looks like he's about to
have a stroke. He dabs his brow with a handkerchief.

VERROCCHIO (CONT'D)
The chest has been rigged to
explode if anyone tampers with it.

GIULIANO

Are you mad? Why would anyone engineer such an infernal contrivance?!

DAVINCI (O.S.)

To protect my ideas, obviously.

CLOSE ON DaVinci, just now entering, tailed by Nico. Upon seeing them, Verrocchio's face floods with relief.

VERROCCHIO

Gentlemen, Leonardo DaVinci.

BECCHI

(sizing DaVinci up)

I've heard of you. They say you're quite the free thinker.

DAVINCI

I'm not sure who "they" are, but I'm happy to accept the distinction, even if it was delivered somewhat disingenuously.

DaVinci sweeps past them, drawing near Verrocchio, who hisses:

VERROCCHIO

You're late.

DaVinci smiles back at him, as if to say "I've got this." Then he CLAPS his hands, launching into presentation mode.

DAVINCI

So! The First Citizen of Florence is desperate for us to fashion a *columbina*. Is that correct?

BECCHI

Desperate is a strong word.

DAVINCI

And yet it happens to be the word I used. But let's review. Every Easter, a grand procession makes its way through the streets, terminating at the cathedral, where Mass is held --

GIULIANO

Why do you insist on stating what every child of three already knows?

DAVINCI

Why do you insist on interrupting me? I have a methodology. We can follow it. Or we can flail about. Which avenue do you prefer?

Giuliano stares at DaVinci, momentarily flummoxed.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)

I'll take your silence as a vote for the former. Onward, then. At the culmination of Mass, a mechanical dove, the *Columbina*, is flown from the altar on a wire --

DaVinci leaps onto a workbench, pantomiming wings.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)

Out into the public square it soars, igniting a cart full of fireworks! The Republic celebrates, donning masks, engaging in drunken revelry. For years, the House of Medici has contracted with *inferior* workshops to produce the ceremonial dove.

(advancing on Becchi)

But this year, if I'm to understand the politics afoot, the same, shoddy pageantry just won't do.

BECCHI

No one's carped about our dove before.

DAVINCI

To call your previous efforts a "dove" is to insult the entire avian class. I'm offering to fashion you something much more *sublime*.

GIULIANO

Enough! Show us the damn thing!

DaVinci kneels and deftly manipulates the lock. As it unlatches, the others back away, expecting an explosion --

-- but nothing happens. Instead, DaVinci pulls out the most beautiful ARTIFICIAL DOVE the world has ever seen.

DAVINCI

Of course, this is but a quarter-scale model.

BECCHI

It's astonishingly life-like. I'll grant you that.

DAVINCI

It can be yours for thirty florins.

GIULIANO

Thirty? The contract stated twelve.

DAVINCI

Ah. But that was for a bird that needed a *guide-wire*. This marvel requires no such handicap.

DaVinci triggers an internal spring. The dove circles the workshop before landing in his hands. The workers APPLAUD.

BECCHI

Your work is impressive. But the price is too steep.

DAVINCI

The Medici require a show of power. Something that will astound the public and assure them Florence is secure. Thirty florins is a bargain.

GIULIANO

Thirty florins is sodomy!

DAVINCI

Perhaps I should be negotiating with your older brother instead.

Verrocchio winces. Giuliano reaches for his sword as if to strike DaVinci -- but he relents, reining himself in.

GIULIANO

For God's sakes, Becchi! Just pay the degenerate and be done with it!

Giuliano leaves in a huff. Becchi pulls out a coin purse.

BECCHI

You win, *artista*. As is customary with commissions, we shall pay half now and half upon completion.

DAVINCI

While we're on the subject of commissions, I'm told there's an open one to paint Lorenzo's mistress, Lucrezia Donati?

BECCHI

Even if Lorenzo had a mistress, which I strenuously deny, what of it?

DAVINCI

I'd like to nominate myself as a candidate.

BECCHI

Signora Donati is one of the most revered women in Florence. As such, the commission is reserved for registered members of the Guild.

Becchi offers a cadaverous smile.

BECCHI (CONT'D)

Stick to your whirligigs and parlour tricks, DaVinci. Take a lesson from Icarus.

And with that, Becchi exits. But we can tell from the look in DaVinci's eyes that he's not about to let it go.

13 INT. VERROCCHIO'S STUDIO - LIVING QUARTERS - DAY

13

Moments later, Verrocchio and DaVinci are in the loft overlooking the workshop. DaVinci seems distracted.

VERROCCHIO

You push too hard, Leonardo.

DAVINCI

That's the thanks I get for doubling our rate?

VERROCCHIO

You're missing the point. You're an artist, not a charlatan. It's prestige you should be after. You won't gain it by continually insulting those above your station.

DAVINCI

(taking offense)
My station?

VERROCCHIO

You're a bastard, Leonardo. Illegitimate. You can't hold office or inherit wealth.

(MORE)

VERROCCHIO (CONT'D)

You're prohibited from joining any of the major guilds. Your options are limited; mercenary, thief, artisan.

DAVINCI

You forgot begging. I could always take up that. Or prostitution.

Despite the tirade, it's obvious Verrocchio has hit a nerve.

VERROCCHIO

I'm trying to counsel you, Leonardo.

DAVINCI

And if prestige was all I wanted, I'd take it. You want me whoring out my talents like Botticelli? His backgrounds are for shit and his perspective's even worse. I want to be a scientist, Andrea. A thinker. I have ideas that need birthing.

VERROCCHIO

The world may not be ready for your ideas, Leonardo.

DAVINCI

Then I'll just have to invent one that is.

14 INT. DAVINCI'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT

14

It's late. PAN OVER a host of REVOLUTIONARY DESIGNS; some for inventions we RECOGNIZE, like the DIVING SUIT. Some lost to history. We also see BIRDS in various states of dissection.

DaVinci works, smoking opium, slumped over a table cluttered with designs for the *columbina*, near the point of exhaustion. As we DRIFT CLOSER to him, Vanessa's earlier words echo:

VANESSA'S VOICE

Is there nothing else you fear?

DISSOLVE TO:

15 EXT. THE HILLS OF VINCI - DAY (FLASHBACK)

15

A memory. The sun is high. A younger Da Vinci (14), climbs a hillside, attempting to round up some wayward SHEEP. One of them is BLACK, which strays towards --

A WATERFALL

And behind it, Young DaVinci notices a CLEFT in the rock. Curious, he climbs up, where he discovers a CAVE. He peers into the darkness. A wind from within stirs his hair. Setting caution aside, he climbs inside.

Time passes. Shadows lengthen and the sun dips. Then --

YOUNG DAVINCI EMERGES

His clothes are torn and his hands are covered with BLOOD. He tries to wipe them on his clothes, but there's too much of it. The boy starts to panic, CRYING OUT, his screams --

16 INT. VERROCCHIO'S STUDIO - DAVINCI'S QUARTERS - DAWN 16

-- melding with the adult DaVinci's as he wakes. He looks about, disoriented, trying to re-calibrate back to reality.

VERROCCHIO (O.S.)

Are you alright, Leonardo?

DaVinci turns to see Verrocchio in the doorway, concerned.

DAVINCI

Just a nightmare, Andrea.

VERROCCHIO

You have them all too frequently.

DAVINCI

I'm having some issues with my mathematics, that's all.

He gestures to the *Columbina* designs, and the scale model.

VERROCCHIO

Issues --?

DAVINCI

I'm not sure the *Columbina* will be flight-worthy by Easter.

VERROCCHIO

But the model --

DAVINCI

-- was a *model*. Once I scale up the dimensions, the calculations don't hold. It's annoying.

Verrochio spots a PIPE and POPPY SEED PODS near DaVinci.

VERROCCHIO
Smoking opium won't help matters.

DAVINCI
It clears my head.

VERROCCHIO
It clouds it.

DAVINCI
What are you, my nursemaid? I think too much, alright?! I need to dull my thoughts or I'll be eviscerated by them. I'd have thought you'd understand that by now!

DaVinci sweeps his drawings to the floor, SMASHING bottles. Finally, he flings his scale-model into the fire, watching it burn. He picks up one of the poppy pods.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)
The tears of the poppy have medicinal properties. The priests in Egypt knew that --

VERROCCHIO
We are not in Egypt. And you are no priest.

DaVinci's shoulders slump, his rage evaporating into darkness.

VERROCCHIO (CONT'D)
A word of advice --

DAVINCI
I don't want it.

VERROCCHIO
Well you'll get it anyway. You have a *gift*, Leo. A kind of genius the likes of which I've never seen. Because of that, people will always seek to destroy you. Don't aid them in that endeavor.

As Verrocchio exits, we HOLD ON DaVinci, briefly glimpsing the deep well of loneliness abiding within him. Forever set apart from others, doomed to be misunderstood. He stares at the model dove burning in the fireplace and we --

MATCH CUT TO:

17 EXT. OLD MARKET/PONTE VECCHIO DAY - DAY 17

-- wooden cages, containing every kind of BIRD imaginable, from fowl to songbirds to birds of prey.

REVEAL DaVinci and Nico, browsing the BIRD SELLERS section. DaVinci at a CAGE OF STARLINGS, nodding to the PROPRIETOR:

DAVINCI

How much for the starlings?

BIRD SELLER

Six denari a-piece.

DAVINCI

I'll give you two soldi for the lot of them.

BIRD SELLER

Two -- are you trying to offend me?!

DAVINCI

If I wanted to offend you, I'd comment on the scent of fecal matter wafting from your hind quarters. Do you want the soldi or not? They're my last and I'm bored.

DaVinci reaches into his belt purse, producing the soldi. The vendor offers him the cage, but DaVinci shakes his head.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)

I'm only interested in the birds. Just open the cage on my say-so.

DaVinci opens his notebook, pulling out a sketch pencil that.

NICO

(explaining to the vendor)
He's obsessed with flight. He studies them for inspiration.

DaVinci nods to the bird seller, who opens the cage.

The starlings take to the air in slow-motion and we shift into "DA VINCI VISION" once more. DaVinci records every detail, quickly rendering a series of perfect studies. And then, the spell is broken as --

BIRD SELLER

Well? Did you see what you were hoping to?

DAVINCI
For one of my soldis back, I just
might tell you.

BIRD SELLER
(handing him a soldi back)
Alright, then. Tell me.

DAVINCI
(pocketing the coin with a
grin)
I saw an idiot who doesn't know how
to haggle.

DaVinci leaves the bird seller, his attention now drawn to --

DAVINCI (CONT'D)
Look, Nico. There she is again --

LUCREZIA DONATI,

Again making her rounds with her servants. As we watch, her
group encounters another, exchanging pleasantries with --

LORENZO MEDICI,

Holding court with Becchi, FAVOR SEEKERS and BODYGUARDS.

NICO
And there's Lorenzo Medici, too.
You'd best keep moving.

Nico tugs at his sleeve, but DaVinci stays put, watching --

DAVINCI
Look at them, both behaving with
perfect composure. Surrounded by
parasites. Everyone pretending the
two of them aren't fucking.

NICO
Isn't that your father with them?

As Nico points out PIERO DAVINCI (50s), a serious-minded man
in robes, DaVinci's face clouds over with a storm of emotions.

DAVINCI
The Crown Prince of parasites. He
serves as Lorenzo's notary.
(then, impulsively)
Let's stir the pot a little, Nico.

As DaVinci stalks towards the group, Piero spots him, his mouth curling into a frown. His lead guard, CONTI, stiffens, alert for trouble. DaVinci ignores them, grinning broadly.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)
Your Magnificence!

Lorenzo breaks off his conversation, regarding DaVinci.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)
My name is Leonardo DaVinci.
Perhaps you've heard of me? I am
designing your Easter *columbina*.

LORENZO
Aren't you the eccentric Verrocchio
employs?

DAVINCI
I am an artist, yes. And anatomist.
And an engineer of some note.

BECCHI
Really? "Extortionist" was the
phrase I recall using.

Lorenzo's entourage LAUGHS. But DaVinci presses on.

DAVINCI
I drive a stiff bargain, it's true.
But the fact is, I've designed a
more ambitious series of devices
that I know your percipient mind
will take interest in --

As DaVinci reaches for his notebook, CAPTAIN NAZZARENO
DRAGONETTI, leader of the Officers of the Night (Florence's
secret police), steps forward, threatening.

DRAGONETTI
Move along, vermin.

DaVinci reads the implicit violence in Dragonetti's face and
slowly closes his notebook. Lorenzo offers a polite smile --

LORENZO
Some other time, perhaps.

-- and continues on his way. His retinue follows suit, with
Piero casting a meaningful glower back at his son. Then
Lucrezia, offering a final, furtive glance.

DAVINCI
I'm wounded, Nico. I need wine.

NICO
You said you were out of money.

DAVINCI
I lied.

18 INT. BARKING DOG - NIGHT

18

A noisy establishment, populated by Florence's SEEDY ELEMENTS: WHORES, MUSICIANS, DRUNKARDS. DaVinci holds court in back, sketching in his notebook, while drinking with Nico --

AND ZOROASTER (30S),

A self-professed occultist and scoundrel. Also, DaVinci's best friend. Currently indulging in a plate of sausages.

DAVINCI
How goes business, Zoroaster?

ZOROASTER
Execrable since the Duke's demise.
These are dark times for Florence.

Just then, a SQUABBLE breaks out amongst a GROUP OF SOLDIERS. A PUNCH or two is thrown, a man goes down. LAUGHTER ensues.

ZOROASTER (CONT'D)
Case in point. Those mercenaries flooding into town. If war breaks out, they'll be the only ones gainfully employed.
(shifting gears)
And speaking of employment, a two-headed calf was still-born on Zitto's farm. I can procure it, if you like. For your medical studies.

DAVINCI
The last corpse you brought me was already decomposing by the time I took a scalpel to it.

ZOROASTER
Grave-robbing is like fish-mongering. Sometimes, you're at the mercy of the day's catch.

Zoroaster spears his last sausage, offering it to DaVinci.

ZOROASTER (CONT'D)
Boar sausage?

DAVINCI

You know damn well I'm a vegetarian.

ZOROASTER

Yet I keep hoping to corrupt you.

DAVINCI

I'm corruptible. I just prefer not to eat anything with eyes.

NICO

Potatoes have eyes.

ZOROASTER

Oh, fuck-off! Who asked you, anyway?

Then, a winsome, yet unctuous youth approaches: JACOPO SALTARELLI (19), part-time model and hustler.

JACOPO

Maestro, may I model for you again?
No one looks at my form as you do.

DAVINCI

No one looks at *any* form as I do.
(waving him off)
Go peddle your wares with Botticelli.
He's an easy mark.

As Jacopo feigns insult and saunters off, Zoroaster sniffs.

ZOROASTER

"Model", *pffft*. That boy's nothing but a hustler. And an *artless* one at that.

DAVINCI

(watching Jacopo retreat)
But pleasing to the eye, nonetheless.

ZOROASTER

(dismissive)
Piss. Have a gander at *these* --

Zoroaster produces a deck of hand-painted TAROT CARDS.

ZOROASTER (CONT'D)

My latest venture. They're called *tarot* cards. They're used to divine fortunes.

As Zoroaster collects and shuffles the cards, DaVinci notes --

THREE NEW ARRIVALS

Captain Dragonetti and two of his Officers of the Night,
BLACK MARTIN AND MORGANTE, prowling the bar and generally
intimidating customers.

Zoroaster sets the shuffled deck FACE-DOWN, nods to Nico --

ZOROASTER (CONT'D)

Pick one, Nico. We'll see if it
squares with your temperament.

Nico selects a card and turns it over: THE FOOL.

NICO

It's a trick.

ZOROASTER

Is it? Or am I simply channeling
the powers of the Ancients?

DAVINCI

How many women has that line worked
on, Zo?

ZOROASTER

A respectable amount. And a goodly
number of gentlemen as well. Your
turn, Leo. Don't be shy.

DaVinci selects a card. But he doesn't yet turn it over.

DAVINCI

I already know what it is. It's
the Devil card, obviously.

DaVinci turns it over. And so it is. Nico is impressed.

ZOROASTER

Well done. But a card can symbolize
not just one's temperament, but his
fate. Do you dare see yours, Leo?

DaVinci picks a new card: THE HANGED MAN. Zoroaster frowns.

DAVINCI

Tell me. Don't hold back.

ZOROASTER

This one represents sacrifice.
Suspension between life and death.
And then, perhaps, a great awakening.

But DaVinci seems distracted as an idea forms in his mind. He's been sketching a SCENE OF BATTLE.

DAVINCI
I'm an idiot.

DaVinci nods towards the previously mentioned mercenaries.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)
Those mercenaries. Florence has no army of their own, so they've come to sell their muscle, right? Our citizens want assurances that Rome won't be storming the city gates and they capitalize on their fear. But what if there were a more lucrative way to traffic in the Republic's unease?

NICO
Like what?

DAVINCI
How do we attract patrons?

DaVinci takes out his notebook, flipping to his *columbina*.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)
With art. Take my *columbina*. It's beautiful. But it's ephemeral. And honestly, who cares about art when their farm is about to be burnt down and their daughters sodomized? So how does one really achieve immortality?

Nico shrugs. Zoroaster is equally puzzled.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)
By selling an idea. Aristotle, Plato, Socrates. They laid down a set of principles, which then propagated outward through history.

ZOROASTER
No one wants your principles, Leo. They barely want your art.

DAVINCI
But what if those principles could make them feel safe at night?

ZOROASTER

What do you have in mind, Leo? A chastity belt for the anus?

DAVINCI

I should be promoting myself as a *military engineer*, not a painter. War's always been the hand-maiden of progress. If I want to explore my ideas, I just have to cloak them in the guise of Florence's defense.

Just then, a new HUBBUB draws their attention.

ANGLE ON "THE TURK" (50S),

(Sharp-eyed viewers saw him disembark from the ship earlier.) Dragonetti and his men are harassing the scholar.

NICO

Why are the Officers of the Night bothering that man?

ZOROASTER

He's a Turk. A heathen. Isn't that reason enough?

Dragonetti knocks the Turk's drink from his hands and begins shoving him. DaVinci's face hardens as he watches.

ZOROASTER (CONT'D)

This isn't your fight, Leo.

DAVINCI

When has that ever stopped me?

ZOROASTER

(to Nico, rolling his eyes)
He always courts danger when he's drunk.

DaVinci pushes himself into the center of the fray.

DAVINCI

What seems to be the trouble here?

DRAGONETTI

Go back to your sketchbook, scribbler. This isn't your concern.

DAVINCI

Unfortunately, I have a character flaw that compels me to intervene whenever stupidity rears its head.

Black Martin draws his sword, threatening DaVinci --

-- who deftly traps the man's hand, twists it, and transfers the sword to his OWN HAND in the blink of an eye. He thrusts it forward, giving a pin-prick touch to Martin's forehead.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)

There, you see? That was stupid.
Your man's grip was too loose and
now he finds himself staring down
this handsome *spada filo*.

Morgante tries to engage DaVinci --

-- but DaVinci moves like lightning, drawing a DAGGER with his left hand, parrying the man's sword, then SLASHING his cheek. Morgante CRIES OUT, clutching his face.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)

More stupidity. If you'd asked
around, you'd know I'm ambidextrous
and perfectly capable of fighting
two --

(pointedly)

-- or even three men simultaneously.

Dragonetti pauses, hand on his sword hilt. Although DaVinci is smiling, the look in his eyes tells us he means business.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)

Bully someone else, Dragonetti.

Dragonetti glances about. The whole tavern is watching.

DRAGONETTI

You've made a serious
miscalculation tonight, *artista*.

DAVINCI

It wouldn't be the first time.

Dragonetti gestures to his men, who back away. The trio exit, enduring a CHORUS OF CATCALLS. DaVinci looks to the Turk.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)

Are you alright, Sir?

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)

I am more than alright. "I am a son
of Earth and Starry Heaven."

DaVinci blinks. That was a odd reply. The Turk reaches into his robe, retrieving a COIN, which he hands to DaVinci.

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM) (CONT'D)
I return to Constantinople the day
after tomorrow. But I am staying
at the Inn of the Black Swan. Come
see me before I go, Maestro.

And with that, the Turk exits. Nico and Zoroaster approach.

ZOROASTER
Well that was certainly bizarre.
What did he give you?

DaVinci looks down at the coin, perplexed. A strange symbol
is embossed on it: a winged man with a lion's head and twin
serpents coiled around him.

DAVINCI
A tip, I think.

19 EXT. FLORENCE STREETS - NIGHT

19

DaVinci and Nico traverse the empty streets, supporting an
extremely drunk Zoroaster between them. As they reach an
intersection, DaVinci transfers Zoroaster's weight to Nico.

DAVINCI
Take him, Nico. He won't make it
home alone.

NICO
Are you *sure*, maestro? It's after
curfew and there are bound to be
rogues about.

DAVINCI
Then I'll fit right in. Go on.

Nico nods. But as he starts away, Zoroaster briefly stirs
from his stupor. He looks at DaVinci, his speech slurred.

ZOROASTER
Leo --?

DAVINCI
Yes, my friend?

ZOROASTER
I didn't deal you the Hanged Man.
That was all you. It was an omen.
Just like the two-headed calf.

DAVINCI
I don't believe in omens, Zo. And
neither should you.

ZOROASTER
-- okay --

As Nico heads off, struggling beneath Zoroaster's uncooperative weight, DaVinci smiles. He turns into an alley, WHISTLING to himself. Then he stops --

A HOODED FIGURE

Steps from the shadows, sword in hand, radiating menace. DaVinci is briefly alarmed, then relaxes as he realizes:

DAVINCI
I know it's you, Dragonetti.
(drawing his dagger)
Didn't you learn your lesson
earlier?

Then, a DOZEN MORE HOODED FIGURES emerge from the shadows.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)
Oh. I guess you did learn.

20 EXT. THE BARGELLO - NIGHT 20

An imposing, crenelated fortress, acting as headquarters of the Officers of the Night and the city's prison. SCREAMS echo from within. Nearby we note a barrel-like structure decorated with the face of a lion, with a slot where the creature's mouth should be: the *Tamburo* (explained in future episodes).

21 INT. BARGELLO DUNGEON - NIGHT 21

Torch-lit, filled with dank cells and instruments of torture. DaVinci has his hands bound and is getting the shit beaten out of him by Dragonetti, Black Martin and Morgante. And just when it seems like he can't take it anymore --

PIERO'S VOICE (O.S.)
That's enough.

They stop. DaVinci squints, making out a SILHOUETTE in the shadows. One of the Officers sets a chair down and the figure sits. It's DaVinci's father, Piero.

DAVINCI
I should have known.

PIERO

People are talking about you. And not in a positive light.

DAVINCI

I could care less what they're saying about me.

PIERO

I care! Your actions embarrassed me today. I'll not have you tarnishing our family's name with your flippant tone and vulgar attempts at self-promotion.

DAVINCI

Then perhaps you should disown me.

PIERO

You are my first-born. And as much as I might wish to disavow you, our reputations are intertwined.

DAVINCI

First-born? You say that as if --

PIERO

My wife, Margherita, bore me a son this past week.

(smiling cruelly)

A legitimate heir.

DaVinci straightens himself, stung.

DAVINCI

My condolences to him. I wonder how long it will take the poor fool to curse his lineage?

PIERO

(his face growing cold)

Your rank within the social order has been rigidly defined. You should endeavor to remain within it. Stay away from the Medicis, Leonardo. I'll not warn you again.

DAVINCI

And I'll wager you will.

PIERO

Why do you have to make this all so difficult?!

DAVINCI
It's my nature. I see things as they are, and not as they might be. Truth compels me to speak.

Piero BACK-HANDS DaVinci across the face.

PIERO
Speak, then!

DAVINCI
(wincing, spitting blood)
You are a petty man --

Piero STRIKES DaVinci again.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)
You will never achieve greatness --

Piero STRIKES DaVinci a THIRD TIME.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)
-- whereas *I*, already *have*.

Piero gestures to the dark, damp environs around them.

PIERO
You are kneeling in a dungeon, about to be hit again and again by men who know how to hit. That's what you've achieved, Leonardo.
(to Dragonetti)
Beat him for another hour, then toss him back onto the streets with the rest of the garbage.

As Piero exits, Dragonetti smiles and readies a truncheon --

DRAGONETTI
Hold out the scribbler's hands --

The men comply, forcing DaVinci's bound hands out. As Dragonetti brings his truncheon down, DaVinci SCREAMS.

22 EXT. OLD MARKET/PONTE VECCHIO - DAY

22

CLOSE ON DaVinci, battered, yet determined. His right hand is a mess, many fingers bruised and cut. He sits on a bench, his notebook and sketch pencil at the ready in his LEFT HAND.

Zoroaster and Nico sit beside him. Zoroaster is hung-over.

ZOROASTER

You look more wretched than I.
Perhaps you should see a physician?

DAVINCI

I'm fine.

Zoroaster casts a dubious look at Nico, who shrugs.

ZOROASTER

They're executing a Jew today.
Apparently they caught him breaking
into a book shop on the Via Dei
Librai. It should be great sport.

DAVINCI

I'm not sure a man's death should
be characterized as sport.

ZOROASTER

This spot is too sunny. Can't we
move over into the shade?

DAVINCI

No.

NICO

Why? And why did we have to come
here so damned early?

DaVinci stares at a fountain that is bracketed by FLOWER
VENDORS. As he speaks, a CHURCH BELL tolls --

DAVINCI

Because every morning, at precisely
this time, Lucrezia Donati comes to
this spot to purchase flowers.

Like clockwork, LUCREZIA and her staff appear. DaVinci
begins sketching. He quickly appraises it -- then tosses it
away and starts another. Zoroaster glances down at the work.

ZOROASTER

She's appealing. I'll grant you
that --

Zoroaster nods to an OLD BEGGAR WOMAN a few yards away.

ZOROASTER (CONT'D)

-- but I'd rather bed that old
toothless hag over there.

DAVINCI

Now you're just being contrary.

ZOROASTER

It takes no great skill to fuck a pretty face. But a truly *ugly* woman, *that* actually requires discipline. Done right, it can be a transcendent experience.

TIME SLOWS

Lucrezia moves at a dream-like pace, her beautiful features drenched in sunlight, framed by the riot of colorful flowers --

-- then DaVinci tears a sketch from his notebook. He rolls it into a tube, tying it with a ribbon. He hands it to Nico.

DAVINCI

Run this over and make sure she knows where it came from.

DaVinci and Zoroaster watch as he makes his way to Lucrezia, hands the drawing to her, then gestures back at them.

ZOROASTER

What the devil are you up to, Leo?

Lucrezia studies the drawing. Then she looks up at DaVinci and says something to Nico. He rushes back, excited.

NICO

She wants to speak with you.

DAVINCI

Tell her I'm busy.

DaVinci starts off in the opposite direction. Zoroaster and Nico follow, confused. In the distance, a TRUMPET sounds.

ZOROASTER

You're turning her down?

DAVINCI

What do you care? Weren't you just extolling the virtues of transcendent hags? There's a leper over there. Go. Fondle her lesions.

(nodding to Nico)

Tell her, Nico. Timing is all.

Nico rushes off once more. Lucrezia and her ladies are equally baffled by DaVinci's behavior.

MOMENTS LATER,

DaVinci, Zoroaster, and Nico, have joined a CROWD at the Bargello. A gallows has been erected. The HANGMAN readies his noose as a TOWN CRYER continues reeling them in.

TOWN CRYER

Behold a criminal in our midst! A
Jew, no less! Watch him dance!
Watch him dangle! Bring your fruit
and small stones! God protect the
Republic of Florence!

Presently, an ox-drawn cart is guided into the square, attended by the CHIEF MAGISTRATE, PODESTA MARINO, and a somber procession of BLACK ROBED, HOODED MEN known as the *Confraternity of Death*.

THE JEW RIDES IN THE CART-BED,

chained, head shaved. The crowd JEERS, throwing fruit at him. As the cart reaches the gallows, the Jew is fitted into the noose. He remains stoic, eyes on the horizon. His RIGHT THUMB is bloody, missing a fingernail.

DaVinci and Zoroaster angle for a closer view. DaVinci takes out his notebook, sketching the proceedings.

Satisfied with the noose, the Hangman signals the Magistrate. Then something odd happens: the Jew looks directly at DaVinci.

JEW

*I am a son of Earth and Starry
Heaven. I am thirsty. Please give
me something to drink from the
fountain of Memory.*

DaVinci is startled. But there's no time to ponder as the Hangman pulls the lever, letting the Jew drop. The SOUND of his NECK BREAKING is audible. The crowd APPLAUDS.

CLOSE ON DaVinci, shaken. As the crowd disperses, Zoroaster and Nico catch sight of him, registering his odd reaction.

NICO

Are you alright, Maestro?

DAVINCI

I have to go.

And DaVinci hurries off, shoving his way into the crowd.

23 EXT. INN OF THE BLACK SWAN - DAY 23

DaVinci spots a wood carved sign and rushes inside.

24 INT. INN OF THE BLACK SWAN - DAY 24

At the front desk, DaVinci approaches the INN KEEPER.

DAVINCI

There was a Turk staying here. An elderly gentleman --?

INN KEEPER

He left at dawn.

(as DaVinci's face falls)

Is your name Leonardo DaVinci?

DAVINCI

Yes.

INN KEEPER

He said you could find him in the in the Roman ruins North of town.

25 EXT. ROMAN RUINS - DUSK 25

DaVinci treks to the summit of a hill. Not much to speak of. The remnants of some stone walls and burial niches.

Then DaVinci spies a LANTERN a way's off. He follows it, coming upon a ragged cleft in an old tomb. STEPS lead down into darkness. And within that darkness, ANOTHER LANTERN.

DaVinci pauses. The lanterns are meant to be a path, but the darkness evokes a feeling of dread in him. He descends.

26 INT. MITHRAEUM - NIGHT 26

DaVinci finds himself in a cave. CANDLES burn in recesses along the walls. At the far end is an ALTAR, containing --

AN AGED LIMESTONE RELIEF

The LION-HEADED MAN, with the twin serpents coiled around it. It holds a KEY in its right hand and ANOTHER KEY in its left.

THE TURK, "ASLAN AL-RAHIM",

Sits before the altar. He nods to DaVinci and we realize that we have nearly caught up to our opening scene.

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)
My name is Aslan Al-Rahim. Sit,
please.

DaVinci takes a seat before Al-Rahim. He nods to the altar --

DAVINCI
That figure --

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)
Will become known to you in time.
Will you smoke with me, DaVinci?

Al-Rahim motions to a water pipe beside him; a *Nargile*.

DAVINCI
That depends on what's in the pipe.

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)
A mixture of tobacco and black
hellebore. The flower is mildly
poisonous and is rumored to induce
visions and summon demons.

DAVINCI
I believe in neither.

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)
Then why do you struggle so hard to
keep both at bay?
(off DaVinci's unease)
Demons exist. You can embrace them
or ignore them at your peril.

Al-Rahim brings the mouth-piece to his lips and inhales
deeply. He then passes it to DaVinci, who follows suit.

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM) (CONT'D)
History is a lie that has been
honed like a weapon by people who
have suppressed the truth.
Centuries from now, your own
history will also be suppressed.

DAVINCI
To what end?

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)
The knowledge you are destined to
learn will upend the established
order of things.

DAVINCI
How could you possibly know that?

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)

You've heard the phrase 'time is a river'? What most fail to grasp is that the river is circular. In this way, the future is a book that can be read like any other.

(beat)

One man's death opens the doorway for the birth of the next. Would you like to know how this particular doorway opened?

DaVinci slowly nods, apprehensive. Al-Rahim seems pleased.

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM) (CONT'D)

Be forewarned, then. Some doorways lead into darkness.

DAVINCI

I saw a man executed today. He said something to me before he died --

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)

I am a son of Earth and Starry Heaven. I am thirsty. Please give me something to drink from the fountain of Memory.

(beat)

It is an invocation. A way for members of our fraternity to recognize one another.

DAVINCI

I'm not a member of your fraternity.

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)

Are you *sure*?

DaVinci blinks as his surroundings briefly PULSE in and out of focus. The effects of the hellebore are kicking in.

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM) (CONT'D)

I came to Florence for two reasons. The first was to prevent Avraham ben Yosef from being executed. I failed at this.

DAVINCI

And the second reason?

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)

Did you really think our meeting at the tavern was a coincidence?

(MORE)

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM) (CONT'D)

I provoked the Officers of the Night in order to observe your behavior.

DAVINCI

And how did I fare?

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)

Like a fool. Your intellect is vastly superior to your peers, yet you needlessly risk it on acts of bravado.

DAVINCI

But I was coming to your aid --

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)

I could have defended myself. You are bright, Leonardo. But you are not yet wise. And there is an ocean of knowledge that remains hidden to you.

Al-Rahim indicates the temple around them.

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM) (CONT'D)

This temple was a place of worship for a religion that originated long before Christ. Its adherents have largely vanished, but there are still a select few who heed its call. We are known as the Sons of Mithras.

(beat)

Much of what you call *progress* has simply been a matter of *remembering* what was once *forgotten*. Many of science's recent "discoveries" were already known and codified millennia ago.

Al-Rahim's words take on a trance-like quality as his FACE BLURS and the candles STROBE.

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM) (CONT'D)

This knowledge was set down in a compendium known as the Book of Leaves. Recently, certain clues have surfaced regarding the Book's location. Avraham ben Yosef was following those clues when he was apprehended and put to death.

Again, DaVinci blinks. His whole world is upending. Did the statue of the lion-headed figure just *move*?

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM) (CONT'D)

Rome is aware of the Book. Indeed, they already possess a handful of its pages. The weapon used to kill Duke Sforza was engineered using secrets gleaned from those pages. Now imagine the knowledge contained within the entire volume. In the wrong hands, it could bring about the end of the world itself.

(beat)

Perhaps you've heard of the Secret Archives the Vatican has assembled?

DaVinci nods.

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM) (CONT'D)

Its curator is a man known as Lupo Mercuri. A *fallen* Son of Mithras.

(beat)

In many ways, the Secreta's agents can be considered our opposites. Where we seek to *preserve* and disseminate knowledge, the Secreta hopes to *alter* or suppress it.

DAVINCI

I still don't understand what any of this has to do with me.

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)

What do you know of your mother?

DAVINCI

Almost nothing. She disappeared. She was a servant girl, I think --

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)

She was a slave. Brought against her will from Constantinople.

DaVinci stares back at Al-Rahim, stunned.

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM) (CONT'D)

An incident occurred when you were young. Something you've repressed?

DaVinci nods, uneasy. How could Al-Rahim know about that?

DAVINCI

I was a boy, back in Vinci --

A MEMORY FLASH ASSAULTS US

DaVinci as a teenager, having gone to fetch his Uncle's sheep. He comes upon the waterfall and the CAVE ENTRANCE.

BACK TO THE PRESENT

As DaVinci's HEARTBEAT quickens, rising in volume.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)

I'd been sent to fetch some sheep
that wandered off. I found a cave --

ANOTHER MEMORY FLASH

Young DaVinci at the mouth of the cave, peering in.

DAVINCI (V.O.)

I was scared to go inside, but I
was curious. So I ventured in.

Young DaVinci enters. We FOLLOW HIM, swallowed by darkness.

NIGHTMARISH IMAGES: SOMETHING MONSTROUS in the shadows. An ALTAR with a LION-HEADED FIGURE. Impressions of VIOLENCE. Coming faster as DaVinci's HEARTBEAT reaches a fever-pitch.

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)

What happened?

DaVinci looks away, frightened, anxious.

DAVINCI

I don't know. The next hours are
blank. I remember stumbling out --

BACK IN THE PAST,

Young DaVinci stumbles from the cave in shock, his clothes torn and dirty. His hands and face are covered with BLOOD.

DAVINCI (V.O.)

There was blood on my hands and
face. And somehow -- I knew it
wasn't my own.

Al-Rahim nods, satisfied with the account. DaVinci is spent, his hands trembling. Al-Rahim speaks softly now:

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)

One day, you will sip from the
Fountain of Memory and remember more
of what occurred in the cave. And
when you do, we will meet again.

DAVINCI

But -- what am I to do until then?

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)

Search for the Book of Leaves. Fate has chosen you, Leonardo.

DAVINCI

I don't believe in fate.

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)

Then believe in yourself. You followed me here, didn't you?

DAVINCI

Where do I start my search, then?

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)

With the hanged man, obviously. The seat of the soul. You'll find he already opened the door for you.

DAVINCI

And my mother --?

Al-Rahim holds up a HANDFUL OF DUST.

THE TURK (AL-RAHIM)

She's waiting for you on the other side. All you need do is enter --

Al-Rahim blows the dust in DaVinci's face. He coughs and tries to rise, alarmed -- and is dragged into unconsciousness.

NICO'S VOICE

Maestro? Can you hear me?

27 INT. MITHRAEUM - MORNING

27

FADE IN as DaVinci stirs, his face lit by sunlight from the stairs above. Nico and Zoroaster kneel over him, worried.

ZOROASTER

We've been looking for you since last night. What happened to you?

DAVINCI

The Turk was here --

DaVinci looks around the cave, but all traces of Al-Rahim are gone; the candles, the pipe, even the altar.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)

There was an altar, a statue --
they must've weighed over a ton.

Zoroaster and Nico exchange puzzled looks.

ZOROASTER

This place has been empty for
centuries, Leo.

DaVinci rubs his temples, feeling drugged and confused.

NICO

Maestro. The Officers of the Night
have been looking for you as well.
They say that Lorenzo Medici
himself has asked for you.

28 INT. MEDICI PALACE - ARCADE - DAY 28

DaVinci, clutching a notebook, is escorted through the arcade by Dragonetti, Black Martin and his men. But he's not being strong-armed. On the way, DaVinci spots some of Lorenzo's menagerie: a zebra, some ostriches, a lion.

29 INT. MEDICI PALACE - COUNTING HOUSE/STAIRCASE LANDING - DAY 29

DaVinci is lead past the money-counters. Then a wall with portraits of LORENZO'S ANCESTORS, including Cosimo de Medici.

Dragonetti stops at a door, nodding for DaVinci to continue. DaVinci studies Dragonetti for clues to his fate, but reads only antagonism.

30 INT. LORENZO MEDICI'S PRIVATE STUDY - DAY 30

The study is richly appointed with Flemish tapestries, precious manuscripts, and priceless works of art. An OWL rests on a nearby perch.

Lorenzo sits before a roaring fire, writing a letter. Gentile Becchi stands nearby. DaVinci waits, but neither of them says a word. Finally, Lorenzo looks up --

LORENZO

Leonardo di ser Piero DaVinci. I'm
told you're my notary's bastard son.

DaVinci hesitates, glancing at Becchi before giving a nod.

DAVINCI

I am.

LORENZO

I'm also told you are a trouble-maker. That you are arrogant, impolitic, and utterly incapable of keeping your opinions to yourself.

DAVINCI

Arrogance implies that I exaggerate my own worth. I don't.

Lorenzo considers this, offering a ghost of a smile.

LORENZO

My mistress, Lucrezia, seems to think you have a singular talent for portraiture --

At this, Lorenzo reveals the SKETCH DaVinci did of Lucrezia.

LORENZO (CONT'D)

She insisted that you and none other be the one to capture her beauty.

DAVINCI

I'd say she has a discerning eye, then.

BECCHI

A warning, Sir. The man has a reputation for *taking* many commissions, but finishing *few*.

LORENZO

(to DaVinci)

Is this true?

DAVINCI

I wrestle with details. I bore easily. Call it a character flaw.

LORENZO

Well, on *this* commission, you'd be wise to overcome it.

DAVINCI

When it comes to Ms. Donati, boredom is the *last* thing I fear.

Lorenzo sits back, appraising DaVinci. Amused.

LORENZO

I'll have your father draw up the contract, then.

Lorenzo turns away, dismissing DaVinci. But DaVinci lingers, setting one of his notebooks down in front of Lorenzo.

DAVINCI

Sir? If I may, I have a few other designs you might be interested in --

BECCHI

That will be all, DaVinci.

But DaVinci presses on, quickly flipping through the pages, settling on a diagram featuring a MULTI-BARRELED RIFLE.

DAVINCI

This item, for instance, can greatly increase your gunners' rate of firepower. While the top rack is being fired, the rack below can be loaded, and the rack below that one allowed to cool. The cannons are also arranged in a fan-like spread in order to allow for a greater distribution of projectiles --

BECCHI

That will be enough, DaVinci!

But Lorenzo holds up his hand. He flips through the next few pages, settling on a DIAGRAM OF A CONICAL TANK-LIKE WEAPON.

DAVINCI

This is an armored cart for breaking an enemy's line. Propulsion is achieved by two men, who are housed within, operating cranks, which rotate the wheels. Cannons can be mounted around the car's perimeter.

Lorenzo continues, finding diagrams for an ARMORED BOAT, a SCYTHED CHARIOT, and finally, a FLYING MACHINE.

LORENZO

And this?

DAVINCI

A flying machine. Modelled after the articulated wings of a bat.

BECCHI

Madness. If man were meant to fly --

DAVINCI

-- he would have been born with wings. But a similar assertion could have been made prior to the invention of gunpowder. Or the wheel. Or any other invention conceived since fire.

(beat)

I believe man will fly. And I base this belief on the fact that God has blessed us with minds *capable* of *imagining* it. He wouldn't have granted us this gift if he didn't want us to use it. Anything that can be *dreamt* of will eventually be built. Anyone who says otherwise is a fool.

Lorenzo glances at Becchi, amazed by DaVinci's impertinence.

LORENZO

So what, exactly, do you propose?

DaVinci takes a breath, knowing his moment is at hand.

DAVINCI

I wish to be employed as a military engineer. Allow me to apply my talents in Florence's defense.

Becchi shakes his head, audibly scoffing at the idea.

LORENZO

I am a humanist, DaVinci. I have no interest in waging war.

DAVINCI

And yet, your humanism is precisely why war will happen. Thanks to your patronage, Florence is a crucible of innovation. But we both know the only reason that innovation exists is because its people actually have the *freedom* to challenge the old doctrines. Rome fears that freedom. Indeed, they fear the future itself. If I may speak freely --

DaVinci moves to a MAP OF THE VARIOUS ITALIAN STATES, pointing to different territories as he presses his case.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)

Florence has no standing army. Nor does Rome. Necessarily, you've each made alliances with states that do;

(MORE)

DAVINCI (CONT'D)

Florence with Milan and Rome with Naples. Sforza's death has upended the game board. The Duke of Urbino has an army for hire, but he's expensive. You need weapons of your own, your Magnificence.

LORENZO

Are you trying to frighten me by pointing out our vulnerabilities?

DAVINCI

(candidly)

I don't need to, Signor. Our vulnerabilities are obvious.

Lorenzo mulls over DaVinci's words. Then:

LORENZO

I will give you a modest stipend. To see whether these contraptions of yours can actually be *realized*.

DAVINCI

Shall we say a hundred florins?

LORENZO

Fifty. And if you haggle any further, I'll cut out your tongue.

BECCHI

(under his breath)

Which would please us all.

DaVinci smiles and offers another bow.

DAVINCI

As you say, Sir. Thank-you.

As DaVinci gathers his notebooks, Lorenzo looks once more to the sketch of Lucrezia. He gestures to it --

LORENZO

You used Lucrezia to gain access to me, didn't you?

DAVINCI

I am an engineer. I utilize any device at my disposal in order to realize my goals.

Lorenzo drops the sketch of Lucrezia into the fire.

LORENZO

Clever, but I'd caution you not to get too clever around me. A clockwork loses its luster once one glimpses the gears beneath its face.

DAVINCI

Point taken.

But as DaVinci makes his exit, something catches his eye --

A FIGURINE ON LORENZO'S BOOKSHELVES

The lion-headed being entwined in serpents. DaVinci tries to fathom its implications and Lorenzo's role in all of this.

LORENZO

Is there a problem?

DAVINCI

(covering)

None at all. Good day, Sir.

DaVinci leaves. And we HOLD ON the sketch of Lucrezia, her beautiful features consumed by flame.

31 INT. VERROCCHIO'S WORKSHOP - GROUND FLOOR - NIGHT

31

As DaVinci enters, he finds Verrocchio, Nico, Zoroaster, and the rest of the assistants waiting for him. They APPLAUD.

VERROCCHIO

Congratulations, Leonardo.

DAVINCI

Word travels fast.

VERROCCHIO

There are no secrets in Florence.
How the devil did you do it?

ZOROASTER

He played on a woman's vanity.
(offering DaVinci wine)
Your stratagems become clear. You
are a bastard of the highest order.

At Verrocchio's urging, Nico pours wine for the others.

VERROCCHIO

Drink up. Then get back to work.
(to DaVinci, pointedly)
We've a *Columbina* to build.
(MORE)

VERROCCHIO (CONT'D)

If it isn't the most spectacular bird
this city has ever seen, our heads
will roll.

DaVinci smiles, basking in his moment of victory even as he
pulls Zoroaster aside and speaks to him quietly:

DAVINCI

I have a job for you. The Jew that
was hanged? I need you to unearth
his body for me. I want to examine
it.

ZOROASTER

And my compensation?

DAVINCI

Depends on how fresh the corpse is.

ZOROASTER

Then I'd best get digging.

32

EXT. FLORENCE CATHEDRAL/PIAZZA DEL DUOMO - NIGHT

32

CHURCH BELLS ring. It's Easter and Florence is celebrating.
Banners, flowers, and tapestries hang from the windows.
Citizens mill about, dressed as clowns, nymphs, and devils.

A PROCESSION OF ARMORED HORSEMEN winds through the crowd.
The centerpiece is a giant wooden cart hauled by a garland-
strewn team of WHITE OXEN. Before the cart; the PAZZI
FAMILY, including Francesco Pazzi and family elder, JACOPO
PAZZI, bearing a LARGE CANDLE, the so called "Holy Fire".

ZOROASTER (O.S.)

Ah, here's the Pazzi clan, with
their schemer Francesco and old man
Jacopo. Probably the oldest family
in Florence, definitely the most
ornery -- but not the first family
of the city anymore, which drives
them crazy --

LORENZO MEDICI stands on the cathedral steps, along with
Giuliano, Gentile Becchi, and CARDINAL ORSINI (50s). Also
present is CLARICE ORSINI (30s), Lorenzo's luminous and
stately wife, as well as their THREE YOUNG DAUGHTERS.

ZOROASTER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

No, the leaders here now are the
Medicis. Il Magnifico, his highbrow
wife Clarice, Golden Boy Giuliano.
Don't they look grand. Nice to be
on top. If you can stay there --

ANGLE ON DAVINCI AND HIS FRIENDS

Zoroaster is dressed as BACCHUS, providing commentary on the festivities. Verrocchio is dressed as a HERMIT, Nico as a JESTER. Vanessa as a NYMPH. DaVinci wears no costume.

VANESSA
(teasing)
Jealous, Zo?

ZOROASTER
Absolutely.

As the procession nears the cathedral, Lorenzo raises his arms and a CHEER goes up from the crowd.

ZOROASTER (CONT'D)
Lorenzo's nothing, if not a
showman. Look at the drunken
bastards eating it up.

Just before reaching Lorenzo, the procession halts. Francesco HANDS OVER the HOLY FIRE to Jacopo. Francesco leans in to give him a kiss on the cheek.

FRANCESCO
(whispering)
Only Pazzi hands should touch the
Holy Fire. The Medicis demean us
with this circus.

JACOPO
Bide your time, Francesco. Our
family shall soon regain its place
at the head of Florence.

Jacopo walks to Lorenzo and transfers the Holy Fire to him.

JACOPO (CONT'D)
The Pazzi family entrusts you,
Lorenzo de Medici, with this new
fire - struck by stones from the
Church of the Holy Sepulchre to
light the Eastertide columbina.

FRANCESCO
As is our right. Granted onto our
ancestor for his actions during the
first crusade.

Lorenzo's smile barely masks his hatred for his arrogant rival. He turns and carries the Holy Fire toward the Cathedral. Opening the doors as part of the ceremony is a solemn CARDINAL ORSINI, who seems to ignore Lorenzo's nod to him as he solemnly addresses the crowd.

CARDINAL ORSINI

As shepherd of this flock, I
rejoice to see the leaders of
Florence united in their love for
something greater than mere
commerce. Welcome, all of you,
into God's home.

Back amongst the crowd, Zoroaster continues providing
commentary --

ZOROASTER

Looks a little grim even for a
Cardinal, don't he? But then,
who knows which side Orsini's on?
Sure, he's Lorenzo's brother-in-
law, but his real loyalty has to be
to Rome, right?

DAVINCI

Like most men of the cloth, Zo, I
suspect his loyalty pivots as
convenience dictates.

VERROCCHIO

Shhhhh, both of you. It won't be
long now.

The group watches as the thirty foot-high cart is moved to
the center of the square, then loaded with FIREWORKS.

NICO

What if the *Columbina* misses its
mark, Maestro?

ZOROASTER

Then you can kiss your master's
learned ass goodbye. The Medicis
won't take failure lightly.

A look passes between DaVinci and Verrocchio. But then,
DaVinci spots a MASKED WOMAN dressed as a scarlet harlot.

ZOROASTER (CONT'D)

That crimson-daubed doxy has been
making eyes at you for an hour.

DAVINCI

So?

ZOROASTER

So she wants your prick, you
pompous malt-worm. And if you're
not game to supply it, I will.

DaVinci smiles and throws an arm about Zoroaster's shoulder.

DAVINCI

If you dedicated a *tenth* of your sexual drive to other pursuits, you'd be the richest man in Europe, Zo.

ZOROASTER

Yes, but my prick would be that much poorer.

VERROCCHIO

Shhh. The *Columbina's* about to fly.

Silence settles upon the crowd as the cathedral doors are opened --

THEN, THE COLUMBINA

Emerges from the Cathedral doors. A six-foot wide confection of satin and gilt and feathers. Gracefully flapping its wings, trailing a COMET'S TAIL OF FIRE behind it.

The crowd is awe-struck as it flies over their heads, landing atop the fireworks-laden cart. The flames quickly spread, and in seconds, FIREWORKS fountain up over the piazza.

For Florence, it is a transformational moment. A demonstration that God has graced their Republic.

The crowd CHEERS. MUSICIANS burst out in song and the carnival begins. Verrocchio hugs DaVinci, relieved. Nico looks to Vanessa, boastful.

NICO

Did you see it? I glued the feathers on. Every one of them.

VANESSA

Well done, Nico!

She tousles his hair, but her eyes are on --

DAVINCI,

Who is LAUGHING, uncharacteristically losing himself in the moment. And then, once again, he catches sight of --

THE SCARLET WOMAN,

Intermittently visible through the crowd. She gestures to him. Time slows. And much to Vanessa's dismay, DaVinci follows her. For a moment, he loses sight of the woman --

-- then he FINDS her once more, entering an alleyway. DaVinci follows her, like a sailor stalking a siren.

33

INT. DAVINCI'S STUDIO - LIVING QUARTERS - DUSK

33

DaVinci and the scarlet woman FUCK by candlelight, their flesh smeared by the Crimson Woman's red body paint. And although her robes are off, but the Crimson Woman continues wearing her mask. SOUNDS from the carnival waft through the open window --

-- but the two are oblivious. The sex is raw and animalistic. Her chest heaves, sweat running down between her breasts. He reaches for one them, crushing it with his fingers. She GROANS, sinks her nails into his back, raking downward.

As they climax, she moves her hand between them, touching herself as he continues thrusting. Finally, their limbs constrict, then relax and DaVinci collapses beside her.

DAVINCI

Christ. That was astounding.

He reaches for a bottle of wine, refilling their cups. The woman lounges beside him, catching her breath. As she does so, she quietly HUMS a LULLABY to herself.

Entranced, DaVinci trails his fingers through her hair, then down over her breasts, her abdomen, her pubic mound.

SCARLET WOMAN (LUCREZIA)

Does my cunt please you?

DAVINCI

Pleases, yes. And fascinates. And terrifies.

SCARLET WOMAN (LUCREZIA)

Perhaps that's why they call it the "cave of wonders". We create life. Men just destroy it.

(beat)

But tell me, truly; are you this wistful with all the whores you bed?

DAVINCI

You are no whore, Signora.

The masked woman inclines her head; a silent question.

DAVINCI (CONT'D)

We needn't continue this pretense, Signora Donati. I knew it was you from the moment you approached me.

*

The woman removes her mask, revealing her face: Lucrezia.

LUCREZIA

How did you know?

DAVINCI

I sketched you. Your features, your form, your bearing -- all are now permanently etched in my memory. No fold of fabric could ever conceal your identity from me for long.

(beat)

The more salient question is; why would a noblewoman risk her reputation on a lowly artisan?

LUCREZIA

Isn't that the point of a carnival? To pretend, for a night, that we're something we're not?

DAVINCI

I think there's more to it than that.

LUCREZIA

Tell me, then.

DaVinci brings a candle closer to better illuminate her face.

DAVINCI

You were intrigued by my sketch. You felt that it captured an aspect of yourself that remains hidden from your husband, your lover, Lorenzo. The only time you see this aspect is on rare occasions when you happen to catch your reflection in a mirror and find a stranger staring back at you.

(beat)

You want to know who this stranger is. And you wanted to know the artist that was capable of capturing something so elusive.

From the look on Lucrezia's face, we can tell that DaVinci's characterization of her was devastatingly accurate.

LUCREZIA

You knew I'd seek you out, then.

DAVINCI

I try to discover what motivates people, then proceed accordingly.

LUCREZIA
You manipulate them.

DAVINCI
I prefer to think of it as gently
redirecting their trajectories.

Lucrezia studies him, still taken by his piercing words.
They kiss again. And when their lips finally part:

LUCREZIA
Lorenzo was quite taken with your
designs, you know. May I see one
of these marvels?

DaVinci considers, then reaches for his notebook, flipping to
a page with a sketch of a PYRAMIDAL PARACHUTE DEVICE.

LUCREZIA (CONT'D)
What is it?

DAVINCI
A device for slowing one's rate of
descent.

LUCREZIA
Under what circumstances would I
possibly have use for this?

DAVINCI
Say you were trapped in a fortress
that had just been breached. You
could strap yourself into this and
safely float down to freedom.

Lucrezia assesses the sketch and DaVinci in a new light now.

LUCREZIA
It would appear that Lorenzo's
interest in you was justified.

DaVinci rolls back on top of Lucrezia, ready for another go.

DAVINCI
And his lover's as well, I hope.

LUCREZIA
Perhaps. But I'm curious. I've
risked my reputation sleeping with
you; you've risked more. Possibly,
even death.

DAVINCI

To what do you ascribe my reckless behavior, then?

Lucrezia ponders a moment, then simply says:

LUCREZIA

Love.

DAVINCI

Don't be absurd.

LUCREZIA

You saw me, you drew me, you fell in love. It's as simple as that. Add in the fact that I'm forbidden fruit, and your fate was sealed.

DAVINCI

You're the third person this week to lecture me on fate.

LUCREZIA

Maybe it's time you started listening.

Lucrezia rolls on top of him, straddling him.

LUCREZIA (CONT'D)

Fuck me again, Leonardo. And while you're doing it, remember this --

She reaches down, guiding his cock inside her.

LUCREZIA (CONT'D)

-- you're not the only one capable of manipulation.

34 INT. THE VATICAN - SECRET PASSAGEWAY - NIGHT

34

Count Riario holds a lantern and leads a HOODED FIGURE through a narrow, cobwebbed passage. He whispers:

RIARIO

The Secret Archives are open to only his Holiness' closest advisors. For obvious reasons, we can't have you parading through the front door.

They reach the end of the passage. Riario moves to knock on a panel, then pauses, looking to the hooded figure --

RIARIO (CONT'D)

Oh. How rude of me. I promised
you your payment first --

Riario reaches into his robes, producing a jewel box, which
he hands to the figure. The figure opens it --

A SEVERED HUMAN FINGER

Rests within, wearing a ring set with a rare, cyan-colored
gemstone known as SERENDIBITE. The hooded figure seems
frozen by the sight, distressed.

RIARIO (CONT'D)

(offering a baleful smile)
I take it you're satisfied?

After a long beat, the hooded figure nods and closes the box.
Riario KNOCKS ONCE on a panel, then TWICE MORE. The panel is
opened and they're ushered by Roland, a SWISS MERCENARY, into:

35 INT. VATICAN LIBRARY - SECRET ARCHIVES - NIGHT

35

-- a sepulchral maze of twisting library stacks. After a few
turns, they come upon an island of light where --

-- Pope Sixtus, now dressed in his Papal vestments, sits at a
table with Francesco Pazzi and Lupo Mercuri. Riario bows.

RIARIO

Your Eminence. I bring news from
Florence.

SIXTUS

Get on with it, then.

RIARIO

A new player has entered the stage.
An artist known as Leonardo DaVinci.
The Medicis have employed him to
design siege weapons.

SIXTUS

Artists are as common as court
jesters. I see no reason why this
news should concern us.

At this point, the hooded figure speaks: a WOMAN.

HOODED FIGURE (LUCREZIA)

This artist is *different*. His
ideas are unusual, *revolutionary*.

RIARIO
Our agent in Florence.

The woman pulls back her hood, revealing herself to be Lucrezia Donati. Sixtus assesses her, glancing at Mercuri.

MERCURI
You trust your intelligence to a
woman?

RIARIO
When one seeks to convey a message,
I prefer to use vessels others
would readily dismiss.

As the men consider Riario's wisdom, Lucrezia nods to Mercuri.

LUCREZIA
If I'm not mistaken, you are Lupo
Mercuri, Curator of the Secret Archives?

MERCURI
I am. What of it?

LUCREZIA
You may be interested to know that
DaVinci made contact with the Turk.
Apparently, he's searching for
something called the Book of Leaves?

The news hits Riario and the others like a bomb.

SIXTUS
It would appear the Turk has found
a new champion. Continue watching
him. See if he can be coopted.

LUCREZIA
And if he can't?

Sixtus sits forward, his tone becoming dark and merciless.

SIXTUS
Then DaVinci will be consumed in
the fiery sorrows of Hell along
with the rest of God's enemies.

CUT TO BLACK.

END EPISODE ONE