

MICHELANGELO

"The Little Thrush"

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FADE IN:

1 INT. MICHELANGELO'S STUDIO - DAWN

1

Dawn light streams through high windows, transforming the dust-filled air into a swirling, golden mist. It's magical. Other-worldly.

A glittering SPECK OF DUST catches our eye, floating downwards, down and down past some kind of wooden tower...

... which is in fact an enormous CRATE, eighteen feet tall, open at the top. It's so huge that for a moment the other objects in the room appear tiny, out of proportion.

On a straw pallet on the floor, surrounded by calipers, drill bits, riflers, a saw, and other essentials of the sculptor's art, two men are sleeping tight against each other. Both fully dressed and wrapped in blankets. It's FREEZING cold.

One is MICHELANGELO BUONAROTTI, 28, with wild hair and a broken nose. The other is FEDERICO DATINI - 25 and exceptionally handsome. Church bells peal and Michelangelo stirs, hauls himself out of bed. He's *exhausted*, still wearing his boots.

MICHELANGELO

To work.

Federico rolls over, draws the blankets over his head.

MICHELANGELO (cont'd)

Up.

Beat. Federico knows his duty. He gets out of bed and begins to undress, shivering uncontrollably. As his shirt comes off, we see he has an AMAZING BODY. Lean and muscular - the manly ideal. Off come his boots, his trousers, his socks. He turns away, slips off his *undershorts*, revealing a beautiful, goose-pimpled ass... He adopts a pose of wary readiness, his weight on his right leg.

BORGIA (V.O.)

We will seize the Gomorrah that
pollutes all Italy. That refuge of
whores and sodomites...

Michelangelo's hands are bandaged. He goes to the crate and pulls its sides apart. Through clouds of dust we glimpse ... an AWE-INSPIRING STATUE - unfinished, emerging from a massive block of marble. It's the biblical hero DAVID. It's also Federico, but three times his size. The same taut pose, the same incredible ass. All of white marble.

BORGIA (V.O.)
Where men burn with unnatural lusts...

2 INT. MAGISTRATES' PALAZZO, CESENA. BEDROOM - DAY

2

CESARE BORGIA - 29; handsome, red-haired, with a hideous wound to his right cheek - is sitting up in a canopied bed, working. Three troublingly young GIRLS are in bed with him, naked - his playmates from the night before. He's ripping apart a chicken, ravenous with hunger, and planning his speech.

TITLE:

CESENA, ITALY

THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1504

BORGIA

And women aspire to the rights of men... What do you think, Lorce?

LORCE

Sublime, my lord.

CAPTAIN RAMIRO LORCE is in his early thirties, a faithful and enthusiastic adjutant.

BORGIA

I do love the first day after a city falls.

3 INT. MAGISTRATES' PALAZZO, CESENA. PODESTA'S OFFICE - DAY

3

ALFONSO GASPARE, *Podestà* of the prosperous town of CESENA, is at his desk, richly dressed, his jeweled chain of office hanging from his neck. We pull back to see his hands are bound to his chair. So are his feet.

Soldiers salute as Borgia and Lorce come in.

ALFONSO

My lord Borgia. We are all Italians, all Christians, united in the service of the one true God. Let there be no more bloodshed.

BORGIA

Read God's words.

A SOLDIER puts an illuminated BIBLE in front of Alfonso, who complies unwillingly, sensing a trap...

ALFONSO

"If a man injures his neighbor, just as he has done, so it shall be done to him: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth."

The ceremonial DAGGER OF CESENA hangs above the fireplace. Borgia takes it down from the wall.

BORGIA

Cut for cut.

Slowly, for maximum pain, he cuts the shape of a cross into Alfonso's cheek. Alfonso bears the pain stoically, stubbornly.

BORGIA (cont'd)

Your refusal to surrender cost me--
How many men, Lorce?

LORCE

Twenty, my lord.

BORGIA

Twenty good men.

The birds sing. The soldiers watch. Blood runs from Alfonso's wound, staining his spotless linen shirt. At length...

ALFONSO

Jesus says: "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you... If someone slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also."

Beat. Alfonso wrenches his body round to face Borgia squarely.

ALFONSO (cont'd)

If you'd done that, you'd look symmetrical.

4 EXT. PIAZZA, CESENA - DAY

4

Sharp cut to terrified CIVILIANS watching as Alfonso is sliced open from chin to navel. One catches our eye: a CURLY-HAIRED JUNIOR MAGISTRATE, horrified as soldiers hoist the still-conscious Alfonso onto the gallows...

5 INT. PALAZZO, CESENA - DAY

5

Borgia does his paperwork at the *Podestà's* desk, fiddling with Alfonso's chain of office.

Occasionally he looks out of the window, watching as Lorce's troops run amok, plundering houses, butchering old men, dragging women from their husbands. A trumpet sounds.

Lorce comes in, spattered with blood. Salutes and bows.

LORCE

It is done as you instructed, my lord.

Borgia smiles, nods to the guards. They seize Lorce, bind his hands and gag him with a horse's bridle as he struggles wildly.

Borgia steps past him, onto the balcony...

6 EXT. PALAZZO, CESENA. BALCONY - DAY

6

In the square below, a traumatized crowd has gathered. The corpses of Alfonso and the other magistrates swing from the gallows, their guts spilling onto the pavement. The curly-haired young man is among them, distraught.

BORGIA

My friends! I come from the deathbed of my father, the Pope. He has bestowed on me a special calling: to create a paradise on earth.

This is not AT ALL what the crowd is expecting.

BORGIA (cont'd)

A new country, founded on the Bible's laws.

You could hear a pin drop.

BORGIA (cont'd)

I have learned of this man's crimes.

Lorce is brought onto the balcony, frantically struggling. He can speak through the bridle, but only just.

LORCE

They were *your* orders.

BORGIA

Let no one be under any misgiving -- the rule of Cesare Borgia will be merciful and just. I appoint you this villain's judge and jury.

The soldiers throw Lorce over the balcony. The crowd goes WILD. Lorce is pulled apart, limb from limb, while still alive. Over the carnage, maniacally charismatic...

BORGIA (cont'd)
 United, we will triumph over Evil!
 We will seize the Gomorrah that
 pollutes all Italy. That refuge of
 sodomites and whores. Where men burn
 with unnatural lusts, and women aspire
 to the rights of men.

His audience is stirred... The crowd starts cheering...

BORGIA (cont'd)
 You know her name... The Republic of
 FLORENCE!

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

FADE IN:

CREDITS

TITLE:

FLORENCE

7 EXT. STREETS OF FLORENCE - DAY 7

Florence's splendid streets are a chaos of refugees. Italians, Egyptians, Moors, Turks and Palestinians mill in panic beneath the stone skyscrapers of Europe's most cultured city. It's an ethnic melting-pot: white, black, and many shades of brown. We focus on the dome of the CATHEDRAL, the tallest building in the world. Then on a much smaller workshop next to it...

8 INT. MICHELANGELO'S STUDIO - DAY 8

Michelangelo grimaces as he unwraps his bandaged hands. His fingers are raw and blistered. He applies alcohol to his wounds, wraps them in clean cloths. It's his regular morning routine, and it's *painful*.

Still naked, Federico's doing push ups to warm himself. On the up, his hands leave the ground, clap together, and return to the ground as he descends. His core's solid as rock.

Michelangelo wheels an elevated platform into position, climbs the ladder. His movements are slow, his muscles in spasm. Every grip is torture, but he doesn't lose focus.

MICHELANGELO
 Stand still.

We switch to Michelangelo's POV: gazing intently at Federico's ass, then at the marble one three times its size. He focuses on imperfections in the stone, using a RIFLER.

As he battles the unforgiving rock, transforming it into soft, yielding flesh, the world around Michelangelo takes on an enchanted radiance. He looks up, at the magnificent statue, which ... *stretches*.

For an instant, David is entirely human, stretching his muscles with an athlete's grace.

Then BANG. Michelangelo's dropped his rifler. The statue is stone once more. We hear his pulse racing as he keels backwards, and falls eight feet onto the stone floor.

9 EXT. HILLS ABOVE SETTIGNANO - DAY

9

A carriage careens recklessly down narrow mountain paths. The COACHMAN is completely wasted. From within the carriage...

ANNUNZIATA (O.S.)

STOP!

Her head appears. She's a BEAUTY, in her late twenties.

ANNUNZIATA (cont'd)

Stop at once!

Annunziata gets out, wearing a sumptuously embroidered cloak of midnight blue velvet. To his astonishment, she takes the reins.

ANNUNZIATA (cont'd)

Get in and sleep it off. If you soil it, you pay for it.

On she goes, controlling the horses with great panache...

10 INT. MICHELANGELO'S STUDIO - DAY

10

Federico kneels beside Michelangelo, holding a cup to his lips.

MICHELANGELO

Thank you, friend.

There's a panicked knock at the door. BAM BAM BAM.

Federico peeks out the window. Shit. He dresses FAST. Undoes the bolt on the door, taking care to keep the David hidden, and slips out to face the intruder.

11 EXT. MICHELANGELO'S STUDIO - DAY 11

MARGHERITA DATINI, Federico's mother, is a sturdy woman in her fifties, weighed down by all the worldly goods she can carry. When she sees Federico, she drops them. *Hugs* him close.

FEDERICO

Mamma? What are you doing here?

MARGHERITA

Aunt Isotta at Siena will take us. Get your things, angel.

12 EXT. TOWN OF SETTIGNANO - DAY 12

Settignano's a conservative, small town kind of place. The appearance of a carriage driven by a woman is an EVENT. Most of the men ripping stone from the mountainside are white. A few are black. Everyone downs tools.

We focus on ENRICO BANDINI. Black, geeky, 19. Dripping with sweat from his backbreaking labors.

ANNUNZIATA

Take me to the quarry master's house!

A WHITE MAN points her to the biggest building in sight. Enrico picks up two bales of hay, and follows the carriage.

13 INT. QUARRY MASTER'S HOUSE - DAY 13

Enrico comes into the yard, feeds the hay to the horses. He's eavesdropping on the glamorous stranger.

ANNUNZIATA

The young man must be dependable, well trained. Not above menial tasks.

The QUARRY MASTER listens, affronted. He's not used to women speaking to him like this.

ANNUNZIATA (cont'd)

He must polish stone, draw, cook, and feed the pigs.

QUARRY MASTER

Who is to be this young man's master?

ANNUNZIATA

Michelangelo Buonarotti.

QUARRY MASTER

Never heard of him.

14 INT./EXT. CARRIAGE - DAY

14

The Coachman, sobered up and respectful, is back on the box of the carriage. Inside, Annunziata's PISSED.

ANNUNZIATA

(to the Coachman)

Take me to the next quarry.

As they move off, the door opens. It's Enrico, clinging to the boards. Quick as a flash, she has a knife at his throat. A beautiful dagger with a mother-of-pearl handle.

ANNUNZIATA (cont'd)

This is *not* the day to rob me.

ENRICO

(in a rush)

Did this Michelangelo make the Cardinal de Bilhères's Virgin?

DISSOLVE TO:

15 INT. CARDINAL'S CHAPEL, ROME - DAY

15

The racket of the carriage ceases, replaced by heavenly silence. Enrico's *transfixed* before Michelangelo's PIETÀ.

Like him, we're alive to every detail - the aching tenderness of MARY'S expression as she cradles the dead JESUS, the curve of her lips so real you could kiss them. Across her chest is a sash, engraved MICHELANGELO...

DISSOLVE TO:

16 INT. CARRIAGE - DAY

16

CRASH. We hear the carriage again, bumping on the pot-holed road. Enrico's looking intensely at Annunziata.

ENRICO

I saw it when I delivered his Eminence's angels at Rome.

She withdraws the knife. Hides it in a secret pocket.

ANNUNZIATA

How long have you been with your master?

ENRICO

Since I was six, my lady.

ANNUNZIATA

In which departments?

ENRICO

Roughing out. Polishing. Tool sharpening. Drilling.

ANNUNZIATA

Pitch, point or chisel?

ENRICO

Point, my lady.

ANNUNZIATA

And drawing?

ENRICO

I'm the best draughtsman here.

Beat. She's evaluating him. Enrico *really wants this*.

ANNUNZIATA

Get in.

17 EXT./INT. MICHELANGELO'S STUDIO - DAY

17

Margherita and Federico are huddling in the wind. She can't understand Federico's resistance.

MARGHERITA

I was at Naples when King Charles' army came. You can't imagine it, because you've never seen it. But soldiers are monsters. Get your cloak.

FEDERICO

I can't, mamma. He needs me.

She strokes his face. She *adores* him.

MARGHERITA

He'll understand. Let me ask.

She makes for the door... Federico bars her path.

FEDERICO

No one enters his workshop.

But she slips past him. Federico follows, anxiously. He knows he's failed his most important duty: to keep the David secret.

Michelangelo is finishing a Spartan breakfast. His blood sugar has stabilized.

MARGHERITA

God save you, Signor Buonarotti. I am Margherita Datini, Federico's mother.

She curtseys. Michelangelo rises unwillingly.

MICHELANGELO

God save you, Madam.

MARGHERITA

Federico is honored to assist you. Truly. But Borgia's army is near. My sister at Siena has offered us refuge...

She stops. From her POV, we see... THE STATUE. Her Federico, butt naked.

MARGHERITA (cont'd)

(shocked to her core)

What's that?

MICHELANGELO

The boy who slayed Goliath. If I die in the war, so be it. But not before he's free of that rock.

Long beat. Margherita's speechless. Finally, to Federico...

MARGHERITA

You told me he was using your face for a saint.

FEDERICO

It's Saint David, mamma.

She looks at David, shame-free and naked. Then at the bed.

MARGHERITA

Where do you sleep?

MICHELANGELO

I have only one bed, and a poor one at that.

(to Federico)

Please remove your mother.

Michelangelo picks up his rifler and climbs the ladder.

MICHELANGELO (cont'd)

If you'd like to go with her, go. I have no use for a coward's face.

Margherita's about to say something, but Federico bundles her out of the studio...

18 EXT. MICHELANGELO'S STUDIO - DAY

18

MARGHERITA

Have you lost your wits?

FEDERICO

It's *art*, mother.

She starts pacing, seeing dangers on every side.

MARGHERITA

They'll think you're a sodomite.

FEDERICO

Well I'm not. So I've nothing to fear.

MARGHERITA

(tenderly)

Carino. I know you're not. You're too innocent to see his unnatural lust. But trust me. Every time he touches that marble, he's touching you.

FEDERICO

Michelangelo touches no one.

MARGHERITA

That's what all sodomites say.

Margherita's eyes fill with tears.

MARGHERITA (cont'd)

Your beauty won't save you from Borgia. We *have* to get out.

FEDERICO

You go. I'll come on Saint Ulphia's day.

MARGHERITA

Come *now*.

But he's edging towards the studio door. He's made his choice. As he opens it...

FEDERICO

God bless you, *mamma*.

He vanishes into the studio. She looks at the closed door in disbelief. Which turns to outrage as she hears the bolt slide.

19 INT./EXT. GATES OF FLORENCE / CARRIAGE - DAY

19

Approaching Florence's heavily fortified gates, Annunziata's carriage has to battle through a tide of fleeing refugees...

Enrico stares at the domes and towers, the people in velvets and silks. He's never seen such magnificence. Church bells ring, summoning the citizens to prayer. They pass a carriage loaded with expensive luggage, bearing a RICH WOMAN.

ANNUNZIATA

(off the rich woman's face)

Fear is *terribly* ageing.

ENRICO

Were you not afraid, my lady? Leaving Florence to find me.

She cocks her chin defiantly, nestles back in her furs...

ANNUNZIATA

What Michelangelo needs, he must have. Cesare Borgia be damned.

20 EXT. PIAZZA DEL DUOMO - DAY

20

The carriage stops in the square outside the cathedral. Annunziata leaps down onto the dusty street, holding her skirts high, and makes off through the crowd. Enrico runs after her.

ENRICO

May I ask your name?

ANNUNZIATA

Annunziata degli Obizzi Alberti.

It's impressively long.

ENRICO

A noblewoman?

ANNUNZIATA

The noblest kind there is.

And she opens Michelangelo's door...

21 INT. MICHELANGELO'S STUDIO - DAY

21

Michelangelo's focus BLAZES as he puts the finishing touches to David's miraculously lifelike hand. Annunziata comes in, Enrico trailing her...

ANNUNZIATA

God save you, Stone Cutter. I have brought your salvation.

Stone Cutter is an insult - the kind only intimates can use. Michelangelo looks up, annoyed.

MICHELANGELO

All I need is quiet.

ANNUNZIATA

Quiet won't polish stone. That takes an assistant.

MICHELANGELO

There are no good carvers in Florence, since Verrocchio closed his workshop.

ANNUNZIATA

The talent's in Settignano.

MICHELANGELO

Exactly. And the journey's far too dangerous. I forbid it, fair one.

She flashes him a brilliant, wicked smile.

ANNUNZIATA

Which is why I didn't ask your permission. May I present Signor--

ENRICO

Bandini. Enrico Bandini.

Michelangelo is taken aback. He climbs down the ladder.

MICHELANGELO

(to Enrico)

Show me your hands.

Enrico offers his palms, coated in grey-green dust. They're calloused, but not blistered. Michelangelo's not impressed.

MICHELANGELO (cont'd)

You quarry *Pietra Serena* all day?

ENRICO

Yes, master.

MICHELANGELO

And you think that qualifies you to assist me?

ENRICO

I have polished 92 angels, 54 saints,
and 841 fireplaces. I--

But he's cut off by the arrival of the curly-haired young man who witnessed Alfonso's traumatic execution in the Teaser. He's GISMONDO BUONAROTTI, 22, Michelangelo's younger brother. Gismondo's beautifully dressed. In the presence of a beautiful woman, he's not going to hint at the trauma he's been through.

GISMONDO

God save you, shit bricks.

Michelangelo turns. He's been mad with worry. Gismondo bows, kisses Annunziata's hand.

GISMONDO (cont'd)

Lovelier than ever, Donna Annunziata.

ANNUNZIATA

God save you, Gismondo.

GISMONDO

I got away from Cesena with nothing
but the clothes on my back. Thank the
Virgin, I was wearing my best suit.

Michelangelo laughs, hugs him tight. He loves this guy. Gismondo pulls away, covered in dust. Takes in Michelangelo's injured hands.

GISMONDO (cont'd)

Good God, could you not be a painter?

MICHELANGELO

Painting's for eunuchs.

GISMONDO

(Off the ringing bells)
We're late. Come on.

But Michelangelo turns back to the David.

MICHELANGELO

I worship God in my own way.

GISMONDO

Don't make Father *my* problem.

Long beat. Michelangelo relents. He gets a cloak and turns to go. As he passes Enrico, his tone studiously polite...

MICHELANGELO

You can fuck off now.

22 INT. SAN MINIATO AL MONTE - DAY

22

Margherita's sitting in the empty church, too worried to pray. FRA DENDI DI CASTELFRANCO, a vigorous young Dominican monk, is sweeping the steps of the altar. He sees her distress.

DENDI

What troubles you, my child?

He has a deep, mellifluous voice. Margherita hesitates. She doesn't want to lie to a priest, but she doesn't want to tell the truth either. Eventually--

MARGHERITA

A friend of mine is bewitched by a devil in human shape.

Dendi sits down in the pew beside her. Full of youthful purpose, dedicated to fighting the good fight.

DENDI

Perhaps Christ has chosen you to save her.

This doesn't comfort Margherita. So he raises his hand in benediction.

DENDI (cont'd)

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you now and for evermore.

This *is* soothing. Margherita closes her eyes.

MARGHERITA

Amen.

Dendi rises. As he leaves the pew, he bends down. Murmurs very softly into Margherita's ear...

DENDI

St. John tells us: "Defeat the Devil by destroying the vessel that carries the corrupted soul."

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT I

FADE IN:

23 INT. MICHELANGELO'S STUDIO - DAY 23

Enrico's crushed. Standing at the studio door, watching the frightened crowds. Not sure where to go or what to do.

ENRICO

I can never go back to the quarries.
My master knows I deserted him.

Annunziata gives him a coin.

ANNUNZIATA

Come back tomorrow. Find lodgings at the Casa Meravigliosa on Borgo Santi Apostoli. Do not be distracted by the loveliness you find there - you can't afford it.

24 INT. SANTISSIMA ANNUNZIATA - DAY 24

It's the parish church of high society. What remains of *le tout* Florence has gathered to pray for the city's deliverance.

The ladies sport brocades and satins, embroidered with pearls and trimmed with fur. The men wear cloaks of crimson wool. In this company, his own social class, Michelangelo cuts a shabby, distinctive figure - dressed all in black and caked in dust. As they walk down the aisle...

GISMONDO

Borgia could cross the mountains in three days. We have *got* to get out.

MICHELANGELO

Did they chop off your balls in Cesena?

The Buonarotti have their own pew. LUDOVICO BUONAROTTI, Michelangelo's father, is waiting in it: mid fifties, thin as a rake but splendidly dressed, bowing to friends. Up close, we see his suit has been carefully patched - a relic of more affluent times. When he sees Michelangelo, he's furious.

LUDOVICO

What a mercy your mother is dead.

As Michelangelo and Gismondo take their places, their fashionable neighbors notice Michelangelo's dusty hair and bandaged hands. Ludovico can't bear it.

The PRIEST and his ALTAR BOYS process to the high altar. Incense swirls. The Priest sprinkles HOLY WATER, blesses it...

PRIEST

Commixtio salis et aquae pariter fiat
in nomine Patris, et Filii et Spiritus
Sancti.

The CHOIR sings the ANTIPHON. As the Mass for Deliverance progresses, on their knees, heads bent in prayer, the Buonarotti men begin a heated argument in undertones. We hear the priest's incantations dimly, and focus on the drama unfolding in the Buonarotti pew.

LUDOVICO

I sold my horse to buy you a suit for
church. Where is it?

MICHELANGELO

I have no use for velvet, as I told
you when you bought it. I have a use
for paper. It's devilish expensive.

Ludovico is INCENSED.

LUDOVICO

You *sold* it?

Gismondo, between them, tries to divert their aggression.

GISMONDO

I have seen the devil with my own
eyes, and he is close at hand. Please,
let there be no squabbles between us.

LUDOVICO

Borgia should kill me. Spare me from
the ingratitude of my sons.

The congregation rises. The Buonarotti men rise too.

PRIEST

Dominus vobiscum.

CONGREGATION

Et cum spiritu tuo.

LUDOVICO

(to Michelangelo)

It costs money to flee. Thanks be to
God, I have obtained one last favour
from Filippo Strozzi. He has offered
you a job at his bank in Verona.

PRIEST

Sursum corda.

CONGREGATION

Habemus ad Dominum.

LUDOVICO

Well?

MICHELANGELO

You mistake me for a coward.

25 INT. PALAZZO VECCHIO - EVENING

25

Florence's seat of government is in chaos. Pages rush from room to room of the palace, burning confidential documents in the enormous fireplaces.

Gonfaloniere PIERO SODERINI - 50s; once vigorous, now portly, a little out of breath - is walking *fast* with his key advisers. He's the Head of the Republic, and he isn't handling the stress of this crisis well.

By contrast, NICCOLÓ MACHIAVELLI (35), his Chief of Staff, is having the time of his life. His shaven head contrasts with the others' flowing locks, but it's his eyes that truly distinguish him: sharp, dark, afire with intelligence.

RICCARDO POLLINI (32), Treasury Secretary, is with them. Riccardo is younger than we would expect for a man in such a position - a polished aristocrat; haughty, and consequently a little vulnerable.

They're inspecting some of the greatest treasures of Western art, among them Botticelli's *Primavera* and *Birth of Venus*. Deciding what to sell.

RICCARDO

We can pay our mercenaries perhaps two weeks longer.

SODERINI

(to a Page, taking notes)

Then sell these. The King of France will pay highly. Pack everything by Botticelli, Donatello, and Giotto.

MACHIAVELLI

We *must* have our own army. We have depended far too long on mercenaries.

RICCARDO

There is no money, Signor Machiavelli.

PAOLO CHAFAGGIO hurries in and bows. He's a mountain of a man in his late 40s. A bull-necked warrior and fearless patriot.

SODERINI
What news, Chafaggio?

CHAFAGGIO
Excellency. The army of Pisa is mobilizing against us.

Soderini leans against a bronze. This latest piece of misfortune threatens to overwhelm him.

CHAFAGGIO (cont'd)
Leonardo da Vinci has a plan to cut off Pisa's water supply. We could kill everyone in that cursed city without lifting a crossbow.

MACHIABELLI
At what cost?

CHAFAGGIO
I'll know tomorrow.

SODERINI
Someone must go to Borgia. Hold him off with the promise of a tribute.

MACHIABELLI
Three years ago, we could have fought him. Instead, we paid him 30,000 Florins. This cannot go on!

No one speaks to the *Gonfaloniere* like this. Machiavelli pulls himself together.

MACHIABELLI (cont'd)
Fortune, my lord, is a woman. She submits to the bold, and despises the weak. If we cave now, she will abandon us.

The Buonarottis are bowing to their friends, saying goodbye as they make their way out of church. By the entrance hangs a huge DRAWING of the VIRGIN MARY WITH SAINT ANNE. A crowd of worshipers pray before it, blocking the exit and begging the Madonna to protect them.

From Michelangelo's POV we see the drawing's signature: *Leonardo da Vinci*. He turns to find his father looking at the same signature. Their eyes meet.

BRIGIDA BALDINOTTI is looking for Ludovico. She's in her fifties, pious and *stinking rich*.

BRIGIDA
God give you good day, Signor
Buonarotti. May I offer you my
carriage, to take you home? I will
pray a little longer.

It's meant kindly, but her generosity stings Ludovico's pride.

LUDOVICO
Thank you, but no, Donna Brigida. Our
own is waiting outside.

Ludovico bows and takes his sons away.

GISMONDO
(to Brigida)
God save you, my lady.

27 EXT. ALLEY BEHIND SANTISSIMA ANNUNZIATA - EVENING

27

The Buonarotti men turn the corner into a deserted alley.

MICHELANGELO
Where's the carriage? You can drop me.

LUDOVICO
THERE'S NO FUCKING CARRIAGE!!

The grievance that's been building, *sotto voce*, in the church erupts.

LUDOVICO (cont'd)
You shame us. Coming to church like a
filthy stone cutter.

MICHELANGELO
Whereas fleeing is perfectly fine? So
long as your hair's clean?

This *infuriates* his father. Some well-dressed people pass by, and the Buonarotti men instantly stop fighting. When they've gone...

LUDOVICO
You've more loyalty to a block of
stone than to your own family.

MICHELANGELO

Papa. Please.

LUDOVICO

You never come home, so you don't see the state of things.

(to Gismondo)

Say something!

MICHELANGELO

I can't leave my statue. And I won't leave Florence when the republic needs us.

(beat)

Great art has the power to raise armies. It has always been our weapon.

LUDOVICO

Great art, Michelangelo. Not one of your shitty little saints.

This is a wound to the heart. Gismondo watches, helplessly. When Michelangelo speaks again, he sounds like a little boy.

MICHELANGELO

Come and see what I have made, father. Please.

LUDOVICO

Accept Strozzi's job, and I'll come.

MICHELANGELO

I told you. No.

LUDOVICO

Such false pride!

Ludovico's voice triggers a strobe-like, momentary flashback.

DISSOLVE TO:

28 INT. SETTIGNANO QUARRY - DAY

28

A child's POV. Thirty-something Ludovico striding across the quarry in Settignano on a beautiful summer's day, coming closer and closer, shouting...

DISSOLVE TO:

29 EXT. ALLEY BEHIND SANTISSIMA ANNUNZIATA - EVENING

29

... The same face, in the present, 20 years older. The same expression.

LUDOVICO
And still too proud to work.

Michelangelo rips off his bandages.

MICHELANGELO
Are these hands too proud to work?

LUDOVICO
Then where are the results? Everywhere
I hear da Vinci's name. Botticelli's.
Perugino's. Never yours.

Michelangelo storms off.

GISMONDO
Be gentle with him, father.

LUDOVICO
Wait until you have an ungrateful son.
Then lecture me on gentleness.

30 EXT. STREETS OF FLORENCE - EVENING

30

No one knows if they will live or die. Having done their praying, those who haven't fled are determined to LIVE. Enrico wanders the streets. His spirits rise.

He's in FLORENCE!

Until... Turning a corner, he confronts a horrific spectacle. A huge bonfire has been erected. OFFICERS OF THE NIGHT, Florence's vice squad, are binding TWO MEN to a stake at its summit. The officers wear distinctive uniforms, embroidered with ears and eyes - the embodiment of the Florentine police state. A jeering crowd has gathered.

LEO BUONAROTTI, a Dominican monk whom we will later learn is Michelangelo's eldest brother, is preaching...

LEO
Behold it is said: "If a man lies with
a man as he lies with a woman, both of
them have committed an abomination.
They shall be put to death!"

CROWD
Burn him!... Burn him!... Burn him!

CAPTAIN GILBERTO ALDORINI, mid forties, the senior Officer of the Night, seizes a torch and lights the bonfire. The wood has been doused in oil and the flames ROAR to life. Most of the crowd are delirious with blood lust; a few can't look.

Enrico watches. He can't move. The victims start screeching as the flames reach them. Enrico hurries away, pursued by their blood-curdling screams...

31 INT. IL BUCO - EVENING

31

Heart pounding, Enrico seeks refuge in a dive bar, IL BUCO. All around, straight couples are making out - hands in bodices, tongues down throats. He takes a seat at a table. A gorgeous BLACK WOMAN gives him the eye, but he looks away.

WAITRESS

Who or what can I get you, my love?

ENRICO

Wine. Strong wine.

She brings a goblet and he knocks it back. It's FIRE WATER.

ENRICO (cont'd)

Another.

He downs a second one. We see the room from his POV. The noise softens; the crowd's outlines blur. Except for one face... An EXTRAORDINARILY HANDSOME WHITE MAN, seen in high definition, is watching him. Early fifties, muscular, beautifully dressed in a lavender velvet tunic with silver buttons.

Enrico takes a SCRAP OF PAPER from his pocket: a treasured possession, covered in sketches. He starts drawing the handsome man - who notices, looks directly back. Enrico looks away, stares at his sketch, then... glances back...

The man is still looking. Enrico's flustered. But booze has made him bold. He keeps drawing. He's *astoundingly* good. With courageous strokes he captures the essence of this man: a quiet, total self-confidence.

Every time he looks up, the man's eyes are waiting for his...

32 INT. ANNUNZIATA'S ROOMS - NIGHT

32

Annunziata's rooms are as stylish as she is. She's just back from church, unpinning her complicated *coiffeur*, when Michelangelo storms in. He's in a RAGE. She knows exactly why.

ANNUNZIATA

Your father's well?

MICHELANGELO

Hypocritical asshole.

He looks out of the window, at the street full of refugees.

MICHELANGELO (cont'd)
Curse these cowards.

She pours drinks.

MICHELANGELO (cont'd)
You should see how they pray to Da Vinci's drawing. It's not even a finished painting. But then he never finishes anything. He never finished the Adoration of the Magi. He never finished that bronze horse for the Duke of Milan. Why does no one see through him?

ANNUNZIATA
You spend a deal too much time thinking about Leonardo da Vinci.

MICHELANGELO
By Saint Puccio's pussy, I *never* think of him.

Michelangelo's almost talking to himself.

MICHELANGELO (cont'd)
Botticelli's so old he can barely hold a brush. So's Perugino. Just when David's ready for the world, Da Vinci minces back to Florence.
(beat)
He'll take all the commissions I should get.

She stands behind him, pushes into a knot in his back. He groans - but it's bliss to have the muscles released.

MICHELANGELO (cont'd)
Borgia is Goliath. Florence *needs* my David. But he's commissioned for the cathedral roof. No one will see him.

ANNUNZIATA
So move him.

MICHELANGELO
Only the Committee of Public Works can approve a new site. And you know who leads that.

ANNUNZIATA
Then make Da Vinci your friend.

MICHELANGELO

Impossible.

ANNUNZIATA

It is seldom impossible to do exactly what I say. It is *always* advisable.

(beat)

Undo me.

She turns her back to him. He unlaces her bodice and watches her closely as she steps out of her gown. Her beautiful body is visible through the fine gauze of her underclothes. She bites into a clove of garlic and leans as if to kiss him -- but their lips don't touch.

ANNUNZIATA (cont'd)

How does my breath smell?

MICHELANGELO

As sweet as an angel's.

It's the right answer. She smiles.

MICHELANGELO (cont'd)

Model for me.

ANNUNZIATA

Absolutely not. I'm respectable now.

MICHELANGELO

You think Riccardo Pollini makes you respectable?

Beat, as her face hovers over his.

Are they going to kiss? We don't find out because they hear BOOTS ON THE STAIRCASE and spring apart. She ushers him down the servants' stairs and hides their two glasses.

She undoes the cords of her chemise, exposing the tops of her breasts. Tweaks her nipples HARD, dabs rouge on them. Then she ruffles her hair and opens the door. Outside is Riccardo Pollini, the treasury secretary...

33 EXT. IL BUCO - NIGHT

33

Enrico's drawing is nearly finished. The handsome man gets up and walks straight over, keeping steady eye contact. He glances at the sketch.

HANDSOME MAN

My compliments.

Without introducing himself, he makes for the door. People bow to him. He's a Somebody. As he reaches the street, he turns back. His eyes connect with Enrico's.

It's a clear invitation.

Beat. Enrico struggles with himself - his conscience, his fears. Then he dates his drawing, gets up and follows...

34 EXT. STREETS OF FLORENCE - NIGHT

34

The handsome man strides through crowds of wild revelers across the PIAZZA DELLA SIGNORIA. Live lions, symbols of Florence, roar in their cages.

He walks past Margherita. She's standing in front of a TOMBORI: a locked letter box marked *Denunciations*. Her eyes are closed in prayer. Is she trembling or shivering? It's hard to tell.

She makes the sign of the cross and slips a piece of paper into it. As she folds it, we glimpse: *Michelangelo Buonarotti, Sodomite*.

The man glances over his shoulder, telling Enrico to follow. Enrico does. The man pauses at the entrance to the LOGGIA DEI LANZI, a shadowy colonnade. Then he disappears into the darkness.

Enrico hesitates. He's tempted, but terrified. The abandon around him gives him courage. He follows...

35 INT. LOGGIA DEI LANZI - NIGHT

35

The darkness isn't empty. It's teeming with men and suggestive sounds. Enrico's alarmed and thrilled in equal measure. Suddenly the man is beside him, his silver buttons glinting in the moonlight.

HANDSOME MAN

You're a beautiful little thrush. Are you agreeable to having your tail-feathers ruffled?

He kisses Enrico *sensually* on his neck. Slides his hands down his pants. Enrico is HORRIFIED. Pulls away.

There's a flash of steel. They spring apart. The Officers of the Night are raiding this well-known cruising ground. A flame illuminates Enrico's frightened face amidst the embroidered ears and eyes of their uniforms...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT II

FADE IN:

36 INT. LOGGIA DEI LANZI - NIGHT

36

Arrests begin. Enrico's shaking with fear, but the man in the lavender tunic knows exactly what he's doing. He walks with total unconcern past the officers.

Captain Aldorini blocks his path. He *loves* his authority.

ALDORINI

Slow down. What's your purpose here?

HANDSOME MAN

I'm returning from church with my servant. Get out of my way.

The handsome man is so unafraid that Aldorini is disconcerted. He makes way and lets them pass. Back on the lamp-lit street...

ENRICO

Thank you.

The man looks at Enrico closely. Evaluating him.

HANDSOME MAN

Don't be an old maid.

Without a backwards glance, he strides off.

37 INT. ANNUNZIATA'S ROOMS - NIGHT

37

Eyes locked on Riccardo's, Annunziata lets her chemise drop to the floor. She's stark naked. He comes closer. He's *wild* for her. But she raises her hand, holding him at bay.

ANNUNZIATA

A friend may look, Signor Pollini.
Only a *husband* may touch.

Abruptly, enjoying her power over him, she changes the atmosphere. Pours him a drink and settles down for a chat.

She's still naked, curled up on a chair. He sits down, kicks off his shoes. He doesn't only want sex. He *likes* her. He's had a terrible day.

RICCARDO

Mark my words: half the nobility will be in Verona by tomorrow. She-wolves.

ANNUNZIATA

Who will stay?

RICCARDO

Soderini, Machiavelli, Chafaggio.
They're patriots.

(beat)

Our young men must fight, but there's
no money to pay them.

He looks dejectedly into the fire.

RICCARDO (cont'd)

Perhaps we should submit. Borgia's
merciful to those who surrender.

ANNUNZIATA

No!

She jumps up, puts on a silk dressing gown. If she wasn't such
a pro, he'd see she was angry. But she *is* a pro.

ANNUNZIATA (cont'd)

You forget that young men are as
romantic as schoolgirls. If you fire
their imaginations, they'll die for
you. You don't need to pay them.

RICCARDO

Soderini could make a speech?

ANNUNZIATA

Darling, no. The youth of Florence
don't need a fat old man lecturing
them on their duty. They need a *hero*.

RICCARDO

Chafaggio?

ANNUNZIATA

Not Chafaggio. Someone handsome. The
man I'm thinking of won a war.

Riccardo sits up; he's paying attention.

ANNUNZIATA (cont'd)

Single-handedly.

(beat)

His name is David. He's seventeen foot
tall and built like a god.

He's confused... She smiles.

ANNUNZIATA (cont'd)

Michelangelo Buonarotti has been carving David in secret for three years. He was commissioned for the roof of the cathedral. He'll be wasted there.

RICCARDO

Let him be wasted. I helped that ungrateful cunt once before.

She sits on his knee, ruffles his hair. But he's annoyed now.

RICCARDO (cont'd)

He spent Cardinal Piccolomini's money, never finished those saints, and didn't even say thank you.

ANNUNZIATA

Are you... *jealous*?

She kisses his forehead. Riccardo looks up at her. She's touched a nerve.

RICCARDO

Should I be?

ANNUNZIATA

Of course not. He's my oldest friend. If we were going to fuck, we'd have fucked before now.

She kisses Riccardo, squeezes his cock through his silk stockings. Goes on, seductively...

ANNUNZIATA (cont'd)

David should be on the Piazza della Signoria, where everyone will see him. He should be standing beside Soderini when he gives his speech.

She squeezes his cock again and pleasure jolts through him. He grips her wrists, playfully holds her away.

RICCARDO

The answer's no.

ANNUNZIATA

Our boys need someone they can dream of being.

RICCARDO

I told you. NO.

38 INT. CASA MERA VIGLIOSA, SALON - NIGHT

38

It's Florence's best brothel, and trade's ROARING tonight. Boundaries are as fluid as the wine pouring down everyone's throats.

Captain Aldorini comes in, Chief Officer of the Night. CECILIA LICONELLA, the proprietress, receives him gracefully. She was once a GREAT BEAUTY, now in her sixties. She's seen everything.

CECILIA
Captain Aldorini. You honour us.

ALDORINI
God save you, my lady.

A FLUNKEY takes Aldorini's cloak and sword, and Cecilia leads him to a sumptuously framed two-way mirror. He peers through it. In the room beyond, GORGEOUS GIRLS and HANDSOME YOUNG MEN wait. One or two of the ladies look suspiciously like beautiful youths. He doesn't seem at all concerned by this.

ALDORINI (cont'd)
Where's Beatrice?

CECILIA
Indisposed tonight.

ALDORINI
I pay well for her to be at the ready.

CECILIA
She's not herself. I commend Veronica to your notice.

She points to a SPECTACULAR RED HEAD. He hesitates.

ALDORINI
Very well. Veronica.

She raps on the mirror and leads him to another door.

CECILIA
Special service?

He nods, and disappears into the room beyond.

The bell rings. It's Enrico. Cecilia takes in his clothes.

CECILIA (cont'd)
You'll want down the street, dear.

Enrico's shyness is swallowing him again.

ENRICO

Donna Annunziata sent me, my lady. I
am Enrico Bandini.

39 INT. CASA MERAUVIGLIOSA, BACKROOM - NIGHT

39

Cecilia's turning Enrico around, inspecting his face and build.
Not impressed.

CECILIA

Too thin... I can't think why
Annunziata sent you. Perhaps you have
special gifts?

She looks at him.

CECILIA (cont'd)

Drop your drawers.

He's drenched in shame. Somehow he squeezes out--

ENRICO

She says to sleep here.

Cecilia's puzzled.

ENRICO (cont'd)

Not work here. I am assistant to
Michelangelo Buonarrotti.

Now she understands...

MADAM

Ah! Anyone who works for *that* man
deserves our sympathy. Very well,
Signor Bandini. Be my guest tonight.
But if you wish to stay tomorrow, you
shall have to ... exert yourself. We
are all professionals here.

She's completely matter-of-fact. The doorbell rings and she
goes to welcome a boisterous party.

Enrico settles down to sleep on a pile of cushions. An OLDER
WHORE, ignored by the clients, strokes his cheek. But he turns
down her advances, curls into a tight ball, and tries to shut
out the debauchery whirling around him...

40 EXT. MARKET - DAY

40

Annunziata and Michelangelo are looking for decent produce in a
poorly stocked market. Half the regular stalls are closed. He's
got some rotten vegetables in his basket. She takes them out.

ANNUNZIATA

This is why you need an assistant,
dear Stone Cutter. Shopping is not
your gift.

She starts working through the cabbages, finding the best.

ANNUNZIATA (cont'd)

Charm is Da Vinci's weapon. That's why
the Duke of Milan patronizes him.
That's why he leads the Committee of
Public works. If you want to aid
Florence, you'd better cultivate some.

MICHELANGELO

I've no gift for pretty words.

ANNUNZIATA

Don't be tedious.

She hands him his basket of vegetables. A way better selection
than he found on his own.

ANNUNZIATA (cont'd)

Charm is kindness, artfully applied.
What does Leonardo Da Vinci want? What
all men want, including you.
(beat)
Adoration. You must find it in
yourself to give him that.

41 EXT. BANKS OF THE RIVER ARNO - DAY

41

An angelic young man in his twenties, SALAI, hesitates before
putting his embroidered shoe in the mud of the riverbank. He's
walking with the man in the lavender velvet tunic, who fondled
Enrico.

SALAI

You risk a run-in with the Officers of
the Night at *this moment*? They're
looking for scapegoats, master. It's
always the sodomites who get blamed.

HANDSOME MAN

They didn't take my name.

SALAI

Your fame will betray you.

They're walking towards Soderini, Machiavelli, Chafaggio and
Riccardo Pollini, who are waiting. Everyone's splendidly
dressed and ankle-deep in mud.

HANDSOME MAN
Excellencies!

CHAFAGGIO
God save you.
(to Soderini)
My lord. May I present Leonardo da
Vinci.

42 INT. CASA MERAUVIGLIOSA - DAY 42

By daylight, the brothel looks tawdry, whores and patrons disheveled and hung-over. Annunziata arrives, steps over the sleeping Enrico and goes to an inner room. Cecilia's at her desk, a consummate professional. She rises and hugs her...

43 INT. CASA MERAUVIGLIOSA, SECRET CORRIDOR - DAY 43

Cecilia is leading Annunziata down a secret corridor, with peep holes in the panelling through which she can see and hear everything her influential clients are up to.

CECILIA
Strozzi's leaving today. He told
Isabella. Corsini didn't come last
night - so he's already gone. Di Nardo
won't stay either. He told Gianluigi
he's sent his gold plate to Rome.

ANNUNZIATA
And they call us the weaker sex.

CECILIA
'Twas every thus, my darling. But rest
assured: Borgia won't kill the whores.
He needs us. Soldiers always do.

This observation lands. Cecilia's not conscious of it, but she's given Annunziata an idea. They stop outside a door.

CECILIA (cont'd)
Don't stay too long.

Annunziata collects herself, kisses Cecilia affectionately on the cheek, and goes into the room.

44 EXT. BANKS OF THE RIVER ARNO - DAY 44

The muddy riverside is bleak and cold. As Leonardo starts to speak, we see it from his POV. The dull colors take on a heightened radiance. We're inside his sparkling imagination, seeing what only he can see.

LEONARDO

We'll dig a ditch there, 32 feet deep.

As his hand indicates the spot, the earth EXPLODES. Mud shoots to the sky. A huge TRENCH appears.

LEONARDO (cont'd)

Others will go here, here, and here.

At each word, trenches explode into being. Water POURS into them from the Arno River.

LEONARDO (cont'd)

With God's grace, we can divert the Arno and cut off all water to Pisa. Our enemies will die of thirst within 72 hours.

MACHIAVELLI

Quite impossible.

At the word *impossible*, the ditches vanish. Leonardo's back in their muddy, windy reality.

LEONARDO

That is precisely why it will work, Signor Machiavelli. Pisa can't expect an attack that no one could accomplish.

He looks down, modestly.

LEONARDO (cont'd)

Except myself.

Chafaggio's completely won over.

CHAFAGGIO

You believe you can?

LEONARDO

I know I can, Signor Chafaggio.
(towards the river)
Come forth!

His audience watches, unable to believe their eyes, as a MONSTER appears from the water. This time it's real. A man-shaped monster, covered in seal skin, with huge eyes, no mouth, and curious tusks that protrude from his chin and extend behind his ears. The watching men are brave. But they step back, despite themselves, sinking deeper into the mud.

Leonardo is *delighted*. At a sign, the monster pulls his head off. He's a living, breathing human being.

LEONARDO (cont'd)

I have made an apparatus to allow a man to breath under water. Before we divert the river, we send a squadron of divers into the heart of the town. It will be ours before nightfall.

Beat. His audience struggle to comprehend what they've seen. Soderini and Riccardo are impressed. Even Machiavelli is temporarily silenced. Salai watches, euphoric with pride.

SODERINI

How much will this cost?

LEONARDO

Seven thousand ducats, my lord.

Beat. It's a LOT.

CHAFAGGIO

Didn't you say, Machiavelli, that Fortune favors the bold?

45 INT. CASA MERAVIGLIOSA, INNER ROOM - DAY

45

BEATRICE, a teenager of TRAFFIC-STOPPING SEX APPEAL sits up on her pillows. Her face is flushed with fever.

ANNUNZIATA

I've brought you mercury, from the apothecary.

BEATRICE

You're a darling. Don't come close.

Annunziata keeps her distance as Beatrice drinks the silvery metal. Neither of them have any idea it's highly toxic.

BEATRICE (cont'd)

That is disgusting.

ANNUNZIATA

Then it must be good for you. How are you?

BEATRICE

I don't cough in the mornings. That's a blessing.

ANNUNZIATA

And your fever?

BEATRICE

It enhances my loveliness, does it not?

She cocks her head, coquettishly.

ANNUNZIATA

You've never been lovelier.

BEATRICE

Have you come to say goodbye?

ANNUNZIATA

Of course not. The republic will fall if her women desert her.

BEATRICE

Which mean's *he's* not fleeing.

Beat.

ANNUNZIATA

Who?

BEATRICE

You know very well.

They're sisters. They're canny with each other. Beatrice is broaching a topic too long left unspoken.

ANNUNZIATA

As a matter of fact, *he's* not. He'd never abandon Florence.

BEATRICE

So you risk Death for Love?

ANNUNZIATA

I have no intention of dying. And I'm not in love with him. I never was.

Beatrice starts coughing. She tries to speak; the harder she tries, the more she coughs. Eventually--

BEATRICE

Life is short. Seize happiness.

ANNUNZIATA

(rising)
You must rest, my darling. But before
I go, I have something to propose.

She looks at her sister, her gaze full of tenderness.

ANNUNZIATA (cont'd)

The hour calls for a heroine.

46 INT. MICHELANGELO'S STUDIO - DAY

46

Federico is posing, dressed in several layers. Michelangelo is doing the final touches to David's nose, practicing charming phrases. The studio is a huge mess. Dusty, cold, uncomfortable.

MICHELANGELO

A mere mortal, such as I, can never...

Annunziata comes in, Enrico a few steps behind.

ANNUNZIATA

I've come to show you Signor Bandini
has his uses. Let him polish an inch.

MICHELANGELO

No one touches David but me.

ANNUNZIATA

Very well, then.

She hands Enrico a block of *sanguine* and takes from the cupboard ... luxury of luxuries ... a *brand new sheet of paper*.

MICHELANGELO

Put that back.

ANNUNZIATA

Let's start with drawing.

Enrico sits down, grips the *sanguine*. We switch to his POV. Again, the room blurs. Background noise dies away. Only the paper is in high definition.

Enrico starts to draw Federico's face. But it's out of focus - he can't see it clearly. The sound of the *sanguine* scratching the parchment is brutally loud. He's trying so hard his lines are hesitant and uncertain. There's no trace of the talented artist of the night before.

Abruptly, the paper's wrenched away.

MICHELANGELO

Don't ruin what you can't pay for.

Michelangelo puts the paper back in the cupboard, locks it, and tosses a coin at Enrico.

MICHELANGELO (cont'd)

Be gone when I return.

(to Annunziata)

Wish me luck, fair teacher.

He grabs his cloak and leaves.

Beat. As Federico watches, Enrico looks like he wants the earth to swallow him. His weakness exasperates Annunziata.

ANNUNZIATA

You shouldn't have lied and wasted my time.

47 EXT. STREETS OF FLORENCE - DAY

47

Muddied from their trudge along the river bank, Machiavelli, Soderini, Riccardo and Chafaggio return to the Palazzo Vecchio, through streets crowded with fleeing civilians.

MACHIAVELLI

I'm as captivated as you by Da Vinci's genius, Chafaggio. But we are nothing without an army. Our only question should be: How to pay for one.

Guards salute as they enter the palace.

48 INT. PALAZZO VECCHIO - DAY

48

The art has come down from the walls. The rooms are filled with crates. The place has a cavernous, hopeless air.

Riccardo is struggling between jealousy and patriotism. Patriotism wins.

RICCARDO

(echoing Annunziata)

We forget, gentlemen. Young men are as romantic as school girls. If we fire their *imagination*s, they'll lay down their lives for us. We don't need to pay them.

Beat. He has their attention.

RICCARDO (cont'd)

Michelangelo Buonarotti has made a statue of David. My sources tell me, a good one.

(to Soderini)

The youth who slayed Goliath should be at your side, my lord, when you announce the draft. If our boys see a hero, someone they can dream of being...

MACHIARELLI

Exactly. Terror is Borgia's weapon. Ours has always been Art.

SODERINI

But *is* this David a hero? Donatello's David was as pretty as a girl. Wouldn't suit at all.

MACHIARELLI

Your eyes can be the judge, my lord.

49 EXT. LEONARDO'S PALAZZO - DAY

49

Michelangelo stops outside the door of Leonardo's handsome townhouse. Through his shirt, his hands play with a CRUCIFIX on a chain round his neck. He shuts his eyes tight in prayer. He does *not* want to do this. But he does.

He walks into the courtyard to find it FULL of people waiting to see the mighty Leonardo. The very number of visitors annoys him. He sits down, near the end of the line.

50 INT. LEONARDO'S STUDIO - DAY

50

Leonardo's studio is a world away from Michelangelo's. Full of ornate furniture and expensive trinkets, paintings and intricate technical drawings. The half-finished MONA LISA stands on an easel.

Leonardo's in a state of euphoric concentration, writing a TORRENT OF CALCULATIONS from right to left, in mirror script.

Salai moves round the studio, straightening things. He's frightened - for both of them. He's not a sentimental man, but he's fiercely devoted to Leonardo.

LEONARDO

We'll need to shift one million tons of earth.

SALAI

(off the Mona Lisa)
 Couldn't you finish that portrait for
 Isabella d'Este. Get us out of
 Florence? If you've been denounced to
 the Officers of the Night...

LEONARDO

Don't be so morbid.

SALAI

Borgia's merciless to men of our kind.

LEONARDO

He won't trouble us if we beat him.

SALAI

This scheme is a fantasy. Like your
 flying machine. And your parachute.

LEONARDO

They would have worked.

SALAI

But they didn't. Your ambition will
 get us all killed.

LEONARDO

My flying machine failed because no
 one *believed*. I needed money,
 resources, men. You saw the look in
 Soderini's eyes. Florence is in mortal
 peril. He'll do what's necessary.

He keeps writing.

LEONARDO (cont'd)

Thank God for Cesare Borgia.

51 INT. LEONARDO'S COURTYARD - DAY

51

Salai appears, and addresses the waiting supplicants.

SALAI

Gentlemen. My regrets. Signor Da Vinci
 is occupied on important matters of
 state. He will see no one today.

There's a general exhalation of disappointment. People stand to
 leave. Michelangelo pushes past Salai and runs up the stairs.

52 INT. LEONARDO'S STUDIO - DAY

52

Michelangelo bursts in. As Leonardo watches in astonishment, too polite to throw him out, he launches into his prepared speech--

MICHELANGELO

A mere mortal, such as I, cannot hope to equal a God. But it is right for mortals to beg the aid of Gods. I have come to beg yours.

Leonardo is disarmed, despite himself. He puts down his quill as Salai runs in. A glance from Leonardo dismisses him. He bows and leaves.

LEONARDO

Who are you, young man?

MICHELANGELO

Michelangelo Buonarotti.

LEONARDO

(off his bandaged hands)
A sculptor?

MICHELANGELO

Yes, sir.

LEONARDO

I beg you: be brief. I am very busy.

Out it all tumbles...

MICHELANGELO

You are familiar, sir, with that piece of marble Agostino di Duccio tried his hand at?

LEONARDO

And nearly destroyed.

MICHELANGELO

The very one. He made such a hash of it no one would touch it.

LEONARDO

I assume you did?

MICHELANGELO

Yes, sir. I was commissioned to make a figure for the roof of the cathedral. A statue of David.

(MORE)

MICHELANGELO (cont'd)
I think they thought it would turn out badly, so better put it far from view.

LEONARDO
And how has it turned out?

MICHELANGELO
Magnificently.

LEONARDO
Indeed?

MICHELANGELO
(digging deep)
Your drawing of the Holy Virgin with Saint Anne inspires courage in so many. I have witnessed its power with my own eyes. In this time of our city's great trial, I dare hope my statue might inspire our young men to do their duty.

Praise is Leonardo's drug. He warms to the younger man...

LEONARDO
Your patriotism does you honor. Is it a favor you seek?

MICHELANGELO
Only the Committee of Public Works could approve a new site - somewhere my David might be seen.

LEONARDO
Such as?

Michelangelo gathers himself. He knows this is a big ask.

MICHELANGELO
The Piazza della Signoria.

Beat. It's like asking for a show at the Met.

MICHELANGELO (cont'd)
I thought you could use your influence...

Leonardo considers, then smiles.

LEONARDO
It is always a pleasure to help a fellow artist.

(beat)

(MORE)

LEONARDO (cont'd)
 But sometimes honesty is the greatest gift. You lack renown, Signor Buonarotti. Surely you do not expect your first effort to be placed beside Donatello's?

Sensing a NO, the sleep-deprived Michelangelo gets frantic.

MICHELANGELO
 If my work is not shown, how can I ever win renown? Without renown, my work is not shown. It is hopeless.

LEONARDO
 (off Michelangelo's clothes)
 Do you need money? I'd be honored to lend you some.

MICHELANGELO
 God save you, but no. If my work is not seen, I would rather starve.

Michelangelo stands. Something in his sincerity moves Leonardo. He looks at him, holding the pause.

LEONARDO
 Very well. When I've finished these, I will bring the Committee to see it. I need some air. Perhaps we can save it from utter obscurity.

It's just the chance Michelangelo wants. He kneels at Leonardo's feet, seizes his knees and kisses them.

MICHELANGELO
 A thousand thanks! Ten thousand!

Leonardo permits these supplications, then shifts away.

LEONARDO
 Now I'm afraid I must get on. Florence's fate depends on my work. I shall do my best for you.

MICHELANGELO
 May God comfort and keep you.

Leonardo turns back to his calculations. As Michelangelo passes through the door...

LEONARDO

(without looking up)

We must all learn to crawl before we
can walk, Signor Buonarotti.

53 EXT. STREETS OF FLORENCE - DAY

53

Salai is shivering in a doorway, keeping watch on the Tombori - the locked Denunciation box. BARTOLOMEO DI NARDO, an Officer of the Night, comes to open it in his distinctive uniform. He's in his 40s, out of shape, relishing his mission.

There are three keys, for three locks. It's a cumbersome business. Di Nardo opens the box, takes out a batch of denunciations, puts them in his bag, puts his bag on the pavement...

With the grace of a leopard, Salai springs. Knocks Di Nardo down and sprints off with the bag.

54 EXT. PALAZZO VECCHIO - DAY

54

A huge retinue is assembling - musicians, mercenaries, and servants. All wearing cloaks embroidered with the Florentine fleur de lys. Flanked by Machiavelli and Riccardo, Soderini leads Chafaggio to a white charger, as citizens watch in awe.

SODERINI

Make Borgia believe we'll pay for
mercy. Buy us time to build our army.
Then we'll destroy him.

(beat)

I'll drive the stake through his heart
myself.

CHAFAGGIO

If he has one.

Chafaggio mounts his horse. His engraved armor glitters in the sunshine. The procession is MAGNIFICENT. You'd never guess they were the envoys of a bankrupt state.

Among the servants, conspicuously beautiful, is Beatrice. Annunziata helps her into the wagon as trumpets sound.

ANNUNZIATA

Your beauty is your passport. Your
experience your armor.

She gives her a pot of precious HONEY.

ANNUNZIATA (cont'd)

Eat this before you meet him, and you won't cough.

She steps back, trying to look brave.

ANNUNZIATA (cont'd)

Goodbye, my darling.

55 INT. MICHELANGELO'S STUDIO - DAY

55

Enrico hasn't gone anywhere. He's stayed and made himself useful. The studio is unrecognizable. Tables and windows are clean. He's covered David in dust sheets, for protection, and is putting the finishing touches to a vase of holly when Michelangelo returns, whistling.

MICHELANGELO

I told you to go!

But he's too HAPPY to be truly cross at being disobeyed. He takes in the transformed studio...

ENRICO

Yes, Master.

MICHELANGELO

So... go! I've work to do, Signor Bandini. Have this paper for your pains.

He unlocks the cupboard, gives Enrico the sheet bearing his hesitant lines.

MICHELANGELO (cont'd)

You have blooded it. Now it's yours.

Enrico steels himself. He's about to say something when---

Leonardo da Vinci arrives with the Committee of Public Works, the greatest artists of the age: BOTTICELLI, PERUGINO, and FILIPPINO LIPPI.

Enrico is FLABBERGASTED to see his seducer. Leonardo gives no indication of ever having seen him before. Michelangelo's overwhelmed by gratitude.

MICHELANGELO (cont'd)

Signor Da Vinci, I'm forever in your debt.

LEONARDO

Well, Signor Buonarotti. Here we are.
Show us this statue you have made.

Michelangelo nods to Enrico, who whips away the dust sheets...

David towers above them.

Michelangelo watches his visitors closely. They are BLOWN AWAY. A tidal wave of euphoria surges through him. It's everything he could have dreamed of.

Leonardo is shocked. This kid isn't just another young hopeful. He's a genius. And now, he realizes, a THREAT.

Botticelli, approaching 60, is old enough and famous enough not to mind the arrival of a new star.

BOTTICELLI

Young man... You have equaled - nay,
surpassed - the greatest masters of
antiquity.

FILIPPINO LIPPI

(shocked)

But you cannot put a naked man on the
Cathedral.

BOTTICELLI

Even if one *could* hoist a block this
size to the dome, which I very much
doubt, this David must be seen.
Acclaimed. Do you not agree, Perugino?

PERUGINO

I do, Botticelli.

Trumpets announce the approach of the Gonfaloniere. Preceded by pages and heralds, Soderini appears at the door with Machiavelli and Riccardo.

Michelangelo can't believe his eyes. He wrongly concludes that Da Vinci has brought them.

MICHELANGELO

(to Leonardo)

I can never repay your kindness.

(to Soderini's party, bowing)

Your Excellencies do me great honor.

Soderini, Machiavelli and Riccardo take in the statue. They are mesmerized. Da Vinci smiles. It takes all his *savoir-faire* to hide his inner turbulence.

LEONARDO

Signor Buonarotti. I congratulate you on a most ... precocious achievement. Considering the poor quality of the stone, you have done very well.

MICHELANGELO

Thank you, sir. When I got the marble, Di Duccio had already knocked a hole between David's legs, trying to make a saint. There was no room for error.

LEONARDO

Or for clothes, it seems.

MICHELANGELO

Indeed not.

Beat.

LEONARDO

How old are you, Signor Buonarotti?

MICHELANGELO

Twenty-eight.

LEONARDO

So young, and so gifted.

Michelangelo's beaming. Doesn't sense the danger.

LEONARDO (cont'd)

But an artist, like a fine wine, takes decades to reach his prime. Permit me to offer some well-intentioned advice.

(to the Committee)

Gentlemen. Consider, for a moment, this hand. A remarkable piece of work, no doubt. But it bears no relation to the wrist. It is quite out of proportion. So too the head.

(to Michelangelo)

I have made accurate measurements of the human body. I would happily share them with you.

Michelangelo doesn't understand where this is going. Like an enthusiastic child, he keeps explaining...

MICHELANGELO

Oh yes! But in fact it's quite intentional. He is meant to be seen from below. Look here.

He lowers himself painfully to the floor, looking upwards.

MICHELANGELO (cont'd)
Do you see how everything fits, when
you view him thus?

LEONARDO
You don't expect us to kneel?

MICHELANGELO
No, no.

He stands up, wincing. His back is in agony.

LEONARDO
If your intention is for him to be
seen from an unnatural angle, perhaps
the dome of the cathedral is just the
place for him.

MICHELANGELO
That's too far away! He needs a high
plinth, that's all.

LEONARDO
A plinth, short or tall, will make no
difference. The gravest flaw...

He looks at his audience, as if embarrassed to bring this up.

LEONARDO (cont'd)
... is this penis. A little small,
don't you think, for a hero? And then
the pubic hair. So immodest. And in
these times, so dangerous. Verrochio's
David - a most excellent piece - wears
a becoming tunic. You would have done
better to follow his example.

MICHELANGELO
When King Saul gave David armor and a
helmet, "David put them off him." So
Holy Scripture says.

LEONARDO
His armor! Not his clothes.

MICHELANGELO
There was no space for vestments in
any case. Not with the stone I was
given.

LEONARDO

What nonsense. A life-sized figure could have been clothed.

MICHELANGELO

But David is a *hero*. He cannot be of mortal size.

LEONARDO

(to Soderini)

My lord. Florence already has a reputation as a ... hotbed of sodomy. Such a - one wouldn't say *vulgar*, but... Such an *extreme* representation of male beauty will only play into our enemy's hands.

Michelangelo's hackles rise.

LEONARDO (cont'd)

I agree with Signor Lippi. This is too indecent for our cathedral. It merits display. But... Somewhere less exposed. Perhaps the Loggia dei Lanzi?

This sends Michelangelo into a boiling rage. Enrico touches him, gently.

ENRICO

It's better than the dome, master.

MICHELANGELO

It's where the shit stuff goes.

(squaring up to Leonardo)

May I ask, Signor da Vinci, who you are to judge me? You who never finish anything. Who couldn't cast a horse for the Duke of Milan.

The watching men are shocked -- all save Machiavelli, who likes Michelangelo's guts.

MICHELANGELO (cont'd)

I heard the duke used the bronze for cannonballs. You have made some pretty paintings, but you have never, ever done anything to match this.

(off his velvet doublet)

You think fine clothes and charming manners make an artist? You are wrong. It takes toil, and dust, and SUFFERING.

He picks up a hammer. He's in a frenzy. Leonardo steps back. He thinks Michelangelo's going to hit him.

MICHELANGELO (cont'd)

If you won't show him, you don't
deserve him.

He lurches at the statue, hammer raised.

ENRICO

NO!

Enrico throws himself across the room and tackles Michelangelo to the floor, wrenching the hammer from his grasp. It skids under a table.

Beat. They lie, tangled, together. The only sound Enrico's anxious breathing.

Slowly Michelangelo stands up. Soderini finds his tongue.

SODERINI

This statue, Signor Buonarotti, does honor to our city and to you. We shall find him a place on the Piazza della Signoria. His unveiling will accompany my call to arms. Perhaps a gilded fig leaf can allay Signor da Vinci's anxiety.

MICHELANGELO

My lord. There can be no fig leaf.

Beat. Everyone looks to see how Soderini will take this.

MACHIABELLI

(*sotto voce* to Soderini)

God has sent Michelangelo to assist us. Forget the ditch. I beg you.

Soderini considers. Then makes his decision.

SODERINI

I will ponder the fig leaf. Meanwhile, Signor Da Vinci... Your scheme is a miracle of daring. I salute your genius. But there is no money. We must rely on our young men.

MICHELANGELO

(eyeballing Leonardo, 23
years his senior)

We are proud to serve.

Leonardo's beaten, and he DOESN'T like it...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT III

FADE IN:

56 INT. LEONARDO'S STUDIO - EVENING

56

Leonardo's sitting at his desk, looking at his dense calculations. All that work, wasted. He can't take it in.

LEONARDO

This one-- I thought this one-- This one would get built.

Salai comes in, with the bag of denunciations.

SALAI

These are what you need to worry about.

He tips them on the floor, starts going through them.

SALAI (cont'd)

Two men burned yesterday. I couldn't sleep for their screams.

LEONARDO

I'd slit my wrists in a warm bath before they came for me. Gently slip away.

He's so distraught, there's something relieving in this thought. He pushes the papers with their gorgeous scribblings onto the floor.

LEONARDO (cont'd)

Signor Buonarotti's right. I never finish anything. But that is not because I do not wish to.

Salai stops. Puts his hands on Leonardo's shoulders, digs his fingers into his tense traps. He really cares for him.

SALAI

Your name will ring down the ages.

LEONARDO

On what grounds? A peeling fresco in Milan?

SALAI
 (off the Mona Lisa)
Finish that. Please.

LEONARDO
 Maybe.

He goes to some cushions and lies down, closes his eyes. One by one, Salai throws the denunciations into the fire... Until...

SALAI
 Master?

LEONARDO
 (completely resigned)
 Am I to be burned?

Salai is WILD with excitement.

SALAI
 No! He is!

57 INT. IL PRINCIPE - NIGHT

57

Riccardo's treating Michelangelo, Annunziata, Enrico and Federico to a riotous victory dinner at Florence's chicest restaurant. Waiters hover attentively. Wine flows. Dish after extravagant dish appears from the kitchen.

Riccardo's enjoying playing the big shot.

RICCARDO
 Waiter! The suckling pig.
 (to Annunziata)
 It's unbelievable.

Annunziata snuggles up to him.

ANNUNZIATA
 You're unbelievable.

An entire suckling pig, with an apple in its mouth, is set down. Michelangelo looks at Annunziata, eyes full of mischief.

MICHELANGELO
 Sometimes Threats work better than
 Charm, fair teacher.

Riccardo sees the look. Their complicity annoys him. Annunziata sees that it does. She raises her glass to Riccardo.

ANNUNZIATA
 The Stone Cutter is in your debt.

She kisses Riccardo full on the lips. Under the table, her beautifully-shod foot gives Michelangelo's shin a sharp kick.

MICHELANGELO

What for?

ANNUNZIATA

For bringing the Gonfaloniere to your studio.

MICHELANGELO

Da Vinci did that. And lived to repent of it.

RICCARDO

I think you'll find I did, Stone Cutter.

MICHELANGELO

Stone *Carver* to you.

58 INT. LEONARDO'S STUDIO - NIGHT

58

Salai is reading Michelangelo's denunciation.

LEONARDO

I forbid you to use that. Burn it.

SALAI

This is a gift from god! It's heresy to waste it.

LEONARDO

Throw it in the fire.

SALAI

I will not, master.

Leonardo tries to snatch the denunciation, but Salai slips from his grasp.

SALAI (cont'd)

(reading)

It's the mother of that model, Federico Datini.

LEONARDO

She *witnessed* them? Poor devils.

SALAI

No. She suspects Michelangelo's intentions.

LEONARDO

There must be an eye witness, if a man
is to burn.

SALAI

Then I will find one.

LEONARDO

Your loyalty is touching. But I'll
teach that whoreson a lesson in my own
way.

(beat)

Burn it now.

Salai goes to the fire, throws a denunciation into the flames.
As it crackles we see the name *TOMMASO MARAINI*. He slips
Michelangelo's denunciation discreetly into his pocket.

59 INT. IL PRINCIPE - NIGHT

59

Everyone's DRUNK. High on life.

RICCARDO

The lover's virtue I prize most is ...
Courage.

ANNUNZIATA

And the vice you'd most willingly
forgive?

RICCARDO

Extravagance.

He kisses her hand. She's delighted.

FEDERICO

The virtue I prize is Innocence.

Under the table, his hand touches Enrico's thigh.

ANNUNZIATA

And the vice you'd forgive?

FEDERICO

Lust.

The others ROAR with laughter. Enrico stares at the floor,
SHOCKED, then painfully embarrassed. He shifts away.

Through the window, we see Salai wrapped in a cloak, pacing up
and down to keep warm. Watching them...

ANNUNZIATA

A superb choice. Now Stone Cutter, the hour grows late. Have you given your father the happy news?

MICHELANGELO

Let's all go!

60 EXT. STREETS OF FLORENCE - NIGHT

60

They tumble out of the restaurant, heading for Ludovico's home. Michelangelo's tipsy and affectionate. Salai watches as Michelangelo puts his arm round Enrico.

MICHELANGELO

David's hand took three hundred hours of my life. I would never have destroyed it. But you could not have known that.

(beat)

If you'd like to stay, Signor Bandini, you may. Be diligent, and we will accomplish miracles.

Enrico is OVERJOYED. A whole new world is opening.

ENRICO

I will be worthy, master.

Annunziata's well pleased. As they move through crowds of frenzied revelers, she draws Enrico to one side.

ANNUNZIATA

I knew Michelangelo before he could shave, Signor Baldini. When we were both favorites of a great lord.

She looks at him, suddenly serious.

ANNUNZIATA (cont'd)

Don't be fooled by his bluster.

(beat)

There is darkness in this world, and darkness is dawn irresistibly to the light of a man like him. Protect him. Serve him. Earn a place in history.

ENRICO

I will, my lady. With all my heart.

They're on a street of grand mansions. Michelangelo raps merrily on the door of one. Ludovico opens it, dressed in a torn, patched tunic. He's *horrified* to see them...

61 INT. CASA BUONAROTTI - NIGHT

61

... but has to pretend to be delighted.

LUDOVICO

Michelangelo! How naughty of you to bring your friends just when I've sent the servants to Verona, for safety.

Michelangelo takes in his childhood home. He's shocked. There are faded patches on the walls, where paintings once hung. The furniture has been sold. It's months since anyone dusted.

MICHELANGELO

We shouldn't intrude, Father. Forgive me. You're tired.

But his friends have already walked in. Riccardo and Annunziata politely pretend that everything is as it should be. Federico frankly stares.

LUDOVICO

(all over Riccardo)

Excellency! You do me great honor. How I wish I had not just today put my silver plate in Strozzi's bank. Let me see what I have to offer you. Michelangelo, come with me.

62 INT. CASA BUONAROTTI KITCHEN - NIGHT

62

The kitchen is *filthy*. The lair of a decrepit bachelor.

LUDOVICO

You shame me? Before Signor Pollini?

MICHELANGELO

That wasn't my intention. I didn't--

LUDOVICO

Didn't know that we are ruined? Were you not *listening*? Did you think, perhaps, that I was lying to you?

MICHELANGELO

I-- wanted to tell you something.

LUDOVICO

Does it give you pleasure, to show the world our destitution?

Ludovico leans against the table. A weak, defeated old man.

LUDOVICO (cont'd)

No. It gives you pleasure to show them
my destitution.

(beat)

What have I done to you, that you
should hate me so?

There's an INSTANTANEOUS FLICKER of the same room 20 years
before. Full of servants, china, silver, food. And Ludovico
SCREAMING in blind, uncontrollable rage.

MICHELANGELO

Nothing, father. I'm sorry. I'll make
them go.

LUDOVICO

Unless you've come to tell me that
you're taking Strozzi's job, or that
you've suddenly achieved some kind of
staggering renown, you can take this
as our last meeting. In this world or
the next.

Beat. The child in Michelangelo is still afraid of his father.
The man despises Ludovico's weakness. Finally--

MICHELANGELO

I have, father.

LUDOVICO

What?

MICHELANGELO

My statue is to be set in the Piazza
della Signoria. Beneath the windows of
the council chamber.

Ludovico looks at him, astonished. Michelangelo can't resist...

MICHELANGELO (cont'd)

My shitty little saint.

63 EXT. CASA BUONAROTTI - NIGHT

63

As Ludovico closes the door, leaving them on the street,
Annunziata glances at Michelangelo. She knows him in this mood.

ANNUNZIATA

You sleep, Stone Cutter.

Michelangelo walks briskly away, full of conflicted feelings.
Riccardo draws Annunziata off. As she goes, she calls over her
shoulder to Federico.

ANNUNZIATA (cont'd)
 Get Signor Bandini to his lodgings.
 See that no one buys him!

She sashays off down the street. Salai watches...

ENRICO
 I should go to bed.

FEDERICO
 Why?

Beat. MAJOR electricity tingling between them.

FEDERICO (cont'd)
 You wish to be a sculptor?

Enrico nods.

FEDERICO (cont'd)
 Then you must study the statues in the
 Medici Garden...

64 EXT. MEDICI SCULPTURE GARDEN - DAWN

64

It's a yard full of broken classical statues. Very romantic by moonlight. Enrico's shivering - from nerves as much as cold. Federico puts his arm around him, wraps him in his warm cloak.

FEDERICO
 You can't help Michelangelo if you
 catch your death.

They sit in front of an ancient statue of a muscled athlete. Salai watches from the gate. They think themselves alone.

Federico holds the silence, drawing Enrico out. Eventually...

ENRICO
 (off the statue)
 I wish I looked like him.
 (beat)
 As you do.

Federico's leg touches Enrico's. We hear their breathing, see their breath turn to smoke. Federico flexes his right arm.

FEDERICO
 I'm not that big.

It's an invitation to touch him... We hear Enrico's pulse get louder and louder, faster and faster, as he touches Federico's right biceps. It's solid as ROCK.

ENRICO

I should go.

But he doesn't stand up. Federico leans closer.

FEDERICO

We might die tomorrow, if Borgia gets his way.

Their faces are very close now.

FEDERICO (cont'd)

Do we not deserve a little tenderness?

Federico's lips graze Enrico's. Enrico pulls back. He's shaking.

Very deliberately, Federico kisses him on the lips.

The young men lock eyes. Then... Slowly, transfixed, afraid, unable to resist... Enrico kisses Federico back. The pent-up electricity between them ERUPTS.

It's the first time Enrico has kissed another man. He LOVES IT.

He pulls off Federico's shirt, throws his cloak on the ground. He's all over him, kissing his face, his neck, his nipples, tracing the curve of his hairy pecs - as an artist might. When he sees, as we do...

EEEEUUWWW!

Federico is CRAWLING with crabs.

65 EXT. STREETS OF FLORENCE - DAWN

65

The streets are full of brawling drunks. Enrico races through them in a panic as dawn breaks, looking for a place to wash... He can't find ANYWHERE...

66 INT. MICHELANGELO'S STUDIO - MORNING

66

Michelangelo's already at work, polishing David's thighs, when Enrico knocks at the locked door. Michelangelo lets him in.

MICHELANGELO

I approve of early risers.

But then he looks at him...

MICHELANGELO (cont'd)

What's wrong?

Enrico hesitates. It's agony to confess.

ENRICO

I... went with a lady last night. I was drunk. When I... took her clothes off.. I saw...

MICHELANGELO

Yes?

ENRICO

She's infested with creatures.

Michelangelo laughs.

MICHELANGELO

Lust has been the downfall of many a promising talent. Did they crawl on you?

ENRICO

Maybe. Probably. I don't know.

MICHELANGELO

Best to be sure.

He goes to the provisions cupboard, starts mixing.

MICHELANGELO (cont'd)

There's a solution of olive oil and vinegar that kills creatures such as these. Take your clothes off.

Enrico strips, shivering. Michelangelo soaks bandages in the lotion and applies it efficiently over Enrico's chest, back, arms, legs ... and ass. Enrico doesn't know what to make of this intimate touching. Neither do we.

MICHELANGELO (cont'd)

Do your private parts yourself.

Enrico turns away, and does. Michelangelo throws him a cloth.

MICHELANGELO (cont'd)

Put that on and stand on a chair. Spread your arms wide while it dries.

Michelangelo cricks his neck. Then sits down, starts drawing - barely looking at the page. From a blur of hatched lines, a figure emerges... Enrico as CHRIST ON THE CROSS.

The church bells start ringing for morning service. There's a knock at the door. Enrico opens it to find...

Leonardo da Vinci. Salai stands behind him, with a flagon of EXPENSIVE WINE. Leonardo comes in, ignoring Enrico. Takes in the drawing.

LEONARDO

God give you good morning.

Beat. Michelangelo looks at him, bristling.

LEONARDO (cont'd)

St. Paul says: "Be ye kind one to another, and tenderhearted." I should have remembered that before I offered you advice in public.

MICHELANGELO

Yes you should.

LEONARDO

St. Paul also says: "Forgive one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you."

(beat)

Talent like ours condemns us to loneliness. I know, because I am cursed, just as you are.

(beat)

Will you forgive me?

He offers Michelangelo his hand.

LEONARDO (cont'd)

Let me be a father to you.

Michelangelo's taken aback by this unexpected overture. And then... deeply touched. He stands, grips Leonardo's hand.

LEONARDO (cont'd)

(to Enrico)

Pour the wine.

Enrico hurries into the next room. Salai follows.

67 INT. MICHELANGELO'S STOREROOM - DAY

67

Michelangelo's storeroom is full of tools, brushes... and goblets. Salai waits while Enrico gets things ready.

SALAI

I hope you profited from your ... anatomical studies last night.

Enrico is TOTALLY THROWN.

SALAI (cont'd)
 Don't be alarmed. I'll forget what
 I've seen in exchange for a favor.
 (beat)
 Tell me, now and then, whom your
 master loves.

Beat. It costs Enrico greatly to say this, but--

ENRICO
 Never.

Salai looks pained. From the next room, we hear Michelangelo
 and Leonardo laughing...

SALAI
 I'd hate to denounce you.

He strokes Enrico's cheek.

SALAI (cont'd)
 But dark skin looks so beautiful lit
 by fire.

68 EXT. STREETS OF FLORENCE - DAY 68

FLAMES rain down from the sky. Cesare Borgia's trebuchets are
 hurling BURNING MISSILES over the city walls. In the streets,
 people are panicking...

69 EXT. PALAZZO VECCHIO - DAY 69

Soderini, Machiavelli and Riccardo are directing the firemen's
 efforts.

A young COUNTRY BOY is brought to them, terrified out of his
 wits. The child's ears have been cut off, his wounds roughly
 stitched. He's holding a brass-studded chest and thrusts a
 piece of paper into Soderini's hand.

Soderini breaks the seal. Over his shoulder, we focus on the
 writing...

BORGIA (V.O.)
 Sue for mercy as loudly as you will,
 this brat will not hear. Neither will
 I.

-- Cesare Borgia

They open the chest. It contains Chafaggio's severed head..

CREDITS