



**DREAMWORKS**  
**TELEVISION**



## **THE BORGHIAS**

Pilot

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ImageMovers/DreamWorks Television/Stephen Woolley

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A TITLE -

ROME 1492.

INT. ST PETER'S. DAY.

The august interior of the huge cathedral, at the time, the largest in the civilised world. It is empty but for a portly man dressed in the sumptuous clothes of a cardinal, holding the hand of a young teenage girl.

RODRIGO BORGIA

Jesus Christ said, Thou art  
Peter and upon this rock I will  
build my church...

LUCREZIA

Because Petrus means rock in  
Latin, am I right Papa?

And we realize she is the cardinal's daughter. Her hair is blonde, her face terribly young, Italianate and beautiful...

RODRIGO BORGIA

You have learnt your lessons  
well, my dear. So the bones of  
St. Peter, and every pope to  
succeed him lie beneath the  
floor we walk upon. Which is why  
it is called St. Peter's  
Basilica, the centre of the  
Christian world.

LUCREZIA

So if the pope dies, Papa, does  
that mean his body will be  
buried beneath us?

RODRIGO BORGIA

Yes, Lucrezia.

LUCREZIA

And will you become the new Pope  
in his place?

Borgia chuckles mightily.

RODRIGO BORGIA

The new pope will be elected by  
the College of Cardinals, my  
dear. And only God can predict  
the outcome.

LUCREZIA

Can the Pope have a daughter,  
Papa?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RODRIGO BORGIA  
Indeed, if cardinal Sforza is  
elected Pope, he will have  
several...

LUCREZIA  
I think I will pray to God to  
choose you, papa. And to get me  
a new veil crowned with pearls,  
for your coronation.

RODRIGO BORGIA  
Be careful what you pray for, my  
daughter.

LUCREZIA  
Why, Papa?

RODRIGO BORGIA  
Because the new Pope will be  
surrounded by enemies. And each  
of them will use their armies to  
try and bend him to their will.

LUCREZIA  
Does the Pope not rule the  
world, Papa?

RODRIGO BORGIA  
His rule is over the souls of  
men. His army rules the state  
and city of Rome, which is very  
small, among the many city  
states of Italy and the kingdoms  
that surround it. So he needs  
whatever help he can get...

LUCREZIA  
It all sounds very complicated,  
papa. Maybe you should not  
bother being Pope.

RODRIGO BORGIA  
It is in God's hands, Lucrezia,  
not mine...

Footsteps coming down the nave, towards them. A young  
man dressed in well-cut, clerical clothes. Dashing  
handsome. Borgia's son, Cesare.

CESARE  
It is time, father.

The sounds of a turbulent crowd outside, growing  
louder.

CESARE (CONT'D)  
The city has already heard...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RODRIGO BORGIA  
And the mob is baying...

Borgia puts Lucrezia's hand in Cesare's.

RODRIGO BORGIA (CONT'D)  
See that she gets home safe.  
I'll be in touch.

CESARE  
How?

RODRIGO BORGIA  
I have no idea.

And he walks across the huge Basilica, towards an exit.

INT. VATICAN. POPE'S CHAMBERS.

Pope Innocent VIIIth, on his deathbed, attended by doctors and a gathering of cardinals. He is incredibly old, his skin the colour of parchment. He is straining to address them, his voice barely rising above a whisper.

INNOCENT  
I can hear the Almighty calling.  
And I plead with whichever of  
you is chosen to be my  
successor... reform our Holy  
Mother Church...

There is a murmur in reply.

INNOCENT (CONT'D)  
I want to hear your promise...

The cardinals outdo each other in stating their assent.

INNOCENT (CONT'D)  
Our Church has become like an  
untamed orchard, bowed down with  
rotten fruit. We need to return  
to the simplicity that our  
saviour...

And death is taking him. The words barely escape his lips.

INNOCENT (CONT'D)  
...that Jesus Christ lived by...

And he dies.

INT. DOORS OF ST PETER'S. DAY.

Swiss Guards, trying to close the huge doors, forcing back a baying mob outside. Cesare walks towards them, Lucrezia's hand in his.

GUARD

No way out here your Grace. The news is out, the city is in chaos...

EXT. SQUARE. DAY.

Groups of young noblemen face off against each other, itching for battle. One of them is Cesare's brother, Juan.

COLLONNA

Back to Spain, Borgia. You can't wring any more favours from a dead Pope -

JUAN

I was born here, as far as I'm aware -

Collonna turns to the others.

COLLONNA

If a pig born in a stable, does that make him a horse?

Derisive laughter from the gathering.

Juan places his hand on the hilt of his sword...

INT. VATICAN CORRIDORS. DAY.

Cesare draws her back through the corridors. Guards are blocking up every window above them. The baying of the crowds outside grows terrifying.

LUCREZIA

What's happening brother?

CESARE

The Pope has died. Until a new one is elected, there will be no rule in Rome. Every faction will be fighting for their candidate...

He pushes his way out, through a small door.

EXT. SQUARE. DAY.

The same group of noblemen, facing off against each other like bantam cocks...

COLLONNA

Rome is for Romans now. The new pope will see to that -

JUAN

And if the new pope is Spanish?

COLLONNA

And my mother's the Virgin Mary?

JUAN

Was the virgin a Roman whore?  
That's news to me -

Collonna draws his sword, runs at Juan, who's sword is already drawn. Their blades clash, withdraw, clash again. The crowd around them bays for blood...

INT. VATICAN GARDENS. DAY.

A lackey opens a small door, leading to the unruly square outside.

Cesare wraps his cloak around Lucrezia, hiding her from the world about.

LUCREZIA

Where's Papa?

CESARE

He will be locked inside with the others, until a new pope is chosen. We have to get you home, little sis..

Cesare passes through.

EXT. VATICAN. DAY.

The gate closing, as Cesare loses himself in the crowd. Marauders are trying to storm the upper windows of the Vatican, but are thrown back into the crowd below.

ON LUCREZIA'S FACE, LOOKING BACK -

Through Cesare's cloak.

She can see her father, Borgia, at an upper window. He waves, as huge shutters are drawn across it.

EXT. SQUARE. DAY.

Juan and Collona. Their blades clash, as the crowd cheers for its faction.

JUAN  
Which makes you -

COLLONNA  
Careful -

JUAN  
The son, if I'm not mistaken -  
The blades clash again -

JUAN (CONT'D)  
- of a Roman cardinal's whore -

And Juan freezes.

Collonna's blade is at his neck.

Then Collonna finds another blade at his own neck.

It is Cesare.

CESARE  
My brother speaks before he  
thinks -

Collonna relaxes his blade.

CESARE (CONT'D)  
Sometimes...

He looks from Cesare to Juan.

CESARE (CONT'D)  
And isn't this a time for  
mourning?

He draws Juan away from the standoff.

EXT. BORGIA VILLA. EVENING.

A beautiful, gated villa, fronted by a cobbled Roman square.

Large barred gates opening. Cesare walks through, with Lucrezia huddled in his cloak, Juan behind him.

CESARE  
You're too quick with the sword,  
brother.

JUAN  
If the times demand it...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CESARE  
But they don't. These times  
demand wit.

INT. BORGIA VILLA. EVENING.

A small Renaissance interior garden. A servant removes  
Cesare's cloak, revealing Lucrezia.

An older Roman beauty sitting at a table. Vanossa,  
their mother.

CESARE  
You've heard?

VANOSSA  
The Pope has died.

CESARE  
And you know what that means?

VANOSSA  
I know there will be an  
election.

JUAN  
Which he'll win -

VANOSSA  
How can you be so sure, Juan?  
There are other candidates -

JUAN  
Because... he's waited his whole  
life for this... because... our  
lives would change  
immeasurably...

VANOSSA  
For the better?

She looks around the gardens.

VANOSSA (CONT'D)  
Your father found ways to love  
and care for us in this house.  
I'm not sure as Pope he can do  
the same...

JUAN  
As Pope - he can do what he  
wants -

VANOSSA  
Are you sure? Kings and Popes  
and Emperors belong to their  
peoples, not to their families -

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

CESARE

So, mother. If he asks us for help, we refuse?

VANOSSA

How will he ask you for help? He's sequestered in the Vatican -

CESARE

Like Jesus on the road to Emmaus. In a vision.

INT. VATICAN CORRIDOR/COMMISARY. NIGHT.

Johannes Burchart, the Vatican Bursar, watches as an array of meals are handed through a hatch to the assembled cardinals inside. He lifts the lid off each dish to see nothing is concealed beneath it.

A voice sounds from inside.

VERSUCCI (OFF)

What are we in here, prisoners?

BURCHART

Yes.

He lifts another lid and examines another dish.

BURCHART (CONT'D)

Until a new pope is agreed...

INT. VATICAN COMMISARY. NIGHT.

In the barest of rooms, the cardinals sit, like schoolboys at a table, waiting for their food. Versucci, an ancient Venetian cardinal, sits beside Borgia.

VERSUCCI

After the death of pope Sixtus they holed us up here for a month...

BORGIA

Appalling.

VERSUCCI

The company was tolerable, but as for the food... I had to lead the revolt. Insist our dishes could be brought from outside.

BORGIA

Wise indeed.

And a plate is placed before Versucci. He touches it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VERSUCCI  
And now my soup is cold.

BORGIA  
Please, your grace. Have mine.

Borgia pushes the plate delivered to him, towards the old cardinal.

VERSUCCI  
Delicious...

As he sips.

BORGIA  
You can have my suckling pig too, if you find yours overdone...

VERSUCCI  
How can I thank you?

BORGIA (TO HIMSELF)  
I wonder...

INT. VATICAN CORRIDOR/COMMISARY. NIGHT.

As puddings are brought through the hatches, Borgia talks in the corridor outside with Johannes Burchart.

BORGIA  
You are in charge of the cardinals repast, Friar Burchart?

BURCHART  
I am the Vatican Bursar, your grace. I account for every florin spent inside here.

BORGIA  
You will know then, that cardinal Orsini must have pheasant for luncheon. His digestion is delicate. And as for cardinal Versucci...

BURCHART  
Quail, marinated in truffle.

BORGIA  
Cardinal Piccolomini -

BURCHART  
Suckling pig -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BORGIA

Indeed. The well being of the curia is of the utmost importance. As Vice-chancellor, I have to insist upon it. Mens sana, corpore sano.

BURCHART

St. Augustine might disagree with you. He extolled the virtues of fasting...

BORGIA

St. Augustine never had to vote in conclave...

INT. VATICAN CORRIDORS. NIGHT.

Borgia, making his way down a corridor. Delle Rovere is sitting in a window, reading his breviary.

DELLE ROVERE

Cardinal Borgia -

BORGIA

Cardinal -

DELLE ROVERE

One of us will win this contest -

BORGIA

Can you be so sure?

DELLE ROVERE

Yes. I acknowledge your abilities. You have performed your office impeccably, as vice-chancellor -

BORGIA

Thank you. And I acknowledge yours.

DELLE ROVERE

If you were a different man, I would cede the contest to you now. The church has need of your..

His lips curl, distastefully.

DELLE ROVERE

...organizational genius...

BORGIA

But...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DELLE ROVERE  
It has other needs as well.

BORGIA  
And they are?

DELLE ROVERE  
Honesty. Probity. Goodness.

BORGIA  
You find me lacking in those  
qualities?

DELLE ROVERE  
Yes. So I shall fight you. To  
the end. And beyond that, if I  
have to. With every means at my  
disposal.

Borgia smiles, with apparent humility.

BORGIA  
We must agree to disagree, then  
cardinal. Which is why we have  
an election process...

EXT. VATICAN ROOFS. NIGHT.

Borgia stands alone on the roofs, with a white dove in  
his hand. He ties a note to the dove's leg and sends it  
flying over the city.

EXT. ROOFS OF ROME. NIGHT.

The dove, making its way over the crumbling city.

INT. CESARE'S BEDROOM. BORGIA VILLA. NIGHT.

Cesare, sleeping. He is awakened by the sound of the  
cooing of many doves. He goes to the window, throws it  
open.

EXT. DOVECOTE. VILLA GARDEN. NIGHT.

The dove, alighting at its home in the dovecote.

INT. JUAN'S ROOM. NIGHT.

Cesare kicks Juan awake.

CESARE  
Get a notary.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JUAN

What?

CESARE

We need to make deeds of  
transfer. Now... Pen and ink...

INT. KITCHEN. BORGIA VILLA. NIGHT.

A tired notary (lawyer) drawing up documents of deeds  
to transfer various properties.

NOTARY

To Cardinal Jullius Versucci,  
all rights to the Abbey of St.  
Catherine of Siena and all  
benefits accruing in  
perpetuity... signed...

CESARE

Cesare Borgia...

He signs. The notary draws up another document.

NOTARY

To Cardinal Piccolomini, the  
estates of St. Angelo Di...

Juan is rolling up the documents in greaseproof paper.

EXT. DOVECOTE. VILLA GARDEN. DAWN.

Cesare, tying a note to the same dove's leg. Lucrezia,  
just awoken, comes towards him, still in her nightgown.

LUCREZIA

Why the dove, Cesare?

CESARE

It has a dual purpose, my love.  
Like many things in life. It is  
both a symbol and a messenger.

LUCREZIA

A symbol of what?

CESARE

Of the uncorrupted soul.

LUCREZIA

And a messenger of what?

CESARE

Of corruption.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Vanossa enters the garden, from the house, dressed in a nightgown. She puts her arms protectively around Lucrezia.

VANOSSA

You mean it bears news of how many votes we have already bought in the Papal Election?

CESARE

You are criminally well informed, Mother. But I trust your soul is still of the purest white.

LUCREZIA

Don't you want our father to be Pope, Cesare?

CESARE

I want to keep him as our father.

LUCREZIA

But even as Pope, he can still be our father.

CESARE

He will be father of all mankind.

And he throws the dove into the air.

EXT. ROOFS OF ROME. DAWN.

The dove, flying through the city.

EXT. BORGIA'S BEDROOM. VATICAN. DAWN.

Borgia is woken by the tapping of the dove at his bedroom window.

EXT. ROMAN STREETS. MORNING.

Juan, walking through the streets with the documents in his arms, wrapped in greaseproof paper. He enters a kitchen doorway.

INT. KITCHENS. MORNING.

Stone arches, huge stone ovens, birds and beasts of all types being roasted, stuffed, garnished. Juan walks through with the head cook.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JUAN  
Cardinal Julis Versucci -

COOK  
Pheasant for the cardinal,  
roasted -

He pulls out a roasting tray, displaying a roasting pheasant.

Juan shoves one of the greaseproofed documents up the pheasant's ass.

JUAN  
And stuffed.

Juan takes out the next document.

JUAN (CONT'D)  
Cardinal Piccolomini?

COOK  
Suckling pig -

He pulls out another tray, displaying a roasted pig.

EXT. VATICAN. DAY.

The ragged crowds, outside St. Peter's and the Vatican. Most of them asleep, like the crowds after a rock concert.

Picking their way delicately through the crowds come a line of flunkeys, all bearing dishes covered by silver platters.

INT. VATICAN DOOR. DAY.

Johannes Burchart lifts the lid of each platter as the flunkeys enter, examining the content on the plate below.

INT. VERSUCCI'S CHAMBERS. DAY.

Versucci at his lunch, in his chambers. He is tucking into his pheasant. Finds his knife strikes something inside. Pulls out the document, wrapped in greaseproof paper.

INT. PICCOLOMINI'S CHAMBERS.

Piccolomini, tearing the suckling pig apart. He knows the document is in there. When he eventually pulls it out, he licks it clean.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PICCOLOMINI

Tasty...

INT. VATICAN CONCLAVE. DAY.

The conclave of cardinals gathered. The secretary is counting the votes.

SECRETARY

Cardinal Guido Delle Rovere has garnered thirty nine votes. Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, twenty eight. Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia has garnered thirty five votes. But none has the required majority.

EXT. VATICAN ROOFS. DAY.

Grey smoke burns out of the Vatican chimney.

EXT. VATICAN. DAY.

Cesare makes his way, through the milling crowds.

He enters a small church, built into the walls.

INT. CHURCH. DAY.

Cesare, blessing himself in the half-empty church. He makes his way to a confessional.

INT. CONFESSIONAL. DAY.

Cesare kneels inside the confessional. His father is waiting on the other side of the grille.

CESARE

Bless me father, for I have sinned.

BORGIA

How have you sinned, my son?

CESARE

I have steeped myself in simony. I have pledged estates, castles, benefices to your brother cardinals. I have transferred the documents in the innards of roasted beasts and fowls. All to secure your election as Pope.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

BORGIA

I need six more votes for a majority, my son.

CESARE

So I believe. And I am about to sin further. Ten mules, laden with gold are on the way from our estates in the Romagna. Which will leave the Borgia family sorely strapped...

BORGIA

The papacy will replay us tenfold.

CESARE

But you must set my soul at ease, father. Can a worthy end come of such unworthy means?

BORGIA

Every vote in that conclave will be bought and paid for. And if God intends Rodrigo Borgia to ascend to the papacy, why...

He smiles to himself.

BORGIA (CONT'D)

...He will put me in funds...

CESARE

You must set my soul further at ease, father. Can a family such as ours survive such a prize? We are outsiders, Spaniards, among Romans, of infinite guile. The enemies we have at present will be multiplied, tenfold.

BORGIA

God will protect his Vicar on earth, Cesare, and those dearest to him.

CESARE

If the outcome is to your liking and you do indeed become Pope, will you inform God as to his duties in this regard?

BORGIA

Why the blasphemous tone, my son?

CESARE

Because I swear, if God does not protect us, I shall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BORGIA

You do not need to think such  
ungodly thoughts, Cesare.

CESARE

I am forced to father. By the  
sins I am about to commit. So  
absolve of them, dear father. I  
commit them for you.

BORGIA

Ego te absolvo peccatore tui...

INT. ABBEY. DAY.

Juan, followed by a weeping Abbess, is walking through  
a magnificent abbey, tearing every gold ornament from  
the walls, the altars, putting them into a canvas  
sack...

ABBESS

But these belong to the Abbey,  
it's traditions, it's history -

JUAN

And your benefactor is?

ABBESS

Cardinal Borgia -

JUAN

Then methinks they belong to  
him...

He looks at the Abbess. She is pretty, beneath her  
penitential garb. She is wearing a silver, jewel  
embossed cross around her neck.

JUAN (CONT'D)

Haven't you taken a vow of  
poverty?

ABBESS

Yes, My Lord -

He pulls her robe aside, revealing her cleavage. The  
jewelled cross, dangling there.

The abbess gasps.

ABBESS (CONT'D)

Please -

JUAN

Then you won't be needing this -

He rips it from her neck.

INT. CATHEDRAL. DAY.

A series of gold trumpets, held to the mouths of stone carved angels, on the walls of a cathedral.

Juan is knocking them free with the hilt of his sword.

JUAN

Catch -

He throws the trumpets to a soldier below, who piles them into an already bulging sack.

EXT. CATHEDRAL. DAY.

Ten mules there, with soldiers, each mule laden with sacks. Juan emerges from the cathedral with his bulging sack, throws it over a mule. Mounts his horse, whips it into motion.

JUAN

Back to Rome...

The mules follow, the sacks clinking with the precious ornaments inside...

EXT. DOVECOTE. VILLA GARDEN. EVENING.

Cesare sends the dove flying once more into the evening light.

INT. VATICAN ROOFS. EVENING.

Borgia, walking by the roofs. He is searching for something. He sees the dove, lying exhausted on the tiles. Picks it up. Unties the note from it's leg.

Drops it back on the tiles.

As Borgia walks off, reading the note, we see the inert dove in the foreground, dead.

INT. VATICAN LIBRARY. DAY.

Borgia, turning the pages of an ancient book, with Cardinal Ascanio Sforza.

BORGIA

Of course, Cardinal Sforza, the entire conclave knows that I cannot be both vice-chancellor and pope of Rome.

CONTINUED:

SFORZA

Than you can no longer be vice-chancellor.

BORGIA

You mean I might yet be Pope of Rome?

SFORZA

If you can find a suitable vice-chancellor.

BORGIA

How would you describe the qualities necessary for a suitable vice-chancellor, Cardinal Sforza?

The cardinal smiles to himself. He knows what he must say.

SFORZA

Discretion. Loyalty. And a certain kind of wisdom.

BORGIA

Can you be more specific?

SFORZA

I would say the one who would be a suitable vice-chancellor would be wise to support the vice-chancellor who would be Pope.

BORGIA

And I would say we seem to have an understanding. If I do indeed become Pope I shall know who to thank...

INT. VATICAN CONCLAVE. NIGHT.

The cardinals gathered, pacing, tense. The secretary counts the votes.

SECRETARY

Cardinal Delle Rovere has garnered thirty six votes. Cardinal Ascanio Sforza, twenty five. Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia, forty two.

An intake of breath from the conclave.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)

Cardinal Borgia has the required majority.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A wave of whispering round the gathering. Delle Rovere raises his voice above it.

DELLE ROVERE  
Correction. Cardinal Borgia has bought the required majority.

SECRETARY  
What is your implication?

Borgia looks over at Delle Rovere.

BORGIA  
His implication is that the throne of St. Peter's is for sale.

Orsini joins in the argument.

ORSINI  
...and has been bought by a Spaniard up to his elbows in simony...

BORGIA  
I see. You would have preferred it had been bought by an Italian?

ORSINI  
By someone remotely worthy of the papacy at least -

BORGIA  
Well then. My first act as Pope will be to institute an enquiry into the elective process. The accusation of Simony is of the gravest concern...

This shuts Orsini up. And we begin to realize how clever Borgia really is.

Borgia glances towards Cardinal Sforza, and purses his lips.

BORGIA (CONT'D)  
And my second of course, will be to appoint a vice-chancellor.

Borgia, looking towards Sforza, gives an imperceptible wink.

BORGIA (CONT'D)  
The greatest office, with the greatest income, is my gift. There are two obvious candidates.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

He looks from Orsini to delle Rovere.

BORGIA (CONT'D)  
Cardinals Delle Rovere and  
Orsini.

They listen in silence. And we realize that they too  
can be bought.

BORGIA (CONT'D)  
But the Pope could never appoint  
one who questions his right to  
be Pope.

A silence. Then delle Rovere retracts.

DELLE ROVERE  
That was not my intention.

ORSINI  
Nor was it mine.

BORGIA  
I see. And the Spanish race is  
closest to your bosom. Can we  
proceed then?

He nods to the secretary. He is quite the operator and  
now is in complete control.

SECRETARY  
To conclude. Cardinal Borgia has  
the required majority. And since  
the days of Pope Joan, an  
examination, testes et  
pendentes, is requested.

BORGIA  
And Cardinal Borgia is happy to  
comply.

He walks through the conclave, past delle Rovere. He  
displays no animosity as he passes his aristocratic  
profile.

INT. VATICAN CORRIDORS. NIGHT.

The cardinals walk, in comical procession, through the  
tiny corridors.

Borgia follows, last, smiling to himself.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM. NIGHT.

A series of circular benches, rising above a space,  
where sits a marble chair, with a circular hole cut in  
it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A young priest stands beside it, with a bowl of water.

The cardinals enter, and seat themselves at the benches.

Delle Rovere whispers to Orsini.

DELLE ROVERE

Can there be any doubt that the good cardinal is male?

ORSINI

Not if you count his children.

SFORZA

Let him who is without children cast the first stone...

ORSINI

I have heard rumors of a rhinoceros horn...

SFORZA

That small?

They chatter on like this, in the Renaissance equivalent of locker room talk, as

BELOW THEM -

Borgia enters, last.

He walks slowly towards the marble chair, with the hole in the centre.

He raises his cardinals robes.

He sits.

The young priest washes his hands.

BORGIA

Is that water warm?

PRIEST

I am afraid not, your grace.

And now his hands are shaking.

BORGIA

But those hands are, I trust.

The priest hesitates.

BORGIA (CONT'D)

Go on. The suspense is killing them...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

And the priest places his hands beneath Borgia's robes and feels for his genitals.

PRIEST

Habet duos testiculos et benes  
pendentes.

ORSINI

So. He has two testicles, well  
hung.

The cardinals chuckle.

SECRETARY

Habemus papam.

The cardinals cheer. A bell begins to toll.

EXT. VATICAN ROOFS. DAWN.

Bells, ringing all over the vatican. White smoke billows from the chimneys. Thunderous cheers, from the crowd, below.

INT. VATICAN CORRIDORS. DAWN.

Rodrigo, walking down a long corridor towards a balcony, the murmur of crowds and the dawn light. He has an enigmatic smile on his lips.

EXT. BALCONY. DAWN.

Rodrigo reaches the balcony, raises his arms in the papal benediction. The crowd's murmur swells to an almighty roar...

INT. WHOREHOUSE. NIGHT.

A group of whores, lying on a rose petalled floor, dressed provocatively in white nun's outfits.

A drunken Juan pours wine from a huge bottle, over their bodies. As if it were a renaissance wet T shirt competition, the red wine exposes their beautiful breasts.

JUAN

Your sins are all forgiven  
sisters -

He falls on top of them.

WHORE

By the Pope's bastard?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

JUAN  
Son. His favourite son...

EXT. BORGIA VILLA. EVENING.

Borgia sits at dinner al fresco, with Vanossa, by the dove-cote. Like any married couple, but now with a significant difference. There are bells, still ringing from the city.

VANOSSA  
So. You have won.

BORGIA  
Yes. I've won.

VANOSSA  
My congratulations.

She pours him wine. She knows some statement is coming, but doesn't know what form it will take.

BORGIA  
And I have lost.

And here it comes. Her hand stays with the bottle.

VANOSSA  
Ah. What have you lost, my love?

BORGIA  
You.

VANOSSA  
You'll never lose me.

BORGIA  
Not in spirit, maybe. But in fact, I may have to.

VANOSSA  
The pope cannot love?

BORGIA  
The Pope can love God. But to be seen to love anyone else would be... unthinkable.

VANOSSA  
So. We can find ways to... accommodate our affections... Something like we've always done.

BORGIA  
No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A tear comes to her eye. She blinks, doesn't disclose it. She is used to containing her emotions.

BORGIA (CONT'D)

Not only must the Pope be chaste. He must be seen to be chaste.

VANOSSA

Ah.

She reaches for his hand. He squeezes hers. There is genuine affection between them.

VANOSSA (CONT'D)

We have our children. You can still love them, no?

BORGIA

Cesare will have a career in the church. Juan in the papal military. And Lucrezia will one day marry.

VANOSSA

As for me, I suppose I always knew this day would come. As long as you are with me in spirit...

BORGIA

I always will be.

VANOSSA

And with no-one else, in fact...

BORGIA

That is equally unthinkable, Vanossa.

VANOSSA

And why this new austerity, my dear cardinal?

BORGIA

I promised the dying Pope Innocent. We need to return to the simplicity that our Saviour lived by.

VANOSSA

You? Promised that?

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

A huge kitchen, under a seemingly endless series of stone arches, each with its own blazing oven.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Chefs run about in a frenzy, preparing lobster, suckling pig, exotic fish and fowl.

Tray after tray of roasted quail, duck, pheasant are pulled from the ovens and garnished by numerous cooks..

The sense of excess is obscene and overwhelming.

We hear a voice, over.

BURCHART (V.O.)

Item. The coronation of Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia as Pope Alexander Vth. For the breakfast banquet, two thousand quail, seventeen hundred duck, seven hundred french Capon, fifteen hundred platter of oyster, thirty seven barrels of Tuscan wine...

EXT. ROMAN STREETS. DAY.

A magnificent procession, heading towards St. Peters.

BURCHART (V.O.)

For the ceremonial procession, horse, arms and livery for seven hundred priests and cardinals with their retinues, knights and grandees...

A carriage, drawing Vanossa, Cesare, Juan and Lucrezia, all respendently dressed.

BURCHART (V.O.) (CONT'D)

For the Borgia family, a sandalwood carriage, gold inlaid, refurbished in Venice...

A ceremonial throne, drawn by four horses liveried in gold. Borgia sits on it, in gold and silver vestments. Nodding to the crowd...

BURCHART (V.O.) (CONT'D)

For Pope Alexander, a ceremonial throne constructed by Florentine master builders, gold and silver plated, four Andalusian horses, crowned with ostrich feathered, liveried with silk, threaded gold and silver...

Lucrezia, in the carriage, a beautiful pearl embossed veil around her head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BURCHART (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 For Lucrezia Borgia, a mantilla  
 of handwoven Catalan lace,  
 embroidered with nine hundred  
 pearls, silk stocking from...

INT. CARRIAGE. DAY.

Vanossa looks like Jackie Kennedy, in black lace.  
 Cesare is beside her, dressed soberly in simple, black  
 clerical garb. He lifts the black mantilla from her  
 face.

CESARE  
 You look beautiful mother. But  
 you must try to remember you are  
 not in mourning.

VANOSSA  
 But perhaps I am...

CESARE  
 You think you are losing your  
 family? The life we have lived?

VANOSSA  
 And what are we gaining?

CESARE  
 The future?

VANOSSA  
 I wonder who will protect us  
 from it?

CESARE  
 Me?

VANOSSA  
 You are a man of God, Cesare.  
 Not a man of arms...

Cesare looks out the window, sees Juan prancing in  
 magnificent armour, at the head of the Swiss Guard.

CESARE  
 Juan, then...

But he doesn't believe it. Neither does she.

VANOSSA  
 Juan needs protection himself...

CESARE  
 Well then. It will have to be  
 God.

INT. ST PETER'S. DAY.

Sunlight streams through the incense smoke as a heavenly choir sings.

All of the royalty of Europe gathered, in st Peter's. Borgia walks like a new bride, down the aisle towards the altar. There, the secretary raises the Papal Crown.

SECRETARY

I appoint thee the Chosen of  
God, Bishop of Rome, Vicar of  
Jesus Christ, Primate of the  
West, Sovereign of Vatican City,  
Servant of the Servants of God -

It seems he will go on forever with the titles.

DOWN IN THE PEWS -

Lucrezia whispers to Cesare.

LUCREZIA

That is so many titles, Cesare.  
What will his family call him  
now?

CESARE

Holy father.

UP BY THE ALTAR -

The Secretary is nearing the end.

SECRETARY

His Holiness, Pope Alexander the  
Sixth.

He brings the Papal Crown down on Alexander's head.

A Te Deum sounds out. The choir sings.

DOWN IN THE PEWS -

Lucrezia and Cesare.

LUCREZIA

Holy father. That's easy. Even I  
can remember that. And tell me  
dear brother -

CESARE

What, sis?

It is obvious they mean the world to each other.

LUCREZIA

What must I call myself? Holy  
Daughter?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CESARE

You are still Lucrezia Borgia,  
my dear. You will only change  
your name when you marry.

LUCREZIA

And when will I marry?

CESARE

Never, if I can help it.

LUCREZIA

But surely it is good to marry,  
Cesare?

Cesare looks fondly at her. She is so young, the  
thought of marriage seems preposterous.

CESARE

As Pope's daughter, you will  
have every Prince of Europe  
vying for your hand. But they  
may care little for your heart.  
There, for example, is the King  
of Naples, who wants to enlarge  
his domains.

We see the king, sitting beside his young son.

CESARE (CONT'D)

A marriage to Rome would help  
his ambitions.

He points to the french ambassador.

CESARE (CONT'D)

And there is the ambassador to  
King Charles of France. He  
regards the Kingdom of Naples as  
France's natural right. A  
marriage to Charles would help  
him enforce it. The only problem  
is, he is as ugly as a boar.

Lucrezia shudders.

CESARE (CONT'D)

And there is the duke, Giovanni  
Sforza. Next to his cousin,  
Catherina Sforza.

He points to a foppish young man across the way, next  
to a tall, beautiful woman.

CESARE (CONT'D)

Their kingdoms are next to the  
Papal States.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CESARE (CONT'D)

If you married him, France  
couldn't get to Naples, Naples  
could get to Rome. Must I go on?

LUCREZIA

Perhaps I should do what you  
have done, brother. Take Holy  
Orders. Give my heart to God.

CESARE

It might be the safer option, my  
love.

LUCREZIA

Does Papa have so many enemies?

CESARE

As our father, perhaps not. But  
as Pope...

DELLE ROVERE -

Sitting beside the French Ambassador.

DELLE ROVERE

The King of France must be  
aware, ambassador, that we have  
placed the Papal mitre in the  
hands of an ape...

AMBASSADOR

He has hopes, Cardinal. That the  
office brings it's own grace  
with it. And the grace of God  
can transform the worst of  
men...

DELLE ROVERE

And if it doesn't?

AMBASSADOR

He will observe with interest  
what harm a mitred ape can do...

INT. BANQUETING HALL. DAWN.

A huge, seemingly endless banqueting hall, now empty of  
its guests. The table is groaning with food half  
consumed and an army of flunkys arrives, to clear it.

BURCHART (V.O.)

Item. Coronation banquet. Five  
thousand snails from Perigord in  
France. Three thousand duck  
livers from Normandy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The camera tracks down the sumptuous remains, out of the banqueting hall to find Johannes Burchart in a tiny room, continuing with his inventory, writing with a quill pen.

BURCHART (CONT'D)  
Two hundred weight of caviar  
from the Caspian Sea...

INT. ST PETER'S. DAY.

A figure, sitting alone, dwarfed by the huge altar. It is Rodrigo Borgia, now pope Alexander the Sixth.

Down the nave comes Cesare.

CESARE  
You called for me, father.

ALEXANDER  
Yes, my son. I need to confess.

CESARE  
To me?

ALEXANDER  
To whom does the Pope of Rome  
unburden his soul, Cesare?

CESARE  
To his official confessor,  
surely, appointed by the Curia,  
bound by the sacramental vows...

ALEXANDER  
We have bought them all, my son.  
We have shown, perhaps, how  
little those vows are worth...

And Cesare now sits.

CESARE  
You surprise me father.

ALEXANDER  
Yes. I surprise myself. For I  
felt the hand of God descend on  
me, when that crown touched my  
head. The Pope of Rome is  
answerable to nobody but God  
Himself. Such responsibility is  
humbling, truly humbling. And it  
has made me think, perhaps God  
had his plan for us.

CESARE  
Can you elucidate?

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

ALEXANDER

We used whatever means we could to gain the Papacy. All of the others bought, sold, traded, bartered. Power, influence, money. We merely proved ourselves better at the game. But perhaps that itself was part of God's plan.

CESARE

God's plan?

ALEXANDER

To place one such as ourselves in the Papal Throne. Only one so adroit at the arts of politics could garner the forces necessary to do what God wishes to be done.

CESARE

And that is?

ALEXANDER

To effect the reform of our Holy Mother Church.

CESARE

Ah. A noble task, father.

ALEXANDER

And one which I can hardly accomplish alone. I will need your help, Cesare.

CESARE

I am at your service.

ALEXANDER

Overawed as I am, by the responsibilities that face me.

CESARE

Perhaps what you need to do, Holy father, is give it time.

ALEXANDER

Time?

CESARE

Time. To let that crown settle on your forehead. Do nothing hasty.

ALEXANDER

Small beginnings, then.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CESARE

Yes.

ALEXANDER

But to good ends.

INT. VATICAN CONCLAVE. DAY.

Pope Alexander sits at the head of the cardinals in conclave. He is in his new mode, of restrained humility.

Cesare stands behind him, like a consigliere. Attentive, silent, almost invisible.

ALEXANDER

...these offices we grant, in the full expectation that they will be used wisely, for the restoration of the honour of our Holy Mother Church. So help me God.

The cardinals repeat.

CARDINALS

...so help me god.

ALEXANDER

And the last office in our gift, the post of vice-chancellor, the office that stands a heartbeat from our papacy goes to -

He closes his eyes, as if looking for guidance.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

The most august, not valued colleague and the brightest hope for the future of the church -

ON DELLE ROVERE'S AND ORSINIS'S FACES -

They have both been promised this.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

Cardinal Ascanio Sforza.

The pleasure and cruelty of the moment is not lost on the gathering. But Orsini rises from his seat in fury.

ORSINI

Simony - I charge you now and in public with trading the sacred offices like a market huckster -

Cesare tries to calm him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CESARE

My I remind the cardinal he is  
in conclave -

ALEXANDER

Perhaps we misheard him -

ORSINI

That office was promised to me -

ALEXANDER

Ah. Did you pay for it?

ORSINI

With my acceptance of your foul  
election -

ALEXANDER

When the Pope pledges to banish  
all suspicion of simony from the  
cardinalate, he means what he  
says. God has chosen us as a new  
broom to sweep the Vatican clean  
of corruption. Which is  
precisely why we choose one who  
has no expectation of  
advancement - Cardinal Sforza.

Sforza bows, graciously.

SFORZA

Your Holiness, I pray I might  
prove worthy of the honour.

And delle Rovere interjects.

DELLE ROVERE

I pray so too.

Cesare glances his way. Delle Rovere is proving himself  
far cleverer than the bullish Orsini.

DELLE ROVERE (CONT'D)

In fact I compliment his  
Holiness on a most inspired  
choice. I fully approve of  
his...

His lips curl with the slightest disdain.

DELLE ROVERE (CONT'D)

...new broom. And in honour of  
his new appointment, I invite  
Cardinal Sforza, His Holiness  
and the College of Cardinals to  
a banquet at my palace in two  
days time.

He bows graciously. Whispers to Orsini.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DELLE ROVERE (CONT'D)  
Bow, you fool -

Orsini bows.

INT. FRENCH AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE. DAY.

The ambassador, in conference with Cardinals Orsini and delle Rovere.

AMBASSADOR  
The French King has informed me that he must do business with whatever Pope the Curia has seen fit to elect.

ORSINI  
What business does he have in mind?

AMBASSADOR (CONT'D)  
He is new to the throne. He would dearly like a ceremony of investiture in St. Peter's. By the Pope of Rome.

ORSINI  
He wants the seal of Christ's Vicar on earth upon his crown.

The ambassador smiles, thinly.

AMBASSADOR  
His majesty could not have put it better himself.

Delle Rovere speaks up.

DELLE ROVERE  
But the blessing of a pretender would be worth less than nothing. And the blessing of the Anti-Christ would be a positive curse.

AMBASSADOR  
What are you implying?

DELLE ROVERE  
I am implying that Rodrigo Borgia secured his votes from the curia through the foulest of methods. That his election will soon be declared null and void. And that your gracious Highness, if he so wants such an investiture would be wise to bide his time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

AMBASSADOR

So. I gather you have access to information that I am not privy to.

DELLE ROVERE

Borgia's reign has already been scandalous enough. I can assure you, it will also be brief. And that it will go down in history as the briefest, blackest stain on the chair of St. Peter's. You must tell your French majesty of this exchange with the greatest of urgency...

EXT. MARKET. ROME. DAY.

Cesare, strolling, in his anonymous priest's garb, through a busy market place.

He comes to a stall where a huge Abyssinian man is selling spices.

There is a small tame monkey on his shoulder.

Cesare picks up a small bowl of spice.

ABYSINNIAN

Saffron, my Lord, from the  
Ethiophe...

Cesare dips his finger in the bowl, holds it up to the monkey, who licks it.

CESARE

He approves?

ABYSINNIAN

Indeed. He is my connoisseur of  
spices.

CESARE

How much?

ABYSINNIAN

For the bowl?

CESARE

For the monkey -

EXT. CARRIAGE. NIGHT.

A carriage, being drawn through the Roman streets.  
Flanked by the Papal Guard.

INT. CARRIAGE. NIGHT.

Cesare and Pope Alexander inside it. Cesare, bizarrely, has the monkey on his lap.

ALEXANDER  
Are you going to share it with me?

CESARE  
Share what, Holy Father?

ALEXANDER  
Why you take a monkey to a banquet?

CESARE  
I fear the other cardinals might not share your appetite for reformation.

ALEXANDER  
And the monkey does?

CESARE  
Yes. He is an excellent judge -

He lifts the monkey to his face. The monkey licks his lips.

CESARE (CONT'D)  
-of appetite -

EXT. DELLE ROVERE'S PALACE. NIGHT.

Tables set out on the lawns, framed by a magnificent renaissance palace. It displays far more taste and artistry than the Borgia Villa.

The cardinalate, at dinner.

Cesare sits beside his father, the monkey on his lap.

ALEXANDER  
Reform of our Holy Mother Church may happen slowly. But God has spoken to me - as he spoke to my predecessor, Pope Innocent. Happen it must.

DELLE ROVERE  
Shall we dine on gruel tonight then, your Holiness? I could inform my cooks -

ALEXANDER  
I am your guest tonight, cardinal.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

And we will dine according to your choosing. We must begin with the little things.

ORSINI

The little things.

ALEXANDER

Sale of indulgences, for example...

DELLE ROVERE

Thank goodness. I can have the wine poured then? Unless wine is too is under edict -

ALEXANDER

The last supper was celebrated with wine -

Delle Rovere nods to a manservant waiting. Michelleto. A man with a pockmarked, inscrutable face. He pours wine for the pope.

CESARE

Let me taste that -

MICHELETTO

It's an excellent vintage, My Lord.

CESARE

I've no doubt.

He holds the glass in front of the monkey.

Alexander smiles, finally realising the purpose of the monkey.

The monkey slurps.

DELLE ROVERE

How is his palate?

CESARE

Superb.

The monkey growls. Seems to like it.

DELLE ROVERE

And what's his opinion?

CESARE

Tuscan. Early forties. He salutes your good taste.

He nods to Micheletto, who pours wine for the Pope and the rest of the gathering.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DELLE ROVERE

A great wine. Like the Papacy  
itself. Mature. Rounded. Its  
roots in the soil. Its bouquet  
in the heavens. Consumed by a  
monkey.

He swirls the liquid in his glass. Glances at  
Alexander, to see has the intended offence been taken.  
Alexander smiles, graciously.

ALEXANDER

Is there a metaphor there?

DELLE ROVERE

Perhaps, your Holiness. For our  
unworthiness as servants of God.  
We are all of us, unequal to his  
calling.

ALEXANDER

We are all animals, blessed with  
an eternal soul. There go we,  
but for the grace of God.

The monkey crawls along the table. It lifts its leg and  
pisses on Ascanio Sforza. The entire table breaks into  
laughter.

CESARE

It seems nature, not metaphor,  
calls.

He lifts the monkey gingerly. The monkey squeals.

CESARE (CONT'D)

He begs your lordship's pardon.

Cesare walks with the monkey, away from the table.

EXT. GARDENS. NIGHT.

A lone figure, walking towards a small gazebo, with a  
wine decanter in each hand. It is Micheletto.

Cesare appears some distance behind him, walking with  
the monkey.

Cesare watches Micheletto slip like a shadow into the  
gazebo.

EXT. GAZEBO. NIGHT.

The gazebo in shadow. The sound of someone grinding,  
like a pepper grinder, comes from inside it. Cesare  
walks quietly towards it.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

The monkey makes a throaty noise.

Cesare clamps his hand over the monkey's jaw.

INT. GAZEBO. NIGHT.

Micheletto grinding a tan coloured powder, with a pestle and mortar. Two decanters of wine next to it. He senses someone behind him. Keeps grinding with one hand. Reaches for a knife with the other.

EXT. GAZEBO. NIGHT.

Cesare, with his hand clamped over the monkey's jaw. He edges towards the gazebo entrance.

He sees -

INT. GAZEBO. NIGHT.

Micheletto, back to him, in the darkness, grinding away.

Cesare draws something unexpected from his priestly cassock. A knife.

Then he leaps on Micheletto, knife drawn. To his surprise, he finds Micheletto faster than him - with a knife towards his own throat.

CESARE

My God you're fast -

MICHELETTO

For a cook. And you -

CESARE

For a priest -

The monkey leaps on the table. Licks the powder.

CESARE (CONT'D)

On kitchen duty?

MICHELETTO

For tonight.

CESARE

Who pays you?

MICHELETTO

Tonight? Cardinal delle Rovere.  
Tomorrow, who knows.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CESARE

Whatever your being paid I'll  
double it.

MICHELETTO

They all say that.

CESARE

No. You have heard me. I could  
use someone that fast.

MICHELETTO

You could?

Cesare nods. Micheletto slowly relaxes the knife - and  
finds Cesare's own knife to his throat.

CESARE

But not that stupid.

Now they both have knives to each other's throats.

MICHELETTO

If you employ me sire, I will  
never be that stupid again.

Cesare smiles. Both knives are now drawing blood.

CESARE

Maybe we understand each other.

MICHELETTO

A rare kind of understanding.

CESARE

You first.

Micheletto stares. Drops his knife. Cesare presses  
harder with his.

MICHELETTO

Of course...

As if he expected this.

CESARE

Tell me why I shouldn't.

MICHELETTO

Because of the sixth commandment  
father. Thou shalt not kill.

CESARE

I'll be forgiven. The Pope is my  
confessor.

MICHELETTO

Because you'll never meet an  
assassin like me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CESARE

That's good...

MICHELETTO

I will gut any throat for you. I will smother infants in their beds. Someone as pitiless as you...

Cesare stares, at his impenetrable, pock marked face.

CESARE

Yes?

MICHELETTO

Needs someone as pitiless as me.

CESARE

And in the powder?

MICHELETTO

Eternal life.

CESARE

For whom?

MICHELETTO

You. Your father. Who else?

The monkey squeals, falls from the table, frothing at the mouth. Then it falls down, dead.

CESARE

Not very subtle.

MICHELETTO

There was no need for subtlety, tonight. They all wanted you dead.

And Cesare finally relaxes the knife. Pours the pestle into one of the decanters.

CESARE

Serve it to delle Rovere.

MICHELETTO

He knows not to drink from me.

CESARE

Orsini, then. And if you pass this test, you have a lifelong contract.

He hands the decanter to Micheletto. Micheletto considers, for a moment, then takes it and goes.

EXT. DELLE ROVERE'S PALACE. NIGHT.

Micheletto, retreating from the table, decanters in his hand. We have no idea who he has served.

Cesare approaches the table, from the darkness. He glances at Micheletto as he passes him, at the red wine in the decanters. Micheletto doesn't look at him. And his eyes reveal nothing.

And suddenly Cesare has a flash of panic. He has no idea who Micheletto has served.

He glances round at the retreating figure of Micheletto.

He looks at the table. Eyes every glass in the gathering. His father's, delle Rovere's, Orsini's. His own.

Eventually he has no alternative but to sit.

DELLE ROVERE

Your eminence - you are bleeding

-

Cesare brings a handkerchief to his neck, bleeding from Micheletto's blade.

CESARE

Damn monkey bit me.

DELLE ROVERE

Animals will do that. They lack soul.

He raises his glass.

DELLE ROVERE (CONT'D)

I propose a toast. To Metaphor.

He raises his glass. The table follows suit. Cesare raises his, looks at the red wine in his goblet. He looks at the raised glasses of the gathering. Any one of them could contain the poison...

CESARE

Why metaphor?

Delle Rovere drinks. Everyone follows suit. Cesare looks to his father, as he brings the goblet to his lips. Delle Rovere looks to him. And Cesare has no alternative but to drink.

DELLE ROVERE

Because she is endlessly pliable. A monkey one minute, a prince the next.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DELLE ROVERE (CONT'D)  
 And what her hidden meaning is,  
 only God in his infinite wisdom  
 knows.

CESARE  
 I propose another toast. To  
 monkeys.

ORSINI  
 Monkeys?

CESARE  
 They lick your hand one minute,  
 bite your neck the next.

His eyes traverse the gathering. He looks from his  
 father to Orsini. And now Orsini is rising, clutching  
 his collar.

CESARE (CONT'D)  
 And everyone knows what you do  
 with the monkey that bites you.

Delle Rovere stares at Orsini. Orsini is trying to say  
 something, but cant get the words out. Delle Rovere  
 says, quite slowly.

DELLE ROVERE  
 And what do you do with the  
 monkey that bites you?

CESARE  
 You wring it's neck.

Orsini sways by the table, tearing his collar from his  
 neck. Foam and spittle come out of his mouth. The  
 cardinals stare in horror. Piccolimini, beside him,  
 rises.

PICCOLOMINI  
 Are you ill, your Grace?

ORSINI  
 Poison -

He staggers backwards, pulling at the tablecloth.

ORSINI (CONT'D)  
 I accuse -

He stares from Cesare to Delle Rovere, who seems frozen  
 to the spot.

CESARE  
 The cooks?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Orsini tries to get another word out, but can't. He falls backwards, pulling the entire tablecloth with him. Wine and food spill over the aghast cardinals, who leap like frightened deer away from the table.

Cesare grabs his father's elbow, who seems as stunned as everybody else.

CESARE (CONT'D)

Come. Father -

Through the chaos he can see delle Rovere - the only still one in the gathering. Cesare hisses in his aghast father's ear.

CESARE (CONT'D)

Now -

INT. GAZEBO. NIGHT.

The dead monkey on the floor. In the background, we see the a scene of utter confusion, as servants try to minister to the dying Orsini, the cardinals flit about like ineffectual moths.

Delle Rovere walks through the gardens, calling.

DELLE ROVERE

Micheletto? Micheletto?

INT/EXT. DELLE ROVERE'S PALACE. NIGHT.

ON CESARE -

Dragging his father the pope down a long, ornate corridor towards the front courtyard, as what seems like the whole retinue of delle Rovere's palace run the other way, towards the ruined banquet.

CESARE

We were saved by a monkey,  
father -

ALEXANDER

It's not possible -

CESARE

The poison was meant for us -

ALEXANDER

Nobody poisons the pope -

CESARE

Are you aware what the gossips  
call you? The mitred ape? Half  
of Rome was waiting to celebrate  
this outcome -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As the reality sinks home to Alexander, his voice rises.

ALEXANDER

You poison a rat, you poison a  
rabid dog - not the Pope of  
Rome - not the heir to St. Peter  
-

CESARE

The idea offends you -

ALEXANDER

It offends me, it offends  
nature, it offends God Himself -

They are in the courtyard now. Cesare pulls open the huge gates.

CESARE

So, God will take his revenge  
then -

He signals for his father's carriage. Alexander takes a breath.

ALEXANDER

No. We will.

As the carriage pulls up, Cesare notices a figure in the shadows, beyond the carriage. Micheletto.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

I'll send Juan, with the papal  
Guard. Delle Rovere shall be  
arrested tonight -

CESARE

If he hasn't fled already -

Cesare helps his father in. He whacks the horses with his hand.

ALEXANDER

Wait - you're coming - surely -

CESARE

I have unfinished business -

To the Papal Guard, managing the horses -

CESARE (CONT'D)

GO!

And the carriage pulls away.

To reveal Michelletto.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CESARE (CONT'D)  
Excellent service.

MICHELETTO  
I fear it's not over yet.

CESARE  
What do you mean?

MICHELETTO  
There is more to the Borgia  
family than father and son -

And it suddenly dawns on Cesare. He begins to run.

INT. LUCREZIA'S BEDROOM. BORGIA VILLA. NIGHT.

Vanossa draws a blanket over the sleeping Lucrezia,  
kisses her cheek.

VANOSSA  
Good night -

EXT. VATICAN GATES. NIGHT.

The Pope's carriage thunders through the Vatican gates.  
As the Papal retinue run to open the carriage doors,  
the Pope is already out, screaming in fury.

ALEXANDER  
Summon Juan Borgia and the Papal  
Guard. NOW!

EXT. ROMAN STREETS. NIGHT.

Cesare, running on foot through the Roman streets. A  
horseman comes behind him. It is Micheletto.

MICHELETTO  
Here -

He holds out a hand as he rides. Cesare leaps on the  
back.

INT. DELLE ROVERE'S PALACE. NIGHT.

Delle Rovere, striding in fury through the palace. The  
Captain of his guard beside him.

DELLE ROVERE  
Where is that pockmarked  
poisoner -

He pinions his captain of the Guard against the wall.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

DELLE ROVERE (CONT'D)  
How could you have let this  
happen -

CAPTAIN  
The banquet was his task, my  
Lord. You placed me in charge of  
the other arrangements -

DELLE ROVERE  
And can you call them off?

CAPTAIN  
I fear it is too late now my  
Lord -

Delle Rovere lets him go. He knows he is finished.

DELLE ROVERE  
We are leaving -

INT. LUCREZIA'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Vanossa blows out the candle by her daughter's bedside.

EXT. BORGIA VILLA. NIGHT.

As the light goes out, two figures, dark cloaks, move  
towards the barred gates.

INT. VATICAN ARMOURY. NIGHT.

Juan is being fitted into his armour, as the Papal  
Guard assemble around him.

JUAN  
Breastplate -

Servants pinion an elaborately modelled breastplate  
round his chest. Juan admires himself in a mirror.

JUAN (CONT'D)  
Helmet -

A servant grabs a helmet from a rack.

JUAN (CONT'D)  
Not that one, fool - the  
feathered one, there -

He whacks the servant round the head -

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JUAN (CONT'D)  
What am I, a common soldier?

The servant rushes to grab the feathered helmet.

EXT. BORGIA VILLA. NIGHT.

One dark cloaked figure helps the other climb over the gates.

The sound behind them. Of a horse.

They turn, and see Micheletto there.

MICHELETTO  
Am I too late?

ASSASSIN  
We haven't even started.

MICHELETTO  
Ah. Then you're too late.

Cesare's blade comes from behind the assassin and cuts his throat.

The other assassin runs. Micheletto follows him on horseback and drags him back, squealing like a pig.

MICHELETTO (CONT'D)  
You want the pleasure, my lord?

Cesare shakes his head.

Micheletto draws a blade and cuts his throat.

INT. DELLE ROVERE'S PALACE. NIGHT.

Servants tear through Delle Rovere's rooms, pulling open drawers, flinging open cabinets, filling various saddle-bags with clothes, documents, gold coin.

Delle Rovere strides through. He is tearing off his cardinal's purple, putting on armor.

DELLE ROVERE  
I want my household cavalry  
ready to ride.

CAPTAIN  
Where to my Lord?

DELLE ROVERE  
Anywhere out of this cesspit -

EXT. VATICAN GATES. NIGHT.

Juan riding through, in his feathered helmet, followed by the Papal Guard. He looks magnificent, but might be already late for the party...

EXT. BORGIA VILLA. NIGHT.

Cesare looks down as the assassin breathes his last.

CESARE

You planned this massacre thoroughly.

MICHELETTO

If I had planned it, we wouldn't be having this conversation.

Cesare stares at him. Sees that he means it. Shivers, with strange admiration.

CESARE

Are you that meticulous?

MICHELETTO

Always.

Micheletto wraps the body of his assassin in his cloak.

MICHELETTO (CONT'D)

So the blood won't stain your mother's tile...

EXT. DELLE ROVERE'S PALACE. NIGHT.

The massive, barred gates of Delle Rovere's Palace. Members of the Papal Guard are wielding a battering ram, crushing and twisting the ornate metal.

Juan paces impatiently on his horse.

JUAN

If we find the bird has fled -  
there will be hell to pay -

EXT. DELLE ROVERE'S PALACE GROUNDS. NIGHT.

On the lawns, beyond the ruined banquet table, the captain of the guard and mounted soldiers are assembling. One of them is holding a restless stallion by the reigns. A groom is trying to fix a saddle to the pawing horse.

Delle Rovere strides from the Palace, fixing on his armour.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DELLE ROVERE

You hear that sound?

The sound of the ram, battering twisted metal. The groom's hands shake.

DELLE ROVERE (CONT'D)

Give it here -

He grabs the saddle from the groom, and begins to tie it himself.

EXT. BORGIA VILLA. NIGHT.

Cesare and Micheletto.

CESARE

Who planned it? Your master?

MICHELETTO

Delle Rovere planned it. I have no master now but you.

CESARE

I'm honoured. But perhaps you'll tell me why?

MICHELETTO

Didn't you make me an offer?

CESARE

Yes. But you could have... let things take their course... betrayed me... Most of your kind do.

MICHELETTO

My kind? I don't have a kind.

He looks at Cesare.

MICHELETTO (CONT'D)

And, I suspect, neither do you.

Cesare smiles. This one is a keeper.

CESARE

Your name, sweet assassin

MICHELETTO

Micheletto.

Cesare takes his hand.

CESARE

You are now in the service of this servant of the Lord.

EXT. DELLE ROVERE'S PALACE GATES. NIGHT.

A battering ram finally shatters the gates. Juan charges through on his horse, into the palace.

EXT. DELLE ROVERE'S PALACE GROUNDS. NIGHT.

Delle Rovere leaps on his saddled horse, and gallops through the ornate gardens. There is a wide moat there, with the Roman countryside beyond.

INT. DELLE ROVERE'S PALACE. NIGHT.

Juan on his horse, galloping down the ornate corridor, scattering servant left and right. He emerges into the palace grounds.

EXT. DELLE ROVERE'S PALACE/MOAT. NIGHT.

Delle Rovere, heading towards the moat. He spurs his horse, and clears it, just barely.

As members of his retinue follow, we see Juan's horse, galloping towards them in the background.

ON JUAN -

As he gallops forwards. He attempts the same jump, but at the last moment hesitates.

His horse rears. He is thrown onto the lawns.

JUAN'S POV -

Delle Rovere, and his retinue, disappearing into the night.

INT. BORGIA VILLA. NIGHT.

Vanossa, turning a corridor. Cesare is slipping in the front door.

VANOSSA

You want me to die of fright?

CESARE

No. I'm sorry mother. I bring a message from our father.

VANOSSA

Tell me.

CESARE

That he loves you very much.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VANOSSA

He sent you here to tell me  
that?

CESARE

I'm lying. It's I who love you  
very much.

She puts her arms around him.

VANOSSA

Tell me why you're here, Cesare.

CESARE

I imagine things. Murders. Blood  
spattered throats. Poisoned  
chalices.

VANOSSA

Perhaps you're not wrong. We  
have many enemies, now.

CESARE

Lucrezia is -

VANOSSA

Asleep upstairs -

INT. LUCREZIA'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Cesare at the door, with Vanossa. Looking at Lucrezia,  
sleeping.

VANOSSA

You missed her that much?

CESARE

Always. If anything happened to  
her I'd die.

VANOSSA

What could possibly happen -

CESARE

I'm putting a guard on the  
house.

VANOSSA

Is it that dangerous outside?

CESARE

We are in a different city now.

VANOSSA

Is it still called Rome?

CESARE

I'm not sure it has a name...

EXT. BORGIA VILLA. NIGHT.

Cesare opens the gates, quietly, as Micheletto carries out the corpse inside on his shoulders.

CESARE  
Can you manage two corpses?

MICHELETTO  
No, my lord. But I can make two trips.

CESARE  
No need.

He bends down and picks up the other corpse.

CESARE (CONT'D)  
One should carry one's own corpse.

Blood flows from the corpse's cut throat, onto Cesare's neck and face.

CESARE (CONT'D)  
Mine is quite the bleeder. How about yours?

Micheletto grimaces.

MICHELETTO  
With respect, my lord, perhaps my cut is cleaner than yours.

CESARE  
But then you have more practise...

EXT. TIBER. NIGHT.

The two corpses, on the steps of the Tiber.

Cesare washes the blood from his face, in the water.

Micheletto fills their pockets with stones.

CESARE (CONT'D)  
Stones in their pockets.

MICHELETTO  
Gives them a day's rest, beneath the waters.

He rolls one corpse in, then the other. Watches them slip beneath the dirty waters.

CESARE  
Tricks of the trade.

CONTINUED:

MICHELETTO

I have many more, my Lord.

Cesare stands.

CESARE

You must share them with me...

He begins to walk, along the banks of the river.

EXT. BRIDGE OVER TIBER. NIGHT.

Micheletto, walking Cesare home, discussing his assassins bag of tricks.

MICHELETTO

But for absolute silence, I favour the garrotte.

CESARE

Tell me why.

MICHELETTO

It is hard to cry out, My Lord, with a wire around your throat...

INT. ST PETER'S. NIGHT.

Alexander, sitting on the throne in the huge empty church.

He has a red cardinal's hat (biretta) in his hand.

Cesare walks down the aisle towards him.

ALEXANDER

Delle Rovere has fled.

CESARE

Where?

ALEXANDER

Florence, I would guess. Then maybe France.

CESARE

And you sit here alone, without a guard to protect you?

ALEXANDER

There are guards everywhere. The Pope needed time alone... to consider... the nights events...

He looks at his son.

(CONTINUED)



CONTINUED:

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

You were right, my son. We won't survive this throne through divine grace.

CESARE

How will we survive it?

ALEXANDER

The way we gained it. By any means necessary. As a family. I have two strong sons. One beautiful daughter... I must put them all to good use...

CESARE

Can I propose something father? However unusual it might seem?

ALEXANDER

What, my son?

CESARE

That you give me control of the Papal Armies. And I promise, no one will ever harm us again.

ALEXANDER

You have embraced Holy Orders, Cesare. You know that's not possible.

And Alexander smiles his slow smile.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)

But perhaps I can give you something even better...

CESARE

What?

ALEXANDER

Tonight's unfortunate events have left one cardinal dead. Someone must fill his shoes.

CESARE

Who?

ALEXANDER

My beloved first born son.

And Cesare senses where this is going. He says softly.

CESARE

You think me fitted for such a role?

(CONTINUED)

ALEXANDER

You will be a prince of the church, Cesare. And Juan will be a prince of state.

CESARE

In his mind, he is that already.

ALEXANDER

So I will appoint him Gonfaliere of the Papal Armies...

Cesare raises his voice.

CESARE

He's not capable, father -

ALEXANDER

I will have one son in cloth, Cesare -

CESARE

And you know he's not capable -

Alexander rises, to confront him.

ALEXANDER

- and one in armour -

CESARE

You think armour will protect him?

ALEXANDER

Are you contradicting me? The Pope of Rome?

Father and son, head to head. And Cesare blinks first, as he must.

CESARE

No, father. I merely wish to see our family... survive...

He looks around the basilica.

CESARE (CONT'D)

...the bounty God has thrust upon us...

ALEXANDER

And one last thing. Lucrezia must marry.

Cesare says to himself.

CESARE

So soon?

CONTINUED: (3)

ALEXANDER  
She is thirteen years old.

CESARE  
She's just a child -

ALEXANDER  
Queens have married younger.

CESARE  
And queens have died.

ALEXANDER  
We must make friends of our  
enemies, Cesare. We must bind  
them to us... there is no better  
way than marriage. You can  
perform the rite. As cardinal.

CESARE  
Am I cardinal already?

ALEXANDER  
Kiss this ring.

He holds out his hand. An enormous ring, with a stone  
like an engorged spider on it.

Cesare kneels, and kisses the ring.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)  
Prostrate yourself.

Cesare hesitates.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)  
You know the rite...

And Cesare prostrates himself. Lies face down, his arms  
spread out in a cross, on the marble beneath the alter,  
who his father towers above him, the cardinal's biretta  
in his hands.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)  
This is red as a sign of the  
dignity of the office of a  
cardinal, signifying that you  
are ready to spill your blood  
for the increase of the  
Christian Faith...

The camera rises above the scene, the prostrate  
Christlike form of Cesare and his father above him,  
performing the rite. It's significance seems more  
diabolical than religious.

THE END.

(CONTINUED)

