

CASANOVA

Written by

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WE FADE IN...

But barely. We are in virtual darkness, just able to make out the figure of a man crouched on the floor in his own filth. A desperate man. Remorseful. At the end of his rope.

MAN

Balbi..?

No response. He mutters to himself.

MAN (CONT'D)

You said you'd come. We had a plan...

We are--

INT. LEADS PRISON, VENICE, ITALY - 1753.

The most impenetrable prison in Europe. The Alcatraz of its day. Two floors of utter hell above the Doge Palace.

The man is none other than GIACOMO CASANOVA, 32, as you've never imagined him. Dirty, sweat-stained, his sharp features masked by an unruly beard. He's talking to the adjacent cell, where he expects a fellow prisoner is listening.

GIACOMO

I'm going to die here, Balbi.

No response.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

To die alone, after the way I've lived...

We begin to PUSH IN on him. He forces a smile through his desperation.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

They were never mere bodies, Balbi. Yes, I have loved women to a frenzy, but... I truly loved them.

CLOSER. TIGHTER. On his eyes, an inextinguishable light.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

Each and every one.

SMASH CUT to skin. The porcelain skin of a nubile young woman being devoured, arching her back.

QUICK CUT to an erect nipple, delicately explored by a man, admiring its sheer beauty.

Casanova drifts into frame (never see all of him, but get the idea that he's young and beautiful). As he puts his tongue on her nipple--

MORE CUTS. Giacomo pleasuring an array of women: Countesses and virgins. Milk maids. A Farmer's daughters.

We're building a MONTAGE. Something stylistic and sexy, that builds with intensity. Shots of fucking. Sucking. Lust. Danger. Ecstasy.

And SHOTS upon SHOTS of women. Opera singers. Housekeepers. Shopkeepers. Lawyer's wives and businessmen's daughters.

FASTER CUTS, making you wonder... is Giacomo a predatory animal in his prime? Or a man with an amazing passion for life and all its beauty? Or both?

A threesome. An orgy.

A transvestite. Or is that a man?

The cuts come FASTER AND FASTER until the rapid imagery--

STOPS on Giacomo (in his prime) gently kissing the nape of a woman, undoing the back of her black outfit.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

When I am away from you, I kiss the air, thinking that you are there.

It slips off, revealing her shoulder, white like the purest marble. He can't *stomach* how beautiful she is.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

I dream that we are born for each other, and curse a world that puts any barrier between us.

His fingers disappear between her legs. The black outfit hits the floor. We realize it's a Nun's habit.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

Desires are but pain and torment, but enjoyment is sweet because it delivers us from them.

She can no longer resist him. She climbs on his lap and takes his manhood inside her. All we can hear is their BREATH until--

Footsteps approach outside. POUNDING on the door.

WIDEN OUT to reveal they're in AN ABBEY. The Nun hurries to cover herself, Giacomo hides, as the door BURSTS open and----

CRASH!!!! A loud sound that brings us back inside--

THE PRISON CELL. A block of stone just crash landed at Giacomo's feet. He looks up. A square hole in the ceiling of the prison cell. A man looking down at Giacomo.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

Balbi?

Gicomo reaches for his outstretched hand. We SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. ROOF - DOGE PALACE - NIGHT

A lead plate comes loose and Giacomo climbs on to the roof, his burly frame SILHOUETTED against the backdrop of Venice. MARIN BALBI, 42, a fellow prisoner, joins him on the roof.

BALBI

Now what?

Giacomo looks both ways, thinking.

BALBI (CONT'D)

You said you had a fail safe plan
if I got you to the roof.

GIACOMO

Yes. Of course.

He's lying. Giacomo ties his possessions around his neck, then edges himself along the ridge, looking to the next building in hopes of jumping across. But the drop is HUGE! They'll never make it.

He spots a DORMER WINDOW two-thirds of the way down the roof.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

Follow me.

BALBI

You want to go back inside?!?

GIACOMO

Ever notice how they leave us to
rot after dark?

(off his look)

The palace is closed at night.

Very carefully, Giacomo slides down the treacherous slope of the roof but gains too much momentum! He MISSES the window and is headed OFF the roof! In the very last instant, he--

GRABS the gutter, his body fluttering in space, hundreds of yards above the swirling canal, for all of Venice to see.

BALBI

They'll see you!

Giacomo uses every ounce of strength to HEAVE himself back on to the roof. Winded, scratched and bleeding, he JUMPS to his feet and goes back to the dormer window. He kicks at it. KICKS again and it caves in.

Giacomo goes through. Balbi follows. They DROP into--

INT. DOGE PALACE, 4TH FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Quiet. Dark. Magnificent.

He opens a door and they step into a hallway, down two flights of stairs, through the dark palace. They reach the--

STAIRWAY OF THE GIANTS, just above ground level, only to find the gate locked. He pulls harder. KICKS at it. To no avail.

GIACOMO

Damnit! GET ME OUT OF HERE!

His vest, shirt and trousers are torn, his hips and thighs are soaked in blood. He backs up near a window.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Balbi. I've failed us.
Not a surprise.

PALACE GUARD (O.S.)

You there!

He spins. A PALACE GUARD from the courtyard below has spotted him. Giacomo ducks, peers back outside again to see the guard is headed for the stairs. It gives him an idea.

GIACOMO

Quickly. Change.

BALBI

What?

GIACOMO

The clothes you were arrested in.

They break into their sacks, quickly tearing off their rags. Giacomo forces on his clothes over his bloodied knees as FOOTSTEPS race up the stairs.

Balbi finishes putting on his Monk outfit, then looks at Giacomo curiously, who now wears a SUMMER SUIT and FEATHER TRIMMED HAT.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

I was arrested at a wedding.

Keys JINGLE and the door opens. The Caretaker looks at them. He thinks he may have locked up a patrician nobleman and his priest from the night before.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

Thank God you've come! We were on a tour and The Father here did not remember the way out. We thought we'd be stuck forever.

They hurry past the Caretaker without giving him a moment to think, down the ceremonial stairs and into--

INT. PIAZZA SAN MARCO - DAWN

They race across the square unnoticed and--

EXT. WHARF, VENICE - DAWN

--jump into the very first gondola they see, undo the ropes and drift off into--

EXT. THE GRAND CANAL, VENICE - DAWN

Pushing their way toward the mainland, Giacomo turns and looks back at his beloved Venice, his one *true* love, as it disappears behind him. The canals are glassy, the first rays of the sun casting it in a glow.

He can't bear the thought of leaving, but has no choice.

GIACOMO

The Inquisition's guards will comb the territories. We will only find immunity abroad.

BALBI

How about Strasbourg?

GIACOMO
You will love Strasbourg.

BALBI
Me?

GIACOMO
We need to split up, Balbi. It is safer that way.

BALBI
But you said if I broke you out, you'd take me with you.

GIACOMO
A desperate man will say anything.

Balbi pulls out a shiv, points it menacingly.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)
Don't get me wrong. I'm eternally grateful.

BALBI
Damn you! I want to live like Casanova.

GIACOMO
There is no Casanova. Not anymore.

Giacomo looks back at Venice as it disappears in the morning fog. He won't set foot in the city again for 18 years.

BALBI
Where will you go?

GIACOMO
An unworthy place, but one that makes it easy for impostors to succeed.

CUT TO BLACK:

EXT. PARIS, FRANCE - DAY

100 years before the Eiffel Tower was even a thought. The nascent days of the Enlightenment.

EXT. PALACE OF VERSAILLES - DAY

Originally a hunting lodge. Now the official residence of the King of France.

MADAME DE POMPADOUR, 35, exquisite, moody, a wicked intelligence, strolls through the massive gardens with a COURT HISTORIOGRAPHER, her posse trailing behind her.

MADAME POMPADOUR

The King's library is now up to 3500 volumes. It will be redesigned with feminine curves and a sense of comfortable elegance, and detailed by Boucher himself.

She glances to a nearby aisle where KING LOUIS XV is returning from a hunt with his Royal Cabinet and Advisors. He isn't listening them, but transfixed by Pompadour. This does not go unnoticed by the most ambitious member of his cabinet FRANCOIS-JOACHIM DE BERNIS, 41.

MADAME POMPADOUR (CONT'D)

My hope is that the great artists and artisans, philosophers and thinkers of our time will come to Versailles, like they have flooded to the salons of Paris for discussion and pleasant debate.

She slows for a moment by a blossoming hyacinth flower. Her bewitching hazel eyes study the white, robust flower.

MADAME POMPADOUR (CONT'D)

They never seem to recapture the beauty of their first bloom.

She looks up, catches a look from the King as his group disappears behind the stables.

Suddenly, an off-screen COMMOTION. SCREAMS and CRIES for help. She can only hear it.

Pompadour races toward the stables, nearly collides with a man running for his life. GUARDS tackle him and subdue him, but she doesn't care about this man. She looks to--

The King, who is on the ground, a crowd attending to him. She pushes through and bends to the King's side.

KING LOUIS XV

I didn't see him coming.

MADAME POMPADOUR

Shhhh.

She opens his jacket and finds blood. He's been stabbed in his side.

She takes his hand, but before she can do anything, a PHYSICIAN and KING'S VALET push through. The Valet quickly looks at Madame Pompadour.

AIDE

Get her out of here. The Royal Family is on their way.

Her fingers dislodge from the King's as she is reluctantly whisked away by Guards. De Bernis watches carefully.

EXT. VERSAILLES - LATER

De Bernis heads for a carriage. A distressed Madame Pompadour catches up to him, walking in stride.

MADAME POMPADOUR

Tell me.

DE BERNIS

It's a three inch wound.
Superficial.

She is visibly relieved, but still intense. Always intense.

MADAME POMPADOUR

And the assassin?

DE BERNIS

I'm sure you will be briefed on all of this.

MADAME POMPADOUR

I need to know now.

DE BERNIS

Apparently he was a disgruntled servant. I don't know more.

He climbs into his carriage. Madame Pompadour shakes her head, despondent. The King's blood still on her sleeve.

MADAME POMPADOUR

The people don't love him the way they should.

DE BERNIS

The people are paying high taxes to fund an unnecessary war.

MADAME POMPADOUR

Says you.

He chooses not to engage her on this.

DE BERNIS

He will never be as popular as his father.

MADAME POMPADOUR

He will be more. I'll make it so.
(then)
Find out if this servant has any accomplices.

DE BERNIS

I'm sorry, do I work for you?

MADAME POMPADOUR

You work for the King, you arrogant prick. Don't forget how you got there.

She SLAMS the door to his carriage and walks off.

De Bernis eyes her as he begins his journey to Paris. The carriage DRIVER turns, hands something to De Bernis.

DRIVER

This came for you.

He hands him a small envelope. De Bernis flips it over to find a simple letter pressed on the back:

"C"

His expression is impossible to read. Not a smile or a frown. Something very in-between.

ARSINOE (PRE-LAP)

Oh, how I wish they had sufficient sense to recognize your excellence!

CUT TO:

INT. COMEDIE ITALIENNE - RUE DU PETIT LION, PARIS - NIGHT

A performance of Moliere's comedy of manners "The Misanthrope" (aka The Cantankerous Lover). ARSINOE is being played by one of France's leading ladies, the remarkable SYLVIA BALLETTI, 39.

ARSINOE

They wrong you greatly, Sir. How it
must hurt you, never to be rewarded
for your virtue!

She quickly exits stage to applause. Time for a costume
change, so she steps into her--

INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Where she finds an unshaven, travel-weary Italian washing his
hands and face with a towel.

SYLVIA

Giacomo? Is that you?

GIACOMO

Mrs. Balletti.

SYLVIA

The rumors of your escape are true!

She EMBRACES him.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

When did you arrive?

GIACOMO

The start of act two.

SYLVIA

I mean in Paris.

GIACOMO

Start of act two.

SYLVIA

You came straight to me?

GIACOMO

I only know a few people in Paris,
and you've always been like family.

SYLVIA

(with a grin)
Not always.

She turns her back to him.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Quick. Help me out of this.

He unzips the back of her dress. She slips it off to make a costume change, exposing her supple breasts. Giacomo looks away, like he's trying to avoid eye contact with her skin.

GIACOMO

I am shocked the Monarchy is letting you do Moliere.

SYLVIA

Things are changing. The city is buzzing with new ideas and freedoms. Maybe you'll stay?

GIACOMO

As long as I can find employment.

SYLVIA

A job, Giacomo? You?

GIACOMO

Last time in Paris, my only goal was the pursuit of pleasure. But I return with greater ambitions.

She takes a hard look at him. He's serious.

SYLVIA

(re: her nakedness)
You won't even look at me.

GIACOMO

Two years in a living hell... it makes a man focus on who he's been, and who he wants to be.

SYLVIA

There were many stories... why were you really imprisoned?

GIACOMO

I was never told. Never tried for a crime.

SYLVIA

That's madness. Don't you wonder?

GIACOMO

I know without knowing. Let's be honest, my behavior, at times, inadvertently made enemies...

(tries to shake it off)

I *could* seek out "who," but... revenge is just another impulse. I'd rather live in the present.

SYLVIA

I think that's noble, Giacomo

She smiles as she slips on her dress.

GIACOMO

I hate to burden you, but a place
to sleep, until I get on my feet...

SYLVIA

All of my children are living under
my roof. There's no room.

(a thought)

But the wig-maker from the theater
has a basement up the alley from
us. I'll have the bed made.

GIACOMO

Thank you, Sylvia.

SYLVIA

Don't thank me.

(re: new costume)

Zip me.

He steps behind her, reaches for the zipper... and pauses at
the sight of her statuesque neck and shoulders. Her scent.
Her freckles that dot her skin like a starry sky. It's been
so long. He'd do *anything* to devour her. But he fights off
the urge... he closes his eyes:

GIACOMO

Mario is a lucky man.

She grins, turns, gives him a soft kiss on his rough cheek,
then slips out of the dressing room.

Giacomo turns to leave her dressing room when he spots her
purse on the counter. It's open, \$200 Louis (the French
dollar) sitting in plain view.

He salivates at the thought of some money in his pocket.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLACE D'ALIGRE - NIGHT

Giacomo wanders through an open air market, taking in the
smells and scents.

Cheeses and meats, ripe strawberries, oysters, champagne...

Oh, and the women shopping in the market. The way they handle a delicate piece of fruit, the way the scent of a truffle makes their cheeks flush.

He dips his hand in a flower bucket, uses the water to slick his hair back and smooth out his beard. Then...

He crosses over Rue Saint Martin into a busier neighborhood, avoids the mud and sewage flowing through the streets, and heads for a shadowy door.

INT. HOTEL DES GESVRES - NIGHT

\$200 lands with a THUMP on a gambling table.

We PULL BACK to reveal it's not Giacomo who made the bet. He's not even at the table, but sitting behind, watching a game of Hombre. A PLAYER notices him.

PLAYER #1
Want to play?

GIACOMO
Desperately, but I'm quite short on funds at the moment.

So he just watches. The game, as well as the players, their faces, their mistakes. Then he notices...

One player, NICOLAS, with an odd tic. He looks to be clenching his teeth. Giacomo looks closer, sees Nicolas clench his hands as well.

Nicolas lays down a winning hand. He collects his money and excuses himself, heads for the bar where he can spend his winnings on liquor and prostitutes. Giacomo rises, follows to--

THE BAR. He slides next to Nicolas, who is surveying a pool of Parisian PROSTITUTES, trying to decide which to choose.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)
Love without love is worthless,
don't you think?

NICOLAS
The average woman pays me little attention.

GIACOMO
You simply can't take no for an answer.

(MORE)

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

I've had scores of women initially refuse to sleep with me only to later defy their fathers, husbands or convention to throw themselves at my feet.

Nicolas take a hard look at him.

NICOLAS

You must know how to pleasure them.

GIACOMO

I don't necessarily have a large cock, or an abnormally long tongue.

NICOLAS

Then what is your secret?

GIACOMO

I make them think I'm falling in love with them.

NICOLAS

How?

GIACOMO

Because I fall in love with them.

Giacomo forces a smile, but he hasn't followed Nicolas to the bar to discuss women.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

Tell me... where is your pain?

NICOLAS

My--?

GIACOMO

I noticed you clench your teeth, your hands. I thought it might be a "tell," but you're in pain.

NICOLAS

If you must know, it's the agony of a sciatic nerve.

GIACOMO

Your back or your legs?

NICOLAS

Are you a doctor?

GIACOMO

I don't trust doctors. Clearly
neither do you.

NICOLAS

How do you know that?

GIACOMO

The string of amber around your
neck.

Nicolas indeed wears a necklace of amber stones. Known in
certain circles as a way to reduce swelling.

NICOLAS

Are you an alchemist?

GIACOMO

I've studied it, and other things.
Do you have a library or a lab?

NICOLAS

I have access to one. Why?

GIACOMO

Go there. Draw a pentacle on your
right thigh using an amalgam of nitre,
flowers of sulphur and mercury.

(off his look)

Everything in nature ripens toward
purity and perfection. Just try it.

Giacomo looks to the door... sees someone walk in. A man in a
wide-brimmed hat and overcoat. The man he's been waiting for.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

If it relieves your pain, you'll
pay me your winnings from tonight.
Fair and square.

(Nicolas nods)

Now, please excuse me.

Giacomo rises, heads toward the visitor, who lifts the brim
of his hat to reveal it's--

DE BERNIS. The man from the carriage at the start. He grins.
They talk like people who have a history.

DE BERNIS

You look like hell.

GIACOMO

Wasn't sure you'd come.

DE BERNIS

It's been a busy day. There was an attempt on the King's life.

GIACOMO

Did he deserve it?

DE BERNIS

Not for me to decide.

GIACOMO

Either way, it's good to see you... Minister.

A beat. De Bernis grins.

DE BERNIS

It's a new title, and it won't last long if I'm seen in a place like this. Come.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARISIAN FLAT - NIGHT

Well-appointed, full of antiques and artwork.

Giacomo spots a gold snuff box on the fireplace mantle, decorated with the portrait of a naked woman beside a smirking cupid with a quiver at his feet.

De Bernis enters carrying a drink for each of them.

DE BERNIS

Your escape is quickly becoming the talk of Paris.

GIACOMO

I haven't even started to embellish it yet.

DE BERNIS

It will open many doors, especially to the bedroom. You'll cut a wide swathe.

GIACOMO

(re: woman on the snuff box)
Is that Marina?

De Bernis approaches, nods. This is a woman he loved.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

How is she?

DE BERNIS

I don't know. She won't see me,
won't respond to my letters.

GIACOMO

She's gone from the Abbey?

DE BERNIS

Yes. And I fear she's fallen into a
depression, her existence a burden
to her.

GIACOMO

You still don't know why?

DE BERNIS

No.

He shakes off the memory, sits down opposite Giacomo, removes
the LETTER from his chest pocket. He's read it.

DE BERNIS (CONT'D)

So you want to work?

GIACOMO

Desperately.

DE BERNIS

I'm glad you came to me.

GIACOMO

You were my first thought.

DE BERNIS

I have something that may be well
suited for you. Have you heard of
Madame Pompadour?

GIACOMO

No.

DE BERNIS

You will. She is the King's
Mistress. A Libertine. And a
commoner, like you, though she
fights like hell to hide it. The
King noticed her during a
masquerade and made her his
paramour. She has quickly become a
threat to the State.

GIACOMO

Why a threat?

DE BERNIS

He is so utterly swayed by her...
he'll do anything she says. Two
years into a war with Britain, the
treasury has been bled dry because
of her.

GIACOMO

What can I do?

DE BERNIS

Get to know her.

Giacomo is afraid he knows what that means.

DE BERNIS (CONT'D)

Charm her as only you know how,
make her an intimate ally. Find out
what her plans are.

(off his look)

Think of it as a spy mission.

GIACOMO

Sounds more like a seduction.

DE BERNIS

Is there a difference?

Giacomo considers for a moment.

GIACOMO

I'm sorry, I can't.

DE BERNIS

I thought you were desperate.

GIACOMO

I am. But a man should not be
defined by one thing his whole
life.

DE BERNIS

You're *Casanova*.

GIACOMO

And look at me. Penniless, hopeless
-- I would have been in prison for
the rest of my life.

Giacomo shakes his head, desperate to put it behind him.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)
I need to start over. My
reputation barely precedes me here.

DE BERNIS
And do what?

GIACOMO
Be a man of importance. Like you.

DE BERNIS
But you're *not* me. You're a peasant
who's lived by his wits his entire
life. A gambler and a con man who
has scaled unimaginable heights by
being fun. Bawdy. Your ability to
enchant women is unparalleled. It's
the envy of every man in the world!
It's not a curse. It's an asset.
Use it.

Giacomo looks away, resisting.

DE BERNIS (CONT'D)
Look, you want to change, you think
you can, fine... but if you want to
be rich? Powerful?

Now he has Giacomo's attention.

DE BERNIS (CONT'D)
All that stands between me and the
future of France is this one woman.
Think of what that could mean. For
both of us.

A beat. Giacomo is fighting every urge.

DE BERNIS (CONT'D)
Just think about it?

Giacomo nods. De Bernis reaches into his pocket, comes out
with a wad of money.

DE BERNIS (CONT'D)
In the meantime, get yourself
cleaned up, buy some new clothes.
In Paris, perception is everything.

He pulls off a few bills, but Giacomo's eyes are on the rest
of the wad.

GIACOMO

What about food, or rent. I could
use a little more...

DE BERNIS

I thought you want to *earn* a
living?

Giacomo nods.

He takes the few bills that De Bernis is offering.

CUT TO:

INT. TAILLEUR - DAY

Giacomo tries on a series of waistcoats, breeches, large
cuffs and belts.

He tries on a bunch of wigs, tries powdering his hair.

Just the way he studies himself in the mirror, it's clear
he's a little vain, but this is fun.

EXT. STREET, PARIS - DAY

Giacomo Casanova emerges on to the avenue looking polished,
swarthy, handsome. Two passing women smile at him.

He smiles back. He feels a little like himself again.

INT. WIG-MAKER'S BASEMENT - DAY

Giacomo enters the dark room with a clothes bag to find
someone making his bed, HUMMING a lovely tune. He assumes
it's a maid.

GIACOMO

Good afternoon.

She spins, stands up straight, nervous to be in his presence.

Giacomo's jaw DROPS. She is the very model of beauty, pink-
lipped, poised, delicate, with a clear, kind, direct gaze.

MANON

I'm so sorry. I wasn't expecting
you.

She steps toward him, silhouetted by the light behind her. She looks like an angel, and Giacomo can't hold back his immediate reaction:

GIACOMO

Your voice is beautiful, but tragic. The last time I was on the Grand Canal, I heard a bird singing inside a rich man's villa. I had no idea which window in a thousand its heartbroken song came from. It tormented me, as it cried out to be seen in all its beauty. To soar over the city, like it was born to, instead of suffering forever as something else.

She smiles a billion-watt smile.

MANON

You don't recognize me?

GIACOMO

Should I?

MANON

I am Manon. Mother sent me to neaten up--

GIACOMO

Manon? My Lord... last time I saw you--

MANON

I was 13.

Not anymore. She is now 18 and simply ravishing. Giacomo must compose himself immediately.

GIACOMO

I'm sorry for my... Manon, please, come sit. You are far above neatening up after a slob like me.

He pulls out a chair, opens the shutters to let a touch of light on her perfectly structured cheekbones.

MANON

I have heard so many stories from my family about you and your adventures, all the places you've been.

GIACOMO

I hope you don't believe *all* of it.

MANON

Oh, Sir, I love the stories. I've been nowhere. That's why I read so much. *LaPutain Errante*. *Venus dans le Cloitre*. I'd do *anything* to see Venice.

GIACOMO

I'd do anything to take you. There is nothing like Venice. So wonderfully crowded. Lying in bed at night, you can hear snoring, arguing, laughing, *lovemaking...*

MANON

I've heard it is a city where women are free to be as they wish?

GIACOMO

For a hundred years.

MANON

Paris is making strides, but it will be too late for me.

GIACOMO

What do you mean?

MANON

I am to be married in a month.

She doesn't sound too happy about it.

GIACOMO

Congratulations. To whom?

MANON

Monsieur Clement. My harpsichord teacher.

Giacomo is surprised to hear this.

MANON (CONT'D)

My mother says it's a good, safe match.

GIACOMO

Are you a good, safe girl?

MANON

I don't know what I am.

GIACOMO

I have felt that way most of my
life.

She grins, a connection blossoming between them. He knows
that he should put an end to this now.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

You should go.

MANON

Must I?

GIACOMO

Yes. I'll walk you out.

EXT. STREET, PARIS - DAY

Giacomo holds the door as Manon steps out into the bright
sunlight. She picks a flower from a blooming tree.

MANON

Here.

She attaches a the tiny flower to his lapel.

MANON (CONT'D)

So you don't forget about me.

She is so confident, unafraid. And it's so attractive.

GIACOMO

Forget? I'm already thinking about
you. About the best advice I can
give to a young adventurer like
yourself.

MANON

Any parting thoughts?

Her tenacity reminds him of himself at that age.

GIACOMO

Be the flame. Not the moth.

SYLVIA (O.S.)

Manon?

They both look to see Sylvia approaching.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

Go home. Now.

Manon hurries off. Giacomo looks to Silvia, who knows him too well.

SYLVIA (CONT'D)

(coldly)
How long until you find your own place?

GIACOMO

Soon, I expect.

An uncomfortable beat. He feels her stare.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

Congratulations are in order. You are about to gain a son-in-law?

SYLVIA

Don't mock me.

GIACOMO

I--

SYLVIA

You are. You can't believe I'm marrying her off so young, but I have reasons. Real reasons.

She sounds desperately serious.

GIACOMO

Is everything okay?

SYLVIA

Stay away from her, Giacomo. She is a flower in a hurricane against you.

GIACOMO

Sylvia, I would never--

SYLVIA

You haven't changed at all.

GIACOMO

I'm trying--

SYLVIA

Then promise me.

GIACOMO

I promise. Of course.

She wipes tears from her eyes, reaches into her coat, removes a gilded envelope.

SYLVIA
This came for you.

She hands it to him and walks away. Giacomo watches her walk off, feeling sorry for himself.

Then he studies the fancy envelope. He likes fancy. Opens it to find an invitation. He raises an eyebrow and we--

CUT TO:

EXT. MANSION, QUIE DES THEATINS - EVENING

Giacomo stands before a mansion on the banks of the River Seine, can't believe how enormous it is. He rings the bell and the door opens on--

NICOLAS. The man from the card game, who grins ear to ear.

NICOLAS
You're here! Come, come...

He follows Nicolas into...

INT. MANSION, QUIE DES THEATINS - EVENING

Extravagant. Magnificent. Half of the art on the walls will someday be in the Louvre.

Giacomo is led up a massive staircase...

NICOLAS
When I told my Aunt about my new acquaintance and his remarkable cure for sciatica, she said she had to meet you.

...salivating at the massive wealth.

GIACOMO
Glad I could help.

They pass through a LIBRARY. Giacomo slows to take it in, crammed with books on SORCERY, MYSTICISM and ALCHEMY. Finally they reach--

INT. LABORATORY, MANSION - CONTINUOUS

A woman is hunched over a table engaged in her favorite occupation -- experimenting with chemicals. She looks up. This is the The MARQUIS DE URFE, known as "The Sublime Madwoman." At 51, she is an independently wealthy woman, free-thinking, free-spirited.

MARQUIS DE URFE
You're not as handsome as they say.

GIACOMO
I grow on people.

Giacomo's eyes wander to the table, an assemblage of grinding bowls, burning mirrors, blowpipes and hundreds of vials containing all sorts of chemicals.

MARQUIS DE URFE
Come. Have a look.

He approaches warily.

GIACOMO
Is this what you do all day?

MARQUIS DE URFE
I would rather spend my time with my salts than suffer under the hairdresser's curling tongs, or make small-talk with sycophantic courtiers whose interests never go further than the paste buckles on their shoes.

He looks around, raises his nose.

GIACOMO
Sulphur.

MARQUIS DE URFE
Very good.

She looks to the corner where a small fire cooks a pot.

MARQUIS DE URFE (CONT'D)
It's been on the fire for fifteen years. Needs another four or five.

GIACOMO
Until...?

MARQUIS DE URFE

A powder of projection that will speed the natural evolution of substance. Transform all metals into gold.

Giacomo privately rolls his eyes, but plays along.

GIACOMO

The Quintessence. The highest goal in alchemy.

MARQUIS DE URFE

"The Great Work." Yes.
(excited)
So it is true.

She slowly paces around him.

MARQUIS DE URFE (CONT'D)

I've heard your name from friends in Venice. Fellow Cabalists. Freemasons.

GIACOMO

Is that why you invited me here?

She grins, stops at a massive sliding door.

MARQUIS DE URFE

You're here for dinner. I always invite friends.

She slides open the door to--

INT. DINING ROOM, MANSION - NIGHT

A salon-style dinner party of 12, mostly lunatics. The key players are MADAME BONTEMPS, a card reader; The CONTE DI CAGLIOSTRO, a chemist and hypnotist; SHERMAN D'CROQ-HED, an occult scientist. But the star of the table is none other than--

The CONTE DE ST. GERMAIN (age unknown), a boastful, international celebrity who seems to have a bottomless purse of money, and never stops bragging about it.

ST. GERMAIN

I've just come from Lorraine where I spent the day with Voltaire, and showed him how I can melt diamonds.

Giacomo eyes the gold and diamonds that adorn his fingers, as well as the buxom women on each side who fawn over him.

ST. GERMAIN (CONT'D)

Out of twelve small diamonds, I can produce one large one without the loss of weight. He called me "The Wonderman," but I told him it's a mere trifle.

He LAUGHS. They all LAUGH with him, most of all the Marquise. But not Giacomo, who eyes St. Germain with annoyance.

ST. GERMAIN (CONT'D)

I showed the stone to Madame Pompadour, a woman of impeccable taste. She wants one for herself.

GIACOMO

Pompadour. The King's mistress?

ST. GERMAIN

Yes. The King asks me constantly to join them at Chambour.

GIACOMO

You're very impressive.

ST. GERMAIN

I have lived in the most remote periods, been repeatedly invited to dine in castles and King's courts.

MARQUIS DE URFE

Tell him how old you are.

ST. GERMAIN

At least three hundred years, but I can't be sure.

Casanova privately rolls his eyes. He looks to the Marquis D'Urfe.

GIACOMO

What has he promised you?

MARQUIS DE URFE

Promised?

GIACOMO

I see the magnet you're wearing on your neck.

She pulls back her hair. She is, indeed, wearing a magnet.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)
 Ferrite, I assume, which is said to
 attract a lightning bolt and
 elevate one soul to the sun.
 According to the tablet of Hermes,
 it's a step toward immortality.

ST. GERMAIN
 A leap, not a step.

GIACOMO
 Is that it? He has promised you
 eternal life? Or something
 greater, like The Philosopher's
 Stone?

ST. GERMAIN
 My friend...

GIACOMO
 You are not the friend of anyone.
 Especially not the Marquis.

Giacomo rises, causing a bit of a scene.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)
 Thank you for dinner.

INT. FOYER, MANSION - MOMENTS LATER

Giacomo is headed to the front door. A voice calls after him.

ST. GERMAIN (O.S.)
 Misseur Casanova, wait.

Giacomo stops, faces an approaching St. Germain.

GIACOMO
 I know an imposter when I see one.

ST. GERMAIN
 Is that what I am?

GIACOMO
 I have found wealthy patrons to pay
 for my entire life, cultivated
 people ready to believe anything.

ST. GERMAIN
 Then what's the problem?

GIACOMO

You have hijacked her heart, her mind, and *all* that remains of her common sense.

St. Germain grins, puts up his hands: Guilty, as charged.

ST. GERMAIN

How much do you want?

GIACOMO

Of?

ST. GERMAIN

Her. The Marquis has a fortune so great she could not spend half of it if she tried. There is plenty for *both* of us.

Giacomo detests him.

GIACOMO

Not interested. I don't want to live off someone else.

St. Germain grins, doesn't believe him.

ST. GERMAIN

Do as you wish, but DO NOT interfere with my *friendship* with the Marquis. I know many people of influence. You'll find yourself back in chains, or worse.

He opens the door for Giacomo and lets him out into the Parisian night.

ANGLE ON a PALE MAN peering out from behind a column.

As Giacomo crosses the street, the pale man FOLLOWS.

EXT. STREET, PARIS - NIGHT

Giacomo passes beneath the shadowy trees of the Tuileries, emerging to the cobblestoned streets of the Left Bank. A series of coaches wait for passengers. Giacomo reaches for the handle of a coach when he notices someone in the REFLECTION of the glass.

He turns, the pale man quickly dips behind a column.

Giacomo skips the coach, moves past the horses and heads across the Pont Royale into the tangled streets of--

MONTPARNASSE. The pale man keeps his distance, following Giacomo to--

A NARROW CORRIDOR strung with hanging laundry. Piles of garbage make entry to the alley difficult, but CLANG... he hears a noise... and starts in. Only to discover a small cadre of homeless men staying warm by a fire. He turns to go when--

WHAM! Giacomo THROTTLES the pale man, knocking him to the ground.

Giacomo drags him further into the alley, then sits on top of him with an elbow across his throat.

PALE MAN

Signore, no! I am a friend of Bragadin.

GIACOMO

Why are you following me?

PALE MAN

I had to make sure it was you.

He pulls the man to his feet, immediately dusting him off.

GIACOMO

Bragadin said he would come himself.

PALE MAN

The Venetian Council is in session, so he paid me to deliver the information in person.

GIACOMO

He found something?

PALE MAN

His associate inside the Inquisition reports that your arrest and subsequent imprisonment was a favor.

GIACOMO

A favor to whom?

He hands Giacomo a slip of paper, who opens it with bated breath.

A beat as he takes it in. We PUSH IN on Giacomo as we--

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. PALAIS BOURBON - DAY

Giacomo moves through the gilded lobby and into--

INT. DE BERNIS'S OFFICE - DAY

-- where he finds De Bernis behind his massive desk.

GIACOMO

My friend, I will do it.

DE BERNIS

I expected you would.

GIACOMO

I'll do it this once. Then you will offer me a legitimate opportunity.

DE BERNIS

You have my word.

The shake hands. Giacomo seems extremely grateful.

DE BERNIS (CONT'D)

Madame Pompadour will be at a Libertine party tomorrow night in the 4th. An associate of mine will make the introduction.

Giacomo nods.

GIACOMO

Is it true the King's assassin has been sentenced?

DE BERNIS

A public execution is being planned.

GIACOMO

Good. Then Madame Pompadour should be in a fine mood.

CUT TO:

EXT. WIG-MAKER'S BASEMENT - DAY

Giacomo heads for the front door in desperate need of sleep when he can hear the tender music of a harpsichord wafting through the street. He listens closer, starts toward it. He reaches the foot of--

INT. THE BALETTI HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

He peers in the window where Manon Balletti is practicing. Backlit by the morning sun, she is a vision.

Her teacher (and fiance) CHARLES-FRANCOIS CLEMENT (39) enters from the kitchen to check on his prized everything.

Giacomo ducks out of the way, then looks again. Clement is older than Giacomo, his greying temples making him seem even more so. Giacomo loathes the idea of her marrying him.

He looks back at Manon, as she plays her instrument with passion, *real* passion, like she feels the love and energy of the music in her entire body.

In classic Casanova fashion, he wants to save her. But how?

As her music continues to play, we TRANSITION TO...

INT. LIBERTINE PARTY, HOTEL DE ROULE - NIGHT

A playful Baroque sonata that fills the former brothel. A crowd of the rebellious, the carefree and the elegant. The Sexual Revolution of the Enlightenment began at parties just like this.

Giacomo drifts through the party in a waistcoat suit, the curls in his hair done perfectly. The women are in all the new fashions of Paris, mostly lowered necklines as far as their nipples. Giacomo can breathe here. It feels like his speed. He stops a stranger and asks:

GIACOMO
I'm looking for Patu?

The stranger points to a diminutive, confident CLAUDE PATU, 28, talking with a spirited woman named ANGELICA LAMBERTINI. As Giacomo approaches, he hears the end of their conversation:

CLAUDE PATU
Five in one night?

ANGELICA
Throughout the night, then once after breakfast. I call him "Count Six Times."

CLAUDE PATU
Well good for you, Madame.

GIACOMO

Egg whites are the secret. Egg whites help a man ejaculate forcefully five or six times.

ANGELICA

(turning to Giacomo)

Is that right?

Patu shakes his head. He grabs Giacomo by the arm...

CLAUDE PATU

If you'll excuse us...

And ushers Giacomo away.

GIACOMO

My God, what has happened to the women of Paris?

CLAUDE PATU

The Libertines have denounced all religious convention. Chastity. Monogamy. Paris is becoming an erotic playground.

He leads him outside into--

EXT. GARDENS, HOTEL DE ROULE - CONTINUOUS

--through the crowd and around a hedge to reveal a more private area... call it the V.I.P. SECTION of the party. That's where MADAME POMPADOUR is holding court with a few artists.

ON GIACOMO, taking her in. Her confidence is effortless, her immense sexuality a weapon she holds at the ready. Every man has a moment in their life when they meet their ideal woman. Whether they can "get" them is an entirely other question.

Patu waits for the right moment to interject with:

CLAUDE PATU

Madame, may I introduce Giacomo Casanova.

MADAME POMPADOUR

This is the man who escaped the Leads?

Giacomo bends to greet her properly.

GIACOMO

Yes, Madame.

MADAME POMPADOUR

You are an Italian?

GIACOMO

Venetian. It's different.

MADAME POMPADOUR

That's what you all say. Venice exhausts me. The masks, the unspoken smugness. At least Parisians blatantly follow their own moral codes. We know what life is and make the most of it.

Giacomo girds himself. This is a worthy competitor. From this point forward, think of her as a female Casanova.

MADAME POMPADOUR (CONT'D)

What is it like?

GIACOMO

Sorry?

MADAME POMPADOUR

Freedom. I assume you are now a free man?

GIACOMO

I am, indeed, but man is not at liberty to do everything he pleases. He becomes a slave the moment he allows his actions to be ruled by passion.

MADAME POMPADOUR

Are you flirting with me, Monsieur Casanova?

She is not remotely falling for his charm. She looks around the room at some of the young nymph-like women ogling Giacomo.

MADAME POMPADOUR (CONT'D)

Women across Europe may be drawn to the dangers of a travelling Venetian like yourself. A man more courtly, more gallant, more sexually adept than his peers. But if you ever speak to me again in that tone, I will have you eviscerated.

Giacomo grins. Like he said earlier, he never takes no for an answer.

GIACOMO

Please accept my apologies, Madame. It's quite rare that I find myself nervous in the presence of a woman, but I have been eager to make your acquaintance.

MADAME POMPADOUR

Why is that, exactly?

GIACOMO

We both come from humble beginnings. We've both been told what we *cannot* be our entire lives, yet look where we are.

She eyes him, momentarily, like she might be softening. But being a commoner is her greatest source of shame.

MADAME POMPADOUR

You don't know me.

She looks to her servant.

MADAME POMPADOUR (CONT'D)

I'm tired.

(considers)

Or, possibly, tired of you.

And she struts away. To say the least, Giacomo has struck out.

Rejection. It's not something he's used to. Not something he's ever taken lightly.

Confounded, he retreats to...

INT. BAR, LIBERTINE PARTY - LATER

Giacomo finishes another drink, lays it down. The party has devolved in status, the "bridge-and-tunnel" crowd has settled in. Giacomo scans the room, especially--

THE WOMEN. It's like they've all read "50 Shades of Grey." Smoking, drinking, public displays of sexual affection. For the first time since prison, Giacomo is tired of denying himself.

He's CRAVING companionship.

He spots a woman across the room that has her eyes on him. They begin a flirtation.

He smiles at her.

She looks away. Walks a few feet, then looks back.

He smiles again.

She returns the smile.

Then, covertly, Giacomo pulls aside his waistcoat to *reveal* himself to her. It's a quick flash of his impressive manhood, but the intention is clear.

She is indeed impressed! Strutting toward him, we get a good look at VICTORIE MORPHY, 24. She steps to Giacomo, reaches under his waistcoat and takes his cock in her hands.

VICTORIE

I'm taken for the evening. Monsieur Patu has already paid two Louis.

She slips her hands out from beneath his coat. Giacomo deflates.

VICTORIE (CONT'D)

But my sister...

He raises an eyebrow. Off his look, we CUT TO:

EXT. VICTORIE'S APARTMENT, RUE DE DEUX-PORTES - NIGHT

Victorie leads Patu by the hand into the small, cluttered apartment. Giacomo trails behind.

VICTORIE

Make yourself comfortable.

There is barely anywhere to sit. Victorie begins to undress Patu, kissing his neck and chest. Then she starts to tug at his pants. As they head into the bedroom, she shouts for--

VICTORIE (CONT'D)

Helena! You have a guest!

The door shuts behind him. Giacomo sighs, looks around, begins to clean off a chair when--

HELENA (O.S.)

Sir...

Giacomo turns. In the doorway to another room is Victorie's unkempt younger sister, HELENA, 20, wearing a rumpled nightgown. She looks like she's been sleeping.

GIACOMO
Did we awaken you?

HELENA
Yes, Sir.

He steps toward the doorway and enters--

INT. HELENA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tiny and dark. She lights a candle, revealing a straw palliasse on four pieces of wood.

GIACOMO
You call this a bed?

HELENA
I have no other, Sir.

GIACOMO
No sheets or anything?

She shakes her head "no."

GIACOMO (CONT'D)
Do you normally sleep with your clothes on?

HELENA
No. I fell asleep reading.

GIACOMO
Well, then, go to bed as usual, and I will pay you a crown.

HELENA
Why?

GIACOMO
I want to see you get undressed.

A beat. She seems nervous, shy.

She slips the shoulder off her nightgown, revealing a dark-skinned shoulder blade followed by a perfect breast. But when the gown comes completely off, she covers herself with an old curtain.

In the flicker of candlelight, Giacomo sees a pretty, helpless young woman in dirty tatters.

He lays a crown on the table, then steps out of the room... but only for a moment. He returns with a small bucket of water.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

Many things have been said of me,
but I've always considered myself
to be a sensualist.

He dips a rag in the water, wrings it out.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

I love good food, wine, clothes, a
comfortable living.

Sits down beside her on the bed...

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

But nothing is more splendid than
the fresh scent of a woman.

He begins to clean her shoulder, her neck (that Modigliani would admire), tucking loose strands of hair behind her ear.

She slowly lets the cover drop and Giacomo begins to wash her collar, followed by her breasts. It's intimate.

Sensual.

Lovely.

The grime comes off, revealing the woman beneath the girl.

Her legs slowly begin to part. Giacomo cannot help himself, begins to kiss her belly, and then below.

She lets the feeling of pleasure course through her body, until Giacomo begins to slip off his pants and mount her--

HELENA

Wait.

She untangles herself from him.

HELENA (CONT'D)

I cannot submit for less than 25
Louie. My sister says that is the
going rate for a virgin in Paris.

Giacomo steps back. He doesn't remotely have that much money.

GIACOMO

Can you be sure your sister is
right?

She shrugs, but stands her ground.

HELENA

I am disposed to let you do all you
please, but not that.

GIACOMO

We can bargain on this capital
point another time...

He lowers his head between her legs again, settling for what
enjoyment he can get, when he--

STOPS. Looks up. Rises. An IDEA has come to him. A GREAT one.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

You know... a woman of your
elegance should not sell herself
for money. You could be destined
for better things.

HELENA

You're just saying that.

He is indeed.

GIACOMO

Let me prove it to you.

He looks away, his mind racing. Then he begins to button his
pants.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

I just need to get a little money
together...

Remember this look on his face. Casanova is scheming.

CUT TO:

INT. FORNEY LIBRARY - NIGHT

Giacomo is deep in the stacks, pouring through books on
alchemy. He's doing research, making copious notes.

ON THE PAGE - The Philosopher's Stone. He continues to make
notes, he finds something of importance.

GIACOMO
 (reading under his breath)
 Transmigration is heretical in a
 Catholic country...

He grins, and we CUT TO:

EXT. FLOWER MARKET, PARIS - DAY

Surrounded in vibrant colors, Giacomo paces beside the somber
 Marquise D'Urfe, who tells him:

GIACOMO
 When I was a boy, I used to get
 terrible nosebleeds. My grandmother
 took me to Murano to consult a witch.

MARQUIS DE URFE
 That's where your fascination with
 magic began?

GIACOMO
 Indeed. Taught myself alchemy,
 cryptology, the Kaballah. Joined
 the Order of the Rosy Cross.

MARQUIS DE URFE
 I am extremely impressed.

GIACOMO
 I'm not fishing for complements. I
 simply want to help you...
 (here comes the pitch)
 I know what you've been brewing for
 in your lab for 15 years. I know
 what you're after.

MARQUIS DE URFE
 You do?

GIACOMO
 There are thousands across Europe
 engaged in a search for the
 Philosopher's Stone.

MARQUIS DE URFE
 (eyes aglow)
 But I am steps ahead.

GIACOMO
 According to whom? St. Germain?

Off her look, the answer is obvious.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

I worry the Count does not have your best interests at heart. That he sees you as a lost and lonely woman in search of an heir, when you are so much more than that.

(the pitch)

What if, together, we could *really* fulfill your greatest wish by regenerating your soul?

MARQUIS DE URFE

Transmigration?

(he nods)

Can it be done?

Absolutely not.

GIACOMO

Of course. My only fear--

MARQUIS DE URFE

(breathless)

Tell me.

GIACOMO

(as rehearsed)

Transmigration is heretical in a Catholic country, so... I don't want to end up back in prison.

MARQUIS DE URFE

You would risk it for me?

GIACOMO

I feel a strong alliance with you, but it may be time consuming. I would need to be compensated for my time. Nothing much. Whatever you're paying St. Germain.

As she reaches for her purse, Giacomo eyes glow.

MARQUIS DE URFE

You mentioned your grandmother. Did you have a mother, Giacomo?

A beat. He doesn't like this question.

GIACOMO

For a very short time.

MARQUIS DE URFE

She died?

GIACOMO

She left.

The Marquis nods, then hands a large wad of money to him.

MARQUIS DE URFE

Consider me your family.

He takes the cash, kisses her hand in gratitude. His plan is in motion.

INT. DRINKING ESTABLISHMENT - DAY

Giacomo slips a tip to the maitre'd, who points out a patron in the rear.

Giacomo approaches a gruff older man drinking alone.

GIACOMO

Are you Monsieur Lundberg?

ARTIST

No.

GIACOMO

You are not the esteemed artist
Gustaf Lundberg?

Giacomo holds out a wad of money. The artist raises an eyebrow.

EXT. MARAIS - DAY

Giacomo leads Helena (the prostitute's sister) by the hand through the windy streets.

GIACOMO

Love is a game, a mercenary one at
that.

HELENA

I don't understand.

GIACOMO

We are going flaunt your assets on
the amorous stock market of Paris!
Improve your standing by finding
you a significant man.

INT. HÔTEL SALÉ - CONTINUOUS

An art gallery where artist GUSTAF LUNDBERG paints a nude portrait of Helena, her bottom raised toward the viewer. Giacomo watches from a short distance alongside Claude Patu.

PATU

I'm impressed that you could encounter such youth and beauty in a woman and seek to improve her. It shows shocking self-control.

GIACOMO

There is beauty in promise. Rescuing a young woman from an uncertain future may turn out to be just as gratifying.

Giacomo looks at the tiny flower on his lapel given to him by Manon. Her uncertain future is on his mind.

He looks back at Lundberg's painting, counts out the money he got from the Marquis that will pay for it.

CUT TO:

INT. DE BERNIS'S OFFICE, PALAIS BOURBON - DAY

Giacomo presents the provocative painting to De Bernis.

DE BERNIS

I thought you were above this kind of thing.

GIACOMO

It's not for me.

DE BERNIS

No? Then who?

GIACOMO

What do you think the King would think?

De Bernis isn't sure where Giacomo is going with this.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

I met your Madame Pompadour. She is quite impenetrable.

DE BERNIS

I've never heard you say such a thing. You're not giving up?

GIACOMO

Of course not. I am determined to give you what you want, but the Madame is far too intelligent to surrender her secrets, even to me. The key is finding a vulnerability, and as far as I can see, she has only one.

DE BERNIS

I'm listening.

GIACOMO

Her age.

De Bernis is intrigued.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

While she is still extremely beautiful, the King will eventually tire of a woman in her 30's and search for a new mistress. What if you were to present him with a new option...

(re: the painting)

One who looks this good, and a virgin to boot?

DE BERNIS

You are suggesting *removing* Madame Pompadour entirely.

Giacomo shrugs. De Bernis studies the painting again, a smile growing...

DE BERNIS (CONT'D)

Very good, Giacomo. VERY good.

He steps forward and takes the painting.

GIACOMO

Thank you, Sir.

DE BERNIS

Sir?

He giggles, then puts an arm around Giacomo.

DE BERNIS (CONT'D)

A viewing party is being arranged for the execution of Robert Damiens. I hope you will come. Bring a guest, if you would like.

As a giddy De Bernis struts off with the painting, Giacomo watches him. His eyes narrow.

CUT TO:

INT. BALETTI'S HOME, RE DE PETIT-LION - EVENING

Giacomo enters. No sign of anyone.

GIACOMO

Hello?

He steps into the kitchen as Manon rushes in. She heard his voice and came running. She is so happy to see him.

MANON

Sorry, I was practicing a Sonata.
Maybe you want to hear it?

GIACOMO

I'm a bit pressed for time. Is your
mother at home?

It crushes her just a little that he's not there to see her.

MANON

I'll get her.

GIACOMO

Wait, Manon.
(she turns)
I'm going to party this Saturday,
and I've been invited with a guest.

A beat.

MANON

Are you asking...?

GIACOMO

Your mother would never approve.

His eyes remain locked on hers. What is he suggesting?

MANON

(a whisper)
Believe me, I have ways of sneaking
out...

GIACOMO

I couldn't condone something like
that, but if you were to be in
Place de Grave around noon...

She grins ear to ear, beyond excited, then hurries out.

A moment later, Sylvia enters. She looks tired, pale.

SYLVIA

Giacomo?

GIACOMO

Are you okay? You look ill--

SYLVIA

A fever, but I'm fine. What is it?

GIACOMO

I've gathered enough money to find my own place. But can I ask for one more favor?

SYLVIA

If only that were true.

GIACOMO

Can you get me proper seats for the opera at Fontainebleau?

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - EVENING

A covered coach races across the French landscape.

INT. OPERA HOUSE, FONTAINEBLEAU - NIGHT

A perfectly dressed Giacomo sits in the stalls for a performance of a Lully opera. LEMAURE, a famous French opera singer not noted for her acting, does a monologue. Not a funny monologue. That doesn't stop Giacomo from LAUGHING out loud.

It draws looks. A few seconds later, he LAUGHS again. Louder. Heartier.

More looks. Including from above, which just happens to be--

THE ROYAL BOX. Reveal that's where Madame Pompadour is watching the Opera, or at least trying. She peers over to see who is causing all the noise, and she sees--

GIACOMO, looking up at her. He nods to her, suggesting she meet him in the hall.

She nods "no."

He nods with a bit more force, then LAUGHS at nothing, threatening to disrupt the entire opera.

She finally gives in.

INT. HALLWAY, OPERA HOUSE - NIGHT

Madame Pompadour leaves her guards outside as she steps into the tiny powder room. Giacomo awaits her. There isn't much room in there, so their faces are close together.

GIACOMO

I admire the silence of the spectators as compared with the noise of the crowd in Italy.

MADAME POMPADOUR

You are too fond of your former country.

GIACOMO

But you must admire my loyalty.

She doesn't crack a smile.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

Admit it, French music is inferior to Italian. The melody hasn't changed in a hundred years--

MADAME POMPADOUR

You have thirty seconds to tell me what this is about.

His heart skips a beat. She puts the fear of God into him, making her even more attractive.

GIACOMO

I need to apologize for our first meeting. I've spent a lifetime trying to cross borders and barriers with a humble background. While I take pride in how far I've come, I should not have made assumptions about you.

She looks at him, then nods.

MADAME POMPADOUR

I live with the constant barrage of royal courtiers who deem it a disgrace for the King to compromise himself. It exhausts me.

GIACOMO

It's not you. It's your influence.
There are men in this city who fear
a woman in power.

(then)

In fact, one of these men has
hatched a plan to extricate you
from the King's embrace.

A beat. She studies him. He's telling the truth.

MADAME POMPADOUR

Who would be so dense?

GIACOMO

The new Foreign Minister.

MADAME POMPADOUR

De Bernis.

GIACOMO

He's put me in charge of recruiting
a young girl. One he could
introduce to the King.

A beat. She eyes him.

MADAME POMPADOUR

And have you found a girl?

GIACOMO

Of course. De Bernis is in a
position to help me.

MADAME POMPADOUR

I'm in a much greater position to
help you.

GIACOMO

I know, but I haven't felt a single
sign that you actually want to.

She blushes with anger.

MADAME POMPADOUR

So you're playing both of us. And
whoever helps you first..?

GIACOMO

That is something I may have once
done, but no... I delivered De
Bernis a young prostitute who will
surely be *rejected* by the Court.

(MORE)

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

She simply does not compare to you,
as if any woman could.

A beat.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

It bought me time with De Bernis so I
could relay this information to you.

MADAME POMPADOUR

De Bernis is your friend. Why would
you betray him for me?

GIACOMO

Because, as I said, I admire you.
And because...

(eyes darkening)

I want you to help me destroy him.

Now her eyes have light in them.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

I have received confirmation that
my so-called "friend" had me thrown
in prison. I would have died there
if it were up to him.

She searches his eyes, their faces closer than ever.

MADAME POMPADOUR

Was it over a woman?

GIACOMO

A Nun.

MADAME POMPADOUR

I do *love* tales of revenge.

She grins. Finally, he got her to smile.

MADAME POMPADOUR (CONT'D)

I want to watch the rest of the Opera,
but I will consider your offer.

GIACOMO

Consider?

MADAME POMPADOUR

I don't know you, nor do I trust
you. But I may be willing to try.

GIACOMO

Thank you, Madame.

MADAME POMPADOUR
Thank you, Monsieur Casanova.

GIACOMO
Call me Giacomo.

MADAME POMPADOUR
Giacomo. Good night.

Her words linger in the darkness, and she steps out of booth.
Her SCENT remains, and he takes it in.

He remains in the darkness, his face in half-shadow, two
HALVES of one man.

CUT TO:

INT. FLAT - RUE SAINT-DENIS

Giacomo moves his things into his own flat. It's not big or
fancy, but it's a start. He peers out the window. Notre Dame
in the distance.

He smiles. This is better.

DISSOLVE TO:

The exterior of a much more beautiful apartment. We are--

INT. VIEWING PARTY - DAY

A regal apartment hosting an elegant party. Giacomo enters
with Manon. He stops to take in the party:

The sumptuous food, the wine, the upper crust of Parisian
society. Then he looks back at Manon. She is *so* beautiful,
all dressed up for him.

He can't help but smile.

GIACOMO
Sometimes I just can't stand it.

MANON
What, exactly?

GIACOMO
How much I want *everything*.

He looks at her. She glows. He opens his arm and she slips
hers through it. He escorts her towards--

THE WINDOWS, where most of the crowd is gathered. Giacomo and Manon find space and peer outside to gain a view of--

THE PLACE DE GREVE. An enormous crowd has gathered to watch the EXECUTION of Robert Damiens, the King's assassin. It's truly a spectacle.

MANON

There he is.

She means Damiens. He is led into the square and tied to a large scaffolding. Giacomo turns away, finds two glasses of wine and hands one to Manon.

GIACOMO

How are you feeling about your impending marriage?

(off her look)

Honest.

MANON

Terrified.

He touches her arm to comfort her. It titillates her.

GIACOMO

You have the soul of an adventurer. Living life to its limits... and the passion it takes to push yourself constantly... it is exhausting, but it is like a drug.

MANON

Have you ever been married?

GIACOMO

No. Love is a marvelous sort of madness, but I know myself...

MANON

Or maybe you haven't met the right woman?

She grins. He looks at her just as there is a STIR IN THE ROOM. Someone important has entered. In fact, the most important man of all...

King Louis XV, moving slowly, but resplendent in black waistcoat. Giacomo's eyes drift to the woman on the King's arm, Madame Pompadour.

He looks away, contemplative, when he notices someone signaling him. It's De Bernis.

GIACOMO

Excuse me for just a moment.

He heads across the room to De Bernis, standing by a large open window.

DE BERNIS

My old friend, welcome!

They warmly shake hands.

DE BERNIS (CONT'D)

I've been waiting for you to arrive. I had the painting of sweet Helena delivered to the King's Court, but it was rejected.

GIACOMO

(just as he expected)
Was it?

DE BERNIS

"Good, but not great."

GIACOMO

Sorry to hear that.

CRIES of agony from the Square

DE BERNIS

It begins.

They looks out. Robert Damiens is strung up, hot pincers applied to his skin, peeling it off his bones. Giacomo has to avert his eyes. De Bernis picks up the conversation where he left it.

DE BERNIS (CONT'D)

Of course, a virgin like Helena is a valuable commodity, so I was able to deliver the girl to a higher standing.

GIACOMO

How do you mean?

DE BERNIS

Come see.

He leads him toward a door on the far side of the room.

DE BERNIS (CONT'D)

The Court is full of wealthy, older men with sadistic sexual appetites.

He cracks open the door to--

A BEDROOM. A fat, older SENATOR is fucking a young girl from behind. She is bent over the window sill so he can watch the execution while getting off on the girl. Twisted stuff.

Giacomo looks closer. The girl getting fucked is Helena. She looks scared, in pain. Giacomo hasn't delivered her to a better place at all.

De Bernis shuts the door.

DE BERNIS (CONT'D)

We will continue our search for a mistress. Your plan is a great one.

Giacomo nods, looks back once more at the door where he saw Helena.

DE BERNIS (CONT'D)

In the meantime, as promised, I'd like to arrange a meeting for you with the King's comptroller of the Treasury.

GIACOMO

About what?

DE BERNIS

The State is considering a lottery, but they don't know how to sell it. We'll tell them you're a financial genius.

GIACOMO

But I'm not.

DE BERNIS

No, but you are shrewd and can sell anything. Just be yourself.

De Bernis eyes the King.

DE BERNIS (CONT'D)

I should pay my respects to the King. Would you like to meet him?

GIACOMO

Not today.

De Bernis heads off. Giacomo drifts back across the party toward --

Manon, standing by the window, watching the execution. She smiles upon his return.

MANON

May I confess something?

GIACOMO

Please.

MANON

I know I should feel nothing but friendship toward you, but...

Giacomo is barely paying attention, his eyes on Pompadour, wondering, hoping she will look to him.

MANON (CONT'D)

I feel uneasy when a day passes that you don't come by the house.

There it is! She flashes her eyes quickly toward Giacomo, then on to Manon, curious who he's with.

Giacomo turns away from Madame Pompadour and threads his arm inside Manon's.

GIACOMO

Then I'll come by the house more often.

HEART-RENDERING CRIES echo from the square. They both look back out the window at THE EXECUTION. It is gruesome, but it seems to have no effect on Manon. She watches, as do other women, unsympathetic, as ropes are attached to each of Damiens' limbs.

GIACOMO (CONT'D)

How is it that compassionate women can watch such horror with ease?

MANON

I've always thought bad people deserve what they get. I believe that in my heart.

Giacomo looks back at Damiens as the opposite ends of the ropes are affixed to four different horses.

GIACOMO

What about change? Do you believe people are capable of change?

On a signal, the horses are sent in separate directions.

MANON

We are who we are. It's undeniable.

Damiens body is TORN to pieces.

The crowd CHEERS!

Giacomo Casanova looks away. He cannot bear to watch.

HARD OUT.

END OF PILOT EPISODE