

DISTANT CHURCH BELLS TOLL. FADE UP ON -- DAY 1

A street bordered by stone houses with tiled roofs. A RIDER on a MULE breaks frame. A DOG follows, happily wagging his tail.

It's before dawn, and we don't see the Rider's face as he heads past the sleeping houses, across --

A bridge on the River Arno, the cluttered Ponte Vecchio and a vast, dome-less CATHEDRAL beyond. A LEGEND: *Florence, 1429.*

The Rider continues out of town, up a hilltop, and toward --

ANGLE - A VINEYARD

Well-kept, heavy with almost-ripe grapes. The Rider dismounts, the sun finally revealing the face of --

GIOVANNI DE' MEDICI

In his late 60s, Giovanni stops to look at the city with a sense of patrimonial pride. He mumbles something to himself as he turns and walks through the vines, his dog trailing.

This is an early morning ritual for Giovanni, and he pops a few of the unripe grapes in his mouth as he walks. Then STOPS, hearing a RUSTLE from a nearby stand of trees.

GIOVANNI

Who's there?

(getting no answer)

Show yourself.

The dog BARKS, but no one appears. Perhaps it was nothing. Giovanni pats the dog, reaches for some more grapes, when --

A STABBING PAIN seizes him. It makes him drop to his knees, clutch at his stomach. He looks at the grapes in his hands. Understands at once what's happened.

He angrily squishes them, the juice RUNNING RED down his hands. He looks back toward the trees, where --

A FIGURE IN A GREY CLOAK

Steps forward. Face in shadow, he stares at the now-dying Giovanni. The dog barks again, but Giovanni only whispers --

GIOVANNI (CONT'D)

May God damn your soul...

As he winces in pain, CUT TO --

Hours later. A BAREFOOT BOY, 8 and plainly dressed, tears down a hillside, vineyard behind him in the distance. Stumbling over stones and dirt, he races headlong toward --

EXT. FLORENCE - DAY 1

Now busy with LABORERS hauling carts, WASHWOMEN scrubbing. The hard, dirty life of common people. The boy, VIERI, races past them all, finally turning toward a large, stone palazzo.

Chest heaving, he slams the wrought iron KNOCKER. A SERVANT opens the door. The boy dashes wordlessly past him --

INT. PALAZZO MEDICI - ATRIUM - CONTINUOUS

Surprisingly opulent, the atrium crowded with paintings, sculpture, tapestries. The boy climbs upstairs, passing CONTESSINA, 30s, aristocratic, piercing intelligence.

CONTESSINA
Vieri...?

But he just keeps running, passing Giovanni's wife PICCARDA, 60s, grandson PIERO, 20s, and his pretty wife LUCREZIA, 20s. Contessina trades frowns with them, then follows upstairs as Vieri hurls himself against a door, bursting into --

INT. PALAZZO MEDICI - COSIMO'S STUDY - CONTINUOUS

COSIMO DE' MEDICI, 40, stands at the window, focused in thought, but now turns, seeing Vieri, bathed in sweat.

Cosimo looks to his accountant, UGO BENCINI, late 50s, then kneels before the boy. Sees his feet are bleeding. Contessina arrives at the threshold, looks to her husband with concern.

COSIMO
Vieri... What is it?

Tears well in his eyes.

VIERI
Your father...

The sound of TOLLING BELLS brings us --

EXT. BASILICA OF SAN LORENZO - DAY 2

HUNDREDS OF COMMONERS in a solemn procession. Some weep; others stare as if in a trance, in shock. All led by --

POPE MARTIN V, who walks before Giovanni's CORPSE on a pallet, features visible beneath a thin shroud.

Behind the pallbearers -- Piccarda, escorted by her younger son, LORENZO, 35.

Followed by Cosimo, Contessina, and Piero, who is crushed by his grandfather's death and stifles tears, consoled by Lucrezia.

Trailing them are the ermine-clad privileged families of Florence, led by RINALDO DEGLI ALBIZZI and his wife, ALESSANDRA, early 40s. Their son, ORMANNO, 20s, whispers to his father --

ORMANNO

They command the pope himself from Rome...

RINALDO

Why not.
(smiles bitterly)
If the pope owes you money --

He directs this last remark to an ally, patrician banker ANDREA PAZZI, 40s, walking just behind. Pazzi returns his smile, when --

DISHEVELED MAN

Stop it!

A DISHEVELLED MAN rants from the side of the road.

DISHEVELED MAN (CONT'D)

Stop pretending! You all know he was a tyrant!

Albizzi is amused, but not Piero, who trembles with rage.

DISHEVELED MAN (CONT'D)

He ruined anyone who got in his way!

This is more than Piero can stand -- he RUNS at the man, PUNCHES HIM FURIOUSLY. Finally pulled away by Lucrezia and then Lorenzo. Commoners subdue the Disheveled Man, as --

Piero rejoins his family, and the procession continues. Last among them -- Vieri, head hung in sorrow. His laborer father, RICCIARDO, 30s, places a hand on his shoulder. PRELAP --

POPE MARTIN V (O.S.)
What the people of Florence owe
Giovanni de' Medici, they could
never repay in gold.

INT. BASILICA OF SAN LORENZO - CONTINUOUS

The Pope stands before a crowd so vast it overflows onto the
piazza beyond, the Medici and privileged seated at the front.

POPE MARTIN V
The lord blessed his family with
great wealth, yet he acted not
from greed. But from conviction.

Piccarda gazes ahead, stone-faced. Lorenzo looks from her to his
brother, Cosimo. Stoic like his mother. Just then -- a MAN cuts
through the crowd, making his way toward the front.

POPE MARTIN V (CONT'D)
Conviction that wealth was not to
be hoarded by the few, but used to
provide for the many.

Albizzi and Pazzi exchange a glance, taking note as -- the man,
MARCO BELLO, 40s, settles behind Cosimo. Lorenzo watches as he
whispers in his ear. Cosimo stiffens. Looks pale.

Lorenzo wonders at this, while -- his eulogy over, Pope Martin
pulls back the shroud, carefully sets a gold *florin* over each of
Giovanni's eyes. As he covers his face for the last time --

INT. PALAZZO MEDICI - DAY 2

The funeral over, family and servants returning. Lorenzo enters,
finds Lucrezia removing her veil.

LORENZO
My favorite niece. How are you, my
darling?

LUCREZIA
It's so awful, isn't it?

LORENZO
Not entirely awful. Look how
pretty you are when you cry.

His stoic charm has made her smile, despite her grief.

LUCREZIA
Uncle...

LORENZO
(spots Contessina)
Contessina, what is my brother
doing?

CONTESSINA
What he always does when his heart
is heavy. He's buried himself in
his work.

Lorenzo starts outside.

CONTESSINA (CONT'D)
He said not to be disturbed --

Lorenzo ignores her --

EXT. MEDICI BANK - DAY 2

ARMED GUARDS stand out front, the building adorned by the Medici
SEAL, with its seven red *palle*. Lorenzo walks past them --

INT. MEDICI BANK - DAY 2

Cosimo is mid-conversation with Marco Bello, in hushed tones. A
basket of UNRIPE GRAPES sits on Cosimo's desk, but Marco quickly
covers them as Lorenzo enters, heads for a credenza --

LORENZO
Care for some wine? I think we
could all use a cup.

Lorenzo uncorks wine. There's tension between the brothers that
the death of their father cannot mask --

COSIMO
Go drink somewhere else.

LORENZO
With pleasure. As soon as you tell
me what your "friend" here
whispered in your ear.

Marco Bello looks coldly at Lorenzo. No love between them.

COSIMO
It's not your concern.

LORENZO
If it has to do with this family,
it is very much my concern.

Cosimo regards him a long moment. Then --

COSIMO
Father was murdered.

LORENZO
(shocked)
What?

The news hits like Lorenzo like a punch in the gut. But Cosimo's hard stare offers no consolation. Marco breaks the moment --

MARCO BELLO
He always tasted the grapes on his morning walks. Only this time they were painted with hemlock.

Marco uncovers the unripe grapes. Lorenzo stares at them, still reeling, taking in the enormity of this.

COSIMO
Marco had the surgeon study his liver. To be sure.

LORENZO
Do... do you know who did it?

MARCO BELLO
Power breeds enemies. Your father had many.

COSIMO
None greater than Albizzi. He's always hated us.

LORENZO
(pointed, a trace of anger)
Not always.

We don't know what this refers to, but sense a sore point.

MARCO BELLO
There are others to consider.

LORENZO
Such as?

MARCO BELLO

Rival bankers, perhaps. Or a
zealot, convinced he corrupted the
church with the sin of usury.

LORENZO

We must inform the Signoria.

COSIMO

We must do nothing of the kind.
Did you learn nothing from Father?
Perception is power. And we must
appear powerful, now more than
ever.

LORENZO

His murder demands justice --

COSIMO

Alerting his killer only makes him
harder to catch. I shall have
justice. Once I know who did it.

The moment interrupted by a KNOCK. Ugo Bencini enters.

UGO

I'm sorry to disturb --

COSIMO

You never disturb, Ugo. What is
it?

UGO

(holds up an envelope)
This just arrived.

He hands it to Cosimo and goes. Cosimo tears it open, reads.

COSIMO

It's from Albizzi. He wants to
meet at the fulling mill.

EXT. FULLING MILL - DAY 2

An oversized water wheel spins, workers washing textiles, while
others stack them in carts. Cosimo rides up on a mule, plainly
dressed. In stark contrast to --

Albizzi, dressed in finery, his horse splendidly caparisoned. He
turns, seeing Cosimo dismount.

COSIMO

Strange you would ask to meet here.

RINALDO

This old mill is where it all started, isn't it? Where your father began his climb from peasant to monarch.

COSIMO

My father held no such title.

RINALDO

No, Giovanni de' Medici was far too clever to claim a title. But everyone knows he ruled this so-called "republic."

(smiling toward the mule)

And that he made his family at least feign modesty in public.

COSIMO

Because of my father, Florence has never been more prosperous.

RINALDO

Or more corrupt. He lined the people's pockets and gave them a voice just loud enough to make them feel strong. But the power rested with him. And now with you.

Cosimo regards him coolly.

COSIMO

What is it you want, Rinaldo?

RINALDO

His place in the Signoria. Tomorrow a replacement will be selected.

COSIMO

With a name drawn randomly.

RINALDO

Randomly yet, remarkably, the restricted council is always seated with a name loyal to the Medici. Tomorrow I expect it to be yours.

COSIMO
If I am so fortunate.

RINALDO

My family has had differences with yours, but in matters of the Signoria at least, we had an understanding with your father.

COSIMO

You mean he permitted you to impose taxes that benefit the nobles at the expense of the common man.

RINALDO

I mean he did not challenge the established order.

COSIMO

You want to know that I won't, either.

(a beat, then)

Rest assured, I am my father's son.

Albizzi squints his eyes.

RINALDO

Not quite a "no," is it?

(smiles)

You certainly are your father's son, Cosimo. I fear you're even more your father than he was.

Albizzi mounts his horse.

RINALDO (CONT'D)

You imagine yourself David, with the noble families the Goliath you mean to strike down.

COSIMO

It's my father who's been struck down, Rinaldo. I don't wish to strike down anyone.

Cosimo stares at him with burning accusation. Albizzi clocks the look, but if he had a hand in Giovanni's murder, he doesn't show it.

RINALDO

Know this: If you challenge us,
your children will be back at this
mill, selling filthy wool like
your late father and his fathers
before him.

Albizzi turns on his horse and rides off. Leaving Cosimo looking
after him. As THUNDER RUMBLES in the distance --

INT. PALAZZO MEDICI - DINING HALL - NIGHT 2

Rain hammers down outside. Lorenzo leads Piccarda, stern and
irritable, to the dining table, where Contessina, Lucrezia and
Piero sit. She sees Piero eat morosely, still grieving.

PICCARDA

Piero, are you quite alright?

PIERO

Fine, Grandmother.

PICCARDA

Then stop making a spectacle of
yourself with those tears. Your
grandfather would want you to show
strength.

Lucrezia strokes Piero's arm, consoling, as Piccarda's eyes come
to rest on an empty seat where Cosimo should be --

PICCARDA (CONT'D)

Where is my son?

CONTESSINA

He went out.

PICCARDA

I gather that. I asked where he
is.

Contessina swallows her bile. Lorenzo intervening --

LORENZO

He had a meeting, Mother. Marco
Bello's gone to find him.

PICCARDA

Missing dinner... His father's not
in the grave one day, and already
he neglects his family.

When Marco Bello returns, soaked by rain. Contessina turns to him, expectant. But he shakes his head -- he couldn't find him. She looks to Lorenzo, worried. LIGHTNING STRIKES, bringing us --

INT. BAPTISTERY OF SAN GIOVANNI - NIGHT 2

Empty and lit by candles, stained glass flickering from the lightning. A figure kneels near the front. Closer, we see --

COSIMO

He's been here, praying. He rises, crosses himself.

EXT. BAPTISTERY OF SAN GIOVANNI - NIGHT 2

Cosimo emerges. Looks up at the rain. Enjoys the water in his face. He unties his mule, climbs on, passing --

A GREY-CLOAKED FIGURE, who turns as he approaches the basilica, looking after Cosimo. Revealing haunted eyes, a stubbled beard. As he heads inside the baptistery --

OMITTED

EXT. PALAZZO MEDICI - COURTYARD - NIGHT 2

The rain has stopped, drips from the eaves. Marco Bello waits anxiously, then sees -- a figure appear in the darkness on a mule. It's Cosimo. He's all right. As Cosimo dismounts --

MARCO BELLO

I looked everywhere for you. Your wife was worried --

COSIMO

I'll speak to her in the morning.

CONTESSINA (O.S.)

You'll speak to me now.

Cosimo turns, sees Contessina holding a candle. He looks back to Marco Bello, enters --

INT. PALAZZO MEDICI - ROOM - NIGHT 2

Contessina closes the door behind him.

CONTESSINA
I'm concerned about you, Cosimo.

COSIMO
I am fine.

CONTESSINA
Losing your father is hard.

COSIMO
Let's not pretend. Poor Ugo was a more loving father to Lorenzo and me than he ever was.

CONTESSINA
He was still your father. And I know you loved him, in spite of everything.
(off his silence)
What happened this afternoon? With Marco Bello and Lorenzo?

COSIMO
Nothing of importance.

Contessina senses this isn't true. Considers her words.

CONTESSINA
There has always been a distance between us, Cosimo. But I have been a good and loyal wife to you these many years. And now you bear a heavy burden. The weight of this family, this bank, this republic. It would be enough to break another man. If you allow me, I could help to lessen it.

Contessina gently puts her hand on his arm. He looks at her, and we sense he might set aside the past that's divided them. Then, wordlessly, he goes. Contessina looks after him, concerned. Cosimo continues past camera, a LIGHTNING STRIKE bringing us --

SCENE OMITTED

EXT. CATHEDRAL OF SANTA MARIA DEL FIORE - DAY (PAST) FB 1

The impressive church, topped by a massive hole where its dome should be.

INT. SANTA MARIA DEL FIORE CATHEDRAL - DAY (PAST) FB 1

Pigeons flutter in the massive apse, gray skies beyond. Below --

YOUNG COSIMO DE' MEDICI works. He is 20 years younger, the focus we saw in his older self now divided between the dome and a sketch pad, where he draws with charcoal.

He's made numerous, detailed drawings and cross-sections of the dome and its imaginary cupola -- and they're good, too.

Beside him are BOOKS on geometry and philosophy as well as a massive BRICK MODEL (made by di Cambio in 1296) imagining what the glorious cathedral would look like if completed.

A pair of visiting MERCHANTS from Siena notice the model, Cosimo sketching. Bemused, the 1st Merchant shakes his head.

1ST MERCHANT

(under his breath)

Of course they'll never finish it.
Florentines always take a larger
bite than they can swallow --

His fellow Merchant smiles as they exit frame, revealing --

GIOVANNI, also 20 years younger, come to fetch his son. He sees what Cosimo is doing, but makes no comment.

GIOVANNI

Come with me. Where is your
brother?

Cosimo hurriedly gathers his sketches --

YOUNG COSIMO

He... he had an errand.

INT. SADDLE SHOP - DAY (PAST) FB 1

YOUNG LORENZO in bed with a WOMAN, 20s, kissing her passionately, when she freezes, hearing a DOOR OPENING --

WOMAN

Oh, God. Roberto!

YOUNG LORENZO

He's early --

He's pulling on clothes, reaching for a fur-trimmed CLOAK.

WOMAN
No, he's late --

YOUNG LORENZO
(realizing the time)
Oh shit...

Lorenzo starts out, then stops, kisses the Woman one last time, and jumps out the window. Dressing as he runs down the street --

EXT. ORIGINAL PALAZZO MEDICI - DAY (PAST) FB 1

This one is darker, less grand. Young Lorenzo enters, races up the steep, dizzying atrium, slowing before he calmly goes --

INT. ORIGINAL PALAZZO MEDICI - STUDY - DAY (PAST) FB 1

Young Cosimo stands with Giovanni and Ugo, also 20 years younger. Cosimo watches Giovanni tap IRON POWDER into an INKPOT. He shakes it, then picks up a HEAVY RING and examines it. Cosimo wondering what this is about when Lorenzo enters --

YOUNG LORENZO
Sorry, I was just --

Lorenzo smiles at Cosimo, out of breath but trying for casual. The brothers are knowing allies, not yet fraught with the tensions that will later divide them. Giovanni frowns.

GIOVANNI
Your cloak. Is it new?

YOUNG LORENZO
Yes.

GIOVANNI
Let me see it.

Lorenzo unhooks and hands it over.

GIOVANNI (CONT'D)
Very fine. My father would sell
wool like this only to the
wealthiest nobles.

But instead of handing it back, Giovanni throws it in the fire. Lorenzo stares, aghast.

YOUNG LORENZO
What did you do that for?

GIOVANNI
Ugo, that will be all.

Ugo looks at Lorenzo with sympathy, but takes his abacus and goes. When the door has shut...

GIOVANNI (CONT'D)
The Medici do not call attention
to themselves with fancy dress.

YOUNG LORENZO
I have money. Why not enjoy it?

GIOVANNI
You have *my* money. I taught you
better than this. Explain, Cosimo.

Cosimo hates being made to correct his brother. Reluctantly --

YOUNG COSIMO
Displaying wealth is vain. It only
makes envious the less fortunate.

GIOVANNI
Which is just about everyone.

YOUNG LORENZO
But what is the point of having
wealth if one cannot display it?

Giovanni steps close to his son. Intimidating.

GIOVANNI
It is for the exercise of power.
We marry into nobility because it
benefits the family. Not --
(indicates burning cloak)
-- so you can ape it.

Lorenzo doesn't like this, not a bit. Cosimo breaks the moment --

YOUNG COSIMO
You wanted to see us, Father?

Giovanni crosses to his desk, holds up a paper.

GIOVANNI
There is news from Rome. The pope
has died. The curia will act
swiftly to name his replacement.

YOUNG COSIMO
How does that concern us?

GIOVANNI
You'll see. Pack your things.

As Lorenzo and Cosimo head off --

EXT. TUSCAN COUNTRYSIDE - DAY (PAST) FB 2

Giovanni, Cosimo and Lorenzo on mules. Three ARMED GUARDS serve as protection, the golden hills of Tuscany stretching beyond. Giovanni rides alongside Cosimo, Lorenzo a few paces behind.

YOUNG COSIMO
It is beautiful, is it not,
Father?

But Giovanni has something else on his mind.

GIOVANNI
You spend many hours studying the
Duomo...

YOUNG COSIMO
Yes, Father.

GIOVANNI
Have you considered why the old
Florentines built a cathedral so
enormous no one could complete it?

YOUNG COSIMO
It was folly. Their ambition
exceeded their ability.

Giovanni shakes his head.

GIOVANNI
They knew it was impossible. The
cathedral is too grand, too
glorious.

YOUNG COSIMO
If they knew it couldn't be
completed, why build it?

GIOVANNI
Because they had dreams, Cosimo --
dreams beyond the reach of a
single generation. And they had
faith, that God would produce
future generations clever enough
to realize those dreams.

YOUNG COSIMO

That could be me, Father. If I
apply myself to my drawings.

GIOVANNI

It could be you, but not with your
drawings.

Cosimo looks troubled. His father sees this --

GIOVANNI (CONT'D)

The dome will not be completed by
an artist or an architect. It will
be completed by a man who can
marshal the vast resources needed
to accomplish the task. A man of
great wealth and power.

(beat)

I know you fancy yourself an
artist, Cosimo. But I, too, have
dreams -- for this family, for
this city. And when I die, it will
be up to my sons -- and their
sons' sons -- to realize them. I
place my faith in God -- and in
both of you.

Giovanni rides on, but we HOLD on Cosimo, thinking --

EXT. CASTLE - DAY (PAST) FB 2

Waves crash on the shores beneath a CASTLE on the coast. The
three Medici and their Guards ride along the beach toward it.

INT. CASTLE - DAY (PAST) FB 2

Giovanni, Cosimo and Lorenzo sit, waiting in an antechamber,
when -- a YOUNG WOMAN runs past. She is semi-clad, pulling on
clothes as a MAN yells after them.

COSSA (O.S.)

Come back next time, I'll give you
a real blessing!

Giovanni watches the Woman run off, impassive, then turns to see
red-faced BALDASSARRE COSSA, 50s, at the door. He drinks wine
from a tin cup, wipes his mouth with his sleeve.

COSSA (CONT'D)

Giovanni de' Medici.

GIOVANNI
Admiral. These are my sons, Cosimo
and Lorenzo.

COSSA
(waving them inside)
This way.

As Young Lorenzo and Young Cosimo follow Giovanni inside,
Lorenzo whispering --

YOUNG LORENZO
"Admiral?"

They step inside Cossa's "office," which is cluttered and
filthy, smelling of dirty clothes and old food.

YOUNG COSIMO
(whispers back)
I think it's Baldassarre Cossa...

YOUNG LORENZO
Who?

YOUNG COSIMO
Cossa. The mercenary.

YOUNG LORENZO
Whoever he is, he's drunk...

That doesn't stop Cossa from refilling his cup.

COSSA
Your father has come up with a
rather remarkable proposal, boys.

Young Cosimo and Young Lorenzo look to Giovanni.

GIOVANNI
At present Holy Mother Church is
fatally divided. There is a false
pontiff in Avignon, another in
Naples.

COSSA
With Pope Alexander dead, our
hopes depend on a strong
successor. To purify and unite the
church.

YOUNG LORENZO
You seek financing?

COSSA
To buy votes. Among the Curia in
Rome.

YOUNG COSIMO
(with contempt)
Bribery...

COSSA
Not bribery. "Lobbying."

YOUNG LORENZO
And your candidate?

Cossa smiles to Giovanni.

COSSA
Why me, of course!

Cosimo and Lorenzo are stunned.

YOUNG LORENZO
Father, you're not seriously
giving money to a... "pirate" --

COSSA
A *condottiero*, not a pirate. A man
who knows how to fight -- and win
-- battles. Not just that, but...

He goes to a trunk, lifts CARDINAL'S ROBES.

COSSA (CONT'D)
An ordained cardinal, and a voting
member of the Curia.

YOUNG COSIMO
(to Giovanni)
He seeks to "purify and unite" by
buying his way into the papacy?

GIOVANNI
It is sometimes necessary to do
some bad in order to achieve a
much greater good.

YOUNG COSIMO
What collateral do you offer?

COSSA
None at all. If I fail, I'm afraid
there's little chance of recouping
your stake. But if I succeed?

The Medici become bankers to the
pope --

YOUNG LORENZO
The pope has no bankers --

COSSA
He would now.

GIOVANNI
All the tithes and taxes that flow
to the Curia from London to
Tunisia would pass through our
bank.

COSSA
You could compound that wealth for
Holy Mother Church. To strengthen
her.

YOUNG COSIMO
"Admiral" -- or should I call you
"Cardinal?" -- you don't consider
banking a sin? "Usury?"

COSSA
Another pope might. I wouldn't.

Cosimo and Lorenzo pause. Understanding at last why their father
brought them here.

OMITTED

EXT. CASTLE - DAY (PAST) FB 2

The brothers follow Giovanni, walking toward the mules. Young Cosimo
appreciating his father's genius --

YOUNG COSIMO
In a stroke we would become the
most successful bankers in Europe.

YOUNG LORENZO
If that criminal got the job.
Which seems exceedingly unlikely.

YOUNG COSIMO
No one could call us "usurers"
anymore, not if the pope was our
client --

Giovanni turns, flashing with anger.

GIOVANNI

Listen to me! Usurers make money by charging interest to the desperate. Our profit comes from trade, and credit. We give opportunity to those who otherwise would have none. Don't ever forget that.

Cosimo and Lorenzo blink back at their father, chastened. After a beat --

GIOVANNI (CONT'D)

I have made my decision. You will go to Rome. At once.

(to Cosimo)

And so will you.

YOUNG COSIMO

Me? Lorenzo is good at persuading people, not me --

GIOVANNI

Only one of you can lead the bank when I die.

Giovanni starts off, accompanied by one of the Armed Guards. Lorenzo wants to follow him, but Cosimo motions him to stay.

YOUNG COSIMO

Don't waste your breath. He wants to pit us against each other.

YOUNG LORENZO

We won't let him divide us, will we?

Cosimo turns to his brother and smiles. Kisses his forehead.

YOUNG COSIMO

Never.

The sound of an ABACUS CLACKING, brings us --

INT. MEDICI BANK - (PRESENT) DAY 3

Ugo totes sums with his abacus, looks up from his table as --

Marco Bello enters with TWO MEN, dragging along the Disheveled Man who shouted insults at Giovanni's funeral. He's bruised, looks like he's been roughed up.

MARCO BELLO
(to Cosimo)
This is the man.

Cosimo steps forward, studies him. After a long beat:

COSIMO
Do you take back the words you
spoke about my father?

DISHEVELED MAN
I was drunk, Messer, and should
not have spoken. But I cannot take
back what I said. I am among those
your father ruined.

Marco's heard enough, starts to pull him away, stopped by --

COSIMO
Wait.

Cosimo goes back to his work table, opens a strong box.

COSIMO (CONT'D)
If one speaks ill of my father in
public, it is impossible to remain
in Florence.

He returns, with a handful of gold florins.

COSIMO (CONT'D)
Take this. To start a new life
elsewhere.

Cosimo puts the florins in the man's hands. He stares at them with disbelief, tears welling in his eyes.

DISHEVELED MAN
Thank you, Messer. Thank you...

Cosimo nods to Marco, who has the Men take the man outside.

UGO
You are a good man, Cosimo.

Cosimo reaches for his cloak.

COSIMO

A practical one. Not everyone benefited from my father's ambition. And it is always better to turn an enemy into a friend.

(to Marco)

Come. We mustn't be late for the vote.

As Marco follows Cosimo, Ugo looking after them --

EXT. PALAZZO VECCHIO - DAY 3

A crowd gathered out front, awaiting the outcome of the day's legislature. Some hold the Medici flag, others the Albizzi's.

Cosimo arrives, Marco at his elbow. As the crowd makes room for him to enter, several bowing in respect --

Albizzi, his son Ormanno and Pazzi watch from a distance as Cosimo and Marco Bello make their way through the merchants offering their condolences. Among them BREDANI, 30s.

BREDANI

Messer de' Medici, permit me to express my sorrow at your father's passing --

COSIMO

Thank you, Bredani.

BREDANI

Who but your father would have believed in me? Without his support I would be nothing --

COSIMO

You can count on me.

BREDANI

Thank you. Thank you so much --

As Cosimo continues up the stairs of the Palazzo Vecchio --

SCENE OMITTED

INT. PALAZZO VECCHIO - SIGNORIA CHAMBER - DAY 3

A magnificent room, the legislative center of the Florentine republic, raucous and crowded with the privileged, commoners and tradesmen. Murals depict victories from battles past.

Cosimo and Marco Bello settle opposite Albizzi, one of the twelve important decision maker. Behind him, Ormanno, Pazzi and other wealthy Florentines are seated. (Including CORONA, pious and po-faced). GUADAGNI, 40s, burly, the *gonfaloniere*, rises.

GUADAGNI

With heavy hearts today we choose
a successor for the late Giovanni
de' Medici. Place the name of your
nominee in the bowl as it's passed
before you.

Members of the Signoria write names on scraps of paper and fold them, dropping them inside a BOWL carried through the room.

We see Cosimo write his name. He uses the SAME INKPOT into which his father poured iron shavings so many years before.

Pazzi, leans forward, whispers sarcastically in Albizzi's ear --

PAZZI

Oh, the suspense...

RINALDO

Democracy belongs to those who
purchase it.

PAZZI

If only everyone had Medici's
clients.

RINALDO

Your time will come.

All the ballots collected, the bowl is brought to Guadagni, who wears the same HEAVY RING Cosimo saw Giovanni examine before. He riffles through the papers until ONE STICKS TO THE RING, which we now understand is MAGNETIZED. Drawn to the shavings in Cosimo's ink. He takes the ballot, gives a covert nod to Cosimo, then opens it.

GUADAGNI

The successor to Giovanni de'
Medici shall be...

(reading from the slip)

... Cosimo de' Medici!

A ROAR OF APPROVAL rises from the room, men STAMPING FEET and THUMPING TABLES. Ormanno leans forward to his father, disgusted.

ORMANNO

It's impossible. They're cheating!

But Albizzi and Pazzi are unsurprised as Cosimo crosses to stand before an empty seat in the front row. He waits for quiet from the room.

COSIMO

My father understood money should be used to allow *all* men to profit from their toil, not just those born to rank and title. That is the Florence he helped build.

(eyes fixed on Albizzi)

He may be gone, but what he stood for cannot be destroyed.

Just then, a MESSENGER rushes inside to deliver a message to Guadagni. The Signoria falls silent as Guadagni reads, then looks up --

GUADAGNI

Visconti, the Duke of Milan, has invaded Lucca. The city walls have fallen.

UPROAR. This news displeases Cosimo, but he is careful to mask his feelings. Albizzi RISES, fueled by anger.

RINALDO

I call for immediate adjournment.

GUADAGNI

Adjourned!

But the room is now buzzing with news of war. Cosimo and Marco Bello start out, intercepted by Albizzi and Ormanno.

RINALDO

The important families must call for war. To protect our interests in Lucca.

COSIMO

The merchants who depend on trade for their livelihood. War is not in their interest.

RINALDO

You will support us, Cosimo, just as your father did. Or you'll find his seat needs filling again.

Albizzi turns to leave with his son. Cosimo stares after him, suspicions about his father's murder renewed --

OMITTED

EXT. PALAZZO MEDICI - DAY 3

Cosimo and Marco Bello return from the Signoria. Marco Bello departing as Contessina approaches with Piero.

PIERO

Is it true there will be war?

COSIMO

It is possible.

CONTESSINA

Piero was meant to go with you today. To see you take your father's seat in the Signoria.

PIERO

It's time I started working with you, Father.

Cosimo sighs.

COSIMO

Is there nothing else you dream of being? Other than a banker?

PIERO

It's what Grandfather wished, is it not?

To Cosimo, Piero's reflexive loyalty is disappointing. He turns to go. Piero looks to his mother, confused -- *What have I said wrong?* Seeing this, Contessina hurries to catch up to Cosimo.

CONTESSINA

He is your heir --

COSIMO

I don't need to be reminded.

CONTESSINA

-- and he is brilliant.

COSIMO

He has a mind for books, not for the affairs of men.

CONTESSINA

At least give him a chance. You
were his age when you started
learning from your father.

COSIMO

Piero is not me.

Cosimo walks on, Contessina looking after him, frustrated. As
she exits frame, we stay on the sky, TILTING DOWN to find --

EXT. ROME - DAY (PAST) FB 3

The glories of ancient Rome lie in ruins, magnificent but
broken, the streets crowded with BEGGARS, LEPERS, THIEVES and
PROSTITUTES. Young Cosimo, Young Lorenzo and Cossa (now dressed
in his cardinal's robes) ride solemnly past, all three men
taking in the deprivation and depravity.

COSSA

(darkly)

Welcome to Rome.

YOUNG LORENZO

The sooner we leave this
stinkhole, the better.

COSSA

Twenty-three cardinals vote for
the pope. We have six days to
persuade 12 of them to elect me.

YOUNG COSIMO

But you are among the 23 --

COSSA

(smiles)

You see? We already have one vote.

They arrive at the imposing stone walls of the Curia, guarded by
ARMED SOLDIERS. Cossa announcing himself --

COSSA (CONT'D)

Cardinal Cossa.

OMITTED

OMITTED

INT. CURIA REFECTORY - ROME - DAY (PAST) FB 3

Young Cosimo and Young Lorenzo and Cossa sit opposite CARDINAL MOSCA, 60s, dwarfed by the enormous, high-ceilinged room.

CARDINAL MOSCA
Are you entirely serious?

YOUNG LORENZO
Entirely. As you are doubtless aware, Cardinal Cossa is highly qualified --

COSSA
And fully ordained --

Mosca's disdain is so great he won't address Cossa directly.

CARDINAL MOSCA
Cardinal Attavanti has my vote. I see no reason to change it.

Cosimo looks disinterested, but Lorenzo is determined, hefts a satchel on the table, clunking with the sound of gold coins.

YOUNG LORENZO
How many reasons does your eminence need?

Off the Cardinal's surprise --

EXT. CURIA SQUARE - DAY (PAST) FB 3

Another cardinal, TORELLI, rotund with a solemn Jabba the Hut countenance, stares at Young Cosimo, Young Lorenzo and Cossa with bored eyes. Cossa in the midst of an impassioned plea --

COSSA
Holy Mother Church is divided, in need of a committed leader who will purify and unite her.

Torelli looks singularly unimpressed.

COSSA (CONT'D)
Surely your eminence recognizes
the need for change --

Cossa drones on, but Young Lorenzo smiles at Young Cosimo -- this man will need to be paid, too. Cosimo turns, noticing -- the PANTHEON in the distance.

The sound of Cossa's voice fades as we DRIFT IN on Cosimo, staring at the Pantheon's enormous CUPOLA --

INT. INN - ROME - NIGHT (PAST) FB 3

Cossa snores on a straw mat on the floor, Young Lorenzo and the Armed Guards sleeping nearby. Only Young Cosimo lies awake, staring at the ceiling. He can't sleep. As he pulls himself up --

EXT. ROME - NIGHT (PAST) FB 3

Young Cosimo breaks frame, holding a torch. The streets have emptied, leaving the ancient ruins standing ghost-like in the moonlight. Cosimo walks past them, staring in awe. They look MAGICAL.

Now he stops, coming upon a POOL OF WATER. He holds the torch to the water, revealing -- DOZENS OF DISCARDED SCULPTURES, ancient human figures submerged in the greenish water.

Their eyes seem to stare back at Cosimo, spirits of the ancestors asking to be revived. Off Cosimo, deeply moved --

INT. PANTHEON - NIGHT (PAST) FB 3

Young Cosimo steps inside, taken by the simple beauty of the place. He glares up at the giant cupola, in awe. Then he sets down the torch, pulls out a sketch pad. Starts feverishly drawing, when --

MAN'S VOICE
Not bad.

Cosimo, startled, turns to see a young man, 20s, scruffy and dressed in the shabby clothes of an artist. This is DONATELLO.

DONATELLO
Not as good as me, of course. But
not bad.

YOUNG COSIMO
You're an artist?

DONATELLO
Donato di Niccolò di Betto Bardi.

YOUNG COSIMO
That's a mouthful.

DONATELLO
I am called Donatello. From your
accent, I hear you are a
Florentine like me, Messer --

YOUNG COSIMO
Medici.

DONATELLO
(recognizes the name)
Medici? Then you are a banker --

That is the last thing Cosimo wants to be.

YOUNG COSIMO
I am... here to learn.

DONATELLO
A banker who wants to be an
artist? Alright then, Medici. Come
with me.

INT. DONATELLO'S WORKSHOP - NIGHT (PAST) FB 3

A door is pulled open, Young Cosimo following Donatello inside a
spacious abandoned building, raucous even at this late hour,
crowded with bohemian ARTISTS, drinking, talking, drawing.

YOUNG COSIMO
What is this place?

DONATELLO
My workshop.

He calls over an attractive young man, BERTOLO, early 20s.

DONATELLO (CONT'D)
Bertolo. This is my new friend,
Cosimo --

BERTOLO
(hands him wine)
Enchanted. Have a cup.

As they walk, Cosimo observes all sorts of decorative objects --
JEWELRY, ILLUMINATED SCROLLS, broken pieces of STATUE.

YOUNG COSIMO
What is all this?

DONATELLO
The wisdom of the ancients,
salvaged from the streets.

YOUNG COSIMO
This is why you came to Rome?

DONATELLO
It seems the only artists who have
something to teach me died a
thousand years ago. Come, see.

Donatello goes to some easels, where he's clipped his own sketches. He flips through several -- half-drawn charcoal images of OLD BUILDINGS and NUDE STATUES.

DONATELLO (CONT'D)
Magnificent, aren't they?

YOUNG COSIMO
Beautiful, but... blasphemous.

DONATELLO
Why blasphemous?

YOUNG COSIMO
They have no clothes.

DONATELLO
You are a banker, aren't you?
(off Cosimo's wince)
Are we not made in God's image? By
showing the beauty of man, do we
not depict the beauty of God?

Cosimo never thought of it that way.

DONATELLO (CONT'D)
You want to learn? Start there.

He indicates a nude model, BIANCA, holding a sheet to her breasts while some ARTISTS draw at her feet. Cosimo looks uncertain, but Donatello and Bertolo have already left. He tentatively takes out his pad, starts to draw.

He determinedly does NOT look at her exposed flesh, but keeps his eyes fixed on Bianca's face, which is quite beautiful.

She notices his bashfulness. He has an innocence, not like the others. She smiles. At first he's unsure whether he's being mocked. But then he smiles back. As their eyes meet, TIME CUT:

ANGLE - BIANCA

She's finished modeling for the evening and pulls on her clothes, as Cosimo approaches.

COSIMO
I hope you didn't mind me staring.

BIANCA
Why would I?

COSIMO
Well, you were...

BIANCA
Naked? I wasn't sure you'd noticed. Your eyes didn't look down once.

She's amused by Cosimo. Who's charmed by her.

COSIMO
What's your name?

BIANCA
Bianca.

COSIMO
I am Cosimo.

BIANCA
(finished dressing)
Well, "Cosimo?" Will I see you again?

COSIMO
I hope so.

Bianca smiles to herself.

BIANCA
I hope so, too.

She heads off, Cosimo looking after her. Smitten.

INT. INN - ROME - DAY (PAST) FB 4

Early morning, the distant crow of a rooster. Young Cosimo lies awake. He's thinking about last night, again unable to sleep, when -- Young Lorenzo and Cossa stand over him, ready to go.

YOUNG LORENZO
Come brother! We have work to do.

As Cosimo gets up, a GREGORIAN CHANT BEGINS OVER a MONTAGE --

Young Lorenzo and Cossa engaged in arguing -- and attempting to bribe -- a succession of red-robed Cardinals in Curia offices... Young Cosimo in the background, uninterested.

CARDINAL BELLINI
Myself, I am inclined to favor...
(picking any name)
Cardinal Colona...

Cossa sees there's no point in arguing, eyes Young Lorenzo. Again he lifts the bag of coins.

While Cosimo, playing hookey with Donatello, drinks in the glories of the Roman Forum... Cosimo sketching Bianca again at night... their eyes meeting... A GROWING ATTRACTION...

Donatello explaining, studying... while on a break at the studio, Cosimo approaches Bianca... She turns, sees him watching her... As she steps forward, kisses him...

Young Lorenzo returns to their lodgings, exhausted. Empties the bag. Only a few gold coins left... And where is Cosimo?

In the Medici palazzo, MEN pack FLORINS into STRONGBOXES... The accountant Ugo's abacus *clacking*...

GIOVANNI'S VOICE OVER
*Lorenzo. You request additional
funds...*

Another ARMED ESCORT waits outside the palazzo, horses stamping, as STRONGBOXES are cached in wagon-load shipments of WOOL under the anxious eye of Giovanni and Ugo...

GIOVANNI'S VOICE OVER (CONT'D)
*Be aware our resources are
finite...*

At another Curia office, Young Lorenzo and Cossa meet with another PRELATE... more money changing hands...

In a small room, Cosimo and Bianca make love. Then Bianca falls asleep, her head on his chest. Cosimo is the happiest ever.

Giovanni, weary and worried, dictates to Ugo. He's trying not to eye yet another pile of florins...

GIOVANNI'S VOICE OVER (CONT'D)
*Please lose no time in bringing
your mission to a successful
close.*

LORENZO'S VOICE OVER
*Father, I am trying as hard as we
can, but I fear I must ask for
still more gold --*

ANOTHER CARDINAL'S VOICE OVER
Who do you think you are?!

MUSIC AND MONTAGE ABRUPTLY ENDS WITH --

EXT./INT. CARDINAL LAMPEDUSA'S RESIDENCE - DAY (PAST) FB 5

Lampedusa is furious with Cossa and Young Lorenzo.

CARDINAL LAMPEDUSA
Who do you think I am? Are you so
depraved as to believe there is no
honor or faith in Rome? For shame.

COSSA
Your eminence, we are merely
hoping to help guide your --

CARDINAL LAMPEDUSA
I know precisely what you are
hoping, "Cardinal" Cossa. How
dare you presume we are all as
corrupt as yourself? I serve God!
And you, this usurer with social
pretensions.

COSSA
Another time, perhaps.

He leaves, unperturbed, and motions for Lorenzo to follow. We
HOLD ON LORENZO. He swallows, ashamed.

INT. DONATELLO'S WORKSHOP - ROME - DAY (PAST) FB 6

Bianca awakes, sees Young Cosimo pulling on his clothes.

BIANCA
Where are you going?

YOUNG COSIMO
I must go to work.

BIANCA
You have a job? I thought you were
an artist.

YOUNG COSIMO
I would very much like to be.

BIANCA
I don't know why, if you have a
job. Artists make no money.

YOUNG COSIMO
There are things in life other
than money, you know.

BIANCA
Like what?

YOUNG COSIMO
Like beauty. Like you.

Cosimo kneels down, kissing her.

BIANCA
I don't see how beauty matters.
Without food in your stomach,
clothes on your back, or a roof
over your head.

YOUNG COSIMO
Where are you from?

BIANCA
Does it matter?

YOUNG COSIMO
What did you do? Before this?

BIANCA
I was a laundress. I will be again
when I leave this place.

Cosimo stares at her.

YOUNG COSIMO
May I see you again?

BIANCA
Do you want to?

YOUNG COSIMO
More than anything.

Bianca falls back down to bed.

BIANCA
Then you know where to find me.

EXT. DONATELLO'S STUDIO - DAY (PAST) FB 6

Young Cosimo exits and buttons his tunic, smiling to himself. But as he hurries off, we find -- his Armed Guard. Looking from him to the studio. Frowning.

EXT. CURIA SQUARE - DAY (PAST) FB 6

Young Cosimo hurriedly enters, finds -- Young Lorenzo, waiting.

YOUNG COSIMO
How's it going with Cossa?

YOUNG LORENZO
Oh, so you remembered about that.

YOUNG COSIMO
I'm sorry, I know I haven't exactly carried my weight.

YOUNG LORENZO
You've done nothing, brother. And to answer your question, it's not going well. Although our "admiral" is surprisingly pleasant company, we have three days left and all we've done is deplete Father's funds. Where have you been?

YOUNG COSIMO
You're far better at this than I am, Lorenzo --

YOUNG LORENZO
Is that supposed to be an excuse?

YOUNG COSIMO
I never wanted to be a banker, you know that --

YOUNG LORENZO
You don't have a choice. Neither
of us do.

Lorenzo starts inside. As Cosimo stares after him, PRELAP
GALLOPING, then --

EXT. STREET, FLORENCE - (PRESENT) DAY 4

MERCENARY SOLDIERS RIDE PAST, finding Florence in turmoil,
preparing for war. War songs spill from the taverns, while
horses are re-shoed and ARTISANS work overtime, repairing
weapons and armor. Amidst them, we find --

Lorenzo, on horseback, surveying the activity. Frowning.

INT. PALAZZO MEDICI - DAY 4

Lucrezia, getting ready to leave, sees Lorenzo enter.

LORENZO
(kisses her cheek)
Good morning, my lovely niece.

PIERO
Will the war end quickly?

LORENZO
No one's voted for war just yet.

LUCREZIA
I am praying they won't. I have
cousins in both Lucca and Milan.

Piccarda enters in time to hear this --

PICCARDA
Wars are fought by fools. They
squander their wealth on
mercenaries, then cry over their
losses. Soon they're drinking and
doing business again with the very
men they swore to kill.

Contessina arrives, addresses Piero and Lucrezia.

CONTESSINA
I need you both to set a calm
example at mass today. The eyes of
Florence will be on this family.

Lucrezia steps toward Piccarda, holding up a GOLD RING.

LUCREZIA

May I wear this to the service? It was a gift from Piero.

PICCARDA

You must ask your mother-in-law. Contessina decides the affairs of this family now.

Lucrezia looks to Contessina, who smiles and nods.

LORENZO

Where is my brother?

CONTESSINA

With Marco.

INT. PALAZZO MEDICI - COSIMO'S STUDY - DAY 4

Lorenzo knocks, finds Cosimo with Marco Bello.

LORENZO

It's time for mass.

COSIMO

Close the door. I want a word.

Lorenzo closes it. Wondering at Cosimo's solemn demeanor.

COSIMO (CONT'D)

We've understood some things. About who killed Father.

LORENZO

Such as?

COSIMO

Whoever he was, he had a classical education.

LORENZO

What makes you say that?

COSIMO

Poisoning fruit was a trick used on Emperor Augustus. His wife knew he had his food tasted, so she killed him by having the figs on the tree daubed with poison.

Lorenzo considers.

LORENZO

That certainly narrows the list.

(to Cosimo)

Can I have a word with you? Alone?

Cosimo looks to Marco Bello, who nods. Exits. Then --

LORENZO (CONT'D)

You know the Albizzi are rallying support for a vote in the Signoria. To authorize war over Lucca.

COSIMO

The families need this war. To preserve revenue from their properties there.

LORENZO

And they'll raise the salt taxes to pay for it.

COSIMO

Raising taxes to enrich themselves is what they've always done.

LORENZO

How will you vote?

Cosimo is surprised by the question.

COSIMO

Father would have voted with them -
- he would have gone along to get along...

LORENZO

You hold Father's seat now. And if you oppose the war, many others in the Signoria will vote with you.

COSIMO

And then the families would be at war with us. Albizzi warned me against opposing them.

LORENZO

Albizzi had a classical education. And when he was a boy, he played in that vineyard many times.

COSIMO

Yes...

LORENZO

If he killed Father, he did it for one reason: to weaken you. Now you have a chance to weaken him. If you don't take it, you may not get another.

INT. BASILICA OF SAN LORENZO - DAY 4

Sunday mass. Cosimo, his mind still on Lorenzo's words, takes his seat in a pew alongside his family. The PRIEST intones --

PRIEST

*In nomine domine, et filii at
spiritu sancti-*

Cosimo closes his eyes in prayer... Startled when he is tapped discreetly on the shoulder...

Cosimo turns to see ANDREAS DI CECCO, 40s. He apologetically jerks his head, signaling Cosimo to follow him.

After some hesitation, Cosimo rises from the pew. Contessina looking after him. As does Albizzi, sitting across the aisle.

Cosimo walks away to the back of the church, sees Di Cecco heading to a dark corner. He bows in deference, whispers --

DI CECCO

You must forgive my intrusion upon your devotions, my Lord.

COSIMO

I lay no claim to any such title, Dottore Di Cecco.

DI CECCO

You had me break the law by conducting an autopsy on your father. And yet I notice word of his poisoning has not spread. Would I be correct in assuming that your excellency prefers to keep this melancholy fact a secret?

COSIMO

Your point?

DI CECCO
My point is that someone *does* know
what befell your lamented father.
Someone besides his murderer...

COSIMO
(realizes...)
You know.

DI CECCO
I wish circumstances were
otherwise, believe me. But my
mother is very ill and alas I am a
poor man... For one hundred scudi,
my lips are sealed forever.

SCENE OMITTED

EXT. DI CECCO DWELLING - NIGHT 5

Di Cecco shuffles down a narrow street, keys open a door --

INT. DI CECCO DWELLING - NIGHT 5

Where he lives and works. Di Cecco strikes a flint to light his
CANDLE, REVEALING -- Albizzi, sitting there. Waiting.

DI CECCO
(surprised, humbled)
Signore Albizzi --

Albizzi stands over the smaller man, intimidating.

RINALDO
You spoke with Cosimo de' Medici
at mass. Tell me what he wants...

INT. PALAZZO MEDICI - DAY 6

Contessina heads downstairs, when she looks out a window, stops,
witnesses -- Cosimo, outside the bank, in a heated whispered
conversation with Di Cecco.

EXT. MEDICI BANK - DAY 6

COSIMO
A hundred *florins*? Last Sunday
your lips were "sealed forever"...

Di Cecco is different now. More confident.

DI CECCO
Circumstances have changed,
Signore. I've had another offer.

COSIMO
From whom?

DI CECCO
I'm not at liberty to say.

Cosimo breaks off the staring contest to sigh --

COSIMO
Very well. A hundred florins.
Midnight tomorrow. Here.

Di Cecco cocks his head, gives Cosimo a sly smile.

DI CECCO
Let us say midday. In the Piazza
Signoria. Safety in numbers.

COSIMO
(offended)
I am a banker, not a murderer.

DI CECCO
And I am a surgeon, not a
blackmailer. These are new times.
Noon -- or I shout his murder from
the poultry stall.

OMITTED

INT. CURIA - REFECTORY - DAY (PAST) FB 7

The Cardinal is the essence of reason as he declares -

CARDINAL BELLINI
I've had a change of heart. Cardinal
Attavanti, after all, seems more
(appropriate) --

Young Lorenzo's dismay...

INT. DONATELLO'S WORKSHOP - ROME - DAY (PAST) FB 7

Cosimo kisses Bianca, who smiles into his eyes. They've just finished making love again, and he stands, starts dressing. She sits up, clutching sheets to her chest.

BIANCA
Where are you going?

COSIMO
To help my brother.

BIANCA
Will you be back?

COSIMO
Why do you keep asking that? Of course I will.
(then)
Don't you understand how I feel about you?

Cosimo kisses her, smiles. PRELAP --

INT. ORIGINAL MEDICI PALAZZO - STUDY - DAY (PAST) FB 7

Giovanni dictates to Ugo.

GIOVANNI'S VOICE OVER
My sons, as I have not heard from you and time is getting short, I must warn you of a new threat. The Albizzi have learned of our plans. You must act with haste or I fear all will be lost --

Giovanni looks up from his letter to see -- the Armed Guard who witnessed Young Cosimo leaving Bianca's bed, returned from Rome. Watching his master with a grave look --

GIOVANNI
What is it, Claudio?

CLAUDIO
Your son is in love. With a peasant.

GIOVANNI
A peasant?

CLAUDIO
A laundress...

Giovanni's face darkens. Behind him, we see -- Ugo, listening with deep concern --

OMITTED

INT. DONATELLO'S WORKSHOP - ROME - DAY (PAST) FB 8

Mostly empty. Young Cosimo approaches the little room where he slept with Bianca before.

YOUNG COSIMO
Bianca?

But he finds it EMPTY. He turns to some of the Artists.

YOUNG COSIMO (CONT'D)
Have you seen Bianca?

Getting no answer, he begins going looking in other rooms, until he comes upon -- Donatello, asleep in bed with ANOTHER BODY draped under the blanket. Cosimo's cheeks FLUSHING RED --

COSIMO
Bianca..?

Before Donatello can answer, Cosimo whips back the covers to reveal -- BERTOLO. Cosimo's shock. The other men's fear.

YOUNG COSIMO
My God... you're a... a--

But Donatello's fear is edged with anger.

DONATELLO
Sodomite?

Cosimo turns to flee but Donatello blocks the door --

DONATELLO (CONT'D)
Will you betray us?

YOUNG COSIMO
... please, just let me--

DONATELLO
Bertolo is only 19. Must he be put to death for sodomy? Must I?!

The enormity of what Donatello is saying. Cosimo sinks into a chair. Looks over at Bertolo, who stares back. Terrified. Cosimo doesn't have the stomach for this. When --

BIANCA
Cosimo?

He turns, sees Bianca has just returned, holding bread. He leaves Donatello and Bertolo, embraces her.

COSIMO
I was afraid you'd left.

BIANCA
Just for bread, that's all.

COSIMO
I don't want you to leave. Ever again. Do you understand?

BIANCA
Cosimo... Don't be silly.

COSIMO
Why 'silly?'

BIANCA
You are the son of a banker. And I am but a laundress.

COSIMO
I am in love with you, Bianca.

BIANCA
As if that mattered.

COSIMO
One day soon, I will take you to meet my brother. And my father.

BIANCA
You are a dreamer, Cosimo.

COSIMO
That's exactly what I am.

He kisses her once more, then beckons her on. Bianca looks after him. Her smile fading as his back turns --

EXT./INT. CARDINAL ORSINI'S RESIDENCE - (PAST) FB 9

Young Lorenzo approaches Cossa, holding his father's LETTER.

COSSA
What is it?

YOUNG LORENZO

A letter from my father. The Albizzi have been sowing bribes the other way. We are nearly bankrupt.

COSSA

I'm deeply sorry.

YOUNG LORENZO

It's not your fault. You said at the start you had no collateral.

Cossa shrugs --

COSSA

A pity. Oh I know you doubt my sincerity. But you don't have to be virtuous to perform virtuous deeds. I could have helped. I could have cleansed the church.

Lorenzo stares at Cossa, wondering if this could be true, as Young Cosimo enters.

YOUNG COSIMO

I have just spoken with Cardinal Mosca. He's with us...

YOUNG LORENZO

How did you manage that? There's no money left to bribe him with --

YOUNG COSIMO

(nods to Cossa)

I used the argument he first made to us. The need to "purify and unite" the church.

Cossa turns to Lorenzo, vindicated.

COSSA

There, you see.

YOUNG LORENZO

If Orsini switched, Attavanti and the other three would follow.

COSSA

You might as well wish for the sun to rise at night. I don't know why we're here, Orsini will never switch. He hates me.

Just then, Cardinal Orsini approaches with TWO GUARDS.

CARDINAL ORSINI
You there. You must leave here at
once.

Lorenzo and Cosimo look to Cossa, who steps forward.

COSSA
I am a member of the curia.

CARDINAL ORSINI
Sadly this is true. But they are
not.
(to Cosimo and Lorenzo)
Go. Or I will have you thrown out.

Cossa looks sorrowfully to Lorenzo and Cosimo.

YOUNG LORENZO
We're going.

But as they turn to leave, Cosimo glimpses through an open door -
-

Bertolo, Donatello's lover, in a Cardinal Orsini's bedroom,
getting dressed. A moment of surprised recognition, neither man
expecting to see the other here.

Bertolo's eyes implore Cosimo -- *don't tell Donatello*. Cosimo
looks troubled, then moves on silently.

OMITTED

OMITTED

EXT. CURIA - NEXT DAY (PAST) FB 10

YOUNG LORENZO
First ballot, nil...

PEOPLE gathered, watching, Young Cosimo and Young Lorenzo among them, watching LIVERIED SERVANTS carrying food on covered TRAYS to the cardinals sequestered within...

YOUNG LORENZO (CONT'D)
Breakfast. If we *had* gold, there's
how to get it inside...

Cosimo stares at the trays, mind racing...

YOUNG COSIMO
We don't need gold. I need paper.

YOUNG LORENZO
What are you going to do?

YOUNG COSIMO
Something bad. In order to do
good.

Off Lorenzo, not understanding --

OMITTED

INT. MEDICI BANK - DAY 6

Marco Bello enters... to find Cosimo and Lorenzo going over papers.

MARCO BELLO
May I have a word?

He means a private word. Lorenzo knows to go. When he has --

MARCO BELLO (CONT'D)

I went to the piazza as instructed. Di Cecco says a hundred florins is nothing to a man such as yourself. Tomorrow he wants a *thousand*.

COSIMO

Frighten him. Tell him he will lose his life if he persists.

MARCO BELLO

Would he lose his life?

Marco senses Cosimo's hesitation. Knows he doesn't want to spill blood.

MARCO BELLO (CONT'D)

How long have I known you?

COSIMO

Eighteen years now.

MARCO BELLO

You found me on the street, bloodied and beaten, and brought me into your home. It has been my honor to serve you ever since.

COSIMO

You have done more than serve, Marco. You have been like a brother.

MARCO BELLO

Then you know you must trust me. I have known men like this surgeon all my life. And I am telling you that he will never go away. Not until he's made to go away.

Marco is clearly advocating murder. But Cosimo can't abide it.

COSIMO

Just frighten him, Marco. That's all.

Cosimo goes. But Marco looks after him, with deep misgiving.

INT. CURIA - REFECTORY (PAST) FB 10

The 23 cardinals of the curia, Cossa among them, confer as dinner trays are brought in...

SEVERAL CUTS as CHAFING LIDS are lifted by hungry clergy...

Including Cardinal Orsini, who lifts his tray to see not food, but a one sentence note:

Cossa Will Tell About Bertolo

Off Orsini, going pale as he looks to Cossa, who stares back blankly, unaware of the blackmail --

EXT. ARNO BANK - (PRESENT) DAY 7

Market day. Crammed with VENDORS and haggling BUYERS as... Andreas Di Cecco steps INTO FRAME. He sees nothing but milling people, then spies --

Marco Bello, coming towards him. Hefting a SATCHEL, bulging with florins. Di Cecco smiles to himself as Marco hands it to him.

DI CECCO
Is it all there?

MARCO BELLO
Of course.

DI CECCO
(nods, satisfied)
Then this will do. For now.

Marco Bello's face darkens and -- suddenly -- he pulls Di Cecco close, EMBRACES HIM.

SURPRISE on Di Cecco's face. Unseen by the crowd, Marco Bello has slipped a DAGGER between Di Cecco's ribs.

As Marco Bello steps away and moves into the crowd, dropping the bag and leaving Di Cecco sagging to the ground. SCREAMS as Di Cecco's corpse spills blood across the cobblestones. The bag filled not with gold, but SAND.

EXT. MEDICI BANK - DAY (PAST) FB 11

A FAST RIDER jumps off his horse, quickly tying its reins as he heads inside --

INT. MEDICI BANK - DAY (PAST) FB 11

He rushes to Giovanni, working with Ugo. The Rider delivering an ENVELOPE, which Giovanni tears open.

UGO
What is it?

GIOVANNI
A letter from Rome. The new pope
has been chosen --

But his face betrays nothing as we hear CURIA BELLS TOLL...

EXT. ROME STREET - DAY (PAST) FB 11

Bianca moves through a crowded street, heading back to Donatello's studio, when suddenly -- SHE'S PULLED IN A DARK ALCOVE, finds herself face to face with -- CLAUDIO, the Armed Guard who reported to Giovanni. He brandishes a KNIFE, CLOSE TO HER FACE. Off Bianca's terrified eyes --

EXT. CURIA, ST PETER'S CATHEDRAL - DAY (PAST) FB 12

CLOSE on the PAPAL TIARA. A CARDINAL lifts it from a velvet cushion, place it on the head of -- BALDASSARRE COSSA.

Cossa, now POPE JOHN XXIII, rises, walks down the crowded streets, where we find --

Young Cosimo, Young Lorenzo, and Giovanni. Cossa smiles to them as he walks past them. But Cosimo has something else on his mind. After Cossa has passed, he starts off, stopped by --

YOUNG LORENZO
Where are you going?

YOUNG COSIMO
There's a woman I want you to
meet. Both of you.

Lorenzo smiles at this strange behavior. But Giovanni watches Cosimo move through the crowd, face impassive.

OMITTED

INT. DONATELLO'S WORKSHOP - DAY (PAST) FB 12

Young Cosimo enters, his stomach knotting, as he finds the place ransacked and empty. The furniture, art all smashed. No sign of Donatello or Bertolo. And no sign of Bianca. Off Young Cosimo --

EXT. ROME GATES - DAY (PAST) FB 12

Young Cosimo hurries through the crowded street, looking at all the faces. Then stops, his spirits sinking.

INT. PANTHEON - ROME - DAY (PAST) FB 12

Young Cosimo enters, then stops. As he hoped he would, he finds -
- Donatello, staring at the cupola above. He is somber, subdued.

YOUNG COSIMO
What happened?

DONATELLO
The Curia Guards shut us down.

YOUNG COSIMO
Whatever for?

DONATELLO
Charges of sodomy. Someone reported us.

Cosimo hides his guilt.

YOUNG COSIMO
What will you do now?

DONATELLO
Go back to Florence, I suppose.
Bertolo's already fled.

YOUNG COSIMO
Donatello... where is Bianca?

DONATELLO
Gone.

YOUNG COSIMO
What do you mean, gone?

DONATELLO
She said she was going. Someplace
you'd never find her.

Cosimo turns to go, but Donatello stops him. Speaking with a firm certainty --

DONATELLO (CONT'D)
She was scared, Cosimo. She'll never come back.

Off Cosimo --

EXT. CURIA - DAY (PAST) FB 12

Young Lorenzo and Giovanni are about to mount their horses, when they see Young Cosimo return, looking dejected.

YOUNG LORENZO
Well? Where is she?

Cosimo looks from Lorenzo to Giovanni, suspecting.

YOUNG COSIMO
Gone.

YOUNG LORENZO
Perhaps another time.

Lorenzo rides off, but Cosimo stares at his father, knowing he was somehow responsible for sending her away. But Giovanni's face betrays nothing.

GIOVANNI
You should feel proud, son. You are about to become the head of the largest bank in Europe.

YOUNG COSIMO
Lorenzo and I did this together.

GIOVANNI
It was your idea to blackmail Orsini. Your brother never would have dared.

YOUNG COSIMO
I didn't want him to tell you.

GIOVANNI
He had to. He knew in his heart you should lead the bank, not him.
(beat)
Come on.

Giovanni rides off. Cosimo lingers a moment, then follows.

HIGH ANGLE - Cosimo, Lorenzo and Giovanni ride away from Rome with their Armed Guards, as we adjust to find a figure in f.g., watching them. Now we reveal --

BIANCA. She wipes a tear from her eye, then looks down at her hand, where she holds 12 GOLD FLORINS. She gives one last look at Cosimo, then walks away. PRELAP:

RINALDO (O.S.)
The case for war has been made.

INT. PALAZZO VECCHIO - SIGNORIA CHAMBER - (PRESENT) DAY 7

The Signoria gathered, crowded and raucous as always. Albizzi stands in the center of the room. Cosimo in his seat, Lorenzo and Marco Bello watching from the gallery.

RINALDO
Duke Visconti and his hired
general, Sforza, must be driven
out of Lucca. Call the question.

Cosimo stands.

COSIMO
Exception.

A queasy rumble in the room.

GUADAGNI
Signore Albizzi, will you yield to
Messer Medici?

Albizzi is wary in the extreme, but sits beside Ormanno, Cosimo speaking to them both --

COSIMO
The Albizzi and the other noble
families of Florence have provided
for this city for centuries.

He turns to face the larger crowd.

COSIMO (CONT'D)
War has been the instrument of
their power, and they prosecute
them endlessly.

RINALDO
Your point, Messer Medici?

COSIMO

We are in a new age, with a new generation of men who understand a simple truth. That war is wrong.

RINALDO

"Wrong?" Wrong for the Medici, you mean.

COSIMO

These lofty paintings glorify war but omit its stench.

RINALDO

Spoken by a man who has never risked his life in combat.

COSIMO

A new world is here. A world of trade, and business, a world where men are rewarded for their ideas and initiative. A world where if you are born poor, it no longer means your children must remain poor --

RINALDO

Your "business" is nothing but usury, which Holy Mother Church condemns!

The privileged families begin TABLE THUMPING in defiant support.

RINALDO (CONT'D)

Jews, not gentlemen, are bankers. Gentlemen don't hold pens, we wield swords. And swords grow rusty if they are not used. I call the vote!

Cosimo looks to Lorenzo and Piero in the gallery. They look back at him, proud for the stand that he has taken. Off the DEAFENING ROAR OF THE CROWD --

INT. BAPTISTERY OF SAN GIOVANNI - DAY 7

Silence. Cosimo praying, as Marco Bello enters, kneels beside him. Just then, the sound of distant TRUMPETS BLASTS. DRUMS BEATING. A CHEER RISES. Marco Bello turns.

MARCO BELLO

What is that?

COSIMO
Albizzi carried the vote.

MARCO BELLO
Then there will be war.

Cosimo nods, grave.

COSIMO
With guns in Lucca. And without
them here in Florence.
(beat)
What of the surgeon, Di Cecco?

MARCO BELLO
He's dead.

COSIMO
(ashen)
How?

MARCO BELLO
He was going to shout out. I had
no choice.

Cosimo is deeply shaken. He didn't want war, but now it is on.
Didn't want blood. But now he has it.

COSIMO
There's always a choice.

He looks up at the crucified Christ --

COSIMO (CONT'D)
And I made mine. Years ago.

We hear the SOUND OF TRUMPETS BLARING...

EXT. FLORENCE STREET - DAY 7

Flags are flown of all the families as Florence sees it SOLDIERS
off to war. A PRIEST blesses the passing troops, turning to
notice a GREY-CLOAKED FIGURE moving among the crowd, while --

Cosimo, Contessina, Lorenzo, Piero and Lucrezia stand at the top
of the San Lorenzo steps with other guild leaders. Watching --

Albizzi riding at the head of the army, Ormanno by his side.
Albizzi trades a last, cold look with Cosimo. WAR HAS BEGUN.

BLACK

END OF EPISODE