THE BORGIAS

Pilot

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ImageMovers/DreamWorks Television/Stephen Woolley

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A TITLE -

ROME 1492.

INT. ST PETER'S. DAY.

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

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

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

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

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

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

RODRIGO BORGIA
Yes, Lucrezia.

LUCREZIA
And will you become the new Pope
in his place?

Borgia chuckles mightily.

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

LUCREZIA
Can the Pope have a daughter,
Papa?

(continued)
CONTINUED:

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

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

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

LUCREZIA
Why, Papa?

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

LUCREZIA
Does the Pope not rule the world, Papa?

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

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

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

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

CESARE
It is time, father.

The sounds of a turbulent crowd outside, growing louder.

CESARE (CONT’D)
The city has already heard...
CONTINUED: (2)

RODRIGO BORGIA
And the mob is baying...

Borgia puts Lucrezia's hand in Cesare's.

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

CESARE
How?

RODRIGO BORGIA
I have no idea.

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

INT. VATICAN. POPE'S CHAMBERS.

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

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

There is a murmur in reply.

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

The cardinals outdo each other in stating their assent.

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

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

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

And he dies.
INT. DOORS OF ST PETER’S. DAY.

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

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

EXT. SQUARE. DAY.

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

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

JUAN
I was born here, as far as I’m aware -

Collonna turns to the others.

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

Derisive laughter from the gathering.

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

INT. VATICAN CORRIDORS. DAY.

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

LUCREZIA
What’s happening brother?

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

He pushes his way out, through a small door.
EXT. SQUARE. DAY.

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

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

JUAN
And if the new pope is Spanish?

COLLONNA
And my mother's the Virgin Mary?

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

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

INT. VATICAN GARDENS. DAY.

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

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

LUCREZIA
Where's Papa?

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

Cesare passes through.

EXT. VATICAN. DAY.

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

ON LUCREZIA'S FACE, LOOKING BACK -

Through Cesare's cloak.

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

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

JUAN
Which makes you -

COLLONNA
Careful -

JUAN
The son, if I'm not mistaken -

The blades clash again -

JUAN (CONT'D)
- of a Roman cardinals whore -

And Juan freezes.

Collonna's blade is at his neck.

Then Collonna finds another blade at his own neck.

It is Cesare.

CESARE
My brother speaks before he thinks -

Collonna relaxes his blade.

CESARE (CONT'D)
	Sometimes...

He looks from Cesare to Juan.

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

He draws Juan away from the standoff.

EXT. BORGIA VILLA. EVENING.

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

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

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

JUAN
If the times demand it...

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

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

INT. BORGIA VILLA. EVENING.

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

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

CESARE
You’ve heard?

VANOSA
The Pope has died.

CESARE
And you know what that means?

VANOSA
I know there will be an election.

JUAN
Which he’ll win -

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

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

VANOSA
For the better?

She looks around the gardens.

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

JUAN
As Pope - he can do what he wants -

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

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

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

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

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

INT. VATICAN CORRIDOR/COMMISARY. NIGHT.

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

A voice sounds from inside.

VERSUCCI (OFF)
What are we in here, prisoners?

BURCHART
Yes.

He lifts another lid and examines another dish.

BURCHART (CONT’D)
Until a new pope is agreed...

INT. VATICAN COMMISARY. NIGHT.

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

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

BORGIA
Appalling.

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

BORGIA
Wise indeed.

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

VERSUCCI
And now my soup is cold.

BORGIA
Please, your grace. Have mine.

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

VERSUCCI
Delicious...

As he sips.

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

VERSUCCI
How can I thank you?

BORGIA (TO HIMSELF)
I wonder...

INT. VATICAN CORRIDOR/COMMISARY. NIGHT.

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

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

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

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

BURCHART
Quail, marinated in truffle.

BORGIA
Cardinal Piccolomini -

BURCHART
Suckling pig -

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

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

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

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

INT. VATICAN CORRIDORS. NIGHT.

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

DELLE ROVERE
Cardinal Borgia -

BORGIA
Cardinal -

DELLE ROVERE
One of us will win this contest -

BORGIA
Can you be so sure?

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

BORGIA
Thank you. And I acknowledge yours.

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

His lips curl, distastefully.

DELLE ROVERE
...organizational genius...

BORGIA
But...

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

DELLE ROVERE
It has other needs as well.

BORGIA
And they are?

DELLE ROVERE

BORGIA
You find me lacking in those qualities?

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

Borgia smiles, with apparent humility.

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

EXT. VATICAN ROOFS. NIGHT.

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

EXT. ROOFS OF ROME. NIGHT.

The dove, making its way over the crumbling city.

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

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

EXT. DOVECOTE. VILLA GARDEN. NIGHT.

The dove, alighting at its home in the dovecote.

INT. JUAN'S ROOM. NIGHT.

Cesare kicks Juan awake.

CESARE
Get a notary.
CONTINUED:

JUAN

What?

CESARE

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

INT. KITCHEN. BORGIA VILLA. NIGHT.

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

NOTARY

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

CESARE

Cesare Borgia...

He signs. The notary draws up another document.

NOTARY

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

Juan is rolling up the documents in greaseproof paper.

EXT. DOVECOTE. VILLA GARDEN. DAWN.

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

LUCREZIA

Why the dove, Cesare?

CESARE

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

LUCREZIA

A symbol of what?

CESARE

Of the uncorrupted soul.

LUCREZIA

And a messenger of what?

CESARE

Of corruption.

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

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

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

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

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

    CESARE
    I want to keep him as our father.

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

    CESARE
    He will be father of all mankind.

And he throws the dove into the air.

EXT. ROOFS OF ROME. DAWN.

The dove, flying through the city.

EXT. BORGIA’S BEDROOM. VATICAN. DAWN.

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

EXT. ROMAN STREETS. MORNING.

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

INT. KITCHENS. MORNING.

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

JUAN
Cardinal Julis Versucci -

COOK
Pheasant for the cardinal, roasted -

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

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

JUAN
And stuffed.

Juan takes out the next document.

JUAN (CONT’D)
Cardinal Piccolomini?

COOK
Suckling pig -

He pulls out another tray, displaying a roasted pig.

EXT. VATICAN. DAY.

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

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

INT. VATICAN DOOR. DAY.

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

INT. VERSUCCI’S CHAMBERS. DAY.

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

INT. PICCOLOMINI’S CHAMBERS.

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

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

PICCOLOMINI

Tasty...

INT. VATICAN CONCLAVE. DAY.

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

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

EXT. VATICAN ROOFS. DAY.

Grey smoke burns out of the Vatican chimney.

EXT. VATICAN. DAY.

Cesare makes his way, through the milling crowds.
He enters a small church, built into the walls.

INT. CHURCH. DAY.

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

INT. CONFESSIONAL. DAY.

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

CESARE
Bless me father, for I have sinned.

BORGIA
How have you sinned, my son?

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

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

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

BORGIA
The papacy will repay us tenfold.

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

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

He smiles to himself.

BORGIA (CONT'D)
...He will put me in funds...

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

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

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

BORGIA
Why the blasphemous tone, my son?

CESARE
Because I swear, if God does not protect us, I shall.
CONTINUED: (2)

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

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

      BORGIA
Ego te absolvo peccatore tui...

INT. ABBEY. DAY.

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

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

      JUAN
And your benefactor is?

      ABBESS
Cardinal Borgia -

      JUAN
Then methinks they belong to
him...

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

      JUAN (CONT'D)
Haven't you taken a vow of
poverty?

      ABBESS
Yes, My Lord -

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

The abbess gasps.

      ABBESS (CONT'D)
Please -

      JUAN
Then you won't be needing this -

He rips it from her neck.
INT. CATHEDRAL. DAY.

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

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

   JUAN
   Catch -

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

EXT. CATHEDRAL. DAY.

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

   JUAN
   Back to Rome...

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

EXT. DOVECOTE. VILLA GARDEN. EVENING.

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

INT. VATICAN ROOFS. EVENING.

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

Drops it back on the tiles.

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

INT. VATICAN LIBRARY. DAY.

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

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

SFORZA
Than you can no longer be vice-chancellor.

BORGIA
You mean I might yet be Pope of Rome?

SFORZA
If you can find a suitable vice-chancellor.

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

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

SFORZA
Discretion. Loyalty. And a certain kind of wisdom.

BORGIA
Can you be more specific?

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

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

INT. VATICAN CONCLAVE. NIGHT.

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

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

An intake of breath from the conclave.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)
Cardinal Borgia has the required majority.
CONTINUED:

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

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

SECRETARY
What is your implication?

Borgia looks over at Delle Rovere.

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

Orsini joins in the argument.

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

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

ORSINI
By someone remotely worthy of the papacy at least –

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

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

Borgia glances towards Cardinal Sforza, and purses his lips.

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

Borgia, looking towards Sforza, gives an imperceptible wink.

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

(CONTINUED)
He looks from Orsini to delle Rovere.

BORGIÀ (CONT’D)
Cardinals Delle Rovere and
Orsini.

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

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

A silence. Then delle Rovere retracts.

DELLÉ ROVERE
That was not my intention.

ORSINI
Nor was it mine.

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

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

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

BORGIÀ
And Cardinal Borgia is happy to
comply.

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

INT. VATICAN CORRIDORS. NIGHT.

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

Borgia follows, last, smiling to himself.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM. NIGHT.

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

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

The cardinals enter, and seat themselves at the benches.

Delle Rovere whispers to Orsini.

\textbf{DELLEROVERE}
Can there be any doubt that the good cardinal is male?

\textbf{ORSINI}
Not if you count his children.

\textbf{SFORZA}
Let him who is without children cast the first stone...

\textbf{ORSINI}
I have heard rumors of a rhinoceros horn...

\textbf{SFORZA}
That small?

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

\textbf{BELOW THEM -}

Borgia enters, last.

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

He raises his cardinals robes.

He sits.

The young priest washes his hands.

\textbf{BORGIA}
Is that water warm?

\textbf{PRIEST}
I am afraid not, your grace.

And now his hands are shaking.

\textbf{BORGIA}
But those hands are, I trust.

The priest hesitates.

\textbf{BORGIA (CONT'D)}
Go on. The suspense is killing them...
CONTINUED: (2)

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

PRIEST
Habet duos testiculos et benes pendentes.

ORSINI
So. He has two testicles, well hung.

The cardinals chuckle.

SECRETARY
Habemus papam.

The cardinals cheer. A bell begins to toll.

EXT. VATICAN ROOFS. DAWN.

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

INT. VATICAN CORRIDORS. DAWN.

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

EXT. BALCONY. DAWN.

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

INT. WHOREHOUSE. NIGHT.

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

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

JUAN
Your sins are all forgiven
sisters -

He falls on top of them.

WHORE
By the Pope’s bastard?
CONTINUED:

JUAN
Son. His favourite son...

EXT. BORGIA VILLA. EVENING.

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

VANOSSA
So. You have won.

BORGIA
Yes. I’ve won.

VANOSSA
My congratulations.

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

BORGIA
And I have lost.

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

VANOSSA
Ah. What have you lost, my love?

You.

VANOSSA
You’ll never lose me.

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

VANOSSA
The pope cannot love?

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

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

BORGIA
No.
CONTINUED:

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

BOGRIA (CONT’D)

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

VANOSSA

Ah.

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

VANOSSA (CONT’D)

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

BOGRIA

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

VANOSSA

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

BOGRIA

I always will be.

VANOSSA

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

BOGRIA

That is equally unthinkable, Vanossa.

VANOSSA

And why this new austerity, my dear cardinal?

BOGRIA

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

VANOSSA

You? Promised that?

INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

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

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

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

The sense of excess is obscene and overwhelming.

We hear a voice, over.

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

EXT. ROMAN STREETS. DAY.

A magnificent procession, heading towards St. Peters.

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

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

BURCHART (V.O.) (CONT’D)
For the Borgia family, a sandalwood carriage, gold inlaid, refurbished in Venice...

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

BURCHART (V.O.) (CONT’D)
For Pope Alexander, a ceremonial throne constructed by Florentine master builders, gold and silver plated, four Andalusian horses, crowned with ostrich feathered, liveried with silk, threaded gold and silver...

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

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

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

INT. CARRIAGE. DAY.

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

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

VANOSSA
But perhaps I am...

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

VANOSSA
And what are we gaining?

CESARE
The future?

VANOSSA
I wonder who will protect us from it?

CESARE
Me?

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

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

CESARE
Juan, then...

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

VANOSSA
Juan needs protection himself...

CESARE
Well then. It will have to be God.
INT. ST PETER’S. DAY.

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

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

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

It seems he will go on forever with the titles.

DOWN IN THE PEWS -

Lucrezia whispers to Cesare.

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

CESARE
Holy father.

UP BY THE ALTAR -

The Secretary is nearing the end.

SECRETARY
His Holiness, Pope Alexander the Sixth.

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

A Te Deum sounds out. The choir sings.

DOWN IN THE PEWS -

Lucrezia and Cesare.

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

CESARE
What, sis?

It is obvious they mean the world to each other.

LUCREZIA
What must I call myself? Holy Daughter?

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

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

LUCREZIA
And when will I marry?

CESARE
Never, if I can help it.

LUCREZIA
But surely it is good to marry, Cesare?

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

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

We see the king, sitting beside his young son.

CESARE (CONT’D)
A marriage to Rome would help his ambitions.

He points to the French ambassador.

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

Lucrezia shudders.

CESARE (CONT’D)
And there is the duke, Giovanni Sforza. Next to his cousin, Catherina Sforza.

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

CESARE (CONT’D)
Their kingdoms are next to the Papal States.

(MORE)
CONTINUED: (2)

CESARE (CONT’D)
If you married him, France
couldn’t get to Naples, Naples
could get to Rome. Must I go on?

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

CESARE
It might be the safer option, my
love.

LUCREZIA
Does Papa have so many enemies?

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

DELLE ROVERE -

Sitting beside the French Ambassador.

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

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

DELLE ROVERE
And if it doesn’t?

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

INT. BANQUETING HALL. DAWN.

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

BURCHART (V.O.)
Item. Coronation banquet. Five
thousand snails from Perigord in
France. Three thousand duck
livers from Normandy.
CONTINUED:

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

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

INT. ST PETER'S. DAY.

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

Down the nave comes Cesare.

CESARE
You called for me, father.

ALEXANDER
Yes, my son. I need to confess.

CESARE
To me?

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

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

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

And Cesare now sits.

CESARE
You surprise me father.

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

CESARE
Can you elucidate?

(CONCLUDED)
CONTINUED:

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

CESARE
God's plan?

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

CESARE
And that is?

ALEXANDER
To effect the reform of our Holy Mother Church.

CESARE
Ah. A noble task, father.

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

CESARE
I am at your service.

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

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

ALEXANDER
Time?

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

ALEXANDER
Small beginnings, then.
CONTINUED: (2)

CESARE

Yes.

ALEXANDER

But to good ends.

INT. VATICAN CONCLAVE. DAY.

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

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

ALEXANDER

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

The cardinals repeat.

CARDINALS

...so help me god.

ALEXANDER

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

He closes his eyes, as if looking for guidance.

ALEXANDER (CONT’D)

The most august, mot valued colleague and the brightest hope for the future of the church -

ON DELLE ROVERE’S AND ORSINIS’S FACES -

They have both been promised this.

ALEXANDER (CONT’D)

Cardinal Ascanio Sforza.

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

ORSINI

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

Cesare tries to calm him.

(Continued)
CONTINUED:

CESARE
My I remind the cardinal he is
in conclave -

ALEXANDER
Perhaps we misheard him -

ORSINI
That office was promised to me -

ALEXANDER
Ah. Did you pay for it?

ORSINI
With my acceptance of your foul
election -

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

Sforza bows, graciously.

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

And delle Rovere interjects.

DELLE ROVERE
I pray so too.

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

DELLE ROVERE (CONT'D)
In fact I compliment his
Holiness on a most inspired
choice. I fully approve of
his...

His lips curl with the slightest disdain.

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

He bows graciously. Whispers to Orsini.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

DELLE ROVERE (CONT’D)

Bow, you fool -

Orsini bows.

INT. FRENCH AMBASSADOR’S RESIDENCE. DAY.

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

AMBASSADOR

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

ORSINI

What business does he have in mind?

AMBASSADOR (CONT’D)

He is new to the throne. He would dearly like a ceremony of investiture in St. Peter’s. By the Pope of Rome.

ORSINI

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

The ambassador smiles, thinly.

AMBASSADOR

His majesty could not have put it better himself.

Delle Rovere speaks up.

DELLE ROVERE

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

AMBASSADOR

What are you implying?

DELLE ROVERE

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

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

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

EXT. MARKET. ROME. DAY.

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

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

There is a small tame monkey on his shoulder.

Cesare picks up a small bowl of spice.

ABYSSENNIAN
Saffron, my Lord, from the Ethiopie...

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

CESARE
He approves?

ABYSSENNIAN
Indeed. He is my connoisseur of spices.

CESARE
How much?

ABYSSENNIAN
For the bowl?

CESARE
For the monkey -

EXT. CARRIAGE. NIGHT.

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

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

ALEXANDER
Are you going to share it with me?

CESARE
Share what, Holy Father?

ALEXANDER
Why you take a monkey to a banquet?

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

ALEXANDER
And the monkey does?

CESARE
Yes. He is an excellent judge -

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

CESARE (CONT'D)
-of appetite -

EXT. DELLE ROVERE'S PALACE. NIGHT.

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

The cardinalate, at dinner.

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

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

DELL'EROVERE
Shall we dine on gruel tonight then, your Holiness? I could inform my cooks -

ALEXANDER
I am your guest tonight, cardinal.

(MORE)
CONTINUED:

ALEXANDER (CONT' D)
And we will dine according to your choosing. We must begin with the little things.

ORSINI
The little things.

ALEXANDER
Sale of indulgences, for example...

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

ALEXANDER
The last supper was celebrated with wine -

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

CESARE
Let me taste that -

MICHELETTO
It's an excellent vintage, My Lord.

CESARE
I've no doubt.

He holds the glass in front of the monkey.

Alexander smiles, finally realising the purpose of the monkey.

The monkey slurps.

DELLE ROVERE
How is his palate?

CESARE
Superb.

The monkey growls. Seems to like it.

DELLE ROVERE
And what's his opinion?

CESARE
Tuscan. Early forties. He salutes your good taste.

He nods to Micheletto, who pours wine for the Pope and the rest of the gathering.
CONTINUED: (2)

DELLE ROVERE

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

ALEXANDER
Is there a metaphor there?

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

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

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

CESARE
It seems nature, not metaphor, calls.

He lifts the monkey gingerly. The monkey squeals.

CESARE (CONT’D)
He begs your lordship’s pardon.

Cesare walks with the monkey, away from the table.

EXT. GARDENS. NIGHT.

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

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

Cesare watches Micheletto slip like a shadow into the gazebo.

EXT. GAZEBO. NIGHT.

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

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

The monkey makes a throaty noise.

Cesare clamps his hand over the monkey's jaw.

INT. GAZEBO. NIGHT.

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

EXT. GAZEBO. NIGHT.

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

He sees -

INT. GAZEBO. NIGHT.

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

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

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

CESARE
My God you're fast -

MICHELETTO
For a cook. And you -

CESARE
For a priest -

The monkey leaps on the table. Licks the powder.

CESARE (CONT'D)
On kitchen duty?

MICHELETTO
For tonight.

CESARE
Who pays you?

MICHELETTO
CONTINUED:

CESARE
Whatever your being paid I’ll double it.

MICHELETTO
They all say that.

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

MICHELETTO
You could?

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

CESARE
But not that stupid.

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

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

Cesare smiles. Both knives are now drawing blood.

CESARE
Maybe we understand each other.

MICHELETTO
A rare kind of understanding.

CESARE
You first.

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

MICHELETTO
Of course...

As if he expected this.

CESARE
Tell me why I shouldn’t.

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

CESARE
I’ll be forgiven. The Pope is my confessor.

MICHELETTO
Because you’ll never meet an assassin like me.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED: (2)

CESARE
That's good...

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

Cesare stares, at his impenetrable, pock marked face.

CESARE
Yes?

MICHELETTO
Needs someone as pitiless as me.

CESARE
And in the powder?

MICHELETTO
Eternal life.

CESARE
For whom?

MICHELETTO
You. Your father. Who else?

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

CESARE
Not very subtle.

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

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

CESARE
Serve it to delle Rovere.

MICHELETTO
He knows not to drink from me.

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

He hands the decanter to Micheletto. Micheletto considers, for a moment, then takes it and goes.
EXT. DELLE ROVERE’S PALACE. NIGHT.

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

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

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

He glances round at the retreating figure of Micheletto.

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

Eventually he has no alternative but to sit.

DELLE ROVERE
Your eminence - you are bleeding

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

CESARE
Damn monkey bit me.

DELLE ROVERE
Animals will do that. They lack soul.

He raises his glass.

DELLE ROVERE (CONT’D)
I propose a toast. To Metaphor.

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

CESARE
Why metaphor?

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

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

(MORE)
CONTINUED:

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

CESARE
I propose another toast. To monkeys.

ORSINI
Monkeys?

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

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

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

Delle Rovere stares at Orsini. Orsini is trying to say something, but can't get the words out. Delle Rovere says, quite slowly.

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

CESARE
You wring it's neck.

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

PICCOLOMINI
Are you ill, your Grace?

ORSINI
Poison -

He staggers backwards, pulling at the tablecloth.

ORSINI (CONT'D)
I accuse -

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

CESARE
The cooks?
CONTINUED: (2)

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

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

CESARE (CONT'D)

Come. Father -

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

CESARE (CONT'D)

Now -

INT. GAZEBO. NIGHT.

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

Delle Rovere walks through the gardens, calling.

DELLA ROVERE

Micheletto? Micheletto?

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

ON CESARE -

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

CESARE

We were saved by a monkey, father -

ALEXANDER

It's not possible -

CESARE

The poison was meant for us -

ALEXANDER

Nobody poisons the pope -

CESARE

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

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

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

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

CESARE
The idea offends you -

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

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

CESARE
So, God will take his revenge then -

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

ALEXANDER
No. We will.

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

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)
I'll send Juan, with the papal Guard. Delle Rovere shall be arrested tonight -

CESARE
If he hasn't fled already -

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

ALEXANDER
Wait - you're coming - surely -

CESARE
I have unfinished business -

To the Papal Guard, managing the horses -

CESARE (CONT'D)
GO!

And the carriage pulls away.

To reveal Micheletto.
CONTINUED: (2)

CESARE (CONT’D)
Excellent service.

MICHELETTO
I fear it’s not over yet.

CESARE
What do you mean?

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

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

INT. LUCEZIA’S BEDROOM. BORGIA VILLA. NIGHT.

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

VANOSSA
Good night -

EXT. VATICAN GATES. NIGHT.

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

ALEXANDER
Summon Juan Borgia and the Papal Guard. NOW!

EXT. ROMAN STREETS. NIGHT.

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

MICHELETTO
Here -

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

INT. DELLE ROVERE’S PALACE. NIGHT.

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

DELL’ ROVERE
Where is that pockmarked poisoner -

He pinions his captain of the Guard against the wall.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

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

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

DELLE ROVERE
And can you call them off?

CAPTAIN
I fear it is too late now my Lord -

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

DELLE ROVERE
We are leaving -

INT. LUCREZIA'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.
Vanossa blows out the candle by her daughter's bedside.

EXT. BORGIA VILLA. NIGHT.
As the light goes out, two figures, dark cloaks, move towards the barred gates.

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

JUAN
Breastplate -

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

JUAN (CONT'D)
Helmet -

A servant grabs a helmet from a rack.

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

He whacks the servant round the head -
CONTINUED:

JUAN (CONT’D)

What am I, a common soldier?

The servant rushes to grab the feathered helmet.

EXT. BORGIA VILLA. NIGHT.

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

The sound behind them. Of a horse.

They turn, and see Micheletto there.

MICHELETTO

Am I too late?

ASSASSIN

We haven’t even started.

MICHELETTO

Ah. Then you’re too late.

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

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

MICHELETTO (CONT’D)

You want the pleasure, my lord?

Cesare shakes his head.

Micheletto draws a blade and cuts his throat.

INT. DELLE ROVERE’S PALACE. NIGHT.

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

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

DELLE ROVERE

I want my household cavalry ready to ride.

CAPTAIN

Where to my Lord?

DELLE ROVERE

Anywhere out of this cesspit -
EXT. VATICAN GATES. NIGHT.

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

EXT. BORGIA VILLA. NIGHT.

Cesare looks down as the assassin breathes his last.

CESARE
You planned this massacre thoroughly.

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

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

CESARE
Are you that meticulous?

MICHELETTO
Always.

Micheletto wraps the body of his assassin in his cloak.

MICHELETTO (CONT'D)
So the blood won't stain your mother's tile...

EXT. DELLE ROVERE'S PALACE. NIGHT.

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

Juan paces impatiently on his horse.

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

EXT. DELLE ROVERE'S PALACE GROUNDS. NIGHT.

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

Delle Rovere strides from the Palace, fixing on his armour. (CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

DELLE ROVERE

You hear that sound?

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

DELLE ROVERE (CONT’D)

Give it here -

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

EXT. BORGIA VILLA. NIGHT.

Cesare and Micheletto.

CESARE

Who planned it? Your master?

MICHELETTO

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

CESARE

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

MICHELETTO

Didn’t you make me an offer?

CESARE

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

MICHELETTO

My kind? I don’t have a kind.

He looks at Cesare.

MICHELETTO (CONT’D)

And, I suspect, neither do you.

Cesare smiles. This one is a keeper.

CESARE

Your name, sweet assassin

MICHELETTO

Micheletto.

Cesare takes his hand.

CESARE

You are now in the service of this servant of the Lord.
EXT. DELLE ROVERE’S PALACE GATES. NIGHT.

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

EXT. DELLE ROVERE’S PALACE GROUNDS. NIGHT.

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

INT. DELLE ROVERE’S PALACE. NIGHT.

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

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

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

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

ON JUAN —

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

His horse rears. He is thrown onto the lawns.

JUAN’S POV —

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

INT. BORGIA VILLA. NIGHT.

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

VANOSSA
You want me to die of fright?

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

VANOSSA
Tell me.

CESARE
That he loves you very much.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

VANOSSA
He sent you here to tell me that?

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

She puts her arms around him.

VANOSSA
Tell me why you're here, Cesare.

CESARE

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

CESARE
Lucrezia is -

VANOSSA
Asleep upstairs -

INT. LUCREZIA'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

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

VANOSSA
You missed her that much?

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

VANOSSA
What could possibly happen -

CESARE
I'm putting a guard on the house.

VANOSSA
Is it that dangerous outside?

CESARE
We are in a different city now.

VANOSSA
Is it still called Rome?

CESARE
I'm not sure it has a name...
EXT. BORGIA VILLA. NIGHT.

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

    CESARE
    Can you manage two corpses?

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

    CESARE
    No need.

He bends down and picks up the other corpse.

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

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

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

Micheletto grimaces.

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

    CESARE
    But then you have more practise...

EXT. TIVER. NIGHT.

The two corpses, on the steps of the Tiber.

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

Micheletto fills their pockets with stones.

    CESARE (CONT’D)
    Stones in their pockets.

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

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

    CESARE
    Tricks of the trade.

(continued)
CONTINUED:

MICHELETTO
I have many more, my Lord.

Cesare stands.

CESARE
You must share them with me...

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

EXT. BRIDGE OVER TIBER. NIGHT.

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

MICHELETTO
But for absolute silence, I favour the garrotte.

CESARE
Tell me why.

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

INT. ST PETER’S. NIGHT.

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

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

Cesare walks down the aisle towards him.

ALEXANDER
Delle Rovere has fled.

CESARE
Where?

ALEXANDER
Florence, I would guess. Then maybe France.

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

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

He looks at his son.

(CONTINUED)
CONTINUED:

ALEXANDER (CONT’D)
You were right, my son. We won’t survive this throne through divine grace.

CESARE
How will we survive it?

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

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

ALEXANDER
What, my son?

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

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

And Alexander smiles his slow smile.

ALEXANDER (CONT’D)
But perhaps I can give you something even better...

CESARE
What?

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

CESARE
Who?

ALEXANDER
My beloved first born son.

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

CESARE
You think me fitted for such a role?
CONTINUED: (2)

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

CESARE
In his mind, he is that already.

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

Cesare raises his voice.

CESARE
He's not capable, father -

ALEXANDER
I will have one son in cloth, Cesare -

CESARE
And you know he's not capable -

Alexander rises, to confront him.

ALEXANDER
- and one in armour -

CESARE
You think armour will protect him?

ALEXANDER
Are you contradicting me? The Pope of Rome?

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

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

He looks around the basilica.

CESARE (CONT'D)
...the bounty God has thrust upon us...

ALEXANDER
And one last thing. Lucrezia must marry.

Cesare says to himself.

CESARE
So soon?
CONTINUED: (3)

ALEXANDER
She is thirteen years old.

CESARE
She's just a child -

ALEXANDER
Queens have married younger.

CESARE
And queens have died.

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

CESARE
Am I cardinal already?

ALEXANDER
Kiss this ring.

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

Cesare kneels, and kisses the ring.

ALEXANDER (CONT'D)
Prostrate yourself.

Cesare hesitates.

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

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

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

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

THE END.

(CONTINUED)