

Fury

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FADE IN:

EXT. VENETIAN SLAVE MARKET--DAY

CHILDREN in chains. All races. None over ten years old. Tears streak their faces.

ONE BOY stands calmly at the canopied auction block. A potential BUYER inspects him. A wealthy merchant, dressed in high Renaissance style.

A SLAVE AUCTIONEER waits impatiently.

AUCTIONEER

He's young. Strong. Have a look. You won't find better.

The buyer grips the boy's face. He turns it slowly from side to side. The boy is dirty. About eight years old. His hair is wild, but he has the face of an angel.

BUYER

Where does he come from?

AUCTIONEER

From the North. Iona. One of the Celtic tribes. Do we have a deal?

BUYER

Done.

AUCTIONEER

Excellent choice.

An ATTENDANT unlocks the boy's leg shackles.

The boy watches as the buyer spills gold coins into the auctioneer's hands.

The boy tenses. Then WHACK! He delivers a snap-kick, scattering the money into the air.

The crowd erupts. Coins roll along the ground. A BEGGAR scampers to pocket one. A MAN claws at the earth with his fingers, sifting for more.

One coin rolls to the sandaled foot of FATHER BENEDICI, a Franciscan priest in his thirties. He doesn't stoop for it. He steps over it and walks into the milling throng.

The young boy snatches keys from the belt of the auctioneer and runs to the other children.

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Quickly he unchains some of them. At first they just stand wide-eyed and unmoving.

BOY SLAVE

Run!

Those who can, scatter. ONE BOY gestures with chained wrists. Our young hero tosses him the keys.

AUCTIONEER

Stop them! They're getting away!

The auctioneer lunges for the boy with the keys, but he's not fast enough. The boy flings the keys and runs.

Arms wide, the auctioneer races about, frustrated. The keys RING as they arc from child to child. It's a very serious game of "keep away."

Our hero pulls a cord on the auction block canopy. Its collapse adds to the confusion.

He scrambles up a nearby wall and finds a perch on a rooftop.

The auctioneer spins about. SMACK! A stone bloodies his head.

AUCTIONEER (cont'd)

What the hell--

Our hero is raining well-aimed roof tiles from above.

BOY SLAVE

Boys--and--girls--are--not--for--sale!

For one so small and young, he's managing to do a lot of damage. The crowd can't help but LAUGH.

FATHER BENEDICI

Who is this little fury?

BUYER

How dare you try and sell me this savage!

AUCTIONEER

(nursing wound)

Guards! Not to worry, Signor. We'll catch him. Then you can give him a good beating.

BUYER

I don't want him. I want my money!

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CONTINUED: (2)

The AUCTION GUARDS run to the wall. The boy tries to scramble away but it's no good. He's trapped. The guards raise CROSSBOWS and wait for the order to shoot.

BOY SLAVE

I was born free! I will die free!

The square grows quiet in the face of the little boy's bravery. What will happen next?

FATHER BENEDICI

(pushing through crowd)

My son, your courage shames me. I would like to be your friend.

AUCTIONEER

He certainly has spirit. How could we ever sell such a brave little boy?

Shoot him.

The guards aim.

FATHER BENEDICI

Stop! Hold your fire!

He takes a crucifix from his belt and brandishes it, turning as he speaks, and keeping the guards at bay.

FATHER BENEDICI (cont'd)

This slave--this child--speaks the truth! These slave markets are a disgrace to Christendom!

AUCTIONEER

I give the people what they want.

FATHER BENEDICI

Do you?

(to the buyer)

Do you want this boy?

BUYER

No. He's trouble.

FATHER BENEDICI

Then I'll take him with me.

AUCTIONEER

He's a savage, Father. We'll have to shoot him down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FATHER BENEDICI

I see deeper. The lad is filled with
fury. But it's a righteous fury.

AUCTIONEER

He's of no use to me. He's yours if you
can catch him.

The priest steps closer to the wall.

FATHER BENEDICI

Come down, my son. Come with me. I
promise you will never be a slave.

BOY SLAVE

Why should I trust you?

FATHER BENEDICI

I give you my word. I swear by this
cross, which is the symbol of my God.

The boy studies the priest. Then in one agile motion he drops
to the ground.

Father Benedici tousles the boy's hair as the two walk away.

FATHER BENEDICI (cont'd)

You are a fine fighter, my son! The way
you kicked that bag of gold! How often
I've wanted to do that.

The two leave hand in hand.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE ALPS--DAY

ON SCREEN: A.D. 1490. THIRTY YEARS LATER.

A spectacular setting high in the Alps. Icy granite walls
rise into a glorious summer sky.

A procession of RELIGIOUS PILGRIMS follows a wooden catwalk
across the face of sheer cliff. Most shun the rail and cling
to the mountainside, murmuring PRAYERS.

Our ferocious boy is now a handsome man with a confident
stride: WILLIAM FURY. He wears a simple Renaissance tunic and
carries a worn leather bag over his shoulder. He smiles as
Father Benedici, an active man in his sixties, fearlessly
negotiates the catwalk, greeting startled pilgrims.

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CONTINUED:

BENEDICI

Good day to you, sir! Good day!

He shakes the hand of an astonished BEGGAR.

BENEDICI (cont'd)

And good day to you, madam!

He waves energetically to an equally surprised CRIPPLED WOMAN. Fury hurries to catch up.

FURY

(Laughing)

Slow down, old goat! I can barely keep up with you!

BENEDICI

You've grown soft so soon, William? Perhaps you should take up a sport. Come! Have a look at the view God has given us today!

Fury joins Father Benedici at the wooden rail.

FURY

You seem in high spirits up here.

BENEDICI

This is a special place, William. Can you feel it? It is the shrine of St. Bernard. He helps lost travellers.

FURY

I'm not lost. I'm just not working for The Illuminati anymore.

BENEDICI

Your talents are a gift, William. Don't turn your back on them. You are a defender of the right. An enemy of all that is unjust.

FURY

It's not that simple, Father. Sometimes it's hard to tell which side is which.

Father Benedici pats Fury's shoulder bag.

BENEDICI

If your heart is set on retirement, why do you still carry this?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FURY

Venice may be at war soon. I could be a target to the Ottoman Empire.

EXT. WOODEN DECK--DAY

The two arrive at a place where the catwalk widens into a wooden deck large enough to support a SIZABLE GATHERING OF PEOPLE, cantilevered out over thin air. Fury and Benedici weave their way through the commotion.

BENEDICI

The faithful have come in good numbers today.

A grimy PROSTITUTE with bad teeth smiles at Fury.

THREE MEN gamble over a heated game of dice.

A THIEF tries to relieve someone of his wallet. A chase breaks out.

FURY

So I see.

MERCHANTS address a CROWD. Glaring and waving theatrically.

FIRST MERCHANT

Sinners! Yes, all of you are sinners! And all of you deserve to burn! Yet I hold in my hand the key to your salvation!

He brandishes a very official-looking printed certificate. It draws an audible "AH" from the crowd.

FIRST FOLLOWER

Save us!

SECOND FOLLOWER

Tell us what to do!

FIRST MERCHANT

If you wish to be saved, buy this from me. I promise you will ensure a place for yourself in Heaven.

Fury watches with detached amusement as customers converge.

BENEDICI

Good people, Stop! You are being misled!

SECOND MERCHANT

Benedici?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FIRST MERCHANT

Go away, old man!

FIRST FOLLOWER

No! Let him speak.

A GRIM FIGURE watches. Tall, silvery pale, and darkly dressed, he exudes a decadent elegance. His name is Maniakes. (Muh-NYE-uh-kees)

BENEDICI

God didn't come to sell you salvation. He gives it to you freely.

SECOND MERCHANT

Shut up!

BENEDICI

No amount of money can pay for the sacrifice He made for you.

At a nod from Maniakes, The first merchant draws A DAGGER and lunges.

FIRST MERCHANT

That's enough out of you!

Fury sweeps the blow aside with a move known only in the Far East. The attacker tumbles to the ground.

The others consider joining the fight. A look from Fury convinces them otherwise.

FURY

Look. We made a new friend.

Fury takes Benedici by the arm. The crowd parts as Fury leads him away.

BENEDICI

I think I was starting to convince them.

FURY

I could see that.

EXT. PASSENGER LOADING AREA--DAY

The shelf ends at a sheer cliff. No catwalk leads higher.

BENEDICI

For the final ascent, we ride the funicular.

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CONTINUED:

A THICK WOODEN RAIL runs up the cliff. Along the rail is a system of ROPES, PULLEYS AND COUNTERWEIGHTS. At its base a CARVED BOOTH. Fury follows the rail upward with his eyes. It reaches the summit. He follows the ropes downward. They veer off near ground level and disappear into a stone wheelhouse.

AN OXEN DRIVER stands at the wheelhouse. Father Benedici nods to him, then steps inside the booth. With a shrug, Fury follows. FOUR ADDITIONAL PASSENGERS cautiously join them. Among them the crippled woman and the beggar that Benedici greeted so cheerfully earlier.

A bell hangs on the wall. Benedici RINGS it smartly. The sound startles the other passengers. They LAUGH nervously.

At Benedici's bell, the driver enters the wheelhouse. Inside wait TWO OXEN, yoked to a large capstan. The driver coaxes them into motion. The capstan turns, taking up rope.

The cabin lurches into motion. As it rises, ratchets engage with a steady CLACKING sound, like a roller-coaster climbing a hill. Passengers cross themselves and shrink to the rear as the ground drops away beneath them.

BENEDICI (cont'd)

Have no fear, friends. The shrine is not far above.

Maniakes waits until they reach a dangerous height. Then he enters the house where The OXEN DRIVER is leading the beasts around a circular path.

OXEN DRIVER

Have you gotten lost, sir? This is not--

Maniakes raises a crossbow and shoots the driver through the heart. Then he overturns a coal brazier, setting fire to the straw-covered floor. The animals BELLOW as the fire spreads.

The 'elevator' stops with a sickening jerk.

FURY

Be calm, everyone.

Fury can see smoke rising from the structure below. The ropes leading from it are on fire. The cabin shudders each time one gives, line by line. They're going to fall.

FURY (cont'd)

Father, take this woman's arm.

Taking the crippled woman's crutch from her, Fury forces it into the side of the track, jamming the ratchet mechanism.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The last rope breaks. But the crutch holds. For now. Although it SPLINTERS loudly.

FURY (cont'd)
Everybody out! Now!

BEGGAR
Where?

FURY
To the cliff side. It's your only chance!

BEGGAR
We can't! We can't do it!

FURY
You've got to try! All of you!

Maniakes watches with frustration from below. Crossbow in hand, he begins to climb an opposite wall.

As Fury argues, an arrow flies into the cabin. It strikes AN OLD MAN next to Fury.

FURY (cont'd)
The Ottomans! They must have followed me!

He crawls out onto the cliff.

FURY (cont'd)
Help the injured! I'll draw their fire!

He scrambles several yards away. Reaching into his leather shoulder bag, he pulls out A METAL SPHERE. He triggers a switch, and the ball emits a spray of wires almost like "steel wool." They entangle themselves in the rough surface of the mountainside. Fury attaches the ball to a hook on his belt. The whole thing functions like a safety harness.

Fury takes A COLLAPSIBLE CROSSBOW from his bag. A SNAP of his wrist unfolds the spring-loaded bow and stock.

FURY (cont'd)
(trying to draw fire)
Over here!

ANOTHER ARROW flies into the elevator.

FURY (cont'd)
You want me? I'm right here!

YET ANOTHER ARROW. Still aimed at the cabin. Don't they see him? Time is running out. The crutch won't hold much longer.

INSIDE THE FUNICULAR

Father Benedici tends to the now unconscious beggar. The crippled woman is in pain. She CRIES LOUDLY.

BENEDICI

Courage, child. You have a small wound.
There are others whose needs are greater.

She nods. CRIES OUT one last time. And dies.

Dark blood trickles from her mouth. The priest pulls the arrow out of her arm. It has an odd tip. He squeezes it, and a drop of mysterious liquid comes out

BENEDICI (cont'd)

William!

The crutch finally breaks. The pilgrims SCREAM as the booth drops. As it approaches the deck, Fury produces another metal ball from his bag and throws it with all his strength.

The elevator CRASHES through the wooden deck in a shower of pulverized timber. In free fall now, it shows no signs of stopping. But Fury's throw connects. On impact with the cabin roof, the ball EXPLODES into a cloud of metal wires, stopping the funicular in mid-air.

The cabin hangs in a metal web, swinging over the abyss.

Fury unhooks his safety harness. Straddling the cliff-mounted rail, he slides down fast.

The look on his mentor's face tells him he is too late. Benedici holds up an arrow.

BENEDICI (cont'd)

Poison.

EXT. ESTABLISHING VENICE--DAY

GONDOLAS on canals. Venice in the Renaissance.

INT. MERCHANT'S VILLA--DAY

Bare walls and floors. No furniture. At one end of the room, the semi-precious stones have all been pried out of what must have been a beautiful mosaic. Pale spots on the walls and empty pedestals remain where once sat works of art.

A HUSBAND AND WIFE in plain robes. The wife weak and ailing. She leans on her husband for support.

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A corrupt priest, FATHER DAMIANO, paces. A printed INDULGENCE in his hand.

DAMIANO

This is the grace of God I offer you. It will cure her. You cannot refuse it.

MERCHANT HUSBAND

Look around you. We have nothing left to give. And my wife is no closer to a cure.

DAMIANO

(inspecting a the remnants of a mosaic)

But at least she is alive, thanks to your wise purchases.

WIFE

(coughing)

No. No more. Father Benedici has shown us another way.

HUSBAND

He tells us that God's blessings are not for sale.

DAMIANO

(prying a last stone free)

I'm not sure you understand me. I'll explain again. If you don't buy another indulgence, I cannot guarantee your wife--

MERCHANT HUSBAND

We will trust in God. Not you.

Father Damiano studies their faces.

DAMIANO

Fools.

EXT. MERCHANTS VILLA--DAY

Maniakes waits for Father Damiano outside.

DAMIANO

You can poison them until they die. They've been talking to Benedici.

MANIAKES

That old man is cutting into my profits.

INT. HALLWAY IN THE PALACE OF THE VENETIAN DOGE--NIGHT

A procession of men escorted by CEREMONIAL ATTENDANTS front and rear: THE DOGE of Venice. VIRGILIO, the leader of the Senate. CASSIO, the Venetian military commander. Father Damiano. And Father Benedici.

GUARDS along the hall snap to attention as they pass.

AT THE END OF THE HALLWAY

stand a muscular Turkish Janissary, HAKIM, and TWO SMALLER, MORE ELABORATELY DRESSED MEN, who hold open a large set of double doors.

Exotic MUSIC fills the air.

HAKIM

How may I help you?

CASSIO

Stand aside, man, this is the Doge himself. You are in his palace.

HAKIM

Since these are the ambassador's quarters, I am standing upon Ottoman soil. But you are welcome here, if you come in peace.

DAMIANO

What is that infernal noise?

BENEDICI

The instrument is an oud, by my guess. And the singer is composing a ballad?

HAKIM

Correct. A poem of welcome.

Hakim bows, and steps aside.

INT. GUEST QUARTERS IN THE PALACE OF THE DOGE--NIGHT

A man and a woman at a tripod on a balcony inside. Making adjustments to a large viewing device, AN ASTROLABE.

The man is older, but robust. He is YUSEF IBN BEYAZIT, the Turkish ambassador. He is accompanied by his beautiful daughter, SITAARA.

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CONTINUED:

BEYAZIT

Welcome, my Venetian guests. May Allah
bless this meeting.

RUGS AND PILLOWS cover most surfaces. Tables are laden with
DELICACIES. SILKEN HANGINGS festoon the walls and ceilings.
The effect is one of tented magnificence.

THE DOGE

(noting the decor)

Greetings, Ambassador. You have, it
pleases me to see, made yourselves
perfectly at home here in Venice. Many of
us have longed to visit distant
Constantinople, and now you have kindly
brought it to us.

DAMIANO

(to Cassio)

They dare bring their filthy Pagan ways
so close to the chapel? Look at these
rugs and pillows. Who authorized this,
Cassio?

(to Virgilio)

After we send these infidels away, this
whole floor will need to be cleansed of
the spirit of disbelief.

VIRGILIO

Do you think that will be necessary?

DAMIANO

Necessary, and costly. Spiritual
cleansing is very expensive. Each room
must be done separately.

Damiano seethes at the astrolabe on the terrace.

DAMIANO (cont'd)

And these instruments of the Devil right
in the open air. The Senate will pay
dearly for that balcony, Virgilio.

The Turkish ambassador embraces Benedici warmly.

BEYAZIT

Ah! And you have come too, my old friend.

BENEDICI

I have looked forward to seeing you
again, good Yusef. I must thank you for
your excellent star charts. I've used
them often, and even added to them.

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CONTINUED: (2)

BEYAZIT

Once the treaty is signed, our two cities
will share more knowledge, to the greater
benefit of us all.

At the ambassador's gesture, all sit.

DAMIANO

I thought we were here to discuss a
military truce.

VIRGILIO

A truce, and a treaty to safeguard the
trade routes, and--

BEYAZIT

(laughing)

--And we shall discuss all of this
tomorrow. Tonight is a social occasion.
Please. Enjoy yourselves.

The Ambassador CLAPS. A YOUNG WOMAN enters with a TRAY OF
FRUITS. She presents it to the Venetians. Each refuses.

The host looks troubled at the obvious slight.

BEYAZIT (cont'd)

Friends, we offer you our hospitality.

The guests remain in uncomfortable silence. Sitaara guesses
the problem. She takes up one of the bright yellow fruits.
She peels it, and offers its sweet interior to the Doge.

SITAARA

You mustn't eat the skin, but the flesh
inside is good. It is called a banana.

The Doge hesitates, but Father Benedici accepts with a smile.

BENEDICI

Banana. I have heard of these, but never--
Delicious! Do try one, my lord Doge

Sitaara begins pointing out and naming the other treats.

SITAARA

Orange. Pineapple. Dates. Pomegranate.

DOGE

I will try each of these in turn.

The group relaxes. SERVERS enter with more trays.

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CONTINUED: (3)

BEYAZIT

But wait. There is one last wonder.

He CLAPS again. A SERVANT appears with a brass urn and cups.

BEYAZIT (cont'd)

Please drink, and feel your spirits rise.

DOGE

(smelling his cup)

What is it?

BEYAZIT

It is called coffee. In Istanbul it is a daily ritual.

(to the lead musician)

Isa! Play for our new friends!

The group joins together to the MUSIC OF THE OUD AND TAMBOUR.

EXT. THE TERRACE OF THE AMBASSADOR'S GUEST QUARTERS--NIGHT

Sitaara joins her father on the torch-lit balcony.

BEYAZIT

What did you think of our guests?

SITAARA

Virgilio, the Senator, is quiet and cunning. But he wants to trade with us. Cassio, like all military men, is cautious and guarded. But he will take his lead from the Doge.

BEYAZIT

And the Doge himself? What are your thoughts on him?

SITAARA

Smooth. And he wants to make history.

Her father nods in agreement.

BEYAZIT

You measure men well, child.

SITAARA

The priest in black is an enemy. But not the one in brown.

BEYAZIT

Yes. Benedici is a friend. Enough, oh wise counselor.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

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BEYAZIT (cont'd)

If your mother were alive she would scold me for treating you as a favorite son, instead of a favorite daughter.

Sitaara smiles.

BEYAZIT (cont'd)

Come. Let us watch the stars rise.

He takes a sighting with his astrolabe.

BEYAZIT (cont'd)

See how they unite us, Sitaara? This sky holds the same stars that shine over Istanbul. Allah looks down on all men.

SITAARA

Father, do you remember the hill in Karilei? When you took mother and me to see the eclipse? I wish we could--

She turns toward her father.

He looks at her strangely and grasps his chest in pain.

SITAARA (cont'd)

Father, What is it? Is it your heart?

He sinks to the floor, still holding his chest.

BEYAZIT

Sitaara! Run! I've been shot!

In a panic, she kneels at his side. She holds his head. Blood trickles from his mouth.

SITAARA

Hakim! Hakim, they are shooting!

Instantly Hakim appears. He douses the torches and readies his longbow, scanning the darkness for attackers.

Sitaara tries to revive her father.

SITAARA (cont'd)

Father, please!

She sobs. Hakim comforts her.

SITAARA (cont'd)

Hakim, what kind of people are these? They attack us under a flag of truce?

Maniakes watches from the shadows below.

INT. FURY'S APARTMENT--DAY

Airy, spacious, and warm-hued. Its eclectic African and Asian furnishings give it an almost 'modern' feeling.

A beautiful woman, SOPHIA, rests in Fury's arms. As they kiss, an unexpected KNOCK startles him.

SOPHIA
(softly, while kissing)
Ignore it.

Another KNOCK. Fury pulls free.

FURY
I should answer.

He looks through a peephole before opening the door.

Sophia watches as a hooded MESSENGER hands Fury A VELVET POUCH, then leaves in silence.

SOPHIA
Who was it?

FURY
No one. A merchant.

SOPHIA
Let me see--

She grabs the pouch from him.

She notes the OFFICIAL-LOOKING SEAL, then rips it open.

Inside she finds A BRASS CYLINDER studded with short pins.

FURY
It's just a part from a music box. I was
having it fixed.

On the table sits the music box. She drops in the cylinder and turns a small crank. The box CHIMES, but plays no melody. She can't make sense of the tune. It's gibberish.

FURY (cont'd)
See?
(tries to hold her)
Now where were we?

SOPHIA
William, I'm not stupid. That was a
Venetian state seal. What are you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FURY

Sophia, please. Not this again. I told you. I'm a trader. An importer.

SOPHIA

You're a liar.

FURY

It's just a music box. You heard it yourself. What did it sound like?

SOPHIA

It sounded like you, William. Strange. And impossible to understand.

She throws the music box at him. Then she starts to gather her GLOVES and CLOAK. Fury follows her to the door.

SOPHIA (cont'd)

You lie. You come and go mysteriously. You're always so heavily armed.

FURY

Spice trading is dangerous business. There are pirates. Enemy nations. Sophia, don't leave.

SOPHIA

No, you're no trader. Are you some kind of... soldier?

FURY

Sophia.

SOPHIA

I'd like to believe you, William, but I don't.

She goes.

He returns to the parlor and sits quietly.

The music box attracts his attention. Picking it up, he pulls out the brass cylinder.

He gives the box a twist. It reconfigures itself with a CLICK. Hidden mechanisms spring into view. He replaces the brass cylinder inside, and turns the small handcrank.

This time, the pins engage small blocks of movable type.

The pins on the cylinder doesn't store a song, they store information.

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CONTINUED: (2)

The pins trip tiny hammers which pound out a message on tickertape: WE HAVE BUSINESS TO DISCUSS. PLEASE COME. WE NEED YOU. -- DA VINCI.

Fury reads the message, then lights it from A CANDLE and lets it burn.

INT. LEONARDO DA VINCI'S STUDIO--DAY

A fantastic place. Paintings, drawings, and sculptures in various stages of completion scattered throughout. Fury pushes past a gauzy curtain into the sun-filled room.

FURY

I got your message.

Da Vinci gently coaxes a delicate face out of a block of marble. He pauses, and smiles warmly.

Young, handsome, and brilliant, the artist makes a striking impression. His hair is long, and around his neck he wears a pendant: a piece of shattered armor breast-plate, hanging from a strip of leather.

DA VINCI

We can really use you, Will.

He sets down his chisel and circles to greet his old friend.

DA VINCI (cont'd)

The peace talks are stalled. All hell is breaking loose.

Fury blows the stone dust off a stool and sits.

FURY

We've been through a lot together, Leonardo. And you're a friend. But I can tell you right now, I don't want to--

DA VINCI

Will, the Turkish ambassador is dead. They think we did it.

FURY

(unimpressed)
Well, did we?

DA VINCI

It's not like that. Venice wants this treaty with the Turks. We need to prove we weren't involved.

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CONTINUED:

FURY

So get Rossi. He's the best--

DA VINCI

You're the best. We need you.

FURY

I'm out.

DA VINCI

What are you making these days? They'll pay you double this time.

FURY

I'm not for sale.

DA VINCI

You're not? Since when? What about Corsica? Alexandria? Paris? What about--

FURY

I believed in those missions. Back then I thought we were doing the right thing. Now I'm not so sure.

DA VINCI

That's a little naive, don't you think? Sometimes you bend a rule or two. That doesn't make you the bad guy.

FURY

To me it does. Find someone else.

He disappears through the door.

DA VINCI

You're disappointing us, Will! Will?
(to himself)
Damn.

EXT. SAINT MARK'S SQUARE--DAY

A lively Renaissance plaza, CROWDED and immense, but Sitaara moves easily through it with the fierce-looking Hakim earning her a wide berth.

Her handmaiden, TASLEEM, follows with A PARASOL to shield Sitaara from the Mediterranean sun.

The Venetian citizenry react to their exotic appearance.

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CONTINUED:

HAKIM

Perhaps next time you would consider being carried in the litter, Mistress. I don't think it safe for you to walk about in Venice so openly.

SITAARA

I trust you to keep me safe, Hakim. These are the people who killed my father. I want to look into their eyes.

She studies each passerby, but all she sees are the plain faces of the common folk.

EXT. BENEDICI'S CHAPEL--DAY

A simple church courtyard behind a wall.

Several startled HERB GARDENERS pause at the sight of Sitaara and her entourage in resplendent Turkish finery

One gardener, GEOFFREY, runs into the chapel. He reappears a moment later, a bewildered Father Benedici in tow.

GEOFFREY

There! You see? Sorcerers!

BENEDICI

(laughing)

Then they should conjure you some manners, Geoffrey. All are welcome here.

(to Sitaara)

Greetings to you, child.

SITAARA

And to you, Father Benedici.

INT. BENEDICI'S CHAPEL--DAY

They are led to a small study. Hakim assesses the security of the room, then takes up a position just outside the door.

BENEDICI

I am sorry we meet under these sad circumstances. Your father was my friend. The shock of his--

SITAARA

My grief must wait.
(to her servant)
Tasleem.

Tasleem produces a small, ORNATE CONTAINER. Sitaara opens it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SITAARA (cont'd)

I found this on his body.

BENEDICI

It looks like a thorn of some kind.

SITAARA

It is a thorn, but one that only grows in my country, not here. It's been soaked in poison. I believe it's the murder weapon.

BENEDICI

Poison?

Rummaging through a drawer, Benedici finds an arrow.

He compares the head of the arrow to the dart that Sitaara brought. They match.

BENEDICI (cont'd)

Then your father was killed by his own people.

SITAARA

Ridiculous.

BENEDICI

This is an Ottoman arrow, taken from an assault in the mountains against one of our soldiers.

SITAARA

I doubt it.
(to Tasleem)
Hakim.

Tasleem nods silently and withdraws. She returns a moment later with Hakim.

HAKIM

Mistress?

SITAARA

Hakim, is this the arrow of a Turk?
(at his hesitation)
You may speak freely in front of our friend.

Hakim inspects the arrow, examining it for weight, balance, and straightness.

HAKIM

This is no Turkish arrow, Mistress.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SITAARA

How do you know?

HAKIM

The point has been tied off-center. Poor workmanship. It would not find its target.

SITAARA

Thank you, Hakim.

He returns it to her. Then he bows. Before leaving, he adds:

HAKIM

And a poisoned arrow is the weapon of a coward.

Father Benedici replaces Sitaara's dart in its box.

BENEDICI

Sitaara, you must take this evidence to the authorities.

SITAARA

I have taken it to you.

BENEDICI

I am just a priest. You need to inform--

SITAARA

My father trusted only you.

BENEDICI

But I'm sure that--

SITAARA

No. No one else.

BENEDICI

(sighs)

Let me see what I can do.

SITAARA

The common element between the two attacks is poison. Let that be our starting point.

BENEDICI

I know of an alchemist, one Melchioro, by name. Perhaps he can help us.

INT. THE ALCHEMIST'S LABORATORY--DAY

A weird place. DISTURBING EXPERIMENTS in various stages of completion. A partially dissected CADAVER. RATS IN CAGES. Even stranger ANIMALS FLOATING IN JARS. The room is dark. Most of the light comes from burning OIL LAMPS.

A KNOCKING disturbs the silence. Benedici opens the door.

BENEDICI

Hello? Is anyone there?

Light from the door spills across a table. Seated there is MELCHIORO. (Mel-kee-OR-o) Ugly. Dressed in filthy clothes. Moist with sweat. He speaks haltingly, as if ill.

MELCHIORO

Father Benedici. Welcome. You'll forgive me if I don't get up. I've not been well.

BENEDICI

You know me, sir?

MELCHIORO

Your fight against those who sell indulgences is well-known to me.

From A WATER BUCKET Benedici fills A CUP for the alchemist.

BENEDICI

May I impose upon you for a favor?

From under his robes, Benedici produces A ROLL OF CLOTH. Holding it by one edge, he lets it unfurl, spilling both the arrow and the dart onto the table.

Melchioro leans forward for a better look.

BENEDICI (cont'd)

Caution, sir. Do not prick yourself. The tips are poisoned.

MELCHIORO

Is this church business, Father?

BENEDICI

No, it is a private matter, but an urgent one, which requires your discretion.

The alchemist nods, raising his unwashed hand in reassurance.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MELCHIORO

I will keep your confidence. You have my word on it.

BENEDICI

I need to know what you can learn about these weapons, and the poison they contain.

MELCHIORO

My Alchemy can uncover any secrets these items may hold. But it will take time.

Benedici rises, leaving the weapons on the table.

BENEDICI

Then I await your word. Thank you.

He leaves.

Maniakes steps from his hiding place in the gloom and places a hand on the alchemist's familiar shoulder.

INT. BENEDICI'S CHAPEL--DAY

Benedici addresses his congregation.

BENEDICI (cont'd)

So why a good Samaritan? Why not a good Nazarene? Or a good Galilean? Surely one of these would have been more likely to help the dying man.

As he speaks, he looks out over the gathering.

He sees Sitaara seated in the front, dressed in veiled mourning. Beside her is Hakim. Their presence is causing a small sensation in the chapel. He smiles.

BENEDICI (cont'd)

It is because Christ wanted us to see that goodness can be found in unpredictable places. Virtue is not the property of one group alone. It does not belong only to us. Or to people like us.

He is also pleased to see Fury in the back of the chapel.

BENEDICI (cont'd)

How then can we tell the good from the evil? Not by their words, but by their deeds. Watch my feet, not my mouth.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BENEDICI (cont'd)

May you go in peace today, and do good to
someone who least expects it.

Maniakes is also there, unrecognized.

Benedici raises his hand to bless the crowd.

BENEDICI (cont'd)

In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus
Sanctus. Amen.

He prepares for communion, going from the pulpit to the
altar. The choir SINGS the Sanctus. As bells RING, he
elevates THE CHALICE and consecrates it. He drinks.

He drops in agony, clawing at his throat.

The crowd panics. Some run for the altar. Others for the
doors.

FURY

Father! Father!

Fury reaches the priest first. For a moment he loses himself
in shock and grief. He shakes the body as if to revive
Benedici. Sitaara and Hakim come up beside him.

SITAARA

Lift him, Hakim. Perhaps we can--

FURY

Don't touch him! Stay back!

HAKIM

Is he dead so quickly?

The giant Turk moves in for a closer look.

FURY

I said stay back!

SITAARA

He asked us to come here. He said we
would meet a friend.

FURY

Get out!

Hakim kneels over the body.

HAKIM

Very few poisons can kill so swiftly.
Whoever did this--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FURY

Is probably a friend of yours!

Fury lunges for Hakim. The Turk rises to defend himself. Sitaara throws herself between them.

SITAARA

No! He wanted us to meet. He had evidence to show us.

FURY

What evidence?

SITAARA

News about arrows you found in the mountains. And about the dart that killed my father. Perhaps in his study--

That's all Fury needs. He begins to run.

INT. BENEDICI'S HOUSE--DAY

The room is ransacked. Geoffrey the gardener and A WOMAN COOK lie in expanding pools of their own blood.

What little the priest had has been smashed or cut open. Except one thing.

Undisturbed on the wall hangs a small, plain cross. The same one Benedici used to free the young Fury from the slave market. He takes it down and holds it for a moment. Then he stuffs it in his shirt.

A NOISE outside the window draws his attention. The crowd has become an angry mob.

Defending Sitaara, Hakim holds them back with HIS SCIMITAR.

Fury slips away during the diversion, letting them fend for themselves

INT. LEONARDO DA VINCI'S STUDIO--DAY

LARGE WOODEN PINNACLES close together, gently pressing on the cheekbones of A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN. She smiles. Da Vinci smiles back. Then he transfers the calipers to A MATCHING FACE IN MARBLE and compares measurements.

Fury enters.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FURY
 We have to talk.
 (to model)
 Will you excuse us, Signorina?

He throws HER STREET CLOTHES at her. The model catches them. She turns to da Vinci with a questioning expression. The sculptor looks at her. Then at Fury. Then back at her.

DA VINCI
 Why don't we stop for today, Isabella?

She dresses to leave. At the door, she stops.

ISABELLA
 Tomorrow morning, then, Maestro da Vinci?

Leonardo kisses her hand.

DA VINCI
 Until then.

Fury can barely wait for her to leave.

FURY
 Okay. I'm in.

DA VINCI
 Huh?

Da Vinci takes up A BROOM and begins sweeping MARBLE CHIPS.

FURY
 The dead Ambassador. I want the case.

DA VINCI
 Rossi's on it. Don't worry about it.

Fury reaches out and stops the broom.

FURY
 Take him off. I want it.

DA VINCI
 Why?

FURY
 Benedici's been killed.

DA VINCI
 What? By who? Will, I'm so sorry--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FURY

I think the two deaths are related.
Benedici and the ambassador were both
part of the peace negotiations.

DA VINCI

Then we have a security leak. No one
outside us knew Benedici was on the team.

FURY

I need to do this, Leonardo. I owe it to
him. I have to find his killer.

Fury looks at da Vinci's pendant.

FURY (cont'd)

At least you knew your own father.
Benedici was the closest I had to one.

Da Vinci unconsciously touches the pendant. Then tucks under
his tunic.

DA VINCI

Okay. What do you need?

FURY

I need the best stuff you've got.

DA VINCI

(killer smile)

Then let's go.

On a wall is A FRESCO of da Vinci's Vitruvian Man, the one
with arms and legs outstretched inside a square and a circle.
Da Vinci turns and walks right into it.

Two CONCEALED DOORS burst open. Fury follows him through.

CUT TO:

INT. LEONARDO DA VINCI'S LABORATORY--DAY

The silence of da Vinci's studio erupts into the DIN of a
busy laboratory.

MEN in smocks hurry about. Each smock is embroidered with a
graphically simplified logo of the "Ideal Man" image.

FANTASTIC SCALE MODELS and SEPIA-INK DESIGNS for inventions
line shelves.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

There are CHARIOTS WITH WHIRLING METAL BLADES. MASSIVE CATAPULTS. TERRIBLE SIEGE ENGINES. MYSTERIOUS MACHINES WITH WOODEN WINGS.

An ASSISTANT of da Vinci's adorns the neck of A MANNEQUIN with A NECKLACE fit for a queen.

DA VINCI
How goes it, Pietro?

PIETRO
Exceedingly well, Signor da Vinci.

The necklace sparkles. Suddenly the pendant begins to draw its chain into itself. It tightens with a SNAP, shearing off the mannequin's head. Fury is impressed.

FURY
For the woman who wants to be fashionably...late?

DA VINCI
It's for the occasional assassination.
(to Pietro)
Great. Let's make ten more.

Pietro nods and withdraws. Fury and da Vinci continue across the busy floor. They stop by A WORKBENCH.

DA VINCI (cont'd)
Okay. Let's see. What do you use for climbing, these days?

Fury forms his hand into a C-shape, the size of an orange.

FURY
You know. Those little round things. That shoot out the wire?

DA VINCI
Tangle Balls? That's old stuff. Don't use them anymore. If you have any left, bring them in. I think they might be unstable. Try this.

He reaches into a drawer and pulls out a slightly bulky LEATHER VEST.

DA VINCI (cont'd)
Here. Lift your arms up.

Da Vinci places the vest around Fury's torso and begins fastening straps.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DA VINCI (cont'd)

It goes under your clothes. And it'll stop an arrow.

(indicates folded metal claw in back)

It has a grappling hook here.

(points to squat brass cylinder)

Line take-up reel here.

(pats an elaborate set of tucked and folded wooden ribs)

And if you fall, these'll save you.

FURY

It's good. But it's all defensive.

DA VINCI

(smiles)

I know, hold on. You're gonna like this.

He produces A COLLAPSIBLE CROSSBOW. It looks like the one Fury used in the mountains.

Fury shakes it open. As before, the stock unfolds. Bow arms blossom outward. Beautiful and intricate cams and pulleys slip into place. But this time, two new things appear: A BUNDLE OF SHAFTS, tied by A RED SILKEN CORD. And AN ORNATE CRANK HANDLE.

FURY

Already got one.

DA VINCI

Not one like this. Here, let me--

Fury pulls the cord. The bundle unrolls into a ribbon of MANY ARROW SHAFTS, connected together by WOODEN CLIPS.

FURY

Cute.

He starts to turn the crank.

DA VINCI

No! Not in here!

Everyone with any sense ducks for cover. The crossbow HISSES with a vicious machine gun action. Bolts fly out the front, ricocheting dangerously. Wooden clips eject out the back. Within seconds, the entire ribbon of arrows is spent.

FURY

You're right. I do like it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DA VINCI
 (laughing in spite of himself)
 Jesus, Will! What the hell is wrong with
 you?

FURY
 Anything else?

DA VINCI
 (amused)
 Maybe you should just make do with that
 for now.

Da Vinci throws some MORE BRASS CYLINDERS and BUNDLES OF
 ARROWS into A LEATHER BAG.

DA VINCI (cont'd)
 That's the best I can give you.

Fury collapses his new bow into compact form. He places it
 inside the bag and hoists it over his shoulder.

FURY
 Then I'm ready.

INT. A GREAT CATHEDRAL--DAY

HANDS reach for one last chance to touch THE COFFIN of Father
 Benedici. The GREGORIAN CHANT of the DIES IRAE fills the air.
 The funeral mass is over. In spite of rain, CROWDS have come.
 They leave the church in solemn procession.

Standing in the shadow of the doors, Fury watches every face.
 The great citizens of the city follow the coffin. Sitaara and
 her entourage are with the Doge. Seeing Fury, she breaks away
 from the procession as she passes.

SITAARA
 I need to speak with you. Come to my
 apartment in the Doge's Palace. Sunset.

Fury ignores her. The procession has stopped. They are
 pointedly waiting for Sitaara.

SITAARA (cont'd)
 I know that you've been appointed to
 investigate my father's murder. I
 received official word.

FURY
 My interest is in finding the man who
 killed my friend.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SITAARA

The two cases are obviously related. We should work together.

FURY

I don't think so.

SITAARA

When you were on pilgrimage, you were fired upon by poison arrows.

FURY

So you say.

SITAARA

No. So Father Benedici told me. How else would I know about them?

FURY

Maybe because your big friend there was doing the shooting.

Sitaara looks at Hakim, then hits Fury with her LARGE BLACK FAN. She turns and rejoins the procession.

IN THE CROWD

a scuffle breaks out. A MOURNER sees Father Damiano. SCREAMING IN ANGER, he tries to tackle the priest. We recognize the mourner from before: he's the merchant that had been buying indulgences from Damiano to help his sick wife.

MERCHANT

Murderer! My wife is dead because of you!

GUARDS and SOLDIERS converge to restrain him.

MERCHANT (cont'd)

(struggling)

How dare you come to this man's funeral?
Stop him! Murderer!

ANOTHER GUARD helps Damiano to his feet.

DAMIANO

He's mad. Take him away.

The guards eject the man bodily from the cathedral.

EXT. CATHEDRAL STEPS--DAY

The merchant lies bruised at the foot of the steps. A strong hand is offered to him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FURY

What did you mean back there? Why is Damiano a murderer?

MERCHANT

Poison! That devil-priest killed my wife! He made her sick! We refused to buy his indulgences, so he killed her.

FURY

Slow down. Start from the beginning.

They walk along the canal in the rain as the story unfolds.

EXT. THE HOME OF FATHER DAMIANO--NIGHT

The morning's rain is now a violent storm. Lightning flashes, illuminating the walls and hedges around Damiano's home. GUARDS patrol the courtyard.

Fury runs confidently along the top of an ivy-covered wall. He stops where the wall meets the side of the building. Above lies a dimly lit window. Water arcs past him from a gargoyle rainspout, SPATTERING the stone below.

Fury jumps. Catching hold of the gargoyle's neck, he pulls himself into a perch on top of it. From his bag comes his climbing gear: A pair of WOODEN HANDLES WITH IRON SPIKES. As guards pace below, Fury begins the final ascent. He forces the spikes between the stones in the side of the building. Hand-over-hand, he makes his way to Damiano's window.

INT. THE BEDROOM OF FATHER DAMIANO--NIGHT

Tapestries. A canopied bed. Rather sumptuous for the home of a priest. As Damiano sleeps, his window fills with LIGHTNING-- and the silhouette of William Fury.

Fury finds a burning OIL LAMP. He carries it to Damiano's bed. Light from the lamp falls across the sleeping priest.

FURY

Get up.

The priest startles awake.

DAMIANO

What? Who is there?

FURY

You're coming with me. Move.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAMIANO

Who let you in here? Guards!

Fury sets down the lamp and reaches for Damiano.

FURY

You killed Benedici.

The priest scrambles to his feet, but away from Fury, so that the bed lies between them.

DAMIANO

Ridiculous! I hardly knew the man!

Fury closes in. The priest backs to the window.

FURY

You knew him real well.

IN THE HALLWAY

ARMED SENTRIES approach the bedroom door.

IN THE BEDROOM

Damiano makes a run for the door. Fury gets there first.

DAMIANO

Are you insane? How dare you! Guards!

Fury drops a bar across the door. From beyond it come muffled SHOUTS. Something SLAMS against it from the other side.

FURY

You poisoned people until they thought they were sick, then sold them phony cures. That I get. But why did you kill the Ambassador?

DAMIANO

I am a priest, you insolent fool. You have no jurisdiction over me. Get out!

The door is BATTERED again.

FURY

Tell me why.

DAMIANO

Go to hell.

FURY

We'll go together.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Fury rushes forward, throwing himself at the priest. They SMASH through the window.

OUTSIDE DAMIANO'S WINDOW

The two fall in a shower of broken glass toward the courtyard below. Damiano SCREAMS.

They'd both fall to their deaths except for one thing:

AT THE WINDOW SILL

is Fury's grappling hook.

ABOVE THE COURTYARD

the take-up reel on Fury's belt WHIRS as it pays out line. With a SUDDEN TWANG the cord grows taut. They stop abruptly, then swing like a pendulum back to the side of the building.

Fury hits the wall feet-first and "stands" there, horizontally, facing the ground below. He holds Damiano by the silk of his robe. The only thing keeping the priest in the air is the strength of Fury's grip.

LIGHTENING flashes.

DAMIANO

You'll kill us both!

FURY

Like you murdered Benedici?

DAMIANO

I am a priest! I don't answer to you!

Fury shakes him.

FURY

You killed the Ottoman too! Admit it!

DAMIANO

No! It wasn't me!

FURY

It was!

The robe begins to tear from Fury's fists.

DAMIANO

No! No. It was my partner. It was Man--

Damiano fears Fury. But he fears Maniakes more.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FURY

Say the name, or so help me, I'll kill you now, priest or not!

DAMIANO

M-- Melchioro. His name is Melchioro.

FURY

The alchemist?

DAMIANO

Yes! The alchemist. It was his poison. He used it to murder Benedici.

FURY

If you are lying to me--

DAMIANO

It was Melchioro! I swear it!

Horizontal, Fury begins to "walk" across the wall, the cord from his back letting him trace out a wide arc. He carries Damiano to a jutting gargoyle, and leaves him hanging there.

DAMIANO (cont'd)

Come back! You can't leave me here!

Fury triggers his take-up reel. It pulls him sharply upward and out of sight.

EXT. FURY'S RESIDENCE--DAY

Fury leaves his apartment and walks along the adjacent canal. A COVERED GONDOLA is moored there. He ignores it.

A large figure with a drawn sword appears behind Fury. He presses his long, sharp blade into Fury's back. Then he places his free hand upon Fury's shoulder to ensure better contact against the sword point.

HAKIM

My mistress wishes a word with you.

Fury turns to face the wall, but Hakim maintains his hold. Fury raises his foot to the wall and kicks off. Hard. He pushes back with all his weight into the sword, but the blade doesn't penetrate. It SHATTERS, sailing Hakim into the canal.

An exasperated Sitaara draws back the curtain to her gondola.

SITAARA

That is enough nonsense, William Fury. We have waited here all night, and--

IN THE WATER

Hakim is thrashing. Sitaara tries to struggle out of her gondola. It almost tips.

SITAARA

He can't swim!

Fury rolls his eyes. Then he takes THE LONG POLE from the gondola and offers one end to the drowning Turk, pulling Hakim to safety.

He leaves Hakim heaving for air at the water's edge, and begins to walk away.

Sitaara runs to follow. She catches hold of Fury's hand.

SITAARA (cont'd)

For the sake of the friendship between my father and your friend, help us.

FURY

I'm working on it.

SITAARA

We need to work together. My people are worried that the Venetian government will try to cover up this crime.

Hakim joins Fury and Sitaara, who are walking along the canal toward an arched bridge.

FURY

There'll be no cover-up.

SITAARA

We are going to the house of Melchioro, the alchemist. Please. Come with us.

FURY

Mel--what? Where'd you get that name?

SITAARA

That is who your friend visited to learn about the poisons.

FURY

With you?

SITAARA

No. He went alone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FURY

That's how I work, too. Alone.

They climb the steps of the bridge.

SITAARA

The Doge promised you'd cooperate.

FURY

I'd be happy to if you can keep up.

SITAARA

Watch me.

FURY

Then follow me.

Fury leaps off the bridge. Sitaara rushes to the rail in time to see him land in A PASSING GONDOLA. He smiles and waves as he drifts away.

Sitaara kicks off her heeled sandals and climbs onto the rail. Hakim scoops her up and sets her back on the bridge.

SITAARA

Hakim!

HAKIM

My lady, you cannot follow such a one if he does not wish it. Let us go back to the Palace.

EXT. THE HOUSE OF MELCHIORO--DAY.

Maniakes KNOCKS on the alchemist's door. There's no response.

He forces it open, and enters the dark and filthy space.

INSIDE MELCHIORO'S HOUSE

ONE LANTERN burns low. Maniakes lifts it, and uses it to find his way inside. A PILE OF RAGS on a bed in the corner erupts into a fit of COUGHING. It is the Alchemist.

MANIAKES

You look sick, old man. Took a little too much of your own medicine?

MELCHIORO

No. It's not the poisons. I have built up a tolerance to them. It's something else.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Maniakes approaches lifting the lantern. The light falls across the naked torso of the Alchemist. He has the tell-tale signs of a sickness in its advanced stages.

Maniakes jumps back and instinctively covers his mouth and nose with his arm. The light swings wildly in his hand.

MANIAKES

Idiot! You have The Plague!

MELCHIORO

It may very well be.

MANIAKES

But how? Who has visited you?

MELCHIORO

You. Benedici. That is all.

MANIAKES

Then how did you catch it? Are you under a curse?

Melchioro's rats scabble in their ornate cages.

MELCHIORO

(laughs ruefully)

No doubt many times over, but I don't think a curse is the cause of it.

MANIAKES

Then what?

MELCHIORO

Do you see these rats? I use them to test my poisons. These ones are from a shipwreck. I think they carry the Plague within them.

Maniakes' eyes widen.

MANIAKES

The Plague is carried by... rats? What an interesting idea.

MELCHIORO

(cough worsening)

I'm thirsty. Bring me some water, please.

MANIAKES

You are dying, old friend.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MELCHIORO

No. Not yet. Take me away from here. In a covered litter. Kill the rats. It may not be too late.

MANIAKES

Where are my poisons? You should have seen how well the last ones worked. The old priest fell right on the altar. It was magnificent.

MELCHIORO

Some water. Please.

MANIAKES

Where are the poisons?

MELCHIORO

The last of them are in this bag.

The alchemist points to A CLOTH BAG on a table top. Maniakes rifles through it.

MANIAKES

I need a hundred times this much.

MELCHIORO

Help me get well again, and I'll make as much as you need.

Maniakes empties the bag onto the floor. VIALS OF POISON SMASH at his feet. Next he opens the cages, and carefully begins to place each rat into the bag.

MELCHIORO (cont'd)

Yes. Take them. Drown them. Then bring me to your villa.

Maniakes continues packing the rats as Melchioro BABBLES. He smiles and nods occasionally in agreement.

MELCHIORO (cont'd)

That's a good man. I knew you would help. You come from a noble family. Did you know I fought with your grandfather against the Turks? He was one of the great generals of Byzantium. General Maniakes.

Maniakes' eyes flash.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MANIAKES

He was the greatest general.
Constantinople will be ours again.

MELCHIORO

Yes, well that was years ago. That's all
over, now. I'm told they renamed the city
Istanbul.

Maniakes goes to the door with his rat-bag and lantern.

MELCHIORO (cont'd)

(coughs)

Send a covered litter for me. I'll give
you all my recipes.

Maniakes holds up the squirming rat-bag.

MANIAKES

But you have just given me the best gift
of all, old friend.

He tosses a lantern onto the bed-ridden man. Melchioro
SCREAMS as he burns.

EXT. THE HOME OF MELCHIORO--NIGHT

Fury rides on horseback to the home of Melchioro.

The fire has spread in the congested quarter. Frantic
NEIGHBORS with BUCKETS OF WATER try to protect their homes
from the flames.

Fury sifts through the ruins of Melchioro's lab. He takes
particular interest in the charred body. And in the empty
cages.

The spreading flames CRACKLE in the night sky. Fury mounts
his horse and gallops away.

INT. ILLUMINATI HEADQUARTERS--NIGHT

An impressive, official-looking room. Its most prominent
features: The Illuminati "logo," (the graphically simplified
Vitruvian Man in the circle and square) painted on the wall,
and A LARGE CONFERENCE TABLE with FOUR HIGH-BACKED CHAIRS.

Fury enters. He sees three seated men. The Doge. Cassio. And
da Vinci. He goes to his usual chair.

To his surprise, Sitaara already occupies it. He looks at
her. Then at the door. Then back at her. She smiles and fans
herself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SITAARA
Am I in your seat?

Fury forces a smile and pulls up a smaller chair.

THE DOGE
What news, William?

Fury hesitates. He looks once more at Sitaara.

THE DOGE (cont'd)
It's quite all right. The ambassador's
daughter is here at my behest.

Sitaara acknowledges the Doge with a head nod and a slight
smile. Fury sighs.

FURY
Melchioro is dead.

CASSIO
What happened?

FURY
The whole place was torched. It was
burning when I got there. Do we still
have Damiano in custody?

CASSIO
For now. But he's a priest. We don't have
the authority to keep him.

DA VINCI
(to Fury)
Damiano knew Benedici was on the
negotiating team. At least we found our
security leak.

FURY
(eyeing Sitaara)
One of the leaks, anyway.

THE DOGE
Gentlemen. Please. Let us begin.

FURY
Here's what we know. Father Benedici is
dead. Murdered.

CASSIO
That would suggest the killer is a Turk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SITAARA

Why would we attack your priests?

CASSIO

Because Father Benedici was on the negotiating team, and one of your people wanted to hinder the peace talks.

SITAARA

Or one of yours did. My father was also on the--

DA VINCI

No. Not possible. That might explain the ambassador's death, but not Benedici's.

SITAARA

Why not?

FURY

Because when he was attacked, he wasn't on the team. I would have known.

THE DOGE

True. We added him later, when we found out he was a friend of the ambassador's.

FURY

The ambassador's death was an assassination. Benedici's death was something else.

SITAARA

There must be a connection. I saw the evidence.

FURY

Damiano got rich running an Indulgence scam. Benedici was killed for stepping on their profits. The Ambassador was killed for political reasons.

DA VINCI

Maybe Damiano had another partner. Someone other than Melchioro. Someone with a political agenda.

FURY

The question is: who would gain by destabilizing relations between both cities? Not a Venetian, and not a Turk.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

SITAARA

He must be Byzantine.

THE DOGE

But the Byzantines are not enemies.
They're fellow Christians. They have a
large and thriving community here.

SITAARA

The Venice treasury is full of Byzantine
gold you stole from your "fellow
Christians" when you passed through
Constantinople on your Fourth Crusade.
Maybe they hold a grudge.

CASSIO

That was over two hundred years ago. And
who occupies their city now? You do. A
race of infidels.

Sitaara's eyes narrow.

SITAARA

And old grudges die hard, do they not,
Signor da Vinci?

DA VINCI

What?

SITAARA

You carry a broken piece of Crusader
armor. Perhaps you still harbor some ill
will toward Muslims?

He tucks his necklace away, and closes the neck of his shirt.

DA VINCI

No. This is just something of my
father's, my lady. And a token of my
namesake, Saint Leonard.

The Doge CLAPS his hands together with an air of finality,
dispersing the tension in the room.

THE DOGE

Good. We have done well here. Let us
investigate the possibility that our
suspect is Byzantine. William?

FURY

Yes, my lord?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

THE DOGE

You will work with Sitaara.

FURY

Please, my lord. I--

The Doge rises to his feet.

THE DOGE

Meeting adjourned. That is all.

Everyone else files out, leaving Fury alone in the room with Sitaara. She remains seated, smiling silently and fanning herself. Fury smiles weakly back.

EXT. A VENETIAN SIDE STREET--DAY

Sitaara looks stunning in the morning sunlight. She has traded her cumbersome lady's finery for a closely fitted, tailored ensemble in green and gold silk brocade. More practical, but every bit as beautiful. The overall effect is one of fashionable chic.

She is joined by Fury. He takes a moment to admire her.

FURY

You're traveling lighter today. Where's your big friend?

SITAARA

I left him behind. We'll move faster this way, just you and me.

She leads the way. Fury watches her for a moment. He smiles. This might not be so bad after all. He hurries to catch up.

INT. BYZANTINE PATRIARCH'S HOME--DAY

An elegant and elderly Byzantine gentleman at A TABLE in his home. Joined by Maniakes. The two converse over WINE.

MANIAKES

Sir. The treasure is ours. We should rise up against Venice and take it back.

PATRIARCH

These are ancient grievances, my son. Long since settled.

MANIAKES

Their palace overflows with Byzantine gold, sir. Our sacred relics are all stolen from us. Look around you.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MANIAKES (cont'd)

There is more of Byzantium here than remains in all of Turkish Istanbul.

The Patriarch sips his wine thoughtfully.

PATRIARCH

We have a forum for such matters. If you wish to make a protest, why do you never come to the Council of Elders?

MANIAKES

For what, your politics?

PATRIARCH

You claim a Byzantine cause, yet you take no part in our community. You are absent from our meetings, our weddings, our funerals--

MANIAKES

The time for talk is past. Now we fight. I have a plan to lead us to victory. We can reclaim what is ours.

PATRIARCH

I think not, my son. You don't speak for us.

Maniakes nods solemnly.

MANIAKES

Very well. I understand, sir.

Maniakes rises from the table. He bows.

Then he punches the elderly man in the face.

The Patriarch collapses on the floor. Badly hurt, he manages to struggle to his hands and knees.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

You are right.

Maniakes kicks him again, knocking him unconscious.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

Perhaps I should attend a funeral or two.

Maniakes has ROPE under his vest.

He binds and gags the Patriarch, and drags him toward the door. Before he can open it a loud KNOCKING comes.

He looks with pleased surprise at his hostage.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MANIAKES (cont'd)

You have company.

He props his prisoner up against the wall by the entrance.

OUTSIDE THE PATRIARCH'S DOOR

stand William Fury and his new partner, Sitaara.

MANIAKES

Visitors, what a nice surprise. Good day to you both.

FURY

You are the Byzantine Patriarch, Theodore?

MANIAKES

How can I be of service?

FURY

I am a special envoy from the Palace of the Doge. This is my assistant--

SITAARA

Partner.

FURY

Partner. We'd like to ask you a few questions, if we may.

Maniakos smiles evenly. His unconscious hostage stirs a bit.

MANIAKES

I am afraid you've come at a bad time. I was just going out. We have regular meetings for this kind of thing, you know. The Council of Elders. Why don't you contact me there?

SITAARA

Please, sir. We have come a long way. It will be brief, I assure you.

MANIAKES

Very well. Come in.

Sitaara nods. She moves to enter. Fury bars her way.

FURY

Wait. We have business elsewhere.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SITAARA

Where?

FURY

Elsewhere.

(to Maniakes)

You are right, sir. Our apologies. We will contact you at The Council.

He takes the mystified Sitaara by the hand.

She looks back to see Maniakes vanishing behind the door.

EXT. THE VILLA OF MANIAKES--DAY

Maniakes' home extends over the water of a little-used canal. His COVERED GONDOLA approaches, and slips beneath the house.

Maniakes climbs a set of stairs upward to the underside of his villa. A SERVANT follows, carrying A HEAVY BLANKET ROLL.

INSIDE MANIAKES' VILLA

they unwrap the blanket from around the Patriarch and loosen his GAG. He blinks in the light and gasps for air.

They drag him to the door of A STORAGE CELLAR, set into the floor of Maniakes' home.

PATRIARCH

What are you doing? Release me immediately!

Maniakes pushes the man.

Still bound, he tumbles backward into the hole. Maniakes stands framed in the doorway to the tiny dungeon. He grins and waves. Then he closes the door.

PATRIARCH (O. S.) (cont'd)

Open this door! Open this door!

There's A BANGING from below as the old man kicks a wall.

MANIAKES

Goodness. I almost forgot.

For the Patriarch, it's darkness. Then the door opens again. Maniakes stands overhead with a large sack in his hand.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

I promised you company.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

With a shake, Maniakes rains filthy, squealing rats onto his prisoner. He LAUGHS, and SLAMS the door closed a final time, muffling the old man's SCREAMS.

EXT. SAINT MARK'S SQUARE--DAY

Sitaara Hakim, and da Vinci thread their way through the BUSTLING MARKETPLACE.

SITAARA

He's still trying to do this alone, I'm certain. We were at the Byzantine's door. The least we could have done was question the man.

Something catches her eye. She pauses at the stand of a BAKER selling BISCOTTI wrapped in paper. NUTS roast over A SMALL CLAY POT FIRE by his side.

SITAARA (cont'd)

What manner of merchant are you?

BAKER

I am a baker, signora.

She picks up one of the sweets.

SITAARA

Your goods must be very fine if you wrap them in something as expensive as paper.

DA VINCI

(ENTERING)

They're the best biscotti in Venice, signora. Allow me.

Da Vinci hands the baker A COIN. Sitaara tastes the biscotti and smiles. Hakim looks at da Vinci with the disapproving eyes of a chaperone, but says nothing.

DA VINCI (cont'd)

This is great. Watch this.

Da Vinci takes the CRUMPLED PAPER WRAPPER and smooths it flat. He rolls it into a loose cylinder, and stands it on end on the wooden counter.

Next he takes A SMALL PIECE OF KINDLING from the fire and touches it to the top of the paper. It smolders gently but rapidly to the bottom. The glowing tissue paper blackens, but keeps its shape. Just as the embers are about to reach the countertop, the entire hot, light, paper cylinder rises about three feet into the air, cools, and floats back down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sitaara GASPS and CLAPS her hands. Her eyes light up.

HAKIM
By Allah!

SITAARA
It flies!

BAKER
Witchcraft!

DA VINCI
No, it's not magic. It's Physics. When
the ashes become hot they becomes less--

BAKER
(pointing past da Vinci)
Look!

They whirl. Hakim draws his sword.

A RIDER has entered the square on horseback. SCREAMS OF
HORROR fill the air.

We see TERRIFIED UPTURNED FACES. A MAN pulls HIS MESMERIZED
SON out of harm's way. Some avert their eyes. Many run.

A WOMAN sinks to her knees in shock.

WOMAN
(stunned whisper)
Pestilence!

Now we see what they see: the bloated face of A DEAD MAN,
propped in the saddle of his horse. There's A FOLDED SHEET OF
PARCHMENT fixed by A DAGGER through his forehead.

WOMAN (cont'd)
It's Pestilence! It is The Horsemen!
They're coming!

The woman rises to her feet and runs. Panic erupts. A PRIEST
makes the sign of the cross and slowly backs away.

PRIEST
The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. It's
a sign!

The horse rears and breaks into sporadic gallops, scattering
everyone in its path. The motion of the animal creates the
frightening impression that its lurching rider is alive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The crowd GASPS as the body leans precariously in its seat. It falls to the ground. Everyone except da Vinci keeps a fearful distance. He starts to move toward the body.

HAKIM

Stay back, Maestro da Vinci. That's an Evil Spirit.

DA VINCI

If it is, Hakim, I'd like a closer look.

SITAARA

Be careful!

Da Vinci inspects the body. Then jumps back in alarm.

DA VINCI

All right! Nobody leaves here! Hakim! Get the Palace Guards. Now! Move!

INT. FURY'S APARTMENT--DAY

Fury sleeps in darkness. A POUNDING wakes him.

DA VINCI

Open the door, Will. It's me.

Fury opens the door to Leonardo and Sitaara.

FURY

What's going on?

He dresses rapidly, arming and equipping himself.

DA VINCI

We have a problem.

(at the dark room)

It's almost noon. Why don't you let some light in here?

Sitaara notices the unusual decor of Fury's apartment. She picks up A JADE BUDDHA and turns it over in her hands.

FURY

What kind of problem?

Sitaara finds AN AFRICAN MASK. She looks back at Fury.

DA VINCI

You know the Byzantine you visited? He just turned up dead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sitaara discovers AN OPEN MANUSCRIPT on A READING TABLE.
Elaborate Arabic script. Illustrated with Persian miniatures.
She reads a few words in the original language to herself.
Then translates.

SITAARA

Not in this world is nest or rest for
thee. This little planet packed with so
great woes.

FURY

This star of tears, This country of sad
eyes.

(to da Vinci)

What did he die of? Another poisoning?

SITAARA

You know Persian?

Maybe there's more to this man than meets the eye.

Fury fastens in place the last of his "special devices."

FURY

And Arabic. It was part of my training.

DA VINCI

It wasn't poison. He died of the Plague.

FURY

The what?

DA VINCI

The Plague. The Black Death. We had to
quarantine everybody in Saint Mark's
Square. Come on. I want you to see the
body before they burn it.

EXT. ST. MARK'S SQUARE--NIGHT.

Commotion. SHOUTING. PANICKY CROWDS moving in the opposite
direction make headway difficult for the trio.

IN THE SQUARE

it's a grim setting: MEN IN BLACK ROBES AND HOODS building a
funeral pyre. OTHERS in a long line with LIGHTED TORCHES.

SITAARA

Who are they?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DA VINCI

Prisoners. If they accept plague duty and survive a quarantine, they're set free.

FURY

(to Sitaara)

Why don't you go on to the Doge's palace. We'll fill you in later.

SITAARA

Are you still trying to get rid of me?

She walks forward. Fury catches up. He holds her shoulders.

FURY

It's too dangerous. The people are in a frenzy. There's a risk of contagion.

DA VINCI

It's more than a risk. It's a threat.

FURY

What do you mean?

SITAARA

Show him the note.

Da Vinci hands Fury A FOLDED SHEET OF PARCHMENT.

DA VINCI

We found this on the body.

FURY

(reading aloud)

"This is the first victim of my pestilence. More will die unless you meet my demands."

Fury winces dubiously at the tone. Is this letter for real?

FURY (cont'd)

"I ask for nothing less than the Crown Jewels of Emperor Constantine. You will give them to me at a time and place of my choosing. What was ours will be ours again. Blah, blah, blah. Etcetera, etcetera. Maniakes of... Byzantium?"

He pauses at the word "Byzantium." It comes out more as a question than a statement.

Using ropes, the men are dragging the corpse to the bonfire.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FURY (cont'd)

Let me see this body before they burn it.
Stay here.

He reaches for A TORCH and runs closer, holding it over the dead man's face.

FURY (cont'd)

(returning)

That's not the same man we talked to.

SITAARA

I knew it! I thought he was too young to be the Patriarch--

FURY

So did I. That's why I didn't want to let you go inside.

Sparks swirl and the crowd SHOUTS as the body of the Patriarch is pulled to the top of the bonfire.

SITAARA

Signor Fury. Is that concern I hear in your voice? For me?

INT. SENATE CHAMBERS--NIGHT

An emergency meeting. Virgilio. Cassio. SEVERAL REPRESENTATIVES OF THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS. Even a CARDINAL.

Fury, Sitaara, and Leonardo sit together at one end of A GREAT CONFERENCE TABLE. They listen while the others argue.

FIRST PRIEST

This is an idle threat. The Plague does not come from man. He cannot simply call it forth as if he were drawing water from a well. It comes from God to chastise sinners.

SECOND PRIEST

No. It comes from the Devil, to test our faith and tempt us to despair.

THE DOGE

Then you believe this Maniakes doesn't have the means to infect the city.

CASSIO

Of course he doesn't! The man's just an opportunist.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CASSIO (cont'd)

He found the Patriarch already dead, and he's using it to try and blackmail the city--

VIRGILIO

With outrageous demands. The crown jewels of Constantine?

FURY

I'm not suggesting we pay the ransom. Just that we use it to set a trap.

THE DOGE

It's too great a risk. What if you lose the jewels, and him as well?

CASSIO

I agree, Excellency. If anything, bait him with false gold. An alchemist can doctor some lead to make it look almost--

SITAARA

The ransom must be genuine. Maniakes may send someone to examine it first. If it proves false, he might never show himself.

FURY

Absolutely. We need the real jewels. It's the best way to flush this mass-murderer out of hiding.

VIRGILIO

Mass-murderer? You leap to extremes, Signor Fury. What do we really have here? One dead Byzantine?

SITAARA

You forget he also assassinated my father.

VIRGILIO

And one dead Turk. We're not going to risk losing a treasure over that.

Sitaara is stung by his offhand tone.

LEONARDO

We think we can lay the blame for several other deaths with him as well, but we need to find him first.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FURY

What if he can make good on his threat?
How much do we know about The Plague?

THE DOGE

Enough, Fury. We are talking about an isolated incident here. The Plague breaks out in small pockets from time to time. We have ways of dealing with it.

FIRST PRIEST

Have you set the victim and all of his possessions aflame?

CASSIO

His villa is burning as we speak.

SECOND PRIEST

Then all you need now are the special processions, the water from the Holy Land, and the distribution of the--

FURY

How effective are these procedures?

LEONARDO

The most practical measure is quarantine. If we limit public assembly for a while, maybe it won't spread.

THE DOGE

There you have it. The sacred procession. And the distribution of the holy water. And a quarantine, from now until "The Wedding with The Sea." But no ransom.

CARDINAL

I will issue an edict declaring the teaching of the Holy Church that the Plague is not man-made.

FURY

I think we should cancel this year's Wedding with the Sea. Or at least postpone it.

CASSIO

The ceremony must continue as usual, my Lord. We cannot afford to appear frightened in the eyes of the people.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

THE DOGE

I agree, Cassio. Venice will not be held hostage to the ravings of a lunatic. Continue your investigation, William. Find this man before the ceremony. That gives you a week.

EXT. LIDO--DAY

THUNDERING surf. An idyllic expanse of sand. A steady summer breeze. Two magnificent white ARABIAN STALLIONS close at hand.

Sitaara wears BILLOWING CHAMPAGNE-COLORED SILK. She reclines on A SHEET, admiring the sun and clouds.

SITAARA

This is paradise, William, what a good idea. I feel as if I could stay here forever.

Fury stands over her, blocking her sun.

FURY

Don't get too comfortable, you two. We're here to work. When the Doge does his Wedding with the Sea, this whole beach is going to be full of people.

Da Vinci is also sitting cross-legged on A SHEET. A WOODEN CLIP encircles his forehead. A hinged attachment from the clip suspends a lens over one of his eyes. Spread out before him like a disassembled skeleton lie various complicated-looking MECHANICAL COMPONENTS. He holds two pieces in his hands, and concentrates on fitting them together.

DA VINCI

(raising forehead-mounted lens)
Would you mind not standing there? I need the light.

Sitaara sits up and explores A WICKER BASKET.

SITAARA

There's a nice loaf of bread here, William. And some excellent cheese.

Fury scans the surroundings.

FURY

The Doge's barge will be right about there. We should have agents here, at all main access points, and along that ridge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Da Vinci pulls his eyepiece off, leaving the headband on.

DA VINCI

This seems like too obvious a place for Maniakes to hit. If I were him, I'd leave town for a while.

FURY

We have to be ready for anything. Plus there are sentries on all the roads leading away from here.

Fury looks out again at the sea. He gets up. Mounts one of the stallions. And spurs it toward the water.

Sitaara watches him as he gallops across the sand. Then she turns to da Vinci. He has completed assembling the support structure for his invention.

She watches as he attaches numerous triangular canvas forms, ribbons, and streamers.

SITAARA

What are you making?

DA VINCI

I'll show you.

He stands, carrying his newly assembled device.

DA VINCI (cont'd)

Watch this.

He lifts his invention. Releases a spring. A whole section POPS open into wooden spars and segmented cloth pockets. They fill with air. The device splits into two parts. One, like a puppet controller, stays in his hand. The other, the best kite you've ever seen, soars upward, paying out line and streamers as it climbs.

DA VINCI (cont'd)

(controlling kite)

Do you like it?

Sitaara CLAPS her hands together.

SITAARA

It's fantastic. You are a genius, Maestro da Vinci.

Sitaara returns her attention to Fury.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DA VINCI

Me? I didn't invent it. Will actually brought me one from China. I just made a few improvements here and there.

SITAARA

Did he?

Da Vinci watches her watching him.

A slight smile, barely noticeable, plays across her lips.

DA VINCI

You're smiling. I once painted a woman in Florence with just such a smile. She told me she was thinking about a lover.

SITAARA

Maestro da Vinci, how you embarrass me. I was just thinking how well-travelled William is. And how well-educated. He speaks Persian, you know.

DA VINCI

(slightly teasing)

Yes, and Arabic, too!

(serious again)

His job makes him keep people at arm's length, but he's a good friend, once you get to know him. And he leads an amazing life. I imagine what can be done. But he actually goes out and does it. I admire him for that.

Fury gallops back.

SITAARA

What is it?

FURY

I'm done here. I want to check the seaports now. If Maniakes has left town, it was probably by boat.

SITAARA

Let me come with you.

Sitaara looks at da Vinci. He bows out.

DA VINCI

I think maybe today three's a crowd.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

She notices da Vinci's gesture. She nods a smiling acknowledgement.

Fury lifts her onto the back of his horse and they gallop away.

Da Vinci pulls from his pocket A SECTION OF LEADED, BLUE STAINED GLASS - as if from a church window - and clips it to his headband. It juts out like a visor.

Da Vinci watches them fondly as they go. Then he flips his visor down, forming his own personal Renaissance sunglasses, and he returns to his kite

EXT. VENETIAN SEAPORT--DAY

A busy harbor. Galleons at anchor. Sleek caravels under sail.

Fury guides the stallion along the waterfront. Sitaara sits behind him, her arms encircling his waist.

The sights and sounds of the oceanside city captivate her. She is in love. She is in Venice. And everything is wonderful and new.

AT A DOCK

is moored A FABULOUS VESSEL. Carved and richly gilded.

SITAARA

What is that?

FURY

That's the Bucintoro. The Doge's wedding barge. He only uses it once a year in a ceremony where he marries the sea. It's an old tradition here.

SITAARA

It looks as if it could sail through the gates of Paradise!

FURY

(laughing)

I suppose it does, now that you mention it. I've must have passed these streets a thousand times, but you make them all seem new again.

Sitaara smiles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SITAARA

If I lived here, I would get a little house just like that one. With a little gondola just outside.

FURY

No palace? You're easy to please.

SITAARA

I was raised in Topkapi Palace. But with palaces come palace lives. Full of order and duty, watching and whispering. I feel so much freer here.

Fury pauses

AT A SMALL TAVERN BY THE WATER.

FURY

Let's stop here. I want to look inside.

INT. TAVERN--DAY

A gathering of MEN and WOMEN in small groups.

A MINSTREL plays. A BARKEEP serves wine from a large cask.

Fury offers Sitaara his arm. Eyes turn as she enters. They make a striking couple. They find an empty table. Fury waits while Sitaara seats herself.

FURY

I'll just be a moment.

AT THE BAR

FURY

Good day to you, Signor.

BARKEEP

What will you have?

FURY

I'd like some information.

BARKEEP

I'm sure there's very little I could tell a gentleman such as yourself.

Fury SLAPS a small leather pouch on the counter. It CLINKS.

AT THE TABLE

Sitaara glances idly around the tavern. She watches as Fury confers with the barkeep. The MUSIC entertains her. She finds herself absentmindedly smiling and keeping its tempo with slight nods of her head.

AT THE BAR

FURY

Are you sure? No unusual ships? No unscheduled arrivals or departures in the harbor?

BARKEEP

Signor, please. I run a tavern. You need to speak to the harbor master.

The sight of TWO LOVERS talking in a corner catches Sitaara's eye. They notice her looking. They return her smile.

The young man tries to speak to Sitaara, but she's too far away. She indicates with a hand to her ear that she can't make out his words over the MUSIC.

He approaches. She waits for him, looking up with an air of pleasant alertness. He lowers his mouth to her ear so as to be clearly heard.

YOUNG MAN

(leering)

I'd like a turn next. How much?

She stiffens. Could she have heard right?

SITAARA

What?

He licks her ear.

She jerks her head away and jumps up, knocking over her chair.

AT THE BAR

Fury sees. He turns to defend her, but the firm grip of the barkeep's hand on his shoulder stops him.

BARKEEP

(to Fury)

Maybe I do know something.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

YOUNG MAN
(with Sitaara)
Who's in the mood for Turkish Delight?

The patrons LAUGH.

BARKEEP
(indicating Sitaara)
How about a trade? Information - for her?

Fury breaks the barkeep's grip. And possibly his arm. The MUSIC stops. The man drops in pain, holding his shoulder.

BARKEEP (cont'd)
What the hell?

Fury whirls. He sees the room with new eyes: A waterfront den of GAMBLERS and PROSTITUTES, drunken SAILORS and THIEVES.

The young man, drunk and laughing, lights up at the prospect of a fight.

He lifts Sitaara to her feet. He holds her from behind. She can smell his breath, and feel his knife at her throat.

YOUNG MAN
(to Fury)
What's the matter? You got somethin' for Turks? Why don't you come and get her?

In one smooth motion, Fury reaches behind himself. Without looking, he picks up A BRASS DISH from the bar and sends it slicing through the air. It barely misses Sitaara, but her attacker isn't so lucky. He catches it in the face and drops.

Fury rushes to Sitaara. He overturns the table, and pushes her behind it.

It's a full on melee now. Every man rises to the attack. They use KNIVES, BOTTLES, LONGSHOREMAN'S HOOKS. Fury uses anything at hand. Imaginatively and well.

They converge on Fury from all sides. He defends himself easily, throwing one attacker into another. They are strong. But unsophisticated. They have never encountered anyone that fights like Fury before. He moves with a confident grace, drawing upon his training and exotic Eastern techniques unknown in Europe.

With a great economy of effort, he takes out everyone in the room. Then he strides coolly over to the barkeep as if to resume a conversation after a slight interruption.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FURY

Now what was it you wanted to tell me?

EXT. FURY'S NEIGHBORHOOD--DAY

Fury leads his horse by the reins. Sitaara follows quietly. They walk along the canal near his home.

They stop under A BLOSSOMING CHERRY TREE. Sitaara's hair is down, and in her billowing Venetian silk dress she has a wild, wind-blown beauty. Fury plucks A FLOWER, and places it in her hair. He gazes at her, then takes her in his arms.

FURY

Listen. Forget them. They're nothing. It was an ugly place full of ugly people. I'm sorry I brought you there.

SITAARA

I know. It's just that--

FURY

Shh.

They kiss. A breeze blows HER SCARF around Fury. She takes it off and hangs it around his neck. Then she pulls away. He ties it around his arm.

She looks at THE BOATS. And THE HOUSES. And the PEOPLE as they pass.

SITAARA

I don't know what I was thinking. This is not my country.

FURY

It's not mine, either. But I've made it my home. You could too, if you want. You'll see. Once the treaty is signed, things will be different.

SITAARA

Will they? You're from the West. I am from the East. I doubt I'll ever be as welcome here. Even after the treaty.

They look into each other's eyes. Neither speaks.

HAKIM (O. S.)

So it is true.

Hakim has been waiting by Fury's door. Tasleem stands with him, eyes downcast.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SITAARA

Hakim.

HAKIM

What kind of dress is this? Have you forgotten yourself, my lady?

Sitaara unconsciously crosses her hands over her breast, as if to cover herself. Tasleem approaches with A VEIL. Sitaara drapes it over her head and shoulders.

HAKIM (cont'd)

The Sultan awaits you in Istanbul. Time to come home. You must prepare for your father's funeral.

Hakim holds out his hand to Fury, palm upward, as if to say, "hand her over."

Fury stiffens, ready to fight. He looks at Sitaara, but she simply lowers her head. Hakim waits with a grim patience.

Sitaara refuses to meet Fury's eyes. She takes Hakim's hand.

Hakim turns to leave. Then he stops, as if he has remembered something. He pulls a velvet pouch from a pocket and tosses it to Fury.

HAKIM (cont'd)

A merchant left this for you.

Fury catches it and breaks the seal. Inside, he finds ANOTHER BRASS MUSIC BOX CYLINDER. He holds it, and watches Sitaara as she is led away.

EXT. LIDO--DAY

A sparkling sea. A FESTIVE REGATTA in formation around the Doge's Bucintoro.

ON THE DECK OF THE BUCINTORO

Fury stands on duty, SMARTLY DRESSED for the occasion. He scans the surroundings for trouble. A fellow agent, ROSSI, similarly dressed, joins him.

FURY

See anything, Rossi?

ROSSI

Not so far. If Maniakes is going to try something, he'll have to do it soon. The wedding's almost over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A PRIEST and various CEREMONIAL ATTENDANTS surround the Doge.

He opens A SMALL BOX containing A GOLD RING. Using both hands, he raises it over his head.

FURY

We have clearances for these boats?

ROSSI

Every single one.

(at a FANFARE)

There go the trumpets.

The Doge steps to the prow of the boat.

THE DOGE

With this ring I wed thee, oh sea, as a token of our true and perpetual possession.

He tosses the ring, and watches with pleasure as it glints and arcs into the water with a small SPLASH.

A CHEER rises from the CROWD. On each boat, HORNS SOUND, and BANNERS wave. The Doge continues to stand in the prow of his ship. But his smile gives way to puzzled confusion.

A FIGURE floats face down in the swells, not far off.

FIRST SAILOR

Man overboard! Man in the water!

Fury and Rossi exchange looks. They run to the rail.

ROSSI

Get a rope!

A SECOND SAILOR prods the floating figure with A LONG OAR. As he does, the body flips over, showing familiar symptoms.

FURY

He's dead. Looks like Plague.

THIRD SAILOR

Plague! Plague!

Fury spins in anger.

FURY

Quiet! You'll start a panic!

He gestures for silence, but the sailors don't obey.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FIRST SAILOR

Look! Another one!

SEVERAL MORE BODIES float in the water. Other sailors take up the cry: "Plague! Plague!"

FURY

Rossi! Get the Doge out of here!

Fury takes up A LONG-HANDLED SHIP'S AX and swings it, SMASHING a whole section of PRICELESS GILDING. To the Doge's shock it comes loose, and CRASHES into the sea.

THE DOGE

William, please! My ship!

FURY

(hacking away)

Don't worry, this isn't structural. It's just decorative.

Rossi pulls free the remaining pieces of broken wood and gold leaf, revealing A SMALL, CONCEALED BOAT. He Drags it to the side and pushes it into the water.

Ax still in one hand, Fury pulls the Doge to the railing.

FURY (cont'd)

Are you satisfied now? I want the ransom ready for me by midnight!

The Doge nods. This time he doesn't argue.

Fury lifts the ax overhead. He swings it down hard, striking the blunt side of its head against a recessed teak panel in the deck floor. POP! A column of wooden pegs thrusts out from the side of the boat: A CONCEALED ESCAPE LADDER.

Fury helps the Doge onto the ladder. Rossi seats him in the skiff below.

ROSSI

Throw me the spring!

Fury tosses Rossi A BRASS DISK. He catches it in one hand and triggers a switch. The disk snaps open like a four-bladed stiletto.

Rossi fits it onto the end of A WOODEN ROD and slides the whole assembly into the boat's rudder mechanism.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

The blades churn in the water, forming a propeller. The skiff races away, taking the Doge a safe distance from the Bucintoro before the internal spring expends its energy.

MORE BODIES appear in the water. Not all of them dead. The survivors swim for the Bucintoro.

FIRST FISHERMAN
(swimming)
Help me! Somebody help me!

The sailor with the oar uses it to keep the swimmer back.

SECOND SAILOR
No! Get back! Stay away!

The survivors surround The Bucintoro. The sailors on deck refuse to let them board. They try to drown the swimmers, raining OBJECTS onto them and beating them with OARS.

Fury climbs to a commanding position on the Bucintoro's deck.

FURY
I want all sailors to rescue these men!

There's A HOWL of refusal from the crew.

FURY (cont'd)
I'm taking command here! Now do it!

FOURTH SAILOR
They have The Plague! They'll kill us
all!

Fury jumps down to meet the hostile sailor. He holds the top of the long-handled ax against the man's chest, forcing him back to the ship's rails.

FURY
Help them, or join them. What's it going
to be?

FOURTH SAILOR
It's too dangerous!

FURY
We can't turn our backs on them.

The crew tenses. They're ready to mutiny.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

FURY (cont'd)

I'm willing to stay here and rescue these men. Will you help me? I don't think short contact will hurt you.

The sailor looks at the drowning men.

FOURTH SAILOR

Yes--sir.

Fury releases the sailor. He gives him a nod and a slap on the shoulder.

FURY

Good man.

The tension eases among the crew.

FURY (cont'd)

All right! Turn about! Pick up all men in the water! Then make for the quarantine island. Dump any excess weight! I don't care if it's solid gold! Sink the dead bodies with it!

The men rouse into action. At the far railing, they pull the first of the RESCUED MEN aboard. Fury helps.

FURY (cont'd)

Bring these men blankets!

(to survivor)

What happened here?

The shivering men accepts THE BLANKETS gratefully.

FIRST RESCUED MAN

(coughing)

Been in the water a day and a night. We swam here from the islands.

A BOTTLE OF WINE is handed to Fury. He passes it to the rescued man, who drinks deeply from it.

FURY

Why were you in the water? Tell me what happened.

FIRST RESCUED MAN

We were on the island mending nets when the Devil himself came to us. He sailed right up with a couple of his minions and a boat full of packing cases.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

SECOND RESCUED MAN

We talked to him. He was friendly. Even told us his name. Maniakes, he said.

As the men speak, their eerie story unfolds ON SCREEN.

We see Maniakes and HIS MEN, laughing with the FISHERMEN. They are on a small island - not more than a sandspit - just a place where fisherman camp and get an early start.

FIRST RESCUED MAN (O. S.)

There were more than thirty of us. Getting ready for the morning, when the baitfish run--

SECOND RESCUED MAN (O. S.)

Then we see his men pouring their black oil on our boats, and opening the boxes. They put torches to our boats, and the whole place turned into his Hell--

FIRST RESCUED MAN (O. S.)

From out of the boxes come rats. Rats everywhere. Our boats burning and him sailing off, laughing.

SECOND RESCUED MAN (O. S.)

There was no place to go. Some ran to the water, those who could swim. Others weren't so lucky.

ON THE ISLAND

The charred shells of the fisherman's boats. Dead men with horrible, diseased faces. Dying rats, quivering, SQUEALING WEAKLY, struggling to stand, their noses wet with blood.

ON THE BUCINTORO

FIRST RESCUED MAN

I'd like to get that Devil.

FURY

We will get him. If we have to follow him to Hell.

INT. THE TREASURE ROOM OF THE DOGE'S PALACE--DAY

EXQUISITE ARTWORK. FABULOUS RICHES. A round chamber ringed with ARMED MEN. In the center Fury, da Vinci, and the Doge supervise as the treasure's CURATOR carefully packs brilliant GOLD AND JEWEL-ENCRUSTED ORNAMENTS, RELICS, and CLOTHING into A LONG RECTANGULAR CONTAINER.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CURATOR

The crown of Constantine.

He places it gingerly onto a cushion inside the container.

CURATOR (cont'd)

His coronation robes.

Folding the sumptuous raiments he places them inside as well.

FURY

(to da Vinci)

This is the right stuff?

DA VINCI

Everything Maniakes asked for.

Fury nods.

CURATOR

(still packing)

The Holy scepter.

(to Fury)

Remember. We display this to the public on the Feast of Saint Constantine. If you lose it, the people will hear of it.

THE DOGE

If Maniakes tests the gold, make sure he does it on an area that doesn't show.

FURY

Not a scratch. Understood. Don't worry: we'll have the area secured for miles. Ships at sea. Men in the cliffs. Hidden soldiers everywhere.

THE DOGE

Cliffs? What cliffs? Where exactly are you taking my treasure?

Fury indicates THE GUARDS as if one might be a spy.

FURY

I'd rather not say exactly, sir. It's near Constantinople.

The Doge and the curator exchange looks.

THE DOGE

William. We are almost at war with the Ottomans.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FURY

Yes, sir.

THE DOGE

And Constantinople is now Turkish-occupied Istanbul, correct?

FURY

Yes, sir.

THE DOGE

Well unless I miss my guess, William, that would place it at the very heart of the Ottoman Empire, would it not?

FURY

Yes, sir. But--

THE DOGE

You cannot send a ship full of soldiers to Istanbul. It would be taken for an invasion force.

DA VINCI

(brightly)

We have a plan.

Fury shoots a "What do you mean, 'we?'" look at his friend.

THE DOGE

Well it had better be a damned good one.

DA VINCI

At dawn today we sail right in to Istanbul with a full contingent of soldiers and an honor guard.

FURY

(to da Vinci)

We?

THE DOGE

Of course. The Turkish ambassador's body--

DA VINCI

Is being returned to Istanbul with great pomp and ceremony, and will be shown every courtesy. The treasure will be on that ship.

(indicates box they're packing)

Right here in the ambassador's coffin.

Fury raises his hand as a call for silence.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FURY

Leonardo.

(to the Doge)

We have a plan. Let's leave it at that.

Fury closes the treasure box lid, ending further talk.

EXT. DOGE'S PALACE LOADING RAMP--NIGHT

A SPECIALLY CONSTRUCTED RAMP. A direct route from the Doge's Palace to the deck of A VENETIAN GALLEON at anchor. Wheels RUMBLE as Fury pushes the ambassador's treasure-filled coffin. Leonardo da Vinci jogs cheerfully along beside, his special sunglasses on, but hinged up.

FURY

Where do you think you're going?

DA VINCI

To see some action.

FURY

That's not a good idea. You stay--

DA VINCI

Will. I want to go. Consider it a "field test."

Fury frowns.

EXT. ESTABLISHING ISTANBUL--DAY

ON SCREEN TITLE: Istanbul

Delicate minarets and massive fortifications rising above the confluence of the Bosphorus and the Sea of Marmara.

EXT. TOPKAPI PALACE--THE SULTAN'S GARDENS--DAY

A tranquil walled garden at sunset. Adjacent to the Sultan's palace. Fountains. Reflecting pools. AN ELABORATE HEDGE MAZE.

Two women sit in the leafy alcove

AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE MAZE

Both wear black. One, Tasleem, occupies herself with embroidery. The other, Sitaara, gazes with a faraway expression at A BOOK OF PERSIAN VERSE.

SITAARA

Home feels so strange, Tasleem. Do you know when I saw this garden again, I wept?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TASLEEM

These walls hold many memories, my lady.
Do you remember how we used to play here?
We would hide in the maze, and your
mother would try to find us.

Pressed in Sitaara's book is the cherry blossom that Fury
gave her in their last hour together.

SITAARA

You're right. My memories are here.

INSIDE THE MAZE

Maniakes secretly listens from behind a wall of greenery.

AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE MAZE

Sitaara looks at her pressed flower.

SITAARA

I should forget Venice as it has
forgotten me.

TASLEEM

Forgetfulness will come with time, my
lady. I will call Jasmine. And she will
sing one of those Persian poems you love.

Sitaara closes the book, pressing the flower within.

SITAARA

Not yet. It will be some time before I
can hear with pleasure the words of
Hafiz.

A BELL RINGS. Tasleem stands.

SITAARA (cont'd)

I thought all condolence calls were
finished for today.

TASLEEM

I shall go and see who it is.

Tasleem leaves.

Sitaara sits in silence until a voice, sly and seductive,
speaks to her from within the hedge. It seems so close, as if
the devil were whispering in her ear.

MANIAKES (O. S.)

I have news for you from Venice.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She stands in surprise.

SITAARA
Who is there?

MANIAKES
Someone who knows William Fury.

As they speak we alternate between Sitaara, her back against the hedge as she listens; and Maniakes, his pale, silvery face pressed against the leafy wall as he whispers to her.

SITAARA
Has he sent you?

MANIAKES
I am here because of him.

SITAARA
I knew it. He still thinks about me.

MANIAKES
Does he? Does anyone know what occupies the mind of William Fury?

SITAARA
What are you saying?

MANIAKES
I am saying that you misjudged the man. I am saying that you, a high-born Ottoman lady, have placed your faith in a paid agent of the Venetian State.

SITAARA
Who are you? Show yourself.

She steps

INSIDE THE MAZE

to confront him. But he hides deeper within.

MANIAKES
Don't blame yourself, my lady. He gains the trust of women. He is for hire. That is part of his job.

SITAARA
I don't believe you. Why have you come here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MANIAKES

To warn you. The Venetians care about nothing but gold. It's all about gold.

SITAARA

What has this to do with me?

Maniakes steps out of the shadows.

SITAARA (cont'd)

Are you Maniakes?

MANIAKES

It has everything to do with you. They killed your father--

SITAARA

I've seen you before. You opened the door that day--

MANIAKES

They killed him to stop the treaty. To keep the gold they stole from our city.

SITAARA

You killed the Patriarch.

Maniakes continues in his soothing voice.

MANIAKES

I was at the door. Yes. But things are not always as they seem. These are complex times.

SITAARA

Did you kill him?

As he answers, he moves deeper into the maze, making her follow.

MANIAKES

He died. It's true. Poor Theodore. He was like a father to me.

SITAARA

But you pretended--

MANIAKES

I pretended nothing. I found him already dead of the Plague, his servants gone, the house looted.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SITAARA

But you lied about who you were--

He retreats still further into the leafy gloom.

MANIAKES

And you were so honest? Was I to believe that you were in the employ of the Venetian State?

Again she follows.

SITAARA

I was with William Fury. The Doge appointed him to investigate my father's death.

He LAUGHS.

MANIAKES

Something like appointing a lion to investigate the death of a gazelle?

SITAARA

Why are you here?

MANIAKES

They deceived you in Venice. I am here to help you see the truth.

SITAARA

Am I to believe you, then? William Fury is a liar, and you--?

MANIAKES

William Fury is a spy. His world - our world - is a dirty world. No one who works there has clean hands. Even I have done some wrong.

SITAARA

What wrong? Tell me.

MANIAKES

I made use of my friend's death to try and gain back some of the lost treasure of our city.

SITAARA

Do you mean the Plague victim on horseback?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MANIAKES

I wept as I tied him to his old horse.
But I felt his blessing on my plan.

SITAARA

What plan?

MANIAKES

They could stop the treaty, but they
could not stop me. I have forced them to
return the sacred jewels of Constantine
to us.

SITAARA

How have you done that?

MANIAKES

I will tell you everything. But I need
your help.

SITAARA

What can I do?

MANIAKES

You can do so much. The jewels are almost
within my reach, but I fear a trap. I
need a show of force. A small unit of the
Sultan's guard for protection.

SITAARA

When will this happen?

MANIAKES

They are sailing for Istanbul even now.

SITAARA

Do they plan to invade? How can they dare
come so close? It violates the truce.

MANIAKES

How, you ask?

He leans close to answer.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

I have heard from one of the Doge's
guards that they hide the treasure in the
casket of your father. They have
desecrated his body. Will you help me?

Sitaara's eyes widen. Maniakes comforts her in his arms.

EXT. COASTAL HEADLANDS OUTSIDE ISTANBUL--DAY

Metal wheels GRIND along atop the rocky bluffs. Fury pushes the casket to a halt. He squints in the sunlight. Just a few yards away - right in the open - stands Maniakes.

MANIAKES

Welcome, Signor Fury. So good of you to come.

Maniakes is close, but A DEEP CREVASSE lies between him and Fury. A place where the headlands split, and the ocean rages in the cleft formed.

Fury pats the coffin.

FURY

Here's your ransom. Come and get it.

Between the cliffs hangs A ROPE-BRIDGE WITH A PLANK DECK.

On Maniakes' side, TWO ARMED MEN wait with A HORSE AND WAGON.

MANIAKES

I'd feel so much more comfortable if you would bring it to me.

Fury shrugs and starts across the bridge, rolling the casket in front of him.

The bridge GROANS and sags under the weight. Fury hesitates.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

Come along. The bridge will hold.

The bridge stabilizes at a new, lower level. Fury continues until he reaches dead center. Then he stops.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

Now what? Bring it all the way across.

FURY

This is as far as I go. It's all yours.

Fury turns and starts to head back to his side. The treasure swings slowly on the CREAKING bridge. Surf THUNDERS below.

Maniakes weighs his options.

MANIAKES

(to his henchmen)
Go and get that.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

His men exchange hesitant looks.

MANIAKES (cont'd)
Well get on with it.

They don't want to anger Maniakes, but still they refuse.

MANIAKES (cont'd)
You're not done yet, Fury. You must
deliver it to me. Those are the terms!

Fury turns again.

FURY
If you insist.

Fury heads back toward the middle of the bridge. For Maniakes, this is just as bad. What does Fury have in mind?

MANIAKES
Stop! Stay right there. I know you,
William Fury. This is some kind of trap.

FURY
This might go a little faster if you'd
make up your mind.

MANIAKES
Never mind that. Take off your weapons.
Throw them in the water.

Fury unslings A CROSSBOW from his back, draws A DAGGER, and drops both into the sea. Then he takes another step.

MANIAKES (cont'd)
Uh uh uh. The little bag of tricks. Drop
that, too.

Without breaking eye contact, Fury takes off his leather bag, holds it at arm's length, and drops it too. It falls about three feet before the strap catches on A JUTTING PLANK.

The bag hangs there, unnoticed by Maniakes.

Satisfied, Maniakes starts across. The two men face each other in the center of the bridge, the casket between them. Fury KNOCKS on the lid.

FURY
Don't you want to check it?

MANIAKES
Whatever for? I trust you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FURY

I'm touched.

What happens next happens very fast.

Fury raises his head and gives a nod: it's the signal to spring the trap.

Maniakes notices. He turns, following Fury's gaze.

Venetian soldiers converge from all directions.

Maniakes sees them on Fury's side of the bridge. He turns to run. Too late. They are on both sides. HEAVILY ARMED AND ARMORED, the Venetian forces raise weapons and lower visors.

Da Vinci stands in the rear ranks on Fury's side, a safe distance away. Bemused by the proceedings, he lowers his sunglasses and watches the show.

FURY (cont'd)

You're under arrest, Maniakes.

A frosty smile creases Maniakes' face. A BRASS CLIP drops from his sleeve.

In one sharp motion he attaches the clip to the handle of the coffin, effectively chaining himself to it.

MANIAKES

Perhaps some other time, Fury!

The Venetians whirl at the SOUND of ONCOMING HORSEMEN.

To Fury's surprise, Sitaara is in command of the Turkish cavalry. Hakim rides at her side. They close in on Fury's men, surrounding them.

With fire in her eyes, she points straight at da Vinci, calling out to Hakim.

SITAARA

There is your target, Hakim! He's the mastermind!

With a practiced grace, Hakim draws an Ottoman arrow from his quiver. He examines it for trueness, much as he did with the poison arrow in Father Benedici's study. He smiles grimly.

At that same moment, Maniakes pulls A CONCEALED CORD that runs along the bridge, releasing TWO PINS, one on each of the cliffs. SPRING-LOADED FLINTS spark brightly. FUSES ignite.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Hakim releases his arrow, firing on da Vinci.

Fury watches as the deadly arrow strikes his friend. Da Vinci clutches his chest and falls, reeling in shock and pain. His stained-glass sunglasses SHATTER on the hard ground.

One of Maniakes' henchman manages to scramble back off the bridge to the safety of the cliff. For everyone else on the bridge, it is too late.

Charges of Chinese gunpowder EXPLODE. The bridge collapses. Fury, Maniakes, and his henchman seem to hang for a moment in a cloud of splintered wood and granite. Then they accelerate toward the water below.

Reacting instinctively, Fury rips open his tunic. He sheds it in mid-air. Thin articulated WOODEN RIBS, reminiscent of da Vinci's kite, unfold around him. RIBBONS OF CANVAS between them catch the air, slowing his descent.

For Maniakes, the situation is reversed. Weighed down by the treasure-filled casket, he plunges into the surf.

Maniakes' other henchman also lands in the sea. He tries to swim. He almost succeeds. For a moment or two. Then the water surges, dashing him against the rocks.

Still pulled along by the casket, Maniakes clears the dangerous surface white water and dives deep. With a WHOOSH of bubbles, he torpedoes relentlessly downward.

In the eerie calm of the ocean floor, he unhooks himself from the casket. He abandons it there and begins to swim.

A hundred feet down. Too deep for anyone to follow. Maniakes finds the undersea entrance to AN OLD MINE SHAFT. He crawls inside.

Several MEN already wait there, ready to help. Pearl divers. Nearly naked, except for loincloths and lead weight-belts.

MANIAKES

(coughing)

Find the treasure! Use the pearl divers!
Then flood this mine shaft!

EXT. BETWEEN THE SEA CLIFFS--DAY

Fury struggles to control his descent. He pulls hard on WOODEN-HANDLED GUIDE LINES and throws his body weight from side to side. Sudden gusts in the canyon drive him against the rough sea cliffs. His WINGED WOODEN PARAFoil splinters and breaks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Despite the damage, he still manages to glide to a ledge in the cliff around the headland, out of sight of the Ottoman forces. He lands hard, and lies in a heap. Unconscious. Bleeding from a head wound.

EXT. ON TOP OF THE SEA CLIFFS--DAY

Sitaara and Hakim look down into the pounding surf below.

SITAARA

Fury must be still alive! Find him!

Hakim nods and turns to the mounted Turks.

HAKIM

Form a search party! Find the winged man who fell!

EXT. ROCKY LEDGE--DAY

Fury regains consciousness. Everything shimmers in the sun. He looks up at the CLATTER of FALLING ROCKS. MEN are climbing down the cliff face. They haven't seen Fury yet. He rises to unsteady feet.

He disentangles himself from his parafoil. And throws it into the sea. Then he ducks for cover.

One of the searchers spots the remains of Fury's chute being SMASHED against some rocks.

FIRST SOLDIER

There! In the surf! It's the kite that helped him!

SECOND SOLDIER

No one could survive such a pounding.

Fury lies flat under a small outcropping of rock.

He tenses as they approach, but they walk past, missing him.

EXT. THE LEDGE--NIGHT

Judging it safe in the darkness, Fury comes out of hiding. He touches a few bloody spots and tests his joints. Nothing seems broken. He dusts himself off.

Noticing the scarf Sitaara gave him, he unties it and studies it with contempt. He relaxes his grip on it. It unfurls and catches the breeze. Fury watches it flutter. He almost drops it. Then changes his mind, and stuffs it in his pocket.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks up. Above him stretches a long climb.

Marooned and abandoned, a small figure on an immense rock face, he makes his way upward in the moonlight.

EXT. THE ROAD TO ISTANBUL--NIGHT

Dawn on a dusty road, just outside Istanbul. An exhausted Fury trudges on, encouraged by the nearness of the city.

EXT. THE MARKETS OF ISTANBUL--DAY

An explosion of color and sound. JEWELERS and BOOTBLACKS, KILIM MERCHANTS and SPICE TRADERS. HOLY MEN and THIEVES.

Fury spots A PUBLIC FOUNTAIN in the center of a square and heads for it. Several LONG-HANDLED DRINKING CUPS hang there. He uses one to splash water on his face.

He looks up at THREE MEN. They had been talking together, but they have stopped now and are staring at him. Do they recognize him? Or are they just put off by the sight of someone washing up in their drinking fountain? He doesn't stick around to find out.

Moving again, Fury weaves through the bazaar. Many cultures have converged here, so it shouldn't be too difficult to blend in. But he can't shake the feeling that everyone seems to be watching him.

An ARAB leading a CAMEL catches his eye. As does a PISTACHIO SELLER. A METALSMITH pauses haggling with a CUSTOMER just long enough to notice him. Are those VEILED WOMEN talking about him?

TWO MOUNTED JANISSARIES question a BEGGAR. The man lifts his hands to his face in a splashing gesture and points toward the fountain. That's all Fury needs to see. It's time to get off the street. AN OPEN DOOR beckons. He ducks through.

It feels like a mistake. Inside, FIVE MEN recline around HOOKAHS. One of them rises suddenly at his arrival. The rest remain motionless amid rising tendrils of smoke. Their faces darken at the interruption. He can't go outside again, so he goes even deeper in.

At the rear of the room hangs A CURTAIN. No one stops him, so he pushes through. Right into the middle of chaos.

WILD MUSIC fills the air. DERVISHES in HIGH FEZ-LIKE HATS and long, SKIRTED COATS whirl feverishly, spinning themselves into religious ecstasies.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As Fury tries to circumnavigate the outside of the room, eager hands pull at him, inviting him to join the dance.

The two Janissaries appear at the curtain. Spotting Fury, they try to follow him. But they have no easier time crossing the room than he did.

Fury shrugs off the last pair of grasping hands and finds an exit. Once outside, he tries to assess the situation. OTTOMAN LATTICE WORK makes for an easy climb. He finds himself a hiding place among the rooftops.

He watches from his perch as the Janissaries emerge, looking around in confusion. Met by other MOUNTED MEMBERS OF THEIR CORPS, The elite Ottoman guardsmen speak together.

Fury can't hear their words from where he sits, but he can see their gestures. They seem to reach some sort of conclusion, and the horsemen ride off, leaving two standing guard behind.

Fury watches as they ride down a broad avenue toward what can only be one place: the Sultan's Palace.

Pulling Sitaara's keepsake from his pocket, he holds it in his clenched fist and gives it a long look. How could she have betrayed him like that?

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TOP OF THE SEA CLIFFS--DAY

In slow motion we reprise the scene of the ransom drop.

Again we see Sitaara ride forward, eyes aflame. She CRIES OUT to Hakim, and slowly raises her arm. This time her voice is muffled, surreal.

Again Hakim draws his bow and fires. And da Vinci reels in pain and falls, his sunglasses SHATTERING on the hard ground.

Again the bridge explodes, sending Fury, Maniakes and his henchman falling into the abyss.

The Venetians react in horror. But their panic unfolds slowly, as if in a dream. Then in a

SMASH CUT:

we return TO REAL TIME. Like a blurry image focusing, the VOICES of the people resolve and clarify.

SITAARA

No one move!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Venetians turn, ready to fight, but the surrounding Ottomans have them covered.

SITAARA (cont'd)
Be still! Drop your weapons!

Out-numbered, they obey. SWORDS AND BOWS fall to the ground. On the opposite cliff, Ottoman soldiers close in on Maniakes' one surviving henchman. They tie him up.

The Venetians expect the same treatment. But it doesn't come. Sitaara addresses a Janissary on the far cliff.

SITAARA (cont'd)
Azziz! See to the bridge!

AZZIZ nods and gestures to A GATHERING OF SOLDIERS. ROPES are thrown across the divide. The Ottoman forces lower their weapons. Some busy themselves with repairs.

SITAARA (cont'd)
At ease, good Venetians. We mean you no harm.

A BUZZ of confusion rises from the captured soldiers. Hakim goes to da Vinci's side.

HAKIM
Breathe deeply. Relax.

Da Vinci tries to sit up.

HAKIM (cont'd)
No, no. Put your head down.

Hakim treats him gently as he waits for Sitaara to ride over.

SITAARA
He's not hurt, is he?

HAKIM
No. Just winded. My arrow flew true, praise be to Allah.

Da Vinci raises his shirt. Underneath it, around his neck, hangs the armor fragment he wears, skewered on the end of Hakim's arrow.

DA VINCI
(smiling and shaking his head)
What was that all about?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SITAARA

Maniakes asked for my help. I gave it. I wanted to win his trust.

DA VINCI

Where is he now?

SITAARA

He chained himself to his treasure and plunged into the sea.

DA VINCI

He must be happy. He died a rich man. Where's Will?

HAKIM

He also fell into the sea. But very slowly. Like a goose feather.

DA VINCI

(laughing)

He's fine, then. he'll turn up soon.

SITAARA

He had better. We have no time. This area is not safe for a Venetian soldier.

HAKIM

Our cities may be at war again soon.

DA VINCI

What about the new treaty?

HAKIM

There is no treaty. Only a truce, and it hangs by a thread thinner than a hair from the beard of the Prophet.

DA VINCI

That sounds pretty thin.

A SHOUT goes up. The bridge now repaired, Turkish soldiers approach, dragging Maniakes' one surviving man with them.

SITAARA

Hold him for questioning!

Hakim goes to the prisoner. By now, da Vinci feels well enough to stand. He follows.

DA VINCI

What can you tell us about Maniakes?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

The henchman shakes his head.

DA VINCI (cont'd)
Listen. You're not in Venetian custody
now. You'd better talk.

Still no response. Da Vinci gestures at Hakim.

DA VINCI (cont'd)
I can't control these Turks, you know.
They're crazy. Who knows what they'll do?

Hakim has to bend down to look the henchman in the eye. A big, nasty grin spreads across his face.

DA VINCI (cont'd)
He obviously wanted you dead. You don't
owe him anything. What can you tell us?

EXT. ESTABLISHING TOPKAPI PALACE--NIGHT

A thin crescent moon. The spires and domes of the Sultan's royal residence washed in silvery light.

EXT. THE WOMEN'S ENCLOSURE--NIGHT

Fury dangles like a spider from the palace roof. With confident kicks he rappels across the face of the building, moving from one windowed balcony to the next.

At one window he stops and listens intently. He drops onto the terrace and watches in the darkness. It is Sitaara's quarters. He stands there, tormented by rage and grief.

INT. SITAARA'S LIVING QUARTERS--NIGHT

Sitaara sits at HER DRESSING TABLE. Bathed in moonlight. COMBING her hair. As if she senses Fury, she turns to him.

OUTSIDE SITAARA'S WINDOW

Fury wants to speak with her. But two latticework doors lie between them. He almost opens them--then checks himself.

INSIDE SITAARA'S CHAMBER

she is not alone. Maniakes is there. She steps into his arms.

SITAARA
I have never been without Tasleem and
Hakim. Please. Let them come with us
tonight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MANIAKES

No, my darling. The world is filled with treachery. We trust no one. Once we are safely away with the treasure, we can send for faithful servants and--

SITAARA

Can't we wait until morning? You said you would send for me tomorrow.

Maniakes raises his hand to rebuke her.

MANIAKES

You spoke before I was finished.

He lowers his hand again, placing it on her head as a sign of her submission.

SITAARA

Forgive me. my lord. I am too excited.

MANIAKES

Of course you are. This is the happiest night of your life. But trust me, my divine one.

Sitaara takes his hand and kisses it.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

Some spy may even now be planning to stop us. We must leave tonight.

SITAARA

Where are we going?

MANIAKES

To a special place, my angel.

He begins to stroke her hair, caressing it in lazy circles with his fingers.

SITAARA

How far is it?

MANIAKES

Too many questions, my magpie.

SITAARA

Are we going to your villa?

He winds her hair around his fingers until it hurts. Sitaara winces and closes her eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MANIAKES

Don't ever question me. You have been in Venice too long. In the company of weak, soft men. Now you are with a man of iron.

SITAARA

You will teach me, my lord.

Maniakes bends Sitaara's head back and kisses her as

OUTSIDE SITAARA'S WINDOW

Fury watches.

He pulls the scarf from his pocket and leaves it tied to the railing of her balcony.

Engaging his climbing line take-up reel, he shoots up and out of sight.

INSIDE SITAARA'S CHAMBER

They are ready to leave. Sitaara goes the doors of her terrace and takes one last moment to look around.

She sees her scarf tied there, fluttering. She reacts at the sight of it. Then she shuts and secures the doors.

EXT. ROOFTOP OVER SITAARA'S BALCONY--NIGHT

Perched on the rooftop, Fury commands a view of the moonlit square. He watches as THREE MEN enter the street. Each carries A LADY'S LARGE TRAVELING TRUNK.

They stop at AN IRON GRATE embedded in the street. AN ACCOMPLICE waits there. He opens the grate from inside. Beyond lies a narrow service stairway. It leads to a cobblestone storm drain.

Maniakes emerges from the shadows, pulling a bewildered Sitaara by the upper arm. He enters the tunnel. His henchmen follow, closing the grate behind them.

INT. OTTOMAN SEWER ENTRANCE--NIGHT

The stairs end at a small torch-lit landing. A place where two sewers meet. They are massive, stone-lined tubes, half-filled with water, branching off into darkness.

THREE SKIFFS float at the landing. Moored to IRON RINGS in the wall. Maniakes waits with Sitaara as his men load her trunks onto one of the boats. Then Maniakes' men help him on board. He gets the only seat.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Sitaara has to fend awkwardly for herself. She steps uncertainly onto the skiff and tries to make a place for herself with the luggage.

One of Maniakes' men stands in the rear of their boat. He uses A LONG POLE to propel it along against the lazy current. The other three men take a separate boat. One rows. The other two hold torches, lighting the way.

MANIAKES

Tonight, my dear, it is your turn to see my palace.

SITAARA

Yes, my lord. Thank you. It has a magnificent entrance hall.

Is she mocking him? In his egotism, he decides not.

MANIAKES

This is just an Ottoman sewer, my little flower - much like the rest of the city has become. I use it only of necessity. A lady like yourself would not know of such things.

SITAARA

I know that the Sultan instituted many such public works projects after the expansion into Istanbul.

Maniakes eyes her coldly. But says nothing.

OUTSIDE THE SEWER ENTRANCE

Fury uses one of his climbing picks to force the lock on the grate and slip inside.

INSIDE THE SEWER ENTRANCE

Fury finds A BOAT. And four tunnels from which to choose. He looks around. Which way? Downstream? He drops the pole into the boat and sits. Let the current reveal.

He begins to move.

INT. BASILICA CISTERN--NIGHT

Maniakes and Sitaara continue upstream. They round a bend in the tube. And enter A REMARKABLE CHAMBER. A vast subterranean reservoir. Hundreds of STONE COLUMNS rise strangely from the water to ARCHED AND VAULTED CEILINGS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They navigate by torchlight. Two boats adrift in a flooded cathedral.

SITAARA

Is this where you live? It's beautiful.

MANIAKES

No. This is called the Basilica Cistern. The Emperor Constantine ordered it built a thousand years ago. It was the ancient water source for all of Byzantium.

Maniakes grows distant. As if remembering a dream. Or a joke.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

When your Sultan "expanded," as you say, into Constantinople, this is where the women and children fled. I was just a child myself. But I remember how we hid here. How we scurried about like little mice and waited for help from our fellow Christians, the Venetians.

(he laughs again)

For help that would never come.

Sitaara doesn't dare speak.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

And so the Turks took the city. Many died. They said it couldn't be helped. That it was war. Soon I'll show them a war. The Venetians. The Turks. Every last filthy one of them.

Seeing Sitaara's frightened confusion, he takes her hand to comfort her. Smiling, he increases his grip until she winces.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

Of course, there are exceptions.

The boatmen guide them to a landing.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

Many times have I revisited this place.

They disembark. And unload Sitaara's luggage.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

Many times I've sat alone here in the darkness and plotted my revenge.

Embedded into the landing lies A HEAVY STONE SLAB.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MANIAKES (cont'd)

One day, while I was down here, I found this.

With a HISS of dusty air, Maniakes' henchmen lift the slab and drag it aside.

Maniakes gestures with a magnanimous sweep.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

You may enter.

Sitaara looks into the opening. Beyond the slab, rough-hewn steps lead deeper.

Maniakes and his men make their way down the steps. Sitaara, less certain of the way, feels about cautiously in the darkness. Suddenly she emerges into light. A look of wonderment spreads across her face.

INT. ANCIENT GREEK BATH HOUSE--NIGHT

MANIAKES

Welcome.

They have entered an astonishing place. An ancient subterranean bath house from a time lost in antiquity. A vast space. Lit by A CONSTELLATION OF TORCHES.

EXQUISITE MOSAICS cover the walls of the chamber. The floors are polished marble. Their many levels contain inviting POOLS, each fed by CASCADING WATERFALLS.

SITAARA

Magnificent! Is it Greek?

MANIAKES

Yes. And very old. It dates to the first settlement of Byzantium. To the time of Byzas himself. Come. Here are your quarters.

INT. SITAARA'S UNDERGROUND QUARTERS--NIGHT

Maniakes leads Sitaara into a small chamber with a view of the bath house pools. His henchmen arrange her trunks inside.

MANIAKES

Important matters require that I leave you now. We will dine together presently.

SITAARA

Yes, my lord.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He gestures to AN ALMOST DECADENTLY SUMPTUOUS GOWN hanging in her chamber.

MANIAKES

I expect you to dress for the occasion.

He kisses her. Then he leaves, taking his men with him.

Alone at last, Sitaara tries to relax. She breathes deeply to calm herself. She looks like she might cry. She rakes her hand across her mouth to wipe away Maniakes' kiss. She rubs hard as if her face and mouth feel dirty. She wants to bathe.

The water beckons.

INT. GREEK BATH HOUSE--NIGHT

She removes her clothes, wraps herself in A TOWEL, and walks down marble steps. At the water's edge she lets her towel fall and slips naked into a pool. She stands under a small waterfall. She closes her eyes and lets it wash over her.

INT. OTTOMAN SEWERS--NIGHT

The current stronger now. Fury glides in the darkness. He waves his torch about, and tries to make out the occasional ARABIC INSCRIPTIONS that slip by.

He reaches a fork in the tunnel. Eddies churn, spinning his boat backwards. Two archways loom ahead. He drifts through the left one.

The diameter of the pipe becomes smaller. The water livelier. It splashes over the side of the boat. Fury struggles to keep his torch dry.

Another fork approaches fast. This time he sweeps down the right-hand side.

Paved pipe suddenly ends, Giving way to a rough, natural stone fissure in the bedrock. There's A DULL ROAR in the distance. And an uncomfortably low ceiling. Fury has to roll to avoid STALACTITES.

Picking up speed, he careens into the wall at a sharp kink in the passage. The boat SLAMS against an outcropping. Planks CRACK. He clears the bend. He's in choppy white water now.

Then he sees THE SOURCE OF THE SOUND.

At the end of the chamber lies a tremendous vertical drop. Volumes of water rush into it in a kind of indoor waterfall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Scrambling for his crossbow, he fires a line. His grappling hook connects in a spray of shrapnel, biting deep into the side of the cavern. It holds. But he is almost at the lip of the falls. The current is too strong to fight.

His fingers claw at the handcrank on the side of his crossbow. He rips it free. Then reaches into his shoulder bag. He finds A BRASS TAKEUP-REEL and locks it into place where the crank used to be.

Bracing himself with his feet against the side of the boat, he triggers the reel, and begins to take up line. The gears of the coiled spring "motor" WHINE loudly. But they don't fail. He begins to make headway against the powerful flow. The boat bucks violently as it rides the onrushing surf. Slowly, inexorably, Fury pulls the boat toward safety.

He almost makes it.

SNAP! The wall crumbles and breaks. His hook tears free.

The line suddenly slack, Fury tumbles to the rear of the boat. In a WHOOSH of water, he is swept out of sight over the lip of the falls.

INT. ANCIENT GREEK BATH HOUSE--NIGHT

AN ORNATE PIECE OF GRILLWORK EXPLODES outward.

Fury blows through the hole on a plume of WATER and BROKEN TIMBER. He arcs through the air, boat and all, and SPLASHES down in deep water.

Right near Sitaara.

She turns at the sound of the splash, and breaks into a bright smile. She's glad to see him, but modesty stops her from swimming to him.

Fury spots her. He approaches. Aware of her nakedness, she turns away as if to run.

FURY
Not so fast, you.

He swims hard to reach her. He catches her foot, upending her in the water. She rises sputtering and laughing.

SITAARA
What are you doing?

FURY
Just tell me one thing: why?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SITAARA
What do you mean?

FURY
You set us up. You killed Leonardo.

SITAARA
I didn't--I mean--I never--

FURY
He threatened you. He must have. Why else
would--He must have forced you to--

Her kiss stops him. She takes his head in her hands and pulls
him to her.

She kisses him. And he kisses her back.

SITAARA
William. Leonardo's not dead.

FURY
I saw the arrow--

SITAARA
That was a trick. To win the trust of
Maniakes.

FURY
What do you mean?

SITAARA
Hakim is our greatest archer. He aimed
for the necklace on purpose.

She tries to pull Fury across the pool.

SITAARA (cont'd)
Leonardo is alive and well. And he says
he has some "stuff" for you to field-
test.

Fury's convinced. With a LAUGH, he chases off after her.

She sweeps up her towel and covers herself with it on her way
out of the water.

INT. SITAARA'S UNDERGROUND QUARTERS--NIGHT

Sitaara sweeps into the bed-chamber. A soaked Fury follows.
He spots her traveling trunks. He kneels at one of them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FURY

This it?

SITAARA

These two. Yes.

He POPS the latches. Throws back the lid. SITAARA'S ROBES lie neatly folded there. He pulls them aside. A big smile spreads across his face. Underneath -- NEW TOYS.

He pulls out A PARCHMENT SCROLL. Slips off THE SILK RIBBON. Unfurls it. A sepia ink "blueprint" shows a diagram of A DEVICE--like two maces hinged together--or a two-legged tripod. Holding the diagram in one hand, he pulls out the actual device with the other. Hits a switch. It comes to life. First one side springs out a stiletto blade from its tip. Then a half-second later it retracts, and one pops out at the end of the other leg. The two sides alternate in regular rhythm, like a metronome. TICK--TICK--TICK--TICK. Fury shuts it off.

He nods approvingly and throws it into his damp leather bag. Then he adds ANOTHER FOUR OR FIVE just like it. He seems to know from the sepia blueprints what to do with them.

He rummages around for more items, picking and choosing among THE STRANGE DEVICES. Tossing them in his bag.

He's having fun.

Sitaara dries herself. Then she drops A THIN SILK SHIFT over her head, smooths it over her body, and starts to brush her hair.

She catches Fury smiling at her in the mirror. He has stopped what he is doing to admire her. She smiles back. Then turns to him.

They embrace.

SITAARA (cont'd)

You're wet!

She strips off his shirt and begins to dry his hair and chest with A TOWEL. They share a moment. Then he takes the towel and finishes drying himself.

FURY

I'm going to look for the treasure. What do you know about the layout of this place?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Sitaara returns to her own dressing. As she speaks she wraps herself in LAYERS OF GOLD AND SILK CLOTH.

SITAARA

Very little, I'm afraid.

She holds up one last garment. A STIFF, HEAVY BODICE - jewel encrusted - with elaborate clasps in back.

There is A KNOCK at the door. They freeze.

SERVANT (O. S.)

The Emperor awaits you, my lady.

Fury silently mouths "The Emperor?"

SITAARA

(whispered to Fury)

Help me with this.

(loudly)

A moment please. Tell "The Emperor" that I will come presently.

She turns her back to Fury. He closes the clasps of her gown.

A SECOND KNOCK.

SERVANT (O. S.)

You must come now, my lady. The Emperor awaits you in the Imperial Dining Hall.

SITAARA

(to Fury)

What shall we do?

FURY

Go with him. Find out what you can. I'll have a look around.

Excited, and a a little fearful, she nods.

Now Fury gets his first good look at her in full regalia.

She looks like a radiant Bird of Paradise. Like a metallic woman in a Gustav Klimt painting.

Fury is dressed too. Armed and dangerous. The familiar bag hanging at his side. He looks ready for a fight.

A last quick kiss, and Fury hides behind one of the THE LARGE DOUBLE DOORS as they begin to swing open.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Maniakes' servant looks impatient. Sitaara straightens. She pulls herself to her full height.

SITAARA

I am ready. Lead me to my lord, The Emperor.

EXT. ESTABLISHING TOPKAPI PALACE--NIGHT

The balcony outside Sitaara's quarters.

INSIDE THE SULTAN'S PALACE

Hakim and da Vinci walk briskly down a corridor.

HAKIM

My lady's quarters are here.

DA VINCI

Pretty low security. What'd she do, dismiss the guards?

Hakim breaks into a run.

HAKIM

This was not the plan. Something is wrong.

He throws his full weight against the heavy Palace doors.

INSIDE SITAARA'S CHAMBER

The doors fly open, framing a puzzled da Vinci and an especially wary Hakim.

HAKIM

(scanning the room)
Maniakes must have taken her early.

He throws open the balcony doors.

Tied to the rail, Sitaara's keepsake head scarf flutters in the moonlight. Hakim touches it.

DA VINCI

Hakim, the prisoner at the ransom drop said Maniakes lived somewhere underground. Where do you think he meant?

HAKIM

The ocean cliffs outside the city once held the Sultan's silver mines.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAKIM (cont'd)

I thought perhaps he might be there. We tried to search them. They were flooded.

DA VINCI

Can you think of anyplace else? An abandoned cellar? How about the sewers?

HAKIM

Not possible. The Sultan's builders have surveyed every building and every sewer. If Maniakes lives underground, he lives very deep. With the Devil himself.

DA VINCI

(to himself)

Very deep. Very deep.

Da Vinci pauses in thought. He has an inspiration.

DA VINCI (cont'd)

Like into the bedrock? Like an Artesian well?

HAKIM

We have such a well! Prodigiously deep, but dry. The Sultan commanded it be built, but it never bore water. It was abandoned many years ago.

DA VINCI

Take me there.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN HALLWAYS--NIGHT

Fury begins to explore. Hallways lead away from the bath house. He chooses one and follows it to an intersection.

FOOTSTEPS startle him: TWO GUARDS on patrol. He ducks into an alcove until they pass.

He decides to follow the patrol. He tails them as they navigate the passages.

They arrive at A HEAVY DOOR at a place where two hallways meet in a "T" shape. They speak briefly with TWO MORE GUARDS already stationed there. They pull on THE DOOR-HANDLE to make sure it's locked. Then they add themselves to the complement, raising it to four.

That door must be important.

Fury reaches into his shoulder bag and produces AN INNOCENT-LOOKING LITTLE DISK. He tosses it in an arc through the air. It hits the ground with a PLINK, and rolls toward the men.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The sound draws their attention. They watch the disk as it rolls along, then wobbles to rest like a coin just a few feet away from them.

It just sits there.

One of the men moves to pick it up. Before he can, the disk POPS into the air. It gets about four feet up, then it spins furiously, ejecting LETHAL SHRAPNEL from holes in its side.

The corridor fills with flying metal pieces. What doesn't hit them directly, hits them on the ricochet. In an instant, everyone is dead.

Fury goes to the door and examines the lock. He needs a key. He searches the bodies.

INT. IMPERIAL DINING HALL OF MANIAKES--NIGHT

Maniakes sits on AN OPULENT THRONE. He is heavy with gold and jewels, and he wears the coronation robes of Constantine.

Before him stretches A BANQUET TABLE. TWO GUARDS flank the door. SERVANTS attend to the FOOD.

Sitaara enters.

MANIAKES

Ah. Behold the future Empress of the World. Come. Join me. We have much to celebrate.

SITAARA

What do we celebrate, my lord?

He indicates that she should sit on A SIMPLE WOODEN CHAIR.

MANIAKES

My revenge, of course. And my ultimate victory. I have assembled a great invasion force. We stand tonight upon the brink of war. Soon the entire world--

The banquet hall doors CRASH open. A GUARD enters. He carries a section of Fury's boat.

GUARD

Emperor! There is an intruder! We found this under the waterfalls.

Maniakes looks at Sitaara. Her eyes flash before she can suppress the reaction.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MANIAKES
Friend of yours?

SITAARA
No, my Emperor, I--

He raises A JEWEL-GAUNTLETED hand as if to strike her.

MANIAKES
Shut up!
(to guard)
It's probably Fury! Find him! Sound the
alarm! Make sure my army is safe!

One of the door guards begins to RING a heavy IRON BELL. The alarm is taken up by others. A CLANGING fills the air.

MANIAKES (cont'd)
(gripping Sitaara)
We'll soon see if you're a lying bitch.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN HALLWAY--NIGHT

Fury finds KEYS on one of the bodies. The ALARM BELLS startle him. He begins quickly but calmly testing each key in the lock of the heavy door. So far, none fits.

He assesses his situation. Because of the "T" shaped halls, he has three directions to defend.

He tries the last of the keys. No good. He tosses the ring down and pulls his folded crossbow from his shoulder bag. Using the heavy butt end, he HAMMERS on the lock.

A group of SIX MEN, all armed with crossbows, appears at the end of the central hallway. Their CAPTAIN spots Fury.

CAPTAIN
You're trapped! Stay where you are!

They raise their crossbows. The weapons CLATTER ominously. They have the drop on him.

Fury raises his own crossbow. The top half swings out from underneath, LOCKING into place. The bow arms blossom. The pulleys and cams engage. The ribbon of bolts spills out to the side.

CAPTAIN (cont'd)
Don't be a fool. We're six. You're one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Turning the handcrank, Fury cuts loose. A SPRAY OF ARROWS ricochets down the hall, glancing off floor, walls and ceiling.

MORE MEN attack from the right. Then the left. He whirls to defend. Takes out as many as he can. They outnumber him. But they get only one shot each. He gets one hundred.

Then his crossbow empties.

SECOND CAPTAIN

He's out of arrows! Shoot him!

Both sides shoot at Fury. He ducks into the central hallway. They catch themselves in their own crossfire.

SWORDSMEN appear in the central hall.

Fury reaches into his bag. He pulls out one of the hinged pairs of maces and places it on the ground, hinged end upward. TCHOK! A spike lances out of the mace on the left and bites into the stone floor. A coiled spring activates in the hinge, causing the mace on the right to lift up and around from behind. It swings overhead, then slams into the ground. Now this one anchors itself with its own retractable spike, and it's the other side's turn to disengage and swing.

The process repeats. The whole thing lurches along, wildly swinging as it goes. It has a weird, intermittent gait: flip--flip--flip--flip as it walks down the hallway like a lethal "slinky."

Fury sets the rest in motion. They walk down the central corridor en masse, toward the astonished swordsmen.

Fury's right and left flanks still remain a problem.

He finds something new in his bag: A COMPACT MAGAZINE OF RAZOR-EDGED IRON RINGS. He fits it to his crossbow. Then pulls the handcrank free. Replaces it with a fully charged take-up reel.

Fury fires down the right-hand alley. SHHHHLING! The rings spin fast enough to hover, but they cruise forward so gently they seem almost friendly. With an EERIE HUM they glide toward Maniakes' men. One ring, pushed to the side on an imperceptible whisper of air, lightly touches the wall of the narrow passage. SNAP! Like "english" on a billiard ball, its spin sends it careening off into its neighbors. The chain reaction turns the entire cloud into a wicked, razor-sharp swarm, cutting into the horrified men.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

In the central corridor, the swordsmen retreat before the advancing "walkers." ONE MAN tries to slip by. He misjudges their force and takes a stunning blow to the midriff. While Fury reloads his crossbow with a roll of arrows, ANOTHER MAN succeeds in getting through. He approaches Fury from behind.

The first walker has now reached the end of the central corridor. But it doesn't stop there. On what should have been its last flip, it engages the end wall and starts to climb.

MEN attack from the left-hand side. But Fury is reloaded. He fires down the narrow shaft, holding them back.

The elusive swordsman continues to close in on Fury. He raises his blade. Fury senses him. He turns to defend. But ducks, instead. The walker is on the ceiling now, and on its way back. It takes out the swordsman from behind.

Maniakes appears.

MANIAKES

Enough! That is enough!

He pulls Sitaara along as he comes.

FURY

Maniakes, you twisted son of--

MANIAKES

Temper, temper, "Signor" Fury. Have you come for the treasure?

(tosses keys to Fury)

Go ahead. Open it.

These are the keys Fury was looking for. He studies Maniakes' face a moment. Then he unlocks the door and pushes it open.

INT. DRY ARTESIAN WELL--NIGHT

On the other side of the door, Fury finds himself in an unusual space: he's at the bottom of a giant cylindrical shaft.

It's paved in stone, and it goes very high. A hundred feet above, TWO MASSIVE COUNTERWEIGHTED DOORS enclose the ceiling. AN ODD WEB of convoluted MESHWORK PIPES covers the walls.

At the bottom, A CURTAIN OF CANVAS surrounds him, hiding the last ten feet of the shaft from view.

Maniakes' men pile in after him, weapons drawn. They hold Fury. They take his crossbow and shoulder bag.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MANIAKES

Quite a little hole these Turkish dogs
have dug. Don't you think?

FURY

Must reach all the way to street level.
Looks like a well.

MANIAKES

Very good, Signor Fury. I'm impressed.
(to Sitaara)
An athlete and a scholar. A true product
of The Renaissance.

FURY

Let her go, Maniakés. This is between you
and me.

MANIAKES

I think I'd rather keep her. Besides,
it's not safe anywhere but here. There's
a war on, you know. It starts now.
(to henchman)
Open the doors.

A HENCHMAN throws a lever.

High above, the doors begin to GRIND open. Driven apart as
counterweights lower by ropes into the room. Beyond the
doors, stars twinkle in a dark blue pre-dawn sky.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

Introductions are in order. How negligent
of me. May I present my army.

As his henchman draws a cord, the canvas curtain falls.
Behind it lies a partition of glass blocks. Beyond that lies
Maniakés' invasion force: A VAST SYSTEM OF CAGES surrounds
them on all sides, seething with RATS.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

An army of Plague-infested rats.

SITAARA

What?

Sitaara looks up, following with her eyes the route up the
tubes from the rat cages. She GASPS. Maniakés laughs. His
henchman circle the room, pulling the cords that open the
various cages to the network of tubes above.

Fury pulls against his captors.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FURY
Are you insane?

MANIAKES
Don't you like them? They're such fierce
little soldiers.

The rats show only minor interest in the newly-opened tubes.
Fury stalls for time.

FURY
I see even a rat won't follow you.

MANIAKES
They will. They just need a little
"encouragement."

A henchman touches A BURNING TORCH to A METAL TROUGH which
encircles the room under the cages. A ring of fire ignites.

The fire makes the rats respond. They climb the tracks to the
city above, but they have a long way to go, and their
progress is slow.

FURY
Maniakes--

MANIAKES
Emperor Maniakes.

FURY
Don't do this. If they have the Plague,
they'll infect the entire city.

SITAARA
Emperor Maniakes. What you do makes no
sense. That is Constantinople above us.
It's your city. You'll only poison the
very place you love.

MANIAKES
Poison the city? Never. I only poison the
people. The city will be quite untouched,
I assure you.

FURY
What's the difference? You'll never be
able to live there again.

MANIAKES
On the contrary. Plagues pass. They
always have. In a year or two I'll
return.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MANIAKES (cont'd)

And when I do, I'll rule a new empire. In the meantime, I'll simply wait down here.

FURY

"In the meantime," you could kill half of Europe. Maybe more. This is not just about Istanbul. You start the Plague here, it'll spread everywhere. You can't turn it off. You can't contain it.

MANIAKES

The casualties of war. So sad.

Rats round bends in tubes, climbing higher.

Maniakes amuses himself by rifling through the contents of Fury's bag.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

In The Middle Ages we fought with honest, simple steel. You Illuminati agents think you're so clever. You and all your little toys from the great Leonardo da Vinci.

Fury reacts to the breach in security.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

Oh, is that secret information? Am I not supposed to know that?

He takes out one of Fury's "tangle balls," like the one he used in the Alps. Fury reacts slightly at the sight of it. Wasn't he supposed to turn those in? Maniakes notices Fury's wariness. He smiles.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

A little ball. I'm sure it's fun to play with. I wonder what it does.

He brandishes it at Sitaara. Fury says nothing.

He swings the ball towards Fury now. Studies his face.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

Let's play a little game of...catch?

He gestures as if to throw it.

Now Fury reacts.

WHACK! A snap-kick sends the ball high into the air. It gets up about thirty feet. Then EXPLODES. Sending coils of wire in all directions. Some entangle themselves in the rat tracks. Others shoot downward, where they hang within Fury's reach.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Fury jumps. He catches the wires and hangs with all his weight.

A whole section of track rips free and comes CLATTERING down, rats and all. It SHATTERS the glass partition. Cages overturn. The flaming trough spills, igniting the canvas curtain.

The room is crawling with rats. Fire spreads.

Sitaara pulls loose from Maniakes and runs from the room. His men turn to chase.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

Leave her! She can't get far! Get Fury!

Kill him!

(to Fury)

See how she runs. She deserts us both!

TWO MEN rush Fury from opposite sides. With a sweep he deflects one, using his momentum to send him into the other.

Fury's bag lies on the floor in the debris. He lunges for it.

Maniakes kicks it away. He swings at Fury with his jeweled scepter.

Fury rolls. He saves his head, but the blow catches his shoulder. He grits his teeth in pain. Then regains his feet and goes for the bag again.

Maniakes intercepts. He connects with a solid kick to Fury's stomach. The shoulder wound dulls Fury's reflexes.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

(to Fury)

You are soft, Renaissance Man.

Fire rages. Rats scurry. Maniakes' men run in fear.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

(to fleeing men)

Come back! I command you!

Fury uses the time to regain his strength.

MANIAKES (cont'd)

A fortune in gold to any man who stays!

Maniakes kicks. Fury catches his leg. Maniakes hits the floor. The impact winds him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

Now its Fury's turn. He begins to pound the mad Byzantine. Maniakes' head snaps to the side as Fury lands punch after punch. He beats on Maniakes with a savagery he has never felt before. A trickle of blood escapes Maniakes' lips.

FURY

So much for the Man of Iron.

Then, fist poised, Fury just stops. Maniakes lies there, doing nothing. His lack of resistance bothers Fury. Maniakes lies still, but he's not dead. His eyes are wide open.

MANIAKES

Where is your Turkish sweetheart? Have you forgiven her for murdering your little priest friend?

Fury grabs him by his cloak and SLAMS him into the ground.

FURY

You the one who killed him!

MANIAKES

As you say. It doesn't matter now. What would you like to know? Yes. I poisoned him.

Whole swarms of rats - the ones that had been above the collapsed section of pipes - are now approaching the top of the chamber.

Fury doesn't notice. But Maniakes does. He keeps talking to distract Fury from their progress.

FURY

Why?

MANIAKES

I am a man of great ambitions. I have expenses. My men are well-paid. Your friend Benedici interfered with my fund-raising activities. What else would you like to know?

FURY

You talk too much.

Maniakes can't resist stealing a glance up past Fury - over his head. Fury turns. The rats that were still in the system are now almost at the top of the chamber.

MANIAKES

Oh. Too late, Signor Fury.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

Fury scrambles to his feet.

He finds his crossbow and bag, jerks the spent brass disk loose and slaps on A FRESH ONE. He adds A NEW ROLL OF ARROWS and lets them unfurl.

The fire rages. Fury uses it to light the end of his weapon.

Then he cuts loose.

Shooting upward, he sprays the walls of the chamber with FLAMING ARROWS. The coiled spring disk provides more power than his usual handcrank. The crossbow SHUDDERS in his grip. WOODEN CONNECTING CLIPS eject out the back and bounce on the floor. Fiery bolts race skyward. They lodge in the tubes near the top of the well, forming a wall of fire above the rats.

Sitaara throws open the doors to the chamber.

SITAARA

William!

FURY

Sitaara! Why did you come back?

She struggles in the heavy gown, dragging one of her trunks.

FURY (cont'd)

Leave your luggage! Leave it! Just leave it!

SITAARA

We need this!

FURY

No! Get out! Keep the doors shut!

SITAARA

Then come with me!

FURY

I can't! I have to stop the rats!

Fury raises his flaming crossbow. He fires another volley of arrows upward, aiming at the DOOR COUNTERWEIGHT MECHANISM.

Its rope begins to burn.

Maniakes throws himself at Fury. The two roll and tumble.

As they fight, Sitaara pulls the trunk into the middle of the room, and pops the lid. Inside - more da Vinci devices.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

She pulls out DISASSEMBLED PARTS. Rats crawl on her. She brushes them off in disgust. Then she pulls off some of her awkward clothing.

Maniakes fights wildly. His hands still protected by jeweled gauntlets, he pulls A SECTION OF HOT METAL from the fire and threatens Fury with it.

Sitaara finds A SCROLL among the machine parts. A diagram and assembly instructions. Squinting in the dim firelight, she holds the "blueprint" in one hand and rummages for parts with the other, comparing the diagram to the real thing.

The heavy dress doesn't make things any easier. She tears the rest of it loose. She's down to her silk shift.

High above, the rope snaps. The counterweight begins to fall along the chamber wall. Unstoppable, it SMASHES through the tubework, bringing a whole new section down.

FURY (cont'd)

There's no way out. It ends here.

MANIAKES

Never.

Slowly the upper doors begin to close.

SITAARA

Help me with this!

She tips the diagram toward fire in order to see better. She turns it one way. Then another. She can't seem to make sense of it. Fury tries to help, but Maniakes keeps swinging his hot metal spike.

FURY

(while defending himself)

Da Vinci writes backwards! For security.

Look through it! Hold it up to the light!

She flips the diagram over. Now it makes sense.

SITAARA

I can read it now! Ohh!

WHOOSH! Too close to the flames, it ignites! She blows on it. No good. She waves it about. Only makes it worse. Suddenly a familiar voice calls down from overhead.

VOICE (O. S.)

Put the base on level ground!

AT THE TOP OF THE WELL

it's da Vinci! He's at the mouth of the well, but the doors are still closing.

DA VINCI

Now fit the brass axle down! Yes! It locks! Turn it!

Hakim is there too, in the rising dawn.

He pulls with all his strength on one of the doors, but he has no place to stand.

AT THE BOTTOM OF THE WELL

Sitaara continues.

DA VINCI (O. S.)

Counterclockwise. No, Counter-clockwise! Will! We can't jam the doors! You'll have to hurry!

Fury understands. He tries to reason with Maniakes.

FURY

Stop it! We still have a chance! Put that down!

MANIAKES

I've come too far to stop now.

Maniakes LAUGHS, raising his searing metal spike. He swings left. Fury dips right. Maniakes swings right, completing the figure-8. Fury ducks left. Then goes in close. WHAM! An elbow to the face. Maniakes drops his weapon.

DA VINCI

(to Sitaara)

Now pull the cord! Pull it!

She does.

FLUMP!

Wooden arms unfold. Spirals of canvas SNAP into place. It's a helicopter!

Fury tries to drag Maniakes to it.

FURY

You can't stay here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MANIAKES

I'll take my chances.

DA VINCI

Leave him, Will! Too much weight!

Fury tears loose some of Maniakes' heavy jeweled armor.

MANIAKES

No! Let me go! I'll give you half my treasure!

FURY

I'm not for sale.

DA VINCI

You don't have the lift! You'll never make it!

The doors continue to close.

Sitaara steps onto the helicopter. She holds on tight.

Fury drags Maniakes on board. He pulls A TAKE-UP REEL from his bag. And fits it to THE PROPELLER MECHANISM. He triggers it. The blades spin.

Maniakes looks at the treasure. It lies scattered on the ground, crawling with rats. He can't stand it.

MANIAKES

My treasure!

Maniakes leaps off.

Insane with greed and grief, he puts on his cloak and crown. Rats cling to him. He turns to Fury with a triumphant smile.

FURY

Drop it! Come back!

MANIAKES

What Venetian dog dares to bark at Emperor Constantine?

The blades hit full speed. The copter rushes skyward.

Maniakes stands in a sea of fire and rats. He SCREAMS.

Fury holds Sitaara tightly as they rocket toward the closing doors. The gap is narrow. They might not make it. They hit the opening with a CRASH. The propeller EXPLODES on impact-- too wide to fit. Only momentum carries them through.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The doors SLAM shut, clipping off the last of Maniakes' PITIFUL CRIES.

AT THE TOP OF THE WELL

The splintered helicopter barely breaks their fall.

Fury and Sitaara tumble to the ground.

Hakim and da Vinci rush to help. No need. They find the couple entangled in each other's arms.

Dawn is rising over the horizon. Fury and Sitaara kiss.

EXT. A MEDITERRANEAN HARBOR--DAY

A blue sky. White sand. TWO SHIPS at anchor. A VENETIAN FLAG on one. The other flies OTTOMAN COLORS.

ON THE BEACH

Two THRONES. One for THE SULTAN. The other for The Doge.

Two LINES OF PEOPLE face each other across twenty feet of sand. Some on HORSEBACK. Others on foot. OTTOMANS. VENETIANS. BANNERS. FLAGS.

In the Venetian line stands William Fury in elegant court dress - HIGH MILITARY COLLAR, HALF CAPE, AND PLUMED HELMET. Da Vinci's at his side.

In the Sultan's entourage sits Sitaara in REGAL GOWN and HALF VEIL. Hakim stands near her in A HIGH TURBAN with a feathered cockade, long curly SLIPPERS, billowing PANTALOONS, and AN EMBROIDERED VEST.

Virgilio stands with The Doge. He reads from A SCROLL. The Sultan nods benevolently as Virgilio's words are translated for him into Turkish.

VIRGILIO

Furthermore, we agree that a suitable trade route--

Fury catches Sitaara's eye. She smiles.

VIRGILIO (cont'd)

--be established through the Ottoman Empire--

A quick "Let's go" nod tells her to join him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIRGILIO (cont'd)
 --in exchange for a tribute, the amount
 of which shall be--

As the politicians drone on, Fury and Sitaara slip out of their respective lines. They come together by A TEMPORARY CORRAL full of CEREMONIAL HORSES.

FURY
 I'm leaving. This was my last case.

SITAARA
 But why? I'm sure the Doge has forgiven you for the loss of his treasure. You saved millions of lives. He must have given you a lordship!

FURY
 Oh yeah. Lord Fury. That's me.
 (laughs)
 No, the whole case is a State secret. It's all classified. They can't admit to any part of it.

SITAARA
 None of it? How can that be? What about Leonardo's inventions?

FURY
 As far as the public is concerned, he's an artist. That's his arrangement. It's how he gets funded. Marble isn't cheap.

SITAARA
 But how will they explain the missing relics to the people?

FURY
 Copies are on display right now.

SITAARA
 But the Sultan and the Doge know the truth. They know how we worked together. Perhaps this treaty--

FURY
 Truth isn't what it used to be. It's all politics now. That's why I'm leaving.

VIRGILIO (O. S.)
 We turn now to the articles concerning the possession of Cyprus and of Crete, and of the islands to the east.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SITAARA

That's all the more reason why you should stay. The right path is not always clear. Perhaps it never was. But the Doge and the Sultan may build something new and fine today.

FURY

The "greedy Venetians?"

SITAARA

Yes, and the "infidel Turks." After all, they did do the right thing, even if they can't talk about it. I remember Father Benedici once counseled, watch what they do, not what they say.

Again the negotiations intrude. Now both sides are bickering.

SULTAN'S SPOKESMAN

It is His Excellency's position that the--

SULTAN

Enough! We've given you Otranto! That is more than--

THE DOGE

Cyprus is ours by right. I will have no more discussion on the matter.

THE SULTAN

You test the patience of this committee, Doge of Venice. I will have satisfaction. Either here, or on the battlefield--

The argument continues in background. Audio wallpaper.

FURY

There they go again.

SITAARA

You see? They do need our help. We can make a difference here.

Fury looks into Sitaara's eyes. She's right. He knows it.

They kiss.

FURY

Okay. We stay.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

The politicians continue to fight in the background. Someone's got to try and smooth things out. Fury turns to go back to the assembly.

She stops him.

SITAARA

I didn't mean they needed us this minute.

FURY

No. Not right now.

He drops his helmet and cape and helps her mount.

They turn their horses and break into a gallop toward the beach. Right through the center of the negotiations. Between the two thrones.

The two fighting leaders stop in mid-sentence and watch Fury and Sitaara. Then they look at each other.

The horses rear. Fury and Sitaara wheel about and ride in the foaming surf. Around the headlands of the beach. Into what might be a new beginning for everyone. And into their own glorious futures.

FADE OUT: