

"THE LION AND THE FOX"
(Cesare Borgia and Niccolo Machiavelli;
a play in four scenes)

written by

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Draft: February 15, 2014

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2315 Durant Ave.
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CAST

NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI: Secretary to the Ten of Florence, a diplomat. Born in Florence.

CESARE BORGIA: duke of the Romana, Captain-General of the Holy See. Born in Valencia, Spain.

SETTING

The play takes place in four scenes, in four different locations in central Italy: Urbino, Imola, Sinigallia and Rome, from June 1502 to the end of summer in 1503.

"THE LION AND THE FOX"

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URBINO

1

(June 25, 1502.

A dark, shadowy room in the
palazzo ducale in Urbino, a
little after mid-night.

NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI opens the
door to the room, and enters,
cautiously.

Someone bolts the door lock from
the outside.

Nervously, MACHIAVELLI waits. He
whistles a bit.

A voice from the shadows
addresses him.)

CESARE

Who are you?

MACHIAVELLI
(startled)

Hello?

(no reply)

Your Excellency?

(no reply)

Niccolo Machiavelli. Secretary to the Signory of Florence.

CESARE

Secretary?

MACHIAVELLI

At your service.

CESARE

This is an insult.

(beat)

Your Signory sends me a secretary? I need someone who can
speak with authority.

*
*

MACHIAVELLI

I assure you, I will convey your wishes, and your words,
swiftly and precisely to my good lords.

CESARE
(emerging from the shadows)
Machiavelli?

(Niccolo nods.)

CESARE (CONT'D)
I've never even heard the name.

MACHIAVELLI
We are an old Florentine family. Descendants of the Castellani.

(beat)
My father was a good friend of Chancellor Bartolomeo Scala?
(beat)
From the days of Lorenzo the Magnificent.

CESARE
Ah.

MACHIAVELLI
Chancellor Scala used to say no one could quote Plato or Cicero more eloquently than my father.

CESARE
If I wanted a messenger, I would have sent for one. I need someone I can speak with plainly. Directly. Someone I can deal with, man to man.

MACHIAVELLI
I am all ears.

CESARE
This Signory of yours. I do not like them. I cannot trust them. Who is in charge in Florence?

MACHIAVELLI
In charge?

CESARE
You heard me.

MACHIAVELLI
Well, Florence is a republic, your Excellency.

CESARE
You mean no one is in charge.

MACHIAVELLI
No, the Great Council governs Florence.

CESARE
The Great Council. Ah. And who is on this council?

MACHIAVELLI

Well, the Council includes a wide spectrum of our citizens--

CESARE

But who are they?

MACHIAVELLI

Well, there are some thirty-five hundred on the council altogether--

CESARE

Thirty-five hundred?

MACHIAVELLI

Though only one third of them actually serve at any given time.

CESARE

What?

MACHIAVELLI

There's a term of office--from two to six months.

CESARE

Two to six months--who can accomplish anything in politics in two to six months?

MACHIAVELLI

The terms prevent any one individual from gaining an excessive degree of influence.

CESARE

They prevent anything from getting done.

MACHIAVELLI

Not entirely.

CESARE

How does one get a seat on this Great Council of yours?

MACHIAVELLI

He is selected, by lot.

CESARE

By lot? You mean, by luck? What--you draw names out of a hat?

MACHIAVELLI

Something like that.

CESARE

Ha! So anyone can find himself on the Great Council of Florence--a beggar, a thief, a fool, or a prince.

MACHIAVELLI

Well, there are periodic general scrutinies conducted in order to determine individual eligibility.

CESARE

Ah. I see. And who determines that?

MACHIAVELLI

The Selection Committee.

CESARE

And who are they?

MACHIAVELLI

They are appointed by the One Hundred.

CESARE

The One Hundred?

MACHIAVELLI

One of the two legislative councils.

CESARE

One of two--and the other?

MACHIAVELLI

The Seventy.

CESARE

This is very confusing. How does such a government conduct business with other states?

MACHIAVELLI

All diplomatic matters are administered by the Ten.

CESARE

Ah, the Ten. Now we are getting somewhere. These are the men who undertake matters of war and defense, the safety and security of your state, is that correct?

MACHIAVELLI

Principally. Yes.

CESARE

And are their names drawn out of a hat, as well?

MACHIAVELLI

The members of the Ten rotate every six months.

CESARE

Of course they do. So the men who made me promises last year at Campi are no longer in power. And the men I deal with today, will be gone in six months time. That is no way to run a state.

(MORE)

(beat)
And what about you? When is your six months up?

MACHIAVELLI
I'm in the Chancery. My position is a permanent appointment.

(beat)
CESARE
Ah.

MACHIAVELLI
How may I be of service to you?

CESARE
Your Signory's days are numbered, Secretary. You must know this. This republic of yours cannot last. It is a foolish conceit.

MACHIAVELLI
Have you read Plato, your Excellency?

CESARE
Plato's *Republic* is a shadow flickering on the walls of a cave. I have no time for philosophical illusions. I am concerned with real men and the states they rule.

MACHIAVELLI
The government of my state is modeled on the Republic of Rome. The epitome of governmental organization in the ancient world.

CESARE
Rome only became truly great under Caesar.

MACHIAVELLI
I suppose that depends on your view of greatness.

(beat)
CESARE
Where's my money? *

MACHIAVELLI
Money? What money? *

CESARE
I warn you. Do not play the fool with me. Do not prevaricate. No one lies to me, and lives to tell about it.

MACHIAVELLI
What money are you referring to?

CESARE

Your masters promised me thirty-six thousand in gold, and a contract of three hundred men for three years. That was a year ago in May. That money. Where is it? And where are my men?

MACHIAVELLI

Ah, yes, you are referring to the discussions at Campi last year--

CESARE

The Treaty of Campi. A signed treaty that your masters put their names to--whoever they are.

MACHIAVELLI

Yes, a signed treaty in which your Excellency promised that no one in your pay would offend Florence.

CESARE

What are you talking about?

MACHIAVELLI

Your man, Vitelli, is on a rampage in the Chiana Valley. *

CESARE

Vitelli? In the Chiana Valley? What's this? *

MACHIAVELLI

Now who is prevaricating? Your Excellency.

CESARE

I don't know what you're talking about.

MACHIAVELLI

On June seventh, your captain, Vitellozzo Vitelli rode into Arezzo with three thousand men under his command. *

CESARE

This is news to me.

MACHIAVELLI

Clearly his intention is to fuel rebellion in the Chiana Valley. * *

CESARE

Those people despise Florentine rule. You cannot blame their rebellion on Vitelli--

MACHIAVELLI

He has since been joined by Piero de Medici.

CESARE

Really? Well, that must worry you. The people of Arezzo and the entire Chiana Valley long for the return of the Medici. *

(MORE)

Florence longs for them, too. Admit it. Your people want a real man for a leader, not a great college of clucking chickens, squawking and crowing like fools day in and day out.

MACHIAVELLI

Vitelli's troops are on a rampage, ransacking, burning, committing unspeakable acts of carnage and depravity, and calling for the destruction of Florence. Your man. With Piero de Medici at his side. A clear violation of the Treaty of Campi.

CESARE

I knew nothing of this.

MACHIAVELLI

Vitelli is your captain of artillery, is he not?

CESARE

I said I knew nothing of this! Vitelli despises Florence, for good reason; your Signory had his brother's head cut off.

MACHIAVELLI

For treason, yes--

CESARE

Because they didn't want to pay him the money they owed!

MACHIAVELLI

We contracted the Vitelli brothers to subjugate Pisa.

CESARE

Which they were in the process of doing when you arrested Paolo and executed him.

MACHIAVELLI

He was prolonging the war.

CESARE

He was winning the war.

MACHIAVELLI

No. Not so. I was there when they breached the walls of the Stampace bastion.

CESARE

You were there?

MACHIAVELLI

Yes. I saw the events with my own two eyes.

CESARE

Really. Did you have a hand in the fighting then?

MACHIAVELLI

I was there...in a diplomatic capacity.

CESARE

Of course. Secretary.

MACHIAVELLI

Vitellozzo's artillery opened a breach in the Pisan wall wide enough to drive the hosts of the Apocalypse through.

CESARE

Yes, he has a gift with artillery, doesn't he?

MACHIAVELLI

And then his brother ordered a retreat.

CESARE

That's not how I heard it.

MACHIAVELLI

With victory at hand, Paolo Vitelli ordered his men to retreat. After fifteen years of war, finally, we had it in our grasp, the way in, finally a breach in their walls. The Pisans were in complete disarray. Our infantry surged forward, you could see it, they had the smell of victory in their noses, on they went. Yet Paolo ordered retreat. Stood there in the breach, himself, driving his men back, threatening them with his own sword even. Retreat. Retreat. Retreat. And the opportunity was lost. Why?

CESARE

They'd have sacked the city in that state. A clear violation of your contract with Vitelli. On the contrary, Paolo showed great wisdom and restraint.

MACHIAVELLI

He deliberately prevented our victory.

CESARE

That's not the way Vitellozzo tells it.

MACHIAVELLI

In order to extend his contract.

CESARE

Well, possibly. That's the chance you take with soldiers for hire, isn't it?

MACHIAVELLI

Is Vitellozzo Vitelli in your employ or not?

CESARE

Yes. He is captain of my artillery. But I knew nothing of this little escapade in the Val de Chiana.

MACHIAVELLI

Forgive me, if I find that hard to believe.

CESARE

Believe what you like.

MACHIAVELLI

Call him off.

CESARE

Whose idea was it to have his brother beheaded? Was that your idea?

(beat)

You executed Paolo, but you let Vitellozzo live. Why?

MACHIAVELLI

That was not the intention.

CESARE

He escaped. That was a very foolish mistake, Secretary. Now you have a determined enemy at your doorstep. A determined enemy bent on exacting revenge against your state. Vitellozzo has a vendetta to settle. You wish me to deprive him of that? Why should I? What has Florence done to deserve such a service from me? What respect do you show me?

(beat)

Yes, you have a very serious problem on your hands, I admit. You should have come to me about Pisa. I could have taken care of that mess for you very quickly. Very quickly. Now look at the predicament you are in: Pisa on one side, and Vitelli on the other.

MACHIAVELLI

Call off Vitelli. And you'll get your money.

CESARE

I could be a very good friend to you. Florentine. Things are changing. Everything is changing. The world itself has a new shape. Now we know it's round. The lands of India, and Cathay, and Chipango are now within our reach by sea. Castle walls no longer offer the safety they have provided for so many centuries. Now all tumbles before the newest guns, these marvels of artillery. All these new machines. Now you can make a book on a printing machine. Do you know what that means? I have one of these printing machines. In Fano. You should see it. A remarkable contraption really. What will be next, do you imagine? Anything is possible these days. Anything, don't you agree? Yes, things are changing. Very quickly. Better choose your friends wisely now. Before it's too late. Get me my money. And get me my men. Then I will speak heart to heart with Vitellozzo.

(beat)

MACHIAVELLI

The king of France will not approve of this.

CESARE

Oh, so now you think you can worry me with the king.

MACHIAVELLI

As you know, Florence is under the king's protection.

CESARE

Do not lecture me about the king of France. You don't know him like I do. No one knows Louis like I do. No one. We are as close as this--

(crossed fingers)

Why else would he give me such a well appointed army? Why else would he give me the finest artillery in the world? Why else would he allow me to bring all of these criminals in the Romana to justice?

MACHIAVELLI

Vitelli's actions, any attempt to harm Florence, is an offence against the king of France.

CESARE

Is that so? Do you know, when I visit with Louis, we eat off one plate together. When we hunt, we share one horse. We rest together, side by side, on one bed. We have a very special relationship.

MACHIAVELLI

That may be so, but he banks with us. Vitelli's forces directly threaten the king's lines of supply in his campaign against Naples. He won't like that. Not a bit. You may have a special relationship with Louis, but you and I both know, nothing is dearer to him than the dream of prying Naples lose from the king of Spain.

(beat)

Call off Vitelli, and you'll get your money.

CESARE

Get me my money first.

(beat)

MACHIAVELLI

I shall convey your request to my good lords.

(He starts out.)

He finds the door locked.

He knocks.

No one answers.)

CESARE

Where do you think you're going?

MACHIAVELLI

Are you keeping me here?

CESARE

I haven't finished with you yet. Sit down.

(MACHIAVELLI looks around; there are no chairs.)

CESARE (CONT'D)

Sit. Go on. I won't bite. Contrary to whatever you may have heard. Let's have something to drink.

(produces a jug of wine and two goblets)

Thirsty?

(beat)

Sit.

(MACHIAVELLI sits on the floor.)

CESARE sits with him, and pours the wine.)

CESARE (CONT'D)

To your health.

(MACHIAVELLI hesitates to drink.)

CESARE (CONT'D)

Go on, drink up. It's not poisoned.

(he drinks)

MACHIAVELLI

To your health.

(he drinks)

CESARE

Ah. A good grape. They make a fine red here in Urbino. Don't you think?

MACHIAVELLI

Mm. I prefer our Chianti.

CESARE

Do you.

(beat)

Quite a palace, isn't it?

MACHIAVELLI

Exquisite.

CESARE

You know how I got it?

MACHIAVELLI

We're all wondering.

CESARE

Guidobaldo gave it to me.

MACHIAVELLI

That was generous of him.

CESARE

Yes, he is a very generous soul.

(They laugh together.)

CESARE (CONT'D)

I'm lying, of course. I took it from him. The duchy of Urbino, one of the finest palaces in all Italy, impregnable up here in these mountains, and I took it from him without even unsheathing my sword.

MACHIAVELLI

Why not Camerino?

CESARE

That's what I wanted you all to think. Camerino was the next * logical choice. The Varano have no right to Camerino. They haven't paid tribute to the Holy See in years. They're a detestable family. Giulio Varano murdered his own brother to get Camerino. I put the word out: Camerino is next. But all along I had my eye on Urbino. The Urbino of Guidobaldo Montefeltro.

MACHIAVELLI

I understood the Montefeltro were old family friends of the Borgia.

CESARE

So I thought, as well.

MACHIAVELLI

Aren't you related through your sister's latest marriage?

CESARE

I don't keep account of such things. We are all related on some level.

MACHIAVELLI

You mean, the ruling families of Italy?

CESARE

If you like. The fact is, I found out Guidobaldo was sending troops to Camarino in order to oppose me. He was planning to take my artillery when I passed through here. Ha!

MACHIAVELLI

Really.

CESARE

I have friends everywhere, Machiavelli. Everywhere. Even in Florence. Especially in Florence. You want to know how I did it?

(beat)

From Rome, I sent six thousand foot and seven hundred men-at-arms up the Via Flaminia. Three days later, I joined them at Spoleto. Of course, everyone thinks I am moving against Camerino. No one thinks I would dare move against Urbino. Urbino? Impossible. Who could possibly take Urbino from Montefeltro? It's untouchable. I have my father send a request to Guidobaldo for free passage of my artillery through his territory at Cagli--which he grants--who can say no to the pope, eh? Then I send my own request to Guido--send a thousand foot to Arezzo.

MACHIAVELLI

To aid Vitelli?

CESARE

No, to check him.

MACHIAVELLI

And he complied?

CESARE

Of course, he complied. Why wouldn't he? We are old family friends.

MACHIAVELLI

He left his own state depleted with your troops passing freely through his lands?

CESARE

I assured him of my gratitude, and my love, as if he were my own brother.

MACHIAVELLI

And he believed you?

CESARE

No. He was planning to trap me at Cagli. This I had word of. But he thought I was still in Spoleto. On the night we took Urbino, they tell me he was dining comfortably at the monastery on the hill over there.

(looking out the window)

(MORE)

Do you see it there? There he was, in the monastery garden, out under the stars, sipping wine, on a warm summer night... when suddenly, word arrives: a thousand of my troops from the Romana are sweeping in from the east, headed straight for Urbino. Dinner is over. He gallops across the ridge back to the palace, only to be met with more bad news: another thousand of my men are storming through San Marino in the north. Followed by a third grave messenger: I am already in Cagli--not a hundred miles away in Spoleto--a mere twenty miles away to the south. Ha!

MACHIAVELLI

How?

CESARE

I rode round the clock, straight through the night.

MACHIAVELLI

But your troops--how did they--?

CESARE

My Romangols march like the wind at night. Miguel's cavalry races on ahead, and--uno, dos, tres!--all converge at once--from the north, from the east, from the south--three great strikes of lightning! Poor Guidobaldo, he barely had time to flee. They say he slipped out through a sewer hole at the back of the palace, as Miguel's advance team flew through the gates--the gates were still open!--and off Guidobaldo ran into the woods, with nothing more than the shirt on his back.

MACHIAVELLI

Escaped?

CESARE

We'll find him. He's out there now, crawling through the mud and the bushes, hiding like a beggar. And Urbino belongs to the Holy See. Let that be a lesson to you, Machiavelli: these days, a man might take supper as a duke of glorious Urbino, and the next morning breakfast a pauper with the pigs.

MACHIAVELLI

Fortune is a strumpet.

CESARE

Fortune favors the bold. Fortune must be seized hold of, firmly, roughly--that you might have your way with her. That's how she likes it.

(fills his cup)

Drink up.

(beat)

Have you seen this place?

MACHIAVELLI

No. Only as I came in tonight. I arrived at sundown. Even at night, though, it's a marvel.

CESARE

Old Montefeltro knew what he was doing, eh? The library here is one of the finest in Italy--you should see it--I'll show you. The artwork here--the paintings, the sculptures, the craftsmanship. Those white marble walls, and porticoes, on and on they go. It's endless. But...

MACHIAVELLI

Yes?

CESARE

I don't care for it here. It seems...empty to me.

MACHIAVELLI

Where's all the furniture?

CESARE

I had it removed.

MACHIAVELLI

All of it?

CESARE

I'm sending things off. For safe keeping.

MACHIAVELLI

Not planning to stay?

CESARE

Why do you ask?

MACHIAVELLI

Just...curious.

CESARE

What of you, Machiavelli?

MACHIAVELLI

Hm?

CESARE

What lies ahead for you?

MACHIAVELLI

For me? Well, who can say?

CESARE

A man wills his own destiny.

MACHIAVELLI

Not according to the Greeks.

CESARE

What do the Greeks know?

MACHIAVELLI

Well...

CESARE

Do you not dream of power, Secretary? Great power.

MACHIAVELLI

I was not born to it.

CESARE

No one is born to it. Power must be seized hold of. A man is what he makes of himself.

MACHIAVELLI

Your father is the pope. Mine... Each man's world is circumscribed in certain ways. Yours is...

CESARE

Mine is what?

(beat)

I will tell you a story. When I was eighteen, my father made me a cardinal. No, Papa, I said. I don't want to be a cardinal. I don't want to be a man of the church. I want to be a soldier. You see, I knew even then, I had a gift for this. It's in my blood. I was born to this. Born to swing a sword. Born to rule. Julius Caesar is my namesake. Did you know that?

MACHIAVELLI

Ah.

CESARE

But my father wanted Juan, my older brother, to be the soldier in the family. He made Juan Captain-General, commander of all the Papal armies. That was what I wanted. "But you're a cardinal, Cesar," said my father--he always calls me Cesar--we are Catalan--"if you are a cardinal one day you can rise to the highest office on earth"--one day I myself could wear the white cap, one day I could be the pope of Rome. Like him. I was to be the priest, and Juan was to be the soldier. But I said no. And at twenty-three I doffed my scarlet cap, hung up my cardinal's robes, and took up a sword. No one's ever done that before, you know?--given up a cardinalship. And now I am Captain-General of the Holy See. Why? Because I know who I am. Tell that to your Greeks.

*

MACHIAVELLI

Your brother...was murdered.

CESARE

Yes?

MACHIAVELLI

Do you know by whom?

CESARE

Yes.

MACHIAVELLI

Ah. We heard many different competing theories on the matter.

CESARE

I am sure you did.

MACHIAVELLI

A masked man on a white horse? On the Piazza Judea...was it?

CESARE

When they dragged his body from the Tiber, they counted nine stab wounds--in the neck, in his head, his torso, and his legs. I loved Juan. But he wasn't much of a soldier. My father nearly died of grief. Wept like a child, wouldn't eat, wouldn't speak. He loved Juan more than the throne of Saint Peter itself, "above all things," he said. "Had I seven papacies, we would give them all to have my eldest son back again."

(beat)

You think I murdered Juan, don't you?

MACHIAVELLI

I...wouldn't know.

CESARE

Believe what you like. You'll see. When the time is right, all the world will know who murdered Juan Borgia, the duke of Gandia. My brother. All in good time. Let's talk of other matters. Shall we?

MACHIAVELLI

Congratulations on the marriage of your sister.

CESARE

Don't talk about my sister.

MACHIAVELLI

All right. Well...what's the hour, I wonder?

CESARE

You like women, Machiavelli?

MACHIAVELLI

Hm?

CESARE

Do you like women?

MACHIAVELLI

Well...yes. Who doesn't?

CESARE

And the "Florentine vice," what about that?

MACHIAVELLI

Hm?

CESARE

You like that?

MACHIAVELLI

No more than the next Florentine.

(They laugh.)

CESARE

Are you married, Secretary?

MACHIAVELLI

I am, indeed.

CESARE

How nice. Is she pretty?

MACHIAVELLI

Marietta? Oh...yes, very...pretty.

CESARE

Children?

MACHIAVELLI

Hm? Oh, yes. Just had one. Bernardo. She says he looks just like me. I'm not so sure.

(He laughs.)

CESARE

About what?

MACHIAVELLI

No, no.

CESARE

Don't you trust her?

MACHIAVELLI

Of course, I do.

CESARE

What woman can be trusted?

MACHIAVELLI

What man?

(beat)

CESARE

These are desperate times... What's your given name?

MACHIAVELLI

Niccolo.

CESARE

These are desperate times, Niccolo. Don't you agree?

For whom?

CESARE

For Italy.

MACHIAVELLI

Italy?

CESARE

Yes, Italy. These lands of ours. This place. This ancient peninsula. Where Rome once ruled over all. Over a thousand years ago.

MACHIAVELLI

Well, things are different now.

CESARE

Yes. Now, the bounty of Italy is contested by so many small-minded opportunists, petty warring tyrants, bent on their own advancement and nothing more. These greedy fools have left us vulnerable to foreign adventurers. The king of France in the north, the king of Spain in the south. They battle over us like jackals contesting a carcass.

MACHIAVELLI

The king of France is a jackal?

CESARE

The king of France is a great power.

MACHIAVELLI

He is, indeed. And he has enabled your Excellency to secure a sizable dominion in the Romana.

CESARE

We have reclaimed what is rightfully ours.

MACHIAVELLI

Yes. Is there something more your Excellency, and the Holy Father, have in mind?

CESARE

More? Than the Romana? Well, that's a complicated question.

MACHIAVELLI

Why is that?

CESARE

I have brought justice and order back to the states of the church, to the people of Forli, and Imola, and Pesaro, and Rimini, and Piombino, and Faenza. Everyone knows this. And they love me for it. Because the Romangols love justice. All people love justice. And all crave order. Don't you?

(beat)

Order and strength. This is what I have brought to the Romana. Law and order.

MACHIAVELLI

With men such as Vitellozzo Vitelli?

CESARE

Yes. Him and many others.

MACHIAVELLI

Do you really believe men like Vitelli are motivated by justice? Yes, these are desperate times indeed. For greed and acquisition rule men these days. Vitelli is no more than a common thief, a marauding thug, with an army at his command, looking for his next victim. These are the warring princes of Rome, and Tuscany, Milano, Naples and Venice--greedy, petty cutthroats, one and all.

CESARE

Not if you give them something to believe in. Something greater than themselves.

MACHIAVELLI

Such as what?

CESARE

Italy. Have you seen my Romangols in action? No, you have not. They are a new breed of Italian soldier. From the sturdy fighting stock of the Romana countryside, they join up in droves. Yes, I pay them well, and I pay them on time, but they are no mercenaries, they are fighting for a new order of things, for their dignity, for their homeland. I have built a new army of strong young farm boys, and rugged peasants, men who would throw off the yoke of these petty warlords, these criminals who drive them like slaves, who take the best of all they produce, while they sweat in the fields and valleys of the Romana. No more.

(MORE)

Now they see justice meted out under my governor, Ramiro de Lorca. He is a "no nonsense" Minister of Justice, eh? Thieves hang, brigands pay with their heads. Now there is food, and wealth to be spread about. Can you Florentines say the same?

*
*

(beat)

Your republic is a disaster. Admit it. An embarrassment. From the glory Florence once was--to this republic? Your bankers live in luxury, but your government lies in ruins. You have no army! You exist utterly at the mercy of the king of France.

MACHIAVELLI

We are not alone in that.

CESARE

Do not underestimate me, Secretary. I fear no man.

MACHIAVELLI

Then you are fortunate indeed. Or you are a fool.

CESARE

We shall see who is the fool here.

MACHIAVELLI

One day, like all men, the pope will die. What then--without the blessings of the Holy Father upon you?

CESARE

When that day comes, I shall be ready for it. I have much to do in the days ahead. And no time to waste.

(looking at the stars)

The moon is in Scorpio. You know what that means?

(beat)

Tell your Signory they have four days to prove to me whether they are my friends, or my enemies. If they want my friendship, and my protection, they must deliver the money they owe me. If they do not want my friendship, they shall learn what it means to be an enemy of Cesare Borgia. Choose. Which is it?

MACHIAVELLI

May I go now?

(Music plays, elsewhere in the palace.)

CESARE

You hear that?

MACHIAVELLI

Music--at this time of night?

CESARE

Things are just getting started here. Interested in a little fun?

MACHIAVELLI

Fun?

CESARE

Some food perhaps? We'll break out the Chianti. I like to dance. You?

MACHIAVELLI

No, I...

CESARE

No? Well, you can watch. Watch the girls. There will be lots of them. Watch them dance. Till they have nothing on at all. It will be fun. I assure you. I have fun every night. We dance, and we dance, and we dance, till the dawn light chases us all to bed. Once, in the Palace of the Apostles, after dinner, we had fifty whores, all dancing with the servants, and everybody else who was there, till all of them were naked as satyrs. So we took the lighted candelabras off the tables and put them on the floor, and we threw chestnuts out among them, and had them all crawl about to see who could pick up the most, you know, with their...

(laughing)

My father never laughed so hard in his life. And Lucrezia... *

*

Lucrezia was there, too...

(stops laughing)

We gave out prizes--silks, hats, gold coins--to whomever could do it the most times. Guess who won. Come. I'll show you the palace of Urbino.

(Lights change.)

The music swells.

As CESARE guides him through the palace, MACHIAVELLI looks about in wonder.)

CESARE (CONT'D)

The Hall of the Vigils. It goes on and on like this. You see those doors? These are all painted illusions--trick-of-the-eye work at its best. They're not real. None of them. Can you believe it? All illusions. All except that one.

(laughs)

Come. Look. The spheres of heaven, the circles of hell. There: Faith, Hope, and, of course, Charity. Plato, Aristotle, Ptolemy, Petrarch, Homer, and there, look, your Cicero. And here, the books, more books, and more books, the accumulated volumes of the ancients. You can read your Greeks till the end of time here.

(MORE)

These are old Fredrico's scientific instruments--the finest astronomical devices in Italy. And here, have you ever seen an armory like this? Look, there's a parrot. And here a pair of chapels joined, this one a holy sanctuary, and this a temple of the Muses. They tell me this was Guido's favorite haunt, here among the spirits of music, dance, and poetry. And here, the gallery of the Marche. A collection of art to rival any in the world--Santi, Melozzo da Forli, this Raphael fellow, della Francesca, Uccello, they are all here. For the moment. Is it not a wonder? Come. Drink, Machiavelli. Dance. Dance with the women. Enjoy yourself.

(Dizzily, MACHIAVELLI spins, as the music grows louder and louder.)

CESARE (CONT'D)

Live a little. Dance!

(Drunkenly, MACHIAVELLI laughs and dances, till he wavers, staggers, and almost falls.

CESARE exits, leaving MACHIAVELLI alone.

Slowly the sound fades, and he comes to, as if emerging from a dream, or waking from a deep sleep--with a terrible hangover.)

MACHIAVELLI

Oh, my head.

(Lights change.)

(MACHIAVELLI addresses the audience as the Signory of Florence.)

MACHIAVELLI

My good lords. This duke is impressive indeed. And dangerous. Clearly. In war there is no enterprise so great that he does not make light of it. In the pursuit of glory and materiel, terrain and advantage, he never rests. He arrives at one place before anyone knows he's left another. He is a master of secrecy and stealth, a virtuoso of diplomacy and warfare. He is cunning, daring, and formidable. And he is always lucky. Somehow. Still, I recommend... you withhold the money he is demanding. I believe his luck has run out. There is a plot hatching among his captains. Those whom he has used to get where he is, now see that they are all on the steps of the scaffold, as it were, in line to be his next victims. They are convening presently in order to destroy him. With the blessing of the king of France, I have no doubt. My contacts in Milano all agree, the king intends to throw this upstart duke to the wolves, as he has become too big a thorn in everyone's side. I humbly await your instructions.

(He bows.

Lights change.

CESARE enters and greets MACHIAVELLI in a room of the *Rocca Sforzesca*, a magnificent fortress in the town of Imola.

October 7, 1502.)

CESARE

Machiavelli! Welcome to Imola.

(throwing off his riding cape, he embraces Machiavelli warmly)

I have just been to see the king.

MACHIAVELLI

The king--where--here?

CESARE

No, in Milano.

MACHIAVELLI

You were in Milano--when?

CESARE

The day before yesterday.

MACHIAVELLI

But--

CESARE

Last night in Ferrara.

MACHIAVELLI

Ferrara--how is that possible?

CESARE

I flew--upon the wind!

(He laughs.)

MACHIAVELLI

Of course. His Most Christian King...is well, I trust?

CESARE

Oh, very well. Very well. You wouldn't believe what we did...

(he laughs)

MACHIAVELLI

Well. Good. Good.

CESARE

What's wrong?

MACHIAVELLI

Nothing.

CESARE

Surprised?

MACHIAVELLI

Pleased to hear the king of France is well.

CESARE

You should have been there. I went in disguise. As a knight of Saint John. Just me alone. Stopped once in Forli to change horses and dine on a tray of chickens and squab--to the outrage of the locals--it was Friday--*Vaffanculo!*

(laughs)

There was a big fight. I rode through the night to Milano. And straight to the palace. There he was. In the great ball room there. Louis. The king of France. Surrounded by all his courtiers. Most of whom hate my teeth. All of them sucking at the tit of Louis Valois. I am announced: "Cesare Borgia, duke de la Romana!" All of them, one by one, heads turn, jaws drop, curses under breath. He's here. He dares face the king? Louis turns and sees me. All is silent. Slowly, he walks across the great hall toward me.

(MORE)

The crowd of sycophants parts like the Red Sea before Moses. Only the sound of the king's footsteps echoes through the palace. The dogs begin to salivate. This is the moment when the king will clip the balls of the Borgia bull. He stands before me. Looks into my eyes. And smiles. His hand cups my neck. Welcome, Valentino--he always calls me Valentino--come with me, he says.

(he laughs)

Oh, you should have seen their wretched faces. All of them pissing their drawers, crapping their pants with fury, biting their tongues till they bled. And off we went. Oh, what a night. We spent the whole night together. In his private quarters. We laughed. We told stories. We played games. He is very funny. You know what he likes?

(laughs)

Nevermind. He's very funny. Louis.

(beat)

And in the morning...I was on my way. With all his many, many blessings.

(beat)

MACHIAVELLI

You wanted to see me?

CESARE

Yes. I want to discuss important matters.

(tosses him an apple)

Have an apple. I picked these in Ferrara last night.

(one for himself)

They're good. Eat.

(They bite into the apples.)

CESARE (CONT'D)

What do you think of the Rocca Sforzesca?

MACHIAVELLI

Very impressive.

CESARE

Have you been here before?

MACHIAVELLI

I have. On a mission to Madonna Caterina.

CESARE

Ah. Yes. Then you can appreciate the improvements I've made.

MACHIAVELLI

Very impressive.

CESARE

There is no other fortress like it in Italy. It's the genius of Leonardo da Vinci.

MACHIAVELLI

Leonardo?

CESARE

My new architect-engineer.

MACHIAVELLI

Leonardo...is working for you?

CESARE

Oh, that's right, he's a Florentine--do you know him?

MACHIAVELLI

We've...met.

CESARE

I should have him dine with us. He's funny. Sometimes. After things went so badly for Ludovico in Milano, he came to me, looking for employment. He has all sorts of ideas, you know. Among other talents, he has a genius for military engineering. This I love.

MACHIAVELLI

He has a difficult time finishing anything.

CESARE

Not when he's working for me. He has transformed this place. Admit it. You've never seen fortifications like these. This is all new. He has a gift. And artillery--he has revolutionary ideas about artillery design and manufacture. We've got a whole new foundry here, utterly at his disposal. You wouldn't believe what he's got in mind.

MACHIAVELLI

Oh, I might. I might.

CESARE

How's your wife?

MACHIAVELLI

Marietta?

CESARE

Yes, Marietta. She well?

MACHIAVELLI

Well enough.

CESARE

No?

MACHIAVELLI

Oh, she complains.

CESARE

She complains?

MACHIAVELLI

Oh, you know. Women.

CESARE

Ah.

MACHIAVELLI

She doesn't like it I'm away so much. "When are you coming home? The baby doesn't even know you. I need money." Always money.

CESARE

You need money?

MACHIAVELLI

Well...who doesn't?

CESARE

Doesn't your Signory pay you well?

MACHIAVELLI

Oh...well enough.

CESARE

Really?

(beat)

Is it true you have to pay for your own horses and lodging?

MACHIAVELLI

No, I'm reimbursed for all...well, usually, or rather, I'm supposed to be... How did you know that?

CESARE

Oh, I know all about you now. Niccolo. You were born in Florence in the house you still live in, the first son and third child of your father, Bernardo, who passed away last year--my condolences. You speak Latin--*Veni, vidi, vici* [I came, I saw, I conquered]--but not Greek. Why not? *Gnōthi seautόn* [Know thyself].

(MORE)

Still, you're the best read diplomat in the Florentine Chancery--your favorite author is Livy--you secured your position at the time that filthy, lying fraud of a monk, Savanarola, was strangled and burnt at the stake--did you have a hand in that, I wonder?--and you have since worked your way up through the halls and corridors of power in the Palace of the Signory till you are now the primary instrument of the Ten of Liberty and Peace, which as far as I can determine is the closest thing there is to a center of power in this laughing-stock of a government you call your republic. Have I got that right?

MACHIAVELLI

Not exactly. I prefer Lucretius to Livy.

CESARE

Ah, Lucretius: "Life is one long struggle in the dark." Eh?

MACHIAVELLI

Exactly what important matters did you wish to discuss? *

CESARE

(a bite of apple)

So, you know Caterina Sforza.

MACHIAVELLI

No, no. I only met her once. *

CESARE

What do you think of her? *

MACHIAVELLI

I think she's a very courageous woman.

CESARE

Courageous? Yes. Oh, yes. Indeed. There is fire in her veins, I can tell you that. You think she's beautiful? You do.

MACHIAVELLI

She's Caterina Sforza.

CESARE

Yes, she is. Would you sleep with her? Make her scream with delight? *

MACHIAVELLI

She dallies with potions and spells. She might turn me into a dog. *

CESARE

Or an ass. Ha!

(they laugh)

She doesn't think much of you.

MACHIAVELLI

Me?

CESARE

She says you betrayed her.

MACHIAVELLI

I did nothing of the kind. I brought the bad news, that's all. There was nothing else we could do.

CESARE

You abandoned her.

MACHIAVELLI

We couldn't very well oppose the king. And you. Could we? I offered her asylum in Florence. She refused. She chose to stay and fight.

CESARE

Yes. And what a fight she put up.

(chuckles)

She tried to kill my father, you know? It's true. She wrapped a length of gauze about the open wounds of a corpse, a victim of the plague, and sent the putrid cloth with a letter of surrender to my father. Her intent was, that in handling the letter, the pope would contract the foul disease. She has quite an imagination. We uncovered the plot, of course. The witch. Then she tried to lure me into a trap. Right out there.

(looks out the window)

Come in, come in, she said. Let us discuss our differences. Surely, we can avoid shedding the blood of our soldiers and the good people of Imola. Come alone, she said. She stood there at the portcullis. A beauty indeed, beckoning me on. Come. Come. I smiled. And walked across the drawbridge. She glances at her gatekeeper. Ax blade to rope, gears spin, * up swings the bridge, I turn, run, and leap back across the moat, amid a hailstorm of crossbow bolts whipping all about me. Ha! You cannot trap me, Virago! For this treachery, I will make you pay! Let loose the artillery! We pounded the walls round the clock for two days, till finally they crumbled down like the great temple upon blind Samson. In we came, cutting our way through her loyal defenders, two thousand of them. The citadel caught fire. I made my way up, alone, in to here, this very chamber, amid the smoke, and the flames, and there she was. Sword in hand. Defiant as a demon from hell. And I took her. Right here on the floor.

MACHIAVELLI

Where is she now?

CESARE

Where do you think?

MACHIAVELLI

Is she alive?

CESARE

Oh, she's alive, all right.

MACHIAVELLI

A prisoner?

CESARE

No. A guest. Would you like to visit with her?

MACHIAVELLI

I think not.

CESARE

She's in my private quarters.

MACHIAVELLI

You mean...

CESARE

She cannot get enough of me. But I'm tired of her. She's gone mad, I think.

MACHIAVELLI

What are you planning to do with her?

(CESARE smiles.)

CESARE

We had fun in Urbino, eh? You're funny. That story about the girl in the cellar.

MACHIAVELLI

Hm?

CESARE

The ugly one.

(laughs)

MACHIAVELLI

Oh. Yes.

(laughs, uneasily)

CESARE

That's a good one. Yes, we had fun that night.

MACHIAVELLI

We were sorry to learn you lost Urbino.

CESARE

A little rebellion. Nothing to get excited about.

MACHIAVELLI

Has Guidobaldo returned?

CESARE

Not yet. Though he plans to, no doubt. Urbino is nothing. I took it once; I haven't forgotten how to get it back again. Soon enough. Guidobaldo.

(beat)

MACHIAVELLI

There's a corpse in the square out there. I passed it on the way in.

CESARE

Yes?

MACHIAVELLI

Is that Ramiro de Lorca?

CESARE

Mm-hm.

MACHIAVELLI

What happened?

CESARE

We had a falling out.

MACHIAVELLI

Over what?

CESARE

Everyone hates him.

MACHIAVELLI

Wasn't he your governor in the Romana?

CESARE

Yes, he was. But certain things came to light. So I had him arrested. And...questioned.

MACHIAVELLI

And?

CESARE

He admitted some very disturbing things.

(beat)

You know, when I took over here--out there, in the Romana--no one was in charge. Those hills were crawling with thieves, every family was fighting with the next, there was no law, no order. These people had more reason to fight with one another than to work together. I had to bring peace to these lands, and obedience. I needed an effective government. So I put Ramiro in charge. Ramiro was not afraid to be cruel. And he was vigorous about it. I gave him almost unlimited authority. And he got results. Swiftly. Peace and unity rule in the Romana now, thanks to Ramiro. I've known him since I was a kid. He taught me to ride. A bit about how to use a sword, as well. My father brought him with us from Valencia. But that was a long time ago. Now, here, cruelty is no longer necessary. In fact, Ramiro's excessive cruelty has bred anger and hatred among many. Too many now.

(MORE)

Now I have established a civil court in Cesena, with representatives from every city in the Romana, and a proper judge in charge of the whole legal body--Antonio Sansovino, do you know him? He's a good man. Very... respectable. It's time to make it clear that these cruel ways of the past came not from me, but from the brutal character of Ramiro. I decided to make an example of him. So this morning, I had him placed in the town square, in two pieces, his head on a lance, the bloody knife that did the work lying beside his well-heeled remains. He always had the most expensive taste in clothes. Did you see the white gloves on his hands? Everyone recognizes those gloves. Look there, they say, the tyrant Ramiro de Lorca. Finally, he got what he deserved. Thanks to who? Cesare Borgia dealt justice to the beast. And they love me for it.

MACHIAVELLI

What did he confess to?

CESARE

Oh, taking bribes, extorting money, trafficking in grain... among other things.

(beat)

That was this morning. This afternoon we had a celebration. Did you see it?

MACHIAVELLI

A celebration? No, I just arrived--

CESARE

In honor of Saint John the Baptist's Day. In the old Roman arena. I had six bulls loosed. Then I entered the ring, on my white charger, Cristos. First with lance. Charging, leaping, turning--I pierce one of them through the shoulder into his heart. He drops to his knees, and goes down into the dirt. Madly, they all charge after me, circling, helter-skelter. The people--there must have been ten thousand of them--wildly they cheer, roaring their approval--while my foes and I scramble in a fray, a tangled knot of horns, and hoofs, dust, and blood. I drive my lance through a second, and a third. Blood sprays through the air showering my face in red. Rearing up, I strike another, but one of them sneaks his horns under the belly of Cristos, goring him, driving him back, back, back, and down we crash into the dirt with a mighty thud, and a horse's cry. But I am instantly to my feet, as another one of the great, snorting beasts bears down upon me. Seizing my lance from its resting place in one of the dead, I charge to meet this demon, driving the point into his chest, into the glistening black sheen of the fierce, screaming giant. As the dust settles, I rise. Only one devil left, standing at a distance, alone on the field of battle, surrounded by the carcasses of his dead and dying companions. He stands, snorting, calmly. His eyes fixed on mine. *

(MORE)

(he draws his sword)

Slowly, I approach. The roar of the crowd rises to a deafening pitch. I am awash in blood, gleaming, silver armor painted with crimson gore. Still he does not move. He waits for the moment. The final moment of contest. Now. On he comes. Like thunder from heaven, crashing down upon the archangel Saint Michael, I dance to the side, and bring the awful blade down with relentless will as it slices through the whole great trunk of his neck. Collapse. A flood of red splashes out. Silence. Death. Triumph. A roar goes up to wake the gods. I beheaded the thing with a single stroke of my sword. Have you ever seen such a sight? Neither had they. Nor are they ever like to again.

(raising the sword toward
Machiavelli)

Choose, Niccolo: are you my friend...or are you my enemy?

(beat)

MACHIAVELLI

There was a meeting. At La Magione.

CESARE

A meeting?

MACHIAVELLI

The Orsini have convened a plot to destroy you.

CESARE

Orsini. Hm. The cardinal?

(Machiavelli nods.)

Who else?

MACHIAVELLI

Four of your captains.

CESARE

Go on.

MACHIAVELLI

Pagalo and Francesco Orsini--

CESARE

Francesco. Good. Who else?

MACHIAVELLI

Oliverotto Euffreducci.

(Cesare smirks.)

And Vitellozzo Vitelli.

CESARE

Vitelli?

(Machiavelli nods.)

Oh, Vitellozzo. You poor fool.

MACHIAVELLI

All signed a pact. To leave you dead, and divide up your holdings.

CESARE

How do you know this?

MACHIAVELLI

Because I was there.

CESARE

I see. And did you put your name to this agreement, as well?

MACHIAVELLI

No. I did not.

CESARE

No?

MACHIAVELLI

Florence will not offend the king of France.

CESARE

Hm. Then they will suspect you.

MACHIAVELLI

No. Though I made it clear we would not offend the king, I also made it clear that Florence devoutly favors your destruction.

CESARE

Hm. That was clever of you. Still, they will suspect you. How will they come for me?

MACHIAVELLI

From two sides. The Orsini will capitalize on your loss of Urbino, enlisting Guidobaldo in their cause. They will come from the south. Vitelli and Euffreducci will strike here.

CESARE

Here?

MACHIAVELLI

According to their plans.

CESARE

When?

MACHIAVELLI

Soon.

CESARE

Soon? When was this agreement signed?

MACHIAVELLI

Two weeks ago today.

CESARE

Two weeks ago? What numbers do they have?

MACHIAVELLI

Six thousand men-at-arms.

CESARE

Six thousand?

MACHIAVELLI

Altogether. On paper.

CESARE

On paper?

(He laughs.)

These are promises then, not men in the field?

(More laughter.)

Oh, this is funny.

MACHIAVELLI

Funny?

CESARE

(a hand on his shoulder)

Thank you. My friend. For this intelligence. I will reward you well.

(looks out the window)

This year the planets are aligned against those who rebel.

MACHIAVELLI

Their numbers are formidable.

CESARE

On paper. This is nothing. Is Venice with these conspirators? No. Is Florence providing them with money? No. Do they have the love of King Louis behind them? And the pope of Rome? No. No, they do not. Only I have these things. Believe me, their moment has already passed. It is already too late for these dogs. Vitellozzo. He is nothing. Not once have I ever seen him display one trace of courage on the battlefield. He is good only at devastating defenseless villages, robbing and defiling old women. Francesco Orsini? He almost married my sister. That was too much. We have an old score to settle with the Orsini. This is a wonderful stroke of good fortune.

MACHIAVELLI

Good fortune?

CESARE

Yes, Machiavelli, good fortune. Because now I know who I can trust, and who means to destroy me.

(beat)

Either Caesar...or nothing.

(MACHIAVELLI steps into a spotlight, and addresses the audience.)

MACHIAVELLI

(to the Signory)

This duke lives in a world of fantasy.

CESARE

Come, I'll show you what Leonardo is doing for me.

MACHIAVELLI

His enemies converge, while he preoccupies himself with frivolous party tricks and wild flights of fancy.

CESARE

He has built me a mechanical man. You should see the thing. It walks. It sits. It bows to me. All pulleys and gears--and yet it speaks! The jaw moves up and down, and the words, well, he's working on that. It's a marvelous thing. It delights all the girls.

(He laughs.)

MACHIAVELLI

The king has recalled his troops from the duke's ranks. The nearest French forces are in Milano, too distant to be of any use should an attack come.

CESARE

Machines. Machines of all shapes and manner.

MACHIAVELLI

He has, by my estimation, no more than two thousand five hundred troops at his disposal here.

CESARE

Vehicles that move of their own power--armored, self-contained artillery pieces that can move independently about the battlefield--these will be most effective.

MACHIAVELLI

If other cities in the Romana follow the example of Urbino, and rebel, he will be overwhelmed.

CESARE

Gun-machines: one contraption fires eleven guns in sequence, then rotates to fire eleven more, and so on--can you imagine the power of such a weapon against common foot soldiers--against horse?

MACHIAVELLI

I have just learned his cavalry was routed at Calmazzo.

CESARE

Ships that sail beneath the waves.

MACHIAVELLI

Guidobaldo Montefeltro has returned to Urbino.

CESARE

Plans to divert the waters of great rivers in order to destroy enemy strongholds. Whole cities designed to defeat disease through a system of integrated waterways and mechanisms, inspired by the structure of Dante's *Paradise*, the very spheres of the heavens.

MACHIAVELLI

Vitelli and Euffreducci are at San Pietro, just seven miles from Imola, now with Bentivoglio, and another two thousand troops in their number.

(to Cesare, sitting on the floor, lost in thought)

What troubles you, Valentino?

CESARE

I saw my sister yesterday.

MACHIAVELLI

In Ferrara?

CESARE

She's ill.

MACHIAVELLI

I'm sorry to hear that.

CESARE

She lost the child. I held her down while they bled her. We talked. All night. I think I shall never see her again.

MACHIAVELLI

(to the Signory)

The duchess of Ferrara has lost a child. As she has been married less than six months, we can only guess who the father was.

CESARE

There is a flying machine. One of Leonardo's machines. I have seen it. A machine that takes a man aloft, into the sky, high above his enemies, making him invincible in warfare, above all below, flying, ever higher--I can touch the sun!

MACHIAVELLI

(to the Signory)

The noose tightens. Long live the republic.

(Blackout.)

(Lights up on CESARE. He addresses his captains, and their troops, outside Sinigallia, on a freezing day at the end of December.)

CESARE

Old friends. It's a cold wind blows here today. But my heart is warm. Welcome back. We gather here to make amends. It seems I have wounded you. And you have wounded me. We must put an end to this discord between us, and our families--the Orsini, the Vitelli, Euffreducci da Fermo, and the Borgia. We have come too far together. We have too much at stake here. And so much more to accomplish together. Great things are in store for us. Great things. For Italy. No? Let us heal the wounds we have inflicted upon each other, and reforge the bond that first united us. What is past, is past. I accept your gift of this worthy prize, Sinigallia. A worthy prize indeed. Let us take this prize together, and rekindle the love that binds us.

(draws his sword)

The Holy Father sends his blessings.

(CESARE kneels and prays on his sword.)

MACHIAVELLI addresses the Signory.)

MACHIAVELLI

Most illustrious lords of Florence, and my very particular masters, I have very encouraging news. From his weakened position, the Borgia Bull has sued for peace with his rebellious captains. All is forgiven, or so he believes. As a gesture of their restored good faith, they have offered to present him with Sinigallia, which they have pried loose from Cardinal Rovere. They have invited the duke there to present him with the city. But it is a trap they mean to catch him in. I am to meet with Francesco Orsini in the Rocca Roveresca upon my arrival in Sinigallia tonight, fittingly, on the last day of the year. It should all be over by then.

(MACHIAVELLI exits.)

CESARE rises and sheathes his sword.)

CESARE

Come, my brothers, let us present ourselves to the good people of Sinigallia.

(MORE)

We must wash away the stink of old Giuliano della Rovere, a stink that has lingered about the place for so long. Come, let us celebrate these good times in the high Roman tradition. The New Year is upon us.

(Blackout.

Lights up in the *Rocca Roveresca*, the fortress of Senigallia, just after midnight.

January 1, 1503.

Outside, the town is on fire-- sounds of looting and pillage.

MACHIAVELLI enters, looks about, sees no one, waits nervously, looks out at the flames blazing in the town.

The door opens, and CESARE enters, wearing the mask and costume of "Brigella," a Commedia dell'arte character, with a dagger in his belt.

He looks at MACHIAVELLI and strikes a classic Commedia pose with a big animated smile.

Then he drags a big trunk into the room, and closes up the doors behind.

He walks up to MACHIAVELLI and looks him in the eye, point blank.)

MACHIAVELLI

Your Excellency?

(CESARE bursts out laughing, and takes the mask off.)

CESARE

You should see your face. "Your Excellency?"
(more laughter)

MACHIAVELLI

I didn't know it was you.

CESARE
(referring to his costume)

Do you like it?

MACHIAVELLI

Brigella?

CESARE

The lusty servant. Ha! I like it. It's ironic. Happy New Year.

MACHIAVELLI

The same to you.

CESARE

We are celebrating. There's a big party. Welcome to Sinigallia.

(beat)

What's the matter?

MACHIAVELLI

Well, the town's on fire.

CESARE

Oh. Yes. That's my fault. I admit. My men. I had to let them sack the place. They've earned it. But it got a little out of hand. I don't care. Tonight we celebrate. This is a very special occasion, Machiavelli. A new year begins tonight. And the stars are very favorable. We're having a masquerade in the great hall. You should see what we've done to the place. It's hilarious. But you'll need a costume. Everyone needs a costume.

MACHIAVELLI

A costume?

CESARE

What's wrong?

MACHIAVELLI

I don't have...a costume.

CESARE

Of course not. That's why I brought this.

(the trunk)

It's full of all sorts of surprises.

MACHIAVELLI

I'm sorry. Been a bit ill. A bit of a fever. Not sure I'm up to a masquerade.

CESARE

I insist. Tonight is special.

(A woman screams, outside, in the distance.)

MACHIAVELLI

You're sacking the town. Did they put up a fight?

CESARE

No. But they were loyal to Giuliano della Rovere. They deserve what they get. Cardinal Rovere is an old enemy of my father's. He thinks my father stole the white cap from him in the Conclave of Ninety-two. He's been causing us no end of trouble ever since. Not one scudo in tribute has Sinigallia ever paid since my father became pope. This is illegal. Now they are paying...with interest, eh?

(beat)

I have good news, Machiavelli.

MACHIAVELLI

Yes?

CESARE

Things are changing.

MACHIAVELLI

Things...such as what?

CESARE

Where is Leonardo? Have you seen Leonardo?

MACHIAVELLI

No.

CESARE

I've been looking all over for him.

(Gun fire in the distance.
MACHIAVELLI looks out the window.)

CESARE (CONT'D)

He's concocted some sort of theatrical performance for tonight, a masque, with dancers and costumes, and fireworks. I'm supposed to be in it. All in gold. In a flying chariot. Or something.

(referring to the trunk)

Go on. Open it.

(Machiavelli hesitates)

Open it.

(MACHIAVELLI opens the trunk.)

CESARE (CONT'D)

What do you see?

(MACHIAVELLI withdraws a mask.)

CESARE (CONT'D)

Is that all? Look deeper.

(Cautiously, MACHIAVELLI sorts through the contents of the trunk a bit.)

MACHIAVELLI

Costumes? Masks and costumes?

CESARE

Mm-hm. Amusing, aren't they? From my sister, in Ferrara. She thinks I work too hard. She thinks, after the stress and strain of all my worldly enterprises, I should find time to amuse myself. Look at them all. Here. This one. This one looks like Vitellozzo, doesn't it?

(chuckles)

You should see him now.

(beat)

Come, take these off.

(pulling off Machiavelli's robes)

We need to find you the right costume in here.

MACHIAVELLI

No, please, your Excellency.

CESARE

Take it off.

MACHIAVELLI

No, please...

(A bit of a struggle.

Stop.)

CESARE

You need a costume. I insist.

(MACHIAVELLI removes his outer garments.)

CESARE (CONT'D)

(fishing through the trunk)

Now, let's see what we have here. Ah!

(a black robe, hat and mask)

Pantalone! Here we are. Try this on. Pantalone, the old miser. The cuckold. Yes, very nice. It's a good fit, no?

MACHIAVELLI

If you wish.

CESARE

What, you don't like it?

(beat)

Niccolo. Why didn't you tell me you were coming?

MACHIAVELLI

I did.

CESARE

No, you didn't.

MACHIAVELLI

I sent a letter to Agapito. You didn't get it?

(beat)

It must not have arrived. The snow. The roads are horrible. This weather. It's a miracle any of us... you didn't get it?

CESARE

What did it say?

MACHIAVELLI

It's an official directive. To your court. Here.

CESARE

Why?

MACHIAVELLI

I'm to be at your disposal. Should you wish to communicate anything. To the republic. I just arrived. Moments ago.

CESARE

I know that.

MACHIAVELLI

The snow is... miserable. I was lost for hours. Thought I'd freeze to death.

CESARE

Actually, you have been sent to keep your Signory informed of my whereabouts. And my doings. Correct?

MACHIAVELLI

More or less.

CESARE

To spy on me.

MACHIAVELLI

You could say that. Yes.

CESARE

(regarding the costume)

This is not for you. Take it off. You are many things, Machiavelli, but an old cuckold is not one of them. Or am I wrong about that? Ha! Perhaps I should ask Marietta. While the cat's away, eh?

(laughs)

Let's see what else we have here? What's this? Ah! *Il Capitano!* Just the thing.

(CESARE withdraws britches, breastplate, helmet and wooden sword, and gets Machiavelli into them.)

CESARE (CONT'D)

Yes, this is more like it. The braggart soldier. Full of bluff and bluster. Utterly ineffectual on the battlefield, but grandiose in his braggadocio. And a Spaniard, no less. Yes, that's the costume for you, Machiavelli. How does that suit you?

MACHIAVELLI

I don't like it.

(beat)

CESARE

Who were you waiting for in here?

(beat)

MACHIAVELLI

Francesco Orsini.

CESARE

Why?

MACHIAVELLI

I don't know.

(beat)

I understand you are reconciled with your captains.

CESARE

Yes, all is reconciled now. They gave me Sinigallia as a peace offering today. A token of their good faith. Their esteem. Their respect. Their loyalty. They opened their hearts to me. Many tears were shed. And many kisses. All is forgiven. We are as thick as thieves once again.

MACHIAVELLI

Good.

CESARE

Francesco can tell you all about it himself. He's right upstairs. With his brother Pagolo.

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MACHIAVELLI

I shall look forward to that.

CESARE

You didn't think to notify me of your arrival before meeting with one of my captains?

MACHIAVELLI

I was looking for Agapito to do just that, but the whole town is in a state of chaos. No one knows anything. You say there's a party upstairs? No one I spoke to knows anything about that. No one knows where you are, or what's going on. It's a madhouse out there.

(CESARE laughs.)

CESARE

Yes, I suppose it is. Or it might seem like that.

MACHIAVELLI

How did you know I was here?

(beat)

CESARE

The king of France is leaving Italy. He's given up on Naples. It was a hopeless adventure from the start. Now he wants nothing more than to leave this warring nest of hornets behind.

MACHIAVELLI

Leaving to what extent?

CESARE

That's a good question. I expect the Signory of Florence will want a good answer to it. Won't they?

MACHIAVELLI

Surely, he's not simply planning to--

CESARE

Florence will need a new protector in his absence. A protector from the likes of men like Vitelli and Euffreducci da Fermo. Those who wish to punish her for past treacheries. Those who wish greedily to possess her. Hm?

(spotting something in the trunk)

Ah! Here we are. Just the thing.

(MORE)

(He pulls a dress out of the
trunk.)

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Columbina--the whore! Yes. Put this on.

(beat)

What--you don't like it? Put it on.

(MACHIAVELLI doesn't.)

CESARE (CONT'D)

Put it on. It'll be fun. Great fun.

MACHIAVELLI

You'll have to excuse me.

CESARE

No. Put it on.

MACHIAVELLI

I beg you, your Excellency, do not compel me to do this--

CESARE

Put it on!

(beat)

If you love me, you'll wear it.

(Slowly, MACHIAVELLI begins to
put the dress on.)

CESARE (CONT'D)

Yes, it's been a very eventful day. Sinigallia has been restored to the Holy See. I met them all just outside the town, at the bridge over the River Misa. I had twelve thousand with me. They didn't expect that. They had no idea. Vitellozzo, Euffreducci, Pagolo and Francesco. My errant captains. One by one, I greeted them. First the hand, then the embrace. Each of them kneeled, in a show of their restored loyalty to me. Oh, there were tears, and lamentations, protestations of love, and sorrow, regret, and shame. I forgive you, brothers. I understand. Let us renew our bond...with a kiss.

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(beat)

Come, we shall claim this prize together. We will ride in through her gates as one. Come. And on we went, the five of us, together, across the bridge, toward the gates of the old fortress. But I told them their troops would have to remain across the river, so that my men could be quartered in the town. Naturally. They agreed. And with that, I separated my four brothers in arms from their armies. Now it was just them and me.

(MORE)

As we rode toward the gates of the fortress, I recalled the siege of Faenza, when the Manfredi boys finally surrendered, if only I would let them join up with us.

(laughs)

What fools they were. Well, they were young. Mere boys. Not like these fellows. And just as we arrived at the gates, I stopped. Let us not dine in this inhospitable old fortress, the foul house of Rovere, no. I know a good man in Sinigallia, perhaps the only good man there is in this town. He is an old family friend, Signore Buonanova. Let us dine at his home, on the Via Cavalieri. I signalled for Miguel, and sent him on ahead to announce our coming. Buonanova will make us comfortable, I said. You can count on it. Come. This way. It's not far. And off we went toward the town. You see, they were planning to kill me there, in the fortress. Once inside, Euffreducci's men were going to shoot me with crossbows, from above. This I already knew. And on we rode. Imagine the thoughts going through their heads. Should we run? Should we all draw and slaughter him here? Now? While we can? Nothing. On they went. Like prisoners to the scaffold. Hoping against hope. After all, I had forgiven them their treachery.

(laughs)

I told that story of yours. You know, the one about the girl in the cellar. The really ugly one.

(He laughs, then sings a bit of the old Italian love song, *Primo Amore* by Carlo Buti.)

You can never forget your first love

An old song tells us.

You cannot forget

The first time that we embraced...

On we went, till at last, ah, there it is: Buonanova's. Miguel waits outside, and tips his hat to me. All is in ready. A warm fire burns within, you can be sure of that. We will eat, and we will drink, and we will enjoy ourselves, as our deserts warrant we should. I dismount. Then Francesco. The dog. Pagolo, brother dog, climbs down. Then Euffreducci, the beast of Fermo. Vitelli holds back. He looks about. He looks at Miguel. He looks at me. And down he steps from his horse, like Lucifer falling from the heavens. I put my arm over his shoulder. Come, let's get drunk, old friend. And in we go, to Buonanova's courtyard. I lead the way. Till all four of them are in there with me, then I climb the steps into the house, and I stop, and I turn, and the courtyard gate slams shut.

(Sound of a gate closing like a trap.)

Two dozen of Miguel's finest appear, swords drawn. Pagolo cries out, "No, Excellency, wait!" like a little girl crying to her daddy. Eufreducci is speechless...

(imitating)

Eh, eh, eh--as they bind his hands. Francesco weeps. As well he should. Only Vitellozzo fights.

(MORE)

Reaching for his sword, but they are on him, forcing him up against the wall, they disarm him. "Cesare, Cesare, don't do this to me, you cannot. It is me, Vitellozzo." I went and took a piss.

(he laughs)

That was this afternoon. This evening, we finished the job. Upstairs. After dinner. After I spoke with each one of them. I sat Vitelli and Euffreducci, like this, back to back on the floor. Here. Imagine.

(sits back to back with
Machiavelli)

Then Miguel put a length of violin wire around both their necks, like this. And he put a stick through the wire, and twisted it, like this. Tighter and tighter. Euffreducci cried like a child. Why did you do this to me? I asked him. It was Vitelli. It was all his idea. I love you, Cesare. I love you, lord. Please, have mercy on me. Mercy. Oh, he cursed Vitelli, and he cursed himself for allowing Vitelli to mislead him. The devil, he called him. The devil. And Vitelli, he was worse, he begged me to wait, send to the pope, please, grant me forgiveness for my sins! Fearing for his eternal soul. Vitelli. What manner of man are you? You really think the pope would forgive the sins you have committed? Go on, Miguel. Twist the stick. Again. And again. And again. Tighter and tighter. Till their tongues stuck out like long hard horse cocks. Frozen in silence.

(laughs)

Then I turned to the Orsini. Pagolo and Francesco. Seeing the display presented by Vitelli and Euffreducci, they were quite distraught. You can imagine. You see--I couldn't tell you this before, Niccolo, but it was Francesco that killed by brother, Juan. Yes. It's true. They didn't know I knew that. But I know everything. I've been waiting for this night for years. You killed my brother. Now you will pay. Every member of your family will pay. We are going to kill all of you. First, Pagolo. Then Francesco. In Rome, last night my father invited Cardinal Orsini to a private little dinner party. There he was arrested. All of them. Gone. The way is clear. And guess who's next?

(Swiftly, CESARE draws his
dagger, and puts it to
MACHIAVELLI's throat.)

CESARE (CONT'D)

Are you my friend, or are you my enemy, Machiavelli? Look me in the eye. I can tell where a man's heart lies by looking into his eyes. Where is your heart?

MACHIAVELLI

See for yourself.

(Beat.

CESARE looks into MACHIAVELLI's eyes.

He lowers the dagger.)

MACHIAVELLI (CONT'D)

Either Caesar...or nothing.

(CESARE rises.

MACHIAVELLI kneels, and kisses CESARE's hand.)

CESARE

I want you to do something for me.

(beat)

Take that off.

(Music plays: *Primo Amore* by Carlo Buti.

Slowly, MACHIAVELLI rises, and takes off the dress.

CESARE takes off his Brigella costume.

Lights change.

MACHIAVELLI dresses to appear before the Signory.

CESARE dons his finest.)

MACHIAVELLI

(to the Signory)

Most illustrious lords of Florence, and my very particular masters...everything has changed. He has turned the tables utterly. He's trapped them all. All gone. And now the King of France is leaving. The bull is loose. And he's coming for us. Nothing will stop him this time. We have two, maybe three days--who knows with this duke? We must act. The fate of Florence lies in your hands.

(beat)

Everywhere in the streets, I hear his name. Crowds gather, at the cathedral, at the Bargello, even now, out there, in the square. They chant his name. They love him. They want him. We are losing them. To him. I've seen this captain-general, up close. I've spent time with him. I can tell you, he's not afraid of anything. He never rests. You never know where he is. You think he's one place, he's somewhere else. I don't know how he does it. They love him. He's got all the best men in Italy. He's a major power. A new major power. He's got an army like you've never seen.

(MORE)

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And what have we got? We have our bowels in a bucket. We are defenseless now. Board up your windows, look to your daughters, prepare for a siege...or open the gates.

(The sound of crowds chanting for Mussolini, "Duce, Duce, Duce...")

MACHIAVELLI (CONT'D)

Open up the gates. They love him. His soldiers love him. And those fuckers will fight. They will fuck us...utterly. Everything's with him. It's all at his back. He's the Son of Fortune. The new prince of Italy.

(beat)

I await your instructions.

(MACHIAVELLI exits.

CESARE alone.

Lights change.)

(CESARE drinks a goblet of wine.

It is night, in the Castle
Sant'Angelo, at the end of a long
hot summer in 1503.

CESARE is very drunk. He laughs.
Stumbles about. Falls to the
floor.)

CESARE

End summer. This is too hot. Hot. Thirsty. Something to
drink. Drink!

(beat)

Sleep.

(nods off, revives)

No. Never sleep.

(looks up at stars)

Tell me. Stars. What next? Guide me. I will follow.

(beat)

Stomach. Ugh. What...is this? Papa...I don't feel so good.

(He heaves up his guts.

Blackout.

The sound of falling into a vast,
bottomless cavern.

Lights up. A few weeks later.
Early morning sunlight reveals
CESARE dressed in a ragged tunic.
His fine clothes strewn all
about.

The sunlight wakes him, as if
from a nightmare. He shivers,
weakly. He seems a changed man.)

CESARE (CONT'D)

What day is it? The Conclave.

(He scrambles to the window, and
looks out, cautiously, looks
around.)

CESARE (CONT'D)

What's happening?

(Sees MACHIAVELLI, in the
shadows.)

CESARE (CONT'D)

Niccolo?

MACHIAVELLI

Your Excellency.

(he kneels)

CESARE

How long have you been there?

MACHIAVELLI

(rising)

I just got here. The door was open.

CESARE

Who's out there?

MACHIAVELLI

Agapito. Miguel. Some others I don't know. All yours.

CESARE

You sure about that?

(a laugh)

(They embrace.)

They look at each other.)

MACHIAVELLI

I heard...

CESARE

What? What did you hear?

MACHIAVELLI

I heard you were poisoned.

CESARE

Not true, actually. Bit of the fever. Fine now. Where've you been?

MACHIAVELLI

Oh, all over Italy it seems. Haven't been home in weeks.

CESARE

Ah, the demands of statecraft. Marietta missing you, is she? Baby crying for his daddy? Where's daddy? Where's daddy? Where is daddy.

(beat)

MACHIAVELLI

My condolences.

CESARE

Mm-hm.

(beat)

I'm thirsty.

(finds a pitcher or a cask)

What have you learned in your travels, Machiavelli? What can you tell me? What news?

MACHIAVELLI

We need a new pope.

CESARE

So I've heard. Who does the Ten favor?

MACHIAVELLI

Rovere.

CESARE

Pigs! Damn them for the grunting little pigs they are!
Rovere. Why Rovere?

MACHIAVELLI

Because the king of France favors him.

CESARE

God damn the King of France! God damn his lying French
throat! I will kill him. With my own fucking hands!

*

(beat)

To hell with them. Then there will be no pope. No pope!
Till hell rises up, if need be. No pope!

MACHIAVELLI

Italy needs a new pope. Nothing will happen anywhere, till
we all know who it is. We all have a vested interest in a
short, swift conclave.

CESARE

Till hell rises up.

(drinks)

Ah!

(offers it to Machiavelli)

You want some?

MACHIAVELLI

No, thank you.

CESARE

Water. Pure. I've got lots of it here. Food, water, good
men. What more do I need?

(beat)

You ever been up here before?

(he has not)

Papa used to say, "If you've got the Castle Sant'Angelo,
you've got Rome." That's why we moved in here.

(MORE)

Why we made all these improvements. It's the highest point in Rome. You can see the whole city from up here. What a view, eh? Originally build by the emperor Hadrian. To be his tomb, his mausoleum. His lasting mark on the City of the Seven Hills. Would he laugh, I wonder, to know now it's the finest fortress in Rome? Let 'em come for me. Let 'em try.
(laughs)

I hope they do.

MACHIAVELLI

The Ordelaffis are in Forli.

CESARE

They'll never take the rocca. Ugo's in command. He'll die before he surrenders the rocca of Forli. You watch..

MACHIAVELLI

The Manfreddi's are back in Faenza.

CESARE

No.

MACHIAVELLI

Maletesta's back in Rimini.

CESARE

That sick fuck.

MACHIAVELLI

And Sforza's back in Pesaro.

CESARE

Sforza! Giovanni? Giovanni Sforza is a dickless cuckold. I will crush him for this. What about Cesena?

MACHIAVELLI

Cesena is still holding out.

CESARE

Ha! Of course, they are. They love me in Cesena. And Imola?

MACHIAVELLI

Still holding, as well.

CESARE

Ha. You see? You see? The worst is far behind, Machiavelli, far behind.

MACHIAVELLI

What are your instructions?

CESARE

My instructions?

(beat)

Keep fighting.

(beat)

Do you know what happened to my father's body?

MACHIAVELLI

I only know what I was told.

CESARE

What were you told?

MACHIAVELLI

They laid him out in the great basilica. But the palace was looted. Once the word got out. There were riots.

CESARE

They say his face turned black, and swelled up with rot.
What happened to his body?

MACHIAVELLI

He was interred beneath the basilica, I believe.

CESARE

I heard they desecrated him. Dragged his bloated corpse all about the palace. By a rope tied round one ankle. Did you hear that?

MACHIAVELLI

Where were you?

CESARE

I was nearly dead myself. Funny. I never expected that.

MACHIAVELLI

You never expected what?

CESARE

That when my father died, I, too, would be at death's door.

MACHIAVELLI

Hm. Bad luck.

CESARE

It was the fever. The "double tertian," they call it here. The August Fever. Every summer. Here in the city. The air becomes foul. We always leave for the country in August. But this summer, we couldn't. Too much risk in leaving. No. First I got it. Then him. I don't know what happened to papa after I started retching. The last time I saw him, he was puking his guts out. Both of us. I crawled to my room in the palace. Sent for Doctor Torcella. He did the bleedings. They bled me, and bled me, and bled me.

(MORE)

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Didn't do any good. I told them to treat it the way they do back home. It's the fever, and the chill. Back and forth. That's what kills you. While you vomit, and shit yourself to death. They treat it with ice. I was barely awake, barely alive, as they stripped off my clothes, and dropped me into a tub of ice water. Then they slaughtered a bull. Right there in my room. And my skin turned blue. And they yanked me out, and wrapped me in the steaming carcass of the great beast. It's heart still beating beside me. And I took new life from the animal's flesh, and it drew the poison out of me. Till I was calm, and quiet, and warm.

(beat)

But I was in the thing too long. Something happened. My skin began to peel off. As I screamed. I was nothing but a shivering, bloody skeleton. A tortured soul in Hell. But I was still alive. Miguel came to me, and told me the old man was dead. It was chaos. I could barely walk. I told him to get to the treasury, get to the treasury, quickly! Get everything you can. I got the kids, Sanchia, Jeffery, everyone to the Passetto. There's a secret passageway. From Saint Peter's to here. Through the tunnel, we came. Me, wrapped in nothing but a bloody sheet, little Giulia in one arm, little Rodrigo in the other. Through the stone bowels of the old palace, and out over the rooftops of the Borgo, running, running, all of us, staggering, exhausted, all the way here. All the money, all the men, all the arms, all the family I could get. Here. To Sant'Angelo. Close up the great doors. Man the battlements. And wait. They say the devil came to him at the end.

MACHIAVELLI

Came to who?

CESARE

Papa. Appeared at the foot of his bed. To claim his due. But the old man said, "Fuck off, you!"

(laughs)

The devil himself.

(looks about)

Any news from Ferrara?

MACHIAVELLI

Your sister's safe.

CESARE

Is she well?

MACHIAVELLI

As far as I know.

(CESARE finds a letter.)

CESARE

Here. Can you get this to her?

MACHIAVELLI

Me?

CESARE

Take it with you. Please. I want her to know...I love her.
And I'm sorry. She's the only one...

(hears something)

Who's there?

MACHIAVELLI

What?

CESARE

I thought I heard someone.

(beat)

Help me.

MACHIAVELLI

I've just been to see Giuliano della Rovere.

CESARE

Rovere--why?

MACHIAVELLI

He asked to see me.

CESARE

Why?

MACHIAVELLI

Because he wanted me to bring you an offer.

CESARE

An offer?

(beat)

What is it?

MACHIAVELLI

Use your influence with the Spaniards in the college, get them to vote for Giuliano, and he'll make you his captain-general once he's got the white cap on his head.

CESARE

Is he willing to put that in writing?

(MACHIAVELLI withdraws a letter from his robe, and hands it to CESARE.)

CESARE reads the letter.)

MACHIAVELLI

You've got him.

CESARE

He hates me.

MACHIAVELLI

But now he needs you.

CESARE

Rovere's a snake.

MACHIAVELLI

He's a desperate snake. The one thing he's been living his whole life for--the crown of St. Peter--is almost in his grasp. And you can give it to him.

CESARE

I don't think you know Giuliano so well.

MACHIAVELLI

I spent several months with him in France. I've known him for years. I know how he thinks. We used to drink grappa, and play dice together, while we joked about all the fool's in Louis' court. He's old. He's practically feeble. He needs you. And he could be...guided--I think you could say--in the future. While he lasts. In the meantime...

CESARE

I need to restore my holdings in the Romana.

MACHIAVELLI

You need the blessing of a new pope. And the armies it brings. Send the word to your cardinals in the college: Rovere. On the first vote. You could be captain-general of the Holy See by midnight. There's no other man in Italy. Everyone knows it. You're the one. Only you can save us.

CESARE

I have seen...the other side. Been across the river and back. I rise from the dead. Italy...is mine.

(MACHIAVELLI kneels.)

CESARE goes to him.)

CESARE (CONT'D)

Tell Cardinal Rovere, yes. He will have the support of my cardinals in the conclave. I accept his offer of the Captain-Generalship. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Thank you. Friend.

(MACHIAVELLI kisses him.)

Lights change.

MACHIAVELLI turns to the audience, the Signory of Florence.)

MACHIAVELLI

Foolishly, he accepted the cardinal's offer.

(CESARE begins to shiver, from the fever.)

MACHIAVELLI (CONT'D)

Now Giuliano is sitting on the thrown of Saint Peter, and the duke is dead.

CESARE

Curse this fever.

MACHIAVELLI

He should never have trusted Rovere.

CESARE

It'll pass. It'll pass.

MACHIAVELLI

He who thinks that new favors will make men forget old injuries...is sorely mistaken.

CESARE

Rovere.

MACHIAVELLI

I understand he was killed in a skirmish. Outside Viana. They say a column of Spanish lancers attacked the town there at dawn. The duke was up and in the saddle before any of his men. And off he went at a full gallop.

CESARE

Ya Spanish dogs!

MACHIAVELLI

His own men, those few that stayed with him till the end, followed after. But so fast did he ride, and so hard, he didn't realize that he'd out-stripped them, and left all his comrades behind. He was a remarkable horseman.

CESARE

Cowards all.

MACHIAVELLI

On he went. On and on. Till the lancers noticed he was all alone. So they stopped and turned on him. This army of one.

CESARE

Where am I?

MACHIAVELLI

They unhorsed him. And surrounded him. Two score of them they say. Surrounded him with their lances. He fought them all.

(CESARE fights valiantly with an imaginary sword.)

MACHIAVELLI (CONT'D)

For a full hour, they say.

(CESARE weakens, exhausted, sinks to his knees.)

CESARE

Lucrezia.

MACHIAVELLI

Till at last, they all closed in on him, and ran him through like a pin cushion.

(CESARE gasps, wavers, and collapses onto the floor.)

MACHIAVELLI (CONT'D)

They stripped him of his glorious armor, and left his bloody, naked corpse in the dust. No one knows what exactly happened to the body. Perhaps he's still alive out there. Somewhere. But I don't think so. I believe we've seen the last of Cesare Borgia. There are those who thought he was... the one. A savior. Ordained by God to deliver us. From these barbarians all about us today. It seems they were wrong.

(CESARE looks up at MACHIAVELLI, weakly.)

CESARE

Either Caesar...or nothing.

MACHIAVELLI

(to the Signory)

Long live the republic.

(MACHIAVELLI kneels down beside CESARE, grabs his throat with one hand, and squeezes.

CESARE gasps.

Blackout.)

THE END