

Episode Two

The Secret Book of Grazia dei Rossi

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"The Secret Book of Grazia dei Rossi"

Episode Two

Opening Credits

FADE IN:

1 INT. MATURE GRAZIA'S ROOM, PALAZZO COLONNA, ROMA - DAWN 1

MATURE GRAZIA lies in her bed in her semi-darkened room when she hears, outside her window, the LOUD CLATTER OF HORSES HOOVES.

Mature Grazia hurries to the window and looks out to...

2 EXT. COURTYARD, PALAZZO COLONNA, ROMA - DAWN 2

A COURIER leaps off his horse and dashes into the palazzo.

3 INT. MATURE GRAZIA'S ROOM, PALAZZO COLONNA, ROMA - DAWN 3

Mature Grazia hurries away from her window to get dressed.

4 INT. MATURE GRAZIA'S ROOM, PALAZZO COLONNA, ROMA - DAWN 4

There is a KNOCK on the door.

Mature Grazia is now dressed.

MATURE GRAZIA

Yes?

The door opens and COSTANZA enters impatiently.

COSTANZA

Lady Grazia, Madonna Isabella needs you immediately. Please, come with me.

5 INT. CORRIDOR, PALAZZO COLONNA, ROMA - DAWN 5

Costanza hurries along the corridor, carrying the candle which casts ever-shifting shadows in the doorways and porticoes that are filled with sculptures, paintings, and tapestries.

Mature Grazia hurries from behind.

5 CONTINUED:

5

The young Courier stands outside one door. He appears flushed, sweaty, his clothes rumpled and mud-splattered.

As Costanza hurries by him to the door...

COSTANZA

Lady Madonna Isabella will not take long.

The Courier nods as Costanza pushes through the door, followed by Mature Grazia.

6 INT. ISABELLA'S ROOM, PALAZZO COLONNA, ROMA - NIGHT

6

Costanza ushers Mature Grazia into a large, resplendent room with decorated vaulted arches high overhead lit by candle light.

COSTANZA

Lady Grazia.

Costanza turns away and exits, closing the door. Mature Grazia stands inside the room, looking to...

An imposing woman standing before a candle-lit table with her back to Mature Grazia. She stands still for a long moment.

Mature Grazia silently observes her.

Finally, the woman turns to face Mature Grazia. MATURE ISABELLA is a regal woman of authority, aged 52.

MATURE ISABELLA

You had a goodnight's sleep?

MATURE GRAZIA

Yes, thank you, madama. I slept very well.

MATURE ISABELLA

I trust you find your quarters comfortable.

MATURE GRAZIA

Oh, yes, very comfortable, thank you. And I appreciate your selection of the room...

MATURE ISABELLA

We have a crisis, Lady Grazia, for which I need your services. So your arrival here is very timely.

MATURE GRAZIA

Yes, madama.

Mature Grazia moves to the writing table where she sits, removes a feather quill, and prepares to take dictation.

MATURE ISABELLA

I have received an urgent message from my son.

MATURE GRAZIA

Marchese Federico?

MATURE ISABELLA

He faces a terrible dilemma and the wrong decision could destroy us all.

MATURE GRAZIA

The Emperor's army?

MATURE ISABELLA

Precisely. They have reached Mantova and request safe passage.

MATURE GRAZIA

But if Marchese Federico grants them safe passage...

MATURE ISABELLA

We break our pledge of loyalty to France. And if he doesn't grant them safe passage...

MATURE GRAZIA

The Emperor's German army will march right through anyway.

MATURE ISABELLA

Wreaking vengeance. Exactly, Grazia. It is very good to see you have not lost any of your skills in logic and analysis.

Mature Grazia silently acknowledges Mature Isabella's comment.

MATURE ISABELLA

So tell me, Grazia, what would you do?
(MORE)

MATURE ISABELLA (CONT'D)

If it was your son who was the marchese and had to deal with the army of the Holy Roman Empire...

MATURE GRAZIA

Oh, but the marchese isn't my son and...

MATURE ISABELLA

(very firmly)

But what if he was.

Grazia hesitates, not wanting to make a mistake.

MATURE GRAZIA

I would advise him that Mantova must remain neutral at all costs.

MATURE ISABELLA

Yes, but how?

MATURE GRAZIA

He must grant the Germans safe passage. Promise them whatever they request. But then delay, indefinitely, fulfilling those promises. And inform the French and the Pope here in Roma of his actions.

MATURE ISABELLA

Hmmmh, yes, but... By granting them safe passage, the Germans will unite with their second army in Milano. And then Roma itself will be under threat.

MATURE GRAZIA

True, Madonna Isabella. But Marchese Federico will have saved Mantova.

Mature Isabella ponders this advice for a long moment.

MATURE ISABELLA

Is it really the writings of Aristotle that has armed you with such a mind?

MATURE GRAZIA

Aristotle. And the lessons of life itself.

6 CONTINUED: (3)

6

MATURE ISABELLA

Yes, we have both lived a great deal.

Mature Isabella turns away into the darkness of the room and stands there, pondering in silhouette. Finally...

MATURE ISABELLA

To Marchese Federico Gonzaga at Mantova.

Mature Grazia begins scratching words onto the page with her quill.

7 EXT. COURTYARD, PALAZZO COLONNA, ROMA - NIGHT

7

The Courier gallops out of the courtyard.

8 INT. MATURE GRAZIA'S ROOM, PALAZZO COLONNA, ROMA - NIGHT

8

Mature Grazia stands at her window watching the Courier. She moves to her writing desk where she ponders...

The manuscript of her secret book.

DISSOLVE TO:

9 EXT. DEI ROSSI BANK, BOLOGNA - DAY

9

Title over in handwritten Renaissance script:

Bologna

1489

A panorama of Bologna featuring the top of the Basilica di San Petronio, the dome of Santuario de Santa Maria della Vita, and the Asinelli and Garisenda towers.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

Although my trip to Ferrara for the wedding feast of Francesco and Isabella Gonzaga...

10 EXT. DEI ROSSI BANK, BOLOGNA - DAY

10

PAPA, stooped and weary, walks with GRAZIA to the bank along the narrow, cramped street.

10 CONTINUED:

10

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)
Had been very brief, only a matter of weeks
...

11 INT. DEI ROSSI BANK, BOLOGNA - DAY

11

Papa talks with a customer, his body staggering slightly.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)
It was long enough to provide a fresh look
at my father.

Grazia observes from behind her money-lending table.

Papa's hands with dirt under his fingernails.

Papa's face, unshaven, his shirt undone and unkempt.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)
At least part of the answer to Papa's
condition was to be found in the wine
barrel. He used to absent himself from the
bank on the occasional afternoon.

Grazia looks concerned, then turns to a customer who deposits a small
collection of books on her table.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)
Now, it was every afternoon.

She looks to Papa's table.

It is empty.

Grazia turns back to the customer, examining his books and nodding in
approval.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)
And so my responsibilities for the bank
increased. Each afternoon, I took my seat
behind the money-changing table ...

A MONTAGE of Grazia, dressed in ever finer clothes and looking older
and more mature, dealing with bank customers.

11 CONTINUED:

11

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

... and examined their goods, dispensed coins to this poor wretch or refused the pledge of that one. I actually became, in a strange sense, the Jewish queen.

12 INT. WAREHOUSE, BOLOGNA - DAY

12

A massive room filled with goods - baskets and boxes and trunks overflowing with silks and ribbons and chains and velvet-covered breviaries and boots and hats and cloaks and towels and sheets lit only by glints of sunlight sneaking in through the chinks between the wall planks.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

And the favourite part of my domain was the bank's warehouse which held all the goods left for credit.

Grazia sits in a corner with shelves of books. She pores over one such book in fascination.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

In particular, books pawned by students to pay their expenses. I was prohibited from attending the university, but I could devour the texts.

13 INT. DEI ROSSI BANK, BOLOGNA - DAY

13

A pile of books is dropped on the table before Grazia, who looks up to see ...

PIRRO, dressed as a student, looking down at her in surprise.

PIRRO

As I live, it is the Jewish queen. What has happened to your elephant?

Grazia, momentarily flustered, tries to recover.

GRAZIA

He has returned to the pyramids, sir. For a rest.

PIRRO

I did think him a handsome specimen.
Almost as worthy to grace the princess's
wedding as his rider.

Grazia is flustered again and so goes straight to business.

GRAZIA

Now, then, how can we serve you today,
young gentleman?

PIRRO

I wish to leave these books in pawn with
you. I have used up all my allowance and
am awaiting a fresh remittance from my lord
father.

Grazia, very businesslike, examines the books carefully.

Pirro observes her in amusement.

GRAZIA

But this is your Latin grammar.

PIRRO

So it is.

GRAZIA

How will you study without it?

Pirro stops short: he'd never thought of this.

GRAZIA

You must not place this book in pawn.

PIRRO

Oh, must I not now?

GRAZIA

Oh, please... Please forgive me.

PIRRO

Forgive you for what?

GRAZIA

My impertinence, sir. It is not my place
to instruct you. I only know that the
grammar book is the base on which the
entire edifice of your studies lies.

PIRRO

You are a scholar, then?

GRAZIA

In a small way.

PIRRO

I find nothing small about Latin and Greek, lady. I find them far too elevated for my poor understanding.

GRAZIA

The same with my brother. Boys cannot command the patience for the study of languages.

PIRRO

And girls?

GRAZIA

If girls were given an equal chance, they would take over scholarship in a single generation.

PIRRO

(teasing)

I wonder what my teacher will say when I tell him that.

GRAZIA

Oh, sir, please...

PIRRO

He never tires of warning us against women. Their wantonness, inconstancy, and proneness to folly. Women have no other purpose in this world than to serve men and to bear many children.

GRAZIA

And do you agree, sir?

PIRRO

I have in my family the example of women of great learning.

GRAZIA

Your cousin, Isabella.

13 CONTINUED: (3)

13

PIRRO

Then you understand that I would betray her trust if I did not espouse the cause of female scholarship.

She smiles at him. He smiles back, very warmly.

PIRRO

But if I do not pawn my books, how am I to eat?

GRAZIA

Have you not some articles of equal value but of more trivial importance?

He ponders a moment.

PIRRO

I could bring my silver bowl and pitcher. Ah, but then I might never wash myself. Do you believe cleanliness to be trivial?

GRAZIA

Hygiene is a sacred duty.

He silently agrees.

GRAZIA

Have you no tapestries or fine garments you can spare?

PIRRO

Not my clothes, lady. Spare me nakedness and the chill.

Grazia blushes in embarrassment.

PIRRO

But I do believe ...

And he spins around and hurries out with his books.

Grazia watches in amazement.

14 INT. DEI ROSSI BANK, BOLOGNA - DAY

14

An inlaid ivory box is set upon the table.

PIRRO

I am back, Jewish queen.

Pirro removes the lid from the box for Grazia to examine.

Inside the box, an exquisite set of chessmen, each group of pieces carved from a different gemstone: the bishops from onyx, the knights from malachite, the queen from chalcedony, and the king carnelian.

GRAZIA

But this is magnificent!

PIRRO

Ah, but trivial compared to the pursuit of Latin.

Grazia bows her head in embarrassment.

PIRRO

So, my queen, what amount can you extend me for this?

GRAZIA

(trying to be
businesslike)

Well... Twenty ducats at twenty per-cent. The chess set to be claimed within a year or else sold with all profit accruing to the bank.

PIRRO

Agreed.

Grazia picks up her quill, dips it in the ink, and begins to complete the agreement.

PIRRO

But of course that cannot happen. I will reclaim my chessmen within the month. But you must take care of them. This was a gift from Francesco Gonzaga for my service at his wedding. I treasure it above all else and entrust it to your safekeeping.

GRAZIA

Have no fear, sir. I shall keep it under my watchful eye.

14 CONTINUED: (2)

14

She blots the ink on the parchment and passes it to him.

PIRRO

One thing more.

She looks at him in anticipation.

PIRRO

You have given me a lesson today, lady.
For which I would like to do some small
service in return.

GRAZIA

(flattered)

Your kind words, sir, are payment enough...

PIRRO

No, no, there must be some small thing...

GRAZIA

(hesitant)

Well, there is... No, I dare not.

PIRRO

Out with it. A lady who does not dare
utter her own thoughts will never take over
the world of scholarship.

She hesitates: dare she?

GRAZIA

You are a student at the great University
of Bologna.

PIRRO

Indeed, I am.

GRAZIA

I hear much of this university. Yet we
live very retired and I rarely go out...

PIRRO

You wish me to show you the university?

15 EXT. STREETS OF BOLOGNA - DAY

15

Grazia walks with Pirro through the streets of Bologna.

15 CONTINUED:

15

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

I had never before walked out in a public street without being accompanied by some relation or servant. Jewish girls had been burned for doing not much more than taking the arm of a Christian gentleman on a public street.

16 EXT. PIRRO'S LODGING, BOLOGNA - DAY

16

They proceed down a narrow street to an imposing house decorated with the Gonzaga emblem: a dove on a dead tree trunk with the motto *Vrai armour ne se change*.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

And young men had been expelled from the university for the offense of keeping company with Jewish women. Yet none of these dangers were spoken of.

Grazia is confused as a PAGE with the Gonzaga colours on his sleeve shows them in.

17 INT. BALLROOM/LECTURE ROOM, PIRRO'S LODGING, BOLOGNA - DAY

17

Pirro and Grazia stand a large room with frescoes on the walls and ceiling.

PIRRO

This is where the professor dispenses his wisdom.

GRAZIA

And where do the students sit?

PIRRO

The floor.

GRAZIA

How long are the lectures?

PIRRO

An eternity.

GRAZIA

How often are they given?

17 CONTINUED:

17

PIRRO

All depends on the professor. Sometimes not for weeks on end. Then all at once, every day from the crack of dawn until sunset.

GRAZIA

And where do you study?

18 INT. BEDROOM/STUDY, PIRRO'S LODGING, BOLOGNA - DAY

18

The door opens on a small, sparsely furnished room with a bed, a chest, and trundle meant for a servant but occupied by a small brown and white mongrel: FINGEBAT. The dog leaps up in excitement and prances on its hind legs.

Pirro and Grazia stand in the doorway. Grazia appears very skeptical.

PIRRO

My study and ...
(pointing to Fingebat)
... my tutor, Fingebat.

GRAZIA

This is not the university. And that was no lecture room either.

PIRRO

But it is!

GRAZIA

What are your motives, sir, for escorting me to your private...

PIRRO

(laughing)
Wait, wait. Let me explain. You see, what we have here is a conundrum. The university is here, but not here.

GRAZIA

Impossible! Your own Thomas Aquinas tells us that no thing can be both here and not here.

18 CONTINUED:

18

PIRRO

Forget Aquinas and think for yourself.
What if the university is somewhere else?

GRAZIA

Then it cannot be here.

PIRRO

But what if sometimes it is here? And
sometimes it is somewhere else?

GRAZIA

A movable feast! The university as movable
feast!

PIRRO

Bravo! The university is no place. Or
every place. We gather where we can.

19 EXT. STREET WITH HOUSES, BOLOGNA - DAY

19

Pirro escorts Grazia down the street, pointing out one of the houses.
Fingebat is scampering along with them.

PIRRO (V.O.)

Too many students for the salon, we meet in
the professor's lodging.

20 EXT. PIAZZA DEL NETTUNO, BOLOGNA - DAY

20

Pirro, Grazia, and Fingebat cross the piazza (that after 1563 contained
the famous Fountain of Neptune, 74 years after this scene).

PIRRO (V.O.)

Or in the Piazza del Nettuno.

21 EXT. FIELD NEAR BOLOGNA, DAY

21

Pirro, Grazia, and Fingebat in a field outside the city.

PIRRO (V.O.)

Or even in a field.

They laugh together and play with Fingebat in the field.

21 CONTINUED:

21

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)
 That hour of freedom while we joked and
 laughed and dared the powers that be ...

22 EXT. DEI ROSSI BANK, BOLOGNA - DAY

22

Pirro and Fingebat escort Grazia to the door of the bank.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)
 ... gave me a tantalizing view of what life
 must be like for those less hampered than
 myself.

She scoops up Fingebat in her arms and the dog showers her wet kisses.

PIRRO
 You keep him, madonna. An impoverished
 student makes a poor master. Besides, look
 how happy he is in your arms.

She looks at him in great surprise.

He smiles, tips his hat, and jauntily turns away down the street.

PIRRO
 (calling back)
 Fingebat will guard my chess set. Until I
 return for it. Within the month.

She clings to Fingebat and watches him go.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)
 And suddenly, the house and the bank that
 had been so grand to me ...

23 INT. DEI ROSSI HOUSE, BOLOGNA - NIGHT

23

Grazia sits at the dining table and looks across to...

Papa, food spilt down his shirt, gulping down wine.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)
 ... appeared tiny and smothering. What it
 must have seemed to Papa - a prison.

24 INT. WAREHOUSE, BOLOGNA - DAY

24

Grazia sits in the warehouse with Fingebat. Instead of reading, however, she fondles Pirro's chess pieces.

GRAZIA

(to Fingebat)

Within the month. That's what he said.
But many things can happen in the space of
a month.

There is the NOISE of someone else ENTERING. Fingebat BARKS and Grazia looks to see ...

Papa approaching her with a letter, tears in his eyes.

Grazia, alarmed, quickly sets aside the chess set.

GRAZIA

Papa, what are you doing? Why don't you go
home and get some rest? You do not look...

But Papa breaks down completely and embraces her firmly.

GRAZIA

Papa... Papa...

He finally looks her in the eyes and, referring to the letter...

PAPA

The *cherem* has been lifted. I am once
again a Jew among Jews.

Grazia is thrilled.

PAPA

We can finally leave this insignificant
little post and...

25 EXT. DEI ROSSI HOUSE, MANTOVA - DAY

25

Title over in handwritten Renaissance script:

Mantova

1492

A view of the dei Rossi house as the family unpacks its goods from a cart in front. Fingebat scurries about, in and out, back and forth.

25 CONTINUED:

25

PAPA (V.O.)

... return to Mantova where the Gonzaga
princes will be pleased to welcome us.

Among the family are Papa, Grazia, YOUNG JEHIEL (now 16), CHILD GERSHOM (aged 5), AUNT DOROTEA (33), and RICCA (20). Dorotea, brandishing the keys, harshly issues commands as they unpack.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

Why had the Wad Kellilah decided to
reinstate my father and allow us to return
to the home of my childhood?

26 INT. ENTRANCEWAY, DEI ROSSI HOUSE, FERRARA - NIGHT

26

A body covered in black is carried out on a stretcher by attendants,
followed by a weeping Dorotea and Ricca.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

Because, my son, a year earlier Papa's
brother, my Uncle Joseph, had died.
Leaving Aunt Dorotea without a husband and
Ricca without a father.

Past a very sombre Papa.

27 INT. SYNAGOGUE, DEI ROSSI HOUSE, FERRARA - DAY

27

Papa in formal wear and Dorotea in bridal gown stand side by side
facing a Rabbi in the sanctuary.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

And Jewish law stipulates as an unmarried
male Papa must take the place of his dead
brother.

28 INT. DINING ROOM, DEI ROSSI HOUSE, MANTOVA -- EVENING

28

Grazia, Young Jehiel, Child Gershom, Papa, Ricca, and Dorotea sit
silently, glumly at the dinner table.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

And so, Ricca became my sister and Dorotea
my mother.

28 CONTINUED: 28

Dorotea glowers at everyone around the table.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

But never were two women less alike than my mother and Dorotea. My prerogatives disappeared one by one.

29 INT. KITCHEN, DEI ROSSI HOUSE, MANTOVA - DAY 29

Grazia kneads the dough for bread under Dorotea's glower.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

First to go, my place in the bank. Dorotea insisted I was needed in the household and not behind the counting table. So your uncle Jehiel took my place.

30 INT. ENTRANCEWAY, DEI ROSSI HOUSE, MANTOVA - MORNING 30

Young Jehiel and Child Gershom, with their books, head out the door.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

Next to go, books and learning. We had no tutor and the synagogue school accepted only boys.

Grazia watches with envy the boys leave. Fingebat BARKS at...

Dorotea closing the door, locking it with her keys, and scowling at Fingebat.

31 INT. GRAZIA'S BEDROOM, DEI ROSSI HOUSE, MANTOVA - NIGHT 31

Grazia tutors Young Jehiel with books by candlelight on her bed. Fingebat lies on the bed.

GRAZIA

You are supposed to be teaching me what you are learning all day, not...

YOUNG JEHIEL

But I cannot learn anything if it makes no sense to me.

31 CONTINUED:

31

GRAZIA

So I must tutor you.

YOUNG JEHIEL

Then I will have learned it. And then I
can, in turn, teach you.

She slams him with a pillow. Fingebat jumps up and BARKS.

He falls off the bed and leaps back up, grabbing a book with which to
strike her back.

GRAZIA

Not the book! Wait! Don't use the book!
No, no...

They LAUGH. Fingebat BARKS.

32 EXT. PIAZZA SORDELLO & DUCAL PALACE, MANTOVA - DAY

32

A procession of Mantova's Jewish citizens - men, women, rabbis,
shohets, clerks, serving maids - dressed in their finery, cross the
piazza, greeting one another and proceeding to the main entrance to the
massive Ducal Palace, the Corte Vecchia.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

But I was also attracted to the glitter of
the outside world. And when Marchese
Francesco invited the Jewish banking
families of Mantova to the annual reception
for the Jews, I put away the books ...

Among them, Grazia in her finest dress along with Papa, Dorotea, Young
Jehiel, and Ricca.

33 EXT. GONZAGA GARDEN, DUCAL PALACE, MANTOVA - DAY

33

A large formal garden outside the Gonzaga Reggio. In the centre, a
large white silk under which sits FRANCESCO GONZAGA, now 26, and his
wife, ISABELLA GONZAGA, now 17, on identical gilded armchairs elevated
on twin dais. They are surrounded by courtiers, dogs, and two dwarfs
tumbling at their feet.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

... and entered into the celebrations.
(MORE)

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

We joined the Marchese and his wife,
Madonna Isabella, in their garden.

Grazia strolls through the garden with Papa, Dorotea, Jehiel, Ricca,
and DOZENS other Jewish family members, GREETING and CHATTING.

Grazia steps aside to gaze at...

Isabella, dressed in virgin blue, framed in gold, and seated against
red cushions, fondling the gold bracelets on her arms.

Beside her, Francesco stands and delivers a speech.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

And listened to the Marchese make a speech
about the new *monte di pietà*, the first
Christian loan banks.

FRANCESCO

... that I have recently authorized in
Mantova at the request of Fra Bernardino da
Feltre. The intention of these banks is to
raise capital from the charity of
Christians throughout Mantova and to lend
this, at very low interest, to the poor and
needy. So as you can see, the emphasis is
on Christian charity, and not on the making
of more money...

Grazia looks around absolutely bored, when she spots...

Pirro grinning at her from the edge of the white silk.

She SNICKERS to herself at his forthrightness.

He winks.

She LAUGHS aloud. Francesco falls silent. All is HUSHED.

FRANCESCO

(to Grazia)

You find my address amusing, signorina
ebrena? Does it appeal to your wit?

Everyone turns and stares at Grazia.

Who is absolutely mortified, when...

PIRRO

I cannot attest to the lady's wit, sir, but
I can bear witness to her courage.

ISABELLA

How do you know this Jewess?

PIRRO

She was the Jewish queen at your very own
wedding. Perhaps you do not recognize her
without her elephant.

The is a GENERAL TITTER of laughter.

Isabella cracks a smile.

Ricca is intrigued by Pirro's interest in Grazia.

Pirro approaches Grazia and offers his hand.

PIRRO

Come, Signorina Grazia, allow the
illustrissima to look at you up close.

He escorts Grazia to Isabella. Grazia curtsies low before her.

ISABELLA

Ah, yes. The Jewish queen. You honoured
my father, the Duke, with your poise and
courage on that beast.

PIRRO

She was magnificent.

Grazia blushes in embarrassment.

ISABELLA

Look, she blushes. A girl who can master
an elephant need not be shy of a few
Gonzagas. We are Christians, not savages.
We don't eat young Jewish maidens.

PIRRO

Unless we're very, very hungry.

There is more general LAUGHTER when Francesco intercedes.

33 CONTINUED: (3)

33

FRANCESCO

Enough of this jesting! Lord Pirro, fetch the documents. Honoured Lady, please repair with the ladies and children to the summer sitting room.

Pirro bows before Grazia and Isabella and then hurries off.

Isabella motions to Grazia to accompany her and the pair lead all the other ladies away from the garden.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

The Marchese never did like me from that first moment. But Madonna Isabella came to a completely different conclusion.

Grazia turns back to steal one more glance at ...

Pirro dashing away in the opposite direction.

Isabella makes note of Grazia's look.

34 INT. SYNAGOGUE, DEI ROSSI HOUSE, MANTOVA - NIGHT

34

Grazia and Ricca bow in prayer with Dorotea and several other ladies. They WHISPER fervently.

RICCA

Jehiel told me something happened today.
At the bank.

Grazia barely acknowledges, feigning disinterest.

RICCA

He came. Looking for you.

GRAZIA

For me? Who?

RICCA

Him!

Dorotea shoots them a glance and they fall silent.

Once Dorotea returns to her prayers.

34 CONTINUED:

34

RICCA

He said that tomorrow he wants to return
and arrange to have his chess set sent from
our bank in Ferrara.

Grazia reacts with a start. Which Ricca notices with satisfaction.

RICCA

I saw how he looked at you. Christian
princelings bring nothing but trouble to
Jewish girls.

GRAZIA

Don't be foolish, Ricca. I no longer work
in the bank. So when he comes tomorrow to
collect his chess set... I cannot see him,
nor he me. And that's all there is to it.

Grazia returns to her prayers, but Ricca is not convinced.

35 INT. CORRIDOR, DEI ROSSI HOUSE, MANTOVA - DAY

35

Grazia sneaks down the corridor to a corner and peers around.

She sees Dorotea, her keys around her waist, escorting a MULETEER
delivering firewood into the back of the house.

Grazia dashes furtively to the open door, peeks quickly to see...

Dorotea and Muleteer disappearing into an adjacent room.

Grazia bolts out of the open door.

36 EXT. STABLE, DEI ROSSI HOUSE, MANTOVA - DAY

36

Grazia dashes across the stable yard to the muleteer's wagon, jumps
onto the back of it, and pulls a rug over herself.

A moment later, Grazia hears the FOOTSTEPS OF THE MULETEER.

He climbs into the wagon and urges his horse forward.

Grazia is jolted in the back of the wagon as it bounces across the
stable yard and out the gate.

37 EXT. STREETS OF MANTOVA - DAY 37

The wagon bumps and bounces down the muddy street.

Grazia peers out from the rug but can only see...

The muddy ruts of the road. The wagon wheels SQUEAK and GROAN through the thick mud.

Grazia strains to see where she is when she spots...

38 EXT. DEI ROSSI BANK, MANTOVA - DAY 38

The wagon, bounces and jostles in the ruts towards the bank.

She pulls herself out from under the rug and, trying to maintain her balance, prepares to leap from the wagon.

But the bouncing is so severe that instead of jumping, she slips and slides out of the wagon and into a vat of mud on the street with a SCREAM.

Her chemise is wet and filthy, her face splattered with mud.

Passers-by look at her in amazement.

She sits in comical desolation, when...

PIRRO (O.S.)
May I be of assistance?

Grazia looks to see Pirro standing behind her.

PIRRO
(bowing before her)
What has brought a queen down so low?

She is mortified and wants to just disappear.

He extends his hand and pulls her up out of the mud. They move out of the middle of the street, with Grazia in a particular hurry to be out of such plain view.

PIRRO
May I conduct you to your house before you take a chill?

GRAZIA
Oh, no! You mustn't!

38 CONTINUED:

38

He is taken aback.

GRAZIA

I am sorry, but you see, sir, I am gone without permission and if my stepmother...

PIRRO

(laughing)

Say no more. I have been in similar straits myself. Although such predicaments are more common among the male sex than...

GRAZIA

I had no other way to deliver my message to you than in person.

PIRRO

A message? To me?

GRAZIA

About your chess set.

PIRRO

Ah, yes.

GRAZIA

I have the chess set here. I brought it with me from Bologna.

He smiles at her.

PIRRO

Then the least I can do is to arrange some suitable garb so you can proceed home unnoticed.

She looks at passers by who observe her.

39 EXT. SHOP IN MANTOVA - DAY

39

They emerge from the shop, Grazia in a plain woollen gornea, the mud cleaned from her face. He leads her down the street.

GRAZIA

Where are you taking me?

39 CONTINUED:

39

PIRRO

I must smuggle you past your stepmother and into your home.

GRAZIA

Home?

PIRRO

(teasing)

You do not wish to return?

GRAZIA

Of course. I must. I must.

PIRRO

But there may be time for a brief detour?

She says nothing, silently assenting. He smiles.

PIRRO

I cannot offer you an elephant. But us Gonzagas, as you are no doubt aware, have a fine stable of horses.

40 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE OUTSIDE MANTOVA - DAY

40

Pirro and Grazia gallop freely across the countryside on horses. She revels in the freedom of the wind, the space, and of her companion. He smiles broadly at her as they approach a forest.

41 EXT. FOREST GLADE NEAR MANTOVA - DAY

41

They gallop into the forest, Grazia following Pirro.

He reins in his horse in a small glade of aspens with a small stone basin with a bubbling spring. Pirro dismounts.

She rides up to him and he stops her horse and helps her out of the saddle into his arms.

They stand pressing against one another, staring into one another's eyes.

He is calm and gracious, smiling warmly at her.

41 CONTINUED:

41

She returns his gaze with uncertainty, frightened of what she feels yet unable to resist it.

GRAZIA

Where... What is this...?

PIRRO

This is the Bosco Fontana. The magic fountain. Do you want to know why I brought you here?

GRAZIA

Why, sir?

PIRRO

First, you must stop calling me sir.

GRAZIA

But I am a lowly Jewess and you are...

PIRRO

I am Pirro Vincenzo Gonzaga of Bozzuolo, the second son of Lord Luigi. And you...

(holds her close)

You are a brave, wild, beautiful young lady who has risked her life to come out with me.

She trembles, her feelings soaring with his words.

He leans into her and kisses her. She kisses him back, sweet and innocent, yet hungry and full of desire.

They part and stare into one another's eyes.

Then he silently slips her cloak off her. She acquiesces. He removes his doublet. She undoes her dress.

They embrace again as the WIND SWELLS in the aspens and the horses skitter and WHINNY.

She lies down on the ground, looking up timorously yet tenderly, her shoulders bare.

He lies on top of her, his torso naked, his eyes burning into hers.

They kiss, sweetly, then passionately, then uncontrollably, as the aspens SWISH and SWELL in the wind and the HORSES NEIGH.

41 CONTINUED: (2)

41

She suddenly GASPS and tenses with a stab of pain.

He hovers over her, gently feeling his way into her.

She then clutches at him, pulling him down on top of her and into her, surrendering completely to the sensations and the passion.

He carefully and tenderly thrusts against her, then more and more ardently, until his emotions too are carried away in a wave of uncontrollable love.

42 EXT. FOREST NEAR MANTOVA - DAY

42

The little spring of water bubbles up from the stone basin. Pirro's hand dips into it.

PIRRO

This is a magic fountain. An ancient temple to the goddess of love. I brought you here because those who anoint themselves here come under the special protection of Venus.

He drops the water over Grazia's forehead. Both are now fully dressed.

PIRRO

And we need all the protection we can enlist.

She bends down to the spring and dips her hand in. She then drops the water over his forehead.

PIRRO

Because we have entered upon a dangerous game this day, lady.

They look at one another with the absolute confidence of young love.

43 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE NEAR MANTOVA - EVENING

43

Grazia and Pirro gallop back towards the city.

44 EXT. STREET OUTSIDE THE DEI ROSSI STABLE, MANTOVA - NIGHT 44

Pirro, holding his horse knocks at the gate and looks along the wall to...

Grazia hidden in the shadows by the wall.

The gate opens to reveal SANDRO, the stable hand with a lantern.

PIRRO

Good evening. It is Lord Pirro Gonzaga.
My horse has a problem with one of his
shoes and I need a stable to house him
until my groom can come and mend it. Could
I presume on your generosity for a stable
stall?

Sandro bows to Pirro and opens the gate to him.

Pirro leads the horse in, following Sandro.

On cue, Grazia scurries through the open gate behind the horse.

45 EXT. STABLE YARD, MANTOVA - NIGHT 45

Grazia slinks along the stable yard wall as Pirro and Sandro leads the horse into a stall.

PIRRO

Thank you. If you leave me the lantern, I
will unsaddle and brush him.

Sandro bows, puts the lantern down, and ambles back to the house,
past...

Grazia, hidden in the shadows.

She moves into a stable where Pirro greets her with a kiss.

PIRRO

You must go inside before you are missed.

But she kisses him again, not wanting to go.

PIRRO

We must be strong, my love. So that we may
be weak another day.

45 CONTINUED:

45

GRAZIA

I dare not come out again. This place is locked and bolted like a jail.

PIRRO

Then I will come to you. Wednesday, in the afternoon. Here, in this horse stall.

They kiss again.

PIRRO

Now go.

She reluctantly pulls herself away.

GRAZIA

Wednesday.

PIRRO

Wednesday.

And she slips across the stable yard and into the house.

46 INT. DINING ROOM, DEI ROSSI HOUSE, MANTOVA -- EVENING

46

Another silent dinner, all eating under Dorotea's strict eye: Grazia, Papa, Young Jehiel, Child Gershom, and Ricca.

YOUNG JEHIEL

The prince said he had some trouble with his horse.

PAPA

Prince? Who...?

YOUNG JEHIEL

Pirro Gonzaga.

Grazia does nothing to betray her interest in that name.

Especially as Ricca watches her closely for any reaction.

PAPA

Oh, he is not a prince. He is the son of a lord, Luigi Gonzaga, who is uncle to our Marchese Francesco.

46 CONTINUED:

46

YOUNG JEHIEL

He wished to stable his horse with us.
Until one of his grooms can tend it. A
loose shoe or some such thing.

PAPA

So his horse is here now?

YOUNG JEHIEL

Yes, I myself saw it, although I cannot for
the life of me find anything wrong with his
shoes.

Grazia snickers to herself.

Ricca watches.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

And slowly, day by day, Wednesday drew
closer. Wednesday, Wednesday...

47 INT. CORRIDOR, DEI ROSSI HOUSE, MANTOVA - DAY

47

Grazia secretively scurries down the corridor.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

... Wednesday...

Ricca appears, watching Grazia suspiciously.

Grazia slips out the door. Ricca watches.

48 EXT. STABLE YARD, MANTOVA - DAY

48

Grazia crosses the stable yard and into the stall.

Grazia stops at the sight of...

Pirro standing in the stall, smiling at her.

She dashes into his arms and they kiss.

PIRRO

Quickly...

He motions to...

48 CONTINUED:

48

The hayloft above the stalls.

He cups his hands and she places her foot into them, her hands on his shoulders, and he boosts her up through the opening to the loft.

49 INT. STABLE LOFT, MANTOVA - DAY

49

Grazia pulls herself through the opening and crawls through the hay.

A moment later, Pirro follows her through the opening.

She lunges at him, but he holds her off. They SPEAK SOFTLY.

PIRRO

We must talk.

GRAZIA

Of what?

PIRRO

Of love.

GRAZIA

(pressing against him)

Why talk of love when we can do it?

PIRRO

Because if we get caught, we may both burn.
For sure, you will.

She hesitates, taking this in.

PIRRO

So we must either stop this now...

She recoils in alarm, clearly rejecting such an option.

PIRRO

... or we must find a way to be together
and married.

GRAZIA

But how? We are from two entirely
different worlds, and...

PIRRO

I have sought help in this matter.

49 CONTINUED:

49

Grazia looks at him in alarm.

PIRRO

I have confided our passion to my
kinswoman, Madonna Isabella.

Grazia reacts in horror.

PIRRO

I know, it was a calculated risk. But I
hoped she might help us. And she has
offered to take us under her protection.

She WHOOPS in delight and throws herself into his arms.

PIRRO

Wait, wait! Grazia...

She looks up at him.

PIRRO

It is not that easy, my Grazia. She will
take us under her protection and give us
permission to marry, on one condition.

GRAZIA

She wants me to become a convert.

Pirro silently indicates yes.

She sinks away from him.

GRAZIA

No... No, I could never.... I could
never...

PIRRO

You would have to take instruction.

GRAZIA

I am a Jewess, my lord. How could I
suddenly change?

PIRRO

Madonna Isabella has spoken to the head of
the *casa dei catecumeni* and ...

GRAZIA

The House of Converts?

PIRRO

... and he has agreed to take you in and teach you himself.

GRAZIA

On the Via dei Grechi?

PIRRO

It will only be for a short while until you learn the catechism.

GRAZIA

I will never, ever see my family...

PIRRO

Madonna Isabella herself will sponsor you for baptism.

GRAZIA

My father... my brothers...

PIRRO

And once you are baptized, then we will join ourselves in a Christian marriage.

GRAZIA

Never see them again.

PIRRO

I know what a sacrifice this will be for you...

GRAZIA

I could never... It is too much... I could never...

PIRRO

A Christian marriage is the only course open to me if I am to remain an honourable man.

GRAZIA

No.. No... How could I ever... It is too much...

PIRRO

Shhhhh. Here...

(MORE)

PIRRO (CONT'D)

(offers her a letter)

A letter from Madama. Read it. It might help you.

GRAZIA

No! No, please! Do not ask! It is out of the question. I could never give up my family and everything...

PIRRO

Grazia... Grazia... Do you love me?

Grazia stops short.

PIRRO

I know my love for you. And that I would sacrifice anything - anything - to be with you. Would you not do the same? Would you not at least consider it?

Grazia reluctantly takes the letter.

PIRRO

We have a week. Madama has told me that either I must bring you into the *casa dei catecumeni* or give you up. If you decide against me, I have agreed to never see you again.

She gasps in horror and shakes her head in denial.

PIRRO

Grazia... Grazia, listen to me. I have seen a woman burned, Grazia. I have seen her flesh sizzle on the faggots. I cannot face that for you. Read the letter. Think. Consider. My whole future. The rest of my life. Our lives. Entrusted to you.

She gazes at him fondly. He gazes back. They are drawn together, their lips finally touching, very softly, then more and more passionately, when...

There is a LOUD SHRIEK.

Startled, they both turn to see...

49 CONTINUED: (4)

49

Ricca, watching them from the top of a ladder in the loft opening. She scrambles down the ladder.

Grazia and Pirro are horrified.

GRAZIA
Quickly. You must away.

PIRRO
But I cannot abandon you when...

GRAZIA
Go. It will only be worse if you stay.

He hesitates, not wanting to, but then clambers down the ladder. Grazia carefully stuffs Isabella's letter into her dress.

50 EXT. STABLE YARD, MANTOVA - DAY

50

Grazia climbs down the ladder and turns to find...

Papa, Dorotea, and Ricca approaching her from the house. Behind them, Young Jehiel and Child Gershom.

RICCA
He was with her. Up in the loft. I saw it with my own eyes.

DOROTEA
For shame!

PAPA
Is this true?

GRAZIA
Yes, honoured padre. I was about to...

PAPA
Do not speak! You have nothing more to say to me. Go to your chambers. Now! Go!

Grazia moves past them to the house.

DOROTEA
For shame!

Her brothers give her looks of sympathy.

51 INT. GRAZIA'S BEDROOM, DEI ROSSI HOUSE, MANTOVA - NIGHT 51

Grazia curls up in bed with Fingebat very distressed.

After a moment, she remembers the letter and pulls it out.

ISABELLA (V.O.)

Your virtue and goodness prompts me to offer the hand of friendship. Listen to my advice. Convert to Christianity. So that as virtuous a soul as yours should not remain deprived of heavenly consolations. The Madonna of Mantova, mirror of pure sanctity, will be a Mother to you; my sister, both of my sisters-in-law, myself and many others will be mothers to you; nor will you lack a gracious husband because Pirro Vincenzo Gonzaga longs for you so much that the wretched man has been at risk of losing his head for love of you.

The elegantly written script of the letter.

DISSOLVE TO:

52 INT. GRAZIA'S BEDROOM, DEI ROSSI HOUSE, MANTOVA - DAWN 52

Grazia sleeps with Fingebat and the letter when Fingebat suddenly awakens and BARKS.

Grazia rouses herself and looks up to see...

RABBI ABRAMO moving to her bedside.

RABBI ABRAMO

Good morning, my daughter.

Grazia quickly hides the letter under the coverlet.

RABBI ABRAMO

I am here on behalf of your loving parents. I have assured them that the evil within you is the evil that dwells in all women. This evil can be exorcised.

Grazia recoils.

RABBI ABRAMO

Fear not, my daughter. I will come to you twice each day and recite prayers over you. You will be bled every morning. And purged every night. And the apothecary will administer a klyster twice each week to completely cleanse the evil in your body. We will begin this evening after sundown.

He smiles and rises to leave.

GRAZIA

May I see my parents now?

RABBI ABRAMO

You will see no one save myself. And the apothecary.

GRAZIA

My brothers? Jehiel and Gershom?

RABBI ABRAMO

No one. For a full revolution of the moon. Your parents are deeply humiliated and prefer not to see you until you have been transformed back into the virtuous daughter they can be proud of.

He exits, leaving her alone to consider her fate.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

That night the rabbi came to me as he had promised and chanted his ritual prayers and offered me his purge.

53 INT. GRAZIA'S BEDROOM, DEI ROSSI HOUSE, MANTOVA - NIGHT

53

Grazia lies in her bed in the dark.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

That night, at midnight...

From outside the window comes the CHANT:

WATCHMAN (O.S.)

Ring, oh ring, the heavenly bell. 'Tis the sixth hour of darkness and all is well.

53 CONTINUED:

53

Grazia throws back her coverlet and, fully dressed, sneaks out of her bed.

54 INT. YOUNG JEHIEL/GERSHOM BEDROOM, DEI ROSSI HOUSE, MANTOVA - NIGHT

Young Gershom sleeps peacefully as...

Grazia stands over him, gazing down at him wistfully. She bends over and kisses him gently on his cheek.

Young Jehiel sleeps soundly as Grazia moves to his bed.

Grazia, suddenly overcome, cannot hold back her SOBS. She muffles her crying and hurries to the door when...

YOUNG JEHIEL
(whispered)
Grazia!

She turns back to Jehiel, now awake.

GRAZIA
(through her sobs)
Shhhh!

They embrace and WHISPER.

YOUNG JEHIEL
I'm coming with you.

GRAZIA
No! You must not... I must go alone... I must...
(breaks into sobs)

He holds her close.

YOUNG JEHIEL
Then go. But remember, I am always with you. Always.

She pulls away from him and hurries out.

55 INT. CORRIDOR, DEI ROSSI HOUSE, MANTOVA - NIGHT

55

Grazia, carrying Fingebat and a bag of belongings, sneaks down the corridor to the door.

55 CONTINUED:

55

There she hesitates, looking back and wiping away tears.

Then, with resolve, opens the door and hurries out.

56 EXT. GATE TO THE DUCAL PALACE - NIGHT

56

Grazia, still holding Fingebat, waits at the sentry box outside the great portal of the Gonzaga Reggio as two men approach from inside, a GUARD and Pirro. Fingebat BARKS and leaps out of her arms, dashing towards Pirro.

GUARD

It is just that it is not customary, my lord. And a Jewess!

But Pirro breaks away from the Guard and hurries to Grazia, as Fingebat BARKS and leaps up at them.

PIRRO

Oh, my sweet Grazia. Oh, my lady.

He embraces and kisses her.

PIRRO

How come you here?

GRAZIA

I have fled my home, my family, my faith.
I have come to you.

PIRRO

You have made me the happiest man in all Mantova.

He embraces her again in deep relief and joy.

PIRRO

But now you must sequester yourself in the *casa dei catecumeni*.

GRAZIA

Yes, I know. But I had to see you.

PIRRO

Come, I will escort you there myself.

(to the Guard)

I shall return within the hour.

56 CONTINUED:

56

He takes her arm and they proceed down the street, followed by Fingebat.

57 EXT. STREETS OF MANTOVA - NIGHT

57

Pirro escorts Grazia through the dark streets, followed by Fingebat.

GRAZIA

And when will I see you? Can you visit me there? Can you... ?

PIRRO

Oh, my dear, sweet Grazia. The Marchese is moving the court to Marmiolo for the summer. And I must accompany him.

GRAZIA

Can you not return for a visit, or...?

PIRRO

I am in the service of the Marchese and am entirely at his disposal. My time is not my own, my love.

GRAZIA

So you cannot come...?

PIRRO

I will send a note.

She appears distressed.

PIRRO

Do not lose hope. Not now. You have just made a choice that has freed us both. Freed us to be together. You must now hold fast and undergo your instruction. It is only a matter of time before we will be man and wife.

Satisfied, she silently assents.

They come to a stop before...

58 EXT. HOUSE OF CONVERTS, MANTOVA - NIGHT

58

A two-storey structure with a small, adjoining cloister surrounded by an iron picket fence and tucked away on a piazza.

Pirro and Grazia approach, she very tensely.

They stop before the gate and Pirro pulls the bell-pull three times.
THREE GONGS SOUND.

She clings to him.

PIRRO

Be brave, my Grazia. This will not be
difficult for someone so spirited and
passionate. And a lady scholar as well.

A MONK appears.

MONK

Can I be of service, signorina?

She looks at Pirro who looks back at her.

GRAZIA

Write me.

And she turns from him and walks to the gate and Monk, followed by Fingebat.

59 INT. CHAMBER, HOUSE OF CONVERTS - NIGHT

59

A small room with a straw pallet on the floor, a crude pine chest, a cracked pitcher, a chamber pot, and one small window.

Grazia moves into the room with Fingebat. She feels as desolate as the room.

In the doorway, the Monk holds a candle.

MONK

Goodnight, signorina.

He turns away closing the door and plunging the room into darkness.

She slumps onto the pallet and WEEPS.

60 INT. MEETING ROOM, HOUSE OF CONVERTS - DAY

60

Grazia, clothed in a coarse, black hooded cloak, sits tensely waiting in a bare room with stiff chairs and a plain, wooden desk.

The door opens and FRA PIETRO enters, a slim young man with a warm smile dressed in priest's robes.

FRA PIETRO
Good morning, Signorina.

GRAZIA
Good morning, padre.

He sits on a chair beside her.

FRA PIETRO
I trust your first night with us was comfortable. You are, after all, now in the hands of the Lord, Jesus Christ.

GRAZIA
Yes, padre. But...

FRA PIETRO
Yes?

GRAZIA
I have need to send a note to my parents. To tell them where I am and that I am well.

FRA PIETRO
I shall have a pen and vellum sent to your room later.

GRAZIA
Thank you.

FRA PIETRO
You will be here for some time, signorina, to complete your instruction before you can be baptized.

GRAZIA
Yes, I understand.

He reaches out and takes her hand, looking into her eyes.

60 CONTINUED:

60

FRA PIETRO

We must all be certain that your desire to convert is sincere.

GRAZIA

Oh, I am sincere, padre. And I am most eager to get on with it.

FRA PIETRO

Good. It is well that you begin at once. For there are trials of both spirit and flesh ahead.

GRAZIA

Flesh?

FRA PIETRO

Only the mildest mortifications, my child. We need not suffer severe trials of the body. Christ suffered those for our sake.

Grazia nods skeptically.

61 EXT. CLOISTER, HOUSE OF CONVERTS - EVENING

61

Grazia walks around the perimeter of the cloister, followed by Fingebat. She remains in the same cloak. Her hair is drab.

FRA PIETRO (V.O.)

Every evening, you are to make ten rounds of the square. And you are to stop at each corner and repeat five times...

Grazia stops at a corner and recites:

GRAZIA

The meek shall inherit the earth. The meek shall inherit the earth.

62 INT. CHAMBER, HOUSE OF CONVERTS - DAY

62

Grazia sits on her straw pellet studying a book, *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis. Her cloak appears more unkempt, her hair hangs down greasy and lank. Fingebat lies beside her.

62 CONTINUED:

62

FRA PIETRO (V.O.)

I have had your books removed from your room. Virgil must be replaced by *The Imitation of Christ*. It is filled with the spirit of the love of God.

63 INT. DINING ROOM, HOUSE OF CONVERTS - NIGHT

63

A thin gruel is spooned out into a small bowl on a bare table in front of Grazia. She appears more drab and disheveled.

FRA PIETRO (V.O.)

We Christians are abstemious and ascetic, after the way of our Lord Jesus Christ. Who will reward your fast with everlasting grace. The sacrifice of a piece of bread is a small price to pay for eternal salvation.

She eats the gruel unenthusiastically.

Around her are other converts, men and women clearly of lower social standing.

64 INT. CHAPEL, HOUSE OF CONVERTS - EVENING

64

Grazia is on her knees fervently praying before a crucifix.

FRA PIETRO (V.O.)

And you must pray. For in the food you eat, the pallet you sleep on, and the company you keep with lesser souls, these will help you grasp the heart of the Christian faith. The transformation of flesh into spirit. You must come to know Christ in your own blood and your own flesh. Only then can you truly embrace Him.

GRAZIA

Oh sweet Jesus, please let me be worthy of my lord Pirro. And please have him send me a letter, a note, some word of his love. Oh, Jesus...

The Monk enters and moves to her.

64 CONTINUED:

64

MONK

Signorina, excuse me. You are wanted
below. There is someone to see you.

Grazia is thrilled and looks up to the crucifix impressed and grateful.

65 EXT. CLOISTER, HOUSE OF CONVERTS - EVENING

65

Grazia enters the dusky square and sees...

Two figures huddled in a corner shrouded in dark cloaks.

She crosses to them and discovers...

Papa and Dorotea.

GRAZIA

Papa!

They rush into one another's arms and hold tightly.

Grazia then notices...

Dorotea giving her a reproachful look.

Papa and Grazia pull apart and look at one another.

PAPA

We tried to come before, Grazia. But the
visit took some arranging.

DOROTEA

You do not eat the flesh of the pig and
other such unclean stuff?

PAPA

Please, Dorotea. This is no way...

DOROTEA

If she sets herself against God's
commandments, it will go all the harder for
her when she wants to come back to us.

PAPA

She can come back. She will come back...

GRAZIA

Papa, Papa, what news of my brothers. Are they well?

DOROTEA

As well as can be, considering the shame they...

PAPA

(cutting her off)

They are well, daughter. But they miss you and ask every day when you are coming home.

GRAZIA

I miss them too.

Dorotea SNORTS derisively.

PAPA

Jehiel's studies are just not the same without his favourite tutor. He curses his Greek and will not listen to my help at all. And Gershom, he is too young to understand and will not believe that you are not... And your father... He needs you more than the two brothers together.

(takes her hand)

Why not come with us now, daughter?

Grazia reluctantly shakes her head no.

PAPA

Why not, child? What have we done to make you so bitter. How can we make amends? Please tell us so we can...

DOROTEA

Do not lower yourself to beg her. She is not worth it.

Grazia glowers at her and, abruptly:

GRAZIA

Excuse me, I must return to my prayers.

She spins around and marches back across the square.

65 CONTINUED: (2)

65

PAPA

(calling after her)

No, Grazia. Come back to us... Come home
to your loving family... My dearest
daughter... My Grazia... Grazia...
Grazia...

His words echo in the square and sting her eyes, but she does not turn
back.

66 INT. DINING ROOM, HOUSE OF CONVERTS - NIGHT

66

Another bowl of gruel among the other converts.

Fra Pietro appears.

FRA PIETRO

Grazia...

She rises and follows him out.

67 INT. MEETING ROOM, HOUSE OF CONVERTS - NIGHT

67

Grazia sits with Fra Pietro.

FRA PIETRO

I have just come from the court at
Marmiolo where I attend Madonna Isabella.
She is very pleased at your progress and
has requested you attend a fete there next
week.

Grazia is stunned and wide-eyed.

GRAZIA

Oh, but I cannot go!

FRA PIETRO

You cannot refuse the Marchesana's
invitation.

GRAZIA

But I have nothing to wear!

67 CONTINUED:

67

FRA PIETRO

The Marchesana has sent some things for you. Including some of her own beauty potions.

Grazia starts to smile in delight, but catches herself.

68 EXT. GONZAGA COUNTRY ESTATE, MARMIROLO - DAY

68

A magnificent castle in the rural area of Marmirolo, just outside of Mantova (no longer in existence; destroyed in 1798).

Resplendently dressed courtiers move about in a very rigid, formal manner engaged in stiff conversation.

Dogs bark and cavort about.

Dwarfs skitter about doing comic acrobatics.

Grazia, in a beautiful dress and with well-appointed hair, moves among the courtiers trying not to look out of place.

Two WOMEN COURTIERS eye her up and down and turn away unimpressed.

Grazia then spots...

Pirro, gorgeous and gallant, moving towards her.

They meet but dare not touch or betray their passion; their looks and body language are a study in repression.

PIRRO

Grazia...

GRAZIA

Lord Pirro. How have you been since we last met?

PIRRO

I am expected to ride out with Marchese Francesco every morning. A pleasant duty, I must admit. Do you ride? I mean, other than elephants.

GRAZIA

It is my greatest pleasure, after Virgil.

PIRRO

After Virgil, of course. You are quite the lady scholar.

GRAZIA

Would you prefer me light-minded and bird-witted?

PIRRO

I prefer you...
(drops to a whisper)
Above everything else.

GRAZIA

My lord...

They stand close longing to embrace but rigidly holding their courtly poses.

PIRRO

But I must go to the Marchese. He is a demanding taskmaster.

GRAZIA

Do you not wish to be free of this servitude? To be your own man rather than his?

PIRRO

Few of us are vouchsafed such liberty. Even my cousin, the Marchese himself, is not his "own man". He is the hired captain of the Venetians and that makes him their creature as much as I am his. They pay his living just as he pays mine. So I must to him and earn my pay. I will see you at dinner?

GRAZIA

At dinner and...
(drops to a whisper)
Any other time you care to.

He smiles and turns away.

69 INT. SALA GRANDE, MARMIROLO - EVENING

69

Rows of tables seat dozens of well-dressed courtiers. At the head of the room, Marchese Francesco and Marchesana Isabella sit at a table elevated on a dias. Isabella converses with ladies, Francesco with his hunting dogs.

Grazia sits with Pirro as a large plate of food is set before her. She eyes it with wonder and craving, and is about to eat, when...

ISABELLA
Signorina Grazia!

All turn to Grazia.

PIRRO
She wants you at the head table. This is a high honour.

GRAZIA
I just want to eat.

Grazia rises and walks past all the other courtiers who eye her, impressed. Including the two Women Courtiers who had so disdained her earlier.

Grazia sits at Isabella's side.

ISABELLA
I have been told that you are quite the scholar. Do you know Greek and Latin? And what about Hebrew?

GRAZIA
Yes, I have a basic mastery of Latin and know a little Greek. And more than a little Hebrew.

Grazia looks past Isabella to...

Marchese Francesco, eyeing her with open scorn.

ISABELLA
Oh, I do regret having to abandon my own studies. But the heavy crush of court business leaves me no time. But it is my dream to commission certain works of scholarship, just as my adored Papa did.
(MORE)

69 CONTINUED:

69

ISABELLA (CONT'D)

Perhaps you might help me in this enterprise, signorina ebrea.

GRAZIA

It would be an honour.

ISABELLA

Before you leave us, I must speak with you. Fra Pietro says you are a most compliant *conversa*.

(studies her a moment)

We shall see.

70 EXT. GONZAGA COUNTRY ESTATE, MARMIROLO - NIGHT

70

Court musicians PLAY FROTTOLE, light and tuneful secular songs, on a balcony.

Below the courtiers dance under candle light and starlight.

Among them, Pirro and Grazia, twirl about to the music.

They stare into one another's eyes.

He whispers in her ear.

She moves in a state of rapture.

71 INT. SUITE, GONZAGA ESTATE, MARMIROLO - DAY

71

Grazia is ushered into a large, lavishly decorated suite where Isabella dictates her shopping list to a SECRETARY.

ISABELLA

I need, at once, blue cloth for a *gamorra*. An engraved amethyst. And a rosary of black onyx and gold. Oh, and I must also have black cloth for a mantle. Have no concern for cost, I must have these things from Venezia.

The Secretary bows and moves out, while Isabella turns to Grazia.

ISABELLA

Now then, signorina ebrea, let us see your fair face.

Grazia moves to her and bows, keeping her eyes downcast. Isabella lifts her face and stares intensely into her eyes.

ISABELLA

What do we see? Do we see faith? Purity of purpose? Dedication? Or do we see wantonness and desire? I fear there is turmoil in the eyes.

GRAZIA

Oh no, *illustrissima!*

ISABELLA

Our illustrious lord, the Marchese, believes this conversion of yours has been planned for purposes other than good Christian ones. He fears that it is not Christ you have chosen but the charm of a well-turned calf and a pair of blue eyes.

Grazia holds her gaze, but makes no denial.

ISABELLA

On the other hand, Fra Pietro assures us that you are sincere. And so I must make my own investigation. By the time we are done, I shall either stand sponsor at your baptism, or wash my hands of you.

GRAZIA

And what must I do to win your...?

ISABELLA

Be sincere. Do not play a part. I always know when I am being deceived.

At that moment, Lord Pirro enters the room.

Grazia does not flinch, but maintains a neutral mask.

ISABELLA

(to Pirro)

Ah, cousin. How good of you to join us.

PIRRO

Good day, Marchesana. And you, signorina.

GRAZIA

Lord Pirro. What a surprise to see you.

PIRRO

I am here to bid farewell. I am off to
Brescia to join my lord in the lists.

Grazia hides her dismay while Isabella watches her intently.

ISABELLA

What do you think of my cousin, signorina?
Is he not fair? Do his eyes please you,
lady?

GRAZIA

Lord Pirro is a very fair gentleman with
eyes that are full of the wisdom and valour
of the Gonzaga family.

ISABELLA

A shame to bid him farewell so soon, don't
you think?

GRAZIA

Not if he is called into the service of the
Marchese.

ISABELLA

Then farewell, fair cousin. We look
forward to your return, do we not,
signorina Grazia?

GRAZIA

Indeed, we do, Madonna Isabella.

PIRRO

Until I return, my thoughts will be with
you both.

He bows to them, turns away, and walks out.

Grazia watches him leave, holding back her emotions.

71 CONTINUED: (3)

71

ISABELLA

Come over here. I have something to show you.

Grazia moves to Isabella who is at a table holding an exquisite lace cap. She hands the cap to Grazia.

ISABELLA

Take this. It is my reaffirmation to stand beside you at the font. Wear it on the day of your baptism. And on that day, we will become sisters in Christ.

Isabella bends over and kisses Grazia on the cheek.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

I had passed the test of sincerity. I was to become her sister in Christ. But would I become her cousin in the world? Could I trust her to honour her undertaking?

72 INT. CHAMBER, HOUSE OF CONVERTS - DAY

72

Grazia, in her black hooded cloak, struggles to concentrate on her *Imitation of Christ*. Fingebat lies beside her.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

During the days that followed, thoughts of my brothers intruded constantly.

73 EXT. CLOISTER, HOUSE OF CONVERTS - EVENING

73

Grazia, in her cloak, forces herself to make her rounds of the square.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

And of my father. Had I sacrificed everything golden in my life for dross?

74 INT. DINING ROOM, HOUSE OF CONVERTS - NIGHT

74

Grazia dines on the gruel.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

Doubt, fear, regret, all undermined my resolve.

75 INT. CHAPEL, HOUSE OF CONVERTS - NIGHT 75

Grazia struggles to pray in the chapel

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

Work. Study. Pray. Be patient and your prayers will be answered. And they were. Within weeks, Fra Pietro pronounced me ready for baptism...

76 INT. GRAND ROOM, GONZAGA REGGIO, MANTOVA - DAY 76

Isabella holds forth on her dias surrounded by dozens of courtiers and citizens.

MATURE GRAZIA (V.O.)

... and the Marchesana would be pleased to have an audience with me, not in private, but at her weekly levee, the forum for announcing births, deaths, marriages, and betrothals.

Among those gathered is Grazia in a fine dress. She observes the proceedings with tedium.

ISABELLA

I have decided to grant you fishing rights in the Lago Minore. In exchange for half the catch. Is that understood?

CITIZEN ZOPPO

(bowing)

I understand, your *illustrissima*. And I am most grateful.

Citizen Zoppo bows and backs out of the room.

ISABELLA

Now then, signorina *conversa*...

Grazia steps forward and moves to the base of dias.

ISABELLA

We hear that you have completed your studies and are ready to join us in Christ's sisterhood. Congratulations.

Everyone in the room APPLAUDS.

ISABELLA

Have you thought of what name you will take when you are reborn as a Christian?

GRAZIA

With respect, madama, I hope to take the name of my betrothed.

ISABELLA

Betrothed?

GRAZIA

Yes, Lord Pirro Gonzaga.

Isabella's face suddenly hardens.

ISABELLA

Well, I am afraid that my illustrious husband has made other plans for Lord Pirro.

Grazia staggers in shock. Both women try to contain themselves to courtly protocol, but their emotions clearly infest the following exchange.

GRAZIA

But madama, as you fully know, he was promised to...

ISABELLA

The Marchese has arranged a match with a princess of Savoia.

GRAZIA

He was promised to me!

ISABELLA

She has a dowry of thirty thousand ducats and lands inherited from her illustrious mother.

GRAZIA

But I heard nothing...

ISABELLA

Lord Pirro is prohibited from writing to you now that he is betrothed to another. His honour forbids it.

GRAZIA
 (aggressive, indignant)
 And his promises? His sworn word?

ISABELLA
 (very assertive)
 He has but one sworn word and that is to
 his liege lord, my illustrious husband.
 And, of course, to God.
 (crosses herself)
 It is God's will, girl.

GRAZIA
 God's will!? How can God's will be served
 in such... ?

ISABELLA
 (enraged)
 Are you refusing Christ, girl? Refusing
 baptism? Are you? Or are you not?

Grazia staggers in a state of shock and finally emits one LONG,
 HEARTBROKEN SCREAM that ECHOES through the room.

The courtiers GASP and CHATTER while Isabella stares at her in
 imperious anger.

And Grazia collapses in a heap on the floor.

FADE OUT:

77 INT. MATURE GRAZIA'S ROOM, PALAZZO COLONNA, ROMA - NIGHT

77

Mature Grazia sits at her writing desk looking at ...

The 34-year old letter from Isabella advising her to convert.

She folds the letter up and puts it away in her storage box.

FADE OUT:

END OF EPISODE TWO