

SCENE 1

Leonardo's studio
Florence 1503

It is thirty years later. Leonardo da Vinci, disillusioned with his work in Milan for Cesare Borgia - and unpaid - has moved his household back to Florence. He has taken space for a studio and lodgings, filling five rooms on two floors in part of the friary of the Santissima Annunziata.

His 'apprentice' Salai has already been with him for 13 years. Salai likes the easy life. He had been known to steal and cheat when younger, and he spends too much money on clothes and merrymaking.

It is clear that Leonardo has deep feelings for Salai. Salai, protective of his position, will tease Leonardo, but would never respond. Nor would Leonardo reveal the true extent of his love for Salai, accepting that it is 'a love that cannot speak its name'.

<PROJECTION ON CURTAIN: FLORENCE 1503>

LEONARDO is stood hunched over a table studying some drawings. SALAI is lying on the couch. Leonardo is taking Salai to task about his carefree attitude

LEONARDO

Really Salai. I do wish you'd take life a little more seriously.

SALAI

But I do take it seriously Leonardo. Why, only last night I came home early didn't I?

LEONARDO

Early? Early this morning you mean. Where had you been?

SALAI

I was working! I was studying the effect of candlelight reflected off a wine glass..

LEONARDO

Very amusing. And what conclusion did you reach.

SALAI

I am of the opinion that it looks much better when the glass is empty.

(Pause)

Having previously been full that is...

LEONARDO

And who was paying to fill it up eh? I can't see how you can afford to spend every night out drinking.

SALAI

But Master, I'm young - that's what we do. There's plenty of time to take things seriously when I'm as old as yo--. Well, when I'm older.

LEONARDO

May I remind you that you're twenty-three, you're a man, not a boy any more...

(LEONARDO puts down his pen and comes over to Salai)

LEONARDO

... you need to start making some money of your own. Start thinking about your future.

#5 SETTLE DOWN *Leonardo / Salai* [PLAY MUSIC](#)

SALAI

Fear not dear Leonardo. I have good news. I now have the patronage of a noble lady.

LEONARDO

I don't believe it. I thought you'd stopped telling your little lies, truth will come to daylight you know.

SALAI

It is true! I swear it. On my mothers' life

LEONARDO

You hardly knew your mother... Well I'll believe it when I see it. Do I know her? What's her name.

SALAI

Who? My mother?

LEONARDO

No you young fool. Your 'patron'.

SALAI

Aragona Orsini.

LEONARDO

Orsini? The wife of Ludovico Orsini?

SALAI

The one and the same. She's getting on a bit - she's nearly as old as you - but... not to put too fine a point on it... she loves me. Madly

LEONARDO

Oh.. now I understand. Yet another of your little adventures.

SALAI

No It's not like that. Well not exactly. I really like her - and she's paying me well.

LEONARDO

I'm sure she is. And you'll pay too if her husband suspects you've been fooling around. He's a powerful man Salai.

SALAI

Don't worry. Her husband's not a problem - he thinks I visit her to paint her portrait.

LEONARDO

And do you?

SALAI

I've made a start.
(smiles cheekily)

LEONARDO

Well you'd better make a finish - he'll want to see what he's paying for one day.

SALAI

Oh I'll tell him I was so unhappy with my work that I destroyed it. He'll understand artistic temperament - he's such a fool!

(SFX CUE: <The doorbell rings>)

(Neither of them move to answer it)

LEONARDO

Salai! Will you get up off your backside and see who it is.

*(Salai leaves and returns with **Father Pietro**.
He and Leonardo greet each other with an
embrace)*

PIETRO

Ah my dear Leonardo, how are you keeping. Well, I trust.

LEONARDO

Very well Father Pietro. And yourself?

PIETRO

Yes, Yes. Mustn't complain eh. Just a touch of rheumatics you know.

SALAI

I expect it's all that kneeling on stone floors Father.

LEONARDO

(mocking)

Yes, thank you for that diagnosis Salai... now make yourself useful and pour the good Father a glass of *Tuaca*, there's a good lad..

PIETRO

No no, I really shouldn't, not at this time of day.

LEONARDO

Oh... are you sure?

PIETRO

Well, erm, perhaps just a small one... just to be sociable. The boy is quite right Leonardo. It's an occupational hazard I fear... and those stone benches... I sometimes lose all feeling in my rear end for hours at a time.

(Leonardo and Salai exchange glances)

LEONARDO

Do please sit down Father. It's very kind of you to drop in and see us.

PIETRO

Oh I'm afraid this isn't a social call Leonardo.

(Salai hands him a glass)

Thank you Salai. I'm sorry to have mention it but there's the er, little matter of the...

(almost whispers)

rent.

The priore asked if I would have a word...

LEONARDO

Yes of course. I was just saying to Salai how I've overlooked it wasn't I Salai.

SALAI

You were? Yes, you were... you've been so tied up with your work for the Medici, Master, it simply slipped your mind.

PIETRO

(Shakes his hand dismissively)

Oh yes, I understand - the Medici... You artists are so wrapped up in your work. But it has been quite a few months now, perhaps you wouldn't mind...

LEONARDO

Of course, leave it with me, I'll attend to it. This week I'm sure.

PIETRO

I'm so sorry to have to mention it Leonardo, I'm just following orders you see.

LEONARDO

Don't worry Father. Its no problem. Salai, more Tuaca

PIETRO

No, no! Well... perhaps just a little!

(Salai tops up Pietro's glass)

It is rather good isn't it!

LEONARDO

Yes - It's from Borgia's own cellar you know.

PIETRO

I really am sorry about this rent business Leonardo. You do understand don't you.

(Rising and downing the drink)

This week you say. Thank you for the drink - I'll see myself out.

LEONARDO

You're always welcome father. Thank you for reminding me.

(Pietro leaves. Salai shows him out of the room)

LEONARDO

Has he gone?

SALAI

Yes, he's gone. Are you going to pay them?

LEONARDO

Oh let them wait. They're hardly living on bread and water. Oh! Or perhaps they are?

(Laughs)

Anyway if the worst comes to the worst I'll offer to do them a painting. Nevertheless, I do need to bring some money in Salai. There are bills to be settled and Borgia is still refusing to pay us. We should have taken more of his wine.

SALAI

What will you do Master?

LEONARDO

Well, I'm going to have to take a commission. Tomorrow I'm meeting a client of my fathers. He's a silk merchant, wealthy, and 'patron of the arts'! He wants me to paint a portrait of his wife. Let's hope a deal can be struck.

SALAI

Of course it can. You are a great artist and he'll pay handsomely. It will be a masterpiece.

(moving to the table)

Anyway, it will pay more than all these strange drawings.

LEONARDO

That may well be so, and needs must. But you know Salai, I take no great pleasure in painting for money...

(shrugs)

I'd much rather continue my scientific studies. Mark my words, these 'strange drawings' will in time prove far more useful than a portrait of some rich aristocrat's wife. Look,
(*excitedly pulling a drawing off the table*)
I have invented a machine that can make men fly!

SALAI

Men.. fly...!! Leonardo, have you taken leave of your senses? Everyone knows such things are quite impossible!

LEONARDO

Salai, once men have tasted flight they will walk the earth with their eyes turned skywards, for there they have been and there they will long to return...

#6 BELIEVE

Leonardo / Salai/ Chorus

[PLAY MUSIC](#)

(*CHORUS/Dancers join in for end of song?*)

CURTAIN