

#1 OVERTURE ORCHESTRA

<PROJECTION ON CURTAIN: FLORENCE 1473>

**Piazza della Signoria, outside the Pallazo Vecchio.  
Florence 1473**

**It is a splendid afternoon in August, the day of the Regatta del Palio, on the Arno. A public holiday. The Piazza is gaily decorated for the festivities. Steps lead up to the doors of the Pallazo.**

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*The stage is filled with **HOLIDAY-MAKERS, MONKS, SAILORS, SHIPWRIGHTS, MASQUERS,** laughing and talking. Amidst the busy crowd we see **BASTIANO,** watching the people with the keenness that befits a state spy.*

#2 HOLIDAY! CHORUS PLAY MUSIC

#3 FANFARE ORCHESTRA

**ANNOUNCER**

Signori! Signorini!. The next event is the one we have all been waiting for - the Medici Trophy. This year's challenger is Rudolfo and his crew from Pisa, against the champion, your own... Zuane!

*(CROWD cheers)*

**ANNOUNCER**

Please make your way down to the river!

*(The CROWD dash away to watch the regatta. BASTIANO comes forward)*

**BASTIANO**

Fools look at them. All this fuss over a boat race. Still, it keeps them in their place I suppose. If the people are happy life is easier for a state spy like me.

*(ARAGONA enters with her blind old mother GIOVANNA on her arm. They are in lighthearted conversation)*

**BASTIANO**

Hello... look who's coming. This could be my lucky day

*(ARAGONA sees Bastiano and stops)*

**GIOVANNA**

Why have you stopped my daughter, is something wrong?

**ARAGONA**

No no Mama. I've just seen an old friend that's all. Here, you rest on the steps while I have a word.

**BASTIANO**

Aragona, what a pleasant surprise. I get the impression you've been keeping well out of my way. Is it something I said or something I did?

*(BASTIANO takes hold of Aragona and pulls her to him)*

**ARAGONA**

Let go of me Bastiano. I'm not one of your ladies of the night.

**BASTIANO**

Come off it. You know you want me, why do you tease me so.

*(ARAGONA breaks away)*

**ARAGONA**

I don't tease and I don't want you! How many times must I tell you.

**BASTIANO**

Well I want you and I'm used to getting what I want in this City. I can make a lot of trouble for you Aragona. What would your 'poor old mother' do then, eh.

*(BASTIANO takes Aragona's arm and tries to kiss her. She scratches his face)*

**BASTIANO**

*Puttana!* (Bitch)

**GIOVANNA**

Is everything all right Aragona?

**ARAGONA**

Yes mother, just a bit of fun.

*(ARAGONA goes back to her mother. The CROWD return muttering. ZUANE is talking to his crewman)*

**ZUANE**

I don't understand it. I've never experienced anything like that before.

**BASTIANO**

What happened?

**ZUANE**

We lost!

**BASTIANO**

*(Cynically)*

You lost! Zuane the great champion lost?

**ZUANE**

We were leading coming round the last bend when suddenly we slowed down - but they didn't. I can't explain it.

**BASTIANO**

Well it's obvious isn't it.

**ZUANE**

Obvious?

**BASTIANO**

Yes. It must have been witchcraft. You were cursed!

*(The CROWD react muttering agreement. The idea quickly spreads among the defeated boatman's friends, who gather round)*

**ZUANE**

What makes you say that? Who would practice such sorcery against us?

**BASTIANO**

See the old woman over there, the one who looks... well, looks like a witch... I know that family, they're nothing but trouble. And, I believe the daughter there is Rudolfo's lover!

*(The **BOATMEN** react)*

**BASTIANO**

I swear I heard them plotting against you. You never stood a chance.

**ZUANE**

Of course, that explains it. WE WERE CURSED!  
IT'S WITCHCRAFT....! and there's the witch...

*(The **CROWD** becomes excited and rush over to Aragona and Giovanna, chanting)*

**CROWD**

WITCH! WITCH! WITCH! WITCH!

**ARAGONA**

No! No! Leave her alone she's just a blind old lady.

*(**ARAGONA** tries to protect her mother but the **CROWD** seize Giovanna and drag her from the Pallazo steps)*

**CROWD #1**

Take her to the river.

**CROWD #2**

To the river.

*(**LUCREZIA DEL CACCIA**, who is known and respected locally, climbs the steps)*

**LUCREZIA**

WAIT! WAIT! LISTEN TO ME.

*(The **CROWD** stop)*

**LUCREZIA**

You all know who I am, and I promise you this lady is no witch. She is Giovanna Farnese - there isn't a more God-fearing family in the whole of Florence!

**CROWD#1**

She cursed Zuane's boat.

*(The crowd grow restless again)  
(At the moment of greatest commotion the Pallazo doors swing open. At the head of the*

*steps stands* **LORENZO DI MEDICI**, ruler of the Florentine state, his wife, **CLARICE**, and two **GUARDS**)

**LORENZO**

STOP THIS.... STOP THIS AT ONCE, OR I'LL HAVE YOU ALL ARRESTED FOR RIOTING. GUARDS!

*(LORENZO gestures and the GUARDS move to protect Giovanna)*

**CROWD #1**

It's witchcraft! She's a witch.

**CROWD #2**

Put her in the river, then we'll see!

**LORENZO**

SILENCE! A witch? That's a serious charge.

*(ARAGONA runs forward and kneels before Lorenzo)*

**ARAGONA**

*(Tearful)*

I beg you Signor. This is my dear mother Giovanna Farnese. She cannot see! She is no witch...

**CLARICE**

Lucrezia. Can you speak for this woman?

**LUCREZIA**

Yes I can. The Farnese are good people. There is no evidence.

**LORENZO**

Then who accuses this poor woman

**CROWD**

Zuane. It was Zuane...

**ZUANE**

No! NO! It wasn't me. It was Bastiano. He said he heard them put a curse on my boat.

*(BASTIANO furtively tries to leave. The CROWD hold him)*

**LORENZO**

Bastiano! I might have known it. Guard! Arrest him.

*(The GUARDS grab Bastiano)*

**BASTIANO**

Get your hands off me - *I'm* the Grand Inquisitor! It's not true

*(Points at Zuane)*

- he lies!

**BOATMAN**

Zuane is telling the truth. We all heard him accuse the old woman.

*(The CROWD murmur agreement)*

**ARAGONA**

He threatened revenge because I refused him. He's an evil man.

**LORENZO**

He is indeed. Bastiano you've gone too far this time. I shall see to it that you are sent to the Bargello, and when you get out don't ever think about coming back to Florence. You'll be arrested on sight. Take him away.

**BASTIANO**

*(Shouts back)*

Oh-Ohhh.. you'll pay for this Aragona Farnese. I WILL HAVE MY REVENGE ON YOU!

*(The GUARDS take him away. The CROWD disperse.*

*ARAGONA comforts her mother. They are left alone with Lucrezia)*

**ARAGONA**

Signorina. You saved my mother's life. You know my family but I don't even know your name. How can we ever repay your kindness.

**LUCREZIA**

Please, I only did what any good citizen would do. It's Lucrezia, del Caccia, and I knew your brother Pier Luigi.

*(GIOVANNA whispers to Aragona.*

*ARAGONA takes off her necklace and hands it to Giovanna. It is a Cornicello - a pendant made of gold and red coral.*

*GIOVANNA extends her hands out to Lucrezia in blessing)*

**GIOVANNA**

My child. This Cornicello has been passed from mother to daughter in our family for many generations. But you shall

have it now. It is a small reward for the goodness you have shown.

**LUCREZIA**

But I can't possibly take it, it belongs in your family.

**GIOVANNA**

Yes, you must. Tradition says that a Cornicello passed from mother to daughter will protect her from the evil eye. When you have a daughter of your own you must pass it on and it will keep her from harm.

**ARAGONA**

It is the least we can do. I vow one day that your kindness will be repaid. May God bless you.

*(ARAGONA and GIOVANNA exit)*

*(LUCREZIA stares at the Cornicello)*

*(LUCREZIA slowly exits)*

(SFX CUE: <A BELL TOLLS OVER SCENE CHANGE>)

*(The CROWD return across front of stage, on their way home, they are followed by MONKS chanting)*

#4 TE DEUM LAUDAMUS

Chorus

PLAY MUSIC

CURTAIN