

MACHIAVELLI'S
THE PRINCE

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CAST

NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI: diplomat, writer, exile, about 45.

LORENZO DI MEDICI II: the new duke of Florence, grandson of Lorenzo the Magnificent, about 35.

SETTING

The action of the play takes place in a private audience chamber of the Old Palace in Florence, in the year 1516.

NOTES

The characters wear modern, contemporary suits.

Most scholars agree that Machiavelli's *The Prince* is one of the most influential works ever written in the history of political science. Though it was composed some time around 1513, the short book wasn't actually published until five years after Machiavelli's death in 1527. The text of the book includes a dedication to Lorenzo de Medici II (the grandson of Lorenzo the Magnificent), and makes it clear that Machiavelli intended to present the work to young Lorenzo, the new duke of Florence, as a gift. It is also fairly clear from the dedication that Machiavelli was hoping the small book would impress the new ruler enough that he might bring its author into his service. Machiavelli was an experienced diplomat at the height of the Italian Renaissance. He visited the courts and palaces of many of the most powerful figures of his day as an emissary of the Republic of Florence. He saw first-hand how the dangerous games of power politics were played, and he began to draw a whole range of conclusions about the nature of those games, in general. These conclusions, and the reasoning behind them, constitute the text of *The Prince*. But he wrote the book during the low-point of his life. After many years of service to the Republic, the government rather suddenly collapsed, and Machiavelli was forced to leave Florence when the powerful Medici family returned to take control of the city. What followed for Machiavelli was a kind of exile, when he lived on the family farm seven miles outside Florence, reduced to a life of idleness and insignificance. It was then that he began to reflect upon his career in politics, and that he wrote *The Prince*. As he says in the dedication to Lorenzo, regarding the book:

If you will read it over and study it carefully, you will recognize in it my most earnest desire that you may achieve that summit of grandeur to which your happy destiny and your other capacities predestine you. And if from that summit Your Magnificence will occasionally glance down at these humble places, you will recognize how unjustly I suffer the bitter and sustained malignity of fortune.

Though we know from Machiavelli's letters that he considered trying to present the book to Lorenzo in person, there is no historical record of such a meeting ever actually taking place. Our play, however, imagines what might have happened if it did.—G.G.

MACHIAVELLI'S 'THE PRINCE'

(Lights up in a private office of the Old Palace in Florence. Afternoon sunlight beams in through a window. A desk and chair at one end of the room.)

MACHIAVELLI waits. He wears a rumpled suit, and holds a small black book in hand.

He looks out a window at the city outside, and smiles.

LORENZO enters, wearing a classy black suit.

A beat, as the two see each other, stop, and smile.)

MACHIAVELLI

Lorenzino.

LORENZO

(raises a correcting finger)

Aht.

MACHIAVELLI

(correcting himself)

Forgive me. Your Excellency.

(MACHIAVELLI kneels on one knee and bows his head.)

LORENZO

No, no, no, please.

(raises him up, and regards him)

Master Machiavelli.

(They embrace.

They look at each other.)

LORENZO

It's good to see you.

MACHIAVELLI

It's good to be here. Thank you. My God, how you've grown. And handsome, too. The spitting image of your grandfather. My God. It's amazing.

LORENZO

Twenty years, no?

MACHIAVELLI

Is that possible?

LORENZO

Twenty.

MACHIAVELLI

I can't believe it. Here in this room. Do you remember?

LORENZO

I'll never forget it.

MACHIAVELLI

(calling, in Latin)

Disce quasi semper victurus [Learn as if always going to live;]

LORENZO

(the reply, in Latin)

Vive quasi cras moriturus. [live as if tomorrow going to die.]

(They laugh together.)

LORENZO

My God, I hated Latin.

MACHIAVELLI

But you remembered.

LORENZO

Well, you were a good teacher.

MACHIAVELLI

You were a good student.

LORENZO

I liked your history lessons more than my Latin studies.

MACHIAVELLI

To tell you the truth, so did I.

LORENZO

And I can still remember that passage from Lucretius--how did it go? Something about...Ah: "Man is far from master of all, as he so vainly believes; he is rather a victim of Nature and Fortune.

(MORE)

LORENZO(cont'd)

Born naked and bawling, his cries fill the air, he alone among all the animals is capable of boundless cruelty to his own kind, yet none other is possessed of such limitless desire to live, nor such a burning thirst for--and need of--the eternal and the infinite."

MACHIAVELLI

A fine student indeed.

LORENZO

Twenty years.

MACHIAVELLI

Florence is fortunate.

LORENZO

You're very kind.

MACHIAVELLI

I mean it. Very fortunate.
(He looks out the window.)

LORENZO

Have you missed the old place?

MACHIAVELLI

Have I missed it? As a man dying in the desert misses the taste of water. This palace. The city. My life is here. It's been difficult...being away.

LORENZO

I understand. Believe me. Welcome back. I hope we can put all the misfortunes of the past to rest.

MACHIAVELLI

I do, as well. Thank you. Your Excellency.
(the book)

This is for you.
(gives him the book)

LORENZO

For me?

MACHIAVELLI

A gift. A humble gift, from a humble man. A small token of my appreciation. I just finished it. No one else has even laid eyes on it. It's for you, and you alone. Of all that I have in this world, this is the dearest thing I possess. So I wanted to give it to you. I hope you find in it that which may be, in some small way, of use to you, in the great challenges that lie ahead.

LORENZO
(browsing through it)

Hm.

MACHIAVELLI
It's a study of the actions of men. Gained through my personal experience in political affairs, and extensive readings about figures from the past. The great heroes and infamous villains of our own time, and that of antiquity.

LORENZO
And I'm the first to read it?

MACHIAVELLI
The very first.

LORENZO
I'm honored.

MACHIAVELLI
You're too kind.

LORENZO
Not at all. I look forward eagerly to giving it a careful read.

MACHIAVELLI
Thank you, your Excellency.

(LORENZO sits and thinks, setting the book aside.)

MACHIAVELLI
May I congratulate you?

LORENZO
Hm?

MACHIAVELLI
On your investiture.

LORENZO
Oh.

MACHIAVELLI
His Holiness has made a wise choice.

LORENZO
Did he?

MACHIAVELLI
Yes, he did. Florence is in desperate need of a man like you.

LORENZO

Well, it's in desperate need, I'll give you that.

MACHIAVELLI

Leadership. That's what the old place needs. I don't think things have ever been worse.

LORENZO

There's no plague.

MACHIAVELLI

That's true. The Black Plague was worse, but that was long before either one of us was here. I mean, as far back as I can personally remember. Oh, it was bad under Savanarola. But these days--my God--what with this mess in Pisa. Now Arezzo. And still the French. Still the Spaniards. Now the Germans. And the poor. I've never seen so many beggars in the streets. The filth out there. The stink is awful. Is it my imagination, or is the north wall of the palace crumbling?

LORENZO

It's not your imagination.

MACHIAVELLI

The streets, the squares, the water system, everything's falling apart. Everything's broken. I'm sorry, perhaps I'm overstating things, I only took a short walk through the city on my way in, I'm sure it's not as bad as all that--

LORENZO

Yes, it's as bad as all that. The place is in ruins.

MACHIAVELLI

What's become of the general fund?

LORENZO

There no longer is a general fund.

MACHIAVELLI

Ah.

LORENZO

Yes, there are many problems.
(looks out the window)

MACHIAVELLI

May I ask you something? Your Excellency.

LORENZO

What?

MACHIAVELLI
What happened to your uncle?

LORENZO
He abdicated.

MACHIAVELLI
Ah. Good.

LORENZO
Good?

MACHIAVELLI
No. I only mean... no one seems to know... I just
feared...that he might have been...well, you know.

LORENZO
No. He just...left.

MACHIAVELLI
Hm.

LORENZO
Bit of a surprise to all of us.

MACHIAVELLI
Yes, I'm sure it must have been. Why exactly?

LORENZO
Hm?

MACHIAVELLI
Why did he abdicate?

LORENZO
I don't know. I suppose you'd have to ask him.

MACHIAVELLI
Ah. I see. Where did he go?

LORENZO
What?

MACHIAVELLI
Where did he go? He seems to have just...disappeared.

LORENZO
He has not disappeared.

MACHIAVELLI
Back to Rome?

LORENZO

No.

MACHIAVELLI

Off on a lark somewhere? He was inclined to slip off from time to time and raise a little--

LORENZO

He's entered the monastery of St. Michael.

MACHIAVELLI

Ah.

LORENZO

Let's just leave it at that.

MACHIAVELLI

The contemplative life. A good choice for Guiliano. Hard to imagine him taking a vow of chastity though--

LORENZO

Please.

MACHIAVELLI

Hm?

LORENZO

I'm not interested in discussing Guiliano's abdication. He's gone. His problems are my problems now. And there are plenty of them.

MACHIAVELLI

Yes.

LORENZO

I'm thirsty. Would you care for a drink of water?

MACHIAVELLI

Yes, thank you.

(LORENZO pours two glasses of water.)

MACHIAVELLI

Just as well.

LORENZO

Hm?

MACHIAVELLI

Oh, nothing.

LORENZO

What did you say?

MACHIAVELLI

Nothing, just that--well, I was just thinking--that it's just as well that you're uncle abdicated since... But we have other things to discuss, and I don't want to--

LORENZO

No, say what you were going to say.

MACHIAVELLI

Well, Guiliano wasn't really cut out for the job. Was he?

(beat)

LORENZO

No, he wasn't.

MACHIAVELLI

So it's just as well.

LORENZO

Perhaps.

MACHIAVELLI

But good fortune is often that way, isn't it? Suddenly, out of the blue...and everything changes. One day despair, the next triumph. And the next? Who knows? Fortune is a woman, eh? Who can predict what she will do next? Who she favors, and who she scorns. Why? Take me for instance. She despises me. Why? What have I done to deserve the enmity of Fortune? Year after year she persecutes me. Why? What must I do? Shall I hang myself? Is that what she wants? Well then, I tell myself, that's just what I won't do, just to scorn her in return. I refuse to hang myself, so take that, you great bawdy bitch!

(he laughs)

And then what happens? Out of the blue...comes a letter from the new duke of Florence, my old student, Lorenzino de Medici. The most gifted student I ever set a history book down in front of. And suddenly, everything is different. Everything has changed. Why? God knows. Eh?

LORENZO

Where have you been living?

MACHIAVELLI

Me? You mean, since... Oh, I've been living out on the family farm. Out in San Andrea in Percussina. My family has an old house out there. Bit of a hovel actually. But it has a good library. Thank God for that. Nothing much else. And of course there's nothing to do. Except read. And write, of course. Been doing quite a lot of that lately, which is where the book...

Well, I know it doesn't look like much.

(MORE)

MACHIAVELLI(cont'd)

I tried to be concise. Nothing flowery. Just strictly to the point. Make it simple. Boil it down. Don't embellish it. Just get to the point. Well, you'll see. I hope.

(beat)

Yes, out at the farm. Almost exactly seven miles.

(looks out the window)

Right by the hills there. Seven miles. But I can just barely see the dome of the cathedral here on a clear day. How many days I've spent just gazing out at that dome. Seven miles might just as well be seven hundred. The old dome just keeps taunting me. Calling to me. Laughing at me. Reminding me I'm no longer welcome here. In the city I was born and raised in. The city I devoted my life to. Risked my neck for--on how many occasions? The center of the world for me. These halls. The things we were up against. My God, it was exciting. The missions: off to Forli or Rome, Milan or France. I never stopped. God, I loved it. God, I loved it.

LORENZO

What have you been doing?

MACHIAVELLI

Nothing. Sitting around, all day, every day, with my thumb up my ass. There's nothing I can do. I'm not a farmer. I haven't the faintest idea where to begin with all that. Besides the land is completely overgrown. No one's been farming there in decades. I can't hire anyone, I haven't got the money. I barely have enough to get by on. I sell firewood to make a little, now and again. But it's... It's pathetic, really. Some days I catch a few birds out in the woods. Or I read a book, sitting by the creek, under an old oak tree. Or I go the inn. Every day I go to the inn. Far too often I go to the inn, and talk to those idiots that seem to be always, always lingering about the place. I used to parlay with princes and kings; now I sit and listen to rat catchers and fishmongers bemoan their misfortunes *ad nauseam*, playing cards for pennies a round. Pennies. Sounds like a verse out of Dante, no? The lowest circle of Hell. But then, the day ends. And I return home to my little hovel, cook up something modest for my evening repast, change my clothes, slip on my old satin robe--a bit worse for the wear and tear, but it's still elegant nonetheless--and thus appropriately attired I step into the library of the old place, select a few special volumes from the shelves, and then I enter into the ancient courts of ancient men, and they welcome me kindly. They receive me with affection. And with these good gentlemen, magnificent heroes and notorious villains alike, I dine on delicacies that are mine alone to consume. And in this crowd, my shame is washed away. I circulate among the company freely, respectably, "What made you do this?" I ask Alexander of Macedonia, or Darius of Persia, or Theseus of Athens. "What made you do that?" Xenophone, Romulus, Moses, Septimus Severus.

(MORE)

MACHIAVELLI(cont'd)

And they in their kindness answer me, for hours at a time. I give myself over entirely to them. And they share their secrets--their wisdom--with me. As I read, and I write, late into the night, before finally I lay down to sleep.

(beat)

That's what I've been doing. So you can imagine how I felt when I received your letter.

LORENZO

I want to put an end to your banishment.

MACHIAVELLI

Oh, God.

LORENZO

I've wanted to for years, but now I'm finally in a position to do something about it.

MACHIAVELLI

(kneeling)

Oh, God, thank you, your Excellency.

LORENZO

But I need to ask you something first.

MACHIAVELLI

What, anything, ask.

LORENZO

Agostino Capponi tried to kill my father. Did you have anything to do with that?

MACHIAVELLI

No, your Excellency. Nothing. Nothing whatsoever. I swear to you, on the grave of my mother, I had nothing at all to do with that.

LORENZO

Then why was your name on Capponi's list?

MACHIAVELLI

That was all a mistake. That list was merely a list of all those whom Capponi intended to approach. But he never even spoke to me about the plot. Never. I knew nothing about the whole affair. I was arrested for the crime, yes, but I was innocent of the charges. Two months I spent in the Bargello. Two months, in chains, smelling shit, sharing a dark cell with lice as big as rats and rats as big as cats, and every night, the screams of the tortured, the clank of locks, and the weeping of the condemned. But I was innocent of the charges. They tortured me, you know? Did you know that?

(no)

(MORE)

MACHIAVELLI(cont'd)

Six times they hoisted me on the *strappado*, and six times, down I came, till they snapped the rope, yanking my arms up behind my back, popping them out of the shoulder sockets--six times. And each time they asked me, what did I know? What did I know? What did I know? And every time I told them the same, nothing. Nothing. Nothing. I was innocent. And that is why, finally, they released me. With a sentence of banishment. They may as well have beheaded me. I had nothing to do with the plot against your father. It was all a mistake. Though I have suffered mightily for it. Believe me. Please, your Excellency. That's the truth.

LORENZO

I believe you.

MACHIAVELLI

Thank you.

LORENZO

(looks out the window)

It's true. These are dark days for Florence. I weep when I see what's become of this city. When I think about what it once was. When I was young. In my grandfather's day. God, what a glorious place. Before all the wars. Do you remember?

MACHIAVELLI

Oh, God, do I. Glorious indeed. The most beautiful city in the world.

LORENZO

Seems a lifetime ago. Another world. I used to go up the hill there, on the road to Fiesole. And I would sit up there and look down at the city, watching the river flow under the Old Bridge, the air thick with the golden glow of the sun, and the red shimmer of the walls and rooftops... There were no poor living in the streets back then. None that I ever saw. They were building everywhere. Everything was alive. I want that back again.

MACHIAVELLI

Then we shall have it.

LORENZO

I need someone I can trust.

(beat)

I need a diplomat. Someone accomplished at gauging the true intentions of men, and reporting those impressions back to me clearly and concisely. I expect it will be very dangerous. But I believe the future of Florence will depend on the success of these efforts. By the grace of God. Everyone knows you're the best.

MACHIAVELLI

Thank you.

LORENZO

There's something else I need to ask you.

MACHIAVELLI

What--anything?

LORENZO

There are some in the palace here, who question your ties to the former regime.

MACHIAVELLI

My ties?

LORENZO

No one wants to see a return to the Republic. Do you agree?

MACHIAVELLI

Good God, no.

LORENZO

What?

MACHIAVELLI

I mean, yes, I agree.

(standing)

I can assure you, your Excellency, I hold no loyalty whatsoever to the Old Republic.

LORENZO

None?

MACHIAVELLI

None whatsoever.

LORENZO

How can that be?

MACHIAVELLI

The Republic was a bold experiment. The last one anyway. Granted, it had a long tradition behind it, but I'm afraid that tradition has become a relic of the past, an outdated vestige of a bygone age. The Republic failed, in the end. Because it could not govern effectively. Times have changed.

LORENZO

You were a champion of the Republic. You used to read me Cicero. You were devoted to the idea, with all its counsels, and committees--your citizen militia. You mean to tell me all that means nothing to you any longer?

MACHIAVELLI

I was much younger then. I was quite the idealist. I'm older now. And wiser. All my efforts on behalf of the Republic came to nothing. In the end, it was nothing more than a gaggle of old men, bickering and squawking with each other, old men who cared for nothing but their business interests, merchants and schemers, greedy little men, angling for a bigger share of the loot. I tried. I did everything I could. But they simply wouldn't work together for the good of the state. It was ineffective and ignorant. They were fools. We were constantly outmaneuvered. Nothing ever got done. Till the whole thing finally just collapsed in on itself. You cannot expect so much from ordinary men. You cannot trust them with so much individual responsibility. The burdens of liberty. Men are too...self-interested. They are too greedy.

LORENZO

All men?

MACHIAVELLI

No, not all men. But most. Only the few are truly exceptional. It is those men who must lead us. I see things very differently now. Now the times demand a strong, decisive leader. One who can steer the state wisely, effectively. A man such as yourself. Tested and proven in war. Cool-headed and determined in peace. With such a man as you ruling Florence, anything is possible. Anything.

LORENZO

Good. I will assure those who have concerns about your associations with the Republic, that all that is behind you now.

MACHIAVELLI

Quite completely behind me.

LORENZO

Good.

(looks out the window again)

I want to bring peace back to Florence. I want to bring prosperity back. I want to bring this place back to life. As it once was. I want to see people busy at work, building better lives for themselves and their families. Our wool industry was once the most productive in the world. With a little determination, we can bring it back. We have to bring the banking system back in line. We taught the world how to run banks, but now we are bankrupt. How did this happen? These wars have bled us to the brink of disaster. We must put an end to these wars. We must have peace. We must reignite our genius for culture and the arts. We gave birth to Botticelli, to Leonardo, to Michelangelo, but where are they now? Where is the art of Florence?

(MORE)

LORENZO(cont'd)

Where are the glorious paintings? All fading in the crumbling churches and shuttered *palazzos* that once were the pride of our people. Where are the marble statues that once lined the porticoes of the Old Square? All fallen and shattered to pieces in the streets. Where are the poets? The writers? The musicians? All gone. All silent now. How did we let this happen? I want to rebuild Florence. I want to restore her. No one should be sleeping on the street in this city. No one. Peace and prosperity, so help me God.

MACHIAVELLI

(quietly)

Bravo, your Excellency. Bravo. What would you have me do?

LORENZO

There is a problem. More urgent than all the rest.

MACHIAVELLI

Yes?

LORENZO

Francesco della Rovere.

MACHIAVELLI

Ah, yes. Francesco. What is he up to now?

LORENZO

A few days ago he showed up at Verona. The Venetians have finally taken it.

MACHIAVELLI

Verona has fallen to Venice?

LORENZO

You haven't heard?

MACHIAVELLI

I'm out in Percussina; I don't hear anything.

LORENZO

Yes, Captain Gonzaga has taken Verona for the doge of Venice.

MACHIAVELLI

Well, it's about time.

LORENZO

Unfortunately, that's put the Captain and his army out of a job.

MACHIAVELLI

Gonzaga's signed on with Rovere?

LORENZO

I'm afraid so.

MACHIAVELLI

Oh, shit. Where did Rovere get that kind of money?

LORENZO

We don't know. But he's hired himself an army of five thousand infantry, a thousand horse, and a full detachment of artillery.

MACHIAVELLI

On the move?

LORENZO

Toward Urbino.

MACHIAVELLI

Of course.

LORENZO

I cannot lose Urbino. The financial losses would be devastating. It could threaten the stability of the entire state.

MACHIAVELLI

He knows that.

LORENZO

I cannot lose Urbino.

MACHIAVELLI

I understand.

LORENZO

But I have no wish to embroil us in yet another war. These things will be our undoing, I tell you. I won't allow it. It must stop. I am sick to death of this God forsaken carnage! That bleeding wound in Pisa drags on year after year after year. Now rebellion in Arezzo, skirmishing in Siena, the massacre in Pistoia--it has to stop! We will all die in these wars.

MACHIAVELLI

But Rovere is on the march.

LORENZO

Yes. Rovere is on the march. And he'll be at the gates of Urbino in three days, if he keeps up the pace.

MACHIAVELLI

Then we must stop him.

LORENZO

I want you to meet with him. Before he gets to Urbino. Find him, and meet with him.

MACHIAVELLI

Very well. That shouldn't be too difficult. And when I find him, and meet with him--then what?

LORENZO

I want you to sue for peace.

MACHIAVELLI

Peace.

LORENZO

Find out what it would take to satisfy him--short of re-taking Urbino--and negotiate the terms of a treaty.

MACHIAVELLI

A treaty. As a delaying tactic?

LORENZO

No, not as a delaying tactic. As a peace treaty.

MACHIAVELLI

To what end?

LORENZO

To what end? Peace.

MACHIAVELLI

Hm.

LORENZO

What?

MACHIAVELLI

Hm.

LORENZO

Speak.

MACHIAVELLI

Well, I was just thinking...

LORENZO

Yes?

MACHIAVELLI

I was just thinking...

LORENZO

For God's sake, say what's on your mind.

MACHIAVELLI

How long have the families of de Medici and Rovere been at war?

LORENZO

Far too long.

MACHIAVELLI

Ever since Pope Sixtus tried to murder your grandfather? What's that--nearly forty years?

LORENZO

Yes. And now it has to end.

MACHIAVELLI

I agree. But Francesco will never surrender his claim to Urbino.

LORENZO

Of course, he will, if we can find the right compromise to strike.

MACHIAVELLI

Respectfully, your Excellency, I disagree. He will never surrender his claim to Urbino, nor his claim to Pesaro, nor Senigallia. Never. He may sign a peace treaty, but he will never surrender his claim to those cities. They are his patrimony. Or so he believes. Which of them will you surrender?

LORENZO

Pesaro perhaps. Perhaps Senigallia. Perhaps.

MACHIAVELLI

But they are your patrimony. No?

LORENZO

My family has the prior claim.

MACHIAVELLI

Something tells me Francesco won't see it that way.

LORENZO

I've spoken to His Holiness. He might consider lifting the writ of excommunication against Rovere. I want you to feel him out on that.

MACHIAVELLI

You really think Rovere would surrender his claim to Urbino for that?

LORENZO

His soul has been damned to Hell eternally! You don't think reopening the gates of Heaven would change his mind?

MACHIAVELLI

He might factor it in to a larger view of things, but I don't think it would change his mind. Even eternal paradise is not enough to erase the loss of a man's patrimony. A man will sooner forget the murder of his own father, than the theft of his estate.

LORENZO

That's absurd.

MACHIAVELLI

Is it?

LORENZO

He has been cut off from all the rest of humanity. He is anathema. Can a man live in such isolation? Can he prosper?

MACHIAVELLI

Evidently he can hire an army.

LORENZO

An army of mercenaries.

MACHIAVELLI

An effective fighting force, none the less.

LORENZO

An army of dogs.

MACHIAVELLI

Be that as it may, the more important question is, will they fight for him?

LORENZO

I want peace.

MACHIAVELLI

Of course. The question is how do we get it, without losing our lives? And your state.

LORENZO

Offer to lift the excommunication. It just may work.

MACHIAVELLI

What if we do come to terms with him? What then? Will the hawk molt his feathers and become a dove? What if--God forbid--His Holiness should suddenly die? What happens if you no longer have an uncle on the throne of St. Peter? What if--God forbid--Francesco's uncle the cardinal should be elected the next Pope? Then what? The tables will turn. As they did with Pope Julius before your uncle, and Pope Sixtus before him. The Roveres have given us two popes so far, why not another? Your family has given us only one.

LORENZO

What is your point, Machiavelli?

MACHIAVELLI

My point is, your Excellency, if you delay, you may very well find yourself excommunicated one day, and then what?

LORENZO

I will not perpetuate this endless cycle of war and retribution. This bloodshed has made a wasteland of all Italy. Enough!

MACHIAVELLI

A piece of paper will not change that.

LORENZO

It could. It could. If the words written on it are backed up with the good faith of those who sign their name to it.

MACHIAVELLI

Good faith?

LORENZO

Yes, good faith.

MACHIAVELLI

I disagree.

LORENZO

You disagree?

MACHIAVELLI

If I may.

(beat)

Men do not obey out of good faith. They obey out of fear.

LORENZO

I cannot accept that.

MACHIAVELLI

Look at the world.

LORENZO

There is a goodness in all men. However deeply buried in their hearts. We are all born with it. It comes from God.

MACHIAVELLI

You're new at this.

LORENZO

Are you so old?

MACHIAVELLI

Perhaps. But I beg you to believe me, you can never trust Rovere. He is an enemy of your state.

LORENZO

Then what am I to do?

MACHIAVELLI

You must eliminate him.

LORENZO

What's become of you?

MACHIAVELLI

It's elemental. I'm sorry.

LORENZO

Where is the man that once taught me diplomacy is an art?

MACHIAVELLI

It is an art. But only as a means to achieve advantage for your state. A wise prince always keeps the end in sight: the security and survival of your state.

LORENZO

That's exactly what I have in mind.

MACHIAVELLI

Then kill him.

LORENZO

Is that your only advice?

MACHIAVELLI

Yes.

LORENZO

I expected more from you. Have you no faith in the power of reason? I believe, if I talk to Rovere, if the groundwork is properly laid, if we can talk, man to man, we can find a reasonable solution to this problem. We can make peace. We just need to talk. I'm willing to give up something. I'm willing to compromise. For peace. Doesn't that seem reasonable?

MACHIAVELLI

Seize the opportunity.

LORENZO

What opportunity?

MACHIAVELLI

The momentum is with you now. Your uncle is the Pope. You are the duke of Florence and Urbino. Now is the time to strike.

(beat)

Set a trap.

LORENZO

Treachery and murder.

MACHIAVELLI

If murder is called for, then murder must be done. You're the prince.

LORENZO

Christ teaches us otherwise.

MACHIAVELLI

We are not dealing with Christ. We are dealing with a man. And men cannot be trusted. Not when their patrimony is at stake.

LORENZO

I can be trusted. And my patrimony is at stake.

MACHIAVELLI

Can you really?

LORENZO

Are you questioning my honor now?

MACHIAVELLI

No, I know you are an honorable man.

LORENZO

My word is my bond. My word is my worth. Everyone knows that about me. What more is there to a man? I learned that from my father. Didn't you? What is more fundamental than that? That's the basic principle by which I live my life. I'm the duke of Florence. If I do not keep my word, who will?

MACHIAVELLI

It is good to keep your word. It is honorable. Everyone knows that. And yet, just look around you. It's clear from recent experience that those who have accomplished the most paid little heed to keeping their word. Rather, it is he who knows best how to cleverly manipulate the mind of his adversary who most often succeeds in the end. Thus craft wins out over honesty, and integrity--

LORENZO

No.

MACHIAVELLI

And honor.

LORENZO

No!

MACHIAVELLI

Shall I continue?

(beat)

The ancients tell us that many of the great warriors of antiquity--Achilles, for instance--were sent to be reared by Chiron, the centaur, who trained them in the disciplines of war. Now, Chiron, as you may remember, was part man, and part beast. And such was the nature of his schooling: a prince in war must possess the wisdom and intelligence of a man, but sometimes that alone is not enough. Sometimes he must fight like a beast. He must be both. The one without the other has no lasting effect.

LORENZO

A beast?

MACHIAVELLI

Sometimes the lion. Sometimes the fox. The lion for sheer power. The fox for shrewd cleverness.

LORENZO

Never.

MACHIAVELLI

Then you will fail in this world.

LORENZO

Christ is my model. Chiron, a monster, is yours.

MACHIAVELLI

Be careful. Remember what fate befell Christ. He was betrayed. And annihilated.

LORENZO

How sad it is to hear you say such things. What has become of you?

MACHIAVELLI

I understand how you feel. I felt the same way myself once. Perhaps as I dangled from the strappado. Or was it later, in prison? Or was it in all the courts and palaces I've visited from Naples to Geneva? It's hard to be sure exactly when it was. Except to say, it was the moment I learned to see the world not as I wished it to be, but rather as it really is.

LORENZO

And what of love?

MACHIAVELLI

Love? You mean, as in fornication?

LORENZO

That's cheap. And disgusting.

MACHIAVELLI

Sorry.

LORENZO

You think this is funny?

MACHIAVELLI

No.

LORENZO

The love of God. The love of all that is good in the world.
All that is worth living for.

MACHIAVELLI

Oh, that.

LORENZO

Love.

MACHIAVELLI

Yes. Love is good. But fear rules the world.

LORENZO

Can you really be so cold inside? Is there nothing left of
you? No trace of a human heart?

MACHIAVELLI

Kill him. And kill the rest of the line. All at once.
That's the only way to do it right.

LORENZO

(he sits)

This is madness.

MACHIAVELLI

Francesco, Ippolito, Bartolomeo, and the cardinal. All at
once. You cannot drag these things out, or people will begin
to hate you. And you mustn't allow that to happen. Do it
all at once, and you will inspire fear and respect. That's
the only way to end the game. That's the only way to achieve
a lasting, secure peace for your state. Believe me, no one
will shed a tear for the Roveres. So long as you govern them
properly. Just don't go changing any laws, or raising any
new taxes. People will thank you.

LORENZO

Is this what you learned from Cesare Borgia?

MACHIAVELLI

Perhaps.

LORENZO

Have you become his disciple then?

MACHIAVELLI

I am no one's disciple.

LORENZO

There are those who say you admired him. I never believed it before, but now I'm beginning to wonder.

MACHIAVELLI

I'll admit I admired him, yes, in some regards.

LORENZO

How is that possible?

MACHIAVELLI

I saw him in action. I was with him in Senigallia when he turned the tables on Orsini and trapped them all like the rats they were. It was a brilliant maneuver. Carefully laid, and flawlessly executed. And there were many, many others, equally accomplished. He was a master of deception, a gifted military tactician, and a virtuoso of secrecy.

LORENZO

He was a monster.

MACHIAVELLI

A monster?

LORENZO

He was a bastard son of the most corrupt pope in the history of the Papacy, he carried on an incestuous relationship with his sister, murdered his own brother, murdered his sister's lovers, his sister's husband, the Manfredi boys--who weren't even fifteen at the time--and countless others, the list of his victims is endless. And you admired him?

MACHIAVELLI

Most of that isn't even true.

LORENZO

Really?

MACHIAVELLI

The product of over-heated court gossips. You mustn't believe everything you hear. You didn't know the man. He was a brilliant conversationalist. The product of a first rate education. An extraordinary thinker really. Spoke fluent French, Latin, Spanish.

(MORE)

MACHIAVELLI(cont'd)

A master horseman, a superior athlete, the finest warrior of his generation.

(chuckles)

And he had a fantastic sense of humor. We shared many a good laugh together... He was magnificent to look upon.

LORENZO

You loved him.

MACHIAVELLI

Hardly.

LORENZO

I can see it in the way you speak of him.

MACHIAVELLI

You are confusing careful observation, and frank honesty, for affection. I merely admired him for his virtues, and I learned a few things from him, as well.

LORENZO

He was the determined enemy of Florence, bent on seizing the city from the government you claim you were serving, and he nearly succeeded.

MACHIAVELLI

That's true.

LORENZO

And you loved him.

MACHIAVELLI

I destroyed him.

LORENZO

What?

MACHIAVELLI

I will tell you this, but you should know, I've never told another soul. No one else knows this. Still, it's the truth: It was I that persuaded Cesare Borgia to put his trust in Pope Julius. The only mistake he ever made. And it was his undoing.

LORENZO

You were responsible for that?

MACHIAVELLI

Yes. That was me.

LORENZO

How?

MACHIAVELLI

By playing on his desires. His wish for things to be as he wanted them to be, not what they actually were. He never should have trusted Julius. They were old family enemies. And anyone who believes that new favors will make great men forget old injuries is simply deluding himself. But Cesare was weak then. His luck had finally run out. His father the Pope was gone. And his mind... Well, suffice it to say, he had become a mere shell of the man he once was. The most glorious prince we had ever seen in Italy up until then. One who many thought was ordained by God himself for our salvation.

LORENZO

Ordained by God?

MACHIAVELLI

He could have been the One. The Prince. The one who, one day, will lead us out of this Hell we are mired in. He who will vanquish the forces that have reduced us to the sad state of affairs we find ourselves in today. But it was not to be Cesare Borgia. No. He failed us in the end. I remember...holding him in my arms, as he lay shivering in the Castle Sant'Angelo. He looked up, into my eyes, and said, "Either Caesar, or nothing." Julius Caesar was his namesake, you know. Those were the last words I ever heard him say. He never should have trusted Pope Julius.

LORENZO

You mean he never should have trusted you.

MACHIAVELLI

In the end, he was an enemy of the state.

LORENZO

You loved him.

MACHIAVELLI

If you want to succeed in this sea of sharks, if you want to secure yourself in your new state, if you want to win friends, either by force or fraud, if you want to make yourself beloved and feared by the people, if you want to be followed and revered by your soldiers, if you want to exterminate those who have the power to hurt you, if you want to change the old order of things for a new one, if you want to be severe and gracious, magnanimous and liberal, if you want to destroy a disloyal soldiery and create a new one, if you want to maintain friendships with kings and princes in such a way that they must help you with zeal and offend you with caution, if all these qualities and talents are what you desire, then I can recommend no finer example to imitate than that of Duke Cesare Borgia.

(LORENZO sits and shakes his head, no, in dismay.)

LORENZO

He was an evil man.

MACHIAVELLI

Sometimes, yes. But he was a prince. Sometimes it is necessary.

LORENZO

I cannot believe my ears. Did he cast some spell over you? Did you bargain away your soul to him?

MACHIAVELLI

No, your Excellency, I still have a soul.

LORENZO

No.

MACHIAVELLI

If there is one thing I can warn you of, it's not to be misled by the idealism of youth, as I once was.

LORENZO

Your misfortunes have poisoned your mind, hardened your heart and turned it to dust. Are you utterly hollow inside? Is there no trace of humanity left in there?

MACHIAVELLI

I am still a man. I laugh, I love--yes, I love--I even sing from time to time. I could probably even dance, if I put my mind to it. I am still alive. Not made of stone. Flesh and blood. But wiser than I once was. I will not call an apple an orange, simply because I dislike the color red. An apple is an apple.

LORENZO

Christ weeps.

MACHIAVELLI

Christ again. When did you become so pious? You didn't learn that from me.

LORENZO

When did you turn to the devil?

MACHIAVELLI

Come now.

(beat)

LORENZO
How?

MACHIAVELLI
Hm?

LORENZO
How would you do it?

MACHIAVELLI
Do what?

LORENZO
Rovere. And the others.

MACHIAVELLI
Well. That will take some thinking. Where is his brother?

LORENZO
With him on the march.

MACHIAVELLI
Good. His son is in Mantua. The cardinal in Rome. It could be done with three carefully aimed strokes of the sword. But everything must be coordinated perfectly. Flawlessly. Secrecy must be absolute.

LORENZO
It's impossible.

MACHIAVELLI
Nothing is impossible. Given enough determination. Invite Francesco and his brother to a peace conference in Urbino.

LORENZO
Urbino?

MACHIAVELLI
We must coax him into lowering his guard. In Urbino, he will feel more at ease. He'll be back home. I will meet with him in advance. I will plant the idea that you may be willing to surrender Urbino, because you so deeply desire peace. He will perceive that as a sign of weakness, and then we'll have him. I know the ducal palace well. Hold the meeting in the Chapel of Absolution. You can conceal a number of men in the closets that line the walls there. Once Francesco and his brother are inside the chapel...we strike. Meanwhile, in Mantua, send a mission to Count Lodovico, with a detachment of armed guards. But before they arrive at the palace, divert them to the *palazzo* Rovere and seize the boy.

LORENZO
Seize him?

MACHIAVELLI

And dispatch him.

LORENZO

God.

MACHIAVELLI

As far as the cardinal is concerned, have your uncle order his arrest, on the charge of conspiracy to retake Urbino, which no one will question. Once you have him in the Castle Sant'Angelo, you may do with him as you like. The key is timing and secrecy. We can refine the details as necessary, but all must occur in perfect concert, all precisely at once, to preserve the element of surprise. And no one must be included in the plan who cannot be trusted within an inch of his life.

LORENZO

Murder them all?

(beat)

What if Francesco's army should attack Urbino in retaliation?

MACHIAVELLI

An army of mercenaries. They have no desire to fight. Once they know he is dead, their contract will be null and void. If they are still owed payment, we may have to negotiate that, but I'm sure his Holiness will assist you there.

LORENZO

No.

MACHIAVELLI

These are just preliminary plans. Rough ideas. We must be meticulous.

LORENZO

God is listening, Machiavelli. God is watching. I cannot allow this.

MACHIAVELLI

Then what will you do?

LORENZO

I took a vow.

MACHIAVELLI

A vow?

LORENZO

I have had enough of killing.

MACHIAVELLI

Ah. I see.

LORENZO

Do you?

(LORENZO moves away, crosses himself,
and folds his hands, as if in prayer.)

MACHIAVELLI

You are a good man, Lorenzino. But you must be a prince.

LORENZO

I will be a good man, and I will be a prince.

MACHIAVELLI

You will find that impossible.

LORENZO

Damn you.

MACHIAVELLI

Shall I go?

(beat)

LORENZO

(removes his jacket)

I commanded the siege of Mondolfo.

MACHIAVELLI

Yes, I heard about that. An unfortunate affair.

LORENZO

Unfortunate?

MACHIAVELLI

But a victory none the less.

LORENZO

Yes, a victory. We blockaded the town for forty days. Pounded it relentlessly with artillery. Till the people within those walls were starving and dying of disease by the cart-load everyday. Finally, we tunneled far enough underneath the outer wall, and set off a charge that exploded like the crack of doomsday. When the smoke had cleared, there it was, the mouth of Hell, a breach the size of two great church doors had opened up in the wall. I gave the order to attack, and in we went. Bullets, cannon shot, steel blades, and crossbow bolts, dust and blood, smoke and fire, the fighting dragged on for hours, till night fell. And in the darkness they surrendered. But something happened. You talk of the beast. Well, he was there that day. In the heart of every soldier. In my own heart, as well. And there was no restraining him. It began with executions on the field. Then fires were set all across the town.

(MORE)

LORENZO(cont'd)

More executions. Rape and madness. Now for sport. On and on and on the killing went. And I was leading the charge. Children, old men, mothers with infants in their arms, nothing was spared, not a rat. In the morning, I wandered alone. Had I slept? Was I awake? Like a man sleepwalking through murder, I stumbled upon the smoking remains of an old church. I passed inside, and there I saw such a sight as would make the devil himself turn white and heave up his guts. A pile of corpses, a great mound of them, stacked up as high as the pulpit, all stripped naked, severed limbs, a great, fleshy mountain of tangled dead. And I, ankle deep in blood, knelt and wept. For I was in command. I had filled this slaughterhouse. I. And there above the altar, gazing down at me, the eyes of God, our Savior on the Cross. It was then, I took a vow. I swore to God in heaven, that I would redeem myself for this...somehow. I would atone for this great crime. This unforgivable act. This act of madness and remorse. This bloody horror I had wrought. I will never wash away the sin of that night. But I will bring peace to this countryside, or I will die trying. I will not break that vow.

(LORENZO kneels and prays to God.

MACHIAVELLI kneels beside him.

MACHIAVELLI

Sometimes we must weep.

MACHIAVELLI embraces him.

LORENZO weeps, then pulls away.)

MACHIAVELLI

(reclining on the floor)

Man is born defenseless, and his fate
Is to be stripped of all--no hide, no quills,
No feathers, fur, or bristles as his plate.
He enters into life with tears of fright
And his first word is but a cry of pain--
He is indeed a most pitiable sight.

(beat)

LORENZO

Do you remember when we used to go fishing together on the banks of the river out there?

MACHIAVELLI

Of course.

LORENZO

I would fish. You would read. Or you would tell me a story of one of the great men of the past. Do you remember the story of Castruccio Castracani?

MACHIAVELLI

The Prince of Lucca.

LORENZO

That was my favorite I think. How he was discovered as an infant in a vineyard, and raised by a widow and her brother the priest.

MACHIAVELLI

A born leader he was. Even at the age of fourteen it was clear he could handle a sword better than anyone else, he could out run, out jump, out wrestle, and out do all the other boys his age.

LORENZO

Yes.

MACHIAVELLI

Soon a noble captain in the town took notice of the boy, and one day he asked young Castruccio--

LORENZO

"Where would you rather be, in the house of a nobleman who will teach you how to ride and bear arms, or in the house of a priest--"

MACHIAVELLI

Ha!

LORENZO

"--where you will hear nothing but masses and church services?"

MACHIAVELLI

(as young Castruccio)

"In the house of a nobleman, sir"

LORENZO

Yes, in the house of a nobleman.

MACHIAVELLI

And so he went to live with the great captain, who taught him all there was to know about how to become a true gentleman. At the age of eighteen, he took to the field at the Captain's side, and led the people of Lucca to a great victory over the Pisans, leaving ten thousand dead on the battlefield, for which he was named prince of Lucca.

(MORE)

MACHIAVELLI(cont'd)

Assuming this great office, he wore a brocaded tunic bearing an inscription on front that read:

LORENZO

"He is the man God wills."

MACHIAVELLI

And another on the back that read:

LORENZO

"He shall be what God wills."

MACHIAVELLI

And then he advanced on Florence, occupied Prato and all the strongholds of the plain on both sides of the Arno, all but two miles from the city.

LORENZO

But then Fortune turned against him. Struck down by a fever, he called for his son. And he spoke his dying words to the boy: "Remember, my son: he who is not suited to deeds of war and slaughter, as I have been, should reign with the arts of peace. Turn to these arts, and strive by these means to enjoy the fruits of all my labors." And with those words on his lips, he died.

MACHIAVELLI

Yes, but there is more to the story.

LORENZO

More?

MACHIAVELLI

Fortune was not so kind to his son. For, in the end, his son the peacemaker lost all his father's possessions, all of Castruccio's great victories, all he had sacrificed his life to secure, was squandered and lost by the weak willed son, who eventually died, alone, in utter obscurity.

LORENZO

No.

MACHIAVELLI

You remember Castruccio's motto, don't you? "It is the victory, not the method of achieving it, that brings glory."

LORENZO

No.

MACHIAVELLI

And the inscription on the tomb of the great prince: "Try all, and fear nothing, for God loves bold men and always punishes the weak by means of the strong." You remember that, don't you?

LORENZO

No, I think you've got it wrong. That's not the way I remember it.

(LORENZO pours himself a drink of water.)

MACHIAVELLI

(after a moment)

Shall I recite to you the crimes of Francesco della Rovere?

LORENZO

No.

MACHIAVELLI

How he murdered the Cardinal of Bologna in cold blood, after he failed to take the city. Or the hundreds he hanged outside Pesaro. Is this the man you would make peace with?

LORENZO

I am no monster.

MACHIAVELLI

There is no right or wrong, there is only success or failure.

LORENZO

God is watching me.

MACHIAVELLI

Then why doesn't He do something?

(beat)

The longer you delay, the stronger Rovere becomes. War is inevitable. It is a constant in history. It cannot be avoided, it can only be won or lost. To postpone it only benefits your enemies. This is not a moral issue.

LORENZO

There is good and there is evil. There is right and there is wrong.

MACHIAVELLI

Exterminate the line, and do it quickly.

LORENZO

I will not traffic in the murder of children!

MACHIAVELLI

If you wish to be a good man, then you are in the wrong profession!

LORENZO

How dare you.

MACHIAVELLI

You cannot keep your word when it goes against your interests. If men were good at heart, it would be another matter, but they are a sad lot, who will not keep faith with you, unless it serves their interests. Therefore you need not keep your word with them. Just look around you. History is replete with examples of this. How many treaties and promises have been rendered null and void by the faithlessness of princes? And how many princes who kept their word have succeeded in the end? Point to one! You must be a supreme liar!

LORENZO

This is sedition.

MACHIAVELLI

Men are so foolish, so depraved and stupid, that a clever man will never lack for those who are ready and willing to be deceived. Seem to be good. But only seem. Oh, yes, it is good indeed to appear merciful, truthful, sincere--religious. It is good to be all these things. But you must always be prepared to be the exact opposite.

LORENZO

The lecture is over, Master Machiavelli.

MACHIAVELLI

You must understand this: a prince, and especially a new prince, such as yourself, cannot possibly exercise all those virtues for which men are called "good."

LORENZO

Be silent.

MACHIAVELLI

Be a good man if you can, but do evil if you must.

LORENZO

Silence, or so help me God--

MACHIAVELLI

Everyone sees what you seem to be. Few know what you really are. Always look to the end. Always.

(LORENZO grabs him by the throat and starts strangling him.)

MACHIAVELLI gasps, and struggles, but he weakens, and sinks to his knees.

As he bears down, LORENZO looks up, as if to God, and finally cries out.

He releases MACHIAVELLI, who drops to the floor, gasping for air, slowly catching his breath.

LORENZO sits at his desk, defeated.

Slowly, very slowly, MACHIAVELLI recovers and finally stands.)

LORENZO

All right. I understand. But tell me this. If I do as you say. If we go ahead with your plan. Even if it succeeds. If the line is extinguished. Then what? What comes after that?

(MACHIAVELLI pours himself a drink of water.)

MACHIAVELLI

Well, that's a good question. I've been thinking a lot about that of late, actually. I mean, not about Rovere, specifically, but about the state of affairs, in general. In the broadest sense. And I ask myself, is this the hour? Is this the moment? Is this the chance we've all been waiting for? For so long. Could this be the turning point? And the answer that comes back to me, again and again, is yes. Now is the time. All things seem favorable to me at this moment, so much so that I cannot think of any other point in recent history when things were more favorable than they are at this very moment. This is our chance. For if it was necessary, in order to reveal the greatness of Moses, that the children of Israel should be slaves in Egypt, then at this very moment, if the greatness of an Italian spirit is to be made manifest in this world, then it was necessary that Italy be reduced to her present state, leaderless, degraded, beaten, stripped, scarred, overrun, and plagued by every form of misery. Italy, almost lifeless, waits for a new leader. One who will heal her wounds, stop the ravaging in Milan, end the looting and bloodshed in Naples, not to mention all we are suffering through here in Tuscany. Who will minister to the open sores that have so long been festering in our lands? Her spirit, the spirit of this countryside, implores God to please send us someone who will free Italy from the cruel insults of these barbarian invaders, those who have ripped and torn at the flesh of her body for so many, many years now. Oh, how ready she is to follow someone who will but raise up the banner for all of us to see. If only someone with the proper vision, and the proper will, and the proper strength, would but raise it. You. There is no one in whom she could better place her trust. Your house, with all its wealth and all its virtues, favored by God, favored by the Church, of which your uncle is now the head, only you can redeem us. Go to the Pope.

(MORE)

MACHIAVELLI(cont'd)

Ask him to name you Captain-General of the Church. That is the pathway to supreme power. With the wealth of the Church behind you, you could build the most formidable army in Italy. Then play the French against the Spanish, and with a little luck, you could drive them both out. With all central Italy under your control, you would be perfectly positioned to unite the whole peninsula into one great nation, for the first time since the fall of the Roman Empire. You could be a new Caesar. One who could finally expel these barbarians, and return Italy to the glorious place she deserves!

LORENZO

The dream of Cesare Borgia.

MACHIAVELLI

The dream of Castruccio Castracani. The dream of all true Italians. The dream of a prince, one prince, above all others. The One. You could redeem us. You could be our salvation. Remember your Petrarch:

Then virtue boldly shall engage
And swiftly vanquish barbarous rage,
Proving ancient and heroic pride...

LORENZO

In true Italian hearts has never died.

MACHIAVELLI

(touching the book)

It's all in here. My gift to you.

LORENZO

(rising)

And what role will you play in this new great nation?

MACHIAVELLI

Me? I want nothing more than to be here, at your side. Back here, in the palace, where I belong. Doing what I was born to do. Here, beside the seat of power. I only wish to serve you.

(MACHIAVELLI kneels before the duke.

LORENZO looks down at him.)

LORENZO

A tempting proposition, old friend.

(beat)

Get out. You are banished from the city. I renounce you. I reject you. I reject everything you have to say, everything you stand for. You are an enemy of my state. You are the devil. Have you taken the soul of the teacher I once had as a boy, the man I loved, and respected? Have you hollowed out his body like an empty shell, and inhabited him incarnate?

(MORE)

LORENZO(cont'd)

Whoever you are, get out. If you are found within these city walls after nightfall, I will have you arrested, imprisoned, and executed. May God have mercy on your soul, if it isn't already too late for that.

MACHIAVELLI

(starts to go, but stops)

Goodbye, Lorenzino. Your Excellency. I hope you'll reconsider this decision someday, and I only hope I'll still be alive when you do. But if that day should come, you'll know where to find me. Out on the farm, in Percussina. In my library. Reading. Visiting with my friends from the past. Waiting. For a call to return. You were the finest student I ever had.

(MACHIAVELLI exits.

Alone, LORENZO thinks.

He puts his jacket back on, and starts to go, but stops.

He turns back and looks at the book on the desk.

He picks up the book.

Opens it.

Reads a bit.

Looks around.

Sits.

Continues reading.

Glances up, thinking.

Returns to the book, and reads on.

Blackout.)

THE END