

LET ME COUNT THE WAYS

A Sexpionage Play On The Birth Of Modern Pornography

by Martín Zimmerman

Di Glazer

Theater

ICM®

730 Fifth Avenue, 3rd Floor

New York, NY 10019

(212) 556-6820 (o)

(516) 840-4681 (c)

dglazer@icmpartners.com

CHARACTERS

Pope **CLEMENT VII**, mid 40s. The second Medici pope. Also known as Guilio d'Medici.

Gian Matteo **GIBERTI**, early 30s. Close confidant and advisor to the Clement. Also, Bishop of Verona.

FRANCESCA, early 30s. A Roman courtesan.

Pietro **ARETINO**, early 30s. Writer, satirist, libertine, one man rumor-mill, and close friend of Clement.

Marcantonio **RAIMONDI**, early 30s. Renowned Roman engraver.

NICCOLO, 20s. A young priest. Also plays various unattributed roles.

***In terms of ethnicity, casting should be flexible, but not blind.**

***In terms of gender, casting can be flexible, but under no circumstances should a man play Francesca.**

HOW TO READ THIS SCRIPT

- 1) Large **bolded** text should appear projected on the scrim in lettering reminiscent of early-sixteenth-century typeface. Garamond?
- 2) Stage directions in SMALL CAPS indicate sounds that are to be produced live.
- 3) Stage directions that are **bolded and underlined** indicate heightened movement.

A NOTE ON STYLE

These characters love to play with language. They often delight in their own dexterity with the spoken (and written) word. But they were forced to very carefully hone their wit because their very survival depended on it. The playfulness is often moored by those incredibly high stakes.

Special thanks to the 2013 Literary Office Staff of the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center's National Playwrights Conference whose research support was immensely helpful in the writing of this play.

Glossary of Italian Words & Phrases Not Translated In The Body Of the Text

grillo (p. 11) ['grillo] n. cock; (lit.):
cricket

cazzo (p. 14) ['kattso] n. cock, penis

chiavare (p. 14) [kja'vare] v.
to fuck; (lit): to screw

fica (p. 16) ['fika] n. pussy, vagina

ano (p. 17) ['ano] n. anus

fottuto (p. 18) [fot'tuto] pp. fucked

sterco (p. 23) ['sterko] n. shit, dung

baldracca (p. 24) [bal'drakka] n. whore

chiavata (p. 45) [kja'vata] n. fuck; (lit):
screw

per l'amor del cazzo (p. 43) ['per
la'mor 'del 'kattso] “for fuck’s
sake”; (lit): “for the love of a fuck”

fottere (p. 47) ['fottere] v. to fuck

buonasera (p. 53) [bwona'sera] “good
evening”

potta (p. 59) ['pɔtta] n. pussy

leccacazzi (p. 59) [lekka'kattsi] n.
cocksucker

aiutami Signore (p. 61) [aj'utami
si'jnore] “God help me”

vaffanculo (p. 61) [vaffan'kulo] “fuck
you”; (lit) “go take it up the ass”

tette (p. 64) ['tette] pln. breasts, tits

Sesso (p. 65) ['sesso] n. sex

culi e gomiti e cazzi e fighe (p. 66)

['kuli 'e go'miti 'e 'kattsi 'e 'fige]

“asses and elbows and cocks and
pussies”

inculare (p. 67) [incu'lare] v. to have
anal sex

coglioni (p. 67) [koʎ'loni] pln. balls,
testicles

pistolini (p. 68) [pisto'lini] pln. cocks,
penises; (lit): pistols

poppe (p. 72) ['poppe] pln. breasts

sorca (p. 72) ['sorka] n. pussy

uccello (p. 72) [ut'tʃello] n. dick; (lit):
bird

ara mi (p. 73) ['ara 'mi] “possess me
(sexually)”; (lit): command form
of the v. “arare” meaning “to
plow”

allupato (p. 73) [allu'pato] adj. horny,
aroused

sbrodo (p. 73) ['zbrodo] v. “I’m
coming”; (lit): first person
singular of the v. “sbrodare”
meaning “to orgasm”

per favore (p. 75) ['per fa'vore] please

pizzicare (p. 82) [pittsi'kare] v. to nip,
to bite, to tweak, to tingle

titillare (p. 82) [titil'lare] v. to titillate

accarezzare (p. 83) [**akkaret'tsare**] v. to
caress, to cherish

fotterlo (p. 85) [**fot'terlo**] “to fuck
him”

belino (p. 94) [**be'lino**] n. penis

puttana (p. 94) [**put'tana**] n. whore

vaffan (p. 103) [**'vaffan**] short for "fuck
you" or (lit.) "go take it up the ass"

puttaniere (p. 109) [**putta'njere**] n.
whoremonger

per l'amor di Dio [**'per la'mor 'di 'dio**]
(p. 117) “for the love of God”

ACT ONE

Rome - 1526.

Holy Roman Emperor Charles I and King Philip of France battle for supremacy of Europe (and Italy).

For all Pope Clement VII's efforts to keep Rome from being swallowed in the struggle, Charles's hostile armies are swiftly surrounding The Eternal City.

While Luther's busy making noise up North. . .

(Lights reveal CLEMENT in full papal vestments, mitre on his head.

As he stands there staring out at us, uncertain...

Projections of engraved Italian words suddenly appear on the scrim accompanied by a whisper...

And disappear just as suddenly...

Almost as if they are momentary flashes of light that disappear before you can even make sense of them.

Each projected word/whisper seems to startle CLEMENT...

Until the sheer volume of them renders him helpless.

Paralyzed.

As CLEMENT removes his mitre. . .

Stares at it in his hands...

The projected words/whispers subside.

And lights reveal GIBERTI looking on, wearing the simple cassock of a parish priest.)

CLEMENT

Do you want it, Gian Matteo?

GIBERTI

Want. . . ?

CLEMENT

The mitre so many have lied for? Killed for? Died trying to keep in their family's clutches?

(No answer.)

Here. Take it.

GIBERTI

A bastard cannot be pope.

CLEMENT

Didn't stop me.

GIBERTI

A bastard whose parents weren't rich enough to have their union blessed after the fact.

(CLEMENT studies GIBERTI a moment.)

CLEMENT

You're better off a bishop. Lord knows I was.

GIBERTI

If this is about Reubeni—

CLEMENT

It's about the whole bloody situation!

Charles's armies perched on the edge of our lands, mocking my desperation, searching for an excuse to invade.

He and Philip at each other's throats like jealous brothers while the Sultan waits in the East, a clear path of conquest unfurled before him.

And to top it all Luther undermines us all over Europe.

(Beat.)

We honestly thought our salvation lay in the hands of some Jewish dwarf claiming to be king of a lost tribe of Israel?

GIBERTI

Reubeni was not just any Jewish dwarf, but one with His Holiness's blessing.

CLEMENT

Lot of good it did him. For all we know Charles received my letter supporting Reubeni's crusade and strung the little devil up right then and there out of spite.

GIBERTI

If Charles had taken the bait it would've proven a masterful stroke.

CLEMENT *(with a bitter laugh)*

If. . .

GIBERTI

Using Reubeni's crusade to shift Charles's ire off of us and onto the Sultan was—

CLEMENT

A pipe dream.

GIBERTI

Crusades have united Europe before.

CLEMENT

Not for two hundred years. And I'm not Urban II.

GIBERTI

No. You're Clement VII. Scion of Italy's most powerful family.

CLEMENT

Gian Matteo—

GIBERTI

The former Cardinal Giulio d'Medici. Who moved so swiftly and boldly as to astound his every rival. Who saw an opening and exploited it with such tenacity—

CLEMENT

It's easy to be bold when you're not the one whose reputation is at stake. Who feels the weight of History slowly squeezing the breath from his body—

GIBERTI

Then don't think of History.

CLEMENT

How can I not?

GIBERTI

Think only of this moment. Of what you must do next. History will see what you've inherited. Will praise you as the pontiff who rescued a sickly Rome, revived her.

CLEMENT

I wish I shared your conviction.

GIBERTI

Conviction has nothing to do with it.
It's faith. In the mercy of our Lord. The head of his one true Church.
He would not choose someone unequal to the task. Not now.

CLEMENT

Men chose me. Cardinals drunk on their own selfish aims.

GIBERTI

Yet when those aims work in concert, they yield His will.

(CLEMENT looks at GIBERTI.)

CLEMENT *(sincere)*

You really do believe that, don't you?

GIBERTI

The Lord is at work when we least expect.

(CLEMENT looks at GIBERTI, smiles.)

CLEMENT

I know you'd rather be in Verona. Serving your diocese.

GIBERTI

I am a humble servant of the Lord. Who goes where he's needed most.

CLEMENT

Thank you for stiffening my spine whenever I waver.

GIBERTI

I merely help His Holiness see the strength that is plain to all others.

(CLEMENT looks at GIBERTI, smiles.)

CLEMENT

You may send in my valet, Gian Matteo. I know you have many pressing matters to attend to—

GIBERTI

There's one thing I was hoping to discuss with His Holiness. . .

(CLEMENT looks at GIBERTI, who hands him a pamphlet.)

GIBERTI

My men found it circulating among the Curia.

CLEMENT *(reading)*

"The Ways"?

GIBERTI

Yes.

CLEMENT

Of what?

(GIBERTI looks at him.)

CLEMENT opens the pamphlet.

He is aghast.

And fascinated.)

CLEMENT

He's. . .

GIBERTI

Yes.

CLEMENT

He's. . . he's. . .

GIBERTI

Entering her.

CLEMENT

And you can. . . can. . .

GIBERTI

See?

(CLEMENT feverishly flips through the pages.)

GIBERTI

Sixteen in all.

(As CLEMENT stares...

Fascinated...

Disgusted...

He continues flipping...)

CLEMENT

Is that...?

(...and flipping...)

CLEMENT

How does one even *do*...?

(Perhaps he spins the pamphlet around so he can get a better glimpse?)

He notices GIBERTI watching him, promptly shuts the pamphlet.)

CLEMENT

Just when we've succeeded in keeping the Cardinals from frequenting their courtesans. . .
in snuffing out the hypocrisy in God's Church. . .

GIBERTI

I knew His Holiness would see how vital a matter it is.

CLEMENT

We must take care of. . . of. . .

(reading the front)

Raimondi's responsible for this?

GIBERTI

Word is he saw sketches of some frescoes Viterbo's working on for a nobleman's house.

CLEMENT *(still staring at the images with fascination)*

But can it really be *Raimondi*. . .?

GIBERTI

As His Holiness can see, the images have a way of making men act against their better nature.

(Embarrassed, CLEMENT quickly hands over the pamphlet, which GIBERTI ceremoniously tears in half.)

CLEMENT

I have been true to my vows, Gian Matteo. Since becoming Clement.

GIBERTI

I don't doubt His Holiness.

CLEMENT

But it's been a struggle.

GIBERTI

Easy vows aren't ones worth taking.

CLEMENT (*suddenly seething*)

I want Raimondi rotting in prison. Every pamphlet burned. The engravings ground to dust.

GIBERTI

Easier said than done.

(*CLEMENT looks at him.*)

There is no law supporting such a decision.

CLEMENT

How can that be?

GIBERTI

No one thought to ban it because it's never been done.

CLEMENT

The frescoes on every nobleman's wall? The statue at the entrance to Chigi's house?

GIBERTI

It's never been put in print. Where the world can see.

CLEMENT

Leave that to the Italians. . .

Imagine what Luther will say if he gets his hands on them.

GIBERTI

I don't need to.

CLEMENT

Gutenberg invents the press to spread God's good word to the world, but those heretic *Italians*. . . the second they've had their filthy paws on it long enough to understand it, they use it spread their only meaningful contribution: copulation.

GIBERTI

The images will never get to Luther.

CLEMENT

How can we stop them if the law gives us no leg to stand on?
Must I be forever hobbled by the mistakes of my predecessors?!

GIBERTI

Somehow I doubt Pope Leo would've considered the lack of such a law a mistake.

CLEMENT

No, my cousin as much as encouraged all this vile. . .

(A thought has entered his head.)

. . . vile. . .

GIBERTI

What is it?

CLEMENT

Can I see them, Gian Matteo?

GIBERTI

Is His Holiness sure that's a good idea—?

CLEMENT

I need to see them.

(GIBERTI promptly hands the torn pamphlet to CLEMENT, who studies the cover.)

CLEMENT

You said the images were originally Viterbo's?

GIBERTI

That's the word among the Curia. . .

CLEMENT

Curious how his name doesn't appear on the pamphlet anywhere. . .

GIBERTI

What is His Holiness thinking?

CLEMENT

If Viterbo was aware of the printing, wouldn't he have wanted credit?

GIBERTI

You're saying Raimondi stole them?

CLEMENT

Which would make the act of printing a crime.

GIBERTI

And every copy contraband.

(Beat.)

Did I not say His Holiness has a talent for unearthing opportunity?

CLEMENT

It hinges on finding Viterbo first, convincing him to say our story's true.

GIBERTI

I'll have my men convince him it's in his best interest.

CLEMENT

You're sure it will work?

GIBERTI

If we move swiftly. Decisively.

(Brief pause.)

CLEMENT

The people sense my uncertainty, Gian Matteo.

You did not see the way they stared at me on my balcony—the disgust in their eyes—when I told them of Reubeni's fate.

(Beat.)

They know how weak I really am.

GIBERTI

They know all His Holiness has inherited—

CLEMENT

Yet they still. . .

(holding up the torn pamphlet)

. . . mock my efforts at reform.

(Beat.)

Doesn't lashing out like this only make me seem more desperate?

GIBERTI

We're not the desperate ones.
Men with flesh in front of them have no need of paper.

CLEMENT

A man needs no excuse to make his *grillo* stand on end.

GIBERTI

I've seen how the Curia stares at these images on the street.
It's the stare of a starving wolf who finally sees meat.
The same stare His Holiness had when he first set eyes on them.

(CLEMENT looks at GIBERTI.)

These prints are a desperate act of the depraved who see their way of life slowly slipping away.

(We hear heavy breathing. . . moaning. . .

Coming from across the space.)

GIBERTI

Snuffing them out is the surest sign we're winning our war to cleanse God's church.

(The moaning and breathing build. . .)

Now do I have His Holiness' leave?

(. . . and build in intensity. . .)

CLEMENT

So long as you act swiftly.

GIBERTI

Only way I know.

(. . . until they reach a frenzied climax.)

“The Ways”? Of What?

(Lights reveal FRANCESCA and ARETINO laying naked in each other's arms.)

FRANCESCA

Aretino the Divine. . .

ARETINO

Oh God. . .

FRANCESCA

When I first heard them call you that. . .

ARETINO

It was a joke!

FRANCESCA

. . . I thought surely they can't be talking about the same Aretino *I* know. . .

ARETINO

And why not?

FRANCESCA

. . . the same boastful little man—

ARETINO

Little?—

FRANCESCA

Unless his time away from Rome transformed him. Gave him wisdom. Girth. Discipline.

ARETINO

Ey!

FRANCESCA

But the man inside me. . . seems to be the same distracted man I've always known.

ARETINO

Distracted?

FRANCESCA

Not *five minutes* passed before I could feel you poking about like a man who's entertaining other possibilities.

ARETINO

You caught me by surprise! How could I have known your hands would dive down my pants soon as I stepped through the door?!

FRANCESCA

They'd have never made the trip if I'd known the whole thing would feel like a formality.

ARETINO

And what have I done to deserve such cruelty?

FRANCESCA

Oh poor Pietro. . . if he thinks this is me being cruel, he really has been away from Rome too long.

ARETINO

Just two years—

FRANCESCA

Three since you graced the Eternal City with your “divine” presence.

ARETINO

Can you blame me? Adrian would've flayed me alive.

FRANCESCA

Adrian's been dead a year, Pietro.

ARETINO (*genuinely surprised*)

No. . .

FRANCESCA

Eleven months since the conclave—

ARETINO

That can't be. . .

FRANCESCA

—since *your patron* ascended to the Seat of Rome.

ARETINO

Eleven months?

FRANCESCA

Does Giovanni really have you so distracted up there in Tuscany?

He may have a throbbing *cazzo*, but I have ten fingers and toes.

And twenty times the imagination.

(She tries to stick a finger up his anus.

He grabs her hand forcefully, playfully. . .

And the struggle becomes a game of strength between the two of them.)

ARETINO

What if it's more than just *chiavare* with Giovanni and I?

FRANCESCA

It isn't with us?

ARETINO

That's not what I'm—

FRANCESCA

Consider carefully what comes out your mouth next, Pietro. . .

ARETINO

Giovanni is. . . he's. . . I can't keep up with him.

FRANCESCA

Like Leo.

ARETINO

Even more Leo than Leo.

FRANCESCA

Is that possible?

ARETINO (*with delight*)

Apparently. . .

FRANCESCA

Could it be our little Pietro's in love with the Duke of Tuscany?

ARETINO

A thought enters Giovanni's head, he has to entertain it. Giovanni sets his eyes on something, he has to have it. . .

FRANCESCA

Can't hurt to command a mercenary army who makes his every whim a reality. . .

ARETINO

He takes you by the hand and. . . suddenly a year goes by and you've hardly noticed. It's intoxicating.

FRANCESCA

So I wasn't on your mind even once.

ARETINO

You're always on my mind!

FRANCESCA (*with a laugh*)

You expect me to believe lips that lie so easily?

ARETINO

When have these lips ever lied?

FRANCESCA

The rumors you spread last conclave trying to get Clement elected?

ARETINO

Perhaps my *pen* might exaggerate. . .

FRANCESCA (*with a laugh*)

Perhaps?

ARETINO

Only in service of a deeper truth.

FRANCESCA

And the time you forged a letter from your enemy's hand to convince the world you're the bastard of a nobleman and a courtesan? So they'd never know the boring truth that all you *really* are. . . is the legitimate son of a lowly cobbler?
What truth were you serving there?

ARETINO

That no matter what. . . nobles favor their own.
Which is why I'd never forget you, Francesca.
We share a bond so much deeper than that of mere lovers.
We're commoners in a world run by royalty.

FRANCESCA (*skeptical*)

Is that right?

ARETINO

Why do you think you're my first stop?

FRANCESCA (*arousing him with her hand*)

I thought it was that you ached to feel my *fica*. . .

ARETINO

That, too. . .

FRANCESCA

. . . slide along the shaft of your *cazzo*. . .

ARETINO

You and I, Francesca. . . are allies. . .

FRANCESCA

Uh huh. . .

ARETINO

The only difference. . . between the courtesan. . . and court poet. . .

FRANCESCA

Uh huh. . .?

ARETINO

. . . are the favors. . . for which. . . our patrons. . . pay us. . .

FRANCESCA

I doubt Bembo would agree.

ARETINO (*perturbed*)

Bembo?

(She fights. . . and succeeds. . . in undermining his annoyance by continuing to arouse him.)

ARETINO

Bembo wouldn't know poetry. . . if it thrust its *cazzo* up his *ano*. . .

FRANCESCA

What if I find his work *intoxicating*?

ARETINO

He hasn't. . . come back to Rome. . . has he. . . ? To fill your head. . . with all his terrible ideas. . . ?

FRANCESCA

You'd know if you came round more often, wouldn't you?

(She flicks the tip of his erect penis.

He shouts in pain.

She can't help but smile.)

ARETINO (*cupping his penis to protect it from further harm*)

For someone who didn't write me once while I was gone. . .

FRANCESCA

That should've been a sign.

ARETINO

Of what?

FRANCESCA

How many years did we live under the same roof? And you still don't know the first thing about me?

ARETINO

What are you talking about?

FRANCESCA

Don't pretend, Pietro.

ARETINO

I'm not—

FRANCESCA

I can bear anything but flattery.

(He looks at her, confused.)

Look at me and honestly tell me you didn't notice my fraying clothes, my cracked crystal the moment you stepped in the door—

ARETINO

I hardly had time to notice anything apart from your hands on my—

FRANCESCA

You expect me to believe that you, Pietro, of all the money-grubbing men in Italy, couldn't tell I'm no more than a month away from living on the street the second you set eyes on me?

(He is astonished.)

ARETINO

How can that be?

FRANCESCA

Does Giovanni have you so *fottuto* in Tuscany you've no idea what's happened to your own beloved Rome?

ARETINO

What's happened is a Medici's returned to St. Peter's throne. To restore Rome to all her glory.

FRANCESCA

Far from it.

ARETINO

Of course there's the trouble with Luther, but—

FRANCESCA

Luther's the least of our troubles. Or the greatest. Depending on how you look at it.

(Beat.)

The Medici Cardinal we thought we knew and loved. . . disappeared the day he became Clement. He's become fearful. Plagued by doubt. Hardly ever appears in public.

ARETINO

How can he accomplish anything?

FRANCESCA

His datario's become his crutch.

ARETINO

Gian Matteo Giberti?

FRANCESCA

They say His Holiness is incapable of making a decision without Giberti's advice. That no letter enters or leaves his hand without passing through Giberti's.

ARETINO

Must be why he hasn't answered mine.

FRANCESCA

I'd put what little money I have on it.

(Beat.)

Giberti's sole obsession is keeping Luther's influence in check.

ARETINO

A worthy one.

FRANCESCA

But he's convinced the only way to go about it. . . is to root out hypocrisy by keeping the clergy from *fottere*.

ARETINO (*with a laugh*)

A fool's errand.

FRANCESCA

I wouldn't be so sure. The Sicilian shrew has Clement wrapped so tightly around his finger that His Holiness has promised to punish every Cardinal who "strays from the righteous path."

ARETINO

What?!

FRANCESCA

That's what Benedetto told me when he said he'd no longer be my patron. In my mad rush to replace him, every Cardinal I approached said the same.

Imagine how humiliating. . . Flinging myself at every single Cardinal I come across just to have him reject me?

ARETINO

This is. . . this is. . .

FRANCESCA

Reality. Clement himself has stopped seeing his mistress.

ARETINO

I know the mitre can transform the man, but. . .

FRANCESCA

It's Giberti. He's convinced the clergy to shave their beards, refuses to wear his bishop's robes. . . only the simple frock of a parish priest.

ARETINO

You'd think he's Luther himself. . .

FRANCESCA

It's like the two of them are competing for my personal hatred.

ARETINO

Worthy adversaries.

FRANCESCA

Can you believe Luther's taken to telling men they're supposed to enjoy *chiavare* with their wives? That it's supposed to be some sort of divine communion with God?
If a man's supposed to be satisfied with just one woman, how can a courtesan survive?

ARETINO

Perhaps I can help.

FRANCESCA

How?

ARETINO

I plan to see His Holiness about my reward for my services last conclave.

FRANCESCA

The vile rumors you spread about his rivals?

ARETINO

When Adrian won the vote I couldn't collect. But once Adrian died, it seems my words from before cleared Clement's path.

FRANCESCA

What makes you think he'll even grant you audience?

ARETINO

My powers of persuasion.

FRANCESCA

Are better than Giberti's?

ARETINO

Just worry what you'll do with your half.

FRANCESCA

I don't want your charity, Pietro.

ARETINO

It's no charity. You're my friend. More than. My sister.

FRANCESCA

A lot of good it's done me.

ARETINO

It would if you'd accept my help!

FRANCESCA

So you can hold it over my head?

ARETINO

I will not.

FRANCECSA

You can't help it, Pietro. You're a man.
And I refuse to be beholden to any man.

ARETINO

So you became a courtesan?

FRANCESCA

Better than a wife or nun.

(Beat.)

I earn everything I get.

ARETINO

You have earned it. A thousand times over. I owe you my life, Francesca.
Or have you forgotten the first time a customer beat me in Chigi's house. . . how I was too
ashamed to say what had happened? Here I was, this fifteen-year-old boy, just arrived in
Rome after seeing my own Arezzo sacked. . . my own mother and father murdered before
me. . . terrified Chigi would cast me out if I dared complain about one of his wealthiest
patrons.

FRANCESCA

But the courtesans. . . we noticed the welts on your back.

ARETINO

You always notice.

FRANCESCA

And our word spread like fire through the streets.

ARETINO

Like *sterco* through the sewers. . .

FRANCESCA

What this man did with the boys he bought.

ARETINO

Till no one would entertain him, welcome him in their home.

(Beat.)

Within the week, he was weeping in my arms, begging for forgiveness. . . and as he lay there, this rich, rich man, tears streaming down his face. . . I learned the most important lesson of my life: the power of gossip.

When people wonder how I clawed so high—how a little “bastard” boy brings the nobles to their knees with a stroke of his pen. . .

FRANCESCA

Scourge of Princes. . .

ARETINO

The answer’s simple: I’m friends with all the courtesans.

FRANCESCA

More than friends.

ARETINO

Allies.

(Silence.)

They lie in each other’s arms.

Enjoying the feel of each other’s skin.)

FRANCESCA

Sometimes I think what my life would be like if Leo hadn’t just liked boys. How I’d be where you are now.

ARETINO

A poet?

FRANCESCA

A favorite guest of every Italian court. Showering my benevolence on all my friends.

ARETINO

So sure you are. . .

FRANCESCA

The favorite courtesan of a beloved Pope?

ARETINO

How can you know you'd have been his favorite?

FRANCESCA

I was in my prime then. Sixteen and supple.

ARETINO

You never lacked confidence.

FRANCESCA

Now I'm just an old *baldracca*. . .

ARETINO (*serious*)

There's nothing old about you, Francesca.

FRANCESCA

Then why didn't Raimondi use me as one of his models?

ARETINO

Models?

(She looks at him, astonished.)

FRANCESCA

You haven't heard?

(No answer.)

That Giovanni's no good for you, Pietro. He has you so distracted your poison pen's bound to be blunted.

ARETINO

What's happened?

FRANCESCA

When were you planning to stop by Raimondi's studio?

ARETINO

Tomorrow morning.

FRANCESCA

Save yourself the effort. It's been ransacked. He's in prison.

ARETINO

Since when?

FRANCESCA

Couple weeks. He published prints of some Viterbo paintings entitled *The Ways*.

ARETINO

"The Ways"? Of what?

(She looks at him.)

Ah. . .

FRANCESCA

They say you could see *everything*.

ARETINO

You haven't seen them yourself?

FRANCESCA

Word is His Holiness flew into a rage when he saw them, ordered every copy burned, the engravings ground to dust, and all future printings punishable by death.

ARETINO

From a man I met in a whorehouse. . .

FRANCESCA

They couldn't arrest Raimondi for the images themselves since there was no law against them at the time. They're holding him for stealing the images and printing them without permission. As to whether that's true, no one knows, since Viterbo's lips are sealed.

ARETINO

All so Clement can maintain the appearance of piety. . .

FRANCESCA

My sources say Clement's conversion is sincere.

ARETINO

How long have your sources known the man?
He's my friend of fifteen years.

FRANCESCA

Was.

ARETINO

Still is if I have anything to say about it.

(ARETINO starts hurriedly getting dressed.)

FRANCESCA

Where are you going, Pietro? It's midnight.

ARETINO

Marcantonio Raimondi—the greatest engraver of our time—rots in prison and you expect me to sit still?

FRANESCA

You think you can just shake His Holiness out of this sanctimonious stupor?

ARETINO

If anyone can. . .

FRANCESCA

Careful, Pietro. Giberti's capable of more than you might think.

ARETINO

I will merely remind His Holiness whose pen put him where he is.
Giberti can't compete with that.