

5/29/06 AMS transcription of ch. 30 of The BRAVO; final is AMS. Original is Bentley 1831.

"<[?]> The Carmelite and Gelsomina found the keepers in waiting without and when they had returned the door was locked and barred as usual. As they had no farther concerns with the gaolers, they passed on unobserved. But when they had reached the corridor which led towards the apartment of Gelsomina the monk stopped.

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"Art thou equal to a great effort to save Jacopo?" he asked <solemnly> in that manner which denotes a consciousness of a solemn and imperative motive.

"Father!"

"I would know if thou are <sure> /certain\ thy courage will support thee in a trying scene, without which the poor youth will surely perish?"

"Father, I could die to save Jacopo a pang!"

The Carmelite regarded the slight form and radiant eye of the speaker with melancholy admiration.

Come, then, daughter," he resumed; "we will at least do our duties to all, the offending and the offender—sinner and sufferer, and should we fail, the crime of forgetfulness will not lie upon our souls."

He took her hand, turned, and led the obedient girl into the parts of the palace, which contained the apartments appropriated to the common uses of the chief of the State, the policy of the patricians, concerning those who approached the Ducal presence, is matter of history. ** <a>/A\ will ever be the case with a titular Sovereign, where an Aristocracy rules, *<T>/\the Doge was /a\ puppet in their hands* and great care had been taken to surround him with those whose influence was not dreaded, and, on the other hand, to keep all aloof who might give, what the policy of Venice was pleased to term a false direction to his mind. This wariness, however, proved the real weakness of all power that is based on exclusion, rather than any danger of the Prince's becoming a convert to better principles, since he had been educated, like all around him, in the factitious and false principles of <his day> /his time\ and country, and was far from being a man likely to overstep the bounds /with\ which /he had been surrounded by\ art and habit. <had surrounded him\

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Father Anselmo owed his success partly to his holy calling, but more to the confident manner in which he proceeded. <Guard> Sentinel after sentinel permitted him to pass, without question though not without suspicion, until he had gained the ante-chamber which contained the menials in ordinary waiting.

"His Highness should be in his closet, at this hour?" said the Monk, addressing the <groom> usher who came to receive these unexpected visitors.

"You have discerned the truth, Father—and—"

"Tell him, my son, that the Carmelite he <expects> wishes to see, and the young girl in whose happiness his princely bosom feels so parental an interest await his pleasure."

"Has His Highness commanded—"

"Tell him, moreover; Son, that there is little time to lose, since the hour draws near when the fate of the wretched but innocent will be terminated."

The Monk spoke solemnly, for, so he felt, and he had assumed an air of authority which deceived the menial. While not presuming to remonstrate, he admitted his guests into an inner room, and inviting them to be seated, he went to execute his errand.

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The Doge of Venice, at the time of our tale was, as has already been mentioned, a man advanced in years. He had thrown aside the cares of the day, and, was now, in the retirement of his privacy, endeavouring to <[?]> further /[\?]\ those human sympathies which are stronger than any [human] /of the\ substitutes of human ingenuity, which <belong> [broaden?] his artificial condition, by entering into the feelings and descriptions one of the classic poets of his country. All the usual appliances of his state had been thrown aside for <his> lighter ease and personal indulgences <of the individual>. His white locks fell in graceful ringlets about his venerable <head>, temples, his yielding form was concealed in a /night\ robe <of the chamber>, and his whole air was that of one gladly withdrawn from the false pageantry of a condition whose burthen was no equivalent, for its honours, into <[?]> /beloved\ retirement of his own thoughts. When the domestic entered the room, with the noiseless step of <[?]> habitual deference, the old <man> /Sovereign\ scarce raised an eye from the page, on which it has rested, in order to ascertain who appeared. .

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"Signoir;" said the groom of the chambers, with that familiar mode of address, which is so common among those who serve nearest and most intimately about the persons of Princes.

"What wouldst thou, Marco?"

"Here /are\ the /reverend\ Carmelite and the young girl, in waiting to be received into your Highness' presence."

"How sayest thou, child!--<I know nothing of any Carmelite, or young girl, as thou wouldst pretend ? What pretence is this! !"

"<Excuse> Pardon, Signore. I do but repeat the message of the monk. Tell His Highness, that the Carmelite he wishes to see, and the young girl, in whose happiness his Princely bosom feels so parental an interest, await his pleasure."

M 3

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<[?]> Age and experience had taught the Doge of Venice caution. Though he did not distrust his senses and believe that his memory played him false, he, at once, perceived the prudence of examining for himself, into the meaning of this extraordinary message. It might be a device of the Inquisition, which simplicity and his innocence would best defeat, or it might in truth, be some matter of urgent necessity which would gratify that love for his species, which notwithstanding the effects of the specious <[?]> system in which he existed, was never entirely dormant in his breast.

"Did he say more, Marco?" he <f> asked.

"Signoire, he said there was <urgent> haste for the audience, as the hour was near when the fate of a /very\ wretched but most innocent man would be settled. Most probably he meant some matter of the young nobles who are under a cloud for excesses in the carnival."

The domestic had added some superlatives to the language of the monk as is usual in men of his class, and he did not fail to second them by a proper emphasis and expressive countenance. These embellishments were lost upon his master, however, whose thoughts had taken an entirely different direction.

"Bid thy companions come to me, he said, after a moment's pause, "and usher the Carmelite into my presence, with a trifling delay."

<These orders were> The first of these orders was quickly executed. The prudent Prince <bid> /then ordered\ the attendant to hasten to a secretary with a note requesting the presence of <this> an Inquisitor who was known to be occupied, at that moment, in the palace, among the archives of the secret council. This duty of precaution observed the venerable old man prepared to receive <his guests> / who came to see\ with a calmness suited to his high rank and dignified character.

The member of the Council of Three made his appearance at one door quit as Father Anselmo and his trembling companion entered the cabinet by another. An expression of the <eye> Doge's eye was sufficient to apprise the other that he was summoned as a witness of what was about to occur than with any desire to consult his opinions. The practiced old Senator, therefore, affected as much indifference as /under the circumstances\ he could assume, during the interview.

The Carmelite threw back his cowl, when fairly in the presence, exposing his ascetic countenance and benevolent eye to view, while Gelsomina, partly in awe of the rank of him before whom she had so suddenly been ushered, and partly under the impulses of powerful feeling, sank on her knees, folding her hands upon her bosom, like one who prayed.

"What means this unlooked for and unseasonable visit and /that\ attitude of supplication," demanded the Prince, whose finger pointed to the bowed

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form of the girl, while his eye met that of the monk—"Both are unusual here!"

"Illustrious Doge," returned Father Anselmo, "we come as petitioners for justice rather than for mercy. There is one in the cells condemned of the tribunals who must die in the morning unless your princely word stay the blow of the executioner. I am the ghostly counsellor of the unhappy youth, and this trembling maiden is one bound to him <by the dearest tie of earth."> in a manner I need scarcely name."

"Thou would say she is his betrothed?"

"Plighted to him, Highness, by every human tie save that in which the church is the agent of Heaven."

"It is unfortunate that one <of> so innocent <a> /of\ mien and of so tender years should have placed her happiness on a foundation so frail as the conduct of a worthless suitor. Didst thou say, Father, that the criminal is condemned by the common tribunals?"

"By the criminal judges, Highness, and ordered to the block with the morning light."

The venerable Prince seemed relieved. The courts <to which both> alluded to, never meddled with affairs that might not, in appearance at least, be submitted to the common sentiment of the city, and he saw no obstacle to his listening further.

"By what authority dost <you>

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thou impeach the decision of the judges, Carmelite?" he demanded severely, though the manner in which his relenting eye wandered from the monk to the countenance of Gelsomina betrayed a yielding of purpose.

"Signore, as I have said, by virtue of my holy calling. I have confessed and shrived the penitent. He has laid bare his soul to me, like one whose feet were in the grave, and though I find him guilty towards his God, in common with all of women born, I find him unoffending towards the state."

"Thinkest thou, father, that the law would ever reach its victims were we to listen only to the accusation which the criminal adduces against himself. I have lived long, reverend <carmelite>priest, and it has been my fortune to study the weaknesses of the race; in all the time providence has left upon my shoulders the grievous weight of authority I am doomed to bear, I do not remember to have met with the victim of his own misdeeds <that> who has not believed himself unfortunate rather than criminal."

"That men apply this treacherous solace to their consciences one of my vocation has not to learn—nay, that too often while most condemning their sins by words of confession and self-abasement they make a merit of humility is so true that none accustomed to deal with these illusions of the mind can question it: but, Doge of Ve-

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nice, there is still a majesty and awe in the sacred rite, I have been called to fill, which can look down and even overcome the mounting of the spirit. Many attempt to deceive themselves at the confessional, but by the power of God, few succeed."

"Praised be the /M\<m>ost /H\<h>oly Mother, and Her /B\lessed Son, that this is so!" returned the Prince, crossing himself reverently, and secretly struck by the mild dignity of the Carmelite. "Wilt thou name the condemned?"

"Tis a certain Jacopo Frontoni; a reputed bravo."

The movement of the countenance and recoil of the <[?]> Doge were both full of natural surprise

"Callest thou the bloodiest stiletto that ever disgraced our city, the weapon of a reputed bravo!" he exclaimed. /{?}\ The arts of the wretch have prevailed against thy observation, Father. The true confession of such a monster can be but a history of revolting crimes."

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"Such was my opinion when I entered his cell <Highness> but I left it convinced of my error. If your Highness will deign to hear his tale, like me perhaps, you will think him a subject of pity rather than of punishment.

"This is wonderful! Of all the criminals of my reign this is the last in whose favor I could have imagined there was a word <for> to be uttered. Speak Carmelite, for curiosity is as strong within me as surprise."

The pious monk ejaculated a thanksgiving that he had succeeded so far, for it was not always easy, in that City of <fort> mystery, to bring the truth to the ears of the powerful. He cast a glance of encouragement at the still [?] girl, and commenced his explanation† This is perhaps the only country, even at the present hour, in which truths of a public nature, may be [?] and fearless of exposed. In every other there is some contradiction between practice and theory. Some dread between the conflict of intelligence and vested interests, that cause men to be [?] of their words lest they draw upon themselves the vindictive resentment of the privileged. Where men live under a

system of duplicity a policy of the guilty gets interwoven with their habits, and, the most virtuous are unconsciously tainted with the vice of discipline. Thus, Father Anselmo <used a cautious and> touched tenderly on the practices of the State, as he proceeded and used a reserve in speaking, of that which both his principles and his feelings condemned, <that> of which he was not himself perhaps aware.

"It may not be known to one of a condition as high as that of the Doge of Venice," he said, "That a certain Francesco Frontini, a humble but honest mechanic of <Venice> the city, was accused of aiding in frauds on the republic's revenue. This is a crime that St Mark never fails to visit with his heaviest anger, and the <acc> unfortunate man was long imprisoned in the hope that he would make revelations, which was beyond the power of one who adhered to the truth."

"I remember to have heard of such an accusation, father, but it is long since the matter has been recalled to my mind."

"Highness, I am not now to learn that they in whose name justice is administered, are not bound to have ill seeing eyes. It is now said that this Francesco was wrongly accused, though the truth did not appear until he had [?] years in the cells of the palace. By the death of one who was in truth a criminal, and who had made suit to the daughter of Frontini, the innocence of the latter was acknowledged."

"The state was not slow to acknowledge its error" said the Doge, with the quickness of a man whose better feelings were touched

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"Signiore, the republic is discreet and moves warily in a matter of its own interests. There were reasons that I shall not presume to examine why the prison door of poor Francesco was kept shut, long after the death of his false friend left no doubt as to his having been wrongfully confined."

"Was /he\ a relative of the bravo?" asked the Prince, familiarly.

"Signior, his father. Like a pious child, Jacopo brought proofs of the wrongs of his parent to the <secret> authorities, and slow to be convinced these illustrious politicians enlisted him in their service in order that their doubts of the father's innocence might be removed by the <<[?]> /services\ of the son."

"You speak in enigmas, <carmelite>" monk."

"I am little used to deal in these worldly devices, Great Doge, but this is what I hear. The character of Jacopo was found favorable to a scheme of the police, who profited by his fidelity and habits to entrap the [?], with the apology of preventing crimes. He had a false reputation as a Bravo, though secretly an agent of the Councils, and his reward was to have been Francesco's liberty."

<The Doge listened <as one> /like all\ of [? ?] unwillingly admitting the conviction of unworthy means being used to uphold measures that are connected with their /own\ personal interest; <[?]> with secret consciousness of the hazards of opposition, but with great [?] for>

The Doge listened uneasily. His eye glanced aside at the grave but unmoved Inquisitor, who stood as if chance only made him an auditor of what was said, but the look at <the ? ?> the senator was /as\ brief, as if /<though uncomfortable>\ his marble like visage \repelled/ <? ? ? ?> the glance.

"For all this you have the word of a condemned man, father?"

"With the near view of death before his eyes, Prince. Jacopo <spoke> told his tale like <a man> one whose mind was prepared to meet his end, and equally without resentment as without fear. "By some fated mistake of the Judges, his pretended crimes

have been enfolded with real murders, and without quick relief, there is danger he will receive unmerited punishment."

"Thy tale is extraordinary, priest, and it requires reflection—Didst thou not say the Father was long held a prisoner?"

"Signore, I did."

"And does he know of this <present?> jeopardy of his son."

"Doge he is dead."

"A prisoner, Carmelite?"

<Highness> "A prisoner in his cell."

The Doge of Venice turned aside, for the flush that crossed his care worn brow, contained a confession it was not fit that [every one?] should see. The Monk, who had not <failed> /[?]\ to note each changing expression of his <eye> /countenance\, bent and whispered to Gelsomina

"What wouldest thou, child?"

"Justice—Mercy and Justice!"

"I have had occasion to say lately, that Mercy is not always Justice. Has thou faith child, in this extraordinary tale?"

"Have I faith—"exclaimed Gelsomina, pressing her hands upon /her\ chest, as if she would prevent the mounting of her heart—"My faith in the saints is not stronger. Highness, I have seen Jacopo, for many years, visiting the cell of his father and doing all that love and duty could . <?> in sorrow I have witnessed his grief, his <manly> struggle to keep down his sorrow lest it might make the prisoner's state [harder?] to be borne and <all his> such tenderness as until then I had believed none but a woman could feel."

"Thou wert his companion in these secret visits?"

"Illustrious Prince, I was. I am the daughter of the Head Keeper and they sent me as his guide."

:And thou knewest he was a bravo of the bridges?"

"Ah! no; Prince of Venice that wretched deception they hid from me. Had Jacopo told me this I would have spoken him plainly as one who loved him."

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"Thou shouldest have said—?"

"I would have told him, Great Doge, what God and the church have put into my spirit—" <said> /returned\ Gelsomina <?> under the impulse of her feelings, while a bright glow lighted every feature of her face. "I would have said it is not permitted to us ever to feign evil that good may come of it—that deceit depraves and undermines the heart—that the saints shut their ears to prayers which do not come pure from <?> /a\ soul untainted with evil practices, and that it were better to die in the deepest cell of the palace than to live with the [defiance of morality?]."

"Thinkest thou he would have hearkened to thee, child."

"He might have found the power of the state stronger than his love for an unknown and friendless girl, Highness, but my [reason?] would have given me eloquence. I would not have quitted him, while there was hope and aided by my padrone I might /have\ prevailed. Oh! They who trifle thus with sin, begin at last to look upon it with less horror than is safe!"

"The girl has been well instructed, Carmelite!—Art thou her ghostly counsellor?"

"Signore, I am not. Though dwelling on the midst of those who are the victims of their vices, her soul is pure."

Thy tale is remarkable—so extraordinary as to need much confirmation returned the aged Prince, who, ever and [?], suffered a furtive glance to probe the thoughts of the motionless [?] visitor. “Hast thou heard of the death of one Antonio a fisherman, monk?”

“I have” “More than that, I received his last confession, and knew the man.”

A /sudden\ movement drew all eyes towards the /?\ member of the secret Council, but the priest only understood the ominous warning that shot from his glance

“Then thou mayest know that this Jacopo is suspected of causing his end,” continued the Doge.

“The charge is false, excellent Prince. That much will I say, though my own life answer for the words.”

270 The Doge <?> heeded the measuring eye of the monk, for a moment, and he paced the room in silence. A glimpse of the truth began to dawn upon his mind, and he felt the pang <of> which must <?> /so often> accompany <the> /a\ solemn mockery of truth. Prince and noble [?] the [?] fountain of Justice as well as Mercy, but in fact the [?] tool of a cold and calculating policy, he endeavored <??> pains of appearing what he was not, the very <??> forest of the ablest of him who was condemned to die. Too ? ? in the ways of necessity to evidence further exposure, he went towards Gelsomina, and partly to avoid the eye of the Carmelite and partly to indulge his own feelings, he laid his hand affectionately on her own ringlets in the manner of a priest about to bless his child. The girl seized the happy moment, and ? on her knees /again\ gave a vent to her feelings

“Great Doge! she cried. “You will turn this crime from Venice! By your royal word command the door of Jacopo’s prison to prevent there be innocent blood upon the republick. If it be a fault to have feigned crimes to serve his father, it is a fault that he shares with the patrician, who will have pity on the ignorance and humble condition. You will not leave him to die! Oh! if you knew his noble nature, as I do, prince, you would not hesitate to pronounce his pardon.”,

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“Thou art open in thy love of this Jacopo, child!”

Gelsomina bowed her head in modesty [?]. But <she was> sustain above her ordinary feelings, by her [?], <and. the transient <??> /?\ caused her cheek to glow as it was gone. She lifted her face with dignity and continued.

“Highness! she said. “I cannot feel shame when the life of Jacopo is in danger. I would ? my innocent love for the youth <in> before the citizens to serve him in this strait, and shall I hesitate in this venerable presence. Father [????] with the same benediction, and my own mother has long since told me that one day I should be <the supposed?> ? < I know not that I ought to feel ashamed to own my love, especially when Jacopo is so near death>. Think on his constant love for his father, his long and secret service to the state, his own innocence and the burthen of sorrow he has so long borne without complaint, Great Doge, and then leave him to his fate, if <thou> /you\ can[st]!”

“Thou art of plain speech, girl!”

“<his> “Fear hath made me bold. There is a God for the republick as well as for the gondolier. Think you he will look on this deed with a smile, or that he will forget the mockery of justice! Men flatter themselves with the hope of sharing with a ??, public acts, but there is an eye upon us which looks further than the Council and a countenance whose frown is more terrible than the <anger>, /wrath\ <?> of the Senate! Beware how

you <provoke> /anger\ the God of Jacopo; <and> my God, and your God, Doge of Venice; <for> he will not see evil and be <pleased> satisfied.”

The bright, [?] eye, the glowing <temple> cheeks and the firm speech of this slight and usually timid being who uttered this language, caused the auditors to look at each other in secret awe. The aged prince smiled, but it was sadly, and his muscles trembled.

“Thou knowest not what thou utterest, child,” he said struggling to clear his voice—“These are words that ill become thee to use or me to hear.”

“Art thou greater than he who rules Heaven and Earth! May not /the\ truth be said in this presence that is proclaimed before his altars! <Do ye hope to cheat his eye /<?>\ or to be sure ye are left to your own [heart?]> No, you are a man and a father, and a Prince beloved by his people, and a christian who does not laugh at the fearful being he worships. I know you will not dare to suffer this deed, and I will say no more.”

“Lead her away, father, and calm the disturbed mind of the child by thy wisdom,” said the Prince, whose colour went and came during the few last minutes of the interview.

The Carmelite obeyed. Gelsomina offered no resistance, but rising at his beck, she turned /?\ a look like that which innocence and conscious principles is apt to assume in support of the right on those she left behind, and slowly followed the monk from the room. The Doge kept his anxious eye on her form until it was concealed by the closing door, and then he faced his companion. As the Prince advanced towards the member of the secret council, his eyes moistened, the native benevolence of the man shone on his countenance, and he held forth his hands like one who sought support in the sympathies of the other.