

ASSASSIN'S CREED™

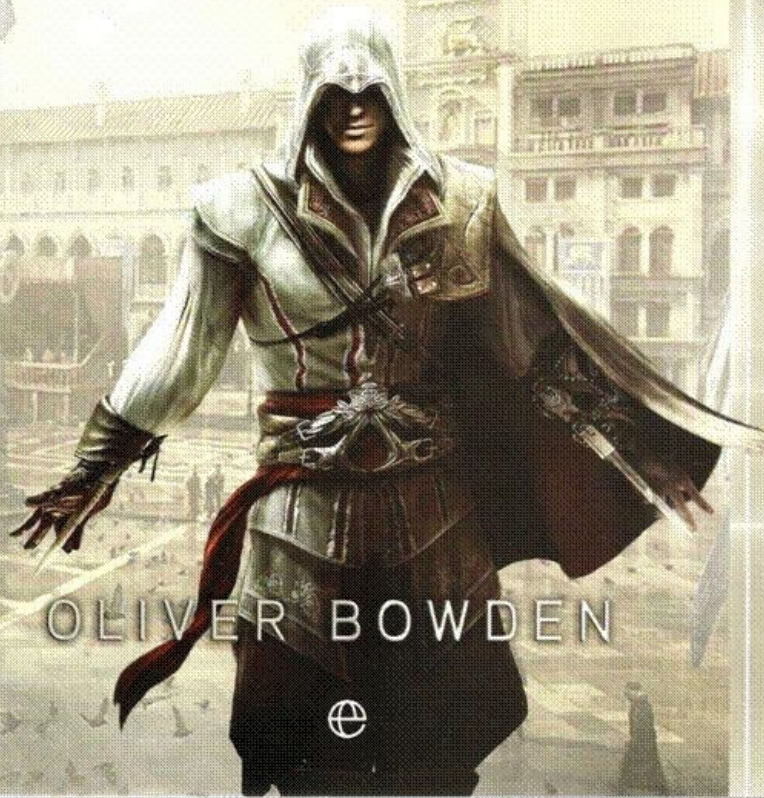
RENAISSANCE



OLIVER BOWDEN 

ASSASSIN'S CREED™

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OLIVER BOWDEN



HarperCollins

La Italia del Renacimiento



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Translated by Isabel Murillo

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While he believed that learning to live

Had been learning to die

LEONARDO DA VINCI

SUMMARY

"I will seek revenge against those who betrayed my family. I Auditore Ezio di Firenze. I'm an assassin ... "

Betrayed by the families that govern Florence, Venice and Rome in Renaissance Italy, the young Ezio Auditore embarks on an epic struggle to root out corruption and restore the family honor. To do this you must learn the art of death. On his way for revenge and control will find the great minds of Leonardo da Vinci and Machiavelli, must decide between love and destiny and discover that the latter is much more complex and higher than you ever imagined. To his allies, Ezio will become the force that will guide them towards freedom and justice. To his enemies, a threat devoted to the destruction of tyrants who abuse the Italian people. An epic tale of power and revenge in which the truth is written in blood.

Chapter 1

Shining and flickering torches on the top of the towers of the Palazzo Vecchio, the Bargello, and only a few lanterns. Destedresser was in the cathedral square, slightly towards the north. Some more lighted docks along the banks of the Arno River where late it out for a city where most people would retire to his home with the arrival of the night, were distinguished in the darkness a few sailors and longshoremen. Some of the sailors still working on their boats and boats, urgestwo to bring out the latest gear repairs androllar adequately covers the ends of freshly scrubbed dark, while dock workers rushed dragging or carrying loads to enclose them in the safety of nearby stores.

Also in the taverns and brothels twinkling lights, but very few people roamed the streets. Seven years had elapsed since the Lorenzo de Medici, who was then withtobacco twenty years, was elected to govern the city, bringing with him at least some sense of order and calm to intense rivalidity exists among the main families of bankers and merFlorence hip had become one of the richest cities in the world. However, the city had ceased to be in constant turmoil, as the factions have fought ceaselesslyCERSE with control, some of them changing their alliances, while remaining as other eternal and implacable enemies.

Florence, in the year of our Lord 1476, even on a spring night permeated by the sweet smell of jasmine, when it was almost possible to forget the stench of the Arno if the wind was blowing in the diright direction, it was the safest place to stroll after sunset.

The moon had appeared in a cobalt blue sky, dominating over a host of stars who accompanied him. DerraMaba its light on the square where the Ponte Vecchio, their crowded tents in the dark and silent now, united with the north bank of river. Its light also discovered a black-clad figure standing sober the roof of the church of Santo Stefano al Ponte. A young man of only seventeen, but tall and proud. Looking to concentrateconcentration in the neighborhood, put a hand to his mouth and whistled, a mild but penetrating sound. In response, first one, then three, desas a dozen, and finally a minimum of twenty men, young men like him, dressed mostly in black, some wearing hoods or hats blood red, green or dark blue, all with swords and daggers in his belt, emerged from the dark streets and arcades towardsGreg on the square. The young band of dangerous aspect desFan-folded, his movements sure and arrogant.

The young man looked down at the faces of impatience, under the pale moonlight, watching him. He raised his fist above his head as a defiant salute.

- Stand together! He shouted, and they also raisedwere the fist, some drew their weapons and soft, and cheered:

- United!

The young man fell at full speed, like a cat, by the faChada unfinished, from the roof to the porch of the church, and from there jumped up, his cloak flying, to land squatting and smoothly through all of them. They gathered around expectantly.

- Hush, my friends! He raised his hand to silence a single and aloneio cry. He smiled grimly.Do you know why I have gathered here tonight, to you, my closest aliatwo? For help. I have stayed too long on whetherence while our enemy, you know who I mean, Vieri de 'Pazzi, this city has come to slander my family, arrasstrating our name through the mud and trying to ma patheticdegrade manner. Not normally stoop to herd mehe kicked a mangy stray dog like that, but ...

Was interrupted at the time that a large stoneof, timing, launched from the bridge, landed at his feet.

"Just as with your nonsense, *grullo* Shouted a voice.

The young man returned with his group, like a unitca person, in the direction of the voice. I knew who it belonged to. CruZande bridge from the south approached another young band. Their leader strutting his head, his red cloak, fastened by a gold brooch adorned with dolphins and crosses on a blue background, covering the black velvet suit, hand on the hilt of his sword. He was tolerably attractive appearance desfigured by a cruel mouth and a weak chin, and even being somewhat coarse, the strength of his arms and legs was beyond doubt.

"Buona sera, Vieri said the young man quietly. Just then we were talking about you. "And made a reveence with exaggerated courtesy, simultaneously adopting a formershock pressure. But you must forgive me. Did not expect you personally. Pazzi always believed that they hired others to hiciesen them the dirty work.

Vieri came and stood up when he and his troop detusaw a few meters away.

- Ezio Auditore! You're a darling puppy! I would say that is your family of pen pushers and accountants who always comes running to the guard as the weakest peeps sign of trouble. *Codardo!* -Tight grip on the handle ispada. You're afraid to address the situation, I think.

"What can I say, Vieri *engaged*. The last time I saw your sister Viola seemed quite satisfied with the treatment I gave him. -Ezio Auditore gave his enemy a wide smilelsa happy to hear the giggles of his fellow obscured his isPalden.

But I knew I had gone too far. Vieri was already red with rage.

- Enough is enough, asshole! Let's see if you can fight as well as sputtering! He turned his head toward his men, his sword and shouted, "Kill those bastards!

Then another stone spun through the air, but this time it was a challenge. Ezio gave a glancing blow in the brakingyou, opening a bloody wound. Ezio staggered for an instantSo while fans threw Vieri a storm of stones. His men barely had time to recover before having the band over Pazzi, who ran across the bridge to pounce on Ezio and his men. Took the fight up so suddenly that they hardly had time to swing swords, daggers and even less so that both sides clashed inTRADA only with his fists.

The battle was hard and unrelenting, brutal kicks and punches connected with the sickening sound of broken bones. For a while he could have opted in either way, but then Ezio, his vision slightly affected by the blood from his forehead, he saw two of his best men take a wrong step, falling and being trampled on by bullies de 'Pazzi. Vieri laughed and Ezio near, prepared to stoke a new blow to the head with a large stone. Ezio was set cucliThe and dodged, but the danger had been too close to feel calm and now band Auditore was taking the brunt. Ezio got, before joining the whole, draw his dagger and stab blindly but successfully, musas a robust Pazzi henchman threatening him with his sword and dagger drawn. Ezio's dagger pierced tissue, muscle and tendon and the man let out a howl of agony and fell bendsdo, dropping their weapons and taking both hands to a wound that continued to

sprout blood.

Desperately struggling to his feet, looked around Ezio. Pazzi saw that had surrounded his men, who had cornered against a wall of the church. Noting that forces recovered his legs, he headed for his teammates. Dodged the cutting edge of another henchman and got connected Pazzitar a punch to the jaw of that bearded guy. Had the satisfaction to see fly a few teeth and his opponent to his knees, stunned by the blow. He shouted to his men giving AniWe, though in reality his thoughts were focused on finding ways to beat a retreat with the greatest dignity possible. At that time, exceeding the noise of the conflict isspoon a loud voice, cheerful and very familiar calling him from behind the band Pazzi.

"Hello, *fratellino*, What the hell are you?

Ezio's heart leapt with relief and managed to say in a broken voice:

- Hi, Fred! What are you doing here? I thought you'd be partying as usual!

- Nonsense! I knew you had something planned and I decided to see if my brother had learned at last to take care of himself. But I think you still have to learn a few lessons!

Federico Auditore, Ezio few years older and older brother was a big man with a big appetite ... BEbida, love and battle. Dodged punches as he talked, he hit a couple of heads of the Pazzi and raised his foot to poke a kick in the jaw while opening a third step inamong the crowd to get closer to his brother, insensitive to violenceence that reigned around him. His men, encouraged, redoubled efforts. Pazzi, on the other hand, were puzzled. A few dock workers had gathered to watch from a distance, and the PenuPazzi's reigning Mbra withfused with reinforcements from the auditors. That, along with the roar and the flying fists of Frederick, his actions quickly emutons by Ezio, who learned at full speed, eventually causing panic among them.

The angry voice of Vieri de 'Pazzi rose above the moundto general.

- Collection! He shouted to his men, his voice broken by the exhaustionment and anger.

Ezio caught the eyes and growled a threat inaudible before disappearing into the darkness, on the way to the Ponte Vecchio,lowed by those of his men who could still walk, and perhotly followed by the victorious allies now Ezio.

Ezio was about to follow too, but the meaty hand of his brother stopped him.

"Wait a minute," he said.

- What do you mean? They are fleeing!

"Relax.

Frederick, with bad face, gently touched the wound of the brakingEzio tea.

"Not a scratch.

"I think it's more than that, she decided her brother, a serious expression on his face. You better see a doctor.

"I have no time to waste visiting doctors Ezio snapped and said," Besides ... He stopped even unwittingly. I have no money.

- Ja! You've wasted on wine and women, I suppose. -FeDericco smiled and gave an affectionate slap his brother in the shoulder.

"I have not exactly wasted, I would say. And look at the exampleexample that *you* just me. -Ezio smiled, but here goesCilo. Suddenly he realized that his head was pounding. I guess it's okay if I look at the wound. Can you lend me a few *Fiorini*?

Federico stroked his bag. Delivered no ringing.

"The truth is that now I'm a little low," he said.

Ezio shyly smiled at his brother's shameful.

- And what will you have spent? For masses and indulgences, I guess.

Frederick laughed.

"Okay. I see where you're going, 'said Ezio.

He looked around. In the end, only three or four of their own hasbian badly injured as a result enough to keep still on the battlefield and were sitting up, grumbling a little, but smiling too. It had been a tough fight, but no one had broken any bones. On the other hand, more than half a dozen isPazzi birra lay completely knocked out, and at least a couple of them were dressed in expensive clothes.

"Let's see if our enemies have fallen some wealth to share," suggested Fred. At the end of the day, we needsity is greater than yours. And I bet you anything that can lighten the load without waking!

"We'll see," said Ezio, and began to work quite successfully.

In a few minutes he had collected enough gold to fill their two bags. Ezio looked triumphantly to his brother and his newly harvested jingled fortune to highlight his achievement.

- There is enough! "Cried Frederick. Better to let themWe limped to bring them back home. In fact, we are not thieves ... This is not just a war booty. And still gustarmo the look of this wound. We have to go flying at you look at it.

Ezio nodded and turned to see a site last donAuditors' just got a victory. Losing patience, Federico laid a hand on the shoulder of his younger brother.

"Come," he said, and without delay began walking at a pace that Ezio, weakened by the battle, found it difficult to follow, but howdo it was very late or took the wrong alley, FeDericco expected to direct or ran in the right direction. Sorry, Ezio. All I want is to get a doctor as soon as possible.

And, indeed, was not far, but Ezio felt more tired with each passing minute. At the end came to a stay in penumbra decorated with mysterious instruments of brass and glass jars, arranged on tables in dark oak and the ceiling hung with bunches of dried herbs, where the medical failly had his consultation. Ezio could no longer stand.

Al *dottore* Ceresa not like being awakened at night, but his bad mood turned to concern as a sail close enough to examine in detail the wound Ezio.

"Hmmm ... "He said gravely. Go mess we have here, young man. Do your people have nothing better to do than anconstantly fighting to out there?

"It was a matter of honor, good doctor" said Federico.

"I see," said the doctor quietly.

"Actually it's nothing," said Ezio, still feeling weak.

Federico, who as always disguised with the help of good humor concern, said:

"Make him a patch of the very best, mate. Look so linda is all you need.

- Hey, *fottiti!* Ezio replied, raising his middle finger toward his brother.

The doctor ignored them, washed his hands gently explored the wound and soaked a cloth with a clear liquid in one of the many bottles she had. Cleaned the wound with the solution so that stung Ezio was about to jump from his chair, his face contorted with pain. Then clean the wound and the doctor took a needle and fine wire threaded casing.

"Okay," he said. This really hurt a little.

Once the stitches and bandaged the wound so that Ezio like a Turkish turban, the doctor smiled to encourage him.

"There will be three *Fiorini* for now. Go to your *palazzo* in a few days and I'll take the points. That will be three *Fiorini* more to pay then. You will have a terrible headache, but it will. Try descendingsar ... But not yours! And do not worry: the wound looks worse than it really is. And there's even an added benefit: it would leave a scar, so that in future I do not think much to disappoint the ladies.

Back on the street, Frederick put his arm around his brother not less. He pulled a flask from his pocket and handed it to Ezio.

"Do not worry," he said, noticing the expression of Ezio. It is the best *grappa* father. Better than milk for a man in your state.

Drank two, the powerful heating fluid inside.

"Well nohecita" said Federico.

"Needless to say it. I just wish they were all so diexpressed as ... "But Ezio was interrupted when her brother not begin to smile from ear to ear. Oh, wait! He corrected himself, laughing. We are!

"Even so, I think some food and drink would not hurt for you replenished before returning home," said Federico. It's late, I know, but around here there is a pub that does not close until breakfast time y. ..

- And you and the *oste* you are *amici intimacy*

- How did you guess?

About an hour later, after a meal of *ribollita* and *bistecca*, washed down with a bottle of Brunello, Ezio felt as if I had not been injured. I was young and fit, and had the feeling of having recovered all the lost energy. The adrenalinalina victory over the band of the Pazzi contributed without lugar certainly the speed of recovery.

"Time to go home, brother," Frederick said. Seguro that father will be wondering where we are, and have decided it's you who will help with the bank. Luckily for me, have not got a head for numbers, which is why I imagine dying to get into politics.

"In politics or in the circus ... the way you behave.

- What is the difference?

Ezio Frederick knew that he resented the fact that his father trusted him more than his eldest son to take the family business. Frederick would die of boredom if Tuviara to face a life on the bench. The problem was that Ezio had the feeling that he could succeed as well. But for now, time to slip into the velvet suit neMontenegro and the gold chain of the Florentine bankers was still quite far away, and was determined to fully enjoy your days of freedom and irresponsibility. Little did he imagine it would be shorter than those days.

"Better hurry, we know Frederick was saying, if we are to avoid a fight.

"He must be worried.

"No ... we manage somehow knows very well alone. Ezio-Federico threw a questioning look. But rather than *we were* you Rando. He paused. Do not you fancy a bet? A cabarrier, perhaps?

- How far?

- How about ...? -Frederick crossed the city with an eye illuminated by the light of the moon to reach a tower not far alejada. The roof of Santa Trinita. If there is too much for you ... and not far from home. But just one more thing.

"Tell me.

"It will run through the streets, but the roof.

Ezio breath.

"Okay. Try me," he said.

"Okay, little *tartaruga*. Vamos!

Without saying a word, Federico was launched and stalled a wall plastered with the same ease with which he would have a lizard. He stopped at the top, swinging about between the red tiles, river and continued their march. When Ezio reached the rooftops, his brother had been released twenty meter lead. Persecution began, her pain forgotten thanks to the excitement and adrenaline. Federico saw was an almighty leap ENCima in a black void as pitch and landed smoothly on the flat roof of a *palazzo* Gray remained somewhat below the roof level above. He ran a little more and waited. Ezio exderwent a flash of fear at seeing the abyss that opened before him, with eight floors below street, but I knew that before moRIR to hesitate in front of his brother, so that is arming oflor, gave an impressive leap of faith watching, flying, hard granite paving shine under the moonlight far beyond their feet waving in the air. For a split secondsdo wondered if he had miscalculated, as the hard gray wall *palazzo* seemed to be rising before him, but then, without knowing exactly how the wall collapsed and was found in the other roof, sprawled, yes, but still standing, and euphoric, even breathing hard.

"Brother, there's still much to learn," joked Fred, getting moving again, a shadow from the chimney swift and low scattered clouds. Ezio ran away, overcome by the frenzy of the moment. Opened beneath their feet other depths, some dead simple, others broad thoroughfares. Federico was not seen

anywhere. Suddenly he looked up at the tower of Santa Trinita, being elevated above the red surface of the gently sloping roof of the church. But the approach recalled that the church was located in the middle of a square, and the distance between your roof and nearby buildings were much greater than any that has passed so far. He dared not to doubt or to slow, his only hope was that the church roof was lower than that from which I had to jump. If he could take the Carrerica enough and really jump into the air, gravity will do the rest. Fly like a bird for a couple of seconds. Away from your mind any idea on the consequences of possible failure.

The end of the roof where he was approached by hurry, and then ... nothing. Take to the skies, listening to the air whistled in their ears, making eye mourn. The roof of the church appeared to be at an infinite distance, never get to reach it, would never laugh, or fighting, or to have a woman in his arms. I could not breathe. He closed his eyes, and then ...

His body bent, was stabilized with hands and feet, but was back on solid ground. I had done, a few inches from the edge, but had managed to stand on the roof of the church!

But where was Fred? He climbed to the base of the tower and turned to look at the way he had come just in time to see his brother flying through the air. Federico landed firmly, but the weight of his body moved a couple of red clay tiles and nearly lost his balance when tiled roof slid down to drop and shatter a few seconds later on the hard cobblestone floor. But Federico recovered his balance and then straightened up, panting, obviously, but with a proud grin on her face.

"I see that in the end there are a *tartaruga* He said, coming to give Ezio a pat on the shoulder. I have advanced as lightning.

"Even I had heard that he had done," said Ezio, trying to catch his breath.

"But I do not earn to the top of the tower," said Federico, Ezio pushing aside and began to climb the squat tower replaced the municipal authorities thought TUIR for something more modern. This time Fred came first grouper, and even had to give a hand to his wounded brother, who was beginning to think that going to bed would be no bad thing.

They were both breathless and stayed a while recovering his city is looking serene and quiet in the light of love. Never a similar brightness to the brightness of an oyster.

"We have a good life, brother," said Fred with a little solemnity of his.

"The best-granted Ezio. And do not ever change.

They remained both silent, none of them willing to romper the perfection of the moment, but after a while Fred spoke quietly

"Let us not ever change, *fratellino*. Come, we must return. There is the roof of our *palazzo*. Pray to God that father has not spent the night awake, or you really feel. Let's go.

He approached the edge of the tower to descend to the roof, but stopped to see Ezio had not moved from where I was.

- What happens?

"Wait a minute.

- What are you looking at? Frederick asked, turning to him. Ezio's gaze followed and then a smile on your face. You are a rascal! Do not think to go there now, right? Leave the poor girl sleep!

"No ... I think it's time to wake up with Cristina.

Only very recently that he had met Cristina Ezio Calfucci, but they seemed inseparable and, although their respective parents still considered too young for this establish a formal alliance. Ezio did not agree with that, but Cristina was only seventeen and the girl's parents hoped that control its rampant Ezio customs before inclusion so you start to look with better eyes. Naturally, this only served to make it more violent, if possible.

The day they met, Federico and he was lounging by the main market after buying some beads to his sister on his name day, watching the beautiful girls in town flew from post to post with *accompagnatrice*, examining some lace here, a few ribbons and silk closures there. A girl, however, towered above the others, the most beautiful and elegant Ezio had ever seen. Ezio never forget that day, the day he first laid eyes on her.

- Oh! "He cried involuntarily. Look! It's beautiful.

"Yes," said his brother, as long as practical. Why do not you come over to say hello?

- What? -Ezio was surprised. And after healthy give it ... What more do I say?

"You could try to make conversation with her. About what you've bought, what she has bought, for that matter. Look, brother, men tend to be so afraid of girls bonite that anyone who is arming the courage to talk to her immediately stands at an advantage. What? Do you think that *want* to look out for them, not *want* enjoy a little conversation with a man? Of course they want! In addition, you are not ugly, *are* an auditor. So go for it ... and I'll distract the rifle. On second thought, it is not so bad.

Ezio remembered being alone with Cristina, if rooted to the uncle, not knowing what to say, getting drunk in the beauty of her eyes, her long, soft brown hair, upturned nose ...

She stared at him.

- What? He asked.

- What do you mean? He snapped.

- What are you doing here planted?

"Oh ... ahem ... is that I wanted to ask you one thing.

- What?

- What is your name?

She rolled her eyes.

"Damn it, he thought. Surely you've heard the same thing plenty of times. "

"Not you care, or have need to know," he said.

And turned away. Ezio stood a moment watching her, and walked after her.

- Wait! He said, putting his height, panting more than if he'd run a mile. I was not prepared. Pen wassado be really charming. And polite! E ingenious! Not mereis a second chance?

She looked at him while walking, but he gave a faint hint of a smile. Ezio was desperate, but Frederick, who had been watching, she whispered:

- Do not give up now! I've seen you smile! Will remember you.

Emboldened, Ezio discreetly followed, ensuring that she would not notice. In three or four times had to hidDerse hastily behind a market stall, or after she left the place, crouch in a doorway, but managed to successfully follow up to the door of his mansion familiarly, where a man whom he recognized it immediately blocked his path. Ezio was left behind.

Cristina looked at the man angry.

"Now I have told you, Vieri, I interesais. And now, let me pass.

Ezio, hidden, took a deep breath. Vieri de 'Pazzi! Naturally!

"But *signorina*, yes I am interested. Very interested, in fact," said Vieri.

"Then, put yourself in the queue.

He tried to pass him, but he stood before him.

"I think not, *my love*. I've decided I'm tired of waiting for you open your legs at will. "And he grabbed her roughly by the arm, pulling her to him, his other arm around her as she struggled to free himself.

"I'm not sure you're getting the message," said Ezio, Vieri ahead and looking into his eyes.

"Oh, the little cub auditors. *Cane rognosol* What the hell do you have to do with it? To hell with you.

-Y *buon'giorno* you too, Vieri. I'm sorry entrometerme, but I have the distinct impression that you're spoiling the day for this young lady.

- Oh, yeah? Really? Sorry, my dear, while I mash this upstart. And with that, Vieri Cristina pushed aside and struck his right fist Ezio. I ski Ezioved and jumped easily to put the zancadilla to Vieri at the timement the inertia of his attack was dragging him to Delanyou, sending him face first into the ground.

- Have you had enough, pal? Mockingly said Ezio.

But Vieri joined in a moment and pounced on him angry, shaking their fists. She poked a serious blow to the jaw Ezio, but he fought off a left hook and got his two successful hit, one in the stomach and, while Vieri bends of pain, one in the jaw. Ezio has turnedCristina ence to see if it was okay. Breathless, Vieri back, but at the same moment his hand moved swiftly to his dagger. Cristina captured and articulated movement involuntariamenyou a cry of alarm at seeing Vieri sent down the dagger on the back of Ezio, who, alerted by the cry, turned just in time to grab Vieri firmly by the wrist and take away the dagger. The gun fell to the ground. The two young men stood face to face, breathing hard.

- Is this the best you can do? Ezio said through clenched teeth.

- Shut up or I swear to God I'll kill you! Ezio laughed.

"I should not be surprised to see the force trying to impose yourself on a pretty girl who evidently considers you a dung dung ... If I have in mind how your dad is trying to impose by force their bank interest on Flodifference!

- You fool!! It's your father who needs a good lesson in humility!

"It's time to let the Pazzi and slanderingus. Although, of course, you're all mouth and no cuffs.

A Vieri mouth was bleeding badly.

-Pay for this ... you and all of your kind. I do not think olVidar this Auditore!

He spat at the feet of Ezio, stooped to pick up the knife, turned and ran. Ezio stared to see himsaparecer.

He reminded all in the tower of the church, staring at the house of Cristina. He recalled the elation he felt when turning to Cristina and see a new warmth in his eyes to thank him.

- You find it, *signorina*? "He said.

"Now ... thank you. He hesitated, his voice still trembling with fear. Before you asked me what my name was ... My name is Cristub. Cristina Calfucci.

Ezio bowed.

"It's an honor to meet you, *signorina* Cristina. Ezio Auditore.

- Do you know this man?

- To Vieri? Our paths have crossed occasionally. But our families have no reason to LLEVARSE well.

"I will not ever see him again.

"If in my hands is to avoid it, so be it.

She smiled shyly and said:

"Ezio, you have all my gratitude ... and because of that, I am willingta to give you a second chance, after his evil coning.

He laughed softly and then kissed him on the cheek before disappearing inside his mansion.

The small crowd that inevitably had congreEzio Gado gave a round of applause. He reverenceence, smiling, but at the same moment he was leaving there he learned that, though perhaps he had made a new friend, had also made an implacable enemy.

"Let sleeping Cristina Federico said again, awakenEzio do your dream.

"There'll be time for that ... later," he replied. I have to see it.

"Okay, if you must ... try to get you an alibi with father. But watch out ... it is very possible that the men of Vieri still hanging around here.

And with that, Federico climbed the tower to reach the roof and jumped from there to a hay truck parked on the street leading to his house.

Ezio saw him leave and then decided to emulate his brother.

The Hay Wain seemed far away, but remembered what hasBia learned, controlled breathing, relaxed and focused.

And flew through the air, giving the biggest jump that had given in his life. For a moment he thought he had misjudged his target, but managed to calm his momentary panic and landed safely in the hay. A real leap of faith! Somewhat breathless, but joy at his success, Ezio took to the streets.

The sun began to peek above the eastern mountains but still there were few people on the streets. Ezio was about to poner towards Cristina mansion when he heard the rumble of a few steps and, desperately trying to hide, crouched in the shadows of the porch of the church and held her breath. It was precisely Vieri and two security men Pazzi who rounded the corner.

"Better let it run, boss," said the older man. It's been long since gone.

"I know that around here," snapped Vieri. Almost smell them.

Together with his men crossed the square of the church but showed no signs of wanting to go further. Sunlight was shrinking shadows. Ezio crept cautiously back to the shelter of the hay wagon and stayed there for a while you stopCIO forever, eager to get going. On one occasion, Vieri was passed so close that he almost smelled Ezio *him*, although Vieri finally told his men with a wave of anger that ifGuier later. Ezio still remained motionless for a while longer, jumped out of the car and heaved a long sigh of relief. Was shaken and quickly covered the short distance that separated him from Cristina, praying that no one at home had already risen.

The mansion remained silent, although Ezio imagined that the servants were preparing the fires of the kitchen in the back. I knew what Cristina window and threw a handful of gravel at the shutters. The noise was deafening and waited, coreason in a fist. The shutters gave way and she soon appeared on the balcony. Her gown hinted delicious contours of your body. The desire came upon him instantly.

- Who is it? "She said without raising his voice.

He was placed so that I could see him.

- Yo!

Cristina sighed, but not in an unpleasant manner.

- Ezio! Would have imagined.

- I can walk, *colomba mia*?

She looked over her shoulder before answering in a whisper:

"Okay. But just a minute.

"That's all I need.

Cristina smiled.

- Really?

He was confused.

"No ... sorry ... did not mean that! Let me show you ...

He looked around to make sure that the street was stilldesert, hitched his foot on one of the great iron rings for tying horses stuck in the gray brick house and drove up, relatively easy to find handholds and footholds in the padding of the wall. In a blink of an eye had perched on the balustrade and between his arms.

- Oh, Ezio! "She sighed, and kissed. Watch your head. What have you done now?

"It's nothing. A scratch. -Ezio paused, smilingdo. Maybe now I'm up, it could also happen.

- Go where?

It was all innocence.

"Your bedroom, of course.

"Well, maybe ... if you are sure that all you need is a minute ...

Embraced, crossed the double doors and entered the warm light of Cristina's room.

An hour later, woke sunlight streaming through the windows, the noise of cars and people on the street and, worst of all, the sound of the voice of Cristina's father opened the bedroom door.

-Cristina was saying. It's time to wake up, girl! Your tutor will be here any ... What the hell? Son of a bitch!

Ezio kissed Cristina, quick but passionate.

"It's time to go, I think," he said, picking up his clothes and corriendo to the window. He slid down the wall and was now they placedDose Calfucci suit when Antonio came up in the balcony. He was white with rage.

"*Forgive, Messer Ezio*-proposed.

"I will give unto thee *Forgive, Messer Calfucci* shouted. Guards! Guards! Pursuing this *Cimice!* Bring me his head! And I also want their *coglioni!*

"I said sorry ... Ezio, "he began, but seeadvantages of the house had just opened and the bodyguards of the Calfucci had made their appearance, brandishing their swords. More or less dressed, Ezio ran down the street, dodging trucks and pushing his way among the citizens, rich businessmen dressed in solemn black, dresses to merchantswe are brown and red, most humble people with simple tunics tissues and even ecclesiastical procession which struck so unexpectedly fell tumbling over the statue of the Virgingene carrying monks with black hoods. Finally, after overcoming sneak through alleys and walls, stopped to listen. Silence. And not even heard the screams and wordsTAS of the population who had followed him constantly. As for the

guards, had taken off, he was sure.

Just hope that the *signor* I had not recognized Calfucciacid. Cristina never betray him, sure. In addition, camelaria his father, who adored her. And even if they found out, reEzio flexed, it would be a bad link. His father managed one of the largest banks in the city, and come the day that would be larger than that of the Pazzi or even ... who knew ?..., that of the Medici.

Using side streets, finally coming home. With whom he first encountered was Frederick, who looked very serious and shook his head giving him a sense of doom.

"All this is not you run away," he said. Do not say I did not warn you.

Chapter 2

Auditore Giovanni's office was on the first floor and doundetermined the rear gardens of *palazzo* through two sets of double windows that opened onto a large balcony. The istance was covered with dark oak paneling, the severity of which was only mitigated by the ornamental plaster ceiling. There were two desks placed opposite each other, mayor of which belonged to Giovanni, and the walls were flaqueadas by shelves crammed with books and roLlosa parchment from which hung heavy red wax seals. The room was designed to tell anyone who entered it: you will find wealth, respectability and trust. As director of the International Bank AuDitore, specializing in loansWe the Germanic kingdoms within what, at least hypotheticalmind, was a Holy Romar Empire, Giovanni Auditore was well aware of the position of power and responsibility he occupied. He hoped that his two older children scurrying to come around and help him bear the burdens that he had inherited in turn from his own father, but saw no evidence of this in the moment. And all that ...

From his seat behind the table, looked through the eyes sparking his middle son. Ezio was standing next to another table, which the Secretary of Giovanni had vacated to providegrou father and son the privacy to which Ezio feared he would be a very painful interview. It was early afternoon. He wore fearing the call all morning, but had also taken the time to grab a few hours of much needed sleep and grooming. He imagined that his father had wanted to give him time to do just that before you throw the fight.

- Do I needis blind and deaf, my son?"Bellowed Giovannino. Do you think that I have not heard about the fight last night with Vieri de 'Pazzi and his gang down there in the river? Sometimes, Ezio, pienso you're not much better than him, and dangerous enemies Pazziardous. "Ezio was about to speak, but his father raised a hand to silence him. "Please kindly let me termine! Took a deep breath. And if that were not already bad enough, you have committed to go after Calfucci Cristina, the daughter of one of the most successful merchants of all TuscanyNot satisfied with that, rolledart with her in her own bed! It is intolerable! Do not you ever think the reputation of our family? He paused, Ezio and was surprised to see the spark of a gleam in the eyes of his father. You see quite aware of what this significantChart, right?"Continued Giovanni. Know who remember me, dotruth?

Ezio nodded, and was surprised again when his padre got up, crossed the room toward him and put his arm around the shoulder with a smile from ear to ear.

- You are a devil! Remember me when I was your age! "But Giovanni became serious again immediately. Do not think, however, do not be punished without mercy of not having the huge! need your presence. Otherwise, mark my words, you send your uncle Mario for you to enlist in his squad *condottieri*. It would sit a little head! But I need to count on you, and though I think you do not have the intelligence to see it, you know that we are housing in our citydo a crucial moment. How's your head? I see you've quiTado the dressing.

"Much better, Father.

"So I guess that nothing will interfere with the work that I have prepared for the rest of the day.

"I promise, father.

"You better keep your promise. "Giovanni turned to his desk and a compartment, pulled out a letter with his seal and handed it to his son, along with two scrolls protected by a functionda leather. I want you to deliver it without delay, Lorenzo of Medici in his bank.

- I can ask what is it, father?

"As far as documents are concerned, no. But it would be nice to know that the letter makes Lorenzo abreast of our business in Milan. I spent the entire morning preparing it. This should not leave here, but if my trust in You, nunca learn to be responsible. There are rumors of a conspiracy against the Duke Galeazzo ... An unpleasant matter, I assure you, but Florence Milan can not afford to be destabilized.

- Who is involved?

Giovanni looked at his son's eyes narrowed.

"They say that the main conspirators are Giovanni Lampugnani, Gerolamo Olgiasi and Carlo Visconti, but apparently is also involved our beloved Francesco de Pazzi, and above all, there is a plan in place that apparently covers more than the questionpolicy issues of two cities-state. At the moment, our *gonfaloniere* Francesco has been arrested and that to them no gus PazziTado anything. "Giovanni is interrupted. Well, I told you too. Make sure this comes quickly to Lorenzo ... I'm told is about to leave for Careggi to enjoy a bit of country air, and everyone knows that when the boss is away ...

"I take as quickly as possible.

"Good boy. Go now!

Ezio left alone, using side streets whenever he could, without thinking of any time that Vieri could be angive even looking for him. But suddenly, in a quiet street isminutes of the Medici Bank cases, there appeared, blocking the passage to Ezio. He tried to turn around but found Vieri men blocking his retreat. Again rotated.

"Sorry, little pig," he shouted to Vieri, "but now I have no time to give you another beating.

"I'm not who is going to take a beating," he shouted in reply Vieri. You're cornered, but do not worry, sendre a lovely crown for your funeral.

Pazzi men approached. Vieri undoubtedly already had learned that his father had been taken prisoner. Ezio desperately looked around. The houses and the high walls of the street had surrounded. After securing the bag against your body containing valuable documents, pick the house that was next and rushed toward the wall, clinging with hands and feet cut stone before starting his climb to the roof. Once there, he paused to look from above Vieri's angry face.

"I have not even time to piss on you," he said, and ran hastily through the roof, jumping back to sleepwhat with his newfound agility is known as free of his pursuers.

Moments later, he was outside the doors of the bank. Boetie entered and recognized one of the most trusted servants Lorenzo. A stroke of luck. Ezio ran to him.

- Hello, Ezio! What brings you here in such a hurry?

"Boetie, no time to lose. I have here letters from my father Lorenzo.

Boetie got serious and opened his hands.

-*Ahimaaz* Ezio! You're late. Has gone to Careggi.

"In this case, make sure you get this ASAP.

"I'm sure it will not be absent for more than a day. In these times ...

- I begin to discover what these days! Make sure you get it, Boetie. And with confidence! As soon as possible!

Back to *palazzo*, went straight to her father's office, ignoring both the friendly cheeky comment from Frederick, who was lounging in the garden under a arbowl, as the attempts of the secretary of his father, Giulio, of ImpeDirI to cross the closed door of the sanctuary of Giovanni. Inside his father discovered deep in conversation with the chief justice of Florence, *Gonfaloniere* Uberto Alberti. Not surprised, as the two men were old amigos, and Ezio Alberti treated like his uncle. But it captured a formerseriously intense pressure on their faces.

- Ezio, my boy! Uberto said, cheerfully. Howyou coming? Breathless, as usual, I see.

Ezio looked hurried to his father.

"I've been trying to reassure your father," continued Uberto. Is having many problems, you know, but ... "He turned to John and his tone became more earnest, ... love herthreat is over.

- Did you serve? Giovanni asked hissuccinctly.

"Yes, father. But the Duke Lorenzo was gone.

Giovanni frowned. "I expected him to leave so soon.

"I have left is," said Ezio Boetie. It will send them ASAP.

"Maybe not soon enough," said Giovanni, mysterySamento.

Uberto patted on the back.

"Look," he said. It may not be more than a couple of days. TeneFrancesco we locked up. What could happen a period as bertime is?

Giovanni gave the impression of being fairly relieved, but it was clear that both men had more discussion topicstir and not in the presence of Ezio.

"Go see your mother and your sister," said Giovanni. You know you should spend more time with the rest of your family, not just to Frank! And let the head rest ... Vol Latersee to need.

And with a nod, his father dismissed Ezio.

He wandered through the house, waving to a couple of servants of the faily, and Giulio, who ran to the office of the bank from somewhere, a sheet of paper in hand and, as usual in it, rapt in their affairs. Ezio waved to his brotherno, still lounging in the garden, but he did not want to join it. In addition, he was told that company were to make his mother and sister and I knew it was better not disobey his father, especially after the argument they had had earlier in the day.

He found his sister sitting alone in the *loggia*, Petrarch's book in hand, unattended. Or so he imagined. I knew itlove tobacco.

-*Ciao*, Claudia, "he said.

-*Ciao*, Ezio. Where *has* state?

Ezio spread his hands.

"I've been running an errand for dad.

"That has not been anything I'm told," she said, but with a weak smile and automatically.

- Where is mother?

Claudia sighed.

"He's gone to see this young artist that everyone talks about. You know, just completed his apprenticeship with Verrocchio.

- Really?

- Do not pay attention to anything that happens in this house? Has commissioned some paintings. Believes that over timeRAN a good investment.

- You see what our mother!

But Claudia did not say anything, and for the first time was real Ezio mind the sadness of his face. He seemed much more of the sixteen years that I had.

- What's the matter, *sorellina*? He asked, sitting in the bankco stone at her side.

He sighed, and looked with a rueful smile.

"It's Duccio," he said at last.

- What happens?

Her eyes filled with tears.

"I found that is unfaithful.

Ezio scowled. Duccio was practically engaged to Claudia, though had not yet produced any formal announcement.

- Who told you that? He asked, his arm around her.

"The other girls. He wiped his eyes and looked at him. I thought they were my friends, but I get the impression that they enjoyed withtandomelo.

Ezio rose angrily.

- In this case are a harpy! 're Better without them.

- But I wanted!

Ezio was a moment before replying.

- Are you sure? Maybe you thought only love him. How do you feel now?

Claudia had dried her eyes.

"I'd like to see him suffer, if only slightly. I was really hurt, Ezio.

Ezio looked at his sister, he saw the sadness in his eyes, a sadness tinged with anger at all. Heart froze.

"I think he'll visit.

Dovizi Duccio was not home, but the housekeeper explained Ezio where to find it. Ezio crossed the Ponte Vecchio and enterprising gave way westward along the south bank of the Arno hasta get to the church of San Jacopo Soprano. Nearby was secluded grounds, where lovers often cited. Ezio, whose blood boiled in her sister's name, but still neNeed some more evidence of infidelity rumors that simple Duccio, he began thinking he was about to find them.

Very soon spotted the blonde girl, dressed in their finery, sitting on a bench overlooking the river, with his arm around a girl with dark hair did not recognize. He moved with caution.

"It's beautiful, dear," was telling the girl, reaching out. Ezio saw the flash of a diamond ring.

"For you only the best *amore* Duccio purred, pulling her towards him to kiss her.

But the girl fell.

"Not so fast. It is not buying. No we mucho time watching us, and I heard that you are committed to Claudia Auditore.

Duccio spat.

"It's over. Anyway, my father says that I can asusing universal precautions to something much better than an audit. He took her by the workHIV-positive. To you, for example!

-*Birbante!* Let's walk a little.

"It occurs to me something that could be much more fun," said Duccio, putting his hand between her legs.

That was the straw that broke the camel for Ezio.

- Hey, *lurido porco!* He shouted.

Duccio caught a complete surprise. This re turnedpente and released the girl.

"Hello, Ezio, my friend said, but his nervousness transparent voice. What would have been Ezio? -. I do not think you know me ... premium.

Ezio, enraged by the betrayal, he stepped forward and punched him in the face of his old friend.

- Duccio, should be ashamed of your behavior! You insuTado my sister, and show off with this ... This *puttanal*

- Who do you call *puttana*? Screamed the girl, but Levanto and retired.

"I thought that even a girl like you could findtraro better than this silly ass," said Ezio. Do you really think that it intends to become a lady?

"Do not talk like that," he muttered Duccio. When less is more generous with her favors close to your sister. EvenI guess that goes more in need than a nun. A pity, I could have taught a few things. While on the other hand ...

Ezio interrupted him coldly.

"I've broken my heart, Duccio.

- Me? What a shame.

"Which is why I am going to break your arm you.

The girl screamed when he heard that and ran. Ezio grabbed Duccio, who had begun to whimper, and bent the right arm of the young lover over the edge of the stone bench where he had been sitting with a good erection just moments ago. Forearm pressed against the stone until the geDuccio MIDOS turned into tears.

- To, Ezio! I beg you! I am the only son of my father!

Ezio looked at him with contempt and released him. Duccio fell and rolled over, clutching his wounded arm and sobbing, her stylish clothes torn and dirty.

"You do not deserve my effort," said Ezio. But if Quieres change your mind about that arm, stay away from Claudia. And stay away from me.

After the incident, Ezio returned home following the camino longer walk along the river to the orchardTAS. When turned, the shadows began to lengthen, but his mind was calmer. Convert never endbe a man, he said, if allowed his fury complete control.

Near his house, he saw his younger brother, who had not seen since the previous morning, and greeted him warmly.

-*Ciao*, Petruccio. What are you up to? Have you given the slip to your tutor? And, anyway, would not be in bed?

"Do not be silly. And I'm almost an adult. In a few years for youjare knackered!" The brothers smiled. Petruccio holding a carved wooden box against his chest pear. Ezio was open and inside was a pile of white feathers and hammertions. Are eagle feathers, "said the child. He pointed to the top of the tower of a nearby building. Up there is an old nest. The pups must have changed the plumage and long gone. I have seen many more feathers attached to the masonry. "Petruccio looked at his brother with pleading eyes. Ezio, would you cogerge a few more?

- And why do the want?

Petruccio looked down.

"It's a secret," he said.

- You will enter the house if you get it? It's late.

"Yes.

- Do you promise?

"I promise.

"So, okay.

Ezio thought: "Today I did a favor to Claudia, there is no reason why it could not also make another Petruccio."

Climb the tower was fine, because the wall was slippery and had to concentrate on finding handholds and footholds in the joints between the stones. At the top, it also helped ornamental moldings. In the end, it took half an hour but managed to collect fifteen feathers-all he could find, and gave them to Petruccio.

"You've left a Petruccio said, pointing upward.

- To bed! "Growled her brother. Petruccio went flying.

Ezio hoped his mother would be pleased to receive this regait. Did not take much to guess the secrets of Petruccio. He smiled to enter the house.

Chapter 3

Ezio next morning woke up late and to his relief he discovered that his father had not prepared anything urgent. Out into the garden, where he found his mother overseeing the work that they were carrying out with its cherry trees, whose flowers just began to wither. She smiled at him and beckoned him to come closer. Auditora Mary was a tall, elegant woman who had just come in from quarantine, her long black hair braided in a spotless white muslin bonnet trimmed with black and gold colors of the family.

- Ezio! *Buon'giorno*.

"Mother.

- How are you? Better, I hope. "I played with the wound on your head.

"I'm fine.

"You said your father to rest as much as you could.

- I have no need to rest, *mamma!*

"Well, in any case, this morning do not expect anything. Your father has asked me to take care of you. I know perfectly well how you mess up.

I do not know what you mean.

"I do not pretend to cajole, Ezio. I know about your fight with Vieri.

"Go out there telling filthy stories about our family. I could not let go unpunished.

"Vieri is under pressure, especially since his father was arrested. He paused thoughtfully. It is possible that Francesco de Pazzi is many things, but I never would have thought it could join a conspiracy to assassinate a duke.

- What will happen?

"There will be a trial. I imagine that your father will be a key witness when you return the Duke Lorenzo.

Ezio was restless.

"Do not worry, you have nothing to fear. And I will not do anything you do not like ... In fact, I want you to accompany me on an errand. We did not take long, and I pray that even you will like.

"Glad to help, *mamma*.

"Come then. Not very far.

They left *palazzo* walk, arm in arm, and headed to the cathedral in the small neighborhood near the same gift. Most of the Florentine artists had their workshops and studios. Some, such as Verrocchio and the young prodigy Alessandro di Mariano Filipepi, who had acquired the nickname of Botticelli, were large and crowded local assistants and apprentices where they came to grind and mix dyes, pigments, others were more humble. It was at the door of one of these where Maria stopped to call. Almost immediately there was a young attractive and well-sensitized, almost slick looking but athletic, with a mop of dark brown hair and beard. It would be six or seven years older than Ezio.

- *Madonna* Auditora! Welcome! I was waiting for you.

-Leonardo, *buon'giorno*. Formal-exchanged kisses.

"We have to see how this artist rubs shoulders with my mother. So Ezio, but he liked the way he looked young.

"I present to you my son, Ezio," continued Mary.

The artist bowed.

-Leonardo da Vinci, "he said. *Onorato molto, signore*.

-Master.

"Not yet, Leonardo said, smiling. But what I will be thinking? Come in, come! Wait here, I will ask my help to serve you some wine while I find your pictures.

The study was not large, but the fact that it was so crammed with things made him seem even smaller than it really was. There were tables full of skeletons of birds and small mammal mammals, bottles filled with a colorless liquid or organic objects of all types that had trouble recognizing Ezio. In a large bench at the back there were some curious structures carefully made of wood, and on top of two horse statues had unfinished paintings in darker tones than usual, with poorly defined contours. Ezio and Mary settled down and then, from an inner room, a handsome young man appeared with a tray with wine and cakes. He served the aperitivo, smiled sheepishly and walked away.

"Leonardo is very talented.

"If you say so, mother ... Art I know little.

Although Ezio thought his life would follow the path of his father in the background had a wild streak and adventurous that it was very uncomfortable for the character of a banker. In any case, like his older brother, he considers a man of action, not an artist or a scholar.

"You know very well that the expression of one's feelings is a vital part of understanding how life and enjoyed Tarla in its fullness. "She stared at him. You should not in against your own safety valve, dear.

Ezio pricked.

"I have many exhaust valves.

"I mean something other than the hookers," her mother prosaic tone.

- Mother! "But the only Mary's response was to shrug and a grimace. Would be nice you could cultivate the friendship of a man like Leonardo. I think he has a bright future ahead.

"From the looks of this place, I feel not that they strongly agreed with you.

- Do not be impertinent!

The reappearance of Leonardo, loaded with two boxes, interrupted chirped their conversation. He put one in the ground.

- Would you care to pay it? Ezio he asked. I would have asked Agniolo, but has to stay to watch the workshop. Also, do not think the poor is sufficiently strong to realize this type of work.

Ezio stooped to pick up the box and was surprised to see her weight. He almost let it fall to the ground.

- Carefully! "He warned Leonardo. The paintings inside are delicate and your mother just paid a fortune for them!

- Are we going?" Said Mary. I can not wait to coling them.

Then, addressing he added:

"I selected the sites and wait for your approval.

Ezio was internally a bit reluctant to the idea: really reciprocal deference and a novice artist?

As they walked, Leonardo began to talk friendly Ezio mind, very reluctantly, was overcome by the charm of the man. And although there was anything that was troubling him, he could not identify it. "Some cold? A sensation of detachment in relation to other human beings? Maybe it was a simply had his head in the clouds, as was the case with artists, or at least that was what he had heard Ezio. Ezio, however, felt an immediate and instinctive respect for the man.

"And you, Ezio, what do you do? Leonardo asked.

"He works for his father," said Mary.

"Oh. A financial! You were born in the right city for that!

"It's also a good town for artists," said Ezio. There are many wealthy clients.

"But we are many," muttered Leonard. Stress is complicated. That's why I feel so indebted to your mother. Indeed, it has a very demanding test!

- Do you concentrate on the painting? Ezio asked, thinking he had seen diversity in the study.

Leonardo was thoughtful.

"A difficult question to answer. If you want to tell you the truth, I find it difficult to focus on one thing, now that I've installed it on my own. I love painting and I know I can, but ... I see the end before reaching it, and sometimes I find it difficult to get things done. They have to push! But that's not all. Sometimes I have the feeling that my work is missing ... I do not know ... a purpose. You know what I mean?

"You should have more faith in you, Leonardo," said Mary.

"Thanks, but there are times when I think I should do more practical work, a job that has a relationship with life. I understand life: how it works, how everything works.

"In this case, you'd be a hundred men in one," said Ezio.

- I wish I could be! I know what I want to explore architecture, anatomy, even engineering. I do not want only to capture the world with my brush. I want to change!

Ezio impressed his passion more than annoy. It was evident that this man was not a braggart, but in any case, it seemed almost haunted by the ideas seething inside. "Now we say that is also dedicated to music and poetry," he thought Ezio.

- Will you stop esto and rest a moment, Ezio? Pre-Leonardo gunt. Perhaps too heavy for you.

Ezio gritted teeth.

"No, *grazie*. Anyway, since we are almost there.

When they reached the *palazzo* Auditore, put the box in the dressed lobe and placed in the ground as slowly and gently that allowed his aching muscles, and felt more relieved than he would have liked to acknowledge, even to himself.

"Thank you, Ezio," said his mother. I think from now we can get along without you, though, of course, if you want to come and help hang pictures ...

"Thanks, mom ... I think it's better that you leave this work to you two.

Leonardo offered his hand.

"It was a pleasure to meet you, Ezio. I hope our caterns cross again soon.

-*Anch 'io*.

"Call, please one of the servants to drive him a hand to Leonardo," said Mary.

"No," said Leonardo. I'd rather deal with it myself. Imagine if someone had dropped a box! "And stooping, cargo the carrying case Ezio and sat on the bow of his elbow. Are we going?" Said Mary.

"This way, Mary said. Goodbye, Ezio. See you tonight at dinner. Come, Leonardo.

Ezio saw them leave the hall. Such that Leonardo was a guy I respect.

After lunch, late afternoon, she came Giulio appreciable suradamente (as always) to tell his father requested his presence in his office. Ezio struggled to follow the secretary down the hall with paneled walls of oak leading to the rear of the mansion.

- Hello, Ezio! Come in, my son.

Giovanni's tone was serious and formal. He stood behind his desk, on which there were two letters bulky, wrapped TAS on vellum and sealed.

"They say the Duke Lorenzo will be back tomorrow or pasado, not later," said Ezio.

"I know. But no time to lose. I want you to give it a couple of my partners here in the city. He pushed the cards on the table.

"Yes, father.

"I need also to pick up a message that a pigeon has to be deposited in the loft of *piazza* there at the end of the street. Try that nobody sees you pick it up.

"I will make it so.

"Well. Come back here right away once you've finished. I have important matters to discuss with you.

-Mr.

"And this time, behave. No fights.

Ezio decided to deal first with the loft. Soon yearcheceria and knew that there would be fewer people now, a little later the place would be packed with Florentines giving his *passeggiata*. When he reached his goal saw some graffiti on the wall behind and above the loft. He was surprised: what would it be recent or was already there and had not noticed it? Carefully written *apreciprocal* recognized as a phrase belonging to the Book of Ecclesiastesenthusiasts, "WHO INCREASE INCREASE YOUR KNOWLEDGEAT YOUR PAIN. " A little further down, someone had added a jocular remark, "WHERE IS THE PROPHET?".

But once again thought the task at maus. Instantly recognized the dove that was looking for: it was the Unitedca with a note attached to the leg. He took the bird quickly returned to the bar where he was lodging. Then the doubt assailed him. WhatBeriah read the note? It was not sealed. Quickly unrolled the peflute parchment and discovered that all it contained was a nameber, that of Francesco de 'Pazzi. Ezio shrugged. He imagined that his father would rather have something more meaning for him. Completely escaped him why the name of the father of Vieri, one of the possible conspirators in a plot to overthrow the Duke of Milan, Giovanni facts I already knew, had to have a relevancia. Unless it were a sort of confirmation.

But I had to hurry and get on with their work. GuarDO note safely in the bag from his belt and went to the address appearing in the first envelope. The location was surprised because he was in the neighborhood of brothels. Had often been there with Frederick before he met Cristina, of course, and never felt comfortable. When he began to approximatelyMarsa al sinister alley that his father had told him, put his hand on the hilt of his dagger to calm down. The address turned out to be a humble tavern, dimly lit, in which cheap Chianti served in clay jugs.

When more was lost on what to do then it does not seem to be anyone, he heard a voice at his side:

- Are you the son of Giovanni?

He turned and found himself facing a tough-looking man whose breath smelled of onions. He was accompanied by a woman who once had to be pretty, but it seemed as if the last ten years that had been loaded on the back had finished with all its charm. If any beauty was, I had it in his eyes, clear and intelligent.

"You look like an idiot," the woman told the man. If it is nailed to his father.

"You bring something to us," said the man, ignoring the remark. Get it to us.

Ezio hesitated. Verified the address. Was correct.

"Get it to us, friend," said the man, closer to him.

Ezio received a wave of your breath. "The man would live only onion and garlic?"

She put the letter in the open hand of man, who immediately closed it to transfer the document to a leather bag strapped to the side.

"Good boy," she said and smiled.

Ezio noted that, surprisingly, gave a smile to your face certain nobility. But not his words.

"And do not worry," he added. We are not contagious.

He paused to look askance at the woman and said:

- Or at least / not!

The woman laughed and pinched her arm to the man. And immediately disappeared.

Ezio eased out into the alley. The direction of the second letter led him to a side street just west of the baptistery. A baRRIO much better, although very quiet at this time of day. Ran through the city.

Waiting under an arch covering the width of the street was a large man who looked like a soldier. He wore leather clothing typical of the field, but it smelled clean and was rehundred shaven.

"This way, he gestured.

"I have something for you," said Ezio. In ...

-?... Auditore Giovanni? "The man spoke in a whisper.

"Yes.

The man looked around to either side of the street. Only saw a lamplighter, at a distance.

- Do you have followed?

-No ... Why should I have?

"Never mind. Give me the letter. Fast.

Ezio handed.

"The situation is heating up," said the man. Tell your father that tonight there will be any action. Make planstions to be safe.

That stunned Ezio.

- What? What do you mean?

"I said as much. Runs back to your home.

And the man melted into the shadows.

- Wait! Ezio cried. What do you mean? Back!

But the man was gone.

Ezio rose rapidly toward the street where he was the lamplighter.

- What time is it? He asked.

The man closed his eyes, looked at the sky and said:

"It must have been an hour since I started working. We will be around one twentieth time.

Ezio immediately made their calculations. He must make a couple of hours had left the *palazzo*, may take about twenty minutes cough to return back to your home. Ran. He had a terrible premonition.

As was seen within his mansion Auditore, knew something was wrong. There were no lights on and the impressive main entrance was open. Quickened the pace, shouting:

- Father! Federico!

The spacious lobby *palazzo* It was dark and empty, but there was enough light to catch a glimpse could Ezio vol tableted, broken chairs, pieces of shattered crockery and glassware. A Gillen had been torn from the walls the paintings of Leonardo, and had cracked with a knife. In the darkness he heard a cry ... tears of a woman: his mother!

Began to move towards the sound when a shadow moved behind him and something he rose above his head. Ezio turned around and grabbed a heavy silver candlestick that someone was bringing down on him. Gave a powerful tug and the attacker dropped the chandelier with a shriek of alarm. He threw the candle away from his attacker grabbed him by the arm immediately afterwards and pulled the person toward the dim light prevailed. At its heart nesting instinct murderer and had already taken the dagger.

- Oh! Ezio! It's you! Thank God!

Ezio recognized the voice, and then the face, the housekeeper of the family, Annetta, a peasant full of energy that took years of service to the family.

- What *past*? Annetta he asked, grabbing ambas wrists and shaking with anguish and panic I felt.

"They've come ... guards of the city. They've arrested your father and Federico ... Have been even smaller Petruccio, was ripped from the arms of your mother!

- Where is my mother? Where is Claudia?

"We're here," said a trembling voice from the shadows.

Claudia appeared, her mother's arm. Ezio well placed a chair for her mother could sit. In the darkness, he saw that Claudia was bleeding, his clothes were dirty and torn. Mary did not recognize him. He sat in the chair, sobbing and swaying Dose from one side to another. Held in his hands the box of mader pear with feathers that had given Petruccio and whether would like two days ... An eternity, now.

- My God, Claudia! Are you okay? He looked and rabito be seized from him. Do you have ...?

"No ... I'm fine. Mistreated me a bit because they believed that I could tell where you went. But mother ... Oh, Ezio, have been father and Federico Petruccio and the Palazzo Vecchio!

"Your mother is in shock," said Annetta. Howdo resist, the ... "He stopped. *Bastard*

Ezio began to think quickly.

"This place is not safe. Can you take them somewhere, Annetta?

"Yes, yes ... my sister's house. There will be safe. -Annetta could hardly speak, fear and anguish drowned his voice.

"We must move quickly. I'm sure the guards again for me. Claudia, mother ... no time to lose. Cojais no nothing, just go away with Annetta. Ahosame ra! Claudia, let *mamma* lean on you.

Escorted them to the outside your home ransacked, shock of swim yet, and helped out before leaving them in the capable hands of the faithful Annetta, who had begun to regain her composure. Ezio head plotted at full speed on the implicationstions, the world convulsed by aquel terrible turn of Aconopments. Desperate, he tried to evaluate what happened and what to do next, what to do to save his father and his brothers ... I knew for sure was that I had to find a way to see his father, find out what it was that had arouseded that attack, the atrocity against his family. But PaLazzo Vecchio! They would have locked up their families in two smallNAS cell tower, he was sure. Maybe there was a posensitivity of ... But the place was fortified as a castle, and there would be a formidable surveillance protecting it, just that night.

Forcing herself to calm down and think clearly, is slidingZo through the streets to reach the Piazza della Signoria, stuck to the walls and looked up. In the battlements at the top of the tower ardiar torches, illuminating a gigantic red lily was the emblem of the city and the great clock of the base of the tower. At the top, straining his eyes, thought Ezio distinguish the dim light of a candle behind the small window with bars. In front of the huge double doors access *palazzo* guards had deliberatelytwo, and many more in the battlements. Ezio but saw none on the top of the tower, whose battlements, however, remained to be ENClma of the window that would come.

He walked around the square to move away from *palazzo* and entered in the callejuela that departed from there and followed the north wall of the building. Luckily, there were still enough people in the streets, walking and enjoyingcourse of the evening breeze. Suddenly, Ezio had the impression of living in a different world that people have thatbeen isolated from the society in which they had been swimming like a fish to her only three or four hours. He put the willies to think that life could still continue their routine hadtual to the crowd, while his family life had been violently shaken. He felt his heart back into a wave of anger and overwhelming fear. But he decided to concentratrate on the task at hand and his face took on a formerpressure cold as steel.

The wall stood in front of him was completely vertical and sharply higher, but it was dark and play in their favor. Furthermore, *palazzo* was built with rough-hewn stone, which would provide abundant handholds and footholds on the climb. Would face the problem of the guards who could be stationed on the battlements on the north side, but take care of them when the time came. Expected *estuvieran* mostly grouped in the main facade of the building.

He breathed deeply, looked up, there was no one else in that dark street, and jumped. Held on tight to the wall, sticking with the toes protected by her soft leather boots, and started climbing.

When you reach the battlements squatted, the sinews of his calves tight. There were two guards, but had their backs to him, watching the lighted square feet. Ezio remained motionless for a moment until he was clear that any noise that might have made had not alerted to its presence. *Sinderezarse*, sprinted toward them and beat them, pouring the back, around his neck with both hands and using the weight of the men themselves and the element of surprise for the fall back. In just a second, I had removed the casco and had hit their heads with violence fell unconscious before they can even look surprised. Of not having run this, Ezio knew that would have had to cut project is doing the neck without hesitation or a moment.

He paused again, panting. Now for the tower. It was built of stone carved with a smooth and would be complicated. She also had to climb from the north side to the west, where the window was located in the cell. He prayed that no one in the square or to look up the battlements. He did not want to be demolished by firing a crossbow after having come so far.

The corner where the walls were north and west was difficult and unpromising, and for a moment he stood there clutching Ezio, transfixed, looking for a grip that seemed inexistent. He looked down and saw far beyond him that one of the sentries on the battlements looked up. Clearly saw his country face. He saw the man's eyes. Stuck to the wall. With her dark clothes was as flashy as a cockroach on a white tablecloth. But, inexplicably, the man looked down and continued his watch. Would you have seen? What if he had been in a peace believe what had just seen? We beat the throat of the tension I felt. Just got me relax after a long nute, only then could breathe again.

After a monumental effort, reached its objective, acknowledging the existence of the narrow ledge on which he could settle for a glimpse what was in the narrow cell beyond the window. "God is merciful, thought to recognize the figure of his father, his back turned to him, reading is something under the light house by a thin candle.

- Father! Shouted without lifting heavy voice.

Giovanni turned away.

- Ezio! In the name of God, how did you ...?

"Never mind, father.

As Giovanni approached, you could see Ezio's hands bloodied and bruised, his face pale and haggard.

"My God, father, what have you done?

"A little beating, but I'm fine. What matters most: How are your mother and your sister?

- A safe.

- With Annetta?

"Yes.

"Praise God.

- What happened, Father? Do you expect this?

"Not so fast. They also arrested and Federico Petruccio. I think they are in the cell next to it. If Lorenzo had been here it would have been different. Should have taken action.

- What are you talking about?

- Now there is no time for that! -Giovanni raised his voice to almost scream. And listen carefully: you have to go home. My office is a secret door. In the chamber behind the door you'll find a hidden chest. Grab *all* what's inside. "I've heard? *Everything!* Will seem strange in their majority, but everything is important.

"Yes, father.

Ezio varied slightly the weight of his body, still clinging with all his strength to the bars crossing the window. He dared not look down and did not know how much longer could remain still.

"Among the contents and find a letter with her some documents. You take it all without delay, the same is notche!, to *Messer Alberti* ...

- Al *Gonfaloniere*?

"Exactly. Now go!

"But, Father ... -Ezio he struggled to get out the words, and eager to do more than simply transporting documents, stammered: Are the Pazzi behind all this? I read the note from the pigeon. Said ...

But Giovanni silenced him. Ezio heard the key introduced in the lock of the door.

"They're going to question me," said Giovanni sorry. Go before getting caught. My God, you are a brave boy. You mercedor of your destiny. And now for the last time I say: go!

Ezio moved warily down the ledge and hung on the wall so you do not see him as he heard how his father had. Play that was unbearable. Then he donned glory for download. I knew that the declines are almost always harder than promotion, but in the last forty-eight hours had gained much experience climbing and falling buildings. Tower crawled down, slipping a couple of times but always recovering balance, until it reached again the battlements, where the two guards were still lying where she had left. Another golpe of luck! He had been hitting their heads with all its forces, but by chance they had regained consciousness while he was at the top of the tower and had sounded the alarm ... Not worth thinking about what would have been the consequences.

The truth is that there was no time to think about such things. Pounced on the battlements and looked down. The weather was a key factor and identified something down that might interrupt his fall, would dare to jump. As their eyes were adapted to the gloom, he saw the awning of an

empty stall next to the wall, far below. Should he play? To achieve win precious minutes. If he failed, ending with a broken leg would be the slightest of problems. But I had to have faith in himself.

Deep breath and plunged into the dark.

From such a height, the canopy gave way under his weight, but was signedmously subject and gave him enough strength to cut its fall. It was out of breath and in the morning following! have some bruised ribs, but was down! And it has notBia triggered an alarm.

He shook himself and ran towards him that only a horas ago had been their home. On arriving there he realized that the rush his father had forgotten to explain how to locate the secret door. Giulio would know, but where was Giulio?

Luckily there were no guards hanging around the house and could access it without anyone to intercept. He had stopped at his home one minute, almost unable to cross the dark threshold of the door gave the impression that the house had changedinformation exchanged, that his holiness had ifdo desecrated. Ezio was forced newtively to bring order to his thoughts, knowing that their actions were critical. Now his family depended on him. He went into the family home in the dark. Shortly after he was in the office of his father, gloomily lit a single candle, looking around.

The guards had turned the room and it was obvious that he hasbian seized several bank documents. General chaos reigning falls shelves, chairs overturned, drawers on the floor and papers and books everywhere, not at all the work facilitatedEzio jo. But knew the office, enjoying a great view and decided to use his wit. The walls were thick, whichany of them could hide a camera inside, but he went to the wall that was installed large fireplace, where the walls were thicker, and began their search there. Bringing the candle, and groping, always keeping his ear alert for returning guards, distinguished thought finally, on the left side of the carved mantel, the faint outline of a door marked on the caissons. There had to be something that servedra open. Carefully studied the sculptures of *Colossi* they held on their backs the marble fireplace. The nose of the left seemed to be broken and have been postpreviously repaired, it had a small slit at the base. Touched his nose and saw it was a bit loose. With a heavy heart, moved gently and the door swung inward rolling on silent spring hinges and discovering a stone-floored hall that turned to the left.

Upon entering, his right foot hit a stone that moved under him and, with the movement, the oil lamps hanging on the walls of the passage came to life. The tour was short, with a slight downward slope, and ended in a chamber circular decorated in a style more reminiscent of Syria to Italy. Ezio's brain remembered the picture that hung in the office firstford of his father in the castle of Masyaf, which was in its day the seat of the ancient Order of Murderers. But it did not have TIMEe to consider whether this curious decoration might have some special meaning. There was no furniture, and in the center of the room was an iron chest closed with two large voluminous locks. He looked around to see if there was a key, but the stay, except for its ornamentation, it was empty. Ezio was wondering if you would have to return to the dismissalfact of his father to look there, and if you have time to do so when his hand accidentally brushed against one of the locks, which opened suddenly. The other was opened with the same ease. Would you have given your father some kind of power he did not know? Would the locks programmed to respond to a particular contactanything else? The mysteries are piling up, but no TIMEe to enter them now.

He opened the trunk and saw that it contained a white hood, evidencetemente old, made with some kind of woolen fabric that does not remet. Something made him put it on and immediately felt a strange power. He pulled down his hood, but it is not removed.

The cabinet also contained a leather cuff, a broken knife instead of a normal grip was connected to an unusual mechanism whose performance did not reach comturn, a sword, a piece of parchment with symbols and letters and what looked like part of a plan, and the letter and the documents that his father had told him that was due to Uberto Alberti. I took everything, closed the cabinet and returned to her father's office, closing the door carefully behind her secret. In the office found a bag to carry documents that belonged to Giulio, guarDO in her cabinet documents and slung across his chest. Buttoned his sword. Not knowing what to do with this strange set of objects and no time to reflect on why his father kept those things in a secret chamber, returned cautiously to the front door of *palazzo*.

But just when he was about to leave the forecourt, he saw two guards entered the city. It was too late to hide. I had seen.

- Stop! Shouted one of them, and they began to move rapidly towards him.

There was no way to start the withdrawal. Ezio saw that they had removeddo ya swords.

- Why are you here? Why arrest?

"No," said he had spoken before. We have orders to kill.

And on hearing this, the second guard ran to him.

Ezio drew his sword when he saw it coming. It was a weapon that was unfamiliar, but felt light and competentTENTE in his hand, as if he had used all my life. Skived the first onslaught, right and left, both guards pouncing on him at the same time. The three swords let loose sparks, but Ezio noticed that his new weapon was firm, his mordant, sharp edge. Just at the time the second guard was down his sword with the intention of separating the braEzio so his shoulder, he made a feint to the right, shouldjo edge. The guard lost his balance when the arm that held the sword fell heavily, though harmlessly on the shoulder of Ezio.

The boy used his momentum to lift his new sword and crossed to the heart of his opponent. Straightening, Ezio turned on his heels, raised his left foot and pushed the dead guard to remove the sword from his body with just enough time to turn around and face her partner. The other guard rushed roaring and wielding a powerful sword.

- Prepare to die *traditore!*

The guard jumped on him, tore his left sleeve and sangre began to sprout. Ezio grimaced in pain, which lasted only a second. The guard kept pushing to see what was ahead and allowed Ezio attack again. Then, taking a step back, put his heel, he waved the sword stuck resolutely and firmly on the neck of his opponent at the moment it fell, separating the head from his shoulders before toface soil.

Ezio stood for a moment trembling at the sudden silenceCIO followed the confused fighting, breathing hard. It was the firstfirst time in his life he killed someone - what was it? - although it was another life inside, oldest, a life that seemed to have years of experience in dealing with death.

The feeling frightened him. That night had seen things that went well beyond what could have been any boy his age, but this new feeling began to awaken in the depths of his being a dark force. It was more than the simple effect of the harrowing experiences he had visaw in the last hours. He walked the dark streets flagging didirection to the house of Alberti, so startled at the slightestnest and looking back frequently. Finally, on the brink of exhaustion but still able to move forward, came home from *gonfaloniere*. He looked up and saw a dim light behind one of the front windows. He knocked loudly on the door with EmpuNadura of his sword.

Receiving no response, nervous and impatient, called again, louder this time. Nothing.

But at the third attempt, it opened a crack in the door that was closed afterwards. The door opened wide for a moment as a suspicious and armed servant invited him. He explained what brought him around the house and was taken to a room on the first floor where Alberti found sitting at a table full of papers. Behind him, through the side and sitting on a chair beside a dying fire, Ezio thought he saw another man, tall and robust, even could only see a little profile, and little clarity.

- Ezio? -Alberti stood up, startled. What are you doing here at this hour?

-No ... not ...

Alberti approached him and put a hand on his shoulder. "Wait, boy. Breathe deeply. Put your ideas in order.

Ezio nodded. He felt safer now, but also more vulnerable. Began to assimilate the events of the evening and night, since he had proposed to deliver the letters to Giovanni. He saw the brass clock that was on the desk, on a pedestal, it was almost midnight. Could only twelve hours have elapsed since Ezio, the boy, had accompanied his mother to pick up some pictures in the studio of an artist? Reluctantly, he realized that he was about to lie to mourn. But he calmed down and was Ezio, the man who took the floor:

"My father and my brothers were taken prisoner I do not know under what authority," my mother and sister have been hidden and the bank of our family have been sacked. My father sent me that I submit this letter and these documents ...

Ezio removed documents from his bag.

Thanks.

Alberti was a pair of glasses and pulled the letter of Giovanni in the light of the candle burning on his desk. In the room could not hear anything except the ticking of the clock and the crackle of the wood off the fire. If there was another presence in the room had forgotten Ezio completely.

Then, Alberti turned his attention to the documents. Spent time consulting them and finally one of them discreetly stored inside his black coat. Others left them gently aside, separate from other papers on the table.

"There has been a terrible misunderstanding, my dear Ezio" he said, removing his glasses. It is true that there have been accumulated serious charges, and a trial is scheduled. But apparently someone has shown up, perhaps for reasons of their own, too extreme. But do not worry. We explain everything.

Ezio could not believe it.

-How?

"The documents I have given contain evidence of a conspiracy against your father and against the city. Will present these papers at the hearing tomorrow and Giovanni and your brothers will be released. I guarantee it.

The boy saw a huge relief. He shook hands with the *Gonfaloniere*.

- How I can be grateful to you for?

"My job is to administer justice, Ezio. I take it very seriously. ... He hesitated for a fraction of a second-... your father is one of my dearest friends. - Alberti smiled. But where have my manners gone? I've even offered a glass of wine. He paused. And where will spend the night? Even I have urgent matters to attend to, but my servants shall ensure that you have food, drink and a warm bed.

Ezio did not know what ended up rejecting an offer as friendly.

When he left the mansion *gonfaloniere* it was past midnight. He covered his head again with the hood and gave a look at the streets trying to gather his thoughts. In fact, he knew very well where his steps led him.

Once there, he climbed to the balcony with more easily than had been imagined, perhaps the need gave strength to their muscles delicately and called the shutters. Whispered:

- Cristina! Love Wake up! Me.

He waited, quiet as a cat, and stayed to listen. The stretching heard, rising. And then his voice, as usual, on the other side of the shutters.

- Who is it?

-Ezio.

Quickly opened the shutters.

- What happens? Something wrong?

"Let me. Please.

Sitting on his bed, he explained the whole story.

"I knew something was wrong," she said. Tonight my father was worried. But what you say all will be well.

"I need to let me stay here tonight ... Do not worry, I'll go long before dawn. And I have to give you one thing you save for the custody. "He picked up the bowl and placed between the two. I need to trust you.

"Oh, Ezio, of course you can trust me.

He fell into a restless sleep in the arms of her.

Chapter 4

Hazy, overcast morning and the city was oppressed by a sweltering heat, the clouds had caught. Ezio arrived at the Piazza della Signoria and saw extremely surprised, which had gathered at the scene a dense crowd. They had built a platform on which stood a table covered with a cloth embroidered with the emblem of the city. Sitting at the same were Uberti and a tall and robust, with a hooked nose and eyes alert and calculating, dressed in rich robes of color carmeses. An unknown, at least for Ezio. But what he called *enseguia* attention was given to other occupants of the platform: his father and brothers, chained, and just beyond them, a building high with a large cross beam from which hung three nooses.

Ezio had reached *piazza* with anxiety and optimism. As he had not told the *Gonfaloniere* everything would be fixed the same day? But his feelings changed instantly. Something was wrong ... very wrong. He tried to cut through the crowd, but it was impossible. Threatened to overcome claustrophobia. Desperately trying to calm down, rationalize their actions, stopped, covered her head with the hood and adjusted the sword into his belt. Do you fail Uberti? And I could not stop looking at that tall, Spanish by his dress, his face and his complexion, which recommended constantly the crowd with his piercing gaze. Who was he? Why awakened something in memory of Ezio? Would you have seen before somewhere?

The *Gonfaloniere*, resplendent in traditional dress of his office, raised his arms to silence the crowd, and at the moment there was silence.

Auditor Giovanni Uberti said in a commanding tone that, for the keen ears of Ezio, could not hide a note of fear. You and your accomplices of the crime you are accused of treason. Do you have any evidence to rebut this charge?

Giovanni seemed both surprised and uncomfortable.

"Yes, it's all in the documents handed to you last night.

But then Uberti said:

"I have no news of any document, Auditor.

Ezio quickly realized that this was a love triangle, and could not understand what seemed a betrayal of large scale by Uberti. Shouted

- It's a lie!

But her cry was muffled by the roar of the crowd. Attempted to get closer, pushing his way between a pair of citizens, but they were many and was caught in the middle of them all.

Uberti had returned to take the floor.

"They have met and considered the evidence there is against you. Are irrefutable. In the absence of any evidence to demonstrate otherwise, my position requires me to declare to you and your accomplices, Federico and Petruccio, *e -in absentia*- Your son Ezio, guilty of the crime for which you are charged. He paused as the crowd was silent again. Accordingly, I sentenced them all to death. The sentence will be carried out immediately!

The crowd roared again. When Uberti gave the signal, seedling prepared the ropes, while two of his assistants caught the *pe* Petruccio flute, struggling to suppress her tears, and with *Ducie* to the scaffold. They put the rope around his neck while the child read hastily and priest sprinkled holy water on his head. The executioner then pulled a lever on the side of the scaffold and little was left hanging, kicking in the air to stand still.

- No! Ezio-delivered, ifn believe what they saw his orjcs-. No, my God, please no!

But his words were drowned in his throat, the sensation losses exceed it.

Federico *fEU el Next*, shouting his innocence and his family, struggling in vain to try to get rid of the guards who led him to the rope. Ezio, beside himself, trying to destabilizing desperately need to move, saw a single tear running down the cheek of his father's emaciated. Horrified, Ezio watched his older brother and best friend hanging from a rope convulsing. Petruccio took more time to leave this world, but eventually he ended up staying still, balance *Dose* on the rope ... the crackle of the wood beam the only sound that broke the silence. Ezio tried to combat the growing disbelief in it. Could it be true that this was happening?

The crowd began to murmur, but a strong voice stopped her. Giovanni was talking Auditor:

"It's you who is a traitor, Uberti. You, one of my dearest friends and partners, to whom I entrusted my life! And I am one isense. I did not know see that you were one of *them!*" And to say this raised his voice to a cry of anguish and *rabia*-. Perhaps today we steal life, but please note the following you: we will we change the *tuyto!*

He bowed his head and was silent. A deep silence, broken only by the murmur of the prayers of the priest down, which followed Auditor Giovanni as he walked with dignity to the gallows and commended his soul to his last great adventure.

Ezio was too shocked to feel pain. It was as if he had hit a great iron fist. But when the trap door opened beneath the feet of Giovanni, could not resist.

- Father! He shouted, his voice breaking.

The Spanish eyes were riveted on him instantly. Would supernatural vision of the man, to find a crowd like that? As if in slow motion, was that Spanish Ezio leaned Uberti, whispered something, and pointed.

- Guards! Uberti shouted, pointing also-. There! It is one of them! Capture them!

Before the crowd could react and catch it, Ezio force his way between her, driving punches which want to get in his way. A guard was special *Randol* now. Ezio pounced on, pulling the hood. With an instinctive, Ezio got rid of him, grabbed the sword with one hand and grabbed the guard by the neck with the other. The reaction Ezio tion was much faster than the guard *isperaba* and before he had time to raise the arms of defend itself, Ezio harder pressed both the neck and the sword, and a sharp swift movement, ran the guard's body, sticking the sword. Upon removal, the guts of their victim *esteem* popped up under his robe and spilled on the floor pavement. She pulled the body of a kick and has turned *edence* the podium, stared Uberti.

- I'll kill you for this! He shouted, his voice tense with hatred and anger.

But guards were closer. Ezio, ruled by his instincts to survival, he ran away from them toward the perceived safety of the narrow streets behind the square. To his dismay, he saw two more guards, quick, ready to intercept it.

They clashed on the edge of the square. The two guards in front of him, blocking his retreat, others approaching from behind. Ezio fought the first two of a frenzy. An unfortunate by removing one of them is ripped off a hand. Fearing that the end was approaching, Ezio turned to flee their attackers ... but before he threw out a barrier, something amazing happened. From the alley would be said, and a few feet away, a man appeared roughly seen. With lightning speed, surprised the two guards from behind and with a long knife, cut short by the armpits with arms that held their swords, cutting tendons and leaving immediate and perceivable. It moved so fast that barely Ezio visual tracking how withdrawing the sword to one of the fallen and tossed it to him. Ezio suddenly recognized him, and sniffed again have that strong odor of onions and garlic. At that time, or Damascene roses would have smelled better.

"Get out of here," said the man, and he left.

Ezio ran down the street and plunged into the corridors and passageways as well known for their evenings out with Federich. The commotion and screaming were slowly fading. He walked to the river, and found refuge in a hut abandoned by a sentry behind one of the stores owned by the father of Cristina.

During that time Ezio stopped being a boy to become a man. The weight of responsibility that he knew in a revenge and correct those horrible evil fell on his back like a heavy cloak.

Lying on a pile of bags, he noticed that his body began shaking. Their world had just been shattered. His padre ... Federico ... and God, no, the little Petruccio ... All disappeared, all dead, all killed. Holding her head in his hands, began to mourn, unable to control that spill of pain, fear and hatred. Only after several hours was he able to remove his hands from his face, his eyes were bloodshot and full of unyielding vengeance. Ezio At that moment he knew his former life was over: Ezio, the boy was gone forever. From now on, his life revolved around a goal, one goal: revenge.

Much later, well aware that the guard would still be searching, relentlessly, went to the mansion of the family of Craig following side streets. Unwilling to put in any danger, but I needed to pick up your bag and its precious contents. He waited in a dark hole that stank of urine, not moving even when the rats scurrying between his feet, until the light of his window he said he had retired for bed.

- Ezio! She exclaimed when she saw him on his balcony-. Thank God you're alive! Her face reflected the relief I felt, but the term was short, the pain taking over her-. Your father, your brothers ...

He could not finish the sentence and dropped his head. Ezio took her in his arms and spent several minutes simply embraced.

In the end, it was she who broke the embrace.

- You're crazy! What are you still in Florence?

"Still I have issues that deal truly sorry," said she-. But I can not stay here long, is a risk too big for your family. If they knew that these surveys would be ...

Cristina remained silent.

"Give me my bag and leave.

She went to look, but before giving said

- What about your family?

"That's my first duty. Bury my dead. I'm not allowed to throw into a pit with lime as if they were common criminals.

"I know where they have been taken.

- How do you know?

"In the city has not talked about nothing else all day. But now there is no one for all. Are close to Porta San Niccolò, along with the corpses of the indigent. There is a grave prepared, and are waiting to arrive in the morning cars with the lime. Oh, Ezio!

Ezio spoke staying calm but very serious:

"I must take care of my father and my brothers are heading in this world that they deserve. I can not offer a requiem, but I can save his body from the indignity.

- I'll go with you!

- No! Do you realize what it would mean that surprised you, me?

Cristina looked down.

"I must also take care of my mother and my sister is ten to save, and I owe to my family one more death. He hesitated-. Intentionally I will. Perhaps forever. The question is: will you come with me?

She stepped back and saw in his eyes Ezio a multitude of conflicting emotions. There was love, deep and lasting, but at the time that had elapsed since the first day I took between his arms, he had matured a lot more than her. Cristina was a child. How could I pretend to make a sacrifice like that?

"I do, Ezio, do not know how ... but my family ... This would kill my parents ...

Ezio looked at her kindly. Despite being in the same age, his recent experiences had done much more mature than her. He had no family to depend upon, only responsibility and duty, and that was very hard.

"I've been wrong, I ask you. And who knows, perhaps the day, when this is back ... "She raised her hands to her chest and in the folds of his robes located a medallion of silver hung from a thin gold chain. Took it off. The medallion was a simple picture, the letter 'A' of your last name-. I want you to have it. Take it, please.

Cristina took it with trembling hands, crying. He looked and then looked at him, to thank him, to give any excuse.

But Ezio was gone.

On the south bank of the Arno, near the Porta San Niccolò, Ezio found the desolate place where the bodies lay next to a large pit dug in the ground. Two guards look pitiful, simple recruits on the basis of their appearance, patrolling nearby, carrying their halberds more than covers with

panache. See their uniforms aroused the wrath of Ezio and his first instinct was to kill them, but then thought he had seen enough deaths that day and were only forced to field boys seeing that uniform in search of a better life. He shrugged and tried to see the bodies of his father and brothers on the edge of the pit with the rope still around his neck burned. He understood that as the guards were asleep, could transport them without problem the bodies to the shore of the river where a boat was discovered that prepared previously loaded with stubble.

It was nearly three, and when he finished his task in the dim light of dawn was beginning to whiten the sky to the east. Is found locks along the river, watching the boat loaded with the bodies of his family, in flames, was carried away by the current slowly towards the sea. He continued staring until the firelight disappeared into the distance.

He returned to the city, their pain replaced by a relentless determination. He still had much to do. But above all, needed to rest. He returned to hut Sentinel and settled as he could. A nap does not go bad, but got even sleeping Cristina leave their thoughts, or dreams.

Knew about the whereabouts of the brother's house Annetta na, although he had never been there, did not even know Paolo, but had been his nurse Annetta and I knew that you can trust someone, had to be in it. He wondered if known and the fate of his father and brothers and if so, whether it would have explained to his mother and sister.

He came home very quietly, making a detour and in as far as possible, covering the distance on the run, head down over the rooftops to avoid streets where surely would Uberto Alberti his men searching. Ezio could not in jar thinking about the betrayal of Alberti. What faction would refer his father when he spoke at the gallows? What could have led to Al Alberti to lead to death one of his closest allies?

Ezio knew that Paola was on a street just north of the cathedral. But when he got there, he could not guess what it was. On the facades of the buildings there were few signs that identify Caran, and could not afford the luxury of loitering there because they could recognize. I was about to leave when he saw Annetta in person approaching from the Piazza San Lorenzo.

He pulled down his hood so that his face is camouflaged by the shadows and approached her, walking at a normal pace, try to mingle with other citizens traveling on the street. Annetta He passed, and was glad to see that even she showed signs of having recognized. A few meters ahead, turned and sped up to stay by his side.

-Annetta ...

Acuity was not her turn her head.

-Ezio. You're safe.

"Not exactly. Are my mother and my sister ...?"

"They're protected. Oh, Ezio, your poor father. And Federico. Y. ... "Stifled a sob the little Petruccio. I come right now of San Lorenzo. I've put a candle to San Antonio for them. They say the Duke will return soon. Maybe ...

- Are my mother and Claudia aware of what happened?

"We thought it best not to tell.

Ezio thought for a moment.

"It's better this way. I'll tell you when the time comes. He paused-. Will you take me to them? I could not identify the house of your sister.

"Now I go there. Follow me.

It was delayed a bit, but without losing sight.

The place became sober and was the facade with the appearance of strength of the most magnificent buildings in Florence, but once inside, Ezio was stunned. Not exactly what was expected.

Was found in a large room with high ceilings and rich furnished mind. It was dark, enclosed space. The walls were covered with swags of velvet in shades of maroon and dark brown interspersed with oriental tapestries depicting scenes of luxury and pleasure s unequivocal EXUAL. The room was lit anything by candlelight and floated in the air a scent of incense. The furniture was composed mainly of soft sofa cushions covered with precious brocade and low tables on which it had silver trays with wine jugs, goblets of Venetian glass and gold containers with candy. But the most surprising you were the people who occupied the room. A dozen beautiful girls, dressed in silks and satins in shades of yellow and green floral style Rentin but skirts with cuts to the top of the thigh with deep necklines that left little to the imagination except protabletop where it should not venture. In the three walls of the room, beneath garlands and tapestry, there were several doors.

Ezio looked around, in a sense without knowing *where* look.

- Are you sure this is the place? An he asked netta.

"*Ma certo!* And here is my sister who comes to meet us.

Saw him coming towards them an elegant woman, who must be forty but looked ten years younger, as beautiful as any *Principessa* and better dressed than most. Its myrada hid a sad evening, augmented somewhat by transmitting sexually charged him, and Ezio, with everything he had in his head was touched.

He held out a hand with long fingers and loaded with jewels.

"Nice, Ezio. "He glanced assessment-. Annetta speaks highly of you. And now I understand why.

Ezio, blushing uncontrollably, he replied:

"I appreciate those kind words, *madonna* ...

Paola "Call me, please.

Ezio bowed.

I do not know how to express my gratitude for having given protection to my mother and my sister *mado* ... I mean, Paola.

"It's the least we could do.

- Are they here? Can you see them?

"They're here ... no place for them, and some of my clients occupy prominent places in the city government.

- Is this place so if you'll excuse me, what I think it is?

Paola laughed.

- Of course! But I hope it is something different from those you have there on the docks! It is soon to be work, but we like to be prepared ... there is always the odd occasional visitor to walk to work. You're in the moment to perfect.

- Where is my mother? Where is Claudia?

"They are safe, Ezio, but it is too risky to take now to see them, and we must not compromise safety.

Dragged him to a couch and sat down with him. Annetta, meanwhile, disappeared into the bowels of the house to go about their things.

"I think we'd better," continued Florence Paola, which leave them at the earliest opportunity. But first need some rest. You have to regain strength, then waits a long road ahead and complicated. You might like ...

"Very nice," said Paola interrupting educadament- and you're right with your suggestion. But right now I can not stay.

- Why? Where do you go?

During the conversation, Ezio had been reassuring as his racing thoughts were found. Finally had been able to shake off their shock and fear, having made a decision and find a target, irrevocable both.

"I'll kill Uberto Alberti said.

Paola took a look of concern.

"I understand your desire for revenge, but *Gonfaloniere* is a powerful man, and you're not a murderer by nature, Ezio ...

"Destiny is making me do this, he thought, but said instead, with much education as possible:

"Spare me the speech.

Was convinced of his mission.

Paola ignored and finished his sentence.

-... but I can become one.

Ezio repressed his misgivings.

- Why would you want to teach me to kill?

She shook her head from side to side.

"To teach you to survive.

"I'm not sure you need for anyon on your part. She smiled.

"I know how you feel, but let me, please help pulir those skills I'm sure that you have in a naturalral. Consider my teachings as an additional weapon in your arsenal.

Paola started training that day, recruiting to the chicas were free and the servants of confidence for the helpwill give. In the garden behind the house, surrounded by high walls, orised to twenty people at your service in five groups of four. They began to wander around the garden, crossing each other, talking and laughing, some of the girls throwing Ezio daring glances and smiling. Ezio, still with his precious bowlisa hung to one side, was immune to his charms.

"Well," said Paola- discretion is crucial in my ownprofession. We need to walk the streets freely ... viscough, but without being seen. You must learn to mingle with others like us and become one among the crowd of the cityDad. "Ezio was about to protest but she raised her hand-. I know! Annetta me that you do not too bad, but tietions to learn more. I want to choose a group and try to mingle with their constituents. The goal is that I can not distinguirte. Remember what was about to happen to you during implementation.

Those harsh words prompted Ezio, although it was a task that input did not seem complicated, if usedra's discretion. Still, under the relentless gaze of Paola, I was more difficult than imagined. He pushed against others clumsy, tripped occasionally, making chicas or servants of the group that had chosen turned away fromJandola exposed. Although the garden was a place agrapossible, sunny, lush, and the birds chirped in their decorative trees to Ezio eventually became a labyrinthto the hostile streets of the city, all bystanders, potential enemies. And I was exasperated with the constant criticism of Paola.

- Beware! --said-. You can not go around giving these empujones! Show a little respect for my girls! Tread carefully when near them! How will you get confused inamong the crowd if you keep shoving? Oh, Ezio, I expected something better from you!

But finally, the third day, decrease biting commentsnuyeron and the morning of the fourth, managed to walk past the noses of Paola without her would not notice. In fact, desfor fifteen minutes without saying a word, Paola shouted

- Okay, Ezio, I give up! Where are you?

Satisfied, he appeared among a group of girls become the perfect imitation of one of the youths of the house. Paola arelaughed and applauded, and everyone else joined in the applause.

But the job does not end there.

"Now you've learned to confuse the crowd," said Paola in the morning the next day- I will teach you how to use your newly acquired skills ... to steal.

Ezio demurred, but Paola said:

"It's a basic survival skill you might needsitar on your journey. A man is nothing without money and may not always find yourself in a position to win honestly. I know I never steal anything from anyone who could not afford perDerlo, or a friend. Think of it as the blade of a knife, which is rarely used, although it is good to know it's there.

Learning to become a pickpocket was much more complicatededo. He managed to sneak up on girls with enough successesto, but as the hand approached the pouch worn on the sash, all shouting "*When I bark!*" and fled from him. When firstra time managed to steal a few coins, he stayedor plantdo where I was for a moment victorious, but immediately afterwards he felt a heavy hand fell on his shoulders.

"*You arrest!*" Smiled the servant who represented the watchdog role of the city, but Paola was not smiling.

"Once you get to steal something," said Ezio- that can notgive you standing there.

But he learned quickly and began to appreciate the need to acquire the skills they taught and were required to complete their mission. When managed successfully plucked ten girls, the last five without even gave Paola Auditorsta this, it announced that the training was over.

-Go back to work, girls, "said-. Running out of time for games.

- Really?Murmured reluctantly the girls howEzio said goodbye do-. It's so cute, so innocent ...

But Paola was implacable. Then walked alone in the garden. As always, it without taking off the hand of his bag.

"Now you've learned to deal with the enemy," said Paola- we have to find the right weapon ... something much more subtle than a sword.

- And what do you use?

- The answer you already!

Y pulled the knife broke and the cuff was found EzioTrade's safe in his father and who until now believed to continue carrying in his bag. Surprised, he opened it and reached into his inexterior. Had disappeared from there.

- Paola! How the hell ...? Paola laughed.

- Have I got? Using the same skills that I just teach. But there is another small lesson to learnder. Now that you behave as a good thief, you alsoalso learn to protect yourself from others who have your same inhabitantsity.

Ezio looked sorry the broken knife she had just returned with the wristband.

He handled some kind of mechanism. Neither one thing nor the other work properly, "said Ezio.

"Oh," she said-. Right. But I think I know *Messer* Leonardo.

- Da Vinci? Yes, I met him just before ... "His voice broke, but declined to dwell on painful memories-. And how can this help me with a painter?

"Much more than just a painter. Bring these items. You'll see.

Ezio, seeing what he was saying made sense, nodded as a sign of conformity and said, "Before I left, could to ask you one last question?

"Of course.

- Why did you so willingly helped ... when I was a stranger?

Paola smiled sadly. In response, climbed slightlyRamento one of the sleeves of her dress, revealing a pale and delicate forearm whose beauty was tarnished by a long, dark ugly scars that crossed it. Ezio was Aquement and instantly understood. At some point in their life, this lady had been tortured.

"I too have known the betrayal," said Paola.

Y Ezio knew without a doubt that he had met a kindred spirit.

Chapter 5

The Placer luxurious Mansion Paola was not to far from thecurrades streets where he was the workshop of Leonardo, but to reach it Ezio had to crUzar the wide and busy Piazza del Duomo, where their newly acquired skills to camuflarse among the crowd were particularly useful. Had been ten days since the executions, and it was likely that AIEzio Berti imagine that had long since fled Florenlence, but was taking no chances Ezio and by the number of guards at the square and its surroundings, nor was willing Albertiplace to run. He was also certain that in the square were also agents in plain clothes. Ezio walked with his head gacha, especially when passed between the cathedral and the baptistry, the pointsto where the place was more crowded. He passed the *camcelery* Giotto, who had almost one hundred and fifty years overlooking the city, and with the great mass of red color of the dome of the caTedral by Brunelleschi, was completed only fifteen years without seeing such agents, although they noticed the presence of groups of viFrench and Spanish sitantes raising his head with amazement and admiration sincere and heart felt a little surge of pride in their city. But the city still remained?

Suppress any gloomy thoughts, advanced quickmind to the south side of the *piazza* and came to the workshop of Leonardo. The teacher was at home, they said, in the backyard. The study showed a more chaotic that even the other time he had visited, although this madness seemed to hide some kind of method. Ezio artifacts had seen in his previous visit had increased in number and the ceiling hung a strange artifacto wood, which reminded once the skeleton of a murcielago a large scale. In one of the stands was a large canvas nailed to a table, and painted it a terribly intricate knot motif and in a corner scribbling indescifrables written by Leonardo. A Agniolo he had added another assistant, Innocent, and the two were trying to put some order in the study, cataloging the material to be able to follow.

"It's in the back yard," said Ezio Agniolo-. Pass. Not molestareis.

Ezio Leonardo found locked in a curious activity. In Florence you could buy caged birds in all iftio. People hang them in the window for pleasure and when molaugh, just replace them. Leonardo was surrounded by dodinners cages. When he arrived Ezio, just select one of them, then opened the little door wicker cages raisedthe and watched the Linnet (in this case) was out, the crossing and was released. Leonardo saw the departure of APbird with interest and when he turned ready to get another cage, he detected the presence of Ezio.

He smiled in a charming manner, while freeing one after the other thrushes, finches, larks and nightingales expensive, observedevating all with great attention.

- What are you doing? Ezio asked puzzled.

"All life is precious," said Leonardo simply-. I can not stand to see me living like prisoners in this way, by simply having a good voice.

- Is the only reason that you let? -Ezio suspected an ulterior motive.

Leonardo smiled, but offered no direct response.

"Neither do I eat more meat. Why does a poor animal to die because we like the taste?

"In this case farmers out of business.

"They could devote all to cultivate corn.

"Imagine how boring it would be. And it would have a surplus.

"Oh, I forgot you're a *finanziatore*. And I was forgetting my manners too. What brings you here?

"I need a favor, Leonardo.

- How I can help?

"There's something ... something I inherited from my father and me gusority repair, if you can.

Leonardo's gaze brightened.

"Of course. Come here. Use the inner room ... These guys are messing me the study, as usual. Sometimes I wonder why I bother to give them a job!

Ezio smiled. Beginning to understand why, but at the same time I sensed that Leonardo's first love was and always would work.

"Come over here.

The internal study of Leonardo, the smallest, was even more cluttered than the other, but in the mountains of books and specialcymene, and between paper covered with doodles indecipherable, the artist, as always impeccably (and incongruously) seemeaning and fragrant, was piling one thing upon another until it cleared a large drawing board.

"Excuse the mess," said-. But now at least have consequencesguido an oasis! Let's see what you brought me. Unless you apetezca first glass of wine.

"No, no.

"Well," he said impatiently Leonardo-. Let's see then!

Ezio carefully pulled the knife, the wrist and the mechanismmo, which had previously involved with the mysterious sheet vitethe accompanying objects. Leonardo tried in vain to put the pieces of machinery and for a moment seemed to fall into the destabilizingrecovery.

I do not know, "said Ezio-. This mechanism is old ... quite anTiguan, but otherwise is very sophisticated, and its manufacture is even ahead of our time. Fascinating. She looked-. The truth is I've never seen anything like it. But I fear that little I can do without the original plans.

Then listened to the sheet of vellum, which was caught wrapping Ezio new objects.

- Wait a minute! He shouted, a close studysity.

After the knife broken left wrist and a hand extendedgiven leaf and consultations, beginning to rummage through a row of old books and manuscripts that had on a shelf. Found the two he wanted, he left on the table and started browsing.

- What are you doing? Ezio asked, somewhat impatiently.

"This is very interesting," said Leonardo-. It seems the previous pagina of a codex.

- What a what?

"It's a page from an old book. Not printed, is a manuscript. It is very old indeed. Got any more?"

-No.

"Too bad. People should not start this way the wallspages of books. -Leonardo paused-. Unless, perhaps, that all together ...

- What?

"Nothing. Look, the content of this page is encrypted, but if my theory is correct ... based on these designs could well be that ...

Ezio was pending, but Leonardo was lost in his own world. He sat and waited patiently while Leonardo stirring and examined in detail per books and scrollsGamino, checking references and making notes, using this curious writing from right to left and inverted. Ezio was not alone, he imagined that life lived always watching their backs. From what little I had seen in the study, the me he had nonorth doubt that if the Church found out things that Leonardo had in hand, it would take a good scolding.

Leonardo finally lifted in sight. But when he did Ezio had been dozing.

"Extraordinary" Leonardo muttered to himself, and then, raising his voice-: Extraordinary! If transferredNemos points and then select the third of each ...

He got back to work, grabbed the knife, the wrist and mechanism. Out from under the table a box of tools, mounted a vise and quietly focused on her workjo. An hour passed, two ... Ezio had become comfortably dormido, lulled by the charged atmosphere and warm the room and Leonardo discrete sounds, still with small bumps and scratching. And finally ...

- Ezio! Wake up!

- Huh?

- Look!

Said Leonardo on the table. Had embedded the dagger, completely restored, in this strange mechanism, which in turn was now attached to the wrist. The set was polished, as if freshly made, but not shining.

"A matte finish, I decided," said Leonardo-. As a Roman armor. Anything that will glow in the sunlight is an informer mortal.

Ezio took the gun and weighed. Was light, but sturdy knifement was perfectly balanced. Ezio had never seen anything like it. A dagger with a spring that could hide in his wrist. It was enough to flex the hand and the knife appeared, ready to rajar or stab as your user decide.

"I was a man of peace," said Ezio, recalling the birds.

"The ideas in front of everything. Whatever they are. Well, "he said, drawing from his toolbox hammer and fivecel-. You're right, right? Well. Now do me the favor of placing the right ring finger on top of this block.

"What are you doing?"

"Sorry, but I have to do so. The knife is designedsigned for ensuring the full involvement of anyone who wields it.

- What do you mean?

"It only works if you remove the finger.

Ezio blinked. On his head spent a lot of pictures: recalled the alleged friendship with his father Alberti, Alberti had given how trust after the arrest of his father, the executiontions, which had become his goal. His jaw.

"Do it.

"Maybe you should use a butcher knife. It would be a cleaner cut. -Leonardo drew one of a desk drawer-. Now, just put your finger ... *così*.

Ezio was prepared mentally as Leonardo stood the butcher knife. He closed his eyes to hear it fall -*chunca!*- On the wooden board. But he felt no pain. He opened his eyes. The knife was stuck in the table, inches from his hand, which isintact tobacco.

- Bastard! "Ezio was stunned, and angry also Aqueprank call.

Leonardo raised his hands.

- Calm down! It was just to add a bit of fun! Cruel, I admit, but I could not resist. I wanted to see how far your determination. You know? The use of this machine *revanted* Originally this sacrifice. Something to do with an ancient rite of passage, I think. But I made a couple of tinkering. So you can keep your finger. Look! The knife comes out perfectly now, and I've added a handle that automatically appears when the knife is open. All you have to do is remember to keep it extended when it comes out! So you can keep your finger. Although you may prefer to wear gloves when using it ... The blade is very sharp.

Ezio was too fascinated, and grateful, to keep his anger long time.

"It's extraordinary," he said, opening and closing the knife several times to understand perfectly how to use-. Unbelievable.

- How so?"Agreed Leonardo-. "You sure you do not have more pages like this one?"

"Sorry but no.

-If you happen to find some more, bring it to me, please.

"I my word. And how much do I owe you for ...?"

"It was a pleasure. Most enlightening. There is ...

Were interrupted by a knock at the door of the studio overlooking the street. Leonardo ran to the front of the buildAgniolo surface while looking at him terrified and innocent. The perperson who was on the other side of the door had begun to cry

- Open, by order of the Florentine guard!

- Wait! Leonardo also replied crying, and quietly told Ezio:- Stay here.

Then he opened the door and stood under the arch of the guard blocking the passage.

- You are Leonardo da Vinci? Asked the guard using one of those voices strong and authoritarian government.

- How I can help? Leonardo said, coming to call, thereby forcing the guard to take a step back.

"I am authorized to formulaic few questions.

Leonardo was positioned so that the guard had fallen back to the studio door.

- What's wrong?

"We got a report that had just been relacionandoos with a known enemy of the city.

- Who, me? Relationships? Far Fetched!

-When was the last time you saw or talked to Ezio Auditore?

- Who?

"Do not you come now with crap. We know that maintenanceniais a close relationship with the family. We sold to the madre a couple of those daub yours. Do you need that you may refresh her memory?

And the guards poked him in the stomach with the butt of his praiseda. Leonardo, uttering a sharp cry of pain, bowed and fell to the ground, where the guard began to poke kicks.

- We are now ready to talk? I do not like artists. You are a bunch of fags.

But the scene had given Ezio has time to glidecer noise at the door and stand behind the guard. The street was deserted. He was just ahead of him naked man's neck. It was an ideal opportunity to test their new toy. Levanto hand, thus triggering the release of the mechanism and instantly came the silent knife. With a deft movementof his right hand to open, Ezio stabbed once in the side of the neck guard. The freshly sharpened blade was betweenmend dangerous and guard penetrated the jugular without resistance. The man fell, dead even before reaching the ground.

Ezio helped Leonardo to join.

"Thanks," said the trembling artist.

"Sorry ... did not intend to kill him ..., there was no time ...

"Sometimes we have no alternative. Although by now would have to be used.

- What do you mean?

"I was involved in the case Saltarelli.

Ezio remembered him right away. Few weeks ago, a young art model, Jacopo Saltarelli, was reported anonymously to practice prostitution, and Leonardo, along with three other men, had been accused of being one of his clientsTual. The case had been dismissed for lack of evidence, but could not shake the bad reputation gained.

"Here we do not process for homosexuals," said Ezio-. That is why, I think, that the Germans used a nickname for them: they are called *Florenz*.

"Officially remains an illegal activity," said DryLeonardo mind-. Can still be fined for it. And with menas Alberti men in power ...

- What do we do with the body?

"Oh," said Leonardo-. It's a godsend. Help me to drag him inside before someone sees us. I'll put it with others.

- A gift from heaven? The others?

"The wine is fresh. Remain a week. Occasionally a couple of corpses recovered from the hospital, not CLAIMma anyone. All unofficial, of course. The open, examined a little ... Serve for my research.

Ezio looked at his friend with great curiosity.

-What?

"I thought you had cash. I like to find out the functionsaccompaniment of things.

Body away from the sight of people and the two assistants Leonardo dragged in any way by the stone steps to hide.

- And if they send someone to look to know what became of him?

Leonardo shrugged.

"I'll say that I know nothing. "He winked-. I have friends pohealers here, Ezio.

Ezio was perplexed. Said: "I very confident ...

"You limit yourself to anyone not mention the incident.

"I will not ... and thank you, Leonardo, for everything.

"It was a pleasure. And do not forget ... His eyes shone with a hungry look-. If you find more pages of this COsays, bring them to me. Who knows what other new designs could withhave.

- I promise!

Ezio returned home triumphant Paola although, throughout their journey to the north of the city, did not forget at any time lost in the anonymity of the crowd.

Paola was received with relief.

"You've been away longer than I expected.

-A Leonardo likes to talk.

"But I hope that is not dedicated to just that.

"Oh, no. Look! "And he showed him the knife wrist, lasting the dola from inside the sleeve with a flourish extravagant and a little boy smile.

- Awesome!

"Yes. -Ezio watched with admiration the gun-. I need some practice. I want to keep all your fingers. Paola became serious.

"Well, Ezio, I think you're ready. Te I provideswimming skills needed, Leonardo has repaired your weapon. Took a deep breath-. All you need now is to perform your feat.

"Yes," said Ezio quietly, his expression darkening again-. The question now is how to access *Messer Alberti*. Paola looked thoughtful.

"The Duke Lorenzo is already back. He did not agree with Alberti authorized executions in his absence, but lacks the power to challenge the *Gonfaloniere*. Tomorrow night will be held the premiere of the latest work of master Verrocchio to the cloister of Santa Croce. Florentine high society will be present, including Alberti. He stared-. I think you should attend.

Ezio discovered that the sculpture was to perform was a bronze statue of David, the biblical hero who was associated with Florence, a city located between two Goliaths: Rome in the south and the kings of France, always eager to conquer territory, the north. The Medici family was the promoter of the commission, which was erected in the Palazzo Vecchio. The teacher had begun work on the sculpture for three or four years and there were rumors that the caBeza had been shaped by what was one of the most attractiveyoung apprentice you and Verrocchio at the time, such a Leonardo da Vinci. In any case excitement to the Accountantfoundation was great and everyone was wondering what was putDria for the occasion.

But Ezio had other issues on which to reflect.

"Take care of my mother and my sister in my absence Paola asked.

"As if they were mine.

"And if anything happened to me ...

"Have faith, nothing will happen.

The next afternoon, Ezio went to Santa Croce with sufficientyou in advance. He had spent hours preparing and refine previousdo your skills with the new weapon until you are satisfied with the feeling that dominated their use. He was thinking about the death of his father and brothers, and the cruel tone of voice in pronouncing the sentence Alberti clearly echoed in his head.

As he approached Santa Croce saw two figures recommendednized immediately. They walked past him and something apart from a small squad of bodyguards whose uniform displaying a badge with five red balls on a gold field. Were discutiendo, and hurried to come and hear the conversation. Sehad before the porch of the church and he was giving LapTAS near them but they could see, to hear what they said. The men spoke barely moving lips. One was Uberto Alberti, the other a thin man of between twenty and thirty years, with prominent nose and determined expression, richly dressed with hat and red cloak, a silver-gray coat beneath. The Duke Lorenzo *II Magnifico*, as they called their subjects, To the indignation of the Pazzi and their supporters.

"You can not accuse me of this, was saying Alberti-. I acted based on information received as conclusive evidence. I acted within the law and within the limits of my office!

- No! Surpass your limits *Gonfaloniere*,and you APROVEchaste in my absence to do so. I'm extremely againststariat.

- Who are you to talk about limits? I've done with the power of the city, you have proclaimed their duke, without the consentor the formal consent *Signoria* or anyone!

- I have not done that!

Alberti was allowed to license a wry laugh.

- What would you say otherwise? You're always so innocent! How convenient of you. In Careggi you surround yourself with people that mamajority consider dangerous freethinkers: Ficino, Mirandola, Poliziano and filthy! But at least we had the opportunity to see how far your radio actually action ... that is the same as saying that anywhere, practically speaking. It was a valuable lesson for my aliatwo for me.

"Yes. Your allies the Pazzi. In reality, everything turns around the same, right?

Alberti studied carefully before responding nails.

"Watch what you say, *duces*. Could attract the attention of someone who does not belong. "Although not discussed fully confident.

"The only thing you should watch what you say you are, *Gonfaloniere*. And I suggest you forward this advice to your partner ... Take it as a warning of a friend.

And with that, Lorenzo turned around and went with guardaespaldas to the cloister. After a moment, cursing to himself, Alberti followed suit. A Ezio gave the impression that the man was cursing himself.

The cloisters had been decorated for the occasion with youjidos embroidered in gold so dazzling reflected light hundreds of candles. On a platform next to the central fountain, a group of musicians played, while in another gallery stood the bronze sculpture, a figure of exquisite beauty whose size reached approximately half the height of a man. When Ezio entered, using columns and shadows to hide, he saw Lorenzo congratulating the artist. Ezio also recognized the mysterious hooded figure who accompanied AIAAlberti on the platform the day of execution.

From a distance, saw Alberti surrounded by fans, members of the local nobility. As could be heard, understood Ezioeven that they were congratulating *Gonfaloniere* for liberating the city from the scourge of the family Auditore. Never have imagineddo that his father may have as many enemies as well as friends in the city, but also realized that only had dareddo to stand against him in the absence of its main ally, Lorenzo. Ezio smiled when a noblewoman Alberti said he was confident that the Duke valued his integrity. Overture saw that has notBia been at all pleasing to Alberti. And continued to hear more.

- What is known about another child? Was asking a non-ble-. Ezio, right? Have you escaped?

Alberti managed a smile.

"The boy does not imply any danger. Soft hands and an even softer head. He was captured and executed by the end of the week.

All those around him laughed.

"Well ... what are you waiting for then Uberto? Asked another man-. Does the chair *Signoria* maybe?

Alberti opened his hands.

"Everything is God's will. My only interest is in continuous service serving Florence, faithfully and diligently.

"Whatever you chose to do so, you have our support.

"Very flattering on your part. We'll see what the future holds. -Alberti was radiant, but appeared to modestly-. And now, my friends, I suggest we leave the politics aside and give ourselves the pleasure of this sublime work of art, so generously donated by the noble mind Medici.

Ezio waited for the company Alberti moved away towards the *David*. For its part, Alberti took a glass of wine and discussed the scene, a mixture of caution and satisfaction in his eyes. Ezio saw it was his chance. The eyes of the world were fixed on the sculpture, near which Verrocchio was stuck with a brief speech.

-Make the ultimate compliment you must have felt like a kick in the stomach, "said Ezio between teeth-. But I pray you're right at the end disingenuous.

A Alberti met him in the eyes of the orbits to recognize.

- You!

"Yes, *Gonfaloniere*. I Ezio. I have come to avenge the death of my father-your friend, and my innocent brothers.

Alberti heard the click off of a pier, a clang, and immediately saw the knife stuck in his throat.

"Goodbye, *Gonfaloniere* Ezio said coldly.

- Stop! He cried in a stifled Alberti-. You have done the same to have been in my situation: you protect your ones. Forgive me, Ezio ... I had no other choice.

Ezio leaned over him, ignoring his pleas. I knew that this man had had no alternative-an alternative honorable-and who had been too passive to decant for her.

- What do you think / I'm not protecting my loved ones? What would you be able to show mercy to my mother and my sister's hand to bring them up? And now tell me the papers of my father gave you? You have to have them stored somewhere safe.

"I never get. Whenever I take over! -Alberti Ezio you wanted to push and took a deep breath to call the guards, but Ezio came the knife a little closer to his throat and slid the blade over his jugular artery. Incapable even of Bourbon, Alberti fell to his knees, his hands clutching instinctively your neck in a vain attempt to stop the blood spill on the grass like a waterfall. As lying completely fell to the ground. Ezio quickly hunched over it and cut the ribbon that connected his bag with the belt. He looked within. The engraving treatment was carried Alberti to tell the truth. The documents were there.

He realized that the silence around him. Verrocchio's speech was interrupted and all the guests had turned to him and were looking, not yet cover the scope of what happened. Ezio stood up and faced them.

- Yes! What you see is real! What you see is revenge! The family Auditore still alive. I'm still here! Ezio Auditore!

Took a deep breath at the same time a woman's voice shouted:

-*Assassin!*

Instant chaos reigned. Lorenzo's bodyguards as rode around immediately, their swords raised. Guests hurried to hide here and there, some trying to flee, the more silent doing at least the gesture of trying to capture Ezio, although none of them dared to do it for real. Ezio saw the hooded figure was lost in the shadows. Verrocchio had been protecting his sculpture. Women screamed, men shouted and city guards ran through the cloisters, without really knowing who to pursue. Ezio seized the moment, climbed onto the roof and the colonnade of the porch and ran to another courtyard, the door opened into the square in front of the church, where they began to congregate and a multitude of curiosos, attracted by the sounds of the commotion that existed in the previous building.

- What happens? Someone asked Ezio.

"Justice has been done," said Ezio, before running off the northwest city in search of security offered Paola's mansion.

He stopped on the way to verify the contents of the box Alberti. At least, his last words were sincere. Everything was there. And there was something else. An undelivered letter written by Alberti handwriting. Perhaps new information to Ezio, who broke the seal and unfolded the parchment.

But it was a personal note to his wife Alberti. While reading, Ezio could at least understand what kind of forces had pushed the man to break his integrity.

Amomine r:

"Plasma my thoughts paper with the hope of you will gather enough courage to eat with me. With the time, no doubt you'll learn that Giovanni e auditors, tache a traitor and set him to death. Probably the history will judge this act as a sign of notice and greed. But you must understand that it was fate that forced me to do this, but fear.

When the Medici steal our family were all that we possessed, I was scared. For you, for our son. By future. What hope is in this world to a man of no means or position responsibilities? In the end, I offered money, land and titles in exchange for my cooperation.

Y I finished eating and was betraying my close friend.

For unexplained that whether that act, it seemed necessary at the time.

E even now, looking back, do not get to see another way ...

Ezio carefully folded the letter and put it back into the box. I would again be responsible for sealing and it was between them. He was determined not ever bow to the meanness.

Chapter 6

And is made, "he simply said Paola.

She hugged her for a moment and then separated.

"I know. Glad you're safe.

"I think it's time to leave Florence.

- Where will you go?

-Mario, brother of my father owns a farm near Monteriggioni. We will go there.

"You're already on the run, Ezio. Are hanging posters everywhere with your picture and the words "Wanted." And prayed public administrators begin to speak out against you. He paused, pensativa. I will command my servants to go and pull up all the posters they can and can bribe the speakers to talk about other things. He then came another thought. Better to do to prepare documents so you can travel on three.

Ezio shook his head from side to side, thinking Alberti.

- What kind of world do we live? It is so easy to manipulate beliefs ...

-Alberti was in a position considered impossiblesible, but should have remained strong. He sighed. The view Dad traded daily. You have to get used to it, Ezio.

Ezio Paolo took her hands in hers.

Thanks.

"Florence will be from now a better place, especially if Duke Lorenzo gets one of his men out elected *Gonfaloniere*. No time to lose. Your mother and sister are here. He turned and clapped. Annetta!

Annetta appeared from the back of the house, accompanied by Maria and Claudia. It was a very emotional. Ezio realized that her mother was not quite recovered and that was keeping in his hands the little box with feathers Petruccio. He returned the hug, eventhat away, while Paola withtuning the scene with a sad smile.

Claudia, on the other hand, gave him a big hug.

- Ezio! Where have you been? Annetta Paola and have been very kind, but do not let us go home. And mother has not pronouncedo not a word from ... "He stopped, struggling withhave the tearsbut then, recovering, he added:- Well, maybe now a father can work things out. Must have been a terrible misunderstanding, right?

Paola looked.

"It's time," he said softly. Sooner or later tinen to know the truth.

Claudia's gaze went again and again Ezio Paolo. Maria was sitting next to Annette, his arm around her. Mary had a blank stare, a faint smile, stroking the pear wood box.

- What, Ezio? Asked Claudia, the fear in her voice.

"It's been a thing.

- What do you mean?

Ezio was silent, finding the right words, but his expression speaks for itself.

"Oh, my God ... no!

-Claudia ...

- Say it is not true!

Ezio bowed his head.

- No, no, no, no, no! Claudia yelled.

"Shhh. She tried to soothe her. I did everything I could, *Piccina*.

Claudia buried his head in his brother's chest and cried, soLoza long and brutal, while Ezio trying to comfort her. He looked at her mother over the head of Claudia, but gave the impressionsion had not heard anything. Perhaps, in his way, already knew that. Desbecause of all the confusion that had engulfed the lives of Ezio, see his sister and his mother were thrown into the abyss of thedesperation almost completely collapsed. But he remained firm, embracing his sister, for a time seemed like an eternity, feeling the weight of social responsibilityber his shoulders. Depended on him from now on protecting your family, it was he who had to return the honor to name Auditore. Ezio, the boy, had ceased to exist ... He tried to gather his thoughts.

"Listen," said Claudia as soon as it calmed down a little. What matters now is to go from here. Going to a placeguro, where you and *mamma* you can be safe. But to getl need you to be brave. You have to be strong for me, and take care of our mother. Do you understand?

Claudia listened, coughed to clear his throat and looked at him.

"Yes.

"Then we must make preparations now under way. Take everything you need, but not much else ... we will have to flee on foot. Organize a coach would be too dangerous. Ponte plain clothes you have, we should not draw attention. And run!

Claudia went with his mother and Annetta.

"You should bathe and get changed," said Paola. You'll feel better.

Two hours later and had their travel documents list and were ready to go. Ezio checked one last time its contents removed. Maybe your uncle could explain the meaning of the documentsments that he had taken from Alberti and how life seemed to him. He wore his new knife strapped to his right forearm wasra of sight. Tightened his belt. Claudia Marie came up with the jardin and stood by the door we had to split into comAnnetta pany, which sought to repress their tears.

Ezio turned to Paola.

"Goodbye. And thanks again for everything.

She hugged him and kissed him very close to the mouth.

"Stay safe, Ezio, and go carefully. I imaginenothe road that lies ahead will be very long.

He nodded very seriously, put the hood and joined his mother and sister, taking the bag with his belongings. It redundanciesAnnetta gave a kiss and moments later took to the streets and we started heading north, Claudia arm of his mother. Kept walking in silence for a while, Ezio reflectionsNando on the great responsibility that he was stuck on his shoulders. He prayed to rise on the circumstances, because I knew it would be very complicated. Would maintainis strong, but it would get for the sake of Claudia and her poor mother, who seemed to have completely withdrawn in herself.

It was not until they reached the center of the city that Claudia started talking ... and all were questions. Ezio realized relieveddo, however, that his voice was firm.

- How is it possible that this has happened to us? "He said.

I do not know.

- Do you think we can return someday?

I do not know, Claudia.

- And what will become of our home?

Ezio shook his head from side to side. I had not had TIMEe to have anything in that sense but, anyway, with whom he could have done? Perhaps the Duke Lorenzo repudiationra close, keep your home protected, but that was only a faint hope.

- Did ...? Did you have a proper funeral?

"Yes ... I fixed everything myself. "They were crossing the Arno and Ezio was allowed to look downstream.

Finally saw the gates of the south of the city and Ezio was satisfied because they have been achieved unnoticed. But approaching a dangerous time, because the doors were strongmind controlled. Fortunately, fake documents, provided that Paola had passed the test, because the guards were looking for a young single and desperate, not a small family modestly dressed.

They spent the whole day walking south, stopping only when they were far enough from the city to buy bread, cheese and wine on a farm and rest for an hour in the shade of an oak tree next to a cornfield. Ezio was forced to control his impatience, as the distanceFlorence stopped Monteriggioni was nearly thirty miles and had to travel to the beat of his mother. It was a strong woman just forty years, but the shock he had suffered had aged suddenly. He prayed that his mother would recover as they got home from his uncle Mario, though he knew that the recoveryrecovery, if he had, would be slow. Confident that, except as produjera some setbacks, arrived at the estate of Mario in the afternoon the next day.

They spent the night in an empty barn where hay had at least warm and clean. Dined the leftovers and Acomamended as much as possible to Mary. His mother did not complain in absoluteto, in fact did not seem to realize where I was, but when Claudia tried to grab the box of Petruccio to bedse, protested violently and pulled her daughter from a push, cursing like a fish. The two brothers were Sisterpowered.

But she slept peacefully the next morning and looked good. Washed in a stream, drank some fresh waterca of the stream as a breakfast and continued their journey. HasCIA a splendid day, something warm but with a nice breeze, and progressed well, with only a few crossing CarretieTthe and seeing no one except a group of farm workers and orchards. Ezio bought some fruit, enough at least to Claudia and her mother could eat something, because he was not hungry, nerves prevented him from eating.

Finally, in midafternoon, he felt encouraged when he saw in the horizonte the walled town of Monteriggioni in the top of the hill, bathed in sunshine. Mario effectively ruled the district. Two or three miles and would be in their territory. AlenTreaty, the small group quickened his pace.

"Nearly there," said Claudia with a smile.

"*Grazie a Dio* She replied, returning the goods.

Just beginning to relax when, on a bend of caminority, a figure familiar to them immediately, accompanied by a dozen men in blue and gold livery, blocked their way. One of the guards carried a banner with the hated and known symbol of the dolphin and golden crosses on a campo blue.

- Ezio! Figure, "he said. *Buon 'giorno!* And to your family ... or at least what's left of it! What a pleasant surprise!

He gestured to his men, who were placed in the way in forming a fan, their halberds to point.

- Vieri!

"The same. As my father was released, decisionsgiven fund this little hunting trip. I was hurt. Also, how did you happen to leave without saying goodbye Florence ofduly?

Ezio moved toward him, pointing out to Claudia and her mother to stay behind.

- What is it, Vieri? I figured we'd be satisfied with what you have achieved Pazzi.

Vieri opened his hands.

- What do I, you ask? I'm not sure where to emPezar. So many things! Let's see ... I'd like a *palazzo* greatestof, a beautiful wife, much more money y. .. What else? ... Oh, yes! Your head! He drew his sword, telling his guards that prestop and walked toward Ezio.

"I'm surprised, Vieri ... Do you really think you just challenge me? Although, of course, you have behind your goons!

"I do not consider worthy of my sword," said Vieri, inbasing it again. I think I'll finish you with my fists. Sorry if this bothers you, *treasure* He added, turning to Claudia, "but do not worry ... will not be long. After you see what I can do to console you. And who knows? Perhaps to comfort your little *mamma!*

Ezio took a quick step forward and hit your fist with your manVieri mandible, leaving his enemy reeling. Had pipped by surprise. But getting back on its feet, Vieri motioned his men not to move and rushed soEzio ber with a roar, driving one blow after another. So fierce was the attack of Vieri who, despite Ezio deftly managed to avoid it, was unable to download a single sharp blow. Both men were locked in a struggle to control the situation, stumbling from time to time to re-attack to continuenuacion with renewed vigor. Finally, Ezio got the raVieri bia end up playing against him: one fight effectively when they feel angry. Vieri was preparing to launch a strongyour right hand, when Ezio came forward and the punch landed without causing effect beyond his shoulder, dragging Vieri inertia forward uncontrollably and his body weight. Ezio then put his opponent to trip, which ended up biting the dust. Bloodied and beaten, Vieri tried to protect his men behind and sat up, shaking hands with full of scratches.

"I'm tired of this," he said, the guards shouted: "Herebad with him, and also with women! I have better things to do to take care of this squalid and tadpole *carcass* your mother!

"*Coniglio!* Ezio cried, panting and drew his sword, but the guards had formed a circle around and extensiveDido their halberds. I knew it would cost a lot of power with them.

The circle is narrowed. Ezio continued turning on itself, trying to maintain at all times to women on their backs, but the situation painted very evil and unpleasant Vieri laughter sounded triumphant.

Suddenly he heard a sharp hissing sound, almost ethereal, and two of the guards fell to their knees first and then forward, simultaneously dropping their weapons. In their back, a knife buried to the hilt and released with a deadly aim. Blood poured from his shirt as a red flower.

The others retreated in alarm, but not before one more of theirs also fell to the ground, another knife in itPalden.

- What kind of sorcery is this? "Yelped Vieri, terror limitby acetylene voice, drew his sword and looking like crazy around him.

Was answered by a deep, booming laugh. "This has nothing to do with witchcraft, chico ... and everything to do with the skill!

The voice came from a nearby grove.

- Be seen!

Among the bushes appeared a tall man with long beard, wearing boots and a breastplate light. Behind him will appearriver men, dressed similarly.

"As you wish," he said wryly.

- Mercenaries!Vieri growled, and turned to his guardays. What are you waiting? Kill! Kill them all!

But the tall man approached, he pulled the sword with tremendous elegance and Vieri started hitting blade against his rodilla like a toothpick.

"I do not think it's a good idea, small Pazzi, although I must say you are at the height of the name of your family.

Vieri did not respond, but encouraged his men to move forward. Not very confident, while surrounded the unknownafter Vieri, with the halberd becoming one of the guards deadcough, Ezio attacked, kicking the sword from his hand and leaving it out of reach.

- Ten, Ezio, use it! "Said the tall man, giving him another sword, which flew through the air to land on its edge and, trembling, staying stuck in the ground at his feet.

He picked it up in a blink of an eye. It was a heavy weapon, but had to use both hands to hold, got cut the grip of the halberd Vieri. This, seeing that his men were being overcome with ease by *condottieri*, and had there been two more casualties, suspended the attack and, with curses, took flight. The tall man came up to run theirdo a wide smile to Ezio and women.

"I'm glad I came to meet you," he said. I think I arrived just in time.

"I thank you, whoever you are.

The man laughed again, and his voice sounded so familiar.

- Did you know? Ezio asked.

"For a long time. But it surprises me you do not recognize or your own uncle!

- "Uncle Mario?

- That's me!

He gave a squeezing Ezio and then approached Mary and Claudia. An expression of anxiety clouded his face to see itTado in which it was Mary.

"Listen, girl ... "Said Claudia. I'm going to take me to Ezio *castello* and I will leave my men here, that you proweave. I get something to eat and drink. Send a rider to theadvancement and return with a carriage to take you away what's left of the line. You have already walked enough for today and I see that my poor sister is ... He paused before adding with delicacy, "Exhausted.

"Thank you, Uncle Mario.

"All settled, then. See you soon. He turned and gave orders to his men, surrounded with a bra Eziozo and guided him to his castle, overlooking the town.

- How did you know it was coming? Ezio asked.

Mario was evasive.

"Oh ... a friend of Florence sent a messenger on horseback who came before you. But he was already aware of what happened. I have not had the strength to move to Florence, but now that Lorenzo is back we will pray for you to keep at bay the Pazzi. Inform me about the fate of my brother ... and my nephews.

Ezio stopped. The memory of the death of his family remained a dark and obsessive memory.

"It was ... were executed for treason ... He interruptedchirped. I escaped by chance.

"God," said Mario, his face contorted by the dolor. Do you know what happened?

"No ... but I hope you can help me find the answers placed.

And Ezio began to explain to his uncle's chest hidden in the *palazzo* family and its contents, revenge has been taken with Alberti and documents that had been caught.

"What seems most important is a list of names-anagiven, and stopped talking, sore. I can not believe that has fallen on us all!

Mario gave him a loving pat on the arm.

"I know a little business of your father," he said, then Ezio Mario realized he had not been very surprising had counted on when it's hidden in the chest secret camera. We will find the meaning of it all. But on the other hand, we must also ensure that your mother and hermana are met. My castle is not a place for women of her class, and soldiers like me would never be just to lay theza, but a couple of miles from here there is a convent wheretaran perfectly safe and well maintained. If you agree, send them there. Because you and I have a lot to do.

Ezio nodded. Las accommodate Claudia there and convince that it was the best temporary solution, because not wanting to see perManeca long confined in that way.

Were approaching the town.

"I thought that was an enemy of Florence Monteriggioni said Ezio.

"Not much of Florence as the Pazzi," he told his uncle. And you are old enough to know the partnerships that istablishes between cities-state, large or small. One year you're friends with one and the next enemy and then another, go back to being a friend. And forever, like a chess game that has gone mad. But you'll like this. The people are honest and hard working, our products are strong and resilient. The priest is a good man, do not drink too much and never gets their noses in anything but their own affairs. And I care about mine ... with him, although I've never been a devotee of the Church. Best of all is the wine that will taste the best Chianti in your life comes from my vineyards. Come on, a little more and we're here.

Mario Castle was the former headquarters of the Auditorium and was built around 1250, although the site was previously occupied by a much older building. Mario had relate and renovated the building, which today, despite its high walls and several feet thick, looked like an affluent town and fortified. Ahead of her, and the place occupied usually the garden outcast, was a large driving range where Ezio saw a couple of dozen young men armed by divers exercises to improve your fighting technique.

-*Casa, dolce casa* "Mario said. Had not been here desthey were little. There have been some changes since then. What do you think?

"It's awesome, man.

The rest of the day was full of activity. Ezio Mario taught the castle, he organized his bed and made sure that Mary and Claudia were alive and well accommodated in the convent cercano, whose abbess was an old and dear friend of Mario (and, rumor, a former lover). The next morning was quoted in the early hours in the office of his uncle, a wide room yourights high with walls decorated with maps, armor and weapons, and furnished with table and chairs sturdy oak.

"Better to go immediately to the city," said Mario one day soon after, with a formal tone. Equip yourself properly. Will command one of my men to accompany you. Once you are back here and start.

- Will we begin what, man?

Mario was surprised.

"I thought you'd come to train.

"No, man ... that was not my intention. It was the first safetyro that crossed my mind when we were forced to flee Florence. But my intention is to take my mother and my brothersna farther.

Mario became serious.

- What about your father? Do not think you would have liked to terminalNARAS your job?

- What job? Does the banker? The family business no longer exists ..., the House of Auditore either, unless the Duke thingrenzo Pazzi has achieved that do not put hand on it.

"No, I meant" began Mario, but then stopped. Are you telling me that Giovanni never told you?

"Sorry, man, but I have no idea what you're talking.

Mario shook his head from side to side.

I do not know what he was thinking about your father. Maybe he thought it was not the right time. But events have theirpected any prior opinion. He looked directly Ezio. We talk at length. Let guar documentsdas in the bag. I have to study while *you* go to the city to equip. I give you the list of what you need, and money to paing them.

Totally confused, Ezio left for the city in company with one of the sergeants of Mario, a grizzled veteran named Orazio, and following their advice in the armory became a battle dagger, light armor, and doctor's house, bandages and basic kit. When he returned to the castle, Mario was waiting impatiently.

-*Salute* Ezio said. I've done everything you asked me.

And quickly, what I see. *Ben fatto!* And now, we have to teachNart to fight properly.

"Uncle, forgive me, but as I said, I have no intention of staying.

Mario bit her lip.

"Listen, Ezio, I hardly knew defend against Vieri. If it had not arrived when I did ... "He broke mydom of the sentence. Well, go if you want, but at least learn before skills and knowledge necessary to defend yourself. Otherwise, you will not last even a week on the road.

Ezio was silent.

"If they do for me, do it for the good of your mother and hermana 'said Mario.

Ezio considered alternatives, and was forced to admit that his uncle had the right.

"Okay, then," he said. Since you've been amabiity to equip ...

Mario's face lit up and he gave his nephew a pat on the shoulder.

- Good boy! Live to thank me!

The following weeks were filled with instruction on the intensive use of weapons, but while learning Ezioday new fighting skills, also discovered more detailedlles about your family history and secrets that his father had not had time to reveal. And Mario had put the library at your disposal, slowly began to discover that it was very possible that he was on the verge of a destination far more important than I ever could have imagined.

- You say that my father was more than just a banker? Asked his uncle.

"Much more serious," said Mario. Your father was a murderer with excellent training.

"This can not be ... My father was always a financier, a businessman ... How do you want to be a murderer?"

"No, Ezio, was much more than that. Born and raised to matar. He was senior member of the Order of the Murderers. -Mario hesitated a moment. I know you will have discovered some of this in the library. We must talk about the documents entrusted to you and your father who had the ingenuity to recover, thank God, Alberti. That list of names ... is not a list of creditors, "sabes? The names of all responsible for killing your father, men who are part of a conspiracy even larger.

A Ezio digest what he was struggling, everything he thought about his father and his family turned out to be true to myself nowadays. How could his father would have concealed it was so inconceivable, so strange ... Ezio carefully chose their parentsJewel, believing that his father must have his reasons for manhave its secrecy.

"I accept that my father was much more than you ever poDria have imagined, and forgive me for doubting your word, but why all the secrecy?"

Mario took a while to respond.

- Do you know the Knights Templar?"

"I've heard of them.

-The Order was founded many centuries ago, just after the First Crusade, and became an elite fighting force composed of soldiers in the service of God, in fact, were monks in armor. Abstinence pledge and made a vow of poverty. But years passed and the situation changed. Over time EMPEZaron to engage in international finance and very sucto, indeed. Other orders of knights, the Hospitallers and the Teutonic "looked on with suspicion, and his power began to cause concern, even for kings. They established their base in southern France and in their plans was to constitute its own isTreaty. Not pay taxes, they had their own private army and began to subjugate the entire world. Finally, make a couple hundred years, King Philip the Fair of France decided to act against them. There was a terrible drain, the Templars were Arresresults, expelled, massacred, and ended up being excommunicated by the Pope. But it was impossible to eradicate them completely, it had about fifteen thousand councils spread throughout Europe. Everything and that, with their farms and properties attached, gave the impression that the Templars disappeared, that his power was broken.

- And what became of them?"

Mario shook his head.

"Of course, they planned a ploy to ensure his survival. Went underground, the treasured wealthforces that could hold, kept their organization and, more than ever, focused on their objective.

- And what was it?"

- Which is, you mean! -Mario sparks flying from his eyes. Their intention is none other than world domination. And there is only an organization devoted to disrupt their plans. The Order of Murderers, which your father and I have the honor to belong.

Ezio needed a moment to capture it all.

- And Alberti was a Templar?"

Mario nodded solemnly.

"Yes. Like all the other names that apAreca in the list of your father.

- Y. .. Vieri?"

"It is also, and his father, Francesco, and the whole of the Pazzi clan.

Ezio reflected on what he had to tell his uncle.

"This explains a lot ... "He said. But there's something I have not yet taught.

He got his sleeve to show his hidden dagger.

"Ah," said Mario. You were very wise not to showdome to be sure that you could rely on me. I wondered what had become of her. And I see that you have made repairs. It was your father, our father gave it to him, and he hers. Broke into ... a confrontation in which your father was involved for many years but never managed to find a craftsman bastant skilled or confident enough to repair it. You did good, kid.

"It seems," said Ezio. But all this talk of Murderers and Templar I think a story of old ... Paread fantasy.

Mario smiled.

-As an old parchment deed full of arcane, perhaps?"

- Do you know that Codex page?"

Mario shrugged.

- Did you forgotten? With the documents was delivered to me.

- Can you tell me what is? "Ezio was reluctant to implicate his friend Leonardo in everything unless it was strictlyabsolutely necessary.

"Whoever noticed your blade must have been able to read at least part of the page," said Mario, but Ezio raised his hand when he was about to open

his mouth. I do not think to ask you questions. I see you want to protect someone and resPetar. But on that page there are other things besides the instructions of operation of your weapon. The pages of the Codex are actually spread throughout Italy. It is a guide to the inner workings of the Order of the Murderers, its origins, objectives and technical techniques. Is, if you want to call it, our Creed. Your father believed that the Codex contained a powerful secret. Something that would change the world. He paused to reflect. Maybe that's why they went after him.

Ezio was overwhelmed with all that information, too slow to assimilate all at once. "Murderers, Templars, that exCodex tran ...>>.

"I'll be your guide, Ezio. But first you must learn to open your menu and always remember that: nothing is true. Everything is permitted.

Mario did not tell anything else at the moment, however much they try to pressure Ezio. His uncle continued his rigorous process of military training. From sunrise to sunset was exercised with young people *condottieri* on the driving range and at night fell into bed so exhausted that I could think of nothing but sleeping. And then one day ...

- Well done, cousin! "Said his uncle. I think you're ready.

Ezio was satisfied.

"Thanks, man, for all you have given me.

Mario's response was to give a hug to the boy.

- Forms part of the family! This is only my duty and my desire!

"I'm glad convinced me to stay.

Mario looked at him with interest.

"Well, have you reconsidered your decision to leave? Ezio looked back.

"Sorry, man, but the decision is made. For the safety of *mamma* and Claudia, I have yet to attempt to reach the coast and go by boat to Spain.

Mario did not hide his displeasure.

"Forgive me, cousin, but I've taught you everything you have taught or for fun or for your sole and exclusive benefit. I have taught you to make you better prepared in front of enemies.

"And so what if they do me.

"Well," Mario said bitterly. Will you go? "Throw everything overboard and your father fought and died? "Negate your real estate? All right! I can not pretend I'm not disappointed ... extremely disappointed. But so be it. Orazio will take you to the convent when you judge which is the moment appropriate to your mother can take a trip and take care of you on the road. I wish *buona fortuna*.

And with that, Mario turned his back to his nephew and left.

He spent more time because he realized that his mother Ezio necessarily needed peace and quiet to recover. He, meanwhile, in the preparations for the journey to the heart broken. When he finally departed for which he imagined would be his last visit to the convent before taking away her mother and sister found them better than we had dared to imagine. Claudia had made friends with some of the younger nuns and Ezio realized to his surprise but not to your satisfaction, beginning to be attracted to that type of life. Meanwhile, his mother was recovering steadily but slowly and the abbess, on learning of their plans, demurred, in ways to break still needed above all else and should not even think about a transfer.

When Mario returned to the castle, therefore, was full of doubts, and he knew also that they had been increasing over time.

During that period, on the other hand, had been going on in Monteriggioni various military preparations now reached a critical point. Served as distractions. He found his uncle anywhere, but managed to locate Orazio in the map room.

- What happens? "He asked. Where is my uncle?

"Preparing for battle.

- What? Who?

"Oh, I hoped that I would have had to have thought you were going to stay. But we all know is not your intention.

"Well ...

"Your old friend, Vieri de 'Pazzi, was installed in San Gimignano. Has tripled the garrison is stationed there and has announced it will soon be ready, you think completely demolish Monteriggioni. So we anticipate, to crush that little snake and give them a lesson they will never forget Pazzi long time.

Ezio breath. That changed everything. And maybe it was Fate, the stimulus that had been unconsciously seeking.

- Where is my uncle?

"In the stables.

Ezio was leaving the room.

- Where are you going?

- At the stables! You must also have a horse ready for me!

Orazio smiled to see him go.

Chapter 7

Una spring night in 1477, Mario, with Ezio riding at his side, he led his forces to San Gimignano spot. Would be the beginning of a tough confrontation.

"Tell me again what made you change your mind," said Mario, extremely pleased by the change of plans for his nephew.

"I see you like to hear.

- So what if I like? Anyway, I knew that Mary would take a long time to recover and I think there are safe, you know.

Ezio smiled.

"As I told you, I wanted to take responsibility. As I told you, Vieri is *giving* problems due to *me*.

"And as I told you, boy, you value your importance wisely. But the truth is that Vieri is giving us problems because he is a Templar and we are Murderers.

As he spoke, Mario was looking at the tall towers of San Gimignano, built the one attached to each other. The square structures practically scraped the sky and Ezio had the odd sensation of having seen it before a scene like that, but was in some dream or another life, not having a reexact sane when he could have been.

The top of the tower was lit with torches, which also shone on the battlements of the city walls and doors.

"It is well trimmed," Mario said. And judging by antorches gives the impression that Vieri is waiting. It's a shame, but not surprised. At the end of the day, he has his spies Like I have mine. He paused. See archers on the walls and doors are very well protected. Continued to review the city.

"But even so, it seems that he has failed the number of men necessary to protect adequately all the doors. The south side is less defenses ... must be the place where you least expect an attack. And therefore, we will go there.

He raised his arm and poked a kick in the flanks of his horse. His men advanced behind him. Ezio rode on his side.

"We'll do next," Mario said, his voice tightened pressing issues. My men and I'll take care of the guards of the door, and you will find a way to beat the wall and open the door from the inside. We have to be quiet and fast.

It picked up a shoulder bag full of knives and handed to Ezio.

"Take them. Use them to get rid of the archers.

When they had dismounted close enough. Mario led a group composed of their best soldiers to the cohort of guards stationed at the southern entrance to the city. Ezio left them and walked swiftly end the hundred meters, iscounties between shrubs and bushes, reaching the foot of the wall. Was covered with the hood and, thanks to the effect that caused the light of torches lighting up the entrance, saw the shadow that projected on the wall hood remembered cuusers with the head of an eagle. He looked up. The wall elements Vaba about fifty feet above him. From there I could see if there were sentries on the battlements. He slung the strap and began to climb. It was complicated, because the wall was built with stone embellished and given little chance for holds, but the loopholes he found on reaching the summit he was granted Spanish price to grip safely and carefully to inspect the battlements. In the defenses on the left, had two archers inclined Swim on the wall, his back to him and with their bows drawn. They had seen the beginning of Mario attack and were preparing to fire on *condottieri* Murderer's. Ezio did not hesitate an instant. It was the life of the archers or your friends, and at that time infinitely valued skills in his uncle had sisted in teaching. Quickly, concentrating his mind and vista in the flickering shadows, took out two knives sidelera and threw them one after another with a deadly aim. The first hit a goalkeeper on the neck, an instant and deadly blow. The man collapsed on the battlements gallery without uttering even a sigh. The other knife flew somewhat lower, reaching the second man in the back with such force that, with a hollow cry, rushed into the darkness that prevailed below.

Below him, at the foot of a narrow stone staircase, was the door. He realized that Vieri forces were not sufficient to protect the city with full efficiency, since the inside of the door there were no soldiers stationed. Down the stairs three at a time, flying about, and quickly located the lever triggering the heavy iron bars blocking the doors of oak three feet high. He tugged at it, being obliged to apply all its strength, because the handle was not designed to be operated by one man, but with then went and pulled one of the huge rings which bia in the door to shoulder height. Relented, and the door emPezo to open, suggesting that ended the bloody task to terminate Mario and his men. On the floor lay two Murderers but, in contrast, a score of men of Vieri had traveled to the home of his Creator.

- Well done, Ezio! Mario exclaimed without raising his voice a lot.

So far, there seemed to have sounded the alarm, though it was only a matter of time.

- Vamos!" Mario said. In silence! He turned to one of his sergeants and told him: "Go back to ours and ordered to come and the main force.

E cautiously began its journey through the silent streets. Vieri should have imposed some kind of curfew, they did not see anyone. I almost tripped over a Patrucall of the Pazzi. Camouflage in the darkness, let them pass, and thereafter, the men attacked from the rear and killed them with aseptic efficiency.

"Now what do we do? Ezio asked his uncle.

"We must find the captain of the guard. His name is Robertto. He will know where is Vieri. "Mario looked more tense than inhabitantstual. This is taking us too long. We'd better divide. Look, I know Robert. At this time of night is drinking in his favorite tavern and the mona or sleeping in the citadel. You take care of taking the citadel. Take you to Orazio and a dozen of my best men.

Looked at the sky, beginning to clear, and sniffed the air, and brought with it the freshness of a new day.

"We see in the cathedral before the cock crows for paSarnos a report on the situation. And do not forget: the man I leavedo in this band of thugs!

He smiled affectionately to his men, took their own andsaparecio a road that climbed up the hill.

"The citadel is in the northwest part of town ..., sir," said Orazio and smiled, like the others.

Ezio sensed both the obedience they owed to Mario, and his suspicion for having been entrusted to the command of an officer so little exercised like him.

-Come Ezio replied firmly. Follow me. And follow my directions.

The citadel occupied one side of the main square, not far from the cathedral and near the top of the small hill on which stood the city. They came to it without difficulty, but before entering Ezio identified several of the Pazzi stationed sentinels at the door. Gesturing to his men to remain where they were approached, protecting themselves in the shadows and silence. Ezio, as a fox, until he was close enough to hear the conversation between two of them. It was obvious they were not satisfied with the leadership of Vieri and the most vehement of the two men was in full speech.

"I repeat, Thibault said the first of them. I'm not at all satisfied with that young pup, with that Vieri. Do not think I can not piss in a pot, let alone to defend a city against an army. And so when *capitano* Roberto is concerned, so it's like drinking a bottle of Chianti in uniform.

"You talk too much," he warned Tebaldo Zohan. Remember what happened to Bernard when he dared to open his mouth.

The other thought and nodded soberly.

"You're right ... I heard that Vieri will blind you ordered.

"Well, I would like to preserve the sight, so I think we ought to end this conversation. We do not know how much of our comrades feel the same way that we and Vieri has spies everywhere.

Satisfied, Ezio returned with his soldiers. A garrison unsatisfied is not usually efficient, but no guarantee that Vieri does not command a handful of faithful followers of the Pazzi. As the rest of the men concerned Vieri, Ezio knew from experience how strong he could be the fear of a coprincipal. But now it was access to the citadel. Ezio inspected the square. Excluding the small group of guardians of the Pazzi, was dark and empty.

- Orazio?

- Sir?

- Do you deal with liquidating these men? Quick and hascer noise. I will try to climb the roof to see if they have more general bet in the patio.

"That's what we came to do, sir.

Leaving Orazio and his soldiers seized the sentinels, Ezio, after checking that knives still had enough in the shoulder, crossed the lane adjacent to the citadel, climbed a nearby roof and from there jumped to the roof surrounding the painter's workshop. He thanked God when he saw that Vieri had happened was not betting men in the highest towers in the homes of wealthy families, who stood out throughout the city, as those of those privileged viewpoints could have controlled everything that happened. But he knew that those towers would dominate the first goal of the men of Mario. From the roof of the citadel saw that the patio was deserted. Then jumped to the courtyard in its columns and thence to the ground. Open the doors was a fairly simple, and position their men, who pledged before the bodies of the defeated members of the Pazzi patrol into the shadows of the colonnade to leave them out of sight. To avoid suspicion, again closed the doors of the citadel once they were all inside.

The citadel seemed deserted for all purposes. But after a little while they heard the sound of voices coming from the square and a group of men appeared to Vieri, who opened the door and made their entrance in the courtyard dragging between them a man foremost, pulling a fat, drunk.

- Where the hell are the guards of the door? "I wanted to know the man. I do not you come now that Vieri has revoked my orders and commanded a new time to make one of her fucking rounds!

-Ser Roberto "begged one of the men who pledged work. Do not you think I should lie down?

- What do you mean? I came here naturally good, right? The night is young!

The newcomers were able to lay your head next to the source you had in the yard and gathered around him, not knowing quite what to do next.

- Anyone would think I am not a captain! Roberto said, almost feeling sorry for himself.

- Nonsense, sir! "Said the man at his side.

-Vieri do not think I am, "said Robert. You'd have to hear me speak!

He paused, looking around and trying to focus his eyes before speaking with a maudlin tone:

"It's only a matter of time to take my place ... Or worse! He turned or to be discontinued and snorted. "Where is that damn bottle? Bring her here!

He gave a good drink, looked at the bottle to make sure it is empty tobacco and threw to the ground.

- Mario's fault! When our spies informed us that he had taken his nephew ... after rescuing the feeble bastard hands Vieri in person, I could not believe it. Now Vieri can not think clearly of rage temple. You and I have to face my old *compagno*! He looked around bleary-eyed. The dear old Mario! In his day were comrades in arms, did you know? But he refused to come with me to serve the Pazzi, though they offered more money, have better facilities, better equipment ... better everything! I wish he were here now. For four quarters, would be ...

"Sorry," interrupted Ezio, stepping forward.

- What ...? "Roberto said. So who are you?

"Allow me to introduce myself. I am the nephew of Mario.

- What? Roberto roared, trying to catch up and trying, unsuccessfully, his sword. Arrest the scoundrel!

She approached him and Ezio had no choice but to support the faint smell of wine and onions on his breath.

- You know what, Ezio? He said smiling. Should sneak around a grade. Now that I have you, Vieri give me what I want. Maybe I'll retire. A small village on the coast, maybe ...

"Do not play the story of the dairy *capitano* Ezio said.

Robert turned around to see what their men have already discovered: they were surrounded by mercenaries murdered. We all armed to the teeth.

"Ah," said Roberto, dropping again.

The desire to fight had vanished completely.

After handcuffing Pazzi guards and take them to the dungeons of the citadel, Robert, with a new bottle, Ezio sat at a table in a room that opened onto the patio. They talked until finally kept Robert up.

- Want to Vieri? I'll tell you where it is. I do not care, anyway. Go to *Palazzo* Dolphin in the plaza near the north gate. It is holding a meeting there ...

- Who attends the meeting? Do you know?

Roberto shrugged.

"People you of Florence, I think. It is assumed that they had to bring in reinforcements with them.

They were interrupted by Orazio, who brought face concernation.

- Ezio! Quick! It is waging a battle with the categorydral. Best to go!

- All right! Vamos!

- What we do with it?

Ezio looked at Robert.

"Leave. I finally chose the right side.

Immediately coming to the plaza, Ezio heard the typical sounds of battle from space that opened in front of the cathedral. As he approached, he saw a large brigade of soldiers from Pazzi was forcing the withdrawal of men from his uncle, is positioned backing him. With the help of their knives, Ezio was opening caminot until he got to his uncle. He gave all the information you had.

- Bien by Roberto! Mario said, without missing a beat, corTando and slashing enemies. I always was annoyed thatra with the Pazzi, but eventually brought us out of trouble. Go! Find out what's doing Vieri!

"But what about you? Can you hold them long enough?

Mario looked very serious.

"I can for a while, but at this point our strongza principal should have been done already with the most towers and come to help. So hurry up, Ezio! Do not let itto castrate Vieri!

The *palazzo* was at the north end of town, away from the scene of the fight, but the guards were there number Pazzi probably sustainable reinforcements had mentioned Roberto and Ezio had to move carefully to avoid them.

He arrived just in time: it seems that the meeting had endeddo and saw a group of four men with their horses addressing layer. Ezio recognized Jacopo de 'Pazzi, his nephew, Francesco, Vieri and, had to restrain a cry of surprise, the Spanish higher than was present on the day of the EXECution of his father. And her Sister caught if possible to see the coat of arms of a cardinal embroidered on the shoulder of his mantle. The men stopped upon reaching Ezio horses and managed to hide behind a tree with the intention to capture some of their conversation. Had to force the ear, and the words came in bursts, but heard it enough like to feel intrigued.

"Then everything was settled, saying the Spanish. Vieri, you will stay here and will restore our position as soon as possible. Francesco organize our forces in Florenence for when it comes time to attack and you, Jacopo, you must be prepared to reassure the public as soon as we have taken control. No you should hurry: the better plaquick explanation is the action most likely to succeed we will.

"But *be* Rodrigo said Vieri, "and what do I do with this *ubriocone*, Mario?

- Take it off of me! You should not find in any mamanner of our intentions!

The man they called Rodrigo got into his saddle. Ezio clearly saw his face at that moment, his cold eyes, aquiline nose, and estimated that it would forties.

"It has always been a problem Francesco snapped. Like his brother *bastard*.

"Do not worry, *father* Vieri said. Soon I will gather them all ... In death!

-Come "Said the man they called Rodrigo. We've been here too long.

Jacopo and Francesco also rose to their steeds and DIRgieron to the north gate, the guards begin Pazziban open and

- That the Father of Knowledge guide us all! -Rodrigo said.

The doors closed behind him. Ezio wondered if it would be a good opportunity to try to stop Vieri, but it was overly protected by his guards and also thought it would be better to capture him alive for interrogation. Mentally took note of the names he had heard with the intent to add to the list of enemies of his father, it was evident that there was a conspiracy in place where they were all involved.

His thoughts were interrupted by the arrival of a squadron of guards Pazzi, the leader of which ran up to Vieri.

- What happens? Vieri asked.

"*Commandante*, I bring bad news. Ma men Auditore river have exceeded our last defenses.

Vieri river slyly.

"That's what he thinks. But you see, "motioned the huge number of men around him," teneWe newcomers are more men of Florence. We will expel the vermin of San Gimignano by the end of the day!

Raised his voice to address the soldiers gathered there and shouted:

- Run to the will face the enemy! Aplastadlos all the scum they are!

With a hoarse cry of war, Pazzi militia formed under the command of their officers and left the door north south through the city and dealing with *condottieri* Mario. Ezio prayed that his uncle caught off guard because the man Pazzi men far outweighed the number. But Vieri has Bia been there and in that time alone, with the exception of guardaespaldas staff, headed back to *palazzo*. No doubt still had unfinished business of the meeting to solve. Or maybe volsee inside to pick up your armor and join the fray. Whatever it was, was about sunrise. It was now or never. Ezio emerged from the darkness and pulled the hood of his head.

"Good morning, Messer Pazzi," he said. "A night movidito?"

Vieri turned round, a combination of surprise and terror taking over for a moment from his face. He regained his composure and said, employing a swaggering tone:

"I should have imagined it would reappear. Make peace with your God, Ezio ... now I have more important things to occupy me. You're just a pawn about to be expelled from the board.

The guards ran for Ezio, but he was prepared for them. Ended the first one using the ulthymus of the shoulder blade, small blade scything the air with an evil hiss. Then drew his sword and fought and killed the remaining guards. He cut and drove like a madman in a bloody spiral, his terse and lethal moves until the last guard, badly wounded, limped away to protect themselves in a safe place. Vieri then pounced on him, wielding a battle-ax sinister aspect had taken from the saddle of his horse, which was still tied up, where others had been. Ezio dodged his mortal lance, but the coup, despite slippery on its cradle, rocked him to lay him on the floor and force him to drop the sword. Vieri was placed on him in an instant after he poked a kick to the sword to be left out of reach. He raised the ax over his shoulder. Gathering all his remaining strength, Ezio whipped up a parry to the crotch of his opponent, but Vieri saw her coming and jumped back. When Ezio took the opportunity to incorexamined and incorporated again, Vieri launched the hatchet against his left wrist, then by dropping his knife and causing a cut profounded in the left hand. Vieri then drew his sword and dagger.

"If you want a good job, do it yourself," said Vieri. Sometimes I wonder why I pay to those who call themselves bodyguards. Goodbye, Ezio!

And he pounced on his foe.

Heat pain had burnt the body in the moment when the ax he chopped his hand, his head was spinning and had cloudy eyes. But in that moment he remembered what he had learned and instinct took over. She shivered, and the moment Vieri was about to deliver the final blow to his supposedly unarmed opponent, right hand flexed Ezio's, extended fingers and opened his palm. The mechanism of the hidden dagger that had belonged to his father was operated with a click and the blade appeared beneath his fingers, extending in total mortality, revealing his evil heavy metal edge. Vieri had raised arm, flank exposed. Ezio plunged the dagger into his side and the sheet is in without the slightest resistance.

Vieri was left paralyzed one second and then released his arms, fell to his knees. In between his ribs blood flowed like a waterfall. Ezio caught him at the time of his fall to the ground.

"You do not have much time, once said Vieri. Ahois ra *your* opportunity to make peace with God. Tell me, what this is discussing? What are your plans?"

Vieri responded with a slow smile.

"We never rule," he said. Peace will never conquer thezi and never conquer Rodrigo Borgia.

Ezio knew that available only a few moments before being talking to a corpse. He insisted more urgently, if possible.

- Tell me, Vieri! Had I discovered your plans my padre? Is it yours why did you run?

But Vieri's face was ashen. Pressed hard Ezio arm. From the corner of his mouth dropped a trail of blood and his eyes began to turn glassy. But even so, she got itbozar a wry smile.

"Ezio, what do you expect? A full-fledged confession? The templeto, but I have ... time ... She opened her mouth for breathing and more blood came out of it. A shame, really. In another world, maybe even would have been ... friends.

Ezio noted that the pressure in your arm is relaxed.

The pain from his wound then came again, along with the raw memories of the death of their relatives. A cold fury gripped him.

- Friends? -he said to the corpse. Amigos! Piece of shda! You should leave your body in a ditch to be pudries as a dead crow! Nobody would miss you! I just would like you to suffer more! I ...

"Ezio," said a voice potnte and kind to his back. Basand ta! Show some respect for that man.

Ezio got up and turned to come face to face with his uncle.

- Respect? After all what happened? Do you think that winning it would not have hung him from the first tree Hubiera found?

Mario was bruised, covered in dust and blood, but remained firmly in place.

"But he has not won, Ezio. And you're not like him. Not with you pour into a man as he was. "He knelt to the leatherpo and closed his eyes with his gloved hand. That death will provide the peace that your poor soul searching, "he said angrily. *Requiescat in pace*.

Ezio looked on in silence. When he joined his uncle, said:

- Are you finished it?

"No," Mario said. The fighting still continues. But the tide has turned in our favor. Roberto has joined our ORT side with some of his men and now only a matter of time. He paused. I'm sure you know that hurt Orazio has died.

- Orazio ...!

"Before he died he told me your courageous behavior. Mantempt the height of the eulogy, Ezio.

"I'll try. -Ezio bit her lip.

Although not consciously recognized, this was another lesson to learn.

"I have to go back to my men. But I have something for you, something that will teach you more about our enemy. It's a letter we received from one of the priests here. This father intended for Vieri, Francesco but obviously is not going to receive it. He handed a paper, the seal broken. This mymo priest held the funeral. I will ask one of my sergeants to take charge of all things.

"I have things to tell ...

Mario raised his hand.

"Later, when we have finished our work here. After this setback, our enemies can not act as quickly as they imagined and Lorenzo, in Florence, is on guard. For now, we take advantage. He paused. I have to go back. Read the letter, Ezio, and reflect on its content. And beware that hand.

Disappeared. Ezio's body turned away and sat Vieri under the tree behind which was hidden before. Vieri's face began to be surrounded by flies. Ezio opened the letter and read:

Messer Francesco:

Have I done what I have asked and talked to your son. I agree with your assessment, but only in parte. If Vieri is foolhardy, and tends to act without reflections, and is habit of treating their men as a toy, eat piAJE ezasDrez whose life care as if they were you long ivory or wooda, and their punishments are cruel: Hand receivedBido reports that at least three men have been disfigured as a result cemos themselves.

But I do not think, as you say, a case lost. Rather I think the solution is simple. you're looking for your AproBation. Your attention. These bursts are the result of insecurityties born to from a feeling of incompetence. Hab "of you coNo pride and often, and formerpresa his desire to be closer to you. So I think quand whether to showvulgar, vile and angry is simply becausee wants attention. Becauseand Quiere loved.

Proceed convenient to eat considereis from the informationtion that aqI Ui provides but debor ask you to demos by terminated this correspondence. In rackingRIRs nature of ourtra disertacion, frankly afraid you que could become of me.

Confidentially

Father Giocondo

Ezio remained seated for a while after completing the readingsra of the letter. Vieri looked at the corpse. He wore a belt pouch whose presence had not noticed before. He came and took it, returning to his tree to examine the contentdo. Found the thumbnail image of a woman, a few guilders in a bag, a notebook to start and careCAREFULLY roll, a piece of vellum. He opened his hands temBlore and recognized him immediately. A page from the Codex ...

The sun rose in the sky and a group of monks appeared with a wooden table on which they deposited the body of Vieri to take him.

As spring gave way to summer again, and mimesas and azaleas left instead to the lilacs and roses, he returned to Tuscany an uneasy peace. Ezio was happy because his madre continued its recovery, but his nerves had been so convulsed by the tragedy that had lived he thought would never leave the peace and tranquility of the conventionalto. Claudia was considering made vows that would lead to the novitiate, a prospect that did not satisfy him at all, but knew he was as stubborn as him and try to disrupt their plans would not only strengthen their decision.

Mario had dedicated their time to ensure that San GiMignano and its territory, now under the control sober and reformed his old comrade Bob, let's pose a threat as the last pockets of resistance remain weak Pazzi. Monteriggioni was safero, and after completion of the celebraciones of victory, *condottieri* Mario enjoyed a well deserved permit each used their own way, with family, drinking or frequenting women, but never forgetdo their training. The squires were devoted to maintaining sharp weapons and armor rust-free, masons and carpenters to ensure the preservation of the fortifications of both the city and the castle. In the north, the external threat of France was put on hold due to King Louis was busy with the problemsbut that was causing the Duke of Burgundy in the south, on the other hand, Pope Sixtus IV, a potential ally of the Pazzi, wastoo busy placing his relatives in positions of rank and overseeing the construction of a magnificent chapel in the Vaticano to consider making an incursion into Tuscany.

Meanwhile, Mario and Ezio had had long talkstions about the threat that they both knew they still existed.

"I have to tell you more about Rodrigo Borgia, Mario told his nephew. Born in Valencia, but studied law in Bologna and has never returned to Spain, so here it is in the best pocomposition to achieve their ambitions. Currently a member desready highlighted the Roman Curia, but has a larger scope. One of the most powerful men in Europe and more than a shrewd politician within the structure of the Church. He lowered his voice. Rodrigo is the leader of the Knights Templar.

Ezio noticed that her heart skipped a beat.

"This explains his presence in the murder of my poor father and my brothers. Was behind it all.

"Yes, and you have not forgotten you, especially since it was largely thanks to you who lost his base in Tuscany. And you know where you come from and the danger it still poses to him. Be very clearro, Ezio, will kill you when I have the opportunity.

"So if I want to be free, I have to faceme to him.

Spent in the garden, where they had been walking to a stayence inside the castle at the bottom of a corridor out of the map room. It was a quiet, dark without being gloomy, the walls filled with books and more like an office *Accademico* that a military commander. On the shelves were also artifacts that appeared to come from Turkey or Syria, and books, so his loins gave to understand, were written in Arabic. Ezio had asked his uncle about it, but notBia received only vague answers.

Once there, Mario opened a cabinet and pulled out a leather wallet to carry documents that drew a sheet of papeel. Among them were some who immediately recognized Ezio.

"Here is a list of your father, boy ... but it should no longer call you, now you're a man and a warrior of pure blood. I have added the names you gave me in San Gimignano. He looked at his nephew and gave him the document. It's time you start your work.

"All the Templars displayed here will fall under my dagger," said Ezio, quietly. His eyes went to rest with the name of Francesco de 'Pazzi. This, I start with him. This is the worst of the clan and a fanatic for the hatred shown toward our allies, the Medici.

"You're right in what you say," agreed Mario. Did you startflush, as the preparations to travel to Florence?

"What I have decided.

"Well. But if you equip yourself properly, you need to know more. Ven.

Mario stood in front of a bookstore and had touched a hidden button on the side. Opened by a silent hinges and appeared a stone wall in the protruding several square holes. There were five full. The rest were empty.

Ezio's gaze lighted to see that. The five spacefull services were held by pages from the Codex!

"I see you recognize what it is," Mario said. And it surprised meignited. At the end of the day, here is the page that you left your father, your intelligent friend of Florence managed to decode and these others, that Giovanni was able to find and translate before his death.

"And I took the body of Vieri," he said Ezio. But its content remains a mystery.

"The punishment is that you're right. I'm not the scholar who was your father, but with every page you add, and with the help of the books I have in my

studio, I'm getting closer to unravel the mystery. Look! See how the words are crossed from one page to the next, and how to bind the symbols?

Ezio looked carefully, I remember a strange sensation flooding his brain, as if awakening in him an instrument inherited red ... and with that feeling, the scribbles on pages of the Codex came alive, his intentions unfold before their eyes.

- Yes! And underneath there seems to be a kind of drawing ... Look, it's like a map!

- Giovanni in these pages manage to decipher what seems to be a prophecy, but I have yet to understand what makes reference. Something about "a Piece of Eden." Was written many years, for a Murderer like us, whose name apparently was Altair. And there's more. Continues to write about "something hidden under the earth, something as powerful as old but still you >>...,,Nemo to discover what it is.

"Here I have the page of Vieri," said Ezio. Also put on the wall.

- Yet! They will copy before you go, but Bring the original to that friend of yours in Florence brilliant mind. No need to know the whole picture, or what we have of it your time. In fact, it could be dangerous for him to know. Then Vieri piece will add to the others and we are one step closer to solving the mystery.

- What about the other pages?

"Still we have to rediscover," Mario said. Never Preoccupes for it. You should concentrate on the company that you now face.

Chapter 8

Ezio preparations had to be carried out before leaving MonteRiggioni. Had more to learn, along with his uncle, on the Creed of Murderers, in order to face the best possible the task that lay ahead. On the other hand, there was a needDad trying to make your stay in Florence was safe, and finalmind had to solve the issue of where to stay, as the spies who Mario was stationed in the city had reporteddo that *palazzo* family was shut and closed with boards but, to remain under the protection and surveillance of the Medici, had not been looted. Several delays and setbacks led to Ezio feel increasingly impatient until, one morning in March, his uncle told him to prepare your luggage.

"It's been a long winter ... "Mario said.

"Too long," he said Ezio.

... but now it is all about, "continued his uncle. And I remind you that meticulous preparation is the last reasonma of many victories. Now, pay attention! I have an amiga in Florence that has arranged for you to have a housingsafe treatment not far from home.

- Who is it, uncle?

Mario proved elusive.

"His name is unimportant to you, but you have my pastyles that you can rely on it as you trust in me. In any case, he is currently out of town. If necessary/BTS help, contact your former housekeeper, Annetta, the address remains the same and now works for the Medici, but the best is that fewer people possible is aware of your presence in Florence. There are, pregnantHowever, a person who *must* contact, although it is not easy to crazyLizard. Te I have written your name here. You ask very discreetdirectly by him. Try to ask your friend when you show the scientist Codex page, but do not give too much information. It's for your own good! And here I leave you, indeed, the address of your accommodation. Ezio He handed two sheets of paper and a volight leather bag. And a hundred florins to begin, and your travel documentation, you'll see that it is in perfect order. And the best news I have to give is to depart tomorrow!

Ezio used what little time he had to approach caballo to the convent and say goodbye to his mother and sister prepare essential clothing and equipment he needed, and desasked his uncle and the men and women of the city all that time had been his companions and allies. But saddled his horse and crossed the gates of the castle at dawn the next day with a happy heart and resolved. The day-of-wayje was long but uneventful, and when dinner was already settled in their new base and prepared to familiarize newwo with the city that had been their home for life and for so long that he saw. But it was felt that a returnmental, and as he was accustomed again and sadly had passed ahead of the front of his old home, went straight to the workshop of Leonardo, not forgetting to take with him APCodex page I had on Vieri de 'Pazzi.

Since Ezio was gone, Leonardo had expanded its taller with the acquisition of adjacent premises is a large warehousesufficient space to accommodate the physical results of imaginationtion of the artist. Two trestle tables occupied the premises from one extreme to another, a space lit by oil lamps and the light coming through the windows at the top of the walls (Leonardo did not like the look of the curious) . On tables, hanging from the walls and scattered, half-montar, per stay, there were an unlimited number of gadgets, machines and engineering components. Nailed to the walls were hundreds of drawings and sketches. Between that creates pandemoniumproductivity, working and running around half a dozen assistants, superInnocente Agniolo visas and somewhat higher than others but no less attractive. Here, the model of a car, exceptto which was round, loaded with weapons everywhere, and covered with a canopy cover battleship reminiscent of a pileup of kitchen, above which there was a hole where a man was associatedTues head to make sure the address was the machine. There, the drawing of a boat in the shape of a shark but with a strange tower in the back. Rarer still, as the picture gave the impression that the ship was sailing under the water. Mapas and anatomical drawings showing since the operation of the eye, to the intercourse, from por the embryo in the uterus, and muLike many other Ezio's imagination was unable to decipher- crammed into every available space on the wall, while the samples and stuff stacked on tables reminded Ezio organized chaos he had seen during his last visit to studygiven, but now multiplied a hundredfold. Had accurate pictures of animals, ranging from the known to the supernatural, and boCoetuses anything, from water pumps to walls of defense.

Pber what he called attention to Ezio hanging from the ceiling. I had seen before another version of the widget, a small modelNa, but what looked like a large-scale model of what one day become a real machine. He kept reminding the esqueleto of a bat, but there was some kind of skin resistanceAnimal I stretched over the structure of the two wooden knobs. In the vicinity there was an easel with documents. Among the entries and calculations, Ezio read:

... spring steel horn or subject of willow covered with reeds.

The momentum holds birds in flight during a time when the wings do not put pressure on the air, and even rise.

If a man weighs ninety kilos and is at the point *n*and hang up your block, which weighs seventy kilos, with a power equivalent to one hundred and forty kilos would rise with two wings ...

A Ezio what sounded to Greek, but at least was able to read it. I imagined that he transcribed the impenetrable AgnioloLeonardo trable scribbles. At that moment he realized that Agniolo was watching and quickly looked away. Leonardo knew that he liked to keep everything secret.

Leonardo was at that time from his former studio and ran quickly to Ezio to give a warm hug.

- My dear Ezio! You're back! I'm glad to see you. After all that happened, we thought ... "But let the sentence die there, his expression of concern.

Ezio tried to cheer again.

- Go to this site! Obviously, for me nothing has neither head nor tail, but I guess you know very well what you do! Have you stopped painting?

"No," Leonardo-. But I devote myself to other things ... I draw attention.

"I see it. And you've expanded the site. You must be thrivingdo. The last two years have been good for you.

But Leonardo was aware of both the sadness and the seriesDad who had taken over the face of Ezio.

"Maybe," said Leonardo-. Leave me alone. I guess they think it useful to prove to anyone who becomes absolute control someday ... although I guess

no one ever will at all. She changed the subject. What are you telling me, amigo me?

Ezio stared.

"I hope someday we will have time to sit and charlar on all that has happened since the last time we met. But for now, I need your help again.

Leonardo spread his hands.

- For you, what you want!

"I have something to show you that I think will interest you.

"Then you better come to my studio ... It is a bit more orderly.

Once installed in the former studio of Leonardo, out of his wallet Ezio page Codex and spread on the table. Leonardo's eyes opened wide.

- Do you remember the first sheet? Ezio asked.

- How could I forget? "The artist looked at the page-. It's exciting! "I can?

"Of course.

Leonardo studied the page carefully, resiguiendo finger scroll. Then, taking pen and paper, began to copy words and symbols. Almost immediately, he began to run from one side to another, consulting books and manuscripts, absorbed. Ezio watched him work, patient and grateful.

"Very interesting," said Leonardo-. There are unknown languagesnocidos, at least for me, but still a kind of pattern. Hmmm ... Yes, here is an Aramaic gloss clarifies things a bit.

He looked up and continued:

- Do you know? If you join together with another page that might almost think they were part of a handbook on some level, at least-on methods of murder. But of course there is much more than that, though I have no idea what it is. All I know is that we're only scratching the surface of what this might reveal. We would need to have it completed, but do you have any idea where can be the rest of the pages?

-No.

- Or how many are there altogether?

"That is possible ... may we know.

"Aha," said Leonardo-. Secrets! I respect them.

But then there was another thing that caught his attention.

- Look at this!

Ezio looked over his shoulder, but saw nothing but a succession of symbols closely together and in a wedge.

- What is it?

"I can not decipher, but if I'm not mistaken this section contains the formula of a metal or an alloy unknownWe ... and that, of course, not *could* exist!

- Is there anything else?

"Yes ..., the most easy to decipher. It is basically the design of another weapon, and seems to complement the existing one. But this will have to manufacture it from scratch.

- What kind of weapon?

"Pretty simple, really. Is an inlaid metal plateTada in a leather wristband. Take her on the forearm izquierdo-or right-handed if you were like me and usesestuaries to repel the attacks of swords, and even axes. The extraordinary thing is that, although, obviously, is very strong, the metal that we will have to cast is incredibly ligero. E incorporates a double-edged dagger, which is activated by a furnitureLLE as the other.

- Do you think you could make?

"Yes, but I will take time.

"I do not have much.

Leonardo thought.

"I think I have everything I need here, and my men are skilled enough to build this. "She turned for a moment the idea, moving his lips as he made the calculationthe-. We take two days. Back then and see if funing!

Ezio nodded.

"I I am very grateful, Leonardo. And I will repay.

-I who is grateful. This codex is for ampanding my knowledge ... I had an innovative, but all I find in these old pages intrigues me. She smiled and murmured, almost to himself: "And as for you, Ezio, you can not imagine the debt I have shown you for telling me. Let me see all you can find ... Where the obHave your business. I only care about your content, and anyone outside your circle, but I should see them. Is all the reward I demand.

"I I give my promise.

"*Grazie!* Until Friday, then ... "In the evening?

"Until Friday.

Leonardo and his assistants met the job well. The newis a weapon, despite being defensive, it was extremely useful. The youngLeonardo Venes aides jokingly attacked Ezio, but using real weapons, including dual-wielding swordshard and battle-axes, and protection for the wrist, light and easy to handle, easily diverted to the heaviest blows.

"An amazing weapon, Leonardo.

"It is.

"And I could save my life.

"I hope you suffer no more scars like that that crosses the back of your left hand," said Leonardo.

"It's the last memory of an old ... friend," said Ezio-. But I need one more thing from you.

Leonardo shrugged.

"If I can help I will.

Ezio looked in the direction of Leonardo's assistants.

- Perhaps in private?

- Follow me.

In the study, Ezio unrolled a sheet of paper that has MarioBia and passed since Leonardo.

"This is the person with whom my uncle told me that I metra. He told me not to try to find it directly ...

But Leonardo was staring at the name written on paper. When he looked up, his face showed anxiety.

- Do you know who is?

"I read the name: *La Volpe*. I guess it's a nickname.

- El Zorro! Yes! But do not utter aloud, or in publicpublic. This man's eyes are everywhere, but he never lets on.

- Where can I find it?

"It's impossible to say, but to start with mu-and andatecho care-you could try the area of Mercato Vecchio ...

- But if there are all thieves who are not in galleries or in jail!

"Like I said you have to be careful. -Leonardo looked around as if they could hear-. Maybe ... maybe you poDria to get a message ... Go get morning after eve ... Maybe you're lucky ... maybe not.

Despite the warning from his uncle, was a person FloEzio Conference who was determined to see again. Throughout the time that had lasted its absence, she had never been away from his heart and the pangs of love had increased savingsra I knew I had it close. I could not take many risks in the city. His face had changed, had become more angleso as they had joined both experience and years, but still recognizable as Ezio. The hood would help, permitiendolo "disappear" from the crowd, and dropped it as he could, but he knew that, despite the fact that now ruled the Medici, the Pazzi were with sharp teeth. They were waiting for the opportune moment arrived, and remained alert, was convinced, as he was sure that if they caught him off guard, kill him, with or without Medici Medici. But anyway, to the mafollowing morning he could not prevent their feet undertake caminot to the mansion Calfucci.

The doors leading to the main street were open,Jando see the sunny courtyard, and there she was rather thin,guramente higher, the hair in a high bun, a girl as a woman. Called.

When she saw him, he was so pale that she thought she would givemayarse, but he recovered quickly, something told her maid to leave and went to greet him with open arms. Raquickly, he led her to the shelter of a nearby archway, with walls of yellow stonehie were covered calldr. He stroked her neck and saw the thin chain with pendantguide still there, though the suspension itself was hidden in the indeterioration of her cleavage.

- Ezio! She cried.

- Cristina!

- What are you doing here?

"I'm here on my father.

- Where have you *state*? Take two *years* no news from you.

"I've been ... out. Also my father's affairs.

"They said you were dead ... and your mother and hermana.

"Fate treated us differently. He paused-. It may not have written, but never left my thoughts.

Her eyes are bright until then, suddenly clouded to express concern.

- What happens *Carissima*? He asked.

"Nothing.

Tried to secede from Ezio. He does not let go.

"It's obvious that something's wrong. Tell me!

She looked into his eyes, and his own filled with tears.

- Oh, Ezio! I promised and I'm getting married!

Ezio was so surprised that I could not even speak. He let go, realizing that he had been holding it toosiad force, almost hurting. Saw, stretching ahead of him, the lonely road that would go.

"It was my father," she said-. He insisted on his choice. You were not. Te was dead. Then my parents started to arrange visits with Manfred d'Arzenta ... you know, the son of the ingots. They settled here from Lucca bit desbecause of you leave Florence. Oh, my God, Ezio, are all day telling me not to fail him the family, who tries topursue a good bond while still can. I thought I would never see. And now ...

He was interrupted by the voice of a girl, screams of panic final of the street, where a square.

Cristina tensed.

"It Gianetto ... Do you remember her?"

Heard more yelling and screaming, and made a name Gianetto:

- Manfred!

"Better that we will see what happens," said Ezio, advanced down the street toward the commotion.

In the square found Gianetto, Cristina's friend, another girl who did not recognize Ezio, and an elderly man recalled that he worked as manager of Cristina's father.

- What happens? Ezio asked.

- It Manfred! Shouted Gianetto-. Again with their debts das game! This time they will kill him, sure!

- What? Cristina shouted.

"I'm sorry, *signorina*" Said the clerk-. Two men to whom he owes money. They've been dragged to the New Bridge. They said they would make him pay the debt with a beating. I'm sorry, *signorina*. I could not do anything.

"Easy, Sandee. Go call the guards of the house. I will y. ..

"Wait a minute," interrupted Ezio-. Who Moni is Manfred?

Cristina looked as if he were locked behind the bars of a prison.

"My *fidanzato*" He said.

"Let's see what I can do," said Ezio, and ran down the street leading to the bridge.

A minute later he was on top of the pier overlooking the narrow strip of land next to the first arch of the bridge, near the yellow waters of the Arno slow. There was a young man smartly dressed in black and silver knees. Two other youths sweated and grunted as he kicked herding, or bent down to crush his fists.

- Note, I swear! "Groaned the young man dressed in black and silver.

"I we are tired of your excuses," said one of their torturers-. We have taken for fools. So now I'll give you We get what you deserve.

And up the boot up to the neck of the young, thrusting fraud against the mud, while his companion gave him a kick in the ribs.

The first attacker was about to stir up a kick in the kidneys when she was grabbed by the neck and folds of his jacket. Someone had risen on wings and a withnacion was found in the air, landing seconds after the river between the sewage and debris that accumulated in the first pier of the bridge. I was too busy trying do not drown in the filthy waters that had entered through the mouth to realize that his partner had just followed the same fate.

Ezio extended his hand to the young muddy and helped put it back on its feet.

"*Grazie, signore*. I think this time would have ended up killing him really. But they would have been stupid to have done. I could have paid ... Sincerely!

- Are you not afraid to come back to for you?

"I do not think now that I have a bodyguard.

"I have not submitted: Ezio ... of Castronovo.

"Manfred d'Arzenta, at your service.

- I'm your bodyguard, Manfred.

"Whatever. You have managed to shake off these clowns and I am grateful. You can not imagine how. In fact, you should let me offer you a reward. But above all, let me wash up and invite you to a drink. Right here in Fiordaliso Via, is a home game ...

"Yes, but a moment," said Ezio, knowing that Cristina and her companions were approaching.

-What?

- Do you play much?

- Why not? It's the best way I know to pass the time.

- Do you love? "I cut Ezio.

- What do you mean?

"To your *fidanzata* ... Cristina ... Does love?

Manfred was alarmed by the sudden violence of his savior.

"Of course ... although it is not your affair. Kill me die right here and loving it.

Ezio hesitated. It seemed that this man was telling the truth.

"So, listen: no shall return to play anymore. "You understand me?

- Yes! "Manfred was scared.

- Swear!

- I swear!

"I do not know how lucky you come to be. I want pro that ye may thrust you will be a good husband. If I hear that you are not, and I will kill you seek.

Manfred realized that his savior spoke completely seriously. He looked at his cold gray eyes and something stirred in his memory.

- Did you know? Said-. There's something about you ... You sound like me something.

"We have never seen or have to meet again, unless ... -Ezio stopped. Cristina expected at the end of bridge, looking down-. Go with her and be faithful to your protable.

"I will be. Hesitated for-Manfredo-. The love of truth. Maybe you learned something today. And I will do everything in my power to have CERLA happy. I do not need any kind of threat to my life to promise this.

"I hope so. Now, go away!

Ezio stood a moment watching the male con Manfredo up, her eyes irresistibly drawn to Cristub. Their eyes met for a moment, he raised slightly his hand in farewell. He turned and Tunescho. Since the death of his family, had not felt much pain in the heart.

On Saturday afternoon found him still engaged in a proAlthough founded. In the darkest moments I had the feeling of having lost everything, father, siblings, home, social position, future professional ... And now, espbear! But then he remembered goodness and protection that Mario had offered him, his mother and sister, who had managed to save and protect. And as for his future and his career are concerned, I still had both, but now running in a direction very different from what had been imagined before. I had a job to do and not have to yearn for Cristina to help him finish it. He is would impossible to walk away forever from his heart, but not that was forced to accept the lonely fate that destiny had in store. Is it always like this with the Murderers? Would that it demanded loyalty to the Creed?

He went to the Mercato Vecchio with dark humor. His conocidos used to avoid that neighborhood and he had only been there once. The old market place was dirty and neglected because, like buildings and surrounding streets. There were people running from one side to another, but no one giving a *passaggiata*. Everyone walked with a purpose, without wasting time with his head bowed. Ezio had tried to dress sencillez and had not caught the sword, although they had put in their place a new metal cuff and hidden blades, just in case I needed them. He was aware that he should not Destacar through the crowd and had to be kept at all times ment on the alert.

He wondered what to do next, and began to raise is entering a tavern that was on the corner of the square to see if I could figure out how indirectly establish touch with the Fox, when a thin young man suddenly appeared like out of nowhere and gave him a shove.

-*Scusi, signore* "Said the young man politely, smiling, and passed quickly by.

Instinctively, Ezio put his hand to his belt. He had left safe in their accommodation more pre belongings incorporating, but had kept a few guilders in the bag from his belt, which had just disappeared. He turned around, saw the young man heading one of the streets radiating from the plaza and went in pursuit. Seeing him, the thief sped up, but Ezio managed not to lose sight and ran after him, caught purpose and intent by throwing his glove just as he was about to enter a dwelling without character high and Via Sant 'Angelo.

"Give it back-ordered.

"I do not know what you mean," replied the thief, his gaze evidenceciando fear.

Ezio, who had been about to release the knife, he controlled his anger. Suddenly it struck him that perhaps the man repudiationra provide the information he wanted.

"I have no interest in harming yourself, friend," said-. Stick to return my bag and not more talk.

After hesitating, the young man said reluctantly:

"You earn.

That said, got the bag he had hidden.

"Just one more thing," said Ezio.

The man was instantly on alert.

- What?

- Do you know where I can find a man who is callsea *The Volpe*?

The man was really scared now.

"I've never heard of him. Take your money, *signore*, and let me go.

"Not until you tell me.

"One moment," said a deep, guttural voice is to Palda-. Maybe I can help.

Ezio turned and saw his side a man with broad shoulders, height similar to yours and perhaps ten or fifteen years older than him. His head was covered with a cap similar to that of Ezio, partly obscuring his face, but managed to see two penis Ezio Tranter violet eyes that glowed with a mysterious force and watched him intently.

"Let me go to my colleague, please," said the man-. Te I will answer for him.

Addressing the young thief, he said:

"Give back the money to the gentleman, Corradin, and get out of here. Talk later about this.

He spoke with such authority that Ezio released the boy. Within a second, Corradin deposited the bag in his hand and disappeared in the interior of the building.

- Who are you? Ezio asked.

The man smiled a slow smile.

"My name is Gilbert, but I called many things: murderer, for example, and *tagliagole*; but my friends know me simply indicates like Zorro. He made a slight bow, while Ezio look with his piercing eyes. And I'm at your service *Messer Auditore*. In fact, I was waiting.

- How ... how to know my name?

"My job is to know everything in this city. And I know, I think, you think I can help in anything.

"My uncle gave me your name ...

The Fox smiled but said nothing.

"I have to find someone ... stay one step ahead of him, too, if that's possible.

- Whom do you seek?

-A Francesco de 'Pazzi.

"A big fish, I see. "The Fox sobered-. Maybe *can* help. He paused to reflect-. I've heard that recently landed in the docks some people from Rome. They came to attend a meeting of the supposedly no one should be aware, but do not know anything about me, let alone that I am the eyes and ears of the city. The host of the meeting is the man you want.

- When will this meeting?

- Tonight! "The Fox smiled-. Do not worry, Ezio: not a thing of destiny. Would have sent someone to get you not to have met you before, but I had fun testing yourself. Those who rarely seek me find me.

- You mean it was you who prepared me stumble Corradin?

"Forgive my sense of theater, but had to make sure that no *I* followed. Corradin is young, and has also been a kind of test for him. Look, maybe I will have prepared everything, but he desfully knew the type of service being provided. I just thought that I had selected a victim! "Her voice became harder, more practical-. Now you must find a way to spy on the meeting, and will not be easy.

He looked to the sky and continued:

"It's dark. We must hurry and the best way to move is on the roof.Follow me!

Without saying a word, turned and began to climb the wall that was behind him with such speed that Ezio cost to follow. They ran the red roofs, building on lastmo sunshine to jump the abyss that opened up the street iflenciosos as cats, foxes agile, northwest, until they sighted the facade of the great church of Santa Maria Novella. Sewas then the Fox. Ezio came only seconds later, but realized he was panting more than the man who was over age.

"You had a good teacher," said Fox.

But Ezio had the clearest sense that, if any, thatrido, his new friend would have easily exceeded, and that not only increased their determination to grow more if it fits your skills. But it was not time for beating about the contests or games.

"That's where *Messer* Francesco held its meeting, Fox said, pointing downwards.

- In the church?

"Under her. Vamos!

In those hours, *piazza* front of the church was comcompletely deserted. The fox jumped from the roof and landed on cuclillas on the ground, Ezio followed suit. They surrounded the square and the paside wall of the church until a hidden door in the wall. The fox told him that the push Ezio and immediately found themselves in the Rucellai chapel. The Fox was stopped by the bronze tomb which occupied the central area.

"There is a network of catacombs that crosses the city far and wide. I find it very useful for the type of work I do, but unfortunately I have the exclusivity on it. However, very few know the catacombs or saben sort through them, but Francesco de Pazzi is one of them. This is where is celebrating his meeting with the Romans. We are at the entrance nearest to the point where they should be in these moments, but you have to get yourself to them. As you come down, find a chapel, part of an abandoned crypt, about fifty yards on your right. Watch carefully, because the sound is transmitted very easily down here. It is alsoTara dark, so I recommend you let your light to all become accustomed to the gloom. Then find the chapel lights will guide you.

Put his hand over a lump of stone pedestal that supported the grave and put pressure. At his feet, a slab apsolid apparently began to move with the help of invisible hinges up to reveal a flight of steps sculptedtwo in the rock. He stepped aside.

"Buona fortune Ezio.

- Are not you coming?

"No need. And even with all my abilities, two peoplenas make more noise than one. Te wait here. Va, go!

In the basement, Ezio groped his way through the damp stone passage that opened on the right. Advanced touching the walls, which were sufficiently close together to be able to touch them with both hands, and was relieved to see that their footsteps do not resonateban on the damp dirt floor. From time to time, had bifurcatedtions with other tunnels palpable rather than see them, when the hands that served as guide to detect a black void. Lost down there had to be a nightmare, as it was to be impossibleagainst new departure. Some minor input sounds surprised him, until he realized that there were more than co ratturet, although on one occasion, when one of them ran over the foot, struggled to stifle a scream. In the niches carved into the walls, he saw the bodies of an obliquelyTigua burial, his skull wrapped in cobwebs. The catacumbas had some primary and terrible, and Ezio had to philosophercar the rising tide of panic I felt.

Finally spotted a faint light ahead of him and movingis slower now, moved toward her. Remained hiddenamong the shadows until he heard the five men he saw before him, silhouetted in the light of a lamp isdistance and ancient chapel.

Francesco immediately recognized, a tiny creature, nerVuda, vehement that when he arrived Ezio, was leaning in front of two priests to cut crown did not recognize. The older of them was giving the blessing with a clear voice and nasal

-Et benedictio Omnipotentis Dei, Patris et Filii et Spiritu Sancti descendat super maneater et vos semper ...

When the light illuminated his face, Ezio recognized him. It was Stefano da Bagnone, secretary of Jacopo, Francesco's uncle. Jacopo was at his side.

"Thank you, Father," said Francesco once the bencondition.

He straightened up and headed for a fourth man, who was standing next to the priests.

-Bernardo, give us your report.

"Everything is ready. We have a full arsenal of swords, staffs, axes, bows and crossbows.

"A simple knife would be best for the job," said the younger of the two priests.

"It depends on the circumstances," said Francesco Antonio.

-O poison, "continued the younger priest-. But it does not matter, while die. He does not forgive easily have annihilatedVolterra side, my hometown and my real home.

"Calm down," said the man named Bernardo-. We all haveWe are sufficient grounds. Now, thanks to Pope Sixtus, we alsoalso the media.

"Yes, *Messer* Baroncelli, "said Antonio-. But teneWe blessing?

Then a voice came from the deep shadows of the back of the chapel, where they reached the lamplight.

"Bless our operation," as long as you do not kill anybody. "

The owner of the voice emerged into the light and gasped Ezio recognize that the hooded figure dressed in crimson red even though his whole face, except furnitureca contemptuous forming his lips, was hidden under the shadow of the hood. It was the most important visitoryou from Rome: Rodrigo Borgia, *il Spagnolo!*

The conspirators shared his knowing smile. Toboth knew which side were the loyalties of the Pope, who was none other than the Cardinal in front of them, a man who exercisedCia control over it. But of course the Pope could not approve openly bloodshed.

"It is fortunate that finally can do the job," said Francesco-. We have suffered many setbacks. But as things stand, killing them in the cathedral will bring us much criticism.

"It's our last and only option," said Rodrigo selfauthority-. And ridding Florence of this mob will be doing God's work, so the scenario is appropriate. Moreover, as we control the city ... people murmur against us, if you dare!

"Still, do not stop changing plans," said Bernardo Baroncelli-. I even have to have someone call his younger brother, Giuliano, to ensure they arrive on time to the mass.

Everyone laughed with the comment, but Jacopo and Spanish, he realized the seriousness of the expression of that.

- What, Jacopo?Rodrigo asked the older of the Pazzi-. Do you think they suspect anything?

Before Jacopo could speak, his nephew gestured impatiently.

- Impossible! The Medici were too arrogant or tooSiado stupid to notice anything!

"Do not underestimate our enemies," he chided Jacopo-. Do not you realize that money was the Medici who funded the campaign against us in San Gimignano?

"This time we will not have these problems," he snapped his nephewnot upset about being scolded in front of their peers and with the memory of his son's death still fresh in their Vieri mememory.

During the silence that followed, Bernardo turned to Stefano da Bagnone.

"I must ask you borrowed a couple of priestly robes for tomorrow morning, father. The more surrounded by Clerigos think they are, the safer they feel.

- Who will be responsible for the attack? Ro askedDrigo.

- Yo! "Said Francesco.

- And me! -Added Stefano, Antonio and Bernardo.

"Well. Rodrigo paused-. I think that in principle, daggers *would* best. Much easier to hide, and very helpful when it comes to work at close range. But having the Pope's arsenal is also good ... I am sure that isRAN loose ends to be resolved when the Medici brothers are gone.

Then he raised his hand and made the sign of the cross to his companionstions between colleagues conspirators

"*Dominus vobiscum*, gentlemen. And the Father of Knowledge guide us. He looked around-. Well, I think with this the matter is settled. You must forgive me, but I must leave now. I have goingRias things to do before returning to Rome, and I need to get on the road before dawn. I do not do any good to be seen in Florence the day that the House of Medici is coming down.

Ezio spent waiting, next to a wall between the somwords, until all six men were gone, leavingl completely dark. Only when he was sure he was all alone, he sought his own lamp and brought the tinder to the wick.

He had come again. The Fox was waiting in the dark Rucellai chapel. Ezio, with a heavy heart, explained what he had heard.

- To kill Lorenzo and Giuliano de Medici in the cathedral while celebrating the High Mass? "Said Ezio Fox when he was done, and Ezio saw that, for once, the man had been virtually without words-. It is a sacrilege! And worse than that: if Florence falls into the hands of the Pazzi, God help us.

Ezio was thinking.

- Can you get seats in the cathedral tomorrow? -I asked-. Near the altar. Next to the Medici.

The Fox looked at him very seriously.

"Complicated, though perhaps not impossible. He looked the young-. I know what you're thinking, Ezio, but you can not do it alone.

"I can try, and I have the element of surprise for me. And an unfamiliar face in the *aristocrazia* in the main area Levantare the suspicions of the Pazzi. But you get me there, Gilberto.

"Call me Zorro," he said Gilberto and told continuacion, smiling-: Foxes can only compete with me as far as cleverness is concerned.

He paused and added:

"We'll see in front of the Duomo half hour before mass. He looked at Ezio's eyes with a new respect-. Te help if I can, *Messer* Ezio. Tu father would have been proudso you.

Chapter 9

Al next day, Sunday April 26, Ezio was up before dawn and walked to the cathedral. There were few people on the streets, but saw a few monks and nuns on their way to make its decisions. Aware that he must avoid being seen, Calo laboriously to the top of *campanile* and watched the sun rise above the city. Little by little, their feet, the plaza began to fill with people of all types, families and stopjas, merchants and nobles, wishing to attend the main mass of the day, which would be honored by the presence of the Duke and his brother no less and co-ruler. Ezio was watching people carefully and when he saw the Fox approached the steps of the cathedral, went to the less visible side of the tower and descending gave, agile as a monkey, to stand beside him, always remembering not to lift his head and blend best with the crowd, using the rest of the people for protection. It has Bia dressed for the occasion in their finest clothes and carried no weapon in sight, although most Mercurires rich and bankers wore ceremonial swords in his belt. He could not resist looking up looking for Cristina, but did not see.

"I see that you're here," Fox said when he approached Ezio-. Everything is arranged and have a quiet place next to the pachair in the third row.

As he spoke, the crowd on the stairs was removed and the heralds were carried to the mouth trumpet to sound a fanfare.

"I come," he said.

Entering the square from the side of the baptistery, first appeared Lorenzo de Medici, accompanied by his wife, Clarice, who had been holding hands with his eldest daughter, the little Lucrezia, while Piero, five years old, walked right proud of his father. Behind them, accompanied by his nurse, appeared Maddalena, three years old, while one or Nera Leo was carrying the baby, wrapped in white satin. Giuliano and Fioretta followed them, her lover, in advanced managetion. The crowd gathered in the square head bent in its path. At the entrance of the Duomo I received two of the priests who were to officiate the ceremony, who Ezio is recognized with ashiver of terror: Stefano da Bagnone and one of Volterra, whose full name, he told the Fox, was Antonio Maffei.

Medici family made its way into the cathedral followed by the priests, and they, in turn, were followed by the citizens of Florence, ordered according to their rank. The Fox nudged him while Ezio noted. Among the crowd was sighted Francesco de 'Pazzi and another conspirator, Bernardo Baroncelli, disguised as a deacon.

"Come now," he whispered to Ezio-. Stay close to them.

More and more people entering the cathedral continued until there was no room for anyone else, and many who had hoped to have room to stay out. Had gathered a total of ten thousand people. The Fox had not ever seen a crowd of such magnitude in Florence. Silently prayed for the success of Ezio.

Inside, the gathering they sat in the sweltering amronment. Ezio had not gotten close to Francesco and everything else would have liked, but did not take his eyes off ENCLma and started calculating what would be done to reach them as soon as they begin their attack. The bishop of Florence, while after that, he held his place in the altar and had begun to officiate the mass.

At the time that the bishop blessed the bread and wine Ezio realized that Francesco and Bernardo exchanged their places res. The Medici family was sitting right in front of them. At the same moment, the priests Bagnone and Maffei, on the lower rungs of the altar, and closer to Lorenzo and Giuliano, looked around surreptitiously. The bishop turned to stay ahead of the congregation, raised the golden cup and EMPEZO say

"The blood of Christ ...

Then everything happened at once. Baroncelli stood griTando "*CREAP, traditore!*" and from behind, stabbed him Giuliano a dagger in the neck. The cut came a jet of blood sprayed Fioretta completely. She fell on her knees on the floor, screaming.

- Let me finish with that bastard! Fran shouted cesco, pushing a nudge Baroncelli toppling Giuliano not trying to stop the flow of blood with his hands. Francesco stood astride him and again and again plunged the dagger into the body of his victim with such a frenzy that, without apparently realizing it, ended up also key in your own musit. Giuliano had died some time before Francesco I nailed the final blow, the nineteenth.

Meanwhile, Lorenzo, with a cry of alarm, had faced Tado attackers of his brother, and Clarice and nurses had fled for protection along with children and Fioretta. Confusion reigned everywhere. Lorenzo had scorned the idea of having the bodyguard near a murderer in a church bombing was unheard- now struggling to reach his side breaking through the masses of the faithful confused and dams PAonly one who pushed and trampled each other to get away from the scene of the carnage. Heat worsened the situation and the fact that hardly had room to move ...

Except in the area in front of the altar. The bishop and his sacerdotess looked on, stunned and paralyzed. Maffei Bagnone and saw that Lorenzo had his back to them, takes were the opportunity and unsheathed the daggers that had hid measures under the robes, they rushed upon him.

The priests are murderers rarely experienced, however noble the cause was believed that, between them is not considered Lorenzo lowed to cause more than superficial wounds quickly before the shake. But the fight has just and Francesco were beating him, limping because of the injury which he had caused, but reinforced by hatred boiling inside, also approached to him, cursing loudly and with the dagger in the air. Bagnone and Maffei, not knowing where to go after what they did, they turned and ran in didirection of the apse, but Lorenzo was reeling, not stop bleeding and the stabbing in her upper right shoulder prevented him from using the sword.

- Tus days are over, Lorenzo!" Cried Francesco-. Your family bastard die on my sword!

"*Infamous!*" Said Lorenzo-. I'll kill you!

- With what weapon? Francesco sneered, raising his dagger to attack.

And when the hand began to fall, someone grabbed her wrist and stopped their momentum, before forcing him to turn back. Francesco found himself face to face another formidable enemy.

- Ezio! Roared-. You! Here?

- The fact that you're finished *you*, Francesco!

The crowd dispersed and approximately guards Lorenzo Maban. Baroncelli was now next to Francesco.

"Come, we must flee. It's over! He shouted.

-Will finish first with these bastards," said Francesco.

But his wound was bleeding profusely and had a look of macro.

- No! We must withdraw!

Francesco was furious, but agreed with his eyes.

"This is not over," said Ezio.

"No, not over. I will follow you wherever you go, Francesco, to kill you.

With a glare, Francesco turned to follow Baroncelli, who had already gone behind the altar. In the side must have a door to leave the cathedral. Ezio began to follow.

- Wait! Said a voice behind broken-. Let them go. Do not go far. I need you here. I need your help.

Ezio turned and saw the Duke lying on the floor between two chairs overturned. Not far away, his family huddled crying, Clarice, with an expression of horror, hugging their two grown sons. Fioretta looked without seeing the dead body twisted and maimed by Giulian.

Lorenzo's guard had arrived.

"Take care of my family," said Lorenzo-. In the city must reign the tumult after the event. Take my family to *palazzo* and shut the door and bolted.

He turned Ezio.

"You saved my life.

- I did my duty! The Pazzi paid to us! -Ezio helped Lorenzo to join and carefully sat on a chair.

Raising his head did not see anywhere or to the bishop or other priests. Behind him, people were pushing and elbowing, scratching provided out of the cathedral through the main entrance on the west side.

- I have to go after Francesco! "He said.

- No! Lorenzo said-. If I'm just not get to get to safety. You have to help. Take me to San Lorenzo. Ten friends go there.

Ezio he was torn, but how much thought Lorenzo had done for his family. I could not blame him for failing to prevent the death of their relatives. Who would have predicted a tie that so sudden as that suffered? And now, Lorenzo had also become a victim. But it was still alive, but not for long unless Ezio got him to a place near where they could assist you. The church of San Lorenzo was a short distance northwest of the baptistery.

With strips of cloth torn from his own shirt, bandaged wounds as he could Lorenzo. Then lifted him gently.

-Pass on the left arm over my shoulder. Well. Must have an exit behind the altar ...

Stumbled toward the direction they had taken his enemies and soon found a little door open with bloodstains on the threshold. It was undoubtedly where he had Francesco out. Would you be waiting? A Ezio, who held Lorenzo by his right side, it would be difficult to open your hidden dagger, and more fight. But metal had attached the cuff on his left forearm.

Came to the square before the door was north of the cathedral and were faced with a scene of confusion and chaos. Des Ezio because they stopped to spend the layer above the shoulders of Lorenzo in an improvised attempt to camouflage, an exit road leading east along the walls of the building surface. In the *piazza* located between the cathedral and baptistery, groups of men dressed in the livery of the Pazzi and the Medici faced heavy fighting in melee. So absorbed is Ezio Taban got to go unnoticed by his side, but when they reached the street that led to the *piazza* San Lorenzo, they stumbled across a couple of men who wore the insignia of the dolphin and the crosses. Both were looking wielding scimitars and a sword.

- Stop!" Ordered one of the guards-. Where do you think you are going?

"I need to bring this man to safety," said Ezio.

- Who are you? "Said the second guard using a nasty tone.

He stepped forward and examined the face of Lorenzo. Lorenzo, near fainting and departed, but in doing so the coat fell to the side and revealed the Medici coat of arms embroidered on his jacket.

- Wow!" Said the second guard, turning to his companion-. I think we've caught a big fish, Terzaga!

Ezio's brain was going at full speed. I could not let Lorenzo, still losing blood. But if I did, I could not use his gun. He quickly rose to the left foot and kicked him in the ass to the guard, who fell face first into the ground. In a question of seconds, his partner rushed upon them, brandishing his scimitar. Ezio dodged its edge when it fell on him and protection using metal deflected the blow. With the move, he blew his sword and stabbed the guard with a double-edged dagger that was linked to protection, although not considered guided him with enough force to kill him. Meanwhile, the second guard had managed to get up and was preparing to help their comrade, which in turn faltered, surprised at his inability to cut Ezio's forearm.

Ezio stopped the second guard by the same method, but this time managed to go with the wrist guard the edge of the sword to hit the handle, thus placing his hand at the wrist of his opponent. Took it and twisted it so fast that the man dropped his weapon with a sharp cry of pain. Ducking quickly, took the scimitar Ezio almost before it touched the ground. It was difficult, working with the left hand and gives additional weight load of Lorenzo, but stuck in the guard's neck before he could recover. The second guard approached again, screaming with rage. Ezio dodged his sword and then exchanged several blows and curses. But the guard who did not know that carrying the hidden metal, followed with useless attacks. A Ezio arm ached and I could barely stand, but finally ended up getting his chance. The old guard had been developing a broach, but the man had not realized it and had at that time staring at the forearm with the intention of attacking again. Swiftly, Ezio raised his gun, bringing you a feint as if he had failed, but getting to it to blow his opponent's helmet. And then, before the reaction could be elementary, Ezio up again the heavy scimitar above the head by guard and cracked his skull in two. The scimitar Ezio stayed stuck and failed to remove it from there. The man was paused a moment, surprise your eyes open wide, and then collapsing on the floor. Taking a quick look at her around, Ezio and Lorenzo continued dragging down the street.

"In a short, *Altezza*.

They came to church with no more setbacks, but the door to the sacristy firmly closed. Ezio, looking back, saw a group of guards had discovered the

bodies of men who had killed and looked in his direction. He banged the door and opened a peephole, revealing behind her eye and part of a face with suspicious expression.

"Lorenzo is wounded," said Ezio, panting-. Coming for us! Open the door!

"I need the password," the man from the inside.

Ezio was left without knowing what to say, but Lorenzo, who had reknown the man's voice, speaking rapidly.

- Angelo! Cried-. I'm Lorenzo! Open the fucking door!

- For Hermes Trismegistus!"The man said-. You had to be dead!

He turned and yelled at someone:

- Open this damn lock! And fast!

Peephole and was closed immediately afterwards was heard the sound of opening locks. Meanwhile, Pazzi had guards checkdo to run down the street. One of the heavy doors opened just in time to give input to Ezio and Lorenzo, and as quickly closed with a crash behind them and the guards corriere the bolts. The noise of the battle being waged outside was terrible. Ezio was found in front of the gentle green eyes a refined man who was about twenty four years old.

-Angelo Poliziano, was presented-. I sent about howcough men to intercept these rats of the Pazzi. NotBeriah give us more problems.

-Ezio Auditore.

"Ah ... Lawrence has talked about you. He stopped-. But talk later. Let me help you install it in a bank. Here we can better examine his wounds.

"It's finally safe," said Ezio, delivering two servants Lorenzo gently guided him to a bench attached to the panorth of the church network.

"I will bandages, blood and stop as soon as it recovered a bit, we'll take you back to your *Palazzo*. Do not worry, Ezio, and is safe. Never forget what you've done.

But Ezio was already thinking that Francesco de 'Pazzi, ~~to~~those heights, and would have had sufficient time to escape. "I have to go," he said.- Wait! Lorenzo shouted.

Gesturing to Poliziano, Ezio bowed and kneltopped by his side.

"I owe you," said Lorenzo-. I do not know why I've helped or how you learned what was afoot, when even my spies were aware of it.

He paused, his eyes closed in pain as one of the servants cleaned the wound of the shoulder.

- Who are you? "He continued, once he had recovereddo a little.

"It Ezio Auditore Poliziano said, coming over and laying a hand on the shoulder of Ezio.

- Ezio! "Lorenzo looked at him, deeplymoved-. Your father was a great man and a good friend. Comlit the meaning of honor and loyalty, and never put her inests ahead of those of Florence. But ... "He paused again and smiled faintly ... I was present when he died atberti. Was it you?

"Yes.

"Your quick revenge was appropriate. As you saw, I have not had much success. Even now, because of their arrogant aminhibition, the Pazzi have finally finished cutting her own throat. I pray that ...

At that moment came in a hurry one of the members of the patrol of the Medici who had been sent to deal with the persecutors of Ezio, his face smeared with sweat and blood.

- What happens? Poliziano asked.

"Bad news, sir. The Pazzi were recovered and pretendden to enter force in the Palazzo Vecchio. We can not holdThe much longer.

Poliziano was left blank.

"Bad news, you're right. If they get control, matare to all our supporters who are there, and if done with the power ...

"If you do with power," said Lorenzo, my survival no avail. We'll be all dead men.

He tried to get up but fell back, moaning in pain.

- Angelo! You must take all the troops we have here y. ..

- No! My place is by your side. We take you to the Palazzo

Medici as soon as possible. Once there, we reorganize to fight back.

"I'll go," said Ezio-. Yet I have unfinished business with *Messer* Francesco.

Lorenzo stared.

"You've done enough.

"Not until you have completed my work, *Altezza*. And Angewhat is right has more important things to do, lead you to your *palazzo* and make sure you are at home.

"*Signori*"Said the messenger of the Medici-. I also bring more news. I've seen Francesco de Pazzi leading a troop to the back of the Palazzo Vecchio. Looking for ways to enter the weakest point of the Signoria.

Ezio looked Poliziano.

"Go. Gun, Arrange freely from one of our Destamedicines, and hurry. This man will go with you and be your guide. We teach the safest place to leave the church. Once it isteas outside in ten minutes to the Palazzo Vecchio.

Ezio nodded and turned to leave.

"Florence will never forget what you are doing for her," said Lorenzo-. Go with God.

Outside rang the church bells, SumanDose to the cacophony of the clash of steel and the cries and gehuman MIDOS. The riots had taken over the city, the streets were burning wagons, soldiers concentrations ambos sides ran to and fro in confused or faced fights. There were dead everywhere in the streets and in the castreets, but the turmoil was such that neither dared to bring crowsthe feast was watching from the top of the roofs with their penetrantes black eyes.

The doors of the west side of the Palazzo Vecchio were open from the outside could hear the sounds of fierce pel had read in the courtyard. Ezio ordered his small force it to stop and approached the officer running toward the Medici *palazzo* command of another squadron.

- You know what happens?

"The Pazzi have broken the back and opened the door from inside. But the men we have in the intethe previous *palazzo* are holding. Can not have escaped the yard. With any luck getting close!

- There are reports of Francesco de 'Pazzi'?

-He and his men have done to the rear entrance *palazzo*. If we could control it, would get caught.

Ezio turned to his men.

- Vamos! He shouted.

They crossed the square and entered the alley surethe north wall guide *palazzo*, a wall long ago very different Ezio climbed to reach the window of his father's cell. Lining up the first street on the right, were taughtguida with troops, led by Francesco de Pazzi, guarded the entrance of the building.

It immediately put on guard as recommended Francesconized Ezio, shouted:

- You again! Why do not you dead yet? MurNaste my son!

- He tried to kill me!

- Kill him! Kill him now!

Both sides were locked in a fierce fight, attackDose with an anger bordering on despair, as the Pazzi sabian perfectly well how important it was for them to protect their line of retreat. Ezio, his heart flooded with icy anger, broke through with strength to Francesco, who was positioned with his back to the door *palazzo*. Ezio The sword had taken from the arsenal of the Medici was well balanced and steel sheet was Toledano, but not being familiar with the weapon, his punches were much less effective than usual. So far there mutilado rather than killed, men who had stood in his way. And Francesco was aware of it.

- Do you think a master swordsman, boy? No you can not kill cleanly. Let me demonstrate.

It launched one over the other, sparking swords, but Francesco had less room for maneuver Ezio and despite that day his opponent was not certain, his twenty years too soon began to weigh.

- Guards! Finally exclaimed-. To me!

But his men had retreated before the onslaught of the Medici. Ezio Francesco and found themselves fighting alone. Francesco desperately searched around half to start rerow, but there was no other than the *palazzo* itself. He opened the door behind her and began to climb the stone staircase that ran inside the wall. Ezio realized that most of the defenders of the Medici were concentrated in the front of the building, where they fought the main battlepal, and also realized that they probably did not have enough men to cover also the rear. Ezio cocurred after Francesco toward the second floor.

The rooms were empty, for all occupants *paLazzo*, except half a dozen terrified employees began to cobARRIER as they saw, they were down, fighting in the courtyard to contain the attack of the Pazzi. Francesco and Ezio continued their pereal by the gilded rooms of high ceilings until it finally reached the balcony overlooking the Piazza della Signoria. From below stood the sounds of battle and desperate cry Francescomately for help. There was no one to hear and retinalcould no longer harbor beyond.

- Fight!"Said Ezio-. Now only two of us.

-*Maledetto!*

Ezio thrust his sword and his left arm began to bleed.

"Well, Francesco, where is all the courage of that hiciste gala when you killed my father? When this morning ApunLaste Giuliano?"

- Depart from me, spawn of the devil!

Francis lashed out at him, but I was tired and missed the shot. He staggered, his balance of control, and was ably Ezio one hand while lifting the foot and causing him to fall hard on the edge of the sword Francesco, dragging the ground.

Before Francesco got recovered, Ezio stamped on his hand, forcing him to drop the handle of the sword. What agaRRO below her shoulders and onto his back. Francesco tried to sit up, but Ezio poked him a brutal kick to the face. Francesco rolled his eyes and was was half unconsciouste. Ezio cache knelt to his opponent, he pulled the gunhard and doublet, leaving it a pale, wiry body. But there were no documents, nothing of importance. Just a few pocos guilders in a bag.

Ezio left the bar and flipped his hidden blade. He knelt down, put his arm under the neck of Francesco and incorporated until their faces were just inches apart.

Francesco blinked and opened his eyes. His eyes expressed miedo and terror.

- Forgive me life! Croaked.

At that time, the court echoed a cry of victory. Ezio heard voices and caught enough to realize that the Pazzi had just been defeated.

- Forgive your life? Said-. Before the pardon is a ravenous wolf!

"This is for my father," said Ezio, stabbing him in the gizzard.

"And this, by Frederick stabbing again. And this by Petruccio, and the latter by Giuliano!

The blood flowed like a fountain of injuries Francesco and Ezio completely smeared with her, and stabbing the dying would have continued had not

remembered then the words Mario bras: "Do not become a man as he was." He sat on his heels. Francesco was still twinkle in his eye, but gradually grew fainter. He muttered something. Ezio bent down to listen.

... "A priest, a priest ... for pity's sake, go get a priest.

Now that the anger I felt inside had subsided, Ezio began to feel deeply shocked by the grossity with which he had killed. That did not agree with the rules of the Creed.

"No time," said-. I'll have to hold a Mass for your soul.

Francesco's throat began to vibrate. Then, in his trance of death, his limbs became rigid and shuddered, bowed his head and opened his mouth, fighting the last battle impossiblesible against the invincible enemy that we all haveagainst some day, and then collapsed, an empty bag, a light object, used and faded.

*"Requiescat in pace*Ezio murmured.

Then he heard a new uproar in the square and the isSouthwest machine came running fifty or sixty menmen, led by a man who immediately recognized Ezio: Jacopo, Francesco's uncle! Waving the banner of the Pazzi.

*"Freedom! Freedom! Popolo e Liberta!*Shouted-. The militaryMedici forces out at that time of *palazzo* for inagainst their opponents, but Ezio noticed immediately that the men were exhausted and were far inferior in number.

He turned to the corpse.

"Okay," said Francesco-. I think I've found a way to pay your debt, even then.

He took the body by the shoulders, lifted him up (he was amazinglightweight mind) and went to balcony. Once there, after locating one end of which hung a flag, used the rope and knotted around his neck Francesco lifeless. Quickly grabbed another formertreme to a sturdy stone column and with all his strength, lifted him up and threw the rope over the parapet. The rope was sunTando, but it soon became tense after yanking. LeatherFrancesco po lifeless hung, the toes signlando languidly to the floor of the plaza.

Ezio hid behind the column.

- Jacopo!Cried a voice of thunder-. Jacopo de 'Pazzi! Look! Your leader is dead! Your case is finished!

Jacopo saw raised his head and hesitated. Behind him his men also doubted. The troops of the Medici had itguido the course of his eyes and cheering, began to roDearle. But the Pazzi had broken ranks ... and fled in terror.

It ended in a matter of days. The domain of the Pazzi of Florence was over. Your assets and property were confiscatedtwo, his coat of arms destroyed and trampled. Although Irenzo claimed piety, Florentine mob chased and which endedPazzi sympathizer any he could find. Leaders main, however, had fled. Only one of them, who was captured, won clemency: Raffaele Riario, nephew of the Pope, whom Lorenzo considered too gullible and naive to be seriously involved. Many of the duke's advisers, however, felt that Lorenzo had shown more humanity in its decision that political savvy.

Sixtus IV was angry and questioned to Florence, but otherwise was in a position of powerlessness and floRentin it took off smoothly.

As Ezio, was one of the first to be convened in the presence of the Duke. He met with Lorenzo on a balcony dominantnaba the Arno. The Duke was still with his bandages, but the wounds were on track and had left her cheeks pale. He looked tall and proud, was again the man who once earned the nickname put Florence *Il Magnifico*.

After greeting, Lorenzo said in the direction of river.

- You know, Ezio? When I was six years old, I fell into the Arno. I started to drown and disappear into the darkness, certain that my life was ending. But I woke to the sound of my mother crying. I saw a stranger at his side, soaked and smiling. My mother explained to me that this man had saved me. Auditore called. And so began a long and prosperous relationship between the two families. He turned and looked solemnly Ezio-. Am notber could save your family.

Ezio not find words to reply. He understood the cold world of politics, where the distinctions between good and evil often confusing, but, in turn, rejected him.

"I know that would not have lost to have been in your hand," he said.

-Tu family home, at least, is safe and under the protection of the city. Your old housekeeper, Annetta, is in charge of everything and the staff and monitoring are on me. Whatever happens, the house will be waiting when you want to return to settle in it.

"Very kind from you, *Altezza*.

Ezio paused. Cristina was thinking. What if it was too late to convince her to break his commitment to marry him and help him return to family life Auditoriumre? But those two short years had changed him so that he was now unrecognizable and also had another duty: a duty to the Creed.

"We won a great victory," he said at last. But war is not won. Many of our enemies have gotdo escape.

"But Florence's security is guaranteed. Six Popewanted to convince Naples to position itself against us, but I was convinced that Ferdinand does not, and neither will nor Bologna and Milan.

Ezio Duke could not explain the great battle that was involved, because it lacked assurances that Lorenzo estuviebe aware of the secret of Murderers.

"To our greatest security," said- I need your permission to leave in search of Jacopo de 'Pazzi.

Lorenzo's face darkened.

- That coward! He said angrily-. He fled before repudiationsemos lay hands.

- Do you have any idea where he might have gone? Lawrence shook his head.

-No. Have been hidden well. My spies tell me that Baroncelli might be trying to flee to Constantinople, but as far as other concerns ...

"Give me their names," then Ezio.

And the firmness of his voice Lorenzo served to confirm that he got in the way of Ezio could expect the worst.

- How could I forget the names of the murderers of my brotherhand? If you find them, I will be forever in your debt. These are priests and Stefano Maffei

Antonio da Bagnone. BerBaroncelli nard, whom I have mentioned. And then there is another, which is not directly involved in the murder, but that is a dangerous ally of our enemies. It is the archbishop of Pisa, Francesco Salviati, another family member Riario, hunting dogs of the Pope. Clement showed me her cousin, as a man trying to be different from them. Although sometimes I wonder if transcends that I behave with wisdom.

"I have a list," said Ezio-. Add these names.

He started to leave.

- Where will you go now? Lorenzo asked.

"I will return with my uncle to Monteriggioni. There installing it my base.

"Then, go with God, friend Ezio. But first I have something you might be interested.

Lorenzo opened a leather purse that hung cinpolecat and took out a sheet of vellum. Ezio knew what he was almost before the unwound.

"I remember years ago I was talking to your father about ancient documents," said Lawrence quietly-. It was a shared interest. I know I translated some. Here, take this. We foundtre among the papers of Francesco de 'Pazzi and given that he no longer needs it, I thought you might like ... Thinking about your padre. Would you like to perhaps add to your ... collection?

"I am very grateful *Altezza*.

"I knew he'd be," said Lorenzo, in a tone that made him wonder how he knew the subject Ezio actually-. I hope you find it useful.

Before you pack up and prepare for the trip, Ezio hurried to visit his friend Leonardo da Vinci page Cosaid Lorenzo had given him. Despite the events of the lastma week, the workshop continued its pace of work as if nothing had happened.

"Glad to see you safe and sound," said Ezio Leonardo to recibirlo.

"I see that you too have been spared the problems," said Ezio.

"I told you: me leave me alone. They must think I'm too crazy, or I'm too poor or too dangerousroughly to get hands on! I have wine and somewhere I have some cakes, if you have not already broken. My housekeeper is useless. Well, tell me what's on your mind.

"I'm leaving Florence.

- So soon? But if I have said you are the hero of the moment! Why do not you relax and enjoy it?

"I have no time.

- Will you still are enemies to chase?

- How do you know?

Leonardo smiled.

"Thanks for coming to say goodbye to me," he said.

"Before I go," said Ezio- I brought another page of the Codex.

"This is really good news. Will you let me see it?

"Of course.

Leonardo carefully read the new document.

"I begin to get the hang of," said-. I still can not see what general diagram is based on everything, but I start to get familiar with writing. It seems the description of another weapon.

He got up and walked to the table a few old books and fragile appearance.

"Let's see ... I would say that whoever was the inventor who wrote all this, must have gone far ahead of its time. Only mechanisms ...He paused, lost in thought-. Aha! I get it! Ezio, this is the design of a knife, whichCajari in the mechanism that you put in used the arm if you neededlizarlo over the other.

- And what is the difference?

"Unless I am mistaken, this is pretty nasty ... is hollow in the middle, see? And through the tube hidden inside the sheet, you can inject poison into the victim. The attack provided that certain death! This weapon would make you almost invincible!

- Could you make it?

- With the same terms as the rest?

"Of course.

- Well! How long do I have?

- Until the end of the week? I have some preparations to make y. .. I try to see someone ... to say goodbye. But bego to leave as soon as possible.

"I did not take long. I still have the toolstools I used for the first job, and my assistants and tie itnen by hand, so I do not see why not.

Ezio took the time to solve issues in Florenence, pack our bags and send a messenger with a letter to Monteriggioni. Postponed the final task he had set over and over again, though I knew I had to take place. Finally, in his penultimateesteem later, approached the mansion Calfucci. Her feet weighsban as lead.

But when he came home he found it dark and closed. Conscient was behaving like a madman, climbed to the balcony of Cristina and found the shutters closed and barred. Nasturtiums of the pots on the balcony were wilted and deadTAS. When he came down, tired, had the feeling in the shrouded heart. He stood by the door is mired in aTado dreamy, never knew how long, butGillen had to see it, it finally opened a window on the firstmer floor and a woman stuck her head.

"They're gone. The *signor* Calfucci saw the problems coming and took the whole family to Lucca. Her daughter's fiance is from there.

- What Lucca?

"Yes. I have understood that the families get along very well.

- When return?

I do not know. "The woman looked at him-. Do you know something?

I do not think, "said Ezio.

He spent the night dreaming as both the St CristinaFrancesco griento final.

The day rose overcast sky comparable to the mood of Ezio. He went to Leonardo's workshop, happy that the day had finally come to leave Florence. The new knife was ready, finished in matte gray steel, very hard, so sharp edges that could cut a silk scarf in the air. The tip orifice was tiny.

"The poison is in the grip and is released simply by flexing the muscle of the arm on the inner button. Be careful because it is very sensitive.

- What do I have to use poison?

"For starters, I used a potent distillation CICUta. When completed, ask any doctor.

- Poison? To a doctor?

"In high enough concentrations, curing can also kill.

Ezio nodded sadly.

"I owe you one more time.

"Here is the leaf of the Codex. Is it true that you have to leave so soon?

"Florence is a safe city ... of time. But even tengo work to do.

Chapter 10

Ezio! "Mario was glowing, his beard more fraught than ever, his face burned by the Tuscan sun. Welcome home!

"Uncle.

Mario's face became more serious.

"I see by your face you've been through hard experiences in memonths since the last time we met. When you haveyas have bathed and rested, you have to tell me everything. He paused. We are aware of what happened in Florence, and I, even I, I prayed that there were a peel off miracle alive. But not only has come out alive, but also has changed the situation and has brought against the Pazzi! Los TemKnights Templar'll hate you for this, Ezio.

"It's a mutual hatred.

"Rest first ... and then tell me all.

That night, the two settled into the office of Mario. Mario listened with interest Ezio explanations on everything he knew regarding the events in Floence. He returned to his uncle Codex page Vieri and will betweengo that Lorenzo had given him, describing the drawing of the poison dagger and are shown below. Mario was impressedZion, but concentrated on the new page.

"My friend was not able to figure anything else except the desdescription of the weapon, "said Ezio.

"That's fine. Not all pages contain such instructions, and should only be of interest to those that contain them, "said Mario, a tone of caution in his voice. In However, we can only understand the full meaning of the Codex when we met all its pages. But it will take us a step further when the other let's link, with Vieri page.

He got up, went to the library to hide the wall that kept the pages of the Codex, moved and studied the place occupiedgave birth the new pages. One of them was connected with any of those he already had there. The other was in a corner.

Interestingly, Vieri and his father had pages are obviously very close, "he said. Now seeWe do ...

He stopped talking, concentrating.

"Hmmm ... He said at last, though with an expression of Preocern.

- Do you think this gives you a little further, man?

"I'm not sure. Perhaps we are more immersed than ever in the dark, but what is clear is that here is thesome type of reference to a prophet, a prophet of the Bible, but a living prophet or one that is yet to come ...

- And who might that be?

"I do not want to run too. "Mario was absorbed in the pages, moving his lips, speaking in a language not understood Ezio. As to decipher this text workduciria more or less like "Only the Prophet can open ...>>. And here is a reference to "two fragments of Eden", but I have no idea what it means. We must be patient until we get more pages of the Codex.

"I know that the Codex is important, man, but I'm here for a more compelling reason to unravel its mystery. Seeking the renegade, Jacopo de 'Pazzi.

"What is certain is that after running away from Florence traveled south. -Mario hesitated before continuing. Did not intend to discuss this topic with you tonight, Ezio, but I see that the matter is so urgent for me as for you, and we have to start preparations as soon as possible. My old friend Roberto has been expelled San Gimignano, which has again become a stronghold of the Templars. Is too close to Florence, and us, to allow it to be. I think that Jacopo could seek refuge there.

"I have a list of the names of others conspiredres Ezio said, taking the printout of your wallet and handing it to his uncle.

"Well. Some of these men have much less to fall back to Jacopo and be easy to beat. At dawn send spies out to see what they can find out about them, and while we must begin to prepare to retake San GiMignano.

-Prepare your men without fail, but I have no time to lose if I just want to stop these murderers. Mario thought.

"Maybe you're right ... One man alone can often transfer an entire army walls can not. And we should kill them while they still believe to be safe. "I thought for a moment. I accordingly give my permission. You go ahead and see what they discover. I know you're more than capable of taking care of yourself.

- Thanks, man!

- Not so fast, Ezio! I let you go on one condition.

- What?

"One week to delay your departure.

- A week?

"If you think you dive only in the field, with no one to accompany you, needing more than the weapons of the Codex. Now you're a man and a courageous fighter of Murderers. But your reputation will be more thirsty Templar your sangre than ever and I know I still lack certain skills.

Ezio shook his head from side to side impatiently.

"No, man, sorry ..., but week ...

Mario frowned, but raised his voice only slightlyte. It was enough.

"I've heard good things about you, Ezio, but also bad things. When you kill Francesco lost control. And let your feelings for Cristina tempt you to break

away from your path. Your duty now is the Creed, and if not careful, you may not be for a world that you enjoy. He stopped his speech. When I ask obedience, I do it in the mouth of your father.

Ezio had seen his uncle grow in height, even in size, as he spoke. And it painful to accept, was forced to acknowledge that what he had said was true. LoveSimilarly, it lowered his head.

"Well," said Mario, more gently. And end up agradeciendomelo. Your new training will start in the morning. And re rope: preparation is everything!

A week later, armed and ready, went on horse Ezio to San Gimignano. Mario had told him to get in touch with one of the patrols *condottieri* had deliberately do in an area not visible from the outskirts of the city with the objective to track the comings and goings. He stayed at one of their camps to spend their first night away from Monte Riggioni.

The sergeant in charge, tough and tanned by the beat seed mixtures of mid-twenties named Gambalto, gave him a pedagogical zo of bread *pecorino* and a bowl of Vernaccia and put the co Ezio currents of the situation while he ate and drank.

I think it's a shame that Antonio Maffei leaves ra of Volterra. He is obsessed with Lorenzo and thinks the Duke destroyed his hometown, while all he did was tounder the protection of Florence. Maffei now gone mad. It has been installed atop the tower of the cathedral, surrounded by archers of the Pazzi, and spend the day throwing tirades and arrows in equal measure. God knows what plans will: to convert people to his cause with his sermons, or kill them with arrows. The ordinary citizens of San Gimignano hate it, but while continuing his reign of terror, the city is powerless against it.

"As far as is necessary to neutralize it.

"That would weaken the influence of the Pazzi in the city.

- Are well defended?

"They have a lot of men stationed at the guard towers and doors. But change of guard at dawn. At that time, a man like you could top the walls and entering the city without being seen.

Ezio thought, wondering if this will distract from the mission that had been imposed to meet Jacopo. But reflections not to be able to see the big picture: that this was starting Maffei ro de 'Pazzi and Ezio as Murderer duty was to overthrow that madman.

At dawn the next day, any special city San Gimignano attentive mind could have realized the pre presence of a hooded figure, thin and gray eyes, slip Dose as a ghost through the streets leading to the cathedral square. The market vendors were setting up their ascough, but it was the low point of the day and the guards, bored and discouraged, slept leaning on their halberds. The area west tee *campanile* was still mired in the dark and nobody saw a figure dressed in black climbed up the walls with the faeasily handle and elegance of a spider.

The priest, emaciated, with sunken eyes and disheveled, this ba already in place. Spent four archers of the Pazzi were also positioned in their proper places, one in each is machine from the tower. But as not confident that the archers were sufficient protection, Antonio Maffei, despite having a Bible in his left hand, also held a round-handled dagger given on the right. Had set to pray, and when Ezio approached the top of the tower, began to catch the words of Maffei.

- Citizens of San Gimignano, pay attention to my pa Jewel! Repent. REPENTOS! And seek forgiveness ... His MacOS to my prayer, my children, so that together we face the dark authority that has hung over our beloved Tuscany! Pay attention, good grief, and I will speak and listen, O earth, the words spoken by my mouth. Let my teaching spill like rain, my speech distil as the dew, as raindrops on plants, such as a shower on the grass as I pro call upon the name and the Lord! He is the Rock! His work is perfect, their ways are right! Is right and virtuous, and those who have fallen in the co corruption, and his children are not ... A stained-generation, perversa and dishonest! Citizens of San Gimignano, "you try and be with the Lord? Oh, crazy and insane! If He is not your father, who bore you? By the light of His mercy, be clean!

Ezio carefully jumped over the parapet of the tower and co Gio positions near the trap door that opened onto the stairs leading down. The archers tried to target him, but within range was short and he was well on his behalf on ele Regulation surprise. He crouched and grabbed one of them by the feet, hastelling her to fall over the parapet and throwing it into a death sure you sixty meters below. Before the others had time to react, he turned against a second and stabbed him in the arm. The man looked startled the little wound, but was pale and collapsed, his life vanishing in an instant important. Ezio had fastened on his arm his new weapon, it was not just fighting time. He turned to the third, who had dropped his bow and tried to pass him on his way to the scaldas. When he reached them, Ezio herded him a kick in the butt and the man began to roll down the wooden stairs headfirst, splitting his bones to be affixed to the first landing. The last man raised his hands and Borboto something. Ezio looked down and saw that the man had peed on it. He stepped aside and, bowing ironically, allowed the tierrizado keeper hastily lowered the ladder to meet his crippled comrade.

He then received a hard blow to the neck caused by egsada steel hilt of a dagger. Maffei had recovered from the concussion he suffered the attack and had acer Ezio ed from behind. Ezio faltered.

- We oblink to your knees, sinner! Cried the priest, is puma peeping from the corners of his mouth. Beg your pardon!

"Why do people always lose time talking? 'Pen So Ezio, who had time to recover and rotated while the sacerdote threw his speech.

The two men began to spin in concentric liited space. Maffei lashed out with its powerful dagger. Was evident recently, an awkward fighter, but desperation and fanaticism made him very dangerous. Ezio was forced to dance back and forth more than once to deviate from the path of the erratic movements of the blade of his opponent, he could not strike a single blow. He could finally get the priest's wrist and pull it until their breasts were rubbing.

"I'll send whining to hell," snapped Maffei.

It shows a little respect for the dead, friend-replication Ezio ed.

- I'll give you respect yourself!

- Surrender! I will give you time to pray.

Maffei threw a spit in the eye, thus obliging Ezio clutches. Then with a shriek, plunged the dagger into the face Ezio left arm, but the blade slid uselessly to one side, folded metal plate was attached Ezio.

- What the hell are you protected? Maffei asked.

"You talk too much," said Ezio, pressing the knife against the neck of the priest and tensing the muscles of the forearm.

By the time the poison blade slipped and stepped into the jugular Maffei, the priest stiffened, opened her mouth and she did not go more than a fetid breath. Deviated Ezio tonka, came teetering on the parapet, stood up briefly and then fell forward into the arms of death.

Ezio bent over the corpse of Maffei. Found a letter from his coat, opened and read quickly.

Padrone:

I write or fear in the heart. The Prophet has reached do. Lor I feel. Ni follow the birds com behavior should laugh. Revolute aimlessly through the sky. Ll see from my unclerre. No attend the meeting as you me you asked, because no I can to exhibit them in public fearing to que that offer heritage could meet. Forgive but I hAcer listened to my inner voice.

May the Father of the Suner you guidance. And I guie tambien to me.

Brother A.

"Gambalto was right, thought Ezio, per man haddido head. Sadly, remembering the warning of his uncle, the priest closed his eyes and mouthed the words *Requiescat in pace*.

Aware that the archer who had spared his life could have sounded the alarm over the pa inspected Rapet tower was down, but did not detect any activity disturbing activity. Pazzi guards were asleep at their posts and the market had opened, people began to bring the stalls are. Undoubtedly, the archer must walk and on his way home, preferring to drop court-martial and possible torture. He put the dagger back inside the mechanism that had been hidden in the forearm, trying to carla only with your gloved hand and started down the stairs of the tower. The sun was high in the sky, which would clearly visible if he decided to go down the outer wall the previous *campanile*.

When reunited with the band of mercenaries Mariver Gambalto greeted him excitedly.

- Our reconnaissance patrol had located the archSalviati bispo!

- Where?

"Not very far from here. Do you see that mansion? "On the hill up there?"

"Yes.

"He's there. -Gambalto then remembered something. But I must ask, *capitano*, how did it go in the city.

"No more sermons of hate from the tower.

"The people will bless you, *capitano*.

"I'm not captain.

"You are for us," replied simply Gambalto. Take a detachment of men. Salviati is highly protected and the mansion is an ancient fortified building.

"Okay," said Ezio. It is always good eggs are together, almost in the same nest.

"The others can not walk very far, Ezio. We turn to find them in your absence.

Ezio selected a dozen of the best fighters Cuer Gambalto po's body and led them on foot through the fields that are stopped by the house where he sought refuge Salviati. He deployed his men so that they could hear each other in case of having to communicate, and that Salviati had placed outposts were easily avoided or neutralized. For unfarence. Ezio also lost two of their men in the landing approach.

Ezio trusted to take the house by surprise, before the occupants were alerted to the attack, but when acered to the robust doors saw the small figure on the wall above them, dressed in the garb of an archbishopspo, subject to the battlements with hands that seemed galands. A face that reminded one of a vulture, which disappeared immediate.

"It Salviati" he thought to himself Ezio.

In the sentries had no doors. Ezio motioned his men to come closer to the walls for arbankers did not have sufficient angle to shoot them. Undoubtedly, Salviati had concentrated the bulk of his men inside the walls, whose height and thickness was apparent thelmmovable mind. Ezio began to wonder if it should, once again, trying to climb the wall and open the door from the inside to give input to their troops, but he knew that the guards of the Peacezi would notice immediately of its presence.

Telling his men to keep hidden, is agacho and walked among the tall grass short distance the knowraba the place where lay the body of one of his enemies. What desknot quickly, dressed in the uniform of the soldier, made a bundle with their own clothes and took her under his arm.

- Open! He shouted. In the name of the Father of Knowledge!

Spent a tense minute. Ezio back to repudiation ran him from the top of the walls. And then he heard the sound of heavy latches.

As the doors began to open, Ezio and his men rushed against them, knocking and surprising the centraltinello inside. Once found in a courtyard, around which the mansion was displayed in three separate wings. Salviati istobacco on top of a staircase located in the center of the main wing. Between him and Ezio, a dozen burly men and arMadosa to the teeth. There were also more men scattered around the patio.

- Sucia treason! Cried the Archbishop. But do not get out with the same ease with which you entered.

He raised his voice to convenientlyrtirla an imperative roar:- Kill! Kill them all!

Pazzi troops came and surrounded the men's Ezio. But the Pazzi had not been trained under the orders of a man like Mario Auditore and, despite losing the lead, the *condottieri* Ezio successfully confronted their opponents while After he ran upstairs. Triggered his poison dagger and the claved to men who cared for Salviati. Regardless of where to aim the knife, even if just on the cheek, whenever it fell, the victim died instantly.

- You are a demon ... Fourth Ring of the Ninth Circle! Salviati exclaimed in a trembling voice when he finally found Tro face to face with Ezio.

Ezio triggered the poison dagger, but also prepared his dagger battle. Salviati grabbed by the throat, above her cope, and brought the blade to the neck of the archbishop.

"The Templars lost their Christianity when he discovered rum the bank said quietly. Does do not know the gospelslios? "You can not serve God and to Mammon! ". But now's your chance to redeem yourself. Tell me where is Jacopo?"

Salviati looked defiant.

- Never find!

Ezio slid the blade gently but firmly, by the Archbishop's gizzard, drawing a trickle of blood.

"You'll have to tell me something better, *arcivescovo*."

"The night protects us when we met ... and now, termine with your work."

"So you hide in the dark as murderers they are. Thanks for telling me. But I'll ask again. *Where?*"

"Father of Knowledge is aware that what I do is for the greater good," Salviati said coolly, and taking sudden advantage of Ezio's diminished wrist with both hands, plunged the dagger into the neck.

- Tell me! Ezio cried.

But the archbishop, the blood gushing in torrents through his mouth, and had collapsed at her feet, her splendid white robes gleaming yellow and red.

Several months passed before they again have notified Ezio of the conspirators. Meanwhile, he drew with Mario a plan to restore San Gimignano and freeing its citizens from cruel yoke of the Templars, who had learned a lesson and kept tight control over the city. Knowing that the Templars' secretariats also searching the pages of the Codex which remained in parader unknown, Ezio was trying to hit them, but without success. The pages that were already in possession of the Murderers were hidden under the strict supervision of Mario, because without them, the secret of the Creed never succumb to the Templars.

One day a messenger arrived from Monteriggioni Florence with a letter from Leonardo to Ezio. Ezio, knowing the custom of his lefty friends to write in reverse, looked enquiringly at a mirror. In any circumstance, however, the convoluted doodles would have been a stumbling block for even the most talented player managed to decipher. Ezio broke the seal and began to read eagerly, his heart going brightening legends do line after line.

(^ *Entile Ezio:*

The Duke Lorenzo I who asked you to get these no-foodstuffs ... Sober Bernardo Baroncelli! Al apparently got pregnant. Carse course or to Venice, and from there traveled in incognito till court the Ottoman sultan in Constantinople, with the intention of refugees in that city. But as soon as entertained Venecia, did not realize that the Venetians had just signed peace with your RCOs (Even I sent an to su second best painter, G Bellini entile, to perform or No portrait Sultan Mehmet). Of so that Cando LLEgo and its identity Do the discovered was arrestado immediately.

Naturally, you can imagine the amount of letters that is crossed between SubliPorte me and Venice. But the Venetians are also our allies -the less por the moment-and duque Lorenzo is above all, an accomplished diplomat. Baroncelli was shackled and returned to Florence, omce tolli, was interrogated. But he was stubborn, or foolish, or brave, I do not know exactly mind why. Lthe question is that resisted foal, the pincers rojor vivo, whipping and the rats running sos feet, and all that confessed that the conspirators used to meet at night in an antique crypt that beneath Santa Maria Novella. Were investigated, of course, but not found Raron anything. It hangs fraud. I made a drawing or fairly good performance that I show the NEXTima time that we sees. I believe that anatomically hsoftened, it is accurate.

Healthy distinctive you,

Your friend,

Leor Leonardo da Vinci

"It's great that this man is dead," said MaEzio laughed when he showed the letter. It was the typical type capable of robarle even his mother. But the pity is that this is not about us at all to find out what plan to do continuous Templartion, even gives us a clue to the whereabouts of Jacopo.

Ezio found time to go visit her mother and her Wells, who continued spending his days with the serenity ofvento and care of the kindly Abbess. Sadly buygiven that the recovery of Mary and not advance further. His hair had turned prematurely gray and in the corners of the eyes had appeared fine crow's feet, but on the other hand, had attained inner peace, and when talking about her husband and hijos died did so with affection and pride. However, seeing the cajita pear wood with eagle feathers that once gave the small Petruccio, an object that was always in menight chair, still with tears filling her eyes. As for Claudia, had become *novizia*, and although with Ezio they considered that that decision would spoil its beauty and spispirit, he had no choice but to recognize the light that illuminatednaba the face of his sister, to respect the decision it had taken and feel happy for her. He returned to visit for Christmas and new year resumed his training, burning with impatience inside. To allay his nervousness, he was named co Mario Deputy principal castle. Ezio began to send its own spies and reconnaissance patrols in search of prey that was still pursuing relentlessly.

And then, finally, came the news. One morning in late spring, Gambalto, its glowing eyes appeared in front of the map room where Mario Ezio and were engaged in deep conversation.

"*Signori!* We found Bagnone Stefano da! Has taken refuge in the abbey of Asmodeus, a few miles south of here. He has spent all this time in front of our narices!"

"Always go together like dogs that are snapped," Mario, his stubby fingers working quickly tracing route on the map before him. Ezio looked. Although this is a dog head. Secretary of Jacopo! If we can not get anything out of it ...!"

But Ezio was already giving orders to saddle and prestop your horse. Quickly, he went to his room and armed with weapons of Codex, this time choosing the hidden blade dagger instead of poison. Following the advice of the doctor of Monteriggioni, had replaced the distillation of hemlock Leonard was originally used by Bethlehem and see the bag ofneno hidden in the handle was full. Had decided to utiLizard poison dagger with discretion, because he always ran the risk of self-administered a lethal dose. For this reason, andthat his fingers were full of tiny scars, when he brandished a knife used for some time resistant leather gloves, but flexible.

The abbey was near Monticiano, whose ancient castle doundermined the small mountain town. Was located in a solead ravine next to a cypress-covered hill. The current building was new, would have perhaps a hundred years, and was built with yellow sandstone rich import around a large courtyard where there was also a church. The doors were open wide and the monks of the order of the abbey, with its ocher habits, were busy working in the fields and orchards near the building and the vineyards that had above. The wine of the monastery attached to the abbey was famous and was exported even to Paris. As part of the preparations, Ezio was done with a monk's habit and, after stopping the horse by a stable boy at the inn where he had rented a room posing as a government messenger had been disguised to access the abbey.

Stefano spotted after a short while, engaged in a withconversation with *hospitarius* Abbey, a portly monk seemed to have taken the form of one of the barrels of wine, of course, emptied frequently. Ezio got close enough to hear without being noticed him.

"Pray, brother," said the monk.

- Does prayer? "Said Stefano, whose black attire contrasted with the sunny colors of their environment.

It looked like a spider walking over a pancake.

- Why? "He added with irony.

The monk was surprised.

- For protection of the Lord!

- If you think that the Lord is interested in our affairs, her Girolamo hand, rather than devote yourself to something else! But please, for heaven's sake, is making it hopes, if that helps pass the time.

- What you just said is blasphemy! Is exclaimed downhaul's brother Girolamo.

-No. Tell the truth.

- You're denying its most exalted Presence!

"It's just a rational response to the assertion that up there in heaven inhabited by a mad invisible. And believe me, if our precious Bible has something to rely on, is that this God has completely lost his head!

- How can you say these things? You're a priest!

"I'm an administrator. I use these clothes to bring Medici those damn me, put an end once and for all and serve them my true Master. But above all, is to Davies The theme of that Murderer, Ezio. It takes too long been a thorn we must tear.

"That's you're right. It is an evil demon!

"Well," Stefano said with a wry smile. At least I see that we agree on something.

"They say the devil has given a speed and a strong supernatural za Girolamo said lowering the tone.

Stefano stared.

-The devil? No, my friend. They are gifts that he has achieved all by himself, thanks to the rigorous training that has been subjected during year. He paused, his skinny body adopting a thoughtful position. You know, Girolamo? I find it disturbing that you're so unwilling to recognize the merits that the gene gets you on your own. I think if you could discover laugh victims everywhere.

"I forgive your lack of faith and your sharp tongue Girolamo replied with mercy. However you're still a child of God.

"Have I said ... Stefano began again, rather abruptly, but then spread his hands and let go barrier. Why? Enough about it! Escorted talking to a deaf!

"I will pray for you.

"As you wish. But do it in silence. I continue with my guard. Until we get to that Murderer dead and buried, no Templar can let your guard down for a moment.

The monk retired after greeting with a nod and Stefano was left alone in the courtyard. Had sounded the campaign announcing the First and Second Station of the Cross and the community had gathered in the abbey church. Ezio abandoned not the shadows like a specter. The sun shone with the weight of a heavy afternoon. Stefano, with the appearance of a crow, walked stalking up and down the north wall, restless, impatient, possessed.

When he saw Ezio expressed no surprise.

"I'm unarmed," he said. Fight with the mind.

"To use it, you need to stay alive. Will you be able to fend it off?"

- Would you kill me in cold blood?

"I kill because they need to die.

- Good answer! But do not think I'm perhaps possession of secrets that could be useful to you?

"What I think is dolegarias you do not under any kind of torture.

Stefano glanced evaluation.

"I'll take that as a compliment, but I'm not so safe of it. However, it is a matter of mere academic relevance. He paused before continuing his sharp voice: "You lost your chance, Ezio. The fate of death is cast. The cause of Murderers is a lost cause. I know I will kill whatever you do or say what I say, and I'll be dead before noonday. The Mass is ended, but my death will not avail you. The Templars have you already checked, and soon you will have to justify.

"I do not have as clear.

"I'm about to meet my Maker ... if final mind exists. It will be gratifying to find out. And meanwhile, why should I lie?"

Ezio dropped his dagger.

"Very clever," said Stefano. What will happen next?

-Repair the bad you've done, "said Ezio. Tell me what you know.

- What *want* know? Does the whereabouts of my master, Jacopo? "Stefano smiled. That is easy. Soon he will meet with our confederates, at night, in the shadow of the Roman gods. He paused. Hope this makes you happy, because although you do not succeed just me. And in any case no importance, because I know for a fact that you're too late. The only regret is that I will not be present to witness your destiny ... but who knows? Maybe there is an afterlife from which to watch your death. But for now, get it over with this nasty business.

The Abbey bell rang once more. Ezio had little time.

"I think you could teach me many things," he said. Stefano looked at him sadly.

"Not in this world," he said. It opened the neck of his robes. But please send me the fast at night.

Ezio thrust a single stab wound, deep and with a pointlethal laugh.

-Southwest of San Gimignano are the ruins of the Temple of Mithras, "said Ezio Mario when he returned thoughtfully. They are the only important Roman ruins in many miles. You say you mentioned the shadow of gods Romans?"

"Those were his words.

- And that the Templars are gathering there ... soon?

"Yes.

"Then we delay. Starting tonight we stand guard there.

Ezio was killed.

-Da Bagnone told me it was too late to deteNerl.

Mario smiled.

"Well, in this case to us to prove them wrong.

It was the third night on call. Mario had returned to his base to continue working on their plans against the Templars of San Gimignano and Ezio had left in the company of five menconfidence men, Gambalto among them is to stand guardcounties in the thick woods that surrounded the lonely and desotons ruins of the temple of Mithras. The temple consisted of a large complex of buildings had been built over the centuries. Its last occupant was Mithra, the god adopted by the Roman army, but also included older chapels, consecrated in their day to Minerva, Venus and Mercury. The complex also provided a theater, whose stage was maintained themDose solidly up and stood in front of a ruined semicircularthe stone benches arranged in terraces, home to scorpions and rats, backed by a dilapidated wall and flanked by cobroken columns where the owls had made their nests. The hieclimbed dra-resistant everywhere summer lilacs their way through the cracks that they themselves offshore drillingmol stained and crumbling. The moon cast a light fantasyMagor on the scene and, despite being accustomed to face them without fear of mortal enemies, had a couple of menmen clearly nervous.

Ezio had decided to stand guard for a week, but I knew that men would find it difficult to control nerves in that place for so long, since the presence of ghostmost of the pagan past was felt strongly. But around midnight, with the Murderers with aching limbs due to immobilization and inactivity, they heard the faint tinkle of a harness. Ezio and his men prepared for what repudiationra happen next. Shortly after the complex appeared in a dozen soldiers carrying torches and led by three men. They were heading to the theater. Ezio and *condottieri* followed them up there.

The men dismounted and formed a protective circle around the three leaders. Observing the scene, triumphant Ezio recognized the man's face who had been looking for: Jacopo de 'Pazzi, a gray-haired man of over sixty-like stalker. He was accompanied by a man who knew and another that yes, the unmistakable figure of a hooked nose and hooded maroon Rodrigo Borgia! With gravity, the knife is linked EzioNenos the mechanism he had in his right wrist.

"You know why I have called the meeting" began Rodrigo. I have given ample time, Jacopo. But you still have to repair the evil you have done.

"Sorry, *commendatore*. I've done everything that was in my hand. I have overcome the Murderers.

"You have not recovered Florence.

Jacopo bowed his head.

- You have not even been able to slice the head Auditore Ezio, a mere pup! And with each victory he gets on us, becomes stronger, becomes more dangerous!

"It was because of my nephew Francesco Jacopo stammered. His impatience was again reckless! I tried to be the voice of reason ...

"More like the voice of cowardice" said the third man in a hoarse voice.

Jacopo turned to him with much less respect than it hasBia shown so far with Rodrigo.

"Oh, *Messer* Emilio. Maybe we would pickpocket me theJor if we had sent weapons quality, instead of that crap that you call the Venetians arms! But you, the Barbarigi, you were always stingy.

- Enough! Cried a voice of thunder Rodrigo. He went back to Jacopo, "We put our faith in you and your family, and how what we've returned? Of passivity and incompetence. ReThe recovered San Gimignano! Bravo! And you sit there doing nothing. It even allows you to attack there. Maffei's brother was a valuable servant of our cause. And you, you could even save your own secretary, a man whose brain was worth ten times your own!

-*Altezza!* Just give me the opportunity to correct what was done and you'll see ... "Jacopo looked harsh expressions of their accompanyingNantes. I'll show ...

Rodrigo relaxed factions. Outlined even a smile.

-Jacopo. We know what to do next. Let in our hands. Come over here. Let me give you a hug.

Jacopo due after hesitation. Rodrigo left his arm above his shoulder and the right drew from his robes slipped a stiletto between the ribs firmly Jacopo. Jacopo Rodrigo away from the knife while it looked like a father to a son would look useless. Jacopo put his hand on the side. Rodrigo had not penetrated any vital organs. Maybe ...

But now was Emilio Barbarigo who advanced toward him. Maininstinctive manner, Jacopo up his bloody hands to protect themselves, as Emily had just pulled out a Swiss Army knife look intimidating, one of her coarsely serrated edges, and with a gutter running along the side of the sheet.

"No," whimpered Jacopo. I've done everything I could. I have always faithfully served the cause. All my life. By favor ... Please do not ...

Emilio gave a brutal laugh.

- Please do not, you piece of shit crybaby?

Yanked the jacket of Jacopo and immediately slipped from its powerful serrated blade knife through her chest, opening it.

Jacopo shouted and fell on his knees first, and then sideways, writhing in a pool of blood. He looked and saw above him Rodrigo Borgia, a narrow sword in his hand.

- Master ... have mercy!Jacopo, "he managed. It's not too late! Give me one last chance to fix things ...

Y then choked on his own blood.

"O Jacopo," Rodrigo said gently. How I've disappointed.

He raised his sword and stabbed in the neck of Jacopo with such force that the tip came through the neck, the spinal cord segandolenal. Borgia twisted it before removing it slowly. Jacopo isvant, mouth full of blood, but he was already dead and fell again, with a spasm, until they finally move.

Rodrigo wiped his sword with the clothes of the dead and, pushing aside his cloak, slipped again.

"How disgusting," he murmured. He turned and looked directly at where I was Ezio, smiled and shouted, "Now you can go, Murderer! I apologize for having won this award!

Y before he could react, Ezio was grabdo by two guards dressed in robes with a red cross on a yellow field, the coat of arms of his greatest enemy. Called

Gambalto, but none of his men replied. He was earnestTrado to the stage of the old theater.

- Very good, Ezio!Rodrigo said. Sorry about your manmen, but do you think I really do not expect to find here? Did not know you were coming? Stefano da You think you do not reveal Bagnonelo time and place of this meeting without my knowledge and approvaltion? Naturally, we had to make it look difficult because, otherwise, would have sensed it was a trap. He laughed-. Ezio Poor! Guess what? We have been in this game much longer than you. I had my guards hiding in the woods long before you arrive. And I fear that your men were as perplexed as you ... but I wanted to see you live before we leave. It be a fad. But now I'm satisfied.

Rodrigo smiled and turned to the guards who were holding his arms Ezio:

Thanks. Now you can kill him.

Emilio Rodrigo Barbarigo and boarded their horses and disappearedCieron along with the guards who had accompanied them. Ezio saw them go. He began to think quickly. On one side were the two big men who were subject ... And how many more would have hidden in the woods? How many men would have bet Borstrategy for that ambush against his troops?

"Pray your prayers, boy," said one of his captors.

"Look," said Ezio. I know that you are simply following orders. So if soltais me, I will forgive their life. What do you think?

That amused the guard who had spoken.

- Look! You have to hear it! I think I never ORTpezado with anyone able to retain his sense of humor in this way at a time like ...

But he could not finish the sentence. Ezio extended his hidden blade and, using his surprise, he thrust the man who held him by the right arm. The poison acted immediately and the man staggered to fall. Before the other guard could react, Ezio had sunk and the dagger in the armpit, the one point that his armor could not meet. Free, jumped into the darkness from the edge of the stage and stood waiting. He did not wait long. Ten others appeared guardays that Rodrigo had hidden in the forest, some inspectionsNando cautiously around the theater, others crouching next to his dead comrades. Moving with the speed morthat of a lynx, Ezio lunged at them, attacking with his weapon like a scythe, focusing on any body part that was exposed. Frightened and caught negligiblewelcome, Borgia soldiers tumbled Ezio front of him and ended with five of them before they put the other foot in polHerbivores and running and throwing disappeared screams of panic in the forest. Ezio saw them go. Not report what theirRodrigo transferred unless they wanted to finish posted by incompletetechnique, and would be a while before they started to miss them and Rodrigo found out that their satanic plan had failed.

Ezio knelt beside the corpse of Jacopo de 'Pazzi. Bruisingdo and deprived of all dignity, all that remained of him was the caparazon a pathetic and desperate old man.

"Poor wretch," he said. I was angry when I saw Rodrigo I had stolen my coveted prey, but now, now ...

He fell silent and closed his eyes to Pazzi. And then he realized that the eyes were looking. In my work of someLagro, Jacopo was still alive. He opened his mouth ready to speak, but could not make a sound. He was obviously lost in his final agony. The first idea was to abandon Eziowhat a slow death, but was looking at him with eyes Jacopo was suppliedsing. "Be merciful, even though no one has had mercy on you," he said. Also this was part of the Creed.

"May God give you peace," he said, kissing her forehead while JacopoAfter firmly nailed the dagger in the heart of his former adversesary.

Chapter 11

Ezio then returned to Florence and reported to the non-Lorenzotice of the death of the last of the Pazzi, Lorenzo felt satisfied, but also sad at the thought of bloodshed, a terribly high price in exchange for the safety of Florence and the Medici. Lorenzo preferred to find diplomatic solutions to disputes, but that desire made him an exception among his colleagues, the governors of other cities-state of Italy.

Ezio rewarded with a ceremonial cloak, which gave the Freedom of the City of Florence.

"A very gracious gift, *Altezza*" Said Ezio-. But I'm afraid I have little time to enjoy the benefits conferred upon me.

Lorenzo was surprised.

- What? Do you mean to go away again soon? He hoped you would stay, would open again *palazzo* your family, and would fill a post in the administration of the city, work Jando me.

Ezio nodded and said:

"Sorry to tell you that I think our problems have toed to an end with the fall of the Pazzi. They were no more than a tenobstacle of a much larger beast. I have intention to travel to Venice.

- Venice?

"Yes. The man accompanying the REU Rodrigo Borgiamunion with Jacopo is Barbarigo family member.

"One of the most powerful families *La Serenissima*. "Quieres tell me that this man is dangerous?

"It is allied with Rodrigo.

Lorenzo thought for a moment and then spread his hands.

"I From left to my deepest regret, Ezio, but I know I can never repay this debt, which also means I have no power to impose your orders. In addition, I have sensation of work you are involved end to the larga benefiting our city, but you may not live to see it.

"Do not say that, *Altezza*.

Lorenzo smiled.

"I hope I may be wrong, but living in this country at this momentit's like to live on the edge of Vesuvius: dangerous and uncertain!

Before leaving, Ezio news and gifts led him to Annetta, but it was so painful to visit his old family home that does not even entered it. Also deliberately avoided the Calfucci mansion, but visited with Paola, and found it nice but disbrought, as if his head elsewhere. His last stop was the studio of his friend Leonardo, but on arrival found only Agni the local and innocent and had the appearance of being closed. No sign of Leonardo.

Agniolo smiled and waved.

- Ciao, Ezio! Long!

- Too!

Ezio looked inquiringly around.

"I wonder where is Leonardo.

- Has been?

"Yes, but not forever. It has brought with him some of their material, but could not take it all, so innocent and I take care to monitor all this in his absence.

- And where has it gone?

"It's funny. Just as the Master was negotiateddo with the Sforza of Milan, Count of Pexaro invited him to spend some time in Venice ... You have to do five portraits of familylia ... "Smiled knowingly Agniolo-. As if that were to pasar real. Apparently the Council of Venice is interested in engineering and have provided a workshop, staff, everything. So, dear Ezio, if needed, that's where you'll have to go.

"It turns out that there is exactly where I said Ezio-. Great news. When will he go?

"Two days ago. But catch it costs you nothing. Go with a big wagon loaded to the brim with things and with only a pair of oxen pulling.

- Will anyone?

"Only with the road and a couple of escorts, in case you have proplems. They have taken the road of Ravenna.

Ezio charged only what fit in their saddlebags and to travel alone, only one and a half after starting out at a bend in the road, struck a large wagon pulled by oxen and a canvas cover that protected their precious cargoment of machines and models.

The teamsters were standing next to the vehicle, hot and singleCandoso annoying head, while the escorts, two sturdy little boys armed with bows and spears, watched from a hill cercano. Leonardo stood beside the wagon, apparently setting up a kind of lever system, when he looked up and saw Ezio.

- Hello, Ezio! What good luck!

- Leonardo! What's wrong?

"Apparently we have a little problem. One of the ruego the car ... He pointed to the spot where one of the wheels workyou'll be out of the shaft had-. The point is we need himVantas the car to reposition the wheel, but do not have the necessary manpower to do so, and this lever just tinkering fails to raise enough. Do you think that ...?"

"Of course.

Ezio gestured to the road to come closer. They were strong men who would be most useful that is graceful coltan, and the three managed to lift the wagon and manhim in that position long enough for Leonard could enter the wheel on the shaft and secure. While performing the maneuver, Ezio, struggling with the other two men to keep the car high, glanced at its contents. Among the dishes stood out, unequivocally, Achaeanslla structure similar to a bat that had already seen and deterioration. Seemed have undergone numerous modificationscations.

Fixed the cart, Leonardo sat on the benchblng along to one of the road, while the other walked before the horse. The guards patrol relentlessly, both in the forefront and in the rear. Ezio continued their pathnot riding at a walk, along with Leonardo and talking. Had translong time elapsed since their last meeting and had much to talk about. Ezio Leonardo made aware of eventsLeonardo knowledge and told his new charges and how excited he was at the prospect of visiting Venice.

- I am delighted to have you as a fellow traveler! Eventhat truth is you would go long before if you had to travel at my own pace.

"It's a pleasure. And I want to make sure you get healthy and saltvo your destination.

"I have my escorts.

-Leonardo, do not get me wrong, but even the most inexperienced highwaymen would be removed off those two with the same ease with which you rob you off a mosquito.

Leonardo looked surprised, then looked offended and deslater, fun.

"Then I'm doubly glad of your company. Adop-to a mischievous expression-. And I think it's not just for razones you would like to get sentimental over.

Ezio smiled but said nothing. He said, however:

"I saw that you keep working on that thing with a bat.

- What?

"I know what I mean.

"Oh, that. It's nothing. Just something to try to fix. But could not leave the workshop.

- What is it?

Leonardo was reluctant.

"The truth is I do not like to talk about the issues before they are ready ...

- Leonardo! You can trust me, I guarantee it. Lowered his voice, Ezio-. At the end of the day, I have entrusted my secret.

Leonardo struggled with himself, but ended up releasing.

"Okay, but you can not tell anyone.

"*Promesse.*

"Anyone would think you're crazy if you told-prosiled Leonardo, now with excitement in his voice-. Listen: I think I've found a way that man can fly!

Ezio looked at him and laughed in disbelief.

"Some day you'll want to erase that smile off your face," Leonardo said gently.

Then changed the subject and began to talk of Venice *La Serenissima* distant from the rest of Italy and is looking more oftence East to the West, in terms of both trade and agitation, as the Ottoman Turks at that time dominated the northern Adriatic coast. Be talked about theplicity and betrayal of Venice, the city's dedication to profitable business, its *richesse*, its peculiar construction, a city rising wetland channels and built on a base of hundreds of thousands of giant wooden stakes- their fierce independence and their political power did not even three hundred years, the Doge of Venice had deviated des Crusadetinada to the Holy Land with the intention to serve their own objectives: destroy all commercial and military competition and all opposition to his city-state and break the Byzantine Empire. Leonard spoke of the secret waters, black as ink, high *palazzi* illuminated with candles, the curious Italian dialect spoken there, the dominant silence of striking splendor of their robes, their great painters, whose prince was none other than Giovanni Bellini, whom Leonardo was anxious to know, their music and masked festivals of its remarkable ability to bluff, his mastery of the art of poisoning.

"And all this," concluded- I know only from books. Imagine how it must be reality.

"It will be messy and human, he thought coldly Ezio. As todas parties. But he smiled at his friend with kindness. Leonardo was a dreamer. The dreamers should be allowed to dream.

Had entered into a gorge and their voices echoed through the rocky walls. Ezio, considering the almost invisible crests of the coimmunoglobulins that were locked on both sides, he felt repentinamenl tense. The escorts were ahead of them and therefore, beDria that power in a narrow space like this, hear the clatter of horses. But there was nothing. There was a slight haze appeared, accompanied by a sudden cold air, two factorstors, which added to their concern. Leonardo was as if nothing had happened, but Ezio realized that the road is alsoTaban tense and cautiously looked around.

Suddenly, a few dropped pebbles rolling down the rocky wall of the gorge and Ezio's horse was frightened. Ezio has lookedupwards, narrowing his eyes to face indifference that sunyou with its light, and saw an eagle flying off.

Even Leonardo had noticed that something was happening.

-What happens? He asked.

"We're not alone," said Ezio-. Could have archetypalros enemies stationed on top of the gorge.

But then he heard a clatter of hooves, several caballos, approaching them from behind.

Ezio wheeled his horse and saw that half a dozen riders approached the banner of the red cross on a yellow field.

- Borgia! "He muttered, drew his sword in the same instant that a crossbow bolt dug into the side of the wagon.

The road ran along the road, and even goodyes they were frightened and began dragging his cargo forward voluntarily.

"Take the reins and shouted pulling sees Leonardo Ezio-. Van behind me, not you. You go ahead no matter what happens!

Leonardo hastened to obey while retracing the path Ezio horse to meet the riders. His sword, propertyDad of Mario, was well balanced and handle his horse was lighter and handier than their opponents. But they were well armed and had no chance to use weapons of Codex. Ezio spurred the horse's flanks to moving into the thick of the enemy. Crouched on his chair, lunged Ezio group, the strength of its load forcing two horses to retroceder violence. Then began a real fencing match. Wearing protective plate attached to the forearm izquierdo served to divert many hits and took advantage of the surprise of one of his enemies to see that his aim failed to deal the turn a good shot.

He soon dismounted four of his enemies, leaving two survivors turning around and running away at full gallop they had come. This time, however, knew better than to givethem the opportunity to convey the news to Rodrigo. Gaulpo after them, slashing first one and then another, and decentralizedgave the horse when he was done with both.

Quickly inspected the bodies, but none had any note, dragged to the ditch and hid the bodies ofunder stones and rocks. Again mounted his horse and made his way back, stopping only to clear the way for the other bodies and give them a rudimentary burial, at least enough to hide them with rocks and bushes found at hand. At that point, the horses of his enemiesrisks had already fled.

Ezio had once again escape the vengeance of Rodrigo, but I knew that Cardinal Borgia would not cease its efforts to kill him. Spurred his horse and rode to get back to Leonardo. When we reached, they began to look for the road, shouting their names several times in vain.

"I paid a huge amount as a deposit for the cart and oxen," grumbled Leonardo-. I guess not ever see her again.

"Sell it all in Venice.

"But there used gondolas?

"On land there has to be farms.

Leonardo looked at him.

- By God, Ezio, practical men like me!

His long cross country trip continued. Passed through the ancient city of Forli, now converted into a small town-state in its own right, and continued on to Ravenna, with its coastal port a few miles from the town. They boarded a boat, a galwas that coast from Ancona to Venice, and as Ezio was sure there was no one on board who represent a danger for him, he managed to relax a little. However, it was concient, even in a ship relatively small one, it would be very difficult to either cut his throat at night and throw the body blue-black water, so ifguided carefully controlling the comings and goings around small port where they landed.

Several days later they arrived without incident at the docks of Venice. Ezio was where he found his next setback, this time from unexpected source.

Had just landed and were waiting for the ferry that would lead them to the island city. Arrived on time, and marineLeonardo ros helped to raise the cart to the boat, which rocked at an alarming rate under its weight. The ferry captain Leonardo explained to the staff of the Earl of Pexaro would be waiting at the docks to go with their new accommodations, and with a bow and a smile helped him aboard.

"You'll pass your course *signore*.

"Naturally," Leonardo said, handing him a paper man.

- And you, sir? Politely asked the captain, volseeing to Ezio.

Ezio was taken aback. He was there without any invitation, completely ignorant of this local law.

"But ... I have no pass, "he said.

"Everything is in order," said Leonardo, please contact the captain-. Come with me. Answer for him and I am sure that the count ...

But the captain raised his hand.

"Sorry, *signore*. Council rules are explicit. Nadie can enter the city of Venice without the appropriate pass.

Leonardo was about to protest, but Ezio stopped him.

"Do not worry, Leonardo. Find an alternative.

"I would like to help, sir," said Capt.-. But I have orders. "And with a higher tone, he went to the multhe attitudes of passengers in general, advertising:- Attention, please!Attention, please! The shuttle will depart in ten den!

Ezio knew it gave him very little time.

He was struck by an extremely well-dressed couple seen up to the galley at the same time that they, who had settled in the best cabin and had been very reserved. Now they were alone at the end of one of the docks, where they were tied several private shelves, and apparently engaged in a bitter argument.

"My dear, please ... "Said the man.

It was sort of looking weak and twenty years older than his accompanyingpanante, an energetic redhead with fiery eyes.

-Girolamo ..., you fool! God knows why I married contigo, but he also knows how much I've suffered as a result! You keep finding fault with everything, you got me caged like a chicken on your horrible country town and now ... ahora! You're not even able to apanarte with a gondolier to take us to Venice! And when you think your guy is the fucking Pope, no less! You could have a little your influence. But merate ... Have less character than a slug!

-Caterina ...

- I come now to "Caterina" nasty bug! Limit yourself to get these men take care of luggage and for the love of God, take me to Venice. I need a bath and a glass of wine!

Jerome looked at her with disgust.

"It would be a good idea to leave you here andcontinued until Pordenone without you.

"In any case, should have gone by land.

"Travelling by road is too dangerous.

- Yes! For a creature like you weakling!

Girolamo was silent while still observing the scene. And then said shrewdly:

- Why not get on the gondola ... "I said a-... and I find then a couple of gondoliers?

- Hmm! Finally you say something meaningful! She growled, and allowed him to help her back into the boat.

But once it was installed, Girolamo quickly dropped the ropes and pushed hard on the bow, sending the gondola into the center of the lagoon.

"*Buon viaggio!*" Shouted a voice unpleasant.

- Bastard! She cried. And then, realizing what a predicament of their situation, began to scream:- *Aiuto! Aiuto!*

But Jerome was already heading toward the place where a group of servants wandered helplessly around the mountain of luggage and started giving orders. In fact, he went with them and the luggage to the other end of the pier, where he began to organize it in obtaining a private shuttle.

Meanwhile, Ezio continued to observe the plight in which it was Caterina. There was something funny, but it was also worrying. She noticed him.

- Hey, you! Do not be left standing there! I need help!

Ezio unbuckled the sword from his belt, took off his shoes and jacket and jumped into the water.

In the spring, a smiling Caterina held out his hand soaked Ezio.

"My hero," he said.

"It was not anything.

- I could have drowned! Y this *porco* you might as well! He looked thoughtfully at Ezio-. But you! My God, you must be very *strong*. I can not believe you got to swim and drag the gondola for me inside out.

-Light as a feather, "said Ezio.

- Flatterer!

"I mean, these boats are so well equipped ...

Catherine frowned.

"It was an honor to serve you *signora* Ezio he concluded, lamely.

"Someday I'll have to return the favor," she said, her eyes full of an intention that went beyond words-. What is your name?

Hearing Officer, Ezio.

-I My name is Caterina. He paused-. Towards where you are heading?

"I was going to Venice, but I have no pass, so the *trasborgiver* ...

- Enough! Cried interrupting-. "So that does not let officialillo?

"Exactly.

- Now we'll see!

Angrily walked along the boardwalk without waiting for Ezio footwear and put the jacket back. When he got caught, she had reached the ferry and therefore able to deduce, was giving him a slap on the trembling man. All you could hear the captain to arrive was sputtering with servile tone imaginable:

"Yes, *Altezza*; course *Altezza*; what you say, *Altezza*.

- Best to do what I say! Unless you want to see your head stuck atop a pole! Here it is! Go to buy his horse and car stuff yourself! Vamos! And treat him right! But you do, I'll find out! "The captain went away. Caterina turned to Ezio-. You see? Fixed!

"Thank you, *madonna*.

"Good service ... He stared-. I hope our paths cross again. He held out his hand-. I'm from Forlì. Go through there someday. Would be happy to receive you. "I shook hands and prepared to leave.

- Also you did not want to go to Venice?

Turned to look, and then he looked at the ferry.

- On that site? Joking! "And he went, strutting to the dock to where her husband, who controlled the burden of what remained to baggage.

The captain ran around from one place to another, pulling the horse Ezio.

"Here you have it, sir. My most humble apologies, sir. Had I known, sir ...

"I need a barn for my horse as we arrive.

"It will be a pleasure, sir.

When the shuttle was launched and sailed leaden waters of the lagoon, Leonardo, who had watched the episode, he quipped:

"You know who it was, right?

"I do not mind at all that was my next conquest, "said a smiling Ezio.

- For in this case, watch out! Is Caterina Sforza, daughter of the Duke of Milan. And her husband is the Duke of Forlì, and so Pope's nephew.

- What's your name?

-Girolamo Riario.

Ezio was silent. The name sounded familiar. He said to continuenuacion:

"Well, she's married to a real beast.

"Have I repeated that Leonardo-. Andate carefully.

Chapter 12

In 1481, Venice, under the strong government of the Doge Giovanni Mocenigo was, overall, a good place to live. I was at peace with the Turks, the city prospered, trade routes by land and sea were safe, and although interest rates were admittedly high, investors showed trends and savers were satisfied. Even the Church was rich, and artists flourished under both spiritual and secular patterns. The city is rich thanks to the systematic looting of Constantinople that followed the Fourth Crusade, the Doge Dandolo diverted from their objective, had managed to subdue the prey Byzantium and displayed without shame, being the most obvious display of the four bronze horses arranged in the top of the facade of the Basilica of San Marcos.

But Leonardo and Ezio, who arrived in Molo that morning in early summer, completely unaware of the past debasement, traitor and thief of the city. Just saw the gloomy marble and masonry of the Palazzo Ducale, the large square extending to the bottom and left, the *campanile* built in brick and astonishing height, and the Venetians, of slim build, wearing dark robes, gliding like shadows *terra ferma* or browse and fetid labyrinth of channels in a wide variety of boats, from sleek Gondola to the ungainly barge, the latter loaded with all kinds of products, from fruit to bricks.

The servants of the Count of Pexaro were responsible for the effects of Leonardo's bustle and, following their suggestion, also addressed Ezio also horse and also promised to find accommodation appropriate treatment to the young son of a Florentine banker. Disappeared immediately afterwards, leaving a servant with them, a fat young fellow with skin and bulging eyes, whose shirt was soaked with his sweat and syrupy whose smile would drop their heads in shame to anyone.

-*Altezza* He said with his smirk, approaching them. Allow me to introduce myself, I am Neri, the *funzionario da accoglienza* County staff. It will be my duty and pleasure to offer you a brief introduction to our city tour before *conte* I received ... "And saying this, Neri began to look at Leonardo and Ezio, trying to decide which of the two was the artist sent, and luckily for him it was decided by Leonardo, who was less like being a man of action, " *messer* Leonardo, for a drink before dinner Venetian, food that *messer* have the pleasure of celebrating in the lounge of the servants knew previously. He bowed and scratched his head slightly, to top it off. Our gondola awaits us ...

During the next half hour, Ezio and Leonardo could enjoy indeed, were happy to do it, the beauty of *La Serenissima* from the best place from which contemporary parlars: a gondola, expertly controlled fore and aft by its gondoliers. But the sticky speech Neri gave that pleasant experience. Ezio, despite the interest he felt for the former's beauty and architecture of the place, still wet as a result of salvage *madonna* Caterina, and tired also tried to forget the depressing monologue Neri's refuge in the soil. No, but suddenly hustler. Something had to call attention.

Ezio heard voices on the side of the canal, near the *palazzo* Marchioness of Ferrara. Two armed guards were harassing a merchant.

"He has told you to stay in your house, sir," said one of the military.

"The rent is paid. I have the right to sell my market stalls here.

"Sorry, sir, but this goes against the new rules of *Messer* Emilio. I fear that you are in a difficult situation.

- Will appeal to the Council of Ten!

"No time for that, sir," said the second man in uniform, giving a kick to the awning of the stall the seller.

The man was selling leather goods and the military, in addition to pocketing more than the very best, jumped into the canal merchandise.

"And now they have run out of nonsense, sir," said one of the men in uniform and retired without hurry.

- What happens? Ezio asked Neri.

"Nothing *Altezza*. A little local difficulty. I beg you to be ignorant. And now we are about to pass under the famous bridge Rialto where you, the only bridge over the Grand Canal, famous throughout history for ...

Ezio left happy that he continued with his speeches heavy, but what he had seen had not liked, and also had heard of a such Emilio. A proper name ... quite common, but it would be Emilio *Barbarigo*?

After a while, Leonardo insisted on stopping to take a look at the positions where they sold toys. He went to one that was instantly caught his attention.

- Look, Ezio! He shouted.

- What have you found?

"A figurine. A small article that the artist's manikin plants used as a model. I would rather have a pair. Would you be so kind ...? I think I sent my bag with all my stuff into my new workshop.

But when Ezio went to get his bag, a handful of young men walked past her and one of them tried to cut the rope that connected the bag's belt.

- Hey! Ezio cried. *Coglione!* Stop!

So she ran after them. The assaults they identified as their, turned for a moment, pushing a lock of brown hair from her face. A woman's face! But he ran and disappeared into among the crowd with their peers.

Ride continued in silence. Leonardo was happy with his two dummies. Ezio was eager to get rid of the buffoon who had become his guide, and even Leonardo. I needed time alone, time to think.

"And now we come to the famous Palazzo Seta," continued the man Neri-. The house *His Altezza* Emilio Barbarigo. Barbarigo *Messer* is now famous for his attempts to love himself under its control to all traders in the city. A madam appreciated that, unfortunately, has met with some resistance from the more radical elements of the city ...

Channel away stood a fortified building with a shady paved area in front of him in his little spring had three gondolas docked. When they passed with Gondola, Ezio was trying to enter the building the same trade'd seen before harassed by men in uniform. He blocked the way two guards, and Ezio noticed that the shoulders had a yellow flag crossed with a red galleon, below it a black horse, a dolphin, a star and a grenade on top. Barbarigo Men, of

course!

"I have destroyed the post, spoiled my marketdise. I demand compensation! "Said the trader veryfadado.

"Sorry, sir, is closed," said one man uniformed, pushing the poor man with his halberd.

"I have not finished with you. This will inform the Council!

- Do not be any good! "Snapped the second man uniformmado, older.

And at that moment an officer appeared, accompanied by three other men.

- Looking for brawl? "Said the official.

"No, I ...

- Arrest this man! Shouted the officer.

"What are you doing? "Said the merchant, scared.

Ezio looked on helpless and angry, and took mentalMind note of that place. The vendor was dragged and carried himrum into a little iron door which opened to give input and immediately closed behind him.

"You have not chosen the best place, however beautiful it is," said Ezio Leonardo.

"I'm beginning to think it would have been better to opt for Milan," said Leonardo. But work is work.

Chapter 13

After the split from Leonardo Ezio and relocate to your accommodation, wasted no time and returned to the Palazzo Seta, a complicated area of passages in that city, labyrinthine channels arcs low, squares and dead ends. But everyone knew the *palazzo* and, provided it is lost, the Venetians kindly told him where to go ... Although none gave the impression to understand why anyone would want to go there for their own will. A couple of them suggested that it would be easier to take a gondola, but Ezio wanted to become familiar with the city and also to reach their target unnoticed.

When he reached the vicinity of *palazzo* it was already mid-afternoon. The building looked more like a fortress or a prison than a palace, as the main structure was erected inside an enclosure with battlements. On either side, *palazzo* left unenclosed by other buildings separated by narrow alleys. In the back garden seemed to have a considerable size roofed by another high wall, and in front, facing the canal, the area was open wide and Ezio had seen before in passing. And Don was there taking place at that time a fierce beatcall among a handful of guards Barbarigo and a motley group of youths who taunted them, jumping from side to side to get away from the reach of their halberds and spears, and threw bricks, stones, eggs and rotten fruit to the angry men uniformed. Maybe just wanted to distract them, as Ezio, looking beyond all of them, behind the scene of the melee, he saw a figure climbing the wall *palazzo*. Ezio was impressed. The wall was so vertical that even he would have him think twice before dealing with it. But whoever it was came to the undiscovered roof and easily. Then, in a crouching position, jumped from there and went to land on the roof of one of the lookout towers. Ezio thought he saw the guy jump back from that point to the roof of what was the palace itself to seek access to its interior. Took note of the tactics used if ever needed, provided that it can see. But the guards at the watchtower had noticed the presence of the individual and had just sounding the alarm to peers standing guard. An archer appeared in a window from the eaves of the roof of the palace and fired. The figure jumped to the ground and the arrow went long, slammed into the tiles, but a second time the keeper hit upon in their aim and, with a faint cry, the figure staggered and put his hand to his wound on his thigh.

The archer fired again but missed the shot. The figure had grown on their footsteps, jumping back from the top of the tower to the battlements, where the guards were already running, then jump over the wall and glide to a landing on the floor.

On the other side of the open space opposite the *palazzo*, the guards Barbarigo days had forced the attackers to retreat hence the streets, where they began to chase them. Ezio appropriated the opportunity to catch the unknown individual who, limping, ran in the opposite direction to safety.

When he got up, surprised his light complexion and child, but athletic. And when I was about to offer help, the individual turned to him and Ezio recognized the face of the chica who had tried to cut the tape from the bag on the market.

He was surprised, confused and, curiously, he was crazy in love.

"Lend me your arm," said the girl, urging him.

- Remember me?

- Should I?

"Today I tried to steal on the market.

"I'm sorry but this is no time for memories. If we are not smoke quickly, we are dead meat.

To illustrate what he meant, an arrow came whistling in the time between them. Ezio grabbed the arm of the chica and passed it over his shoulders, and thereafter, grabbed her by the waist, as he had in his day when I helped her.

- Where?

"To the canal.

"Absolutely," he said wryly. In Venice there is only one, right?

"You're a cocky arrogant for a newcomer. Over here ... I'll show you the way ... But fast! Look ..., and behind us.

So it was: a small detachment of men had crossed the square and ran after them.

No hand off the wound of the thigh and tight from the dolor, Ezio guided the girl to an alley that led to another, and another, until he completely lost sight north. Behind them, the voices of their pursuers were fading until it disappeared altogether.

"Mercenaries from the mainland," said the girl with great disdain. In this city have no chance against him. Are easily lost. Vamos!

They arrived at a pier Canale della Misericordia, where a nondescript vessel was moored with two men aboard. Ezio and seeing the girl, one of them began to immediately to a cast off, while the other helped them to rise.

- Who is this? Asked the girl the second man.

"I have no idea, but was in the right place at the right moment and, apparently, with Emilio joins not just a friend.

The girl was about to faint.

"He has a thigh injury," said Ezio.

"I can not take that," said the man, looking at the place where he had hosted the pin. Here I have no balm and bandages. We must return quickly and before these sewer rats Emilio give us. He looked at Ezio. Who are you, anyway?

"My name Auditore, Ezio. Florence.

"Hmmm ... My name is Ugo. She is Rosa and called Paganino rowing. We do not really like foreigners.

- Who are you? Ezio replied, ignoring the last comment.

"Liberators professionals other properties," said Ugo.

"Thieves," said Paganino with a laugh.

"You take away the poetry to everything," said Ugo sadly. And all of a sudden to be put on alert. Beware! He exclaimed when an arrow, and then another, was nailed with a thud in the hull from somewhere overhead.

Looking up they saw two archers deliberately Barbarigo in a nearby roof, carrying more arrows in their bows. Ugo reached into the hollow of the boat and pulled out a crossbow practice squat quickly loaded, aimed and fired, while Ezio threw two knives flying in quick succession against the other goalie. Both fell screaming to the channel.

"That bastard has thugs everywhere," said Ugo to Paganino, using a conversational tone.

Both types were shorter and wider shoulders, looking hard, and neither reached the thirties. GobenNaban skillfully craft and it was obvious they knew that maze of channels like the palm of your hand, since more than one occasion had thought Ezio immersed in the aquatic version of a blind alley to discover that the channel undermined at a brick wall, but in a low-rise arch under which the boat could only happen if they all ducked.

- What you were doing attacking the Palazzo Seta? Ezio asked.

- And do you care? "Said Ugo.

-Emilio Barbarigo is not exactly my friend. Maybe we could help each other.

- What makes you think we need your help? -ReplicationUgo ed.

"Now, Ugo," Rosa said. Look what I just did. And paSAS also overlook the fact that saved my life. I'm the best climber of all of us. Without me, never get into that nest of vipers. Ezio He turned. Emin iliotento obtain a monopoly of trade in the city. It is a powerful man, and has put in the pocket to several council members. The situation is reaching a point where any merchant that challenges and attempts to maintain its independence is simply whetherviolence.

"But ye are not dealers ..., you are thieves.

-Thieves *professiona*! "She corrected him. Indian businessvidual, individual stores, individuals ... This fatates more theft than any corporate monopoly. They also have insurance, and insurance companies paid after fleecing customers with huge premiums. And everybody happy. Emilio Venice become a desert for people like us.

"That's not to mention a shit who wants to become not only local businesses but also to the entire city-anaUgo gave. But Anthony will explain.

- Antonio? "And who is it?

"Then you will discover, Mr. Florence.

They came at last to another dock and tied the boation quickly, because the wound cleaned and Rosa had to workincreased if they did not want his life in danger. Leaving occupied Paganinopandose of the boat between Ugo and Ezio half dragged, half-loaded with Rosa, who had already been unconscious by the lossloss of blood. Toured yet another twisted alley lined with dark red brick buildings and wood that flowed into a small square with a well and a tree in the middle, surrounded by dirty-looking buildings which had long stucco shellssewerage systems.

They went to the door of a dirty maroon buildings and Ugo called with a sequence of complex shock. He then opened and closed a peephole and the door quickly opened and closed as well. Ezio noticed that, as much as anything else shabby display, hinges, locks and fishhammers were well greased and free of rust.

Found himself in a ramshackle courtyard surrounded by theTAS and uneven gray walls topped windows. Both thetwo, two wooden ladders amounted to join in the galleries, also of wood, plying the walls of the first and hesecond floor and the doors that looked different.

They gathered around several people, some of which Ezio recognized as participants in the altercation that had occurred in front of Palazzo Seta. Ugo was already giving RODers.

- Where's Antonio? Go get it! And make room for Rose, bring a blanket, balsam, hot water, a sharp knife, bandages ...

One of the men ran up the stairs and disappeared through a door on the first floor. Two women deployedGaron almost clean a mattress and slept with care Rosa. A third disappeared and soon returned with the supplies that Ugo had requested. Rose regained consciousness, he saw Ezio and held out his hand. He took it and knelt at his side.

- Where are we?

"I think we are the headquarters of your people. In whichIn any case, you're safe.

She squeezed his hand.

"I regret having tried to steal.

"Now do not think about it.

"Thanks for saving my life.

Ezio was anxious. The girl was very pale. Would have to work fast if they wanted to save her.

"Do not worry, Antonio know what to do," said Ugo Ezio when it is incorporated.

At that time, ran down the stairs a well-dressed man would border quarantine, a large gold earring in his left lobe and a headscarf. He went directly to Rosa and knelt at his side. He snapped his fingers to order the kit.

- Antonio! "She said.

- What happened to you, baby? "Said the Venetian accent hard life.

- You limit yourself to take off this thing! Rose snapped.

"Let me take a look first," said Antonio, his voice suddenly more serious. Carefully examined the wound. Has comedo thigh and exited cleanly, does not touch the bone. Luckily it was a crossbow bolt.

Rose clenched her teeth.

"You ... just ... take away that ...

"Give him something to chew on," said Antonio.

First remove the feathers of the arrow head wrapped with a handkerchief soaked with the balm of entry and exit points and pulled.

Rosa spat wadding that had been placed between the teeth and shouted-

"Sorry, *piccola* Antonio said, pressing with the maus both sides of the wound.

- Fuck you with your apology, Antonio! Rosa yelled whileafter women held her.

Antonio looked up one of the members of his knowquito.

- Michiel! Go find Bianca! "He glanced at Ezio. And you! Help me with this! Take these towels and put them on the wounds as soon as I remove my hands. After the bandrowing properly.

Ezio hastened to obey. He felt the heat of Rosa thigh under his hands, felt immediately afterwards the reaction of her body and tried not to look into her eyes. Meanwhile, Antonio still working with speed. Then Ezio pushed to withdraw and finally, he shook his leg bandaged immaculately Rosa.

"Well," he said. Will be a while before you return to itpenetrate walls, but I think you'll recover completely. Ten patientsence. I know!

- And for that you had to make me much harm, bumbling idiot? "I looked through the eyes sparking. Hope you from catching the fishyou, you bastard! You and your fucking mother!

"Carry it in," said Anthony, smiling. Ugo, go with it. Make sure you rest.

Four women took the mat on their corners andtraron with Rosa, who continued to protest, by a door on the ground floor. Antonio saw them march and has turned backEzio ence.

"Thanks," he said. Really appreciate this small wineryta. If the lost ...

Ezio shrugged.

"I've always had a weakness for damsels in need.

"I am delighted that Rosa did not hear you say this, Ezio Auditore. But your reputation precedes you.

"I have not heard you mention my name Ugo said Ezio, on guard.

"And he did not. But we know your work in Florence and San Gimignano. A good job, but unrefined.

- Who are you?

Antonio opened his hands.

"Welcome to the headquarters of the Thieves Guild and Professional Chulos Venice," he said. Soy De Magianis, Antonio, the *amministratore*. He bowed ironically. Evenwhich, of course, only steal from the rich to give to the poor and, of course, our prostitutes I prefer to refer to himselfmore courtesans.

- You know why I'm here?

Antonio smiled.

"More or less I can imagine ... though I have not shared it with my ... employees. Come! Let's talk in my office.

The office reminded him so much the study of his uncle MaEzio river, inlet, was surprised. I did not know what to expect exactly, but found in a room with the wallsdes-covered books, librexpensive you with excellent bookbindingACIOtions, exquisite Ottoman carpets, furniture oak and boxwood, and silver lamps and candlesticks.

The room was dominated by the central table on which stood a large scale model of the Palazzo Seta and neighborhood. Around and inside, countless miniature wooden dummies. Ezio Antonio told to take a seat and leaned over the cozy fireplace that was in a corner, from which rose a strange odor, attractive and unknown.

- I can offer you anything? Asked Anthony. A Ezio reminded both that his uncle Mario coupleECIO all very curious. Biscottei? A *caffè*?

"I'm sorry ... a what?

"Coffee. "Antonio stood up. It is an interesting concoctionyou brought me a Turkish merchant. Please try it. "And what happened to Ezio a tiny porcelain cup with a hot black liquidyou of that came the pungent aroma.

Ezio tasted. Burned his lips, but it was not bad, and so let him know, but added, recklessly:

"It would be better with milk and sugar.

"The best way to spoil it," said Antonio, offended.

Ezio finished their coffee and then experienced a sensation of completely novel nervous energy. Would have to talk to Leonardo that drink the next time you see him. Antonio stated she saw the model of Palazzo Seta.

"These are the positions we had thought that if Rosa had managed to enter and open one of the sally ports. But, you know, saw and shot and had to repleteGarner. Now we regroup and touch, while Emilio have time to strengthen their defenses. And worse, it was an expensive operation. I spent my last almost until *Soldo*.

"Emilio has to be covered," said Ezio. Why not attack him back now and take his money?

- Did not you hear me? Our resources are low ebb and he is alert. Never get past him without the element surprisessa. It also has two cousins powerful support it, the brothersMarco and Agostino us, but I think Agostino is a good guy. As Mocenigo ... well, the Doge's a good man, but engineeringnuo, and leave the business matters in the hands of others ... others that Emilio has been put in the pocket. He looked into her eyes Ezio. NeNeed some help to replenish our coffers. I think pomitochondria to provide that help. If you do, I show you are an ally to help worthwhile. "Carry out this mission, Mr. Milk and Sugar?

Ezio smiled.

"Try me," he said.

Chapter 14

Le took a long time, and interview with the skeptic will Eziosorero head of the Thieves Guild had been uncomfortable, but Ezio finished using the skills he had learned from Paola to cut bags with the best of them and steal everything possible to wealthy bourgeois allies Emilio Venice. A few months later, in the company of thieves, as they had with discharge and an honorary member of the guild, "brought together the two thousand *ducati* Antonio needed to relaunch its operationstion against Emilio. But all this had a cost. Not all members of the guild managed to elude capture and arrest by the guard Barbarigo. So, despite having savingsra funding, the thieves had decreased in number.

But Emilio Barbarigo erred fruit of his spewence. As an example, publicly exhibited catch thievestwo narrow iron cage placed in various parts of the area he controlled. If it has remained locked in their cells *palazzo*, or God andNo person had gotten sacarlos from there, but Emily chose to exhibit, deprived of food and water, prodded with sticks by his guards always falling asleep, with the intention of letting them die of hunger in the eyes of the world.

"They will not last even six days without water, let alone without food," said Ugo Ezio.

- What do you think Antonio?

"That's up to you to devise a plan for their rescue. "How much more evidence of my loyalty need this manber? "Ezio thought, before realizing that it enjoyed the confidence of Antonio, as the Prince of Thieves hasBia commissioned a mission as crucial as this. But not availableNIA long.

With caution, and he noted e UgoNo secret comings and goings sentries. Apparently, there was a group of guards who carriedZaban a continuous journey from cage to cage. Although the cages were constantly surrounded by a few onlookers, including spies could have perfectly Barbarigo, Ezio and Ugo decided to risk it. During the night shift, moment in which the public was not so large, they headed to the first cage, which the guard was about to leave to go to the second. As the guard left, and studentsvo out of sight, they got power locks, encouragestwo unconnected by cheers from a handful of spectators, to whomtions given enough care who won as they had come out show, and some of which were followed until the second cage, and even the third. The men and women frettwo, a total of twenty-seven, were already, after two and a half days in harsh conditions, but at least had not Wifesado, and Ezio could well lead them to the wells that were in the middle of virtually all the squares, so that your first and most importantsupporting need-thirst, be fulfilled.

After the mission, which took them from the nightfall hasta the cock crowing, Ugo and his colleagues looked at Ezio released with great respect.

"Rescuing my brothers and sisters has been more than a simple act of charity, Ezio" said Ugo. These ... colleagues representedtaran a vital role in the coming weeks. Y. ... "His tone is volsolemnly watched ... our guild has you an eternal debt of gratitude.

The group had already arrived at the headquarters of the guild. Ezio Antonio embraced, but he was serious.

- How is Rose? Ezio asked.

"Better, but the injury was more serious than we thought and she wants to run before jump-start.

"She is.

"Yeah, like her. "Antonio made a pause. See you.

"I feel flattered.

- Why? You are the hero of the day!

A few days later, Ezio was summoned to the office of Antonio, where he found poring over a model of the PaLazzo Seta. Small wooden dummies have been desfolded back by his surroundings and on the table next to the model, there was a mountain of papers filled with calculations and notestions.

- Ah! Ezio!

"*Signore*.

"I just returned from a short trip into enemy territory. We managed to release three weapons charges destinadas the small *palazzo* of our beloved Emily. It occurred to us that we could organize a masquerade visTiendona with uniforms Barbarigo archers.

"Brilliant. That we introduce into the fortress without problem. When do we start?

Antonio raised his hand.

"Not so fast, my dear. There is a problem, and I likewould ask your advice.

"I am honored by it.

"No, just I value your opinion. The fact is that I know for a fact that Emily may have been bribing people to become spies. He paused. We can not attack until you have solved the matter of traitors. Look, I know I can trust you, and your face is not well known in the trade. If repudiationra give some clues to the whereabouts of these traitors, do you think you could take care of them? Ugo could take with you as support, and any task that you needed.

-*Messer* Antonio, Emilio drop is so important for me as for you. Let us join forces.

Antonio smiled.

- It's the answer I expected from you! "He motioned to Ezio who approached the table of maps that were installed near the window. This is a map of the city. Men who have deserted meet, as I have my faithful spies, in a taBerne's here. Vec Il is calledSpecchio chio. That's whereestablish contacts with agents of Emilio, exchange informationtion and receive their orders.

- How many?

"Five."

- What do you do with them? Antonio looked at him. "Kill them, my friend.

At dawn the next day, Ezio group of men met men who had personally chosen for the mission. We set out its plan. Clothed in the uniforms of Barbarigo from vessels that Antonio was arrested. Antonio knew that Emilio believed the stolen material was lost at sea, so that his people would not suspect anything. Together with Ugo and four other men, Ezio Specchio Vecchio II entered shortly after nightfall. Barbarigo was a lair, but at that hour has only a few clients, apart from the turncoats and men Barbarigo. Just looked up as the group of uniformed guards entered the tavern, only to be surrounded paid attention to the newcomers. Ugo pulled back the hood, giving the open in the darkness of the tavern. The plotters tried to get up, surprise and fear reflected in their faces. Ezio dropped a hand firmly on the shoulder closest to him traitor, and then casually and easily, he gave the knife between the eyes of his victim. Ugo and those of more followed suit and ended with his brothers traitors.

During that time, Rosa had continued its impatient recovery. He got up and moved from one place to another, event depended to a cane and leg wound was wrapped in bandages. Ezio, unintentionally and apologizing all the time mentally and Calucci Cristina, spend the most time as possible in the company of Rosa.

-*Salute*, Rosa, "he said one morning. How is everything? I see your leg better. Rosa shrugged.

"This is lasting an eternity, but getting better. And you? How about our little town?"

"It's a great city. But how about the smell of cations?"

"We're used to. We do not like the polvo and the filth of Florence. He paused. What brings you here this time?"

Ezio smiled.

"What I think and also what *no* think. He hesitated a moment. Hoping you could teach me to climb as you do.

She patted his leg.

"In time," he said. But if you hurry, my friend Franco know it almost as good as me. He raised his voice. Franco!

Almost instantly appeared in the doorway a graceful child-like-haired woman, Ezio, embarrassed, she felt a pang of jealousy big enough to realize Rosa. The girl smiled.

"Do not worry, darling, is so little fond of women as San Sebastian. But on the other hand, is tough as old boots. Franco! I want to teach him to do our tricks. He looked out the window. Opposite was a vacant building with bamboo scaffolding leather strapped. Pointed in that direction. Upload up there to begin with.

Ezio spent the remainder of the morning, three hours, behind Franco and under the shrill voice of Rosa. In the end, was finally able to climb to a dizzying height nearly the same speed and skill than his mentor. He then learns to jump *up* from a handle to the next, although he doubted that one day does not achieve the ability to Rosa.

"Eat something light," said Rosa, saving any elogio. We have not yet finished for today.

In the afternoon, during nap time, took him to the street of the great church of the Frari. They watched together the monumental building.

"Get in there," Rosa said. To top. And I want you back here before I count three hundred.

Ezio sweated and struggled, turning the head the effort.

Four hundred and thirty-nine, "said Ezio Rosa when reached at his side. Get back!

At the end of the fifth attempt, exhausted and sweaty, all he wanted was to give a slap Ezio Rosa, but the desire was gone when she smiled and said:

"Two hundred ninety-three. You just get it.

The small crowd that had gathered at the scene applauded his achievement.

Chapter 15

Over the following months, the guild of barktions are devoted to reorganize and equip yourself properly. A maNana, Ugo was presented where Ezio lived to invite to a meetNion. Ezio took a bag, put it in her arms and followed Codex Ugo to headquarters, where they found Antonio, elated, once again moving small wooden dummies to position around the model of Palazzo Seta. Ezio wondered if I was a bit obsessed. At the meeting were also present Rosa, Franco and two or three key members of the guild.

- Hello, Ezio! He said smiling. Thanks for your recent successesough are now in a position to fight back. Our goal is Emilio store, which is not very far from *palazzo*. The plan is as follows. Look! He touched the model and indicated the lines of blue wooden soldiers placed around the perimeteror thewas stored. These are the archers of Emilio. Represent our greatest danger. When night falls, I have the intention to sendwill you and a couple of men over the rooftops of adjacent buildingsadolescents to the store (and I know that with the training that has been submitted you Rosa, you can do this job) so that you cast on you archers and elimineis. Quietly. Meanwhile, ourters men with uniforms that we have apprehended BarbarigoDido, will move from the streets of the neighborhood and take positions.

Ezio said red dummies placed inside the walls of the warehouse.

- And the guards inside?

"When you have finished with the archers, we will meet here ... "Antonio said a *piazza* Ezio nearest recognized because it was where Leonardo had set up his new workshop. It pregent for a moment how you would go to her friend ordersgo-... and discuss next steps.

- When we do it? Ezio asked.

- Tonight!

- Excellent! I want a couple of the best men. Ugo, Franco, "come with me? "The two nodded, smiling. We take care of the archers and then we will meet as you said.

"If we substitute for our men archers, you're notshoulder one thing.

- What next?

"Once we have secured the store, will launch an attack on *palazzo*. But remember! Be stealthy! They should not suspect anything! -Antonio arethen laughed and spat.Good luck, my friends ... *in bocca al lupo!* Ezio She gave a pat on the back.

Il lupo-Crepi Ezio replied, spitting as well.

The operation took place that night without any tropicalzo. Barbarigo archers never knew what they had been attackeddo, and so subtly were replaced by men of Antonio, the guards inside the warehouse succumbed quietly and without offering much resistanceence to the onslaught of the barktions, unaware that his comrades had been neutralized abroad.

The attack *palazzo* was the next target of the agenda of Antonio, but insisted on going Ezio outpost to assess whethersituation. Rosa, whose final stages of recovery were nottables through a combination of skills Antonio and Bianca, and she could now climb and jump almost as if I were already in great shape, wanted to accompany him, but Antonio forbade it. She took a tantrum. A Ezio entered his head the idea that Antonio, after all, I considered him more expendable than her, but quickly gave up that thought aside and prepared for the reconnaissance mission, tying the left arm Codex wristband with double-edged dagger in the right, the hidden blade. Had escalated ahead hard and did not want cobarrier carry the risk of poisonous dagger then, under any circumstances, was a truly lethal weapon and wanted to avoid an accidentent that could prove fatal to him.

He covered his head with the hood and making use of newtechniques you jump up to Rosa and Franco were inSenate, scrambled up the outer walls of *palazzo*, silent as a shadow and without attracting attention, until he came to tiledo and he saw the garden below. He saw two men engaged in conversation. They were heading to a side door is opened into aprivate channel stretch around the back of *palazzo*. Ifguiendo progresses from the roof. Ezio saw a gondola docked at a small jetty with the lanterns off, two gonhurt dressed in black. Firm over a gecko clinging to roofs and walls, Ezio down quickly and took refuge among the branches of a tree to hear the conversation. The two men were Emilio Barbarigo and nothing more and nothing less than Carlo Grimaldi, a member of the entourage of the Doge Moncenigo. They were accompaniedpanied by the secretary of Emilio, a lanky man dressed in gray, whose thick reading glasses slipped continuamenyou by the nose.

-... Your little house of cards is crumbling, Emimess, "said Grimaldi.

"It's a minor setback, nothing more. Merchants who challenge me and that shit Magianis Antonio will soon be dead or shackled, or Turkish rowers in a galley.

"I mean the Murderer. You are here, you know? So AntoTIN is shown as bold. Look, we have all been stolen or vanishSanding and have mocked our guards. I can not do more to prevent the doge tuck their noses.

- What is the Murderer's here?

- You utter fool, Emilio! If the teacher know what isyou can be so thick, you'd be dead meat. You know the damage it has done to our cause in Florence and San Gimignano.

Emilio closed right hand in a fist.

- I will crush him like a bug! He exclaimed.

"Yes, the truth is that it is sucking the blood. Who knows if he is not here right now listening to what we say?

"Yes, and now CarloNext thing you tell me is that Croes in ghosts.

Grimaldi looked into his eyes.

"The arrogance has made you a stupid, Emilio. If you are unable to see the big picture. You're just a big fish in a small pond.

Emilio grabbed his robe and, furious, I approached him.

- Venice will be mine, Grimaldi! I have provided Florence all their weapons! It is not my fault that this idiot Jacopo not used wisely. And do not try to make me look bad in front of the Master. If I wanted, I could tell you things that ...

- Save yourself the effort! And now I must go. Remember! The meeting will be in ten days at San Stefano, in front of the house of Fiorella.

"I remember Emilio said bitterly. The Master will know then how ...

"The Teacher talk and you listen," said Grimaldi. Bye!

Gondola climbed the dark and into the night.

"Cazzo! Emilio murmured to his secretary watching gondola disappear towards the Grand Canal. What if he is right? And if that damned Ezio Auditore *is* here? "He pondered for a moment. Look, now prepares the boatmen. Despise the bastards if you must. I want those boxes now and I loaded the boat ready in half an hour of your water clock. If Grimaldi tells the truth, I must find a place to hide, at least until the meeting. The Master will find a way to deal with the Murderer ...

"He must be working with Antonio de Magianis-Apunto the Secretary.

- I know that, idiot! Emilio said through gritted teeth. And now come and help me prepare the documents that spoke before the arrival of our dear friend Grimaldi.

They began to walk into the *palazzo* Ezio and followed them, without betraying their presence at all, like practiced spirit. Merged with the shadows, walking him if you will of a cat. Antonio knew that the attack would not start *palazzo* until he gave the signal, and first wanted to explore all that Emilio was up. What would those documents just mentioned?

- Why do people not attend to their common sense? "Emilio was telling his secretary while still following Ezio's idols. All this freedom of opportunity only more crime! We must ensure that the state controls all aspects of people's lives and at the same time, gives free rein to the private bankers and financiers. In this way, prosperous society. And if the opponents have to be silenced, not more than the price of progress. The Murderers belong to the past. They do not realize that what matters is the state, not individual. He shook his head from side to side. As Giovanni Auditore, and that it was a banker! One would think that would show more integrity!

Ezio gasped at the mention of the name of his father, but continued to control their prey while Emilio and his Secretary came into the office, selecting documents, packed and returned to the small pier that stood near the garden gate, where another gondola, older now, waiting for his master.

Emilio, taking the bag with documents that had previously loaded the Secretary, he released his last order:

"Send me a change of clothes. You know the address.

The secretary nodded and disappeared. There was no one else but the gondoliers, the stern and bow ready to cast off.

Ezio jumped from his perch to the gondola, which swung alarmingly. With two quick elbows, pushed the gondola through the water and grabbed Emilio in the neck.

- Guards! Guards! Emilio-gurgled, feeling groping to find the dagger in his belt.

Ezio caught her wrist just in time, after getting the gun, Emilio was about to sink into the belly of Ezio.

- Do not drive so fast! Ezio said.

- Murderer! You! "Growled Emilio.

"Yes.

- I kill your enemy!

"That does not make you my friend.

"Killing me will not solve anything, Ezio.

"I think that will help rid of a problematic Venice ... bug, "said Ezio, powering your hidden blade. *Requirei Escatn pace.*

With hardly a pause, Ezio slipped the mortal steel between the shoulder blades of Emilio ... Death came swift and silent. Peri Ezio CIA assassin was only comparable to the cold metal determination to fulfill the duty of his vocation.

Ezio, after cornering the body of Emilio on one side of the gondola, fumbled inside the bag to extract the documents. There were many things that might be of interest to Antonio, he thought as he screened quickly, because at that time did not have time to examine in detail, but he called him personally care: a page of vellum wrapped and sealed. Another page from the Codex!

When I was about to break the seal, an arrow quivered and stuck with a clang at the base of the gondola, between her legs. In the instantaneous state of alert, Ezio ducked and looked toward the place where the missile came. Two in the top of the walls of *palazzo*, an immense amount of archers Barbarigo.

One of them greeted him, waving. And acrobatic leaping down from above the high wall. Within a second was in his arms.

"Sorry, Ezio ..., a silly joke! But we could not resist.

- Rosa!

She snuggled against his chest.

- Back to the fight and ready for action! "He who do at him with a twinkle in his eyes. And we have taken the Palazzo Seta! We have liberated the merchants opposed to Emilio and now control the neighborhood. Come! Antonio wants to celebrate and wine cellar is legendary Emilio!

Time passed, and Venice seemed to be at peace. Nobody mourned the disappearance of Emilio, in fact, many believed he was still alive, and some imagined that simply was traveling abroad and going about their business in the kingdom Naples. Antonio made sure that the Palazzo Seta continue operating as silk, while Venice's commercial interests were not affected in general, nobody cared about the fate he would have run a simple business man, for he was ambitious or successful he had.

Ezio and Rosa had strengthened their relationship, but between them a heated rivalry exists. She had fully recovered and wanted to prove his own worth. One morning he entered the chambers of Ezio and said:

"Listen, Ezio, I think you need to get in shape. I want to see if you're still as good as when Franco and I will train. How about a career?"

- A career?

-Yes!

- How far?

"From here to Punta della Dogana. Beginning *and!*

And she jumped out the window before Ezio could react. The chase was wildly over the red roofs, almost dancing across the channel separating the buildings. He took off his coat and ran after her.

Finally arrived, side by side, the roof of the building maderia that rose on the tongue of land that was the end of the Back-hard, overlooking the Canal of San Marco and the lagoon. Across the canal were the low buildings of the monastery of San Giorgio Maggiore, and before the building of pink stone shining Palazzo Ducale.

"I think I won," said Ezio.

Rosa scowled.

"Nonsense. Anyway, saying it shows you're not a gentleman, and not a Venetian. But what could be specialrar of a Florentine? He paused. In any case, you're a liar. I won.

Ezio shrugged and smiled.

"Whatever you say, *Carissima*.

"Then, the spoils to the victor," she said, pulling the head of Ezio and giving her a passionate kiss on the mouth.

Rosa's body was soft and warm, and infinitely docile.

Chapter 16

Emilio got Barbarigo may not get to her appointment at the Campo San Stefano, but did not think Ezio missed. At the dawn of that bright morning in late 1485, was planted in the already elapsed square. The battle for supremacy on the Templars istobacco to be hard and long. Ezio began to believe that, as had happened to his father and uncle, that would turn also at work in his life.

With her head covered with the hood, mixed with multitude and soon found the figure of Carlo Grimaldi approachDose in the company of another man, austere, whose bushy beard and brown hair malcasaban with pale skin and blue, and he was dressed in red robes of an inquisitor of the state. Ezio immediately identified him as Silvio Barbarigo cousin Emiuncle, whom everyone knew as "IlRosso." It seemed nottar very high spirits.

- Where *is* Emilio? He asked impatiently.

Grimaldi shrugged.

"I told them I was here.

- Did you tell yourself? What else?

"Yes," reluctantly Grimaldi-. Myself! In person! I am concerned that trust me.

"And me too," muttered Silvio. Grimaldi gritted teethTES to hear that, but simply followed Silvio looking AROUNDdor, abstracted-. Maybe it comes to others. Walk a while.

They began their spacewalk *field* rectangular, they passed the church of San Vidal and palaces located at the end of the Grand Canal to San Stefano, stopping occasionally to look at the products that retailers EMPEZaban put in office to start the day's sales. Ezio followed them like a shadow, though it was complicated. Grimalditobacco nervous and constantly looking back suspiciously. Sometimes it was hard to stay close enough to their persecuted like to hear what they said.

"While we wait, you could get familiar with how things are going in the Doge's palace," said Silvio.

Grimaldi opened his hands.

"Well, to be honest, it is not easy. Mocenigo has circlesso very close. I tried to prepare the ground, as you asked, make suggestions for the interest of our cause, but obviously I'm not the only one seeking to capture their attention and no matter how old it is, that bastard is very clever.

Silvio took a glass figurine wearing a complicated issue, examined and returned to your site.

"In this case, you have to work harder, Grimaldi. Tietions that become part of your circle.

"I'm already one of its closest partners and greater trustza. I have taken years to position myself. Years of patience and planningtion, expectations, to accept humiliation.

"Yes," he said impatiently Silvio-. But what you have to give for it?

"It's more complicated than I imagined.

- Why?

Grimaldi made a gesture of frustration.

I do not know. I make every effort by the state, hard work ... But the reality is I'm not liked by Mocenigo.

"I wonder why," said Silvio coldly.

Grimaldi was too lost in thought as to realize the snub.

- It's not my fault! I am constantly trying to compleasure that son of a bitch! Find out what they most want and put it to his feet, the best ham of Sardinia, the latest fashions from Milan ...

"Maybe what happens is that the Doge do not like psychoFantes.

- Is that what you think I am?

"Yes. A flatterer, a mat, a ball ... Do I need to continue?

Grimaldi stared.

"Do not insult me, *Inquisitor*. You have no idea what that. You do not understand the pressure ...

- What I do not understand the *pressure*?

- No! You have no idea. Maybe you're a state official, but I'm a few steps from Doge almost every hour. You'd be in my place, because you think you could do better, but ...

- Have you finished?

- No! Listen. I am very close to the dux. I have dedicated my life to settle in that position and I say I'm convinced we can recruit to our cause Mocenigo. Gri-paused curse. I just need a little more time.

"I think you've already had enough time. -Silvio Ezio paused and saw that raised his hand to draw the attention of an older man with a frothy white beard, richly dressed, who was accompanied by a bodyguard, the tallest person Ezio had ever seen.

"Good morning, cousin," said the newcomer Silvio-. Grimaldi.

"Good morning, cousin Marco," said Silvio. He looked ataround-. Where is Emily? Did not come with you?

Setting Barbarigo was stunned and her expression would not be.

"From what I see you have not heard the news.

- What news?

- Emilio is dead!

- What? "Silvio, as always, was angry to find that his cousin, the bigger and more powerful, he was better informed- How have you been?"

"I can imagine," he said bitterly Grimaldi-. The *Assassino*.

Marco looked at him pointedly.

"Yes." Yesterday, at the last minute, they found his body in a canal. He must have been there ... long time. They say it had swollen to twice its size. So appeared float on the surface.

- Where must hide the Murderer? He asked Gricurse. We have to find him and kill him before he causes more damage.

"It could be anywhere," Marco said. Why do I always accompany Dante. I would not feel safe without it. "He stopped. In fact, for all we know, could be here, even now.

"We must act quickly," said Silvio.

"You're right," said Marco.

"But Mark, I'm very close. I can sense it. Give me just a few days Grimaldi pleaded.

"No, Carlo, Has had enough time. We can no longer permit our subtleties. If Mocenigo not sum to the cause, eliminate it and replace it with one of us. And we must do this week!

Dante, the giant bodyguard whose eyes had not ceased to watch the crowd from the moment he arrived accompanied Marco and Barbarigo, then spoke.

"We should keep going, *signori*.

"Yes," agreed Marco. The Master is waiting. Vamos!

Ezio moved like a shadow in the crowd and the posts, trying to keep a distance to allow him to hear the conversation of those men as they crossed the square and ran into the street leading to the Plaza de San Marcos.

- Teacher will agree with our new strategy? Silvio asked.

"It would be a fool not to be.

"You're right, we have no choice," agreed Silvio. Grimaldi looked then. In a sense what makes you necessary, "he added with a nasty tone.

"It's the Master who must decide the matter," said Gricurse. As it is he who decides who to put in place

Mocenigo ... you or your cousin Marco, here. And the best person to advise you on this matter I am!

"I was not aware that a decision would be taken, "said Marco-. I think the choice is obvious for everyone.

"I agree," said Silvio, very tense-. The choice should rest with the person who organized the whole operation, which took the idea of how to save the city.

Marco replied quickly.

"It would be the last to underestimate the tactical intelligence, good Silvio, but in the end, what it takes to govern is wisdom. Can not be otherwise.

"Gentlemen, please," said Grimaldi-. The teacher could advise the Council of Forty-One when they meet to elect a new Doge, but can not influence them. And for all we know, the Master might be thinking of someone who was not either of you ...

- You mean to you? Silvio asked incredulously, while Marco was laughing after launching a mocking laugh.

- Why not? I who has worked for real!

"*Signori*, please keep moving, "said Dante-. You will all be safer when we entered.

"Naturally," agreed Marco, accelerating the pace.

The others followed him without question.

"It's a good guy, that said Silvio Dante-. How much did you pay for it?"

"Less than it's worth," said Marco-. Is faithful and with bond ... He saved my life twice. I would not say that is exactly talkative.

- Who needs conversation with a bodyguard?

"I Grimaldi said we are reaching a discreet front door in the side wall of a building located in Campo Santa Maria Zobenigo.

Ezio, maintaining his usual safe distance, conscient as extreme vigilance was exercised by Dante, turned the corner of the square just in time to see them go. Glancing around to make sure that the coast was clear, climbed the wall of the building and bet on the balcony was just above the door. The next room windows were open, and inside, sitting in a chair made of great oak behind a long narrow table covered with papers, and purple velvet dress, was Spanish. Ezio merged with the shadows and waited, ready to listen.

Rodrigo Borgia was in a foul mood. The Murderer has disrupted and several of its key initiatives and there is a gelling of any attempt to kill it. And now he was in Venice and had removed one of the major allies that the Cardinal was there. And if this were not enough, Rodrigo had to spend the first fifteen minutes of the meeting listening to the handful of idiots who had in his service so stubbornly which of them would be the next doge. Apparently, those idiots had overlooked the fact he had already made their choice and had bribed key members of the Council of Forty-One, and his choice had fallen on the oldest, the most vain and the most accommodating of the three.

"Close and finally the peak-burst-. What I need from you is discipline and unwavering dedication to the cause, not self-seeking coward. *This* is my

decision and *will* performed. Barbarigo framework will be the next doge and elected a week after the death of Giovanni Mocenigo. A seventy-six years old, but not raise suspicions, however, must look natural. Think you can to take care of that, Grimaldi?

Grimaldi glanced at Barbarigo cousins. Setting istobacco boasting of his victory and trying to keep the com Silvio position despite his disappointment. What fools they were, he thought. Being or without being dux, remained puppets in the hands of the Master and the Master gave him the responsibility of truth. Grimaldi was allowed to think of better things when he responded:

"Of course, Master.

- When will you be closer to him?

Grimaldi reflected.

"I have the Palazzo Ducale at my disposal. It may not be very agreeable to Mocenigo, but I have full confidence and spend most of the time at your service.

"Well. Envenenalo. At the first opportunity.

"You tasters.

"By God, man, do you think I do not know? It is assumed that seenecianos good poisoners. Stir something in the meat after the tasters have tasted. Or in this Sardinian ham quand have so fond. But think about something or be worse for you!

"Let me the matter to me *Altezza*.

Rodrigo turned his angry gaze on Marco.

- I understand what you say you could make a proproduct suitable for our purposes?

Marco smiled contemptuously.

"It's the area that dominates my cousin.

"I could get my hands on the amount of *cantarella* sufficient for our purposes," said Silvio.

- What's that?

"One of the most effective types of arsenic and is very difficult to detect.

- Well! See to it!

"I must say, Master," said Marco- that we admire two of which I vinculeis in a personal and so closely with this company. Is not it dangerous for you?

"The Murderer not dare to come after me. He is intelligent, but never exceed in ingenuity. In any case, I feel like getting involved more directly. Pazzi let us down in Floence. I sincerely hope that Barbarigi not do the same ... "We launched an angry look.

Silvio snickered.

"The Pazzi were just amateurs ...

"The Pazzi," Rodrigo said, interrupting him were a fairly powerful and venerable, and ended by crushing a young Murderer the. No problem infravaloreis this enemy, and eventually also with Barbarigi. He paused to increase the impact of his words. Now go and make what you have to do. We can not afford another failure!

- What plans do you have, Master?

"I go to Rome. Timing is essential!

Rodrigo suddenly got up and left the room. From its strategic position on the balcony, Ezio saw him leave just the editorslaughter and cross the square, frightening in its path to Molo to a group of pigeons took flight. The other men followed him soon after separating and moving everyone to their destination. When all was silent, Ezio jumped to fall on the cobblestones in the ground and ran off to the headquarters of Antonio.

He was received by Rosa, who greeted him with a long kiss.

- Sheathe your blade, "she said smiling as their bodies came into contact.

"It's you who made me drawn. And are you-anapointedly gave who has his case.

Rosa took him by the hand.

"Now, then.

"No, Rosa, *my dispiace veramente*, I can not.

- You tired of me!

- Know that's not it! But I have to see Antonio. It's urpeople.

Rosa looked at him and saw the intense expression on his face, his cold blue-gray eyes.

"Okay. By this time I forgive you. It's in his office. I think that now that has got the real one, misses methat our model of Palazzo Seta! Come!

- Ezio! Antonio said as she saw him come-. I do not like that aspect. Is everything OK?

"I wish I was all right. I just discovered that Carlo Gricurse and the two cousins Barbarigi, Silvio and Marco, are shelltwo with ... a man who I know well, whom people call the Spanish. They are plotting to assassinate the Doge Mocenigo and replaced by one of their own.

"It's a terrible news. With one of their own as dux, have Drane in their hands the whole Venetian fleet and commercial empire. He paused-. And call me *me* criminal!

- Will you help me, then, to stop them?

Antonio offered his hand.

"You have my word, brother. And the support of all my men.

"And women," said Rosa.

Ezio smiled.

"*Grazie, amici.*"

Antonio was thoughtful.

"This will require some planning, Ezio. The Palazzo Ducale is so well defended that in comparison, the Palazzo Seta is like a public park. And I have no time to have a ma listat Quetta in order to plan ...

Ezio raised his hand and said with decision:

"Nothing is impenetrable.

The two were watching. Antonio Rosa laughed and smiled innocently.

- Nothing is impenetrable! No wonder we gUSTES therefore Ezio!

Late in that day, when fewer people had, Antonio and Ezio approached the Doge's palace.

"This kind of betrayal are no longer surprised" he was saying Antonio-. The Doge Mocenigo is a good man and I'm surprised it has lasted so long in power. As far as I'm concerned, small we were taught that the nobles were fair and kind. And I believed him. And although my father was a shoemaker reMendon and mop my mother, I aspired to be a lot more. I studied hard, I persevered, but I could never become a member of the class gobernante. If you were not born into, it is impossible to accept you. That's why I ask this question, Ezio: Who are VerdadeVenetian nobles ros? "Men like Silvio Grimaldi, Marco and Barbarigo? No! We are! The thieves, mercenaries and prostitutes. We are the ones that we run the city and any of us has more honor in his little finger tip that alleged gang leaders! We love Venice. The others are only as a means toenriches.

Ezio reserved opinion since it was hard to imagine AntoGoals, by nice guy he was, wearing the *ducale horn*. After a while they came to the Plaza de San Marcos and crossed to stand in front of the Pink Palace. The building was fine vigilado, despite the two consequentclimb without being seen on the andamiaje he had installed in the side wall of the cathedral, appendedta to the palace, when they saw the picture from that special place in the top saw, though they could jump onto the roof of the palace (which they did), access to the patio, even from there, was prevented by a tall fence topped with spikes curved ascending and descending. Were walking through the courtyard to GioVanni Mocenigo, Doge himself, a grand old man to stopCo. wrinkled sheath tucked into the lavish costumes and *horn* the leader of the city and state, talking with whom he had beenmarked as the murderer, Carlo Grimaldi.

Ezio listened attentively.

- Do you not understand what I'm offering you, *Altezza?*-EsCarl saying tobaccoor-. Listen, please, it is your ulesteem chance!

- How dare you talk like that? How dare you lovenazarme? "Said the Doge.

Carlo immediately began to apologize.

"Excuse me, sir. It was not my intention. But believe me, please, that your security is what worries me ...

The couple entered the building and disappeared.

"We have little time," said Antonio, reading the thoughts Ezio-. And we can not pass this gate. And even stillconsiguieramos it, look at the amount of guards there. *Dayvolo!* He took a punch in the air in frustration, forcing a group of pigeons take flight-. Look at them! The stickmore! How easy would it be if we could fly!

Suddenly, Ezio smiled to himself. And was time to hang out at the studio of his friend Leonardo da Vinci.

Chapter 17

Ezio! Long! -Leonardo received him as a brotherhand lost.

The Venice workshop had adopted the same look as your taFlorentine Miller, but the object was a prominent real-size version of a bat-like machine whose *raison d'être*, saEzio Bia well had to be taken seriously. But first things first, and had to deal with Leonardo.

"Listen, Ezio, sent me through a very grateful manUgo possible call another page of the codex, but did not do any tracking. So busy have you been?"

"I've been liadisimo" said Ezio, recalling Entonces the page that was found among the personal effects of Emilio Barbarigo.

"Well here it is. -Leonardo sought in the apparent chaos of the room and quickly came up with the perfectly coiled page of Codex, the sealing recovered. In this design does not show any weapon, but by the looks of the symbols and writingture manuscript, which I think is Aramaic or Babylonian, tiene to be an important page in that puzzle laberintico you are joining. It has seemed to recognize traces of a map. He raised a hand. But do not tell me anything! To me the only thing that interests me are the *inventions* revealed by these PaPages that I bring. I do not want to know more. A man like me is just immune to the danger as it can be useful, if discoveredbrier know too ... "And, very expressive, with a finger movement, Leonardo pretended to cut his cuement. And there's nothing more to say on my part, "continued" At this point, Ezio, I know enough to know that your views are not merely a social intention. Drink a glass of this horrific Veneto (for me there is nothing like Chianti) and somewhere there must be some fish cakes, if you're hungry.

- Have you finished your assignment?

"The *conte* is a patient man. *Salute!*-Leonardo Levanto his glass.

-Leo ... that machine of yours ... *Does it work* really? -QuestionsEzio to.

- Do you mean if you fly?

"Yes.

Leonardo scratched his chin.

"Well, it is still preliminary. I mean that is far less about ... but I think, modestly, that ... Yes! Of course it will work. God knows and I have devoted timeed!It is an idea that I'm not flush!

-Leo ..., "I can try?

Leonardo was surprised.

- Of course not! Are you crazy? It's too dangerous. To begin, we would have to upload it to the top of a tower to throw ...

The next day, before dawn, but just when the firstmere hints of pink-gray beginning to illuminate the horizonhorizon in the east, Leonardo and his assistants, after desthe flying machine mounted to transport, assemble finished higher again in the flat roof of Ca 'Pexaro, the family mansion pattern Leonardo gullible. Ezio was with them. At the foot of the city slept. Not even on the roof of PaDucale Lazzo had guards posted, it was the Time of the Wolf, where vampires and ghosts were deployed with greater splendordor. Only fools and scientists would venture out at that hour.

"It's all about," Leonardo said. And thank God, there is the coast clear. If anyone saw this thing could not believe his eyes ... and also if they found out that it is an invention of mine, issecretariats ended up in this city.

"I'll be fast," said Ezio.

"Try not to break," said Leonardo.

"It's a test flight," said Ezio. I'll go quiet. And now back to explain how this *bambino*.

- Have you ever noticed how to fly birds?Leonardo asked. It is not lighter than air, it is a matter of elegance and balance. Simply tietions to use the weight of your body to control the elevation and direction, and the wings will carry you alone. "Leonardo was a formerserious pressure. He gave a Ezio squeezing in the arm. *Buona fortuna*, my friend. You are, I hope, about to make history.

Leonardo aides carefully tied her for Ezio to below the machine. The bat wings stretched above him now. Held him facing forward with a tense slumbertea made from leather straps, freeing her legs and arms. For theLante had a crossbar horizontal timber, attached to the frame mainportantly also wood, which held the wings.

- Remember what I said! To one side to the other control the rudder. Forward and backward control the angle of the wings, anxious Leonardo explained.

"Thanks," said Ezio, breathing deeply.

I knew not to work the invention, in seconds would be taking the last jump of his life.

"Go with God," said Leonardo.

Good-bye, "said Ezio with a confidence that was not really.

Balanced the contraption above it, was installed and began to cobarrier to the edge of the roof.

The first feeling was that they felt the stomach, but then came a wonderful feeling of joy. Venice reeled beneath him while spinning and tumbling, but then the machine began to shake and fall from the sky. It was only by keeping the cold and recalledLeonard ndo instructionsdo about using the joystick, how Ezio got right the ship and guide it back, at the right time, to the roof of the Palazzo Pexaro. He managed to land running around with the bizarre craft, using all his strength and agility to keep it stable.

- For God's sake, has *worked!* Leonardo shouted, forgettinggiving a caution any time, triggering a machine Ezio and embracing passionately. You're a wonderful guy! You *flown!*

"Yes, by God I did," said Ezio, almost breathlessly. But I have not gone as far as needed.

His eyes moved to the palace of the Doge and the court which was his goal. And think of the little time I had to stop the killing of Mocenigo.

Then again in Leonardo's workshop, Ezio and the artist inventor made him a detailed set-up to the machine. Leonardo all the sketches were prepared on a large trestle table.

"Let me look at my shots well. You might find some thing, a way to prolong the duration of the flight.

I interrupted the hurried arrival of Antonio.

- Ezio! Sorry to bother you but it is important! My spies tell me that Silvio just got the poison has needed and that it has delivered to Grimaldi.

But just then Leonardo shouted in despair:

- No way! I tried it again and again and not work! I do not know how prolonged flight time. Damn! -Rabiso, threw down all the papers they had on the table. A UNPACKING flew up the chimney close and reached for the shot when burned. Leonardo stood watching, his face flattened, until a smile erased the anger of his face. My God! He cried. *Eureka!* Of course! I'm a genius!

He took fire as he could the papers had not yet arrived and stomped to douse the flames.

- Never give in to a fit of rage! -Advised. It would be terribly counterproductive.

- What has been what has been fixed yours? Asked Anthony.

- Look! Leonardo said. Do you not see how to ascend the ashes? High heat things up! Many times I've seen eagles flying through the air without even flapping wings, and yet, maintain themselves on top! The principle is very simple! This is so regret applying!

He took a map of Venice and spread it on the table. He inclined it with a pencil, said the distance from the Palazzo Pexaro the Palazzo Ducale and marked with crosses clearly points between the two buildings.

- Antonio! Cried-. Could you make your people prepare bonfires everywhere I checked and that ignited a row?

Antonio studied the map.

"I think we could fix it, but why?

- Do not you see? It is the journey that has to follow the flight of Ezio! The fires swept my flying machine and it until your goal! Heat rises!

- What about the guards? Ezio said.

Antonio looked.

"You'll be flying in that thing. For once, let us guard us. In any case, he added, some of them are busy elsewhere. My spies tell me that just returned from a Far Eastern country called China a strange cargo of white powder inside the small tubes. God knows what it is, but it must be valuable to see how we watch.

-Fireworks, Leonardo said almost to himself.

- What?

- Nothing!

Antonio's men prepared the fires that Leonardo had requested and were ready in the evening. Also cleared around guards or passers-by who might alert authorities to what was being plotted. Meanwhile, Leonardo's assistants were transported back to the flying machine and Ezio Pexaro roof, armed with his hidden blade and munequera protective, had settled there. Antonio was with him.

"Better you than me," he said.

"It's the only way to enter the palace. You said it yourself.

"I never dreamed this could happen. I still find it almost impossible to believe. If God had wanted volasemos ...

- Are you ready to signal your men? Asked Leonard.

"Of course.

"Then do it now and launch through the air Ezio.

Antonio went to the edge of the roof and looked down. Then pulled out a red handkerchief and waved it. And then watched as first one, then two, three, four and five of bonfires Brabant life.

"Excellent, Antonio. Congratulations. -Leonardo turned Ezio. And now, remember what I said. You fly Hoguera at stake. When you pass over them, the heat should stay in the air to reach the Ducal Palace.

And look carefully, Antonio said. There are archers on purpose two on the rooftops and shoot as soon as you see. Think you're a demon from hell.

"I would like to find a way to use the sword while flying with this thing.

"You're free foot Leonardo said thoughtfully. If, still sailing close enough archers to prevent their flechas, you could probably kick them out to the rooftops.

"I'll remember.

"Now you have to go. Good luck!

Ezio was launched from the roof into the night sky, heading to the first fire. He was losing altitude as it approached her, but when he was almost over, he noticed that the machine would ascend. Leonardo's theory worked! Continued volando. He saw that the thieves who took care of the fires upon cheered the sight and cheering. But the thieves were not the only ones they had seen. Ezio peek into the Barbarigo archers stationed on the roof of the cathedral and the buildings cercanos the Doge's palace. He managed to maneuver the flying machinery and dodge most flexible flechas, but a couple of them they agreed on the structure of wood. Swoop also got enough to knock a couple of archers. But as he neared the palace building, the Doge guard began to shoot fire arrows. One of them struck the starboard wing of the machine, which immediately caught fire. Ezio young girl who continue to maintain the course, but began to lose their ture at full speed. He saw a beautiful noble looking upwards bath and shouting that the devil was coming for her, but soon lost sight of. He released the controls and then started fighting with his harness that held him. At the last moment, managed to free himself and jumped

forward to land perfectly into cuclillas on the roof of a courtyard, beyond the fence that protected the palace of anything except of APsbirds. When he looked up, saw the flying machine stampedDose from the bell tower of San Marcos and his remains fall into the plaza, causing panic and chaos among those present. The scene distracted even the ducal archers, and took advantage of the circumstances Ezio's to descend quickly and hide. And in its descent to the Doge Mocenigo was looking out a window on the second floor.

-*Ma che cazzo?*"Said the Doge. What was that?

Carlo Grimaldi appeared afterwards.

"Probably some young people with fireworks. Come terminalnad your wine.

At this, Ezio ran through roofs and walls and prohealing remain outside the field of view of the archers, stood right next to the open window. Observed inside and saw the Doge rushing a drink. He jumped onto the sill and entered the room, shouting:

- Stop, *Altezza!* Do not drink ...!

The Doge was amazed at him and Ezio realized that he had come too late. Grimaldi smiled weakly.

- I do not think you got so damn punctual as usual, Young Murderer! *Messer Mocenigo* abandoned usnara shortly. The collapse has drunk poison to a bull.

Mocenigo angrily turned against him.

- What? What have you done?

Grimaldi made a gesture of repentance.

"You should have listened.

The Doge staggered and would have fallen had not co EzioDerrida on hold to accompany him to a chair, which flopped.

"I feel tired ... "Said the Doge. All is dark ...

"I'm sorry, *Altezza* Ezio said helplessly.

"It was time to taste the failure snapped Grimaldi Ezio, before opening the bedroom door and shout: "Guards! Guards! The Duke has been poisoned! I have the murderer!

Ezio ran across the room and Grimaldi grabbed by the neck, forcing him to come back, closing the door shut and locked the door. Seconds later he heard the guards running and club. He turned to Grimaldi.

"So failure, eh? So better do something to resolve it. He opened his hidden blade.

Grimaldi smiled.

"Kill me if you want," he said. But never defeat the Templars.

Ezio plunged the dagger into the heart of Grimaldi.

"Peace be with you," he said coldly.

"Well," said a faint voice behind him. Ezio turned and saw the Doge, even when white as death, was still alive.

"I'll get help ..., a doctor said.

"No ... it is too late. But I will die happier seeing my murderer has preceded me in the dark. Thanks. "Mocenigo was trying to breathe. Had long suspected he was a Templar, but I was too weak, too trusting ... Watch your bag. Grab the documents you have there. I am sure thatagainst something between them that will be useful to your cause, and avenge my death.

Mocenigo spoke smiling. But Ezio saw the smile withwas frozen on his lips, his eyes became glassy and his caBeza fell to one side. Ezio put his hand to his neck of the Doge to make sure he was dead, that there was no pulse. Ezio closed his eyes to the deceased, whispered a few words of blessing and quickly grabbed it and opened the bag of Grimaldi. And among a smallDo not fold documents, found a new page of the Codex.

The guards were beating the door, which was beginning to subside. Ezio ran to the window and looked down. The patio was packed with guards. Should even try for the roof. Sarolled out the window and began to climb the wall while the arrows whistled brushing his head slammed into the masonry on both sides of his body. When he reached the roof had to be facedmented by more archers, but caught off guard and took the element of surprise for shipping. But then ran into another difficulty. The fence that had come before him had prevented ahora trapped inside! The scale and quickly realized that was made just so that nobody could enter: the spikes were curved outwards and downwards. If he could climb to the top, could skip. And heard the footsteps of the guardsdays up in droves the stairs to the roof. Gathering all the forces that gave him his desperation, he took a running start and climbed to the top of the fence. And the next moment he was safely across, with the officers trapped inside. They were too armed to climb the fence with ease and Ezio also knew that in no case could surpass him in AgiliDad. He ran to the end of the roof, looked down, has jumpence the scaffold mounted on the wall of the cathedral and he slid to the floor. Speeding crossed the Piazza San Marco and disappeared into the crowd.

Chapter 18

The death of the doge the same night the devil appeared odd bird in the sky caused a stir in Venice which lasted for weeks. Leo's flying machinard had stamped on the floor of the Plaza de San Marcos made a ball of fire and was burnt to ashes become forces, since no one had dared to near that device Extran. New doge was elected, Marco Barbarigo, which took office. Solemnly swore in public to pursue the young murderer had a narrow escape from being caught and arrested and had ended the life of this noble servant of the state, Carlo Grimaldi, and probably also with the old Doge. Barbarigo guards and guards were at every ski ducalna and patrolling day and night channels.

Ezio, following the advice of Antonio, was inadvertently passdischarge remained locked in their headquarters, but seething with frustration that did not help the fact that Leonardo had temporarily left the city to knowquito his patron, the Earl of Peraxo. Rosa even managed to distract him.

But after a while, soon after the start of the year, Antonio called his office and greeted him with a grin.

- Ezio! I have two good news for you. First, your dear friend Leonardo is back. And second, is *CarNevale!* Everyone is masked, so you ... "But Ezio and was about to walk out the door-. Hey! Where you going?

- To see Leonardo!

"Come back soon ... I want to meet somebody.

- Who?

"It's called Sister Theodora.

- A nun?

- You'll see!

Ezio walked down the street with the hood over his head, making his way quietly between groups of men and women extravagantly dressed and masked to apiNaban streets and canals. He was at all times to groups of guards on patrol. Marco Barbarigo bit worried as Grimaldi's death as his predecessor, he mymo had helped plan and now that it had complied with the pious show of trying to find the culprit, could he forget the thread with a good public awareness and reduce paulatinamenyou the costly operation. But Ezio knew that if he was in the hands of the Doge catch and kill him secretly, I would. While still alive and could continue being a thorn in the Templars, Ezio continue counting among its main enemiegos. Therefore should remain in constant vigilance.

He worked his way smoothly to Leonardo's workshop and went without anyone seeing him.

"Glad to see you again," said Leonardo as a saludo-. This time I was practically dead. Suddenly I did not know most of you, after all that mess Mocenigo and Grimaldi, then my boss got into his head about the trip and insisted that I go with him to Milan, casually and Above, I have not podido to rebuild my flying machine because the Venetian navy wants to start designing things for them ... A nuisance! "Theythen laughed-. But the important thing is that you're alive and kicking!

- And I'm the most wanted man Venice!

"Yes. A double murderer, and two of the most outstanding citizensstate markets.

"You know that's not true.

"You would not be here otherwise. You know that candes trust me, Ezio, and everyone here. At the end of the day, we were the ones that made you fly to the Palazzo Ducale. -Leonardo and appeared slapped one of his helpipients with a jug of wine-. Luca, could find a carnival mask for our friend? Something tells me it could be very useful.

"*Grazie, amico mio.* And I also I have something for you. -Ezio gave the new page from the Codex.

"Excellent," said Leonardo to recognize immediately.

He made some space on the table, unrolled the scroll and began to examine it.

"Hmmm ... He said, frowning and highly concentrateddo-. Here is the design of a new weapon, fairly complexha, indeed. Appears to be also bound to carry the doll, although it is not a dagger. -Carefully inspect the manuscript again-. I know what it is! Is a firearm, but in miniature ... In fact, it is the size of a hummingbird.

"It seems impossible," said Ezio.

"There's only one way to find out, and none other than manufacturingLeonardo said the-. Fortunately, my assistants are former Venetianengineering experts. We get to it right now.

- And what about the rest of your work?

"Oh, I can wait," said Leonardo happily-. Totwo I have a temper and it's okay to let you create ... In fact, used to leave me alone!

The gun was ready in a matter of days and Ezio set out to prove it. For its size, scope and power, was exnary. Like knives, was designed to be affixed to the spring mechanism that Ezio had strapped to his arm and could reget inside, so that was hidden and is operatedbath at the time that it was necessary to use it.

- How is it possible that I've never been a thing? Leonardo said.

"The main question," said Ezio, surprised is how it could happen like this idea a man hundreds of years ago.

"But it happened, and is a magnificent machine. I hope you find it useful.

"I think this new toy comes at the momentappropriate to forward said Ezio.

"I understand," said Leonardo-. But the less you know about the topic, the better, although I would guess that has something to do with the new doge. I do not understand politics, but sometimes I sense the tricks.

Ezio nodded significantly.

"It's a topic that best would have to talk to Antonio. And better too that you put that mask ... As long as *Carnevale* you can walk the streets without any problems. But remember, no weapons over there! Had well kept up his sleeve.

"Let me see now," Antonio said Ezio-. Wants to introduce a person ..., a nun named Sister teodora, in the Dorsoduro.

- Oh, Sister Teodora! Leonardo said smiling.

- Do you know?

"He's a friend of mine and Antonio. Te like.

- Who is it?

"I'll find out," Leonardo said, still smiling.

Ezio headed to the address he had given Antonio. The building did not look like a convent. Called, invited enseguida to go and was instantly convinced that he had equivocado of place, since he was shown into a room that you rememberThe room was much Paola in Florence. And the smart young people who were running from one side to the other nuns had nothing. When preparing to put back the mask to leave, he heard the voice of Antonio moments later appeared on the arm of a beautiful and elegant woman sen lips and eyessual that this time it was dressed as a nun.

- Ezio! You came! "Said Antonio. I was a bit clearscho-. Let me introduce you ... sister Theodora. Teodora, meet a. .. How could I say? The man most talented of all Venice!

"Sister," said Ezio, bowing. Looked at withAntonio tinuacion-. Did I miss something? I've never had a religious nature.

Antonio laughed, but when Sister Theodora spoke, it was surprisingly serious.

"Everything depends on how you look at religion, Ezio. Not only the souls of men those requiring comfort.

- Have a drink, Ezio!Antonio said-. We need to talk, but first relax. Here you are perfectly safe. Have you met the girls? Did you like some? Never Preocoupes, do not tell Rosa. And you have to tell ...

Antonio was interrupted by a shout from one of the rooms surrounding the hall. Suddenly the door opened and a man with eyes wide open and swungdo a knife. Behind him, lying on a bed soaked with blood, a girl was writhing in agony.

- Stop him! Cried-. I was stabbed and robbed me the money!

With a furious roar, the maniac was with another girl before the poor could react and he brought the knife to the throat.

- Or leave me out of here, Or I'll nail it too!-Chioped, pressing the knife so he did poke a small drop of blood-. I'm serious!

Antonio, sober suddenly stared at Teodora and Ezio. Theodora also looked Ezio.

"Well, Ezio said with a coolness that caught by Sister Eziodam- you have before you a chance to leave me impressed.

The maniac was crossing the room toward the door, where a small group of girls crowded. When he arrived, he shouted:

- Open! "But they were paralyzed with fear-. Open the fucking door and nail it!

Sank a little knife in the throat of the girl. Blood began to slide down collar.

- Let her go! Ezio-ordered.

The man turned to face him, a horrible expression on his face.

- Who are you? Does *benefattore of cazzo*? I do not obligues to stop it!

Ezio stared at the man, then looked at the door. The girl had fainted in his arms, was a dead weight. Ezio realized that the man hesitated, but at any time would have to release it. Was prepared. It would be complicatedmarket, the other women were very close, would have to choose the moParliament must then act quickly, and knew he had very little experience with his new weapon.

"Open the door," he said of the decision to a group terrified prostitutes.

As she prepared to do so, the crazy slid down the girl, who was still bleeding. Willing to run to the caLLE, Ezio took off his attention for a second, and that urgeEzio was enough for you to power your small pistol. Fired.

There was a bang and a flame dry, followed by a puff of smoke that seemed to spring from between the fingers of the right hand of Ezio. The manic, with a surprised expression on his face drawn yet, fell to his knees with a precise hole in the forehead and part of his brains spattering the doorway behind him. The girls screamed and the man quickly turned away as he collapsed forward. Teodora shouted some orders and the servants rushed to help the two girls havearid, but arrived too late for lying on the doring quarters, bled.

"You have our gratitude," said Teodora Ezio when she had restored order.

"I arrived too late to save her.

"You saved others. He could have killed more than not being here to stop you.

- What have used witchcraft to kill him? Asked a startled Antonio.

"It's not witchcraft. Just a secret. The eldest of a throwing knife.

"I think it will be useful. Our new dux are dead scared. Is always surrounded by guards and not leave his *Palazzo*. -Antonio paused-. I imagine that Marco Barbarigo is as follows in your list.

"It's an enemy so great as in his day was his cousin.

"I help," said Teodora, adding to the conversationtion-. And our opportunity is very close. The Doge's a big party *Carnevale* and have to leave *palazzo* for it. No expense has been remedied. Because you can not win the favor of people want to buy. According to my spies, has brought even China

fireworks!

"That's why I've asked you to come today," explained Antonio Ezio-. Sister Theodora is one of us and is aware of everything that happens in Venice.

- How to get an invitation to the party? "She questions Ezio to.

"It's not easy," she said-. To enter you need a more face of gold.

"Neither would be very difficult to get with one.

"Not so fast: each mask *is* an invitation. -Mattdora smiled then-. Anyway, I have an idea. I think we may be able *win* a mask. Come, come with me.

Removed him from the others and took him to a quiet garden hasbia in the back of the building, with a source singing over an ornamental pond.

"Tomorrow, on the occasion of the carnival will be held each Thursspecial risks that are open to everyone. There are four games and the winner will win a gold mask and it will be intered guest of honor at the party. You have to win, Ezio, since access to the party gives you access to Marco Barbarigo. He stared-. And when you go to the party, I advise that you carry eglflute thing that spits fire, it will not get closer to your obsubjective enough to stick a knife.

- Could a question,?

"You can try. Do not guarantee a response.

"I have curiosity. Vais dressed in a nun's habit, even it is clear that you are not.

- And how do you know why? Te assure you, my son, I'm homeda with the Lord.

I do not understand. Also are a courtesan. In fact, I'dgis a *bordello*.

Theodora smiled.

"I see no contradiction anywhere. Decide how I practice my faith, I choose to do with my body ... are my choicetions and I am free to take them. He paused, thinking for a moment-. Watch-continued- Like many young girls, I was drawn to the Church, but gradually growth assumptionsingredients of this city disappointed me. For men, God is merely an idea in their heads, and not in deeperdo your heart and body. Do you see where I'm going, Ezio? To attain salvation men have to learn to love. My girls and I provide that knowledge to our congregation. Naturally, there is no sect of the Church agrees with me, why I had to create mine. Maybe not traditional, but it works, and the hearts of menmen in my care is becoming firmer. "Among other things, I guess.

"You're a cynic, Ezio. He held out his hand-. Skill becomesna and take care of the games. Meanwhile, go with caregiven and do not forget your mask. I know you know taking care of yourself, but our enemies are looking for you.

Ezio wanted to make a few adjustments to his weapon, so on the way back to the headquarters of the guild of barktions, went back to Leonardo's workshop.

"Glad to see you, Ezio.

"You were right about his sister Theodora, Leonardo. A true free thinker.

"If I were not so well protected, would have trouble with the Church, but has powerful fans.

"I can imagine. "But Ezio realized that Leonardo was slightly abstracted and looked at him strangely-. What about Leo?

"It might be better not to tell, but if you figure it out by casuality would be worse. Look, Ezio, Cristina Calfucci is in Venice with her husband on the occasion of *Camevale*. Of course, now called Cristina d'Arzenta.

- Where you stay?

"She and Manfred are welcome at my employer. So I know.

- I have to see it!

-Ezio ... are you sure it's a good idea?

"Tomorrow will pick up the gun. The I need to then I'm afraid ... I have some urgent business to attend.

"Ezio, I would not leave the streets unarmed.

"I carry weapons in the Codex.

With heart pounding, he went to Palaz Eziozo Pexaro, stopping in the office of a notary publicPUBLIC who paid him to write a short note, saying:

My dear Cristina:

I meet you alone and away from our host tonight when the nineteenth century. I'll wait on the sundial of the Rio Terra degli Ognisanti ...

... and signed with the name of "Manfred." Handed in *palazzo* the count and waited.

There was an idea with little chance of success, but it worked. Cristina appeared only once with a raised rifle and ran toward the Dorsoduro. He followed. Howdo was to rendezvous and carbine had gone to a disdiscrete substance, he appeared. Both wore face masks, but he was more beautiful than ever. Could not resist. He took her in his arms and kissed her, long and tender kiss.

She was released last hug and removing the mask, looked uncomprehending. Then, before he could Impedirselo, Cristina took the mask.

- Ezio!

"Forgive me, Cristina, I saw ...- no longer carried their Colgante. Of course not.

- What the hell are you doing here? How dare you kiss me this way?

"It's okay, Cristina ...

- Did not pass *nothing*? I have eight years no see or have nottice from you!

"I was afraid not to come if not using this little groundwarefugees.

"You're right ... Of course it would not have come! I remember that the last time we met we kissed in the street and then, with the coolness of a cucumber, you saved my pro lifeput me and allowing me to marry him.

"It was what I had to do. He loved you and I ...

- Who cares what he wants? I loved you *you!*

Ezio not know what to say. It felt as if the world had collapsed.

"Do not come back for me, Ezio," he continued with tears Cristinabut in the eyes-. Not stand it, and it is clear that now bears another life.

-Cristina ...

There was a time when I would have been enough to lift a finger and I ... He stopped-. Goodbye, Ezio.

Watched helplessly and began to walk along with his companion, turned a street corner. Do not look back.

Cursing, he and his destiny, Ezio returned to the headquarters of the thieves.

The next day he awoke in a state of grim determination. He picked up the gun in Leonardo's workshop, thanked him and also collected the Codex page, hoping that, in his moParliament could take her uncle Mario, along with the other who was still in his possession, which had coggone to Emilio. He went on toTheodora tinuacion home. From there, she accompanied him to the Campo di San Polo, where they were to take place games. They had erected a platform in the center of the plaza, on which sat two or three officers behind a table noting the names of the contestants. Among the people, Ezio was emaciated and sickly figure of Silvio Barbarigo. And also surprised to see the huge bodyguard with him, Dante.

"I will face him," said Teodora-. "Think you can?"

"If there is no choice ...

Finally, gathered the names of all participants (Ezio had registered under an assumed name), mounted the platform a tall man wearing a red coat. He was the master of ceremonies.

There would be four games in total. The contestants compete with each other in each of the games and a panel of judges decide the winner. Ezio Fortunately for many of the contestants, to keep the carnival spirit, decided to compete inmasked.

The first game was a foot race, won Ezio facilitateity, much to the chagrin and Silvio Dante. The second, more comcated, consisting of a resistance struggle in which contestsSaints had to compete among themselves to try to capture his opponent emblematic flags that organizers have beenbian given.

Also in this game, Ezio was declared the winner, but felt uncomfortable to see the look on the faces and Silvio Dante.

"The third game," announced the master of ceremonies-comcombines elements of both ppiles and add new ones.This time, you have to use speed and skill, but also the charisma and charm! He spread his arms and pointed to a group of womenelegantly dressed beef was in the square, smiled coyly-. Several of our ladies have provided voluntarysecretariats to help, "continued the master of ceremonies-. Algunas of them are in the square. Others wandering the surrounding streets. Even find some shipped in gondolas. Will recognize the ladies for the ribbons in their hair. Your work, distinguished competitors consist of tape to collect the maximum possible in the time to run my hourglass. When the time comes to an end, we rang the church bell. I can say without equivocation that independent risktemente how fortunate you smileThis will be for you the pasatiempo day more enjoyable! The man who returns with more tapes will win and be one step closer to getting the MostGolden Face But remember, if these games have no direct winner will be the judges who will decide which of you will be lucky to attend the celebration of the Doge! And now ... Begin!

Time passed, and as promised by the master ceremonias, fast and pleasant. San Polo bell beat her when the last grains of sand fell from the upper chamber to the lower chamber of the watch and the contestants returned to the plaza. They delivered the tapes to Referees, Some smiling, others flushed. Dante only remained expressionless, but he turned red with rage when the counting ended, the emcee got up again, Ezio arm.

"Well, mysterious young man, now you're in luck," said the master of ceremonies-. We trust that your good fortune not abandoned youne at the final hurdle. He turned to address the crowd while riding cleared the stands and ropes that would make it a boxing ring-. The latest evidence, ladies and gentlemen, is completely different. This will only brute force. The competitors will fight amongst themselves until they are all removed except two. These last two will fight until one of them falls knocked out. And then come the motion that you are all waiting! It will announce the final winner of the Golden Mask, but be careful with your bets ... We still have plenty of time to disappointments and surprises!

It was in this last game I said Dante, but Ezio, bringing youdo use other skills and very light on his feet, managed to reach the final pair and face the gigantic bodyguards. The pudren seemed to pile the man, but Ezio was agile enough to ensure you do not receive strong punches and got even the odd blow to the chin with the leftda and more than a right hook.

In the last fight there was no rest between rounds and After a while, Ezio realized that Dante was beginning to be tired. But also, on the corner of her eye, she saw Silvio BarBarigo spoke urgently with the master of ceremonies and with the jury sitting at the table in the shade of an awning, not far from the ring. He thought he saw change hands a bulging leather bag, although it was not quite sure because I had to continue paying attention to his opponent, now furious, tried to hit hard. Ezio dodged and ran two fast ganrights against the jaw of Dante, and the last, the big man fell. Ezio Dante stared at him and gave him a lookda furious.

"This is not over," he growled, but had trouble joining. Ezio looked the master of ceremonies and raised his arm to get his attention, but the man remained expressionless.

- Are we sure that all competidores have been removed?Shouted the master of ceremonies-. *Everyone?* No podemos announce the winner until we *Safe!*

At the moment two grim-looking men were disimportance of the crowd to climb into the ring, a murmur reran the square. Ezio looked to judges, but they look divertedda. The men were preparing to go around and saw that both hid a short knife, almost invisible, within reach.

-So things are going well? "He said-. Anything goes, then.

With agility got away at the time that Dante, from the ground, tried to make her fall by grabbing her ankles. He then gave a great leap and extended the leg to give a kick in the face of one of their new opponents. He spat the teeth and staggered. As he fell, he stepped foot iz hardquierdo the second man, crushing his instep. Then he herded nonstop punches in the stomach and when men doBlegen, kneed him in the chin. Howling in pain, this laststaggered mo too. He had bitten his tongue and blood flowed in torrents from her mouth.

Without looking back, Ezio jumped in the ring and confronted the master of ceremonies and judges embarrassed. The crowd threw a cheer.

"I think we have a winner," said Ezio the master of ceremonies.

The man exchanged glances with the judges and Barbarigo Silvio, who was standing next to them. The master of ceremonies came into the ring, avoiding blood as he could, and went to the muchedumbre.

- Ladies and gentlemen!"He announced after coughing nervoso to clear his throat-. I think everyone will agree with me that today we enjoyed a tough and fair fight.

The crowd kept cheering.

"And in these cases it is difficult to choose the authentic lookwe shared ...

People were puzzled. Ezio exchanged glances with teodora, who was very close.

"It was a tough job for the judges and me-prosiled the master of ceremonies, which began to sweat and had to wipe his forehead, but there must be a winner and together, we have chosen one. "And after saying it leaned and with difficulty, helped Dante to sit-. Ladies and gentlemen ... I give to know the name of the winner of the Golden Mask, the *signore* Dante Moro!

The crowd whistled and booed him, uttering cries of disapprovalCORDING, and the master of ceremonies, along with the judges, had to withdraw hastily when spectators began throwing all the garbage we managed to find. Teodora Ezio ran and saw together how Silvio, with a wry smile on his face angry, helped Dante to descend from the podium and depositwork towards an alley.

Chapter 19

Of back to the "convent" Teodora, Ezio strove to convince Teodora and Antonio while watching him with concern.

"I saw Silvio bribed the master of ceremonies," said Teodora. And no doubt also filled the pockets of the jury. I could not do anything about it.

Antonio laughed mockingly and Ezio looked angry.

"It's easy to understand why Silvio wanted to achieve, above all, that their man did with the Golden Mask," continued Teodora. Remain on alert and do not want to cross the barrier to the Doge Marco. He looked at Ezio. Not rest until they see you dead.

"In that case, I expect many sleepless nights.

"We have to think. The party is tomorrow.

-Find a way to follow up the party, Dante sided Ezio. Take off his mask y. ..

- How? Antonio wanted to know. "Killing the poor *stronzo*?"

Ezio looked angry.

- Do you have a better idea? You know very well what is at stake!

Antonio raised his hands, indicating that their disapproval.

"Look, Ezio ... if you kill him, canceled the party, and Marco is condemned back in *palazzo*. We lost the time ... Again! No, it's stealing the mask without making noise.

"My girls can work" said Teodora. Many of them will come to the party ... as cheerleaders. Might decrease bringing Dante while you get the mask. And once there, do not be afraid. I also be present.

Ezio nodded reluctantly. He did not like being told what he had to do, but in this case knew that Teodora and Antonio were right.

-*Va bene* "He said.

The next day, at sunset, Ezio tried to be at a point in the journey that Dante had to do to attend the party. For the few girls hovered around Teodora. At last the big man. Had made an effort with their costumes, which were expensive but flashy. Wearing the Golden Mask hanging from his belt. As soon as I saw the girls push were to whisper flattery and greet, approaching him, two of them taking him by the arm and making sure the mask was hanging from the rear. Thus accompanied him to the wide area was cordoned off near the Molo, where would you see the party place and where, in fact, it had begun. To pressure gauge accurately their action, Ezio chose the last minute to cut the skin and release the belt of Dante. Took it and ran the youth went to put the guards controlled access to the party before that he should make Dante. Upon seeing him, they let Ezio, but when Dante appeared moments later and found the supposedly carrying mask hanging from his belt, he discovered he had vanished. The escort girls who had hitherto had disappeared into the crowd and had covered his face with masks too, so it was impossible to recognize them.

Dante was still arguing with the guards at the gate, which they had received strict orders, while Ezio made his way among the attendees to make contact with Teodora. She received warmly.

- You did it! Congratulations! And now, listen: Oceanco remain very cautious. He is staying in your vessel, the *Bucintoro* Duke, which is moored right in front of Molo. Can not get closer to him, should find a place from which to launch your attack. He turned to call three or four of his courtesans. These girls will cover your movements as you move among the people.

Ezio was launched but when in the company of girls, radiant with satin and silk dresses in silver and red, made his way among the guests, he noticed a tall man and circumstances suspicious over sixty years of age, with blue eyes, intelligent eyes and white goatee, who was talking with a noble Venetian of similar age. Both wore small masks that barely covered his face and recognized the former as Ezio Agostino Barbarigo, the younger brother of Mark. Agostino would have much to do with the fate of Venice in the event that his brother had occupied a disgrace, and Ezio considered desirable approach thereby overhears the conversation they had.

When Ezio Girlhood, Agostino laughed thinly.

"Honestly, I think my brother is ashamed to own my name with this exhibition.

"You have no right to talk about it in that tone," said the noble. It is the dux!

"Yes, yes. Is the dux-granted Agostino, stroking his goatee.

"It's your party. Of *Carnevale*, and may spend as much money as it deems appropriate.

"It's dux, but only nominally, Agostino said more dry. And the money we're spending the money of Venice, not yours. He lowered his voice. There are more important things at stake, you know it.

"Marcus was the man chosen to govern. It is true that your father did not think I could get where it is and why it was you who sent his political ambitions. But that now, considering how things are, is irrelevant.

-I never *wanted* be dux ...

"In that case, I congratulate you on your success," he said coldly noble.

"Look," said Agostino, restraining. Power is more than being rich. Do you really think my brother who was elected by more than for their wealth?

- Was chosen for his wisdom and leadership skills!

Were interrupted by the start of the fireworks. Agostino watched them only for a moment and said with a below:

- And is this what you do with that knowledge? "Offering a spectacle of lights? It hides in the Ducal Palace as the city will under and thought that a few explosions expensive enough to make people forget all their problems.

The noble frowned.

-A people like the show. It's human nature. See how ...

But at that moment, Ezio detected the huge figure of Danl broke through the guests, accompanied by notesment of guards, looking for him, no doubt. Continued to advance until you find a hiding place from which to acyield to the dux in the event that left the *Bucintoro* moored a few meters from the seafrent.

It sounded a fanfare and fireworks stopped by the moment. The guests sat in silence and burst actguido into applause when Marco appeared on the port side of the barge state to address the public and a page I made:

"*Signore e signori!* I present to you our dear doges *Venezia!*

Marco began his speech.

"*Benvenuti!* Welcome, dear friends, the most splendidDido social event of the season!In peace or war, in times of prosperity or hardship, *Venezia* always have *Camevale!*...

While still talking dux, Theodora approached Ezio.

"I'm too far," said Ezio-. And do not think losing his ship. So I will have no choice but to swim to it. *Merda!*

-I would not try, "he said quietly Teodora-. Te detectionsecretariats soon.

"Then I have to ...

- Wait!

The dux was still talking.

"Tonight we celebrate what makes us great. The color with which our light shines above the world!

He stretched his arms and fireworks erupted over. The crowd cheered in approval.

- That's right!Teodora said-. Use your *gun!* Which empleaste to kill that murderer in my *bordello*. Seize the explosions of fireworks when they return to begin to reduce the noise of your shot. Do it at the right time and you can get out of here without anyone noticing anything.

Ezio stared.

"I like how you think, sister.

"It's just that find the shot. Just bedrastic a chance. He squeezed his arm-. *Buona fortune* my son. Te wait on *bordello*.

Disappeared mingling with the partygoers inEzio detected between them back to Dante and his thugs, whoguide searching. Silent as a ghost, came to a lugar in the spring as close as possible to the point from where Mark was giving his speech. Luckily, his clothes resplandecientes, illuminated by the light of the party, made him a perfect target.

Doge's speech progressed, and he used it to pre Ezio stop and wait to attention as fireworks will resumewill give. To get out of there unscathed, had to find the perfect moment.

"We all know that we have overcome troubled times was saying Framework-. But we've overcome them together, and *Venezia* it has been strengthened ... Transitions of power are complicated, but we weathered the change in style and tranquility. It is easy to lose a doge in the prime of life, and it is frustrating to see that the murderer of our beloved comrade Mocenigo is liber and unpunished. But we take comfort in the idea that many were beginning to feel uncomfortable with the policies of my predecessorsuccessor, to feel insecure and doubt the path that was leading us. "Among the guests, several shouted in appropriate signalCORDING, and Marco, smiling, raised his hands to silence them-. Well, my friends, I say again that I have found the right way! It is a beautiful place and go there together! The future vislight for *Venezia* power is a future, a future of wealth. Build a fleet as large as our enemies fear us as we never have feared! And the seas will expand our trade routes and we'll bring home spices and treasuresros with which we could not dream since the days of Marco Polo! Marco's eyes lit up when his voice took a threatening tone-. And those who oppose us want tocirle following: careful with the side that you choose, because either you are with us or you are on the side of evil. And here we do not want enemiegos! I will pursue, I expel, destroy you! -Volsaw hands up and said:- Y *Venezia* will always be the brightest jewel of all civilization!

And when he dropped his arms in triumph, began a poTENTE display of fireworks, a final fireworks conversiontio night into day. The sound of explosions was deafening, and the tiny shot Ezio lost between them. And he was confused as to the crowd before people had TIMEpo to react when he saw Marco Barbarigo, one of the Doge of shortest reign in the history of Venice, stagger, takeDose hand on his heart, and dropped dead on the deck of the barge ducal.

"*Requiescat in pace* Ezio muttered to himself.

But as the news broke, it spread rapidly and came to the brothel before he did Ezio. He was greeted with cries of admiration for Theodore and his courtesans.

"You must be exhausted," said Theodora, taking him by the arm and leading him into an inner room-. Come, relax!

But first, Antonio also congratulated him.

- The savior of Venice! Exclaimed-. What I can say? Maybe I was wrong for doubting you so easily. Now at least we will have the opportunity to see how the pieces fit ...

- Enough for now about it!Teodora said-. Come, Ezio. You've worked hard, my son. I think your body exhausted neNeed some comfort and relief.

Ezio quickly realized what he meant and he followed suit.

"You are right, sister. I have so much pain that needsre much comfort and relief. I hope you can fix it.

- Oh! Teodora said smiling-. Ease your pain I do not mean myself! Girls!

A bevy of courtesans went running alongside Ezio toward the room at the center of which was a bed imhustling and, with it, a device similar to a chair,

but with pulleys and belts, and chains. He remembered something he had seen in Leonardo's workshop, but did not imagine what it could serve.

Exchanged a long look with Theodora and followed her bedroom, slamming the door behind him.

A couple of days later, Ezio was at the Rialto Bridge, relaxed and recovered, watching people walk up and down. Was considering going to take a couple of glasses of Veniceto before *ora di pranzo*, when he saw a man running hasCIA and whom he recognized at once: one of the messengers of Antonio.

- Ezio Ezio! "Said the man approaching him-. *Be AntoNIO* want to see you ... Is an important issue.

"Then go quickly," said Ezio, leaving the bridge after the messenger.

Antonio was in his office together, to the surprise of Ezio, Agostino Barbarigo. Antonio made the presentations of rigor.

"It's an honor to meet you, sir. I feel the loss of your brother.

Agostino made a motion with his hand, less importantimportance to the issue.

"I appreciate your sympathy but to be honest, my brother was a fool and was entirely under the control of the faction of Borgia in Rome ..., something that I would not want to happen ever return to Venice. Fortunately, a civic-minded person herebo with that dangerous killers. In an original and curious ... Ht must research is evident, but personally I have no idea where to lead ...

-*Messer Agostino* will be chosen soon, said duxAntoNIO-. This is good news for Venice.

"This time the Council of Forty-One has worked RaQuick-drily said Ezio.

"I think they have learned the error of their processes-replicationed with a shy smile Agostino-. But do not pretend to be the dux at only nominal, as was my brother. Which brings us to the issue we have now in hand. Our horrible cousin Silvio Arsenal has served the military district of the city, and has posted a garrison of two hundred mercenaries.

"And when ye dux can you not order them removed?

"I'd be fine," said Agostino- but extravaganzances of my brother have exhausted the resources of the city and will be hard to resist a force long enough to have the Arsenal under his control. And the Arsenal, Venice not control, however dux it!

"In that case," said Ezio- we have to solve on our own.

- Well said! "Antonio was glowing. And I think we have the Carambare right for the job. "Have you heard of Bartolomeo d'Alviano?

"Of course. The *condottiero* I was serving itPapal results! Have rebelled against them, I know.

"Now is based here. Silvio, who, as you well know, is the service of Cardinal Borgia, is not exactly the holy ofdevotions, "said Agostino-. Bartolomeo is installed in San Pietro, east of Arsenal.

"I'll visit.

"Before doing so," said Antonio Ezio- *Messer Agostino* has something for you.

Among his robes, Agostino took a roll of vellum old with a broken black wax hanging from a ragged fivered ta.

"I had my brother among his papers. Antonio thought he could be of interest. Consider a payment ... services rendered.

Ezio took it. Knew immediately what it was."Thank you, *signore*. I am sure that will help in the battle that lies ahead.

Pausing only to arm, Ezio acer soonCarse Leonardo's workshop, where he was surprised to find her friendgo pack our bags.

- Where are you going now? Ezio asked.

"I go to Milan. Would send a message before leaving, of course. Together with a pack of bullets for your *gun*.

"Well I'm glad I found you still here. Look, I have another page from the Codex!

"Excellent. I'm very interested. Pasa. My man Luca and the others continue with this. At this point I have them as wellTrenado. It's a shame you can not take them all with me.

- What will you do to Milan?

Lodovico Sforza, has made me an offer I could not refuse.

- What projects were you here?

"The Navy had to cancel. No money for new projects. Apparently, the last doge virtually ended all. I could have made the fireworks, without all the expense of going to look to China. But never mind. Venice is at peace with the Turks and they said they expect my return. Luca leave here, because it would feel like a fish out of water away from Venice, with a few basic drawings to begin. And as the Count, is pleased with the portraits of family ... although personally I think would be better if more work. -Leonardo began to unroll the sheet of vellum. And now, let's take a look at this.

"Promise me let me know when you get back.

"I promise, pal. And as for you, keep me informeddo what you do, if you can.

"I will.

"Well ... -Leonardo extended BPPage before him and examined-. There is something here that looks like a sketch of the double-edged dagger that went with your wrist guard, but is incomplete and could be an earlier sketch of that design. The only remaining tiene importance connected with the other pages ... Look, there are more things that look like pieces of a map and a kind of diBujo makes me think of those intricate designs of knots used to doodle when he had time to think about my stuff. -Leonardo rolled back the sheet and looked at Ezio-. I the guarwould in a safe place along with the other two pages that I have taught here in Venice. It is evident that they are all very importantportant.

"Actually, Leo, if you're traveling to Milan, I wonder if I could ask a favor.

"Shoot.

"When you get to Padua, could you, please arrange everything for a trusted courier will take these three pagesnas my uncle Mario in Monteriggioni? Es

.. antique ... and I know that you will find interesting. But I need someone with confidence.

Leonardo gave him a shadow of a smile. Ezio has not been so worried, would have taken almost a smile *inderstanding* complete.

"I have meant to send my stuff directly to myLAN, but I plan to do before a lightning visit to Florence to see Agniolo and innocent, so it would be better than Fri messenger from there. Send to Agniolo to Monteriggioni, fear not.

"This is better than I could imagine. -Ezio shook hands-. You are a good and wonderful friend, Leo.

"I hope, Ezio. Occasionally I think you could very well be someone to take care of you. He paused-. And I wish you good luck in your work. I look forward to the day when you let it finished and find the rest need.

Steel gray eyes took a look Ezio distance, but no reply, except to say:

"I've been reminded ... I have another errand to do. Te send to a men's Antonio with the two missing pages of the Codex. And now, for the moment *addio!*

Chapter 20

The fastest way to reach San Pietro from the workshop of Leonard was with the shuttle or renting a boat on the Fondamenta Nuova and putting east toward the coast north of the city. Dad. Ezio was surprised to find no one that could get you there. The regular ferries were suspended and it was only scratching the back pocket until he got conventional car to a pair of young gondoliers to take him.

- What's wrong? "He asked.

"They say they are waging tough fights over there," said the stern paddler, fighting water bites. Apparently had ended, a simple local argument. But the ferries do not risk still go. I leave on the north coast. And walk with care.

Ezio made promises and then found himself alone and as with difficulty transcending the muddy bank to the barrage, where he saw the spire of the church of San Pietro di Castello a short distance. And what he saw were also going Rias columns of smoke that arose from a group of low brick buildings situated southeast of the church. Were barraco Bartolomeo tions. With the heart beating strongly, Ezio rushed toward it.

The first thing that struck him was silence. Then, as he was approaching, he began to see dead bodies everywhere, UNPACKING of them wearing the badge of Silvio Barbarigo, others, one that did not recognize. Finally found a sergeant, wounded but still alive, who had managed to sit with back support gives a parapet.

"Please ..., help me," said the sergeant to see which acercaba Ezio.

Ezio quickly looked around and located the well, which drew water, praying that the attackers had not inpoison, but it looked clean and clear. He poured some into a cuBilete he found and brought it safely to the lips of the wounded, then wet a cloth and wiped the blood off his face.

"Thank you, friend," said Sgt.

Ezio noticed wearing a distinctive unknown and assumed that was to Bartolomeo. It was clear that troops had left Bartolomeo worse off than those of Silvio.

"It was a surprise attack," agreed the sergeant. AlBartolomeo guna bitch has betrayed us.

- Where have they gone?

- Men of the Inquisition? Have returned to Arsenal. They have established their base there, just before the new Doge control the situation. Silvio hates his cousin because they form part of the plot in which he plays around the Inquisitor. "The man coughed and spat sangre, but strived to continue talking. Have made our captain prisoner. They've taken him with them. The funny thing is that it was We us which was planning to attack them. BartoPtolemy was just waiting ... a messenger from the city.

- Where's the rest of yours?

The sergeant tried to look around.

"Those who have not died or been taken prisoner were released to try to save his life. Be hidden in Venice or on the islands of the lagoon. Need someone to re-unite them. I guess they expect to hear the captain.

- And Silvio has taken him prisoner?

"Yes. Captain ... "But the unfortunate sergeant began to youner difficulty breathing.

His struggle ended when he opened his mouth and left her a spray of blood, soaking the grass up to three feet beyond where he was. When that stopped, the soldier's eyes and seeing nothing looked towards the lagoon.

Ezio closed her eyes and crossed his arms over his chest.

"*Requiescat in pace*" He said solemnly.

He sat up and pulled the belt where the subject is wearing pada. It was also armed with metal protection in antebrazo left but for that occasion, had not taken the double-edged dagger. He carried the poison dagger on his right forearm, an extremely useful weapon when faced with situations of great disadvantage. The belt carrying the bag gun so helpulabove all against a single target having to recharge after each shot, along with powder and ball, and as a weapon of spare partsto the hidden sheet. He covered his head with his hood and walked to the wooden bridge connecting San Pietro in Castello. Desfrom there progressed smoothly and rapidez down the main street in diArsenal direction. Throughout his journey he came across people who, despite following their usual daily chores, looked apgada. It was evident that to completely stop in Venice was life requires more than one local war, although, of course, very few ordinary citizens of Castello who knew what it meant to their city the result of that conflict .

Ezio unknown at the time it would be a conflict that would last for many, many months, and reaching would even the following year. Cristina thought, his mother Mary and his sister Claudia. He felt helpless and increasingly larger. But I had to continue serving and defending the Creed, and that was more important than anything else. Nobody, perhaps, sabria ever that the world had been saved from the dominion of the Temselected by the Knights Templar Order of the Murderers, consecrated withcounteract the evil hegemony.

His first task was obviously to locate and, if possible, Bartolomeo d'Alviano free, but enter the Arsenal would be difficult. Surrounded by high fortified walls of bricksment, and a maze of buildings and in yards insubsequently, the area was settled in the east of the city and was strongmind guarded by the private army of Silvio, whose members outnumber two hundred mercenaries Barbarigo Agostino had mentioned. Ezio, crossing the main gate built by the architect Gamballo recently, surrounded the perimetro outside of buildings accessible by land to find a great door with a gap and, watching desfrom a safe distance, he realized that this discreteTRADA was used by the sentries outside when carriedZaban the guard. He had to wait hidden four horas, but when it produced the following change of guard was ready. The afternoon sun was scorching, the air was dampdo, and everyone except Ezio was plunged into a state letarcal. Relay saw the soldiers coming through the door, which had a single guard, and followed the mercenaries who had just turn, starting to walk behind them and mingling as best he could. Once he had spent the last soldier, cut his throat at the guard posted at the door and slid down it before anyone realized what happened. Like years ago in San Gimignano, Silvio forces, though numerous, were not sufficient to protect the entire

area. He was, after all, the military center of the city. No wonder Agostino could not be done with all the power without control of that neighborhood.

Once inside, he found it relatively easy to move through the wide open spaces between large buildings: *Cordelie*, the *Artiglierie*, watchtowers and, especially, shipbuilding. While Ezio remained under the dark shadows of dusk and seek to avoid patrols inside the huge complex, I knew it would be okay, but of course, be followed at all times in a state of alert.

Ultimately guided by the sounds of joy, jokes and laughter, ran a major dry dock, which was docked a stunning gallery. He saw an iron cage hung from one of the impressive walls of the dock. And inside was Bartolomeo, a stocky and energetic man of little more than thirty years of age, only four or five years older than Ezio. Around him were a band of mercenaries from Silvio. Ezio immediately thought that it would be better off patrolling disfruits of their victory over an enemy who had already left impowerful, but then was forced to acknowledge that Silvio BarBarigo, however grand inquisitor it was, lacked management experience with troops.

Ezio not know how long he chains Bartolomeo in the cage; sure many hours. But their anger and energy seemed to be affected by the situation. And considering that surely had not given him anything to eat or drink, that was exceptional.

-Luridi codardi! Filthy Cowards! He shouted to his torcrushers, one of which was Ezio, had plunged a spontaneousja in vinegar and approached the mouth of Bartolomeo with the tip of a spear with the hope that they mistook for water. BartoPtolemy's spat. I will end with you all! At the same timepo! With an arm ... no, with *two* arms tied behind his back! I eatre people alive, you bastards! Laughed-. You must ask yourselves how to do it, but get me out of here and I'll show you happy! *Miserabili pezzi di merda!*

Inquisitor's guards laughed with scorn and poked with sticks Bartolomeo, by balancing the cage. I had a dreamthe very strong, and Bartholomew was forced to subject resting your feet firmly on the bars for balance.

- You have no honor! Neither value! Neither virtue! Got acu-Bottlenose enough saliva to spit. And people are preasked why the star of Venice has begun to languish. -Intonka adopted her voice almost pleading tone. I will be merciful with those who have the courage to break free. The rest will die! For work of my own hand! I juro!

"Spare me your fucking words shouted one of the guards. This is not going to die one other than you, you fucking piece of shit.

Ezio, who remained all the while nestled in the shadow of a brick colonnade bordering a bay where theban war galleys moored smaller, began to pensar in the way of saving *condottiero*. Next to the cage were ten guards, all back to him, and there was not anyone else. They were also out of service and were not armed. Ezio checked for poison dagger. Eliminate the guards would not have to be a difficultyculty. Had timed a pass from guard patrols and hasBia seen that occurred every time the shadow cast by the quay wall is stretched about four inches. But then itthe additional problem of tobacco free Bartolomeo, quietly and quickly. He strove to think of something. I knew not availableNIA long.

-What type of man is he who sold his honor and dignitycommunity in exchange for a few pieces of silver? "Shouted BarPtolemy, but his throat began to dry and began to perder bellows despite his iron will.

- Is not that what you do, asshole? Are not you a merscenario like us?

- I've never been in the service of a traitor and a coward as you are you! Bartolomeo's eyes sparkled. The men under him are coupledForged in a moment. "You think I do not know why I havebeige chained up here? "You think I do not know who the puppeteer your leader Silvio? Lu WearChando against the weasel who controls since most of you were babies glued to your mother's tit!

Ezio began to listen with interest. One of the soldiers coGio a brick match and then angrily threw it. Bounced uselessly against the bars of the cage.

- Okay, you bastards!Bartolomeo cried hoarsely. Try to throw something against me! And I swear that once you are out of this cage will become my mission to cut off the head of each and every one of you for meterosla then by those asses maricon you have all! And mixed up the heads, because clearly, motherfuckers, that distinguish you attain your head from your ass!

The men below began to get angry in earnest. It was evidentPresident orders only prevented them from stab the man their pikes, or shooting arrows, they still hanging helplessly on the cagesThe above their heads. But after awhile she had been there, Ezio had already noticed that the lock that closed the cage door was relatively small. Bartolomeo's captors hoped that the cage was perched on top. Undoubtedly intended that the scorching sun of day and cool night, coupled with dehydration and hunger, kill it, unless it collapsed and accepted before speaking. But by the looks of Bartholomew, it was something I never do.

Ezio knew I had to act quickly. Guard patrol would come there soon. Triggered his poison dagger and moved with the speed and elegance of a wolf, covering the distance in questionment of seconds. Stabbed to death group and slid into the hornsafter five of the men before the others realized what was happening. Drew his sword, killed fiercely to resto, their vain lunges bouncing off the metal shield on his left forearm, while watching boquiabier Bartolomeoto the scene. When he finally fell silent. Ezio turned and looked up.

- Can you jump from there? He asked.

"If you get me out, jump like a fucking flea.

Ezio took the sting from one of the dead soldiers. The tip was made of iron, not steel, and cast, not forged. Serve. Balancing it in his left hand, was prepared, stooped and flung into the air to stick to the bars of the cage.

Bartholomew looked at him, her eyes going out of their sockets.

- How the hell did you do that? He asked.

-A training base, "said Ezio, with a tight smile.

Forced the tip of the spear through the end of the lock and turned it. He resisted at first, but eventually left. Ezio pulled the door open, hitting the ground in freefall and tierrizando with the elegance of a cat.

"Now jump," he ordered. Fast.

- Who are you?

- Do not dawdle, come on!

Nervous, Bartolomeo steeled himself on the threshold of the open door of the cage and jumped. He landed heavily, with little encouragement, but when Ezio helped him sit up, or pushed it away withGullo.

"I'm fine," he snorted. What happens is that I am not acostumBrado doing circus acts.- "No bones broken, then?

"Fuck you, whoever you are," said Bartolomeo, raby means. But thank you! And, surprising Ezio, gave her a big hug. But who are you? "The bloody archangel Gabriel, or what?"

"My name Auditore, Ezio.

"Bartolomeo d'Alviano. Encantado.

"No time for these things Ezio snapped. As you well know.

"Do not try to teach me my job," said Barto AcrobatPtolemy, without his good mood alteration. But I owe you one!

They had already lost, however, too long. Some of the men stationed at the seawall must have realized what was happening. Began to ring alarm bells and patrols of the surrounding buildings came to surround them.

- Come on, motherfuckers! Bartolomeo shouted, waving his fists so that the Moro Dante, at her side, would have seemed hammers marquetry. Ezio was now who watched with admiration how to Bartolomeo lunged at the soldiers. Together we got back to the gate and finally deliverare all of them.

- Get out of here! Ezio cried.

- Do not you think we should build a few more heads?

"I think that by now beed better to avoid more conflict.

- Are you scared?

"It's simply a practical matter. I know you blood boil, but we were outnumbered a hundred to one. Bartolomeo reflected.

"You're right. And after all, I am a commander. Mustwould think like that and not let a brat like you I hicial to reason. "Then he lowered his voice and said, concerneddo, "I just hope my little Bianca is alive and well.

Ezio had no time to ask, even to think about the paragraph that had just Bartolomeo. They had to get out of there, and it did, crossing at full speed toward the city's headquarters in San Pietro Bartolomeo. But not before Bartholomew deviated from the route twice: one for acerRiva San Basio should not apply to the Court and other Nuova, in order to alert agents that had featured in those places that iswas alive and at liberty, and to direct their scattered forces, which had not been taken prisoner, to regroup.

Back in San Pietro in the evening, they discovered that several of the *condottieri* Bartolomeo had survived the attack andbian finally come out of hiding. Moving between the corpses were surrounded and flies, trying to bury them and poner order in the premises. When they saw the captain again, his euphoria was absolute. But he was distracted, running back and forth from the camp, shouting, mourning: "Bianca! Bianca! Where are you? ".

- What quien looking for?Ezio asked the sergeant in charge. Must mean a lot to him.

"Yes, *signore* "Said the sergeant grinning. And it is much more reliable than most of their sex.

Ezio ran to catch up with his new ally.

- Is everything OK?

- What do you think? Look at the state as it has been everything! And poor Bianca! If anything has happened ...

The big man charged into a door, which was already half detached from its hinges, to tear it down and go into a bunker which, by their appearance, should be a map room before the attack. Valuable maps were mutilated or had been stolen, but remains Bartolomeo stirred until with a cry of triumph ...

- Bianca! Oh, dear! Thank God you're okay!

Among the debris removed a large sword and brandished it. Then roared:

- Aha! You're safe and sound! In no time I put in doubt! Bianca! I present a. .. Can I repeat your name again?

Hearing Officer, Ezio.

Bartolomeo was thoughtful.

"Of course. Your reputation precedes you, Ezio.

"I'm glad of it.

- What brings you here?

"Me too, I have unfinished business with Silvio Barbarigo. I think he has abused his arrival in Venice.

- Silvio! That sucks! Need a sink in a fucking toilet!

"I thought maybe I could rely on your help.

- After this bailout? I owe my life, needless to say I'm going to help.

- How many men have?

- How many men have, Sergeant?

The sergeant in charge with which he had spoken earlier Ezio acered ran and waved.

-Twelve *capitano*, including you and me, and this gentleman here.

- Thirteen! Bartolomeo exclaimed, waving to Bianca.

"Against a couple of hundred," said Ezio. He turned to the sargeto-. How many of your men were taken prisoner?

"Most," replied the man. The attack caught us completely by surprise. Some fled, but the men chained Silvio took many more.

"Look, Ezio," said Bartolomeo. I will monitor the REUNION the rest of my men still at large. I'll clean all this and bury the dead and we regroup here. Do you think while you take care of freeing the men are held prisoner Silvio? I see that thou do as well ...

-*Intensi*.

"Come back here then as soon as possible. Good luck!

Ezio, with arms above the Codex, walked due west towards Arsenal wondering, however, if there would Silvio men prisoners Bartolomeo. I had not seen when he went to rescue the captain. Upon arrival at Arsenal, he sought amstrike from the shadows of the night INCIPEOOTH and tried to listen inconversation of the guards at the perimeter walls.

- Had you ever seen such large cages? DECia one.

-No. And these poor wretches are packed like sardines inside. I do not think the captain Barto *us* had treated him well have been the winner, "said his comrade.

"Of course you would. And if you want to keep their heads on their shoulders, beware for you your noble thoughtsough. I say we finish with them. Why do not descendingder the cages to docks and drown them all?

At this, Ezio stiffened. Inside the ArsenalBia three huge rectangular docks that could accommodate up to thirty galleys. Were in the northern part of the complex, surrounded by thick walls of brick and covered with heavy roofs mader. Without a doubt, cages, larger versions that they had used to imprison Bartolomeo-string hung over the water of one or more of those *Bacini*.

- One hundred and fifty men trained? Itwould a waste. I bet you want to convert to trusts Silvio their cause, "said the second man in uniform.

"They are mercenaries like us. Why not?

- You're right! Simply soften a bit first. Show who is boss here.

Spero di- yes.

"Thank God, they know that your boss has escaped.

The first guard spat.

"Do not last long.

Ezio left them to go to the hatch that they had discoveredto previously. There was no time to wait for the guard, but the time calculated from the distance separating the moon's horizon and knew that it had a couple of hours. Hidden-powered leaf of the Codex its first weapon, and even his favorite, and cut his throat thick and old guard that had con Silviosidered appropriate to make it there alone on duty, withdrawing before the achieved blood stain clothes. Quickly wiped the gun with grass and replaced it with the poison dagger. He made the sign of the cross over the body of the deceased.

The enclosure inside the walls of the Arsenal was one aspectto separate the light from a slice of moon and a few stars, but Ezio knew where the docks and headed toward the firstmere of them, the walls and remaining resiguiendo at all timestion alert if men suddenly appeared from Silvio. Observed between the arcades the aqueous gloom and saw nothing but the gallows calmly swaying in the dim light of iTrelles. The second dock gave the same result, but he started hearing voices as he was approaching the third.

"It's not too late to swear allegiance to ourBecause work. Do it and save alive "he said to shouts one of the sarlnquisitor's people mockingly.

Ezio, sticking to the wall, he saw a dozen soldiers with bottles in their hands, their weapons on the ground, looking up into the gloom of the roof, from which hung three huge cratesmonth. Saw an invisible mechanism was approaching very slowlymind water cages. At the dock there were galleys. Only water, black and oily, which swarmed something invisible but terrifying.

Among the guards of the Inquisition was a man who is nottobacco drinking, a man in a constant state of alert, a manber gigantic and terrible. Ezio instantly recognized him as Dante Moro! Apparently, with the death of his former boss, Mark, the giantton had transferred their allegiance to the cousin, Silvio, the inquisitor, that anand subsequently had professed his admiration for the bodyguard.

Ezio followed cautiously around the walls to run into a large open box inside which was different wheels rotateTadas, pulleys and ropes, a device that could well be a design by Leonardo. Mechanism was ruled by a water clock, sent down the cages. Ezio drew his dagger LLEVaba on the left side of the belt and stuffed between two sprockets. The mechanism is stopped, and just in time, because the cages were already a few inches below the surface of the water. The guards quickly realized that the decline of the cages had been arrested and some ran to check the mechanism that controlled it. Ezio triggered the poison dagger and was employedas the men were getting to where he was. Two of them fell into the water from the pier and cried briefly before sinking into the oily black water. Meanwhile, Ezio ran at full speed around the perimeter of the basin towards others. They all fled in alarm, except Dante, who remained in post and hovered like a tower on Ezio.

"So now you Silvio dog, right? "Said Ezio.

"Better be a living dog than a dead lion," said Dante, reaching out to throw water Ezio a slap.

- Surrender! "Said Ezio, dodging the blow. I have no desire to fight you!

- Shut up!Dante said, grabbing Ezio by the neck and sending it against the walls of the basin. I feel like I have no quarrel with you. He saw it was astounded Ezio-. You stay here. I'm going to tell my boss, but I will return and be piento fish so if you ever give me problems!

And it was. Ezio shook his head from side to side to clearit and sat up, stunned. The men shouted and cages Ezio saw one of the guards Silvio was crawling on the ground and about to remove the dagger that he had stuffed in memechanism of the cage. He thanked God for not having forgotten the knife thrower skills that once learned in Monteriggioni, took a knife from his belt and threw it with deadly aim. The guard collapsed, screaming, trying to impoassistance to start the knife buried in her eyes.

Ezio took a hook from a shelf that was behind and, leaning dangerously over the water and with great skill, he dragged the first of the cages. The door was locked with a simple lock that broke off one shot, thus freeing the men inside, who took to trompicotions to the dock. With your help, managed to drag the cages and release all remaining prisoners.

Despite what they were exhausted after all that they had suffered, the men cheered Ezio.

- Vamos! "He cried. I have to take you to your cahonk!

Surpassed men standing guard next to givingsigns, returned with no problems at San Pietro, where Bartholomew and his men had an emotional reunion. In the absence of Ezio, had become all the mercenaries they had achieved iscastrate the initial slaughter launched by Silvio and the camp was again *in perfetto ordine*.

-*Salute*,Ezio!Barto saidPtolemy. Welcome back! Well done, my God!! knew I could trust you! He took the hand of Ezio hers. You are the most powerful

of my aliatwo. One might even think that ... "But he interrupted and said instead," Thank you, my army has regained its former glory. Our friend Silvio check how serious is the error you made!

- What do we do? Attacking directly Arsenal?

-No. A frontal assault would be slaughtered in mymore doors. I think we should bet on my men around the neighborhood and make enough to cause problems for most of Silvio's men were busy.

"So if Arsenal is almost empty ...

"You could make him a team of men selectedSwim.

"I hope you bite the bait.

"It's an inquisitor. He knows how to intimidate anyone if you tiene already possess. But not a soldier. Hell, if not Siquiara has the wit to be a chess player of the heap!

Took several days to deploy the *condottieri* Bartolomeo the districts of Castello and the Arsenale. When all studentsvo-up, Bartolomeo and Ezio met the small group marketselected scenario that had booked for the assault on the bastion of Silvio. Ezio was personally in charge of selecting AqueTthe men for their agility and skill with weapons.

They had planned to detail the assault on the Arsenal. On Friday ifollows night, everything was ready. Sent a merceNario the tower of San Martino, when the moon reached its greatestMaximum height, lit a torch impressive Roman had given them the workshop of Leonardo. It was the signal for the attack. Dressed in black leather, the *condottieri* the team iscial Arsenal scaled the walls on all four sides. Once on the battlements, rose like ghosts from the silent and unattended quickly controlled strength and reduced surveillancelance was left inside. Ezio and Bartolomeo little late in coming face to face with their deadliest enemies, and Silvio Dante.

Dante, a hood covering his iron knuckles, spinning endlessly breathtaking saves chain hubkeep your head. It was complicated and Bartolomeo Ezio stay within your range, then planted his men also face the enemy.

"A good copy, right?Silvio shouted from the safetyGive the battlements. You will have the honor of dying in your hands!

- Suck my dick, you bastard! Also screaming, "said BarPtolemy.

He had managed to engage the club with his staff of battle and forcing Dante, now disarmed, to withdraw.

- Come on, Ezio! We have to catch that *grassone bastard!*

Dante turned after reaching its target, an iron stick topped with twisted nails out, and again inln front of them. Bartolomeo and wielded it against one of the nails opened a channel on your shoulder.

- I'll get by it, bag-eyed pig shit! Bartolomeo shouted.

Meanwhile, Ezio had loaded and fired his gunSilvio work ... and missed the mark. The shot had ricocheted off the brick walls causing a shower of sparks and splinters.

- Do you think I do not know whyCAS reality here, Auditore?Silvio roared, though clearly startled by the shot. But you're late! You can not do anything to stop us!

Ezio had reloaded his gun and fired again. But I was angry and confused by the words of Silvio and shooting volsaw pass by.

- Ja!Spat out from the battlements as Silvio Dante and Bartolomeo are enzarzaban in a dogfight.Pretend not to know! While, however, as Dante has done with you and your muscular friend, it will not matter at all. You will follow in the footsteps of your father's stupid! You know what I regret most? No personally have been the executioner of Giovanni. How I would have liked to pull this lever and see your miserable padre kicking, choking and be finally hung! And then, of course, have had their timesufficient for that your drunk uncle *ciShares* Mario, and the viejuna and tits falling your mother Maestuary, and for that luscious strawberry Claudia, your sister. Makes a plenty of time since I follor anything below twentyFive! If you do not mind, I will reserve the latter two for the trip ... not to feel lonely at sea!

Despite being overshadowed by a red haze of rage, Ezio tried to focus on the information in the slug's mouthquisidor was throwing like crazy with their insults.

Silvio guards, far superior in number, had begun to lash out at the command of Bartholomew. Dante stirred up another severe blow to Bartolomeo, crushing his ribs with brass knuckles and taking it to lose almost equal. Ezio fired a third bullet against Silvio and this time went through the clothingjes of the inquisitor in the vicinity of the neck, but despite the man stumbled and Ezio saw a trickle of blood, not dropped. He shouted an order to Dante, who retired and ran to meet his boss and two together, away from the other side of the wall. Ezio knew that the other side was a ladder that would lead to the dock and Bartolomeo yelling at me to follow him, was ejected from the battlefield to intercept their enemies.

Saw that they were going to a vessel of considerable size and realized the anger and despair on their faces reflected. Followed his gaze and saw a huge black hat that disappeared in the lake due south.

- We have been betrayed!Ezio he heard that Dan was telling Silvioyou. The boat has left without us! Damn! I've been faithful to them and now this ... this! That's how they pay me!

"With this boat, catch them," said Dante.

"It's too late ... and never get to the island with a boat of this size, although at least use properwe to escape this disaster.

"He released the man, tie, *Altezza*.

"Okay.

Dante turned to the trembling crew.

- Throw off the bowlines! Hoist the sails! Quick!

Ezio emerged at the time of the shadows, crossed corriendo the dock and jumped on board the boat. The frightened sailors vanished, plunging most of the dark lagoon.

- Depart from me, murderer! Silvio yelled.

"You just say your ultimate insult," said Ezio, ApunLandola in the stomach and belly dragging slowly leaves his double-edged dagger. And what you said about muWomen of my family, I swear I'll cut the balls to think it was worth it.

Dante had been paralyzed. Ezio looked into his eyes. The big man seemed to be exhausted.

"It's over," said Ezio. You bet the wrong horse.

"Maybe," said Dante. But I'll kill you anyway. Dirty murderer. I get tired.

Ezio pulled his gun and fired. Lead is stamped in the face of Dante. Collapsed.

Ezio Silvio knelt and gave him absolution. It was withcienzudo above all, always remember that killing had to be the last alternative, and the dead, suddenly losing all their rights, should at least receive the benefitprice of the last rituals.

- Where are you going, Silvio? What is that hat? I thought preteendays post dux.

Silvio smiled a weak smile.

"That was just a distraction ... We wanted to leave for ...

- Where?

"Too late," said Silvio smiled, and immediately died.

Ezio turned to Dante and placed his big leonine head in the bend of your arm.

"Your destination is Cyprus, Auditore Dante said in a feeble voice. Maybe I can redeem my soul finally telling the truth. Want ... want ... "But the giant died drowned with his propia blood.

Ezio fumbled inside the portfolios of both men but found nothing except a letter to Dante by his wife. Flushed, he started to read it.

Amore mine:

I psk if the day will come quand these word recoveryren, its sense to you. I feel I've doneo: let me depart from you Marco, force me to divorce and become its wife. But ahnowhe has died, tengor to find mamanner that we can get back together. I wonder, emship, even if you'll remember me. Or were too grasee the heridas that suffered in battle? R "emove my words, if not your memory, at least your heart? Although what I digan such seez is unimportant, because I knowyou in my heartslate blight, in some part. Find a way, love mi. HtoCerte remember.Ofrecover ...

Siemperre yours,

Gloria

There was no direction. Ezio carefully folded the letter and guarDo in your bag. Theodora would ask if I knew this strange story, and if I could return the letter to their station, together with non-tice of the death of the creature's true unfaithful husband.

Looked at the bodies and made the sign of the cross over them.

"Requiescat in pace He said sadly.

Ezio was with the dead when he was approached Bartolo-meo, panting.

"I see you did not need my help, as usual," he said.

- Have you recovered the Arsenal?

- Do you think it would not have done it here?

- Congratulations!

-Ewiva!

But Ezio was watching the sea.

"We must return to Venice, friend," he said. And Agostino may govern without fear of the Templars. But I think I will not rest long. See that galley on the horizon?

"Yes.

"Dante said, with his last breath, which sailed for Cyprus.

- For what purpose?

"That, *amico*, is what I have to find out.

Chapter 21

Ezio could not believe it was already summer solstice day of the year of Christ 1487. Twenty-eight was her birthday. He was alone in the Bridge of Fists, leaning over the balustrade and tuning sadly the canal water unhealthy. Saw pasar a rat swimming, pushing a hole opened in the negro brick bank a load of cabbage leaves had just swipe the barge's greengrocer.

- You're here, Ezio! "Said a lively voice, and smelled the aroma to Rosa mizcleno even before turned to greet her-. How to time! Almost starting to think I avoided!

"I've been ... busy.

"Of course. What would Venice be without you?

Ezio shook his head from side to side in sadness, while Rosa was leaning comfortably on the railing beside him.

- Why are you so serious or beautiful? She asked.

Ezio looked at him blankly and shrugged.

- Felicitate for my birthday.

- Is it your birthday? "Are you serious? Wow! *Rallegramenti!* It's wonderful!

- I not say much, "said Ezio, sighing-. Ten years ago I witnessed the death of my father and my brothers. And I spent ten years pursuing the perpetrators, the men on the list of my father and those who have been adding to it since his death. And I know I'm near the end ... but I'm not at all close to understanding for *what* has actually been all that.

"Ezio, you have devoted your life to a good cause. Te has been a way a lonely person, isolated, but in a sense has been your vocation. And although the instrument you used to promote your cause is death, have never been unfair. Venice is a much better place now than ever, thanks to you. So cheer up. Anyway, and since it's your birthday, I bring a gift. By chance has come at the right time! "And he gave a newspaper official-looking navigation.

"Thank you, Rosa. Not exactly what I thought you could give me for a birthday. What is it?

"Just something that happens ... I have collected. Shipping manifest is the Arsenal. It appears the date on your black hat sailed to Cyprus last year ...

- Really? -Ezio reached out to pick up the book peror Rosa joked to give no-. Give it to me, Rosa. This is not a joke.

"Everything has its price ... She whispered.

"If you say so ...

He hugged her for a long time. She was cast him and Ezio quickly became the book.

- Hey! This is not fair! She said laughing. Well, it does not matter, but to save you the suspense I will tell you this gallery of yours is scheduled to return to Venice ... Tomorrow!

"I wonder what will carry on board.

- And you do not believe that someone who is not exactly a million miles away eventually find out? Ezio smiled.

- Let's go first to celebrate!

But at that moment a familiar figure appeared.

- Leonardo! Ezio said, extremely surprised. I believe in Milan!

"I just got back," said Leonardo. They told me where incontrate. Hello, Rosa. Sorry Ezio, but we must discuss.

- Now? "At this very moment?

"Sorry.

Rosa laughed.

- Go, boys, merry will reserve!

Leonardo took with him a reluctant Ezio.

"Better than what you have to tell me is good-murMuro Ezio.

"Oh, it is, it is reassuring," said Leonardo.

Ezio guided through the narrow alleys until they came to his shop. Leonardo began to spin around the room, took a bottle of mulled wine, some stale pastries and lots of documentation cough that dropped on the large trestle table that occupied the central part of his study.

"As I promised, I give the pages of your Codice in Monteriggioni, but I could not resist the temptation to examine Narla before some more. I copied here my findings. I do not know why he had not established before the connection, but when joined, I realized that the marks, symbols and alphabets an Tigan can be decoded. And I think we've struck gold ... Because all these pages are contiguous! He made a pausa-. This wine is hot! The truth is that I usually do at St. Columba and the Gonet seems to piss me of mosquitoes compared to.

"Go forward," said Ezio.

"Listen to this. -Leonardo took a pair of glasses and cocrazy over his nose. He flipped through the papers and read:- "The Prophet ... appear ... when the Second Fragment Flo comes to town important ...>>.

Ezio held her breath to hear those words.

-Prophet? Repeated-. "Only the Prophet can open ...>>. "Two Fragments of Eden ...>>.

-Ezio-Leonardo looked perplexed, removing the gafas-. What happens? Have you heard of something this?

Ezio stared. It seemed like he had just taken a decision.

"We've known for some time, Leonardo. If I can not trust you, I can not trust anyone ...Listen! My uncle MaRio talked about it long ago. Has cracked and the other PaCodex pages, as did also my father, Giovanni. Escona prophecy, uttered on an ancient secret vault that contains something ... something very powerful!

- Really? It's amazing! "But then you came to mind something-. Look, Ezio, if we have learned all this from the Codex, how much should know about the Barbarigo and all the others against whom we have met? Maybe you also know the existence of the vault that you dices. And if so, is not good news.

- Wait!Ezio said, your brain running at full speedDad. And if that's why they sent the galley to Cyprus? Why *incounterrevolutionary* this "Piece of Eden" and *then bring it to Venice*?

- "When the Second Fragment float reaches the City...>>. you Naturally!

- Now I remember! "The Prophet appears ...>>. "... Only the Prophet can open the vault !>>... My God, Leo, when my uncle told me about the Codex, I was too young, too foolish to imagine that this was something more than the fantasy of ancyan. But now I see it! The killing of Giovanni Mocenigo, the murder of my family, the attempt on the life of The Dukerenzo and the terrible death of his brother ... It was part of *its* ... plan, find the vault ... The first name of my *List*] The Unitedco to which I have yet to throw a hand on ... *The Spanish!*

Leonardo took a deep breath. He knew who he was referring Ezio.

"Rodrigo Borgia," he said in a whisper.

- Exactly! -Ezio paused. The galley comes manana from Cyprus. I plan to be there to greet her.

Leonardo embraced him.

"Good luck, dear friend," he said.

The next day, Ezio, weapons and banditry Codexra charged with throwing knives, was under the shadow of a colonnade near the docks, watching closely how a group of men dressed in uniform simplemonth to avoid attracting attention but quietly displaying the coat of arms of Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia, was unloading a crate of small size and normal appearance of a black hat herebaba arriving from Cyprus. Handled the glove boxesilk tees, and one of them, protected by guards, took upon his shoulders and prepared to leave with her. Ezio but then realized that there were more guards charged with similar cases, five in total. "It would contain each of those csome kind of pre AJASappliance prices, the second part, or would simply lures? And all the guards looked the same, at least from the distance from which Ezio was required to observe the scene.

Just when Ezio was leaving it exposed toattain them noticed the presence of another man who also watched what was happening from a vantage point similar to yours. Suppressed an involuntary cry to recognize the man as his uncle, Mario Auditore, but there was no time to call and say hello!, for one of the soldiers who bore the Borgia had begun to move cases followed by his bodyguards. Ezio followed at all times keeping a safe distance. But one question constantly spinning in his head: would it really his uncle, the man he had seen? And if so, how had he arrived in Venice and why precisely at that moment?

But had to shelve that idea as he followed Borgia guards to fully concentrate on not losing sight of the man who carried the first box, if it was that whatever it contained something out. "One of the" Fragments of Eden '?

The guards came to a square that left five streets. Each of the guards loaded with boxes, along with his bodyguard, took a different direction. Ezio climbed the wall of a building from the roof to follow the path of individual guardays. Following them closely, saw that one of them left his escort to enter the courtyard of a solid brick building asrespect, deposited his box down and opened it. Quickly joined by a sergeant Borgia. Ezio leaned over the roof to hear what they said.

"The Master is waiting," said the sergeant. Back to package it with care. Right now!

Ezio saw an object passing the guard carefullystraw returned in original box with another box of teak that had just brought a servant. Ezio thought quickly. Master! As sabia, when the acolytes Templars po mentioned that title onlydian refer to a man, Rodrigo Borgia! It was evident that emwell the device package because they wanted to multiply the security measures. Ezio guard knew and what was his goal.

Fell back to street level and cornered the soldier who carried the teakwood box. The sergeant had returned with the cardinal's guard, who waited in the courtyard. In one mynute, Ezio cut his throat, the soldier pulled the body of the street and put on the outside of his uniform coat and cap.

I was about to load the box on his shoulder when he saw hisoutweighed by the temptation to take a quick look inside and opened the lid. But just at that moment, the sergeant came back into the patio door.

- Wise up!

- Yes, sir! Ezio said.

-Increasing pace. This is probably the most important thingyou are going to do in your fucking life. Do you understand?

"Yes, sir.

Ezio took his place in the center of the guard and the gang launched.

Undertook the journey to the north of the city from the Molo to the Campo dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo, where the newlyyou gigantic statue of *condottiero* Colleone, work *Messer Verrocchio*, overlooking the square. Following the Fondamenta dei Mendicanti northbound arriveswere at last to a house of aspectsto bland located on a terrace above the channel. The sergeant called with the handle of the sword at the door, which opened immediate. The group of guards ushered Ezio first and what followed. The door closed behind them, secured with heavy bolts.

They were in a lodge with walls decorated with ivory, where sat a hook-nosed man of fifty-somethings, dressed in dusty robes of velvet arrearsdo. The men greeted him. Ezio followed suit trying not to eye contact with those icy cobalt eyes he knew so well. The Spanish!

Rodrigo Borgia went to the sergeant:

- Are you really here? Do not you have followed?

"No, *Altezza*. Everything went perfectly ...

- Continued!

The sergeant coughed to clear his throat a bit.

"We are your orders exactly as we are specifiable. The mission in Cyprus was more difficult than you think we were. There ... complications from the beginning. Some followed the Cause ... had to be abandoned to complete the task successfully. But we are back with the engine. And here we have transported with due care as *His Altezza* instructed. And as agreed, *Altezza*, now expect to be handsomely rewarded.

Ezio knew he could not allow the teak box and its contents fell into the hands of the cardinal. He took the opportunity at that time, when the unpleasant but necessary issue of payment for services rendered surfaced and as usual, the supplier was forced to whip up the client to obtain the money owed by the special work he had done. As is often the case with the rich, the Cardinal could be tremendously temperamental when releasing their money. Triggering the poison that had been hidden blade on his right forearm and double-edged dagger left, Ezio stabbed the sergeant, a single stab wound to the cement for the lethal poison got into his blood. Ezio quickly became mated to the five guards escort her double-edged dagger in one hand and the poison sheet in his right wrist, giving turns on itself like a dervish, using motion-cough to implement rapid and aseptic manslaughter. Des moments later, all the guards lay dead at his feet.

Rodrigo Borgia stared and breathed deeply.

-Ezio Auditore. Well, well. Long ago. The Cardinal seemed unfazed.

"*Cardinale*. -Ezio it bowed ironically.

-Give it to me, "Rodrigo said, pointing to the box.

-Content first where it is.

- Where is who?

- Your Prophet! -Ezio looked around-. I get the impression that no one has come. He paused. Continued more serious now:- How many people died for this? For what's in this box? And now look! It turns out that there are no *anyone!*

Rodrigo chuckled. A sound that resembled a tracheostomy tube bones.

"You say not a believer," he said. But here you are. Do you not see the Prophet? Is here! *The Prophet's me!*

Ezio his gray eyes opened wide. The man was a maniac! But what madness was it curious that seemed momentous under the cursor rational, natural life? But unfortunately, the re-Ezio bends left him unprepared for a moment. The Spanish pulled from his robes a *Schiavone*, a light but lethal sword aspect to a cat's head as a *Empu Nadur*, and jumped out of the lodge, pointing to the throat fine sword Ezio ta.

"Deliver the Fruit of Eden" he growled.

- Is that what's in the box? Any *apple*? It must be a very special apple Ezio said, while echoing in his head the voice of his uncle: "A Piece of Eden" -. Come and chemical Tamela!

Rodrigo Ezio attacked with his sword, tear you tance and blood causing the first pass.

- Are you alone, Ezio? Where are now your friends Murderers?

- I need your help to take care of you!

Ezio used their daggers to attack and forearm protection on left to dodge the blows of Rodrigo. But despite that failed to hit upon any sharp blow with the dagger, poison, his double-edged dagger crossed the velvet robes of the cardinal, who immediately spotted with blood.

"Piece of shit," shouted Rodrigo, a victim of pain. I see that I need help to stop you! Guards! Guards!

Suddenly burst into the courtyard where they were Ezio and Cardinal, a dozen men overboard Borgia coat of arms on his uniform. Ezio knew that in the hilt of the dagger-wielding right hand was a tiny amount of your cruise-messy poison. He jumped back, the best way to defend himself against Rodrigo reinforcements, and at that time one of the guards crouched newcomers to take over the teak box and give it to his Master.

- Thanks, *c uomooraggioso!*

Ezio was being seriously over, but fighting continued with a coolness born of their strategic desire to retrieve irrefutable the box and its contents. Codex holstered weapons, grabbed the strap of throwing knives and threw one of them with deadly accuracy, finishing first with *Coraggio uomo* and then, with a second knife, snatched the cash from the hands of Rodrigo.

Spanish is bent to pick it up again and in retirement but then gives- Choof! - another knife cut the air and bounced labor a stone column inches from the face of cardinal. But there was Ezio who had been released.

Ezio whirled around and found a figure known, jovial, bearded. Aged, perhaps, and more grizzled, and more robust, but no less skillful.

- Uncle Mario! Exclaimed-. He knew that he had seen anTES was you!

"I can not let you be the one having fun," Mario said. And do not worry *NIPOTE*. You are not alone!

However, a guard just lunge Borgia Ezio with his halberd. And before he could strike a blow which Ezio had sent on their way to an eternal night, it appeared as if by magic, an arrow buried itself in the face of the attacker. He dropped the gun and fell forward, a look of incredulity recorded in his face. Ezio turned back and saw a ... *La Volpe!*

- What are you doing here, Fox?

"We've learned that you needed a little backed, "said Fox, rearming quickly began to see more guards out of the building.

However, at the same time, it appeared more reinforcement on the side of Ezio: Antonio and Bartolomeo.

- Do not let Borgia escape with the box! An bellowed tonio.

Bartholomew used his enormous sword, Bianca, like a scythe through a row of guards when they tried to overcome simply by number. And little to little

the tide of the battle was turned in favor of Murderers and their allies.

- With these we are, *nipota!* Shouted Mario-. Watch your Spanish!

As he turned, saw Ezio Rodrigo was heading toward a gate, tuated in the back of the lodge and hurried to intercept him, but the cardinal, sword in hand, confronted him.

"It's a losing battle, boy," roared-. You can not stop what is written! My hand will die just like your father and your brotherhands ... for death is the fate that awaits all those who seek to challenge the Templars.

But Rodrigo's voice lacked conviction and, looking around, Ezio found that the last guard had fallen. Rodrigo blocked the withdrawal of the doorway, raised his sword and prepared to attack.

- This is for my father! He exclaimed.

But Cardinal Ezio dodged and thereby lost equipmentance, but dropped his precious box to run out the door to save his skin.

"Make no mistake," said balefully on exit-. I'll live to fight again! And then I'll make sure your death will be as painful as slow.

And disappeared.

Ezio, breathless, trying to regain the rhythm of breath and his feet when he saw before him a woman's hand would help him. He looked up and discovered the identity of its owner: Paola!

"He's gone," she said with a smile-. But no matter. TeNemos what we came for.

- No! Have you heard what you said? I have to go for it and herebar with all this!

"Relax," said another woman approaching.

It was Theodora. Ezio looked around and saw it was aroundallies do: Mario, Fox, Antonio, Bartolomeo, Paola and Teodora. And there was someone else. A young man with light skin and dark hair with a thoughtful look and smile at a time.

- What are you doing all here? Ezio asked, sensing the tension of the environment.

"Maybe like you, Ezio," said the young stranger-. Wait until the Prophet.

Ezio was confused and angry.

- No! I came here to kill the Spanish! Your Prophet gives me exactly the same ... if it exists. And what is clear is that is not here.

- No? The young man paused and stared at Ezio-. The Prophet are *you*.

-What?

"I was foretold the coming of a prophet. And do not get along withsotres imagined long before the truth. You were always the Prophet who were looking for.

I do not understand anything. So who are you, anyway?

The young man gave a bow.

"My name is Niccolo Machiavelli. I am a member of the Order of the Murderers, trained according to the old ways to savesave the future of humanity. Like you, like all men and women here.

Ezio had been stunned and began to look at the faces of those gathered, one after another.

- Is it true, Uncle Mario? "He said finally.

"Yes, son," said Mario, taking a step forward-. We've all been guiding for years, teaching the skills needed to join our ranks.

Ezio had a lot of questions bubbling in his head. I did not know where to start.

"I must ask my family," said Mario-. For my mother, my sister ...

Mario smiled.

"You have every right to do so. Are safe and sound. And I do not live in the convent but to me, in Monteriggioni. Mary will always affected by the sadness of his loss, but it is much consolation now that he has devoted himself to charity work with the abbess. And as Claudia, the abbess was Auditorsta, before that he should make it, that the nun's life is not ideal for someone with his temperament, and there are other ways that can serve the Lord. He was released from his vocough. She married Captain and soon, Ezio, and present you with the arrivalgada a nephew or niece.

"A great news, man. I never liked the idea that Claudia spend the rest of his life locked in a convent. But I have more questions to ask you.

"Soon there will be time for questions," said Machiavelli.

"But there is still much to do before we can again see our loved ones and celebrate," said Mario-. And you may never get to do it. We have to Rodrigo to ignore this box, but will not rest until the newwo in his power, so we must protect it with life.

Ezio watched the circle of Murderers and for the first time realized that they all had a mark on the base of his left ring finger. But it was clear that there was time forBottlenose more questions. Mario told his colleagues:

"I think it's time ...

Very serious, they moved all head affirmatively nodded and Antonio pulled out a map, unfolded it and showed Ezio had scored a point in it.

"We meet here at dawn," he said, his tone solemnimperative mind.

"Come," said Mario others.

Machiavelli was in charge of the box and his beautiful and mysterious contents, and Murderers went quietly up the street andrum, leaving only Ezio.

Venice was mysteriously changes that evening and the large open square in front of the basilica was silent and deserted except for the pigeons, their eternal dwellers. Howdo Ezio began to climb the bell tower rose to thecanzo a dizzying height above his head but did not hesitate at any time. I knew the

meeting that had been with vocado would provide answers to several questions, and even in the depths of his heart suspected that some respondents would find it daunting, I also knew that he could not days turn away.

As they neared the top began to hear the murmur and voices. Finally reached the masonry to the top of the tower and into the space that housed the bells. The seven murdered, their heads covered with hoods, occupied the perimeter of the circular space in the center of a small brazier burning.

Paola took him by the hand and led him toward the center while Mario began to murmur a chant:

-Laa shay'a waqi'un moutlaq koulon moumkine bale ... These are the words of our ancestors, which occupies the heart of the Creed ...

Machiavelli took a step forward and looked into the eyes of Ezio.

"While the other men follow blindly see Dad, remember ...

Y Ezio chose the rest of the words as if they knew of a lifetime:

-... that nothing is true.

"While other men are limited by the morality or the law," continued Machiavelli- remember ...

-... everything is permitted. Machiavelli said:

"We work in the dark, to serve the light. We Roast sinuses.

Y then joined the other, chanting in unison:

"Nothing is true, everything is permitted. Nothing is true, everything is permitted. Nothing is true, everything is permitted ...

When finished, Mario took the left hand of Ezio.

"Now is the time," he said-. In this modern age, we are not as literal as our ancestors. We do not require the sacrifice of a finger. But we set a permanent seal. She took air-. Are you ready to join us?

Ezio, as if in a dream, but knowing so much so I had to do and what would then put out his hand without hesitation.

"I am," he said.

Antonio went to the stove and took from it an iron labeling ending in two small semicircles could join by pressing a lever attached to the handle. He took the hand of Ezio and isolated finger.

"It hurts a bit, brother," said-. Like so many things.

Labeling placed the iron above the finger and imprisoned him with red hot metal semicircles. The meat was singed and smelled something burning, but gave no Ezio not jump. Antonio quickly withdrew iron labeling and set aside. The Murderers took off the hood and gathered around him. Uncle Mario proudly gave a pat on the back. Theodora took a perfume glass vial containing a clear, thick liquid applied gently on the ring that would forever imprisoner's finger Ezio.

"This will calm you," said-. We are proud of you.

Machiavelli then stood beside her and nodded his mind your head.

"Benvenuto, Ezio. Now you are one of us. Only da terminate your initiation ceremony, and then ... intonka, my friend, have an important job to do!

After saying this, he looked over the edge of the tower cambelfry. Much lower, about *campanile*, several bales of hay had separated them for a short distance, forage for the horses of the Ducal Palace. A Ezio it seemed impossible that from this height possible hit upon enough to land at any of those tiny white, but was precisely this that made Machiavelli, his cape flying in the air. His companions followed his example and Ezio watched with a mixture of horror and wonder how we all were on a landing perfect and met je down, looking up at him with what he hoped it was an expression of courage in their faces.

Accustomed as I was jumping up on the roof had never been faced with a leap of faith from a height like that. The bales of hay seemed the size of slices of polenta, but knew there was no other way to get back to the soil that was not that, and that the more we lengthen, it is more complicated destiny. He breathed deeply two or three times and launched into the night with the bZos high, initiating a perfect swan dive.

He gave the impression that the fall lasted for hours. The wind whistled in his ears, bristling, waving their clothes and hair. Then, the hay bales out to meet him. In the last moment, closed my eyes ...

... And landed on the hay! It was no air in the body, but when, trembling, stood up, he discovered that was not broken anything and that, in fact, he felt elated.

Mario ran towards him, accompanied by Theodora.

"I think he'll make it, right? Mario asked Theodora.

At midnight, Mario, Machiavelli and Ezio were sitting around the trestle table in the workshop of Leonardo. Ahead of them had the peculiar artifact that valued both Rodrigo Borgia, and we all watched with curiosity and respect.

"It's fascinating," said Leonardo-. Absolutely fascinatingnant.

- What is Leonardo? Ezio asked-. What do you do?

Leonardo said:

"Well, I'm confused. Contains dark secrets, and its design is unlike anything I'd say, that I have ever seen on earth ... What is clear is that never in my life seen such a sophisticated design ... And just could not explain why the earth revolves around the sun, I can not explain this.

- Did I hear correctly that that the earth revolves around the sun? Mario asked, looking surprised to Leonardo.

But Leonardo continued to examine the machine, giving LapTAS carefully in his hands, and in doing so, began to glow, a ghostly light, interior, generated by it.

"It's made of materials that in fact, logically, not Beriah exist," continued Leonard, startled. And yet, it is clear that a device is very old.

"It is clear that in the pages of the Codex refers to him," said Mario-. I admit from the description therein. The Codex calls it "a Piece of Eden."

And Rodrigo called it "the fruit of Eden, " said Ezio.

Leonardo looked into his eyes.

- Apple Tree of Knowledge? "Lapple that Eve gave Adam?"

Everyone turned to look again at the object. Had empezado to shine more brightly, and a hypnotic effect. For reasons I could not understand, Ezio felt a desire tocarlo growing. It did not seem to give off heat, but that fascination entailed an inherent feeling of danger, as if to touch it were to pass through flashes of light. No senaunt to the other, had the impression that the world around him had suddenly turned dark and cold and there was nothing apart from him and that ... thing.

He saw his hand move, as if they were not part of his body, as though he could not control it, to settle finally and firmly on the softer side of that engine.

His first reaction was surprise. The Fruit of Eden looked like metal, but the contact was warm and soft, like the skin of a woman, as if *vivo!* But there was more time for reflection, that the hand was removed and the next instant the radiance inside the contraption, which had been increasing on a regular basis to suddenly burst into a blinding warm light and color copying, within which different managed chaos Ezio Guir certain ways. Looked away for a moment object to pay attention to their peers. Mario and Machiavelli had his back, his eyes closed, holding his head in his hands because of fear or pain. Leonardo isba transposed, eyes wide, mouth agape and overwhelmed. Ezio looked back and saw the object began to fu formspressing. Appeared a large garden, full of monstrous creatures, there was a dark city in flames, clouds huge mushroom-shaped and bigger than cathedrals and palaces, a marching army, but an army that had nothing to do with anyone who had Ezio seen or could imagine, people starving to uniStriped reports led to brick buildings by men with whips and dogs, high chimneys spewing smoke narrowTthe spiraling and planets, men with grotesque weaponhard going around in the darkness of space ... and there has alsoBia other Ezio, another Leonardo, another Mario and another Machiavelli, and more and more like them, the reply of time, turning impossiblepetent and continuously in space, toys, a powerful wind, which, in fact, seemed to roar with power in the room where they were.

- Make it stop! Someone shouted.

Ezio squeezed customers and without knowing exactly why, subjectsTando right wrist with his left hand, right hand forced her to get back in touch with the thing.

And everything stopped instantly. The room looks and regained its normal proportions. Everyone stared. Nobody had a hair out of place. Leonardo glasses still on his nose. The Fruit of Eden still on the table, motionless, a single small object to which few would have given more than a glance.

Leonardo was the first to speak.

"This *never* should fall into the wrong hands," said-. Crazy again weaker minds ...

"I agree," said Machiavelli-. I could hardly stand it, I could not believe his power.

With care, after putting on gloves, picked up the Fruit of Eden and put it back in the box, closing the lid sealing.

- Do you think the Spanish know what this thing? Think you can control it?"

"*Never* should fall into their hands," Machiavelli with a tight voice. He handed the box to Ezio-. You take care of it and protect it with all the skills you have taught.

Ezio carefully took the box and nodded.

"Take her to Forli," said Mario-. The citadel is walledda, protected by cannons, and is held by one of our mainCipal allies.

- In whose hands? Ezio asked.

"Her name is Caterina Sforza.

Ezio smiled.

"Now I remember ..., an old acquaintance, and I'll be glad to return to see.

"Then, start preparing for your departure.

"I accompany said Machiavelli.

"I'll be happy," smiled Ezio. He turned to Leonard-. And you? *mio amico?*

- Me? When you finish the job that keeps me here, go backre Milan. The Duke is well behaved with me.

"You must also go to Monteriggioni, when you return to Florence and have time," said Mario.

Ezio looked her best friend.

"Goodbye, Leonardo. I hope our paths cross again someday.

"I'm sure it will," Leonardo said. And if I neNeed some, Agniolo, still in Florence, where you'll always knowlimestone.

Ezio hugged him.

"So long.

"A parting gift," Leonardo said, handing him a bag. Bullets and gunpowder to your little *gun* and a good vial of poison for that dagger so useful that you have. I hope that does not needsites, but it is important for me to know you better protected as possible.

Ezio looked excited.

"Thanks ... thanks for everything, my old friend.

Chapter 22

After from Venice to board a galley and A lengthy and pleasant journey, Ezio and Machiavelli arrived at the port of the marshes near Ravenna, where were received personally by Caterina and his entourage.

"I arrived by courier the news that were on camino, so I decided to come to receive you personally and accompanied Naros to Forli said-. You have done wisely, I think, to travel on board one of the galleys of the Doge Agostino, as the roads suelen be unsafe and have conflicts with the bandits. Even think, "he added, casting a meaningful glance at Ezio-re not have been many problems.

"It's an honor that I remember, *signora*.

"It's been a long time, but caused me a good impressionsion. He then turned to Machiavelli "And I am also glad to see you again, Nicholas.

- I had some knowledge? Ezio asked.

"Nicolas told me to ... in certain matters of state. -Camexchange of item-. I am told that you have become a Murderer and void. Congratulations.

Caterina reached the carriage, but he told his servants that he preferred to ride, it was a beautiful day and was a short distanceta. Saddled horses and as mounted, Caterina Ezio beckoned to come over to ride at his side.

Forli, you'll love. And there will be safe. Our pipetions for over a century protecting the city and the fortress is impenetrable.

"Excuse me, *signora* but there is something that has me intrigued.

"Tell me, please, what it is.

"I've never heard of a woman to govern a city-state. I'm impressed. Caterina smiled.

"Well, before he was in the hands of my husband, of course. Do you remember him? "Even a little? Girolamo. He made a pausa-. He died ...

"I'm sorry.

"Do not be," she said simply-. I sent him killed. Ezio tried to hide his astonishment.

"The thing was as follows" said Machiavelli-. DiscoveredGirolamo Riario brim that worked for the Templars. Was in the process of completing a map showing the location of the pages of the Codex to be recovered.

"Anyway, that convicted the son of a bitch said I never liked evenly Caterina-. It was a lousy father, abuDerrida in bed and in general, a real kick in the ass. -Reflexed instantly-. Please note that after you've had a couple of husbands more ... Overrated, if you want to tell you the truth.

I stopped the appearance of a riderless horse approaching at a gallop toward them. Caterina ordered one of his escortedTAS to run in pursuit, and the rest of the group continued camino to Forli, although Sforza servants drew their swords in case. Soon after they found a car volmarket, its wheels still spinning in the air, surrounded by corpses.

Catherine frowned, and spurred his horse. Ezio and MaMachiavelli followed suit.

Somewhat later found a group of farmers, someus of them wounded, walking toward them.

- What happens? Caterina asked the woman who headedZaba group.

-*Altezza* "Said the woman, tears rolling down her musselsTthe-. Came shortly after you left. They are preparedrandose to lay siege to the city!

- Who are they?

- The brothers Orsi *madonna!*

"*Sangue di Giuda!*

- Who are these Orsi? Ezio asked.

"These wretches hired to kill Girolamo, "said Caterina.

"The Orsi work for anyone who pays them," said Machiavelli-. There are many lights, but unfortunately have a reputation of fulfilling their work well. He stopped to think-. The Spanish have to be behind it.

- And how could I know where we will take the fruit of Eden?

"Do not look for the Fruit of Eden, Ezio; leave behind Riario map. The Map is still in Forli.Rodrigo need to know cottonare hidden from the remaining pages of the Codex and we can not afford to get the map!

- And what matter the map?Caterina cried-. My child isas in the city. Ah, *porc demon!*

They lashed the horses into a gallop and rushed to spot the city. Plumes of smoke rose inside the walls and saw that the doors of the ramparts were closed. In many-Rallon had men stationed outside under the banner of the bear and the Orsi family bush. But inside the citadel occupiedpaba the hill, still flying the flag of the Sforza.

"Apparently they have control of part of Forli, but not in the citadel," said Machiavelli.

- Traitorous bastards! Caterina spat.

- Is there any way to enter the city without being seen? Ezio asked, picking weapons and setting Codexselas quickly in their place, reserving the gun in his bagtola and hidden blade.

"There is a possibility *expensive* Caterina said-. But it will be difficult. There is an old tunnel in the ditch that runs through the west wall below.

"In this case I will try," said Ezio. Be prepared. If I can open from inside the gates of the city, come teachguida galloping like demons. If I get to the citadel, they see the flag and let us in, we'll be safe to plan the movement that we have to carry out below.

"Do not be another to hang these idiots and see how they swing with the wind snarled Caterina. But later, Ezio. And good luck! I'll think of something to distract troops Orsi.

Ezio dismounted and ran to the west of the walls, crouched and sheltering behind hillocks and shrubs. Mienafter, Caterina straightened in his stirrups and shouted to the enemy behind the walls of the city:

- You! I am speaking to you to *you, dogs* Gutted. Have you busy *my* city? *My* home? And do you really think I'm going to sit back? I will go and you tear the *coglioni* ... if you have them of course!

At the top of the walls of sun then appeared groupsdice Caterina looked at funny and equally intimidated as she continued with her speech:

- What kind of man are you? Seize the orders of which I paid little more than a handful of pennies! I wonder if they will think that it was worth it when I climb up there, I cut the head all over me mee you and me go vueshead work the *figa!* Your balls will hang a skewer and roast on the stove in my kitchen! What do you think that?

The men guarding the western seawall had Suddenly having fullmado. Nobody watched the pit, and Ezio launched him, swam, located the canopy covered entrance of the tunnel and got into their dark depths.

The interior was well preserved, and dry, and all I had to do was advance to see the light at the end. He stepped toward it cautiously, and as he approached he heard the voice of Caterina. The tunnel ended in a short flight of stairs standingdra that led into a back room on the ground floor of one of the western towers of Forli. Everything was deserted, as Catherine had been together a good crowd. Through a window he saw the back of most men with Orsituning, and even clapping occasionally, the performance of Caterina.

...to be me man, wipe that smile off your faces. But I do not believe it was worth the effort. Do not be carried indeception that has boobs ... "It occurred to him then something-. Whatever you want to bet that you would like to see them, right? Whatever you want to bet that you would like to touches, suck, give them a squeeze! Well, why do not you go down here and you try? I'd kick in the balls so hard that I would come by the narices! *Branco di cani Luridi Bastardi!* Best you do pack up and you return home as you can ... Or you'll end up impaled and hung high on the walls of my fortress! Ah! But perhaps I'm wrong! Maybe you *like* that you metiesen a long oak stick up your ass! ... Give me disgust even beginning to wonder if it's worth the trouble. Never in my life have I seen so much shit together. *Penile viewChesa!* I think that, as *men* would not make much difference if you neuter them all.

Ezio was already on the street. He saw before him the door closest to where they were Caterina and Machiavelli. At the top of its arc, along with the huge lever action saw a arquero bet. Moving quietly and quickly as possible, climbed to the top of the arc and nailed him Sentry is a single punalada in the neck, killing him instantly. Then toggled with the full weight of his body and the doors opened, emitting a powerful crunch.

Machiavelli had been watching closely all the time, and when he saw that opened the door, bowed and said something quietly to Catherinids that immediately spursor his horsement to put it into a gallop and advanced, followed by Machiavelli and totality of his entourage. When they saw what was happening Orsi troops stationed at the top of the wall screamed in rage and ran to intercept them, but the faction of the Sforza ran so fast that it was impossible to reach him. Ezio took his bow and arrows of sentinel dead and used them to shoot down three menOrsi men before quickly climbing a wall and run across the rooftops of the city, according to Catherine and her group in the rerun through the narrow streets leading to the citadel.

The more one enters the city, the greater the confusion. It was evident that the battle for control of Forli notba far from finished, as groups of soldiers under the bannerdera with snakes and eagles black blue Sforza still fighting against mercenaries Orsi, while ordinary citizens sought shelter in their homes or simply confused and aimless running. There were market stalls overturned, chickens by suethe running around and squawking, a little boy sitting in the mud crying her eyes out screaming for his mother, who appeared corriendo picked him up and carry it to a safe place, and the sounds of battle raged everywhere. Ezio, jumping from one rooftop to another, saw the situation from the vantage of the belfry, and used the arrows with deadly accuracy to protect Caterina and Machiavelli as long as the guards approached Orsi over them.

Finally reached a wide *piazza* front of the citadel. It was empty and the streets radiating from it seemed deserted. Ezio fell from the roof and met with his people. In the battlements of the citadel did not see anyone and the door was impressive ceRRAD in tight. It looked as impregnable as Caterina announced.

Catherine looked up and shouted:

- Open, convicted gang of idiots! !! The *showeringsa!* Moved a little ass!

Head peeped some of the men of the Citadel, including a captain who said: "*Shooting, Altezza!*" and gave orders to three men who disappeared immediately to go open the doorta. But at that moment, with a howl of war began to appear, dozens of soldiers from Orsi from the streets around the square, blocking any attempt to withdraw and close in on Catherine and her companions between them and the unrelentingcables walls of the citadel.

- Damn ambush! Machiavelli cried, with Ezio gathdo your few men and placing them between Catherine and Janmigros.

-*Aprite the portal! Aprite!* Caterina cried.

Finally they opened the huge doors. The guards came to assist them Sforza and attacking an Orsi empendentive melee, retreated to the gates, which closed quickly behind them. Ezio and Machiavellil (who had dismounted from his horse) they sat on the wall, shoulder to shoulder, with bated breath. I could not believe they had succeeded. Caterina dismounted too, but not destired even for a moment. He ran through the courtyard towards the door, where two children and a mother with a baby in braZos were waiting in fear.

The children ran to her and she hugged them, greeting them by name.

Cesare, Giovanni ... *preoccuparvi not.* He stroked the baby's head, rocking-. *Salute,* Galeazzo. "Then I looked around, and the nurse-. Nezetta! Where are Bianca and Ottaviano?"

"Excuse me, ma'am. They were playing outside when EMPEz-attack and we have failed to locate them.

Caterina, frightened, was about to reply when all of a suddento be heard the mighty roar of the Orsini troops outside the citadel. The captain of the Sforza ran up to Ezio and Machiavelli.

"They bring reinforcements to the mountains," said-. I do not know howto time we will be able to resist. He went then to a lugarteniente-: To the battlements! Encargaos of the guns!

The deputy ran to organize gunners, which were heading to their posts, when a shower of arrows shot by the archers of the Orsi fell into the courtyard in deterioration and the walls. Catherine ran to garrison their children phenomenon, while at the same time yelling at Ezio:

- Watch the cannons! They are our only hope! No permitas those unfortunate fall in the citadel!

- Vamos! Machiavelli cried.

Ezio followed him to where the guns were ready. Varivers of the gunners were killed, along with the captain and the placeLieutenant. Others were wounded. Survivors struggled to settle and put at the right angle heavy guns and make notes on the men Orsi, located abaho in the plaza. Had appeared many reinforcements and saw that they were manipulating Ezio siege guns and catapults for the calles. Meanwhile, just under a contingent of soldiers approached Orsi a battering ram against the walls. If Machiavelli or it will not be occupiedRRRIA a solution quickly, the chances of saving the citadel would be minimal, to resist this new attack, without emHowever, they would have to shoot guns at targets iftuated in the interior of the walls of Forli, the risk that this importantescrow injure or even kill innocent citizens. Machiavelli leaving the organization in charge of the gunboats, Ezio ran down the yard in search of Caterina.

"They're taking the city. To keep them at bay I disstop the guns against targets inside the muscratches.

She looked at him with a cold expression of calm. "Do what you gotta do.

Ezio looked up at her place Machiavelli, awaiting the signal. He raised his arm and lowered it decisively.

Ezio cannons roared and turned to rush to the battlements with Machiavelli. Directing the gunners to fire at will, found to blow up a siege weapon after another, and catapults. The troops of the Orsini had little room for maneuver in the streets and in the canyons started to wreak havoc, crossbow archers and the Sforza EMPEZaron to pick off the invaders who had lived within the walls of the city. The troops were fi Orsinally expelled from Forli and Sforza troops who had survived on the outside of the citadel were able to secure the exterior curtain walls. But the victory had become an expensive toll. Several houses in the city were in flames and gunsCaterina ros were unable to avoid killing some of themselves. And as quickly Machiavelli said, had something else to consider. Had succeeded in driving the enemy from the citydisease, but had not lifted the siege. Forli still surrounded by the battalions of Orsi and without water and fresh foodcos. In addition, the two older children were in danger and Caterina missing.

After a while, Caterina, Machiavelli and Ezio met on the battlements of the outer wall to examine the multitude of troops camped nearby. Behind them, the citizens of Forli did their best to restore order to the city, but water and food would not last forever and everybody knew it. Caterina was haggard, worried about the possible death of their missing children. Bianca, the eldest, was nine, and Ottaviano was a year younger.

Had yet to locate the very Orsi brothers, but that same day a herald in the midst of the enemy and blew the horn. The troops were divided as the sea to make way for two men on horses and wearing brown coat of evilthe steel, accompanied by pajes carrying the crest of the bear and the tree. They stood away from any arrow.

One of the riders got up in his stirrups and cried.

- Caterina! Caterina Sforza! We believe that still cagedgiven in your beloved city, Caterina ..., answer me

Catherine looked over the battlements, furious.

- What?

The man gave a wide smile.

"Oh, nothing. I just wondered if I would missWe ... some children!

Ezio had been placed next to Caterina. The man who istobacco talking looked surprised.

"Well, well," said-. Ezio Auditore, if I remember correctly. Insung to meet you. I've heard a lot about you.

"And you, so I wonder, are the *fratelli* Orsi-replicationEzio ed.

Which had not yet spoken up his hand.

"The same, Lodovico ...

-... Checco-added and other-. A your service! Laughed drymind.

- Enough!Caterina cried-. Enough of this! Where are my *children*? *Free him!*

Lodovico ironic bowed his chair.

"*Ma certo, signora*. Te return them happy. A cambio of your business. Of something, rather that which belonged to your husband cried. Something that was working on behalf of ... some friends of ours. "Suddenly his voice took a tougher tone-. I refer to a map!

"And also a Fruit of Eden" added Checco-. O another, we know everything to matter. Do you think we are stupid? Do you think our boss does not have spies?

"Yes," said Lodovico-. We also want the fruit of Eden. Or do you want us to cut into slices the throats of your smallren and send with your *pappa!*

Caterina remained listening. His mood was ahora an icy calm. When his turn came, he shouted:

"*Bastardi!* Do you think you can intimidate me with your vulnerabilityGares threats? Slag! I will not give *nothing!* Do you want to my children? Take them! I have ways to do more! "And she lifted her skirts showing their private parts.

"Your histrionics do not care, Caterina Checco said, turning his horse-. Neither interests me look at you the *figa*. CamBiar idea, but I concede just one hour. Your brats will be safe so far in this miserable village next to camino. And do not forget: the *kill andagain* to destroy your city and take by force what we want ... so that appropriateadvantage of our generosity and we all save a lot of concerns.

The brothers set off at a gallop. Caterina collapsed against the rough wall of the wall, breathing heavily through your mouth, shocked by what he had said and done.

Ezio was at his side.

"Do not sacrifice your children, Caterina. No cause is worth it.

- Save the world? "She stared with his mouthtreabierta, her blue eyes wide open just below his mop of red hair.

"We can not become people like them," said SimEzio ply-. There are commitments that can not be.

- Oh, Ezio! This is what I expected you to say! "I openZo-. Of course we can not sacrifice, my dear! She leaned back-. But I can not ask you to take chances to bring them here.

"Try," said Ezio. Machiavelli then addressed-. Not be long ... I hope. But whatever happens, I know that protect the Fruit of Eden in your own life. And Catherine ...

-Yes?

- Do you know where Girolamo hid the map?

"I'll find.

"Do it, and protect it.

- What will you do with the Orsi? Machiavelli asked.

"I I have added to my list, "said Ezio-. Are of the same ilk as the men who murdered and destroyed mineYeron my family. Although now I see that the cause to which I serve is more than just revenge.

They shook hands, looking into his eyes.

"Buona fortune, amico mio Very seriously, "said Machiavelli.

"Buona anche fortune.

It was difficult to get the people whose identity was revealed Checco so reckless, but he had not done justice by describing it as "miserable." It was small and poor, as most of the villages inhabited by servants of the Romagna, and showed signs of having been recently flooded by the river that ran by him, but in general it was a clean town and pulmonarycro, with whitewashed houses and thatched roofs renewed. Although water flooded the road dividing the dozen casas was still muddy as a result of the flood, all suggested order, but no joy, and diligence, but not faithlicidad. The only thing that distinguished Santa Salvaza of a people in peacetime was that swarmed him a few men arMadosa of Orsi. No wonder, Ezio thought that Checco is believed able to afford to mention that it was holding Bianca Ottaviano. The question that remained was the iffollows: what would people rather than hiding the children of Catherine?

Ezio, armed this time with the double-edged dagger on his left forearm, protected by the metal plate and the pistol in his right hand, plus a light sword with a handle in a cross hanging from his belt, was dressed in a simple peasant's woolen cloak that covered her knee. He covered caBeza the hood to avoid being recognized and dismounted at a safe distance from people. Carefully controlling the positionpossible presence of watchdogs Orsi, hung on his back a sack of firewood he had taken loan from a shed. Bent under his weight, came to Santa Salvaza.

Despite the military presence had imposed, hasinhabitants of the village tried to continue his work as if nothing happened. Naturally, no one had a special love for the mercenaries of the Orsi and Ezio, passing unnoticed escough but almost instantly recognized by locals as a Forastero, immediately got support in the mission. He went to a house that was the end of the town, larger than the others and something paragraphTada. It was there, explained a woman charged with a pitcher of water from the river, where they held one of the children. Ezio thanked the soldiers of the Orsi were so scattered, it was obvious they had for the bulk of its forces to the site of Forli.

He knew, however, that it had very little time to rescue the children.

The door and windows of the house were closed and dog limeto, but while around the building to move to the back where the two wings forming a courtyard, Ezio heard a young voice firm delivering a stern lecture. He climbed onto the roof to see the courtyard, where Bianca Sforza, the miniature replica of his mother, was giving an earful to two surly guards Orsi.

- Did ye two, a couple of copies of the issuetimer, all you have managed to find to watch me? DECIA used a regal tone, stiff as a stick and not showing the least fear, as his mother would have done in their circumstancessubstances-. *Stolti!* You are not enough! My *mamma* be angry and will not allow make me any harm. Sforza women withered violets are not, you know? We may be pretty, but the vista fools. As my *pappa* eventually discovered! He breathed deeply and looked perplexed guards including-. I hope you do not imagine you give me fear, because doing so you would be very wrong. And if you touch her hair to my brother, my *mamma* pillandoos end and I eat for breakfast! "*Capito?*

"Shut up, little fool," growled the older guard-. Unless you want a smack arree!

- Do not you dare talk like that! It's absurd, you look at it. I never go out with yours and I'll be alive and well in my house in less than an hour. In fact, I start to get bored. I'm surprised you do not be anything better to do while beingperais your death!

"Enough, enough," said the older guard, ready to shake her. But just then, Ezio disparitiesRO Your *gun* from the roof, hitting the soldier in the chest. The man jumped up, his robe of scarlet dyeing even before he hit the ground. For a second thought Ezio Leonardo gunpowder must have improved. In the confusionsion that followed the sudden death of the guard, you jumped from EzioJado, landing with the elegance and power of a panther, and his double-edged dagger quickly attacked the guard youngest, who had drawn a dagger look intimidating. Ezio went through precisely the soldier's arm, cutting the tendons like ribbons. The dagger of the victim fell to the ground, digging edge in the mud, and before he could draw on other defense, Ezio approached the double-edged dagger to his jaw and passed through the soft tissue of the palate and tongue to penetrate the skull cavity. No hurry, Ezio daggers withdrew, dropping the corpse to the ground.

- They were just these two? He asked the impassive while BiancaAfter quickly reloaded his gun.

- Yes! And thank you, whoever you are. My mother will ensure that you are amply rewarded. But they also have causedtive Ottaviano my brother ...

- Do you know where? Ezio asked, recharging with rapidez gun.

"I have in the watchtower ..., which is next to the bridgeyou ruined. We have to hurry!

- Show me where it is and do not take off on me!

He followed her to the outside of the house and down the road until they found the tower. They arrived just in time because I was thereDovico in person, dragging the weeping Ottaviano by the neck. Ezio saw that the little limp, he must have twisted my ankle.

- You!Lodovico cried seeing Ezio-. Rather than give in to the girl and come back- with your lover! Tell her to end up con these two if we fail to Lor we want!

"I want my *mamma* Ottaviano whined-. Let go, bully!

- Shut up *marmocchio!*Lodovico snapped-. Ezio! Go find the Fruit of Eden and the map or children will pay.

- I have pee! Ottaviano whined.

- Oh, for the love of God, *chiudi il Becco!*

"Let go," said Ezio with determination.

- I want to see how you do! Never get acercarte enough, you idiot! As take a step, he slit the garganta in the blink of an eye!

Lodovico was holding with both hands to smallante him, but at that time gave a hand to desenfungive his sword. Ottaviano then tried to get loose, but Lodovico grabbed him firmly by the wrist. But no longer inter Ottavianopplaced between Lodovico and Ezio. Seeing his opportunityopportunity, took the gun Eziotola and fired.

Lodovico rabid expression turned into disbeliefDad. The bullet had hit in the neck, severing her jugular. With bulging eyes, dropped to his knees and fel Ottaviano, leadDose hands to the throat, blood oozing through his fingers. Little ran to hug her sister.

- Ottaviano! *Stai bene!* She said, hugging tightly.

Ezio came forward and stood next to Lodovico, but not exsuccessively closer. The man was not dead yet and still had the sword in his hand. The blood was also spotted his doublet, a trickle became a torrent.

I do not know what instrument of the devil has given you the means to defeat, "he gasped Ezio-. But sorry to say that whatever you do, you lose this game. The Orsi're not as stupid as you think. If there is here a fool, it's you ... you and Caterina!

"The stupid are you," said Ezio, his voice cold and ironic-. To die by a handful of silver. Do you really think that was worthwhile?

Lodovico grimaced.

"More than you think, man. Te have won the game. And whatever you do now, the Master will be your prize! "His face contorted in agony from the pain I have caused himrida. The stain of blood had grown bigger-. Finish better than me, Ezio, if you still have a glimmer of mercy.

"In that case, die with honor, Orsi. It means nothing. -Ezio stepped forward and opened the wound in the neck of Lodovico. A moment later, he was not there. Ezio leaned over him and closed his eyes-. *Requiescat in pace* "He said.

There was no time to lose. He returned to the children, who had been watching the scene astonished.

- Can you walk? He asked Ottaviano.

"I'll try, but it really hurts.

Ezio knelt down and examined it. He had not sprained his ankle, but was dislocated. Ottaviano climbed on his back.

"Be brave, little dux," he said-. I will return to both home safe and sound.

- I can first make a pee? I really need.

"But do it quickly.

Ezio knew it would be easy to go through the village with nodren. It was impossible to camouflage them as they were elegantly dressedtwo, and in any case, at that stage would have already discovered that Bianca had escaped. He replaced the gun in his wrist by the poisonous dagger. He took the right hand of Bianca with his left hand and went into the woods flanking the aldeia on the west side. Ascended a small hill where poDria Santa Salvaza watching in its entirety and Orsi saw soldiers running toward the watchtower, but not deployed in the forest. Grateful to be able to enjoy a moment of respite, the children came to where he had left tied the caballo, put them up on his back and rode behind them.

He began to ride north towards Forli. The city was quiet. Too quiet. Where were the men of the Orsi? Had they raised the siege? It seemed impossible. Ispulley horse.

"Go through the south bridge," said Bianca, forward, holdDose tightly to the saddle knob-. It is the most direct route home.

Ottaviano snuggled against him.

When they approached the city walls, saw the south side doors were open. The crossing at the time a small troop of guards Sforza, Caterina escorting and behind her, Machiavelli. Ezio quickly realized that his companion was wounded Murderer. Spurred more if possible to monture and when he arrived with the group, quickly dismantled and moved the children into the arms of Catherine.

- What in the name of the Blessed Virgin? He asked, glancing repeatedly Caterina Machiavelli-. What are you doing out here?

"Oh," said Caterina Ezio-. I feel very, very much!

- What *happened?*

"Everything was a trap. To lower your defenses!Caterina said in despair-. What to take the children has been to divert our attention!

Ezio looked back to Machiavelli.

"But the city is safe?

Machiavelli sighed.

"Yes, the city is safe. At Orsi and do not care.

- What do you mean?

"As the drive out of here, we relax ... just momenthane, to regroup and treat the wounded. It was inChecco tonka when struck. They must have it all planneddo! Stormed the city. I fought against him in a melee fight very hard, but his soldiers surprised me by itPalda and beat me. Ezio, I have to ask you now to demonstratethree your courage: Checco has been the fruit of Eden!

Ezio was stunned for a long time. And then he said, slowlymind:

- What? No. .. that can not be. He looked like a madman to thearound-. Where has it gone?

"As he had what he wanted, he retreated with his men and the army was divided. We could not see which group had the Fruit of Eden and the battle had weakened us so that we could not go in pursuit. But we did see in per Checcoperson leading a company into the mountains of western ...

"Then all is lost? Ezio cried, thinking that IDovico was right, that it underestimated the Orsi.

"We continue to maintain the map, thank God," said Caterina. He dared not waste time searching.

"But why? If you already have the Fruit of Eden, and no *necessary/located* Map!

"We can not allow the Templars succeed Machiavelli said sorry. They can not! We must go!

But Ezio saw that his friend was getting paler as a result of his injuries.

"No, you stay here. Caterina! Take care of him. Now I must go! Maybe still time!

Chapter 23

Although he had spent the day riding and just had desired to change the saddle, took a long time Ezio LLEgar to the Apennines, and when he did, he knew that the search ChecOrsi co would take even longer. But if Checco had returned to the headquarters of his family in Nubilaria could interconcepts in the path which led from there to the south, in the long and windingso road leading to Rome. Checco no guarantee that would not have gone directly to the Holy See, but Ezio considered that, with a load as valuable as the fruit of Eden, his opponent would seek safety first somewhere where we met him, and from there sent messengers to find out if the Spanish hadBia returned to the Vatican before contacting him.

Ezio, therefore, decided to follow the path Nubilaria and secretly entered the city, set out to discover all possiblemation on the whereabouts of Checco. But Checco had spies everywhere, and heard Ezio knew immediately that I was looking forfraud and thought from the Fruit of Eden in a caravan integratesprovides for two carriages to escape from him and foil his plans.

The morning he was scheduled to depart Checco, Ezio monto guard near the south gate of Nubilaria and shortly after saw appear the two carriages were waiting. Ezio mounted his horse ready to pursue them, but at the last moment appeared in a side street a third carriage, more ligero, led by a follower of Orsi, who deliberately blockedately over, scaring his horse, which stood on its hind legs and threw him to the ground. With time running out, Ezio was forced to abandon his horse and, jumped up, perched on the carriage of Orsi, driving the same driver with a single blow. He cracked the whip on horses and enterprisinggave chase.

Not long in sight of his opponent cars, but they saw it too and accelerated. Down the whole machinena by treacherous mountain road, the carriage escort Checco, loaded with soldiers of the Orsi preparing to fire their crossbows against Ezio, took a sharp curve with excessive speed. The horses followed the path and drew the curve, but the carriage, with its steering axis disappeared and lost, went straight towards the cliff and have yards and yards rolledta impact on the valley floor. Holding his breath, Ezio thanked fate for his goodness. Urged his horse to go forward, afraid of being forcedidols too, and that their coburst reasons, but pulled his weight than the animalsChecco evils of carriage and, little by little, they were shortening the distance that separated him from his prey.

When Ezio got to its height, the driver waved him Orsiishment against him, but Ezio took it and threw it down. Then, at the right time, dropped the reins and jumped from his carriage hasta the roof of Checco. The horses of his carriage, dams PAmail, released by both weightl driver control is desbocaron and ran out of sight.

- Get the hell out of here! Shouted the coachman Checco, alarmed-. In God's name, what do you think you're doing? Are you crazy?

But stripped of the whip, it was very difficult to control their horses. I could not afford to fight.

Checco screaming from the inside of the carriage.

- Do not be silly, Ezio! It'll never leave! "Sticking out the window half-length, rammed the sword while Ezioafter the driver frantically tried to control the horses-. Get out of my carriage! Right now!

The driver then tried to swerve the CarruEzio je to fall, but he grabbed with all his might. The coach changed direction dangerously and finally, when they passed an abandoned marble quarry, is descompletely controlled, turned sideways and threw the driver withwork a lot of marble blocks and size fits alltwo in their day by miners and later abandoned by defects in the stone. The horses reared and kicked terrifiestwo. Ezio jumped down, landed in a squatting position and prepared to receive the sword Checco, without foodent but unharmed, also leftalso the vehicle, the anger reflected in her features.

"Deliver the Fruit of Eden, Checco. It's over.

- Idiot! *End* when you're *dead!* -Checco waved his sword against his opponent and immediately got into a fight attacking dangerously against each other near the steep edge of the road.

"Deliver the Fruit of Eden, Checco, and let you go. You have no idea the power you have with that!

"I never give it to you. And when I get my Master, shall hold a power never dreamed of, and Lodovico and I enjoy that part of it belongs to us!

- Lodovico is dead! And you really think your teacher will keep you alive when it is no use for it? You know too much!

- What did you kill my brother? So *this* is for you, for him! -Checco lunged Ezio.

Got into a fight, leaves fuming, and again reached Checco Ezio, although the metal shield deflected the blow of the sword. The fact that his wise it would not hit the target down for a moment Checco guard, but recoveredRo quickly and struck a stab in the right arm of Ezio which caused a cut so deep in the biceps that forced him to drop the sword.

Checco gave a hoarse cry of triumph and approached the tip of his sword to the throat of Ezio.

"Do not beg mercy," said- for I do not give it.

And his arm back ready to deal a mortal blowsuch. But at that moment, Ezio powered mechanism forearmzo left that drew the double-edged dagger, and turning round with the speed of lightning, plunged into the chest of Checco.

Checco remained motionless for a long moment and looked down to see the blood that fell on the white ground of the road. Dropped his sword and fell on top of Ezio, holding him in his attempt to stand. Their faces were found to scale're inches from each other.

"I return to have your prize," he whispered, as blood gushed from his chest.

- Do you really thinkad that was worthwhile?Ezio asked-. Such carnage!

Checco made a sound that reminded one of a smilebetween teeth, or maybe it was a cough, as the blood flowed with increasing abundance of his mouth.

"Look, Ezio, you know how hard it is to be kept in your possession for a long time something like this so valuable. -Intempted to take air-. I die today, but tomorrow will be *you* who dies.

And at the same time the expression vanished from his face and his eyes were blank, his body fell to the ground at the foot of Ezio.

"I see, my friend," said Ezio. Rest in peace.

I was exhausted. The arm wound would not stop bleeding, but were forced to walk to the chariot and horses calm, releasing the reins. Then inspected the interior of the vehicle and quickly located the box of teak. Opened first and foremost to ensure that the content was safe, then closed it and took it firmly under his arm healthy. He looked toward the quarry where the driver lay inert. It was not necessary River going to see if he had died because the angle of his body broken spoke for itself.

The horses had not gone far and Ezio came toward them, wondering if he had enough strength to ride one and using it to make at least part of the journey back to Forli. Hoping to find everything just as he had left, then keep track Checco had taken longer than expected. In no time, however, had claimed that his work would be easy, but finally the Fruit of Eden was back under the control of Murderers. The time dedicated to him had not been in vain.

Horses looked again and decided that the animal who led the coach would be the best of the four. He came over and grabbed the mane to climb into the saddle, because the horse was not ensioped, and in doing so stumbled.

He had lost more blood than I thought. I had to bandage the wound in some way before anything else. He tied his horse to a tree and cut a strip of shirt Checco to improvise a bandage. Then dragged the body out of the way, away from prying eyes. If by chance someone was going, and no fijaba much into detail, I would think Checco and the driver had been victims of a tragic road accident. Although he started to be late and few travelers would transit at that hour.

But the effort had exhausted their last resources. "Even I must rest," he thought, a very sweet idea. He sat in the shadow shadow of the tree and heard the sound of horse pasturing. Teak set the box on the floor beside her, and took one last look at her the around. It was the last place you would like to stay a long task, but the eyelids were heavy and did not see the silent watcher hidden by a tree on the knoll that rose above the road behind them.

When Ezio awoke, night had fallen, but the light is bright enough to see a figure moving on iflence near where he was.

It hurt a lot right biceps, but when she incorporated rars left leaning on the arm, found he could not move. Someone had approached one of the blocks of marble from the quarry and had used it to immobilize the arm. He endeavored, using his legs to try to get up, but it was impossible. He looked toward the place where he had left the box with the Fruit of Eden.

Had disappeared.

The figure, which was dressed with *cappa* black and white habit of a Dominican monk, he realized that he had just woken up and turned to him to better position the block of marble and immobilize the arm. Ezio noticed that the monk was missing a finger.

- Wait!" Said Ezio-. Who are you? What are you doing?

The monk did not answer. Ezio was the case when the monk agacho to pick it up again.

- Do not touch that! Whatever you do, no ...!

But the monk opened the box and showed a light as bright as the sun.

Before returning to fade, Ezio he thought he heard the monk breathed a sigh of satisfaction.

When he awoke, it was daylight. The horses were gone, but part of his forces had returned to accompany the sunlight. He looked at the block of marble. It was heavy, but moved ligeramente when he moved the arm that was trapped duejo. He looked around. He was within his right hand a strong arm that should have fallen to the ground and was still at basboth green and not to break. He gritted his teeth and managed to catch it and place it below the block. The right arm ached between Mende and began to bleed again when shod one end of the branch under the block and pushed. He passed briefly through the head a half-forgotten phrase of his school days: "Give me a lever long enough and raise the earth." He pushed hard. The block began to move, but strength failed him and fell back where it was. He leaned back on the ground, and rested intempted again.

On the third attempt, internally screaming in pain, thinking that would end up splitting the injured right arm muscles, push back, as if his life depended on it and finalment, the block began to roll on the floor.

He sat with caution. Left arm was sore, but nothing broken.

Why not have killed the monk in his sleep? Perhaps the murder was not part of the plan of the man of God. But one thing was certain: the Dominican and the Fruit of Eden had disappeared.

Crawling until his feet, he approached a Arrol close and quench their thirst before washing and bandaging the wound of again. And then made his way eastward, to cross Tsar of new mountains and return to Forli.

Finally, after a journey of many days, sighted in the distance the towers of the city. But he was tired, exhausted by his iron work, for his failure, his loneliness. On the way back had much time to think about Cristina and what could have been was not having to carry that cross. But today change his life nor he could change.

He had reached the end of the bridge that gave access to the portsta south and was close enough to see people in almenas, when exhaustion was finally able to him, and vanished.

When he awoke, he found lying on a bed, covered with spotless linen sheets on a sunny yourraza under the shade of the vines. A cold hand touched her Frenand you came up to his lips a glass of water.

- Ezio! Thank God you're back. Are you okay? What happened? "The questions flowed from the mouth of Caterina with his usual impetuosity.

-No ... I do not know ...

"I watched from the battlements. I went to fetch personalmente. I was traveling I do not know how long and have a terrible wound.

Ezio strove to remember.

"Now I remember something ... Gotta take the Fruit of Eden Checco ... but soon after came another man ... It was the Fruit of Eden!

- Who?

"I was wearing a black hood, like a monk, and I paread ... Was missing a finger! -Ezio tried to sit. Howto time I lie here? I have to go ... Now!

Started to rise, but it was as if his limbs were of lead, and as he began to move, felt a sense of vertigo so bad that he was forced to lie down again.

- Wow! What made me this monk?

Caterina bent over him.

"I still can not go anywhere, Ezio. Even you precise of recovery time to fight all the battles that tieties ahead, and I see you have a long and arduous journey. But take heart! Nicholas has returned to Florence. It will address all issues in the city. And your other classmates are guar Murderersday. So you can stay a while ... She gave a kiss on the forehead and then hesitantly first kiss on the lips-. And if I can do something to ... speed your recovery, just say so. "His hand began to gently fall under the sheets until they find their target-. Wow, "he said smiling-. I think I begin to succeed ... even one little.

"You're all woman, Caterina Sforza.

She started laugh.

-Treasury, if I ever decide to write the story of my life, commotion throughout the world.

Ezio was strong and thirty years old, still a man joare in the prime of life. In addition, he had been subjected to one of the toughest workouts known to man, so that no one was surprised that stand in motion much earlier than would have done the majority. But the coup de Checco had weakened his right arm badly and knew I had to work hard to regain full strength and replaceturn on your mission. He forced himself to be patient, and under the guidelines isCaterina strictly but comprehensive, spent his season in Forli forced into a quiet state of contemplation, occasionally sitting in the shade of the vines lost in reading any books Poliziano or more often, by vigorous exercise of any kind.

And then, one morning, Caterina came into her bedroom and into dress for travel from and to a page help you calZarse riding boots. Caterina sat on the bed beside her.

- So the time has come? "He said.

"Yes. I can not delay it more.

Sad, Catherine left the room and returned after a moment with a scroll.

"Then I had to get this far," said- and God knows that your work is more important than our pleasure ... For which I hope to have time soon in an upcoming vilocated yours! "I showed the parchment-. Here, I brought a parting gift.

- What is it?

"Something you need.

Ezio Caterina unrolled it and saw it was a map of the peninsula, from Lombardy to Calabria, and, in addition to the caterms and cities, there were several crosses marked in red ink.

Ezio looked at her.

"It's the map you mentioned Machiavelli. That of your husband ...

"On my *died* husband *mio expensive*. Nicholas and I made a couple of important discoveries during your absence. The firstnumber is programmed the ... elimination of our beloved Girolamo quite well, having just completed his work with the map. The second is that is invaluable, because although the Templars in possession of the Fruit of Eden, found noRAN the vault without the map.

- Do you know something about the vault?

"My dear, sometimes you are a naive child. Of course I know. He spoke then with a more formal-. But to develFull sea by our enemies, you must recover the Fruit of Eden. This map will help you fully complete your task.

At the time that he gave the map, rubs his fingersrum, and caressing continued until his hands were betweenloops. And his eyes did not want nor separated.

"In the marsh, near here, there is an abbey," he finally Caterina-. Of Dominicans. They are dressed in black hoods. I empezaria there. "His eyes were bright and looked away-. And savingsra *go!* Find that monk so problematic!

Ezio smiled.

"I think I'll miss you, Catherine.

She smiled back, a smile so bright.

"Oh, I'm sure it does.

Chapter 24

The Ezio monk received at the Abbey of the Marshes was a young monk round and ruddy, but with the red hair was good and look mischievous and wise, and also spoke with an accent that Ezio recognized as some of the *condottieri*. Looking at him, he was Irish.

"May God bless you, brother.

"*Grazie, father ...*

"I am the brother O'Callahan.

"I wonder if you could help me.

"That's why we're here, brother. Although, of course, we have hard times. And it becomes difficult to think of anything in the stomach.

- Yes to say nothing in the wallet.

"Do not get me wrong. I am not asking anything." The monk opened his hands. "But the Lord helps those who are generous.

Ezio took a few guilders and handed them over.

"If not enough ...

The monk was thoughtful.

"Oh, well, the intention is what matters. But the truth is that the Lord *helps* those who are somewhat more generous.

Ezio continued taking coins until the expression of brother O'Callahan changed.

"The order rate your giving, brother. He took the money to his stomach. What are you looking for?"

"A black hooded monk ... that lacks one of the ten fingers.

"Hmmm. ... Guido's brother has only nine toes. Are you sure you would not be a fool?"

"Pretty sure.

"And then there's brother Domenico, but what it lacks is the entire left arm.

"No, sorry, I'm pretty sure it was a finger.

"Hmmm ... "The monk went on thinking. Yes, a moment ago! I remember a black hooded monk who was only nine ... Yes! Sure! It was when we celebrated the last feast of San Vincenzo in Tuscany Abbey.

Ezio smiled.

"Yes, I know that place. I'll try there. *Grazie.*

"Go in peace, brother.

"That's what I always do.

Ezio crossed the mountains to the west, toward the Toscana, and although it was a long and complicated journey, then came closer to the fall and the days were getting nasty, she began to feel excited as they approached the abbey, where, long ago, one of those involved in the plot to assassinate Lorenzo de' Medici - Secretary of Jacopo de' Pazzi, Stefano da Bagnone - met his end at the hands of Ezio.

It was unfortunate that the abbot who received it was one of the witnesses of this murder.

"Sorry," said Ezio. I wonder if you could ...

But the abbot, recognizing him instantly, fell in horror and shouted:

- That all the archangels, Uriel, Rafael, Miguel, Saraquel, Gabriel, Reuel-Remiel and protect us with full force! He looked down from heaven to speak below in Ezio. Wicked devil! Go away from here!

- What happens? Ezio asked shocked.

- What happens? *What happens?* You're the one who killed the brothers Stefano no. On holy ground! "A nervous group of brothers had congregated at a distance and the abbot was swimming for time to them. *It turn back!* The murderer of monks and priests have *back!* He pronounced his words in a booming voice and left in a hurry, followed by others.

The man was in panic. Ezio was forced to leave in pursuit. But not as well known as the abbey the abbot and his troop of monks. In the end, tired of pacing around the cloisters and unknown, climbed to the roofs to be able to see where the monks had gone, even if all you got with it was more terrified to flee if possible and put to shout: "It has arrived! He has arrived! Beelzebub *has* come!" so he gave up and went chasing using conventional methods.

Gotta catch them at last. Panting, the abbot turned to him and whined:

- Go away, you devil! Leave us alone! We have not committed any sin greater than yours!

"No, wait, listen," said Ezio also panting. Just a question, want.

- We have not invoked the demons! Not intended we still travel to the afterlife!

Ezio repeatedly shook hands with the palms down.

-*Quiet*, please! I do not intend any harm! But the abbot did not want to hear. He looked up at the sky. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Not yet ready to meet your angels! And she ran again.

Ezio was forced to make a tackle. Both rose from the ground, shaking in the middle of a circusulo the astonished monks.

- Leave and run away, please! "Begged Ezio.

Abbot cringed.

- No! Have mercy! I do not want to die! "He mumbled. Ezio, aware that he was being overly formal, said: "Look, Father Abbot, I only kill those who kill in more. And your brother Stefano was a murderer. Attempted to assassinate Duke Lorenzo in 1478. He paused, breathing difficultiestad-. Quiet, *Messer abbe*, I am sure you will notgneiss no murderer.

The Abbot look relaxed a little, but still wecusing suspicious.

- What do you want? He asked.

"Okay, now listen. I'm looking at you dressed like a monk, a Dominican who is missing a finger.

The abbot remained cautious.

- What is missing a finger, you say? How to *fra* Savonarola?

Ezio took mental note of the name.

- Savonarola? Who is it? Did you know?

"I met him, *Messer*. He was one of us ... for a while.

- What next?

The Abbot shrugged.

"I suggest you take a long rest in a hermitageta of the mountains. No. ... did not fit quite right here ...

"I think, *Abbe* it is quite possible that his time as erMitan finished. Do you know where I could have gone?

"Oh, poor me ... "The abbot tried to remember-. If you have left the shrine, could have returned to Santa Maria del Carmine, in Florence. It was there that he studied. Maybe he is back there.

Ezio sighed with relief.

"Thank you, abbot. Go with God.

A Ezio it was strange to return to his hometown after such a long time. There were many memories to face. But the circumstancescircumstances dictated that further work alone. Could not contact even with his former friends and allies, for fear of alerting the enemy.

He saw immediately that although the climate in the city was remaining stable, church, or at least he was walking busCando, was plunged into chaos. A monk had just left it running scared.

Addressed to the monk.

"Easy, brother. Is everything OK?

The monk is stared at him with eyes wide open.

"Stay away, man. If you value your life into something!

- What's here?

- The Roman soldiers just walked into our church! The brothers have scattered, ask questions that make no sense. They keep telling us to give them *fruit!*

- What kind of fruit?

- Apples!

- Apples? *Diavolo!* Rodrigo has come before me! Ezio said between his teeth and almost to himself.

- There have been one of my fellow Carmelites at the sameback of the church you! I'm sure you think to kill him!

- Carmelites? Are not *Dominicans?*

Ezio left the brother and carefully surrounded the walls of Santa Maria, not detached from them. He moved as quietly as the mongoose that is facing a cobra. When he reached the garden walls of the church, climbed to the roof. And despite all the expertiseCIA had given him the years, quand he saw left him breathing downtion. Borgia Several guards were giving him a beating to a monje cast your vote. He was about thirty-five years.

- Sing!Shouted the leader of the guards-. Sing or I'll hurt so wish you had not born! *Where is the Apple?*

- Please! I do not know! I do not know what you're talking!

The leader of the guards moved closer to him.

- Confess! Your name Savonarola!

- Yes! I told you! But stop and hit me!

"So, tell us and your suffering will cease. Where the hell is *the Fruit of Eden?*"The interrogator gave him a powerful edgefoot in the crotch. The monk gave a scream of pain-. I do not think it will make a huge difference for a man always in the position of *missionary* like you, "sneered the guard.

Ezio looked on with great concern. If that was monk Savonarola, Borgia bullies end up killing him before he managed to get the truth.

- Why do you keep lying to me?"Continued the guard. A my Master will not like at all I've learned that lcho torture you to death! Are you trying to get into *problems?*

-I have no apples, "sobbed the monk-. I'm just a simple monk. Let me go *please!*

- By my balls!

- I do not know *nothing!* The monk cried pitifully.

"If you want to stop," shouted the guard, driving the other pointswall in the same place- Tell me the truth, brother Girolamo ... *Savonarola!*

The guard kicked him again and told his followers it agarraran by the ankles and dragged along the ground mercilessly adomachine, his head bouncing painfully on the hard stones. The monk shouted and struggled in vain.

- Have you had enough,*abominato!*"The chief of the guards turned to approach him-. So you are prepared to meet with your Creator that you lie over and over again to see her?

"I'm just a simple monk," cried the Carmelite, whose habit was dangerously cut and color similar to that of the dominantNicos-. I have no *fruit* of any kind! Please ...

The guard kicked him. In the same place. Again. The monk's body writhed in agony was beyond tears.

Ezio had enough. Jumped suddenly, a ghost for revenge, and for once, by pure rage, using the dagger is simultaneouslyNenos and double-edged dagger. After a minute of carnage, the thugs of Borgia, in full, lay dead, or immersed in the same agony they had caused, on adoquisitions of the court.

The monk was caught crying Ezio knees.

"Grazie, grazie, salvatore.

Ezio stroked his head.

"Calm, calm. And is all sorted out, brother. -Ezio monk looked at his fingers.

The ten fingers were intact.

"You have ten fingers," he murmured, disappointed despite himself.

"Yes," cried the monk-. I have ten fingers. And I have more apples than the market brought to the monastery every Thursday! She stood up, shook and swore-: In the name of God! Does the world has lost *sense?*

- Who are you? Why I hcaught an you?Ezio asked.- Because I found that Savonarola name! But why should I betray my cousin before these thugs?

- Do you know what you have done?

- I know nothing! He is a monk, like me. Or preferred theden of the Dominicans, which is harder, yes, but ...

- Have you lost a finger?

"Yes, but how could you ...? The look of the monk gave intender beginning to understand what happened.

- Who is Girolamo Savonarola? Ezio insisted.

"My cousin, a devout man of God. What which, as per melimits may ask, who are you? Although I must thank humility!ve rescued insane and I know that you can ask me any favor.

"I ... I have no name, "said Ezio. But let me please tell me yours.

Marcello-Fra Savonarola, the monk replied meekly.

Ezio noted. His head ran at full speed.

- Where is your cousin Girolamo?

Marcello The monk began to think, fighting his withscience.

"True, my cousin ... has a unique vision on how to serve God ... Preaches his own doctrine ... Now you might inget it in Venice.

- So what are you doing there?

Marcello straightened.

"I think going down the wrong path. He preaches hellfire. States see the future. -Marcello looked Ezio with bloodshot eyes, with agonized eyes. If you really want to know my opinion, I think vomit *crazy!*

Chapter 25

Ezio had the feeling of having wasted too much time in what seemed a fruitless search. Chasing Savonarola was like chasing a will-o', a chimera, your own queue. But the search had to continue, inexorably, for that manber God nine fingers was in possession of the Fruit of Eden, the key to access to much more than I could imagine, and it was a dangerous religious maniac, a true brainless potentially less controllable than the Maestro, Rodrigo Borgia, in person.

It was Theodora who came to greet him when he landed in the gallery in the docks of Venice, from Ravenna.

In 1492, Venice was still relatively straightforward under the rule of the Doge Agostino Barbarigo. The city seethed with the news that Venice had rejected the mad plans of a Genoese sailor named Christoff Corombo of sailing west to cross the Ocean Sea, apparently, the sailor had found the financial support of Spain and was about aboard. Hasbria was Venice which had committed the folly of not eligibleNAR issue? If Corombo it succeeded, there would be a safe sea route to the Indies that you avoid the traditional routetion and topsoil now blocked by the Ottoman Turks. But the head of Ezio was so crowded with other matters that could not pay much attention to those issues and trade policy.

"We received your news," said Theodora. But are you sure? "It's the only track I've got, and I feel good. Isam sure that the Fruit of Eden is back here in your hands of the monk Savonarola. I have been told that preaches to the masses sober the fire of hell to come.

"I've heard of him.

- Do you know where I could find, Theodora?

-No. But in the neighborhood of the crafts I have seen a Herald calling crowds, preaching that pile of nonsense sober the fire of hell of which you speak. Maybe he is a discipleabout your monk. Come with me. Be my guest while permanezcas here and once you are installed, go directly to the place where this man preaches his sermons.

Ezio both as Theodora and, indeed, all rational peopletional and intelligent, they knew why people were beginning to fall prey to a kind of violent and uncontrolled hysteria. Was approaching half a millennium year, 1500, and many believed that this year TuesCarian the Second Advent, when the Lord "comes in his gloryria, and the glory of his Father, accompanied by ten thousand saints, includingso myriads of angels, and will sit on His glorious throne. And before him will gather all nations: and he shall separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep, the saved to his right, the cawords, the condemned, to the left. "

San Mateo's description had been re Judgementreverberations in the minds of many.

"Both the Herald and his boss are taking advantage of *febbre di fine drywhat* Theodora said. From what I know, even they themselves believe in that.

"I guess so," said Ezio. The danger is that with the Fruit of Eden in his power, could cause a disaster that has nothing to do with God, and everything to do with the Devil. He paused. But have not yet deployed the power they have in their hands, and we should thank God for it, because I doubt they knew how to control it. For now, at least, seem tottempted to prRevelation and that aide laughed bitterly always been an easy sell.

"But the thing is getting worse," said Theodora. In fact, anyra could believe that the Apocalypse is at hand. Have you heard the bad news?

"I have not heard anything since I left Forli.

Lorenzo de Medici, died in his villa at Careggi. Ezio grieved.

"It's a tragedy. Lorenzo was a true friend of my familyly and without his protective hand I fear that I'll never get recoveredcome the most Palazzo Auditore. But this is nothing compared to what his death might mean for peace between the cities managed to maintain-state. Something that was always fragile, inEven in the best of times.

"And there's more," said Theodora. A news worse, if possible, than the death of Lorenzo. He paused. Get ready for what I have to say, Ezio. Spanish, Rodrigo Borgia, was elected pope. GoBierna the Vatican and Rome as Pope Alexander VII!

- *What?* "Why prank ...?"

Rome-The Caucus has just completed this month. Rumour has it that Rodrigo bought the majority of the votes. Even Ascanio Sforza, who was the most likely challengerble, voted for him! They say they bribed with four mules laden with silver.

- What benefit does the papacy? What are looking for?

- Is not it enough the impact this mean? -Mattdora stared. Now we are under the power of a wolf, Ezio. The most voracious, perhaps, that the world has ever known.

"What you say is true, Teodora. But the power you are looking for is even greater than it could give the papacy. If you control the Vatican, will be much closer to being able to access the vault, and still behind the Fruit of Eden, the "Piece of Eden" that neNeed some to seize power of God in person.

"Let us pray for you to get it back to the Murderers. RoDrigo, as Pope and Master of the Templars, and is dangerous in itself. If you have also the fruit of Eden ... "He stopped. As you say, it would be indestructible.

"It is strange," said Ezio.

- What?

"Our friend Savonarola not know, but it has two huntedre going after him.

Teodora guided Ezio up the great square of the art districthealthy Venice where the Herald used to deliver sermons and left him there. Ezio, hooded, without lifting your head too much, but alert at all times, melted into the crowd that empezaba to meet in the place. Soon after, the place was packed, the crowd gathered around a small wooden stage that had just climbed a stern-looking man with cool blue eyes, sunken cheeks, dark gray hairro and gnarled hands, wearing a simple wool tunic color gray. He began to speak, stopping only when the mad cheers of the audience forced to do so. Ezio realized the ease with which one man could lead to hundreds of people to a state of blind hysteria.

-Gather, Children, and hear my word! For the End of Days is approaching. Are you ready for what lies ahead? Is itThais prepared to see the light with my brother Savonarola has blessed us? He raised his hands, and Ezio, who knew exactlymind what light is referred to by the Heraldor, he listened with soberDad. Dark days are approaching "said the Herald. But my brother has shown the way to salvation, to the heavenly light that awaits us. But we will only be prepared if we adhere to it. Let Savonarola is our guide, because he alone knows what is coming. He does not lead us astray. -El Heraldo leaned on the lectern. Is itThais prepared for the Final Judgement, brothers and sisters? Who safetywill go when the time comes?He paused to emphtizar his words.In the churches there are many who claim to offercer salvation, requesting, the forgiving, the slaves of superstition crazy ... But no, my children! All those are enslaved in the Borgia Pope, enslaved the "Pope" Alexander, the sixth and most indebted to that name!

The crowd began to scream. Ezio scowled. He recalled the alleged prophecies I had seen on the fruit of the Eden Project in Leonardo's workshop. In the distant future come a timpo where the hell are deployed *really* on earth ... unless he could stop.

"The new Pope Alexander is not a spiritual man, it is not a man soul. Men like him buy our prayerstions and sell their goods for profit. The priests of our churches are just merchants church! Only one among us is truly a spiritual man, only one of us has seen the future and has spoken with the Lord! He will lead us!

Ezio wondered if the mad monk would *open* also the fruit of Eden. Would it have deployed the same views? WhatBia said Leonardo on the Fruit of Eden? What *crazy again weaker minds?*

"Savonarola lead us toward the light, the Herald was saying in conclusion. Savonarola tell us what's to come! Savonarola lead us to the very doorTAS heaven! We do not want this new world that has been witnessed Savonarola. Savonarola's brother is the way to God we've all been looking for!

He raised his hands and the crowd kept on screaming and cheering.

Ezio knew the only way to find the monk was to workInstead of his henchman. But I had to find a way to reach youta him without raising suspicions of the devoted crowd. Is adequateforward with caution, playing the role of submissive man looking for conversation among the flock of the Herald.

It was not easy. Received aggressive pushing of the people who was aware that he was a stranger, a newcomer, theGillen who look askance. But he dedicated himself to smile, bowing and even as a last resort, throw money, disaying:

"I want to give alms to the cause of Savonarola and those who support and believe in him.

And the money ran as usual. In fact, Ezio concluded that money was the best weapon conversion existed. Finally the Herald, who had been watching the progress of Ezio with a combination of fun and satisfaction, he ordered his bodyguards to be made on one side and pointed to signs that come to him, guiding him to a quieter place, a *piazzetta* separated from the main square, where they could hold a conversation in private. Ezio understood that the Herald has believedber made an important and wealthy addition to his flock of followers.

- Where is Savonarola? Ezio asked.

"It's everywhere, brother," said the Herald. It is in every one of us, and each and every one of usters are with him.

"Listen, friend," said Ezio hastily. I'm looking for menber, not the myth. Tell me please, where is.

The Herald looked at with suspicion, and Ezio was clearly true invent the wastage of madness in his eyes.

"I told you where it is. Look, Savonarola loves you just as you are. He will show you the light. He will show the *future!*

"But I have to talk to him personally. I see the great leader! And I have enormous wealth to contribute to its impressive cross!

The Herald looked slyly to hear that. "I understand," he said. Be patient. The time has come toDavia. But you will join us in our journey, brother.

And Ezio had patience. Was very patient. Then one day, the Herald received a summons inviting him to join him on the docks of Venice at sunset. He arrived early and waited nemerves and impatience, until finally he saw a shadowy figure advancedZande in the mist of dusk.

"I was not sure were to come," he told the Herald in greeting.

The Herald seemed satisfied.

"The search for truth you love, brother. And it's slumberTado over time. But now we are ready and our great leader has assumed leadership responsibilities for which he was born. Come!

He walked past him and led to a dock where Ezio was docked a large galley. Next to it expecting a crowd of faithful. The Herald spoke to them:

- My children! Finally it's time to leave. Our brother and spiritual leader, Girolamo Savonarola, awaits us in the city has finally taken over!

- Yes, has taken over! The bastard son of a bitch has humiliateddo my city and my home ... has brought to the brink of insanity!

Ezio The crowd turned to look at the person who had spoken, a long-haired young man dressed in a black cloak, with full lips and a face weak, deformed ahora by rage.

"I just got out of there," he continued. Banned from my dued by that asshole king, Charles of France, whose interference has led me to be replaced by the Dog God, Savonarola.

The mood among the crowd began to rarefied and good willguro would have ended up taking the boy and throwing him to the lake for not having prevented the Herald.

"Let the man express his opinion," said the IRalda and, turning to the stranger asked, "Why do you utter the name of Savonarola in vain, brother?"

- Why? *Why?* As he has done to Florence! Controls the city! Either the *Signoria* supports it, or feel powerless against him. Incite the masses and even people who should know better, as the *teacher* Botticelli, followed slavishly. They burn books, artwork, anything that crazy consideredre immoral!

- What is Savonarola now in Florence?He asked with every intention Ezio. Are you sure?

- Where would it be? I wish I were on the moon or in the pit of hell! I have a narrow escape alive!

- Who exactly are you, brother? He asked theRaldes, leaving betrayed his impatience.

The young man straightened up.

"I am Pieror Medici. Son of Lorenzo *Il Magnificent and legitimatethymus* ruler of Florence! Ezio shook his hand.

"Nice to meet you, Piero. Your father was my true friend. Piero stared.

"Thanks for this, whoever you are. As my father is concerned, was lucky to die before all the madness ragingra our city like a tidal wave. He turned despreocupadamente to the alienated crowd. Do not you support this desthe monk! It is a dangerous lunatic with an ego the size of the Duomo! Should be sacrificed as the mad dog he is!

The crowd, as one voice, roared with rage. The Herald Piero turned back and shouted:

- Heretic! Sower of evil ideas! And addressing the crowd shouted: "This is the man to be *sacrificed!*.. If violence! Sent to *fire!*..

Both Piero as Ezio, at his side, had already unsheathed their swords and faced the threatening mob.

- Who are you? Asked Piero.

Hearing Officer, "said Ezio.

- Ah! *Sono Aiuto pleasure of tuo*. My father often spoke of you. His eyes danced over his opponents. Will hewe of this?

"I hope so. But you have not been what they say very diplomatic.

- How should I know?

"You just destroy an effort and preparation INDECIBLES, but no matter. Now pay attention to your sword!

Was fierce but brief. The two men allowed the crowd pushes them into an abandoned warehouse and there he took up positions. Luckily, the Pilgrims, although angry, isTaban fighters far from being experienced as the most daring loaded withdrew from deep cuts and gashes Provoed by the swords of Ezio and Piero, the rest fleeing back and leftdo. Only the Herald, dark and unrelenting, remained at his post.

- Impostor! "Said Ezio-.Te frozen forever in the ice of the Fourth and the Ninth Circuit. And I who sent you there.

Extracted from his robes a sharp Swiss Army knife and ran towards Ezio raising the gun over his head, ready to attack. Ezio, backwards, tripped and fell at the mercy of the Herald, but went through with his sword Piero legs of the attacker and Ezio, back up, pulled his double-edged knife and stabbed the sharp points on the man's abdomen. The Herald figure shook with the impact, launched a gasp and fell to the ground, writhing and twisting, until at last stand still.

"I hope this will compensate for the play that I've done," said Piero with a regretful smile. Vamos! Go to the palace of Doge Agostino to tell you to send the guard and ensure that the Dream Team has been divided and all return to their kennels.

"*Grazie* Ezio said. But I will go in the opposite direction. Tengo to go to Florence.

Pierre looked at him in disbelief.

- What? To the mouth of hell?

"I have my reasons for pursuing a Savonarola. Although perhaps not too late to repair the damage he has done to our hometown.

"Then I wish you luck," said Piero. Whatever the intended purpose.

Chapter 26

Fra Girolamo Savonarola took actual possession of the government of Florence in 1494, forty-two years of age. He was a manber tormented, twisted genius and a fanatic believer of the worst, but most frightening of all was that the people enabled him not only leaders, but to encourage it to commit the most ridiculous and desstructive acts of madness. All this supported by the terror wasgo to hell and preached a doctrine that pleasure, worldly goods and the work product of human hands were negligible, and that only through complete devotion could a person find the true light of faith.

No wonder, Ezio thought, reflecting on these issues as he rode toward his hometown of Leonardo stay in Milan. Ezio had learned well, thinking of his friend, that homosexuality, about which car to dateauthorities had turned a blind eye or were punished with a multa affordable, Florence was once again a crime punishable by deathte. And no wonder, too, that the great humanist and materialistic school of thinkers and poets who had gathered around the cultivated mind and illustrated by Lorenzo, had been dissolved and gone in search of land less intellectually barren desertual which was rapidly becoming Florence.

As it was approaching the city, Ezio noticed the presence of large groups of monks and lay black robes with sober attire heading in the same direction. They looked solemn, but honest. Everybody was to beza bowed.

- Where you going? Asked one of them.

-A Florence. To sit at the feet of the great leader, "he resspended a merchant's face was very pale before continuing on foot.

It was a wide road and saw another surge Ezio people acerCandoso to him in the opposite direction, obviously from the city. Also walked downcast, her expression serious and depressed. When they passed by his side, Ezio got to hear snippets of conversation and realized that the whole gene had undertaken a voluntary exile. Car car jostlinggados way up, or dragging bags or bags with their belongingsences. Were refugees exiled from their homes by the edicts of the Monk or on their own, unable to live longer under his command.

"Only that Piero would have had a tenth of the talentto his father, would have something to call home ... DECia one.

"I never should have let that fool is strengthenedra in our city, "murmured another. Look at all the misery that has brought ...

"I do not understand is why there are so many willing to accepttar their oppression, "said one woman.

"At this time, any place is better than Florence," said another woman. We have been expelled for refusing to inTregar everything we had at your beautiful church of San Marco!

"It's witchcraft, is the only way to explain it. Even the teachersBotticelli ORT is under the spell of Savonarola ... Although in truth, is getting old, and must be around fifty orta, and the best bets is going to reach heaven.

- Burning of books, arrests, those endless sermons! And think of what Florence was just two years ago ... A modeas against ignorance! And now we're back here, bogged downtwo in the Dark Ages.

And then, a woman said something to acute forced EzioTsar's ear.

"Sometimes I wish that the Murderer back to Florence, to liberate us from this tyranny.

- No!"Replied his friend. The Murderer is a myth! As the coconut that parents use with their children.

"You're wrong. My father saw him in San Gimignano, "the first woman with a sigh. But that was for many years. "Yes, yes ... it *what your DICI*.

Ezio went galloping by his side, his heart press on the breast. But were encouraged when he saw coming towards him along the way a familiar face.

-*Salute*, Ezio Machiavelli said, his face half-serious, half mischievous older population, but more interesting thanks to the passage of time.

-*Salute*, Nicholas.

"You picked a good time to go home.

"You know me. When there is illness, I like intensivetar cure.

"The truth is that your help will go well," said Machiavelli, sighing. Undoubtedly, Savonarola could not have comewhere do if I had not used the powerful artifact, the Fruto Eden. He raised his hand. I am aware of what theirtransferred since the last time we met. Two years ago, Catherine sent a messenger from Forli, and recently got a letter from Piero from Venice.

"I'm here for the Fruit of Eden. It's been far too longpo is not in our power.

"In a sense, I suppose I should be too pleasingacids in this cadaveric Girolamo Machiavelli said. At least he managed not to fall into the hands of the new pope.

- Have you tried anything?

"Not to try. Rumour has it that Alexander plans to excommunicate our beloved Dominican. Although this will not do much to change the situation we have here.

Ezio said:

"We should get down to work and try to recoveryperarlo without further delay.

- "The Fruit of Eden? Of course ... but I think it is more complicated than you think.

- Ja! And when it has not been? -Ezio stared. Why do not you update me on everything?

"Come, let us return to the city. I will tell you everything I know. Eventhere is little to tell. In short, King Charles VIII of France finally managed to subdue Florence. Piero fled. Carlos, the hungrier of territory than ever I still understoodder why they call "the Affable" - he continued his march on Naples, and Savonarola, the Ugly Duckling, suddenly saw his chance and filled the power vacuum. It's like any dictator, is shoddy or majestic. Totally devoid of humor,

believing their cause and full to the brim with an unwavering sense of smugness. The most effective type of prince and nastier than you could insear. He paused. Someday I'll write a book on the subject.

- What has been the fruit of Eden, the means justify the end?

Machiavelli spread his hands.

"Only in part. For the most part, and I hate to say, owes everything to his charisma. Not only has captivated the city itself, but their leaders, men of influence and power. Naturally, there were in *Signoria* who resisted at first, but now ... -Machiavelli adopted an expression of concern. Now have them in your pocket. The man everyone vilipendDiab suddenly became a man revered. And those who disagreed were forced to leave. And still going on, as you have seen yourself. And now the Florentine councilino oppress citizens and ensures compliance with the voMonk will of the insane.

- And what about the ordinary decent people? Do you really behave as if they had no say in all this?

Machiavelli smiled sadly.

"You know the answer to this as well as I, Ezio. Rare is the man willing to oppose the status quo. And to do it ... falls to us to help you succeed.

Murderers The two had arrived at the gates of the city. The armed guards, like any police serving inests of the state regardless of their morality, their documentary examinedments and let them pass, but not before bass Eziotara that there was another group of guards piling the bodies of several men dressed in a uniform that bore the coat of arms Borgia. He said Nicholas.

"Oh, yes," said Machiavelli. Like I said, the friend RoDrigo-never get used to call Alexander a bastard-keep trying. Sends its soldiers to Florence and Florence's returns, usually made bits.

- So you know that the Fruit of Eden is here?

- Of course I know! And I must admit it is a developmentfortunate High complication.

- Where is Savonarola?

-Directs the city from the Convento di San Marco. Almost nunca out of it. Thank God! *Fra Angel* has not lived to see the day that Girolamo was installed there!

Dismantled, they kept the horses in the stables, and MaMachiavelli as arranged to find accommodation for Ezio. The pleasure of Paola house had been closed, along with all ofMoreover, as explained Machiavelli. The sex and gambling, dancing and pageantry, in positions high on the list of unacceptable itemsBLES Savonarola. The murder and oppression justified, on the other hand, were allowed.

Ezio was once installed, Machiavelli accompanied the huge religious complex of San Marcos. Ezio toured the buildingsings evaluating them.

"The direct assault would be dangerous," he decided. Especially considering that holds the fruit of Eden.

"True," agreed Machiavelli. But what other alternativeis there?

"Aside from the leaders of the city, which undoubtedly have integratedpersonal interests, are you convinced that people really believe that?

"An optimist would bet on it," said Machiavelli.

"What I mean is if you do not seem to follow the monk, not by choice, but rather a force of oppression and fear.

"Nobody, except a Dominican or a politician, I disagree.

"Then I suggest that we take advantage in our favor. If we can silence his lieutenants and sow discontentto, Savonarola begins to wander and have the perfect opportunity to attack.

Machiavelli smiled.

"A smart proposal. There should be an adjective to describe people like you. Talk with *La Volpe* and Paola ... if they are here forced to live underground. May help to organize an uprising when you release the neighborhoods.

"Then all settled.

But Ezio Machiavelli was concerned and he realized it. Guided him into the quiet cloister of a small church cercana and made him sit.

- What, man? He asked.

"Two things, but are personal.

"Tell me.

"The old *palazzo* my family ... What has become of him? I dare not to go see.

Machiavelli's face darkened.

"Be strong, my dear Ezio. Tu *palazzo* still stands, but the ability to protect Lorenzo lasted only the duration of his power, his own life. Piero attempted to follow the example of his father, but after being expelled by the French, the Palazzo Auditore was requisitioned and used as headquarters of the mercenaries of the Swiss Guards of Charles. When they left to continue their march hasence the south, the men of Savonarola was cleaned of all that could be on it and closed it. Be brave. Someday you'll end up restoring it.

- What about Annette?

"He escaped, thank God, and now with your mother in Monteriggioni.

"At least that is good news.

After a long silence, Machiavelli asked: - "And the second issue? Ezio whispered, "Cristina ...

"I tell you ask hard things *mio amico*.-Macchiafrowned veil. But you know the truth. He paused. He's dead, my friend. Manfredo did not go, as did many of his friends after the two plagues: the Frenchseparations and Savonarola. Piero was convinced that organized a counteroffensive and regain the city. But there was one night horroRose, shortly after the monk came to power in which totwo who do not voluntarily handed over their belongings to the bonfires of the vanities of the Monk organized to burn and destroy all the luxury and worldly objects, saw their homes looted and destroyed by the flames.

Ezio heard the story, forcing himself to stay calm, even felt his heart burst.

"Supporters of Savonarola, Machiavelli went ontraron force in the Palazzo d'Arzenta. Manfredo trieddefend itself, but there were too many odds against him and his menmen ... And Craig did not want to leave. "Machiavelli was a long pause, holding back tears. In their frenzy, the maniareligious cos also ended his life with a knife.

Ezio kept staring at the whitewashed wall opposite him. Every detail, every smallest crack, including horcrumbs walked through it, concentrated on its terrible eyes.

Chapter 27

The extent to which our hopes are vain,
how useless the plans we draw so perfectly,
how ignorance reigns in the land,
death, the lover of us all, may respondenoslo.
There are those who spend their days indulging in songs, dances and tournaments
there are those who devote their talent to the arts kind,
there are some who despise the world in every way possible,
the need to hide the impulses that move your heart.
Idle thoughts and desires, anxieties of all kinds
greatly prevail in this land offensive
and diverse presence beyond the knowledge of nature;
Fortune fickle-minded acts,
Here things are ephemeral, low and fragile
only death remains forever strong.

Ezio dropped from his hand the book of sonnets of Lorenzo. The news of the death of Cristina only served to increase its decision to eliminate its cause. His town was far too longpo suffering under the command of Savonarola, the city was excessivezens, of every kind, which had fallen under his spell, and those who disagreed had been discriminated against, forced to go underground or driven into exile. It was time to act.

"We lost in exile, many people who could havehelped us,"he said Machiavelli-. But even the mainCipal Savonarola's enemies outside our city-state, and I mean the Duke of Milan and our old friend Rodrigo, Pope Alexander VI, have managed to evict.

- And what accounts for these fires?

"The greatest folly of all. Savonarola and his closest allies organized groups of supporters going door to door and demand the delivery of any item they deem morally questionable, even cosmetics and mirrors, and needless to say pintures, allegedly unethical books, all kinds of games includegoing chess, musical instruments ... everything. If the monk and his followers believe they can be a distraction from religion, leading to the Piazza della Signoria, lit huge bonfires and burned everything. -Machiavelli shook his head from side to side-. Florence has lost much of their valuables and beauty in this way.

- And do not think the city is getting tired of this kind of behavior?

Machiavelli's face brightened.

"Yes, and that feeling is our main ally. I have the impression that Savonarola really believe that the Day of Judgement Final is just around the corner. The only problem is that it showssigns to get work, and even some who at first believed in him, starting now hesitation. Unfortunately, there's too power and influence that still support him without question. If we remove ...

And so began a frenzied period of persecution and elimination of those fans who really were people of all walks: a featured artist, a former soldier, a merchant, several priests, a doctor, a farmer and a pair of aristocrats , all of which clung fanatically to the ideas that the Monje had imbued. Some realized that had been crazy before he died, while others remained steadfast in his convictions. While carrying out this unpleasant task, Ezio was threatened with death with tremendous frequency. But then rumors began to filter through the city: conversationstions late at night, whispers in illegal taverns and alleys. The Murderer is back. The Murderer is back to save Florence ...

A Ezio was saddened to the depths of his soul to see his hometown, his family, his heritage, which have become victims of abuse, hatred and the madness of religious fervor. His heart was hard as a stone that served their deadly work, a wind frostcorrupted do that wiped city of those who had usurticipated to *Firenze* his glory. As always, killed with compassion, knowing that there was no possible way for those who had been so far from God. During those hours of darkness, never once departed from its duty to the Creed of Murderers.

Gradually, the general atmosphere of the city was unraveling, and Savonarola was that the support of his followers dwindled. MienIn the meantime, Machiavelli *La Volpe and Paolo* teamed up with Ezio to organize an uprising, a revolt led by a slow but powerful process of spiritual enlightenment of the people.

The last of the "objectives" of Ezio was coaxed saa priest, when locating Ezio finally ended, I was precatng to a crowd in front of the church of Santo Spirito.

- People from Florence! Come! Gather around me. Itspoon well so I have to say! The end is near! It is the moRegulation of repentance! To beg the forgiveness of God. ListenIf you are unable to see for yourselves. The *signs* around us: riot! Hungry! Disease! Corruption! They are the harbingers of *dark!* We must remain steadfast in our devotion to keep us *consume them all!* -Examinednot the crowd with his eyes ablaze-. I certainly believe itto you crazy. Ahhh ... Not what the Romans said the same of Jesus Christ? Know that in his day, so I share your uncertainty, your fear. But that was before Savonarola close to me. He taught me the *true!* My eyes *opened* finally. And before you today that I'm hoping to open also yours! "The priest paused for breath-. Comto understand that we are on the brink. On the one hand, the glowyou and glorious *Kingdom of God*. On the other hand ... a hollow without fundsDO *despair*] Tambaleandoos you are already precariously on the edge. Men like the Medici or members of other families who once called teachers seeking assets and profitsences earth. Abandoned their beliefs in favor of material pleasures, and you wanted to follow his example. "He paused again, this time to emphasize his words, and continued-: Our wise prophet once said: "The only good thing that they shouldWe Plato and Aristotle is that they

raise many discussions we can now use against the heretics. But even so, they and many other philosophers are now in hell. " If you value the immortality of your soul, you shall give back to the pro tourfano and salute the teachings of our prophet Savonarola. So sanctify your body and your spirit. This discovery reveals the Glory of God! And you will become at last what our Creator intended, in faithful and obedient servants!

But the crowd was beginning to wane, he was losing interest and a few had already left. Ezio stepped forward and addressed the priest:

"I sense that your mind is its own," he said.

The priest laughed.

"Not everyone needs persuasion or coercion to be withup. I already believed. Everything I said is true!

"None of this is true," said Ezio-. And what I'm doing now is not easy. -Activate the hidden dagger and crossed the sacerdote-. *Requiescat in pace* "He said.

Away from the victim, covered her head with the hood.

It was a long and arduous, but towards the end, Savonarola eventually became the unwitting ally of Murderers, as economic power began to wane Florence: The Monk tested both trade and make money, the two things he had made it big in their day to the city. And the Day of Judgement is without guidance. What I got was a liberal Franciscan monk who challenged the Monk with a fire ordeal. Monk refused to so get her and her authority suffered another setback. In early May 1497, a great many people from the city held manifestations of protest, which ended up becoming disturbances. After that, the bars began to open, people came to sing, dance and play resumed prostitution ... The People began to have fun again, really. And banks and other businesses opened time as, slowly at first, the demanding Bundled returning to the neighborhoods of the city and the regime freed Monk. It did not happen all in the overnight, but finally, almost a year after the day of the protests, the time of the fall of Savonarola, who had clung tenaciously to power was imminent.

"You did well," said Ezio Paola, while waiting to *La Volpe* and Machiavelli at the gates of the complex of San Marco, along with a large and eager crowd pro assigned released neighborhoods.

Thanks. But now what will happen?

"Look," said Machiavelli.

A door opened above their heads and appeared on a balcony a gaunt figure dressed in black. Monk glared angrily at the people gathered.

- Silence! -Ordered-. I demand silence!

Overwhelmed, even unintentionally, the members lowered their voices.

- Why are you here? Savonarola asked "Why you bother me? You should be cleaning your houses!

But the crowd roared censoring his words.

- Wiping of what? Shouted a man-. If you already have taken him away everything!

- I will have been guided! Savonarola cried as a response to a-. But now you will do as you order! *Os then submit!*

And the folds of his robes pulled the Fruit of Eden and raised him. Ezio saw in his hand that held it was missing a finger. Instantly, the Fruit of Eden began to shine and the crowd fell back, stifling screams. But Machiavelli, keeping the limema was prepared and without hesitation, threw a knife stuck in the forearm of the Monk. With a scream of rage and pain, Savonarola let the Fruit of Eden, which fell from the balcony into the crowd.

- Nooooo! He yelled. But suddenly it was as if he shrugged, their behavior so baffling as pathetic. That was enough for the crowd gathered there. Joined forces and rushed through the gates of San Marco.

"Quick," said Ezio *La Volpe*-. Find the Fruit of Eden. You can not walk very far.

Ezio saw him, shooting aimlessly among the feet of the crowd. Is its Mergia in the crowd, taking punches and kicks, until at last it was within reach. I quickly saved the bag from his belt. The doors of San Marco had just opened, as probably some of the brothers inside felt that discretion was part of the courage and wanted to save their church and its monastery in addition to the skin, submitting to the inevitable. I also had to be a few of them tired of exhausting despotism of Monk. The crowd crossed the door and reappeared a few minutes later, carrying on their shoulders to a Savonarola who kept on shouting and kicking launch.

"Take the Palazzo della Signoria-ordered Machiavelli-. That the judge there!

- Idiots! Blasphemous! Shouted Savonarola-. God is witness to this sacrilege! How dare you see and to treat her Teacher! "The screams of rage from the crowd almost silenced his voice, but as hectic as scared and screaming continued, as the Monk knew, though not exactly think in those terms, that it could be his last trick-. Heretic! Ardeis all in hell for this! *Do I have heard? Ardeis!*

Murderers Ezio and the other followed the crowd that took the monk, who kept on shouting his continuous combination of pleas and threats:

"The sword of God will fall upon the earth for fast and sudden. Liberadme, because only I can save you from his wrath! Hijos mine, heed me before it's too late! There is only one true salvation, and have renounced the path to it in exchange for material benefits simple! If you can not Someteis back to me, Florence know the full wrath of the Lord ... and this city will fall as Sodom and Gomorrah, because He will know the extent of your betrayal. *Aiutami, Dio!* Ten thousand have fallen on me Judas!

Ezio was close enough to be able to hear the comment from one of the people who carried the Monk:

"Enough lies. Since you arrived here you've done nothing to shed misery and hate!

"Perhaps you are God in your head," said another monk- but you've got a long way from the heart.

They were now at the Piazza della Signoria and the crowd started shouting in triumph.

- We have suffered enough! Return to be a free people!

- Light over soon to our city!- Must be cast! GAR the traitor! The heretic is *he!* It distorts the Word of God for their own interests! Shouted one woman.

- We finally broken the yoke of religious tyranny! Cried another-. Savonarola will finally be punished!

- The truth enlightens us and fear has evaporated! Shouted third-. Your words and are worthless, Monk!

- Claims to be his prophet, but your words were dark and cruel. Call us puppets of the devil ... I think the view Dade were puppet *you!*

Ezio and his friends had no need to continue to interceded, because the machinery that had set in motion by itself would make the rest of the paper. The leaders of the city, so eager to save his skin as to regain power, ran out of the Signoria to show off their support. Then a stage was erected and on it, arranged a gigantic mountain of wood chips and around three stakes, while Savonarola and his two placepassionate lieutenants were dragged into the Signoria to be subjected to a trial brief and fierce. Has never BIA showed mercy and therefore, no one had mise Ricordi him. The defendants reappeared chained, and taken to the poles and attached to them.

"Oh, Lord, Lord, have mercy on me," came begging Savonarola-. Take me away from the embrace of evil! Surrounded as I sin, I call your salvation!

"*You* wanted me *I* burn," sneered a man-. Well now the tables have turned!

The executioners came torches surrounding the firing ishobs. Ezio watched the scene, his head occupied by memories of loved ones who found their final all those years ago exactly directly in the same place.

- *Infelix ego* Savonarola, "he prayed, his voice reflecting the pain as the fire was igniting-. *Omnium destitutus help* ... I have broken the laws of heaven and earth. Where do I can go? Who I can use? Who will have pity on me? I darevo looked up to heaven for I have sinned greatly against him. I can not find refuge on Earth as it is I have been a Candal ...

Ezio approached everything he could. "Despite the pain it has caused, no man, even this, he deserves to die in such pain, she thought. Extracted from their leaves its *gun* loaded and attached to the mechanism of his right arm. At that time, SavoNarol noticed his presence and stared at him with a combination of fear and hope.

"It's you," he said loudly over the roar of the fire, but essentially both were reported by a conemental nection-. I knew this day would come. Brother, shows Migo pity that I showed you. *I left* at the mercy of wolves and dogs.

Ezio raised his arm.

"Goodbye, *father* He said, and fired. In the chaos surrounding the fire, movement and sound of the gun fell fromsapercebidos. Savonarola's head fell on his chest-. Go in peace, and your God is who judge you, "he said quietly Ezio-. *Requiescat in pace*. He looked at the two lieutenants, Monjes Domenico and Silvestro, but they were already dead, their guts chamuscid scattered over the hissing fire. The nose of the spectators began to notice the smell of burning flesh. The crowd had calmed down. After a short while, nothing was heard but the crackling of the flames finishing their work.

Ezio moved away from the pyres. Machiavelli saw, *La Volpe* and Paola watching a short distance. Machiavelli crossed paths with his sightsda and made a gesture, encouraging. Ezio knew I had to havecer. It went on stage, on the opposite side to where they were the hohoses, and all eyes were riveted on him.

- Citizens of Florence! Said using a voice loud and clear-. Twenty years ago I was in the same place where I am today and saw moRIR my loved ones, traicioned for which I had for his friends. Revenge darkened my mind. I would have burned had it not been for the wisdom of a few strangers who taught me to see beyond my instincts. I never preached answers, but guide methat were to find myself. -Ezio Mario saw that his uncle had to join his comrades Murderers and raised his hand to greet-. My friends, "continued- no needWe anybody tell us what to do. Neither Savonarola, and the Pazzi, even the Medici. We are free to follow our own path. He paused-. There are those who would deprivegive us this freedom, many of vosotros (many of us) faithlizmente the hand over. But power is in our hands *choose* choose what they consider the *truth and* exercise is preciselycite this power that makes us human. There is no book or teacher to give responses, to show us the path. Therefore, choose your *own* way! I do not follow like me, or anyone!

Smiling to himself, he realized what seemed uneasy that some members of the Signoria. It was possible that the human being does not change, but did no harm to give it a push. He got off the stage in one leap, he covered his head with the capucha and left the square by the road followed the north wall of the Signoria, a street that he remembered very well have run two-seesces before, and disappeared from view around the world.

And that's where the company began to Ezio longest and toughest of his life that precede the inevitable showdown. Along with Machiavelli, organized fellow of the Order of the Grillsinuses in Florence and Venice to tour the Italian peninsula to the length and width armed with copies of the Map of Girolamo and carefully collecting the remaining pages of the Codex Great find, to explore the provinces of Piedmont, Trento, Liguria, Umbria, Veneto, Friuli, Lombardy in Emilia-Romana, the Marches, Tuscany, Lazio, Abruzzo, Molise, Puglia, Campania and Basilicata, and Calabria dangerous. Perhaps spent too long in Capri, and crossed to reach the Tyrrhenian Sea to Sardinia, the land of the hijackers, and Sicily, full of wicked people and thugs. Woo visited kings and dukes, bacarved Templar against those who found EMPEpanied on the same mission, but ultimately triumphed.

They met again in Monteriggioni. Five long years had been identified, and Alexander VI, Rodrigo Borgia, old now but still strong, continued to be the Pope of Rome. The power of the Templars, though diminished, remained a serious threat.

Needed to be done.

Chapter 28

One morning in early August 1503, Ezio, a man of forty-four years old with graying temples strokes but still keeping his dark brown beard, was summoned by his uncle to join him and the rest of the Society of Murderers in his office at the castle of Monteriggioni. Paola, Machiavelli and *La Volpe* Teodora had joined them, Antonio and Bartolomeo.

"It is time," he said solemnly Ma Eziorio-. We have the Fruit of Eden and we finally met all the pages of the Codex. Finish what you and my brother, your father, you started so long ago ... Maybe we can finally buyder the prophecy buried in the Codex and end once and for all and for all with the inexorable power of the Templars.

"Then, man, we should begin by locating the Vault. Codex pages together should lead you to it.

Mario activated the library to find the wall that thisban hanging pages of the Codex, now complete. At his side, sober a pedestal, was the fruit of Eden.

"That's how the pages relate to them," said Mariver while examining this complex set all-. By all appearances, shows a map of the world but a world mufact greater than the one we know, with continents to the west and south of which we are not aware. But even so, I am convinced of its existence.

"There are other elements," said Machiavelli-. Here, the izquierda, you can see the profile outlined in what can only be a crook, in fact, could be a papal staff. On the right, is clearly a drawing of the Fruit of Eden. Amid the pages, we can now see a dozen points that follow a pattern whose meaning remains a mystery.

And as he spoke, the Fruit of Eden began to glow spontaneously until the end, throw blinding light flashesCodex pages were, as if hugging. He then returned to its off and neutral.

- Why did he do that ... at this very moment? Pre-Ezio gunt, hoping that Leonardo had been there to explainCarsel or, at least for some form of deduction.

He tried to remember what he had said his friend on the singularares properties that curious machine, but failed. Looked more like a living being a mechanism. His instinct, not pregnantHowever, he said he had to rely on it.

"A mystery to unravel," said *La Volpe*.

- How is possible indicating this map?Paola asked-. With continents to discover!

"Maybe these continents waiting to be rediscovered," suggested Ezio, overwhelmed.

- How can it be? Theodora asked.

Machiavelli said:

-Tal Once the answer is in the Vault.

- Is it possible now to see where is it located? An askedtonio, as long as practical.

"Let's see ... Ezio said, examining the Codex-. If aimos these points with lines ..."He did-. Converge ... look! In a single point. He took a step back-. No! No way! The Boclosed! It seems that the Vault is in Rome!

He looked at all together, they read his thoughts.

"That explains why I was so looking forward Rodrigo conversionTirso, "said Mario Papa-. Take eleven years ruling the Santa headquarters, but still lacks the means to uncover their darkerSpecifically, although clearly must know where that place.

- Of course!Machiavelli said-. In a sense, is admirable. Not only has succeeded in locating the Vault, but it will alsoMoreover, by becoming pope, controls the Staff!

- The Staff? Theodora said.

Mario then spoke.

-The Codex always mentions "two fragments of Eden", ie two keys can not mean something else. One-looked back at him, is the fruit of Eden.

- And the other is the Staff papal!Ezio exclaimed, to buyDerlo at that moment-. *The papal Crosier is the "Second FragRegulation of Eden "*

"Exactly," said Machiavelli.

- My God, you're right! Mario cried uncle. And suddenly he became serious-. We have years, decades, looking for these answers.

"And now we have" concluded Paola.

"But it could also have them the Spanish-speaking AntONIO-. We're not sure there are no copies of the codex, do not know, and even if they were still in their librarycomplete, would have enough information to ... "He stopped. And if successful, if you guess the way to access the Vault ... He lowered his voice-. Its content could do that in comcomparison, the Fruit of Eden seems a trifle.

"Two keys," he reminded Mario-. The vault needs two keys to access it.

"But we can not take risks," said Ezio soon-. Now I have to leave for Rome and find the Vault! -Ezio looked one by one the faces of his companioseros. What you say me?

Bartolomeo, who until now had been whethersilence, then spoke without his usual rudeness.

"I'll do what I do best: bring some glitches in the Eternal City, the odd noise, a bit of fun to be able to act without anyone bothering you.

"We all work together to clear your way, friend," said Machiavelli.

-Hasznos know when you've got everything ready, *NIPOI*, and all will support you," said Mario-. *Tutti per one and one per tutti!*

"*Grazie, amici*" Said Ezio-. I know I'll be there when you need it. But let me be who carry the entire burden of this ultimate mission. A fish alone is able to circumvent a network captured a whole bank, and the Templars pillared unprepared.

Preparations accelerated since mid-month, Ezio, exploring the precious fruit of Eden, arrived on the Tiber, on board a boat to the docks near Castel Sant'Angelo in Rome. Had taken every precaution possible, but by the hand of the devil or the sagacity of the ubiquitous spies Rodrigo, their arrival has not gone unnoticed and now at the gates of the pier had to face a squad of guards Borgia. Would find a way through the Passetto di Borgo, the flyover of almost one kilometer long linking the castle with the Vatican. Aware that time was running against him, now that Rodrigo he had learned of his arrival, Ezio decided that his only option was a quick and accurate attack. He jumped like a lynx on the covert an oxcart loaded with barrels of furniture streets, and climbing the tallest barrel, hung from a crane. The guards watched astonished how the Murderer was thrown down, the swelling layer behind it. Drew his dagger, finished with a mounted sergeant knocked Borgia and his caballo. Had carried out the maneuver in such a short time as the other guards could not even draw their swords. Ezio, without looking back, took the horse and galloped by a veil. Capacity of such men could not chase Borgia.

Upon arrival at your destination, Ezio found that door you had to enter was too low and narrow for a rider, so dismounted and walked through, eliminating the two men guarding it with a single deft movement knife. Although it was adding years Ezio had stepped up from storage and was now at the peak of its strength was the pinnacle of his order, the Supreme Murderer.

After crossing the gate was found in a narrow courtyard, across which was another door. Gave the impression of not being watched, but when I went out to the side lever to open imagined that he heard a shout from the top of the battlements.

- Stop the intruder!

He looked behind and saw the closed door that had just entered. Was trapped in a narrow enclave!

While the archers who had above preparing to fire, hung on the lever that controlled the second door and got it open just in time when the cho arrows came with a clang on the floor.

And was inside the Vatican. With the grace of a cat, moved through its labyrinthine passageways, melting into the shadows at the first sign of the presence of the guards alerted, they could not afford a confrontation that will reveal their position. Finally, reached the vast cavern of the Sistine Chapel.

The masterpiece of Baccio Pontelli, built by Pope Sixto IV, an old enemy of the Murderers, and ended twenty years ago, loomed menacingly around and above him, the numerous candles only timidly penetrate the gloom. Ezio distinguished paintings by Ghirlandaio, Botticelli, Perugino and Rosselli, but the vast vault of the ceiling was still pent to be decorated.

He had entered through a stained glass window that was being repaired and at that time stood at equidistance on an interior pocket that dominated the vast space. Below, Alexander VI, with its golden gala, celebrating mass at the time and read the Gospel of John.

"*In principio erat Verbum, et Verbum erat apud Deum, et Deus erat Verbum. Hoc erat in principio apud Deum. FACT Omnia per ipsum sunt, et sine ipso factum est nihil quid factum est ...* In him was life, and life was the light of men. And the light shone in darkness and the darkness left to understand everything. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came to be a witness, to bear witness to the Light, in which all men believe through it. He was not the Light, but was sent to give witness to the Light. That was the true light that enlightens every man who came to earth. He was in the world and the world was created by him and the world knew him not. He came to himself, but his own received him not. But as many as received Him, He gave power to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name: which were born, not of blood nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth ... "

Ezio continued to watch until the Mass came to an end and with congregation began to march, leaving her alone with Pope cardinals and priests. Would you know the Spanish Ezio was there? Had he planned some kind of confrontation? Ezio had no idea, but I saw a golden opportunity to rid the world of the threat of that terrible Templar. Steeling herself, was launched from the pocket to land perfectly squatting near the Pope, immediately before or priests Borgia you see time to react or ask for help, and driving deep into your hidden blade in the bloated body of Alexander. Pope fell to the ground at the foot of Ezio quietly and stood still.

Ezio stood beside him, breathing deeply.

"I thought ... believed to have overcome this. He thought he could overcome me revenge. But I can not. I'm just a man. I waited a long time, I'm too ... and you are a cancer of this world that must be removed for the good of all. *Requiescat in pace, sfortunato.*

He turned, ready to leave, but then something very small. Spanish hand closed around the staff that had been holding. He immediately began to glow with a powerful white light and the hollow space of the chapel began to turn without stopping. The cold eyes of Spanish cobalt suddenly opened.

"I'm not prepared to rest in peace," said the Spanish unhappy.

There was a flash of light and powerful priests and thistles, along with members of the congregation who were inside the chapel, fell to the ground, screaming in pain, while leaving their bodies translucent thin rays of light, which rose like smoke curling up to go to stop the shining. What the Pope, now standing, holding with an iron hand.

Ezio ran towards him, but the Spanish shouted

- Do not, Murderer! "And waved toward the Staff Ezio.

Sputtered in a strange way, like lightning, and Ezio was pushed onto the other side of the chapel, above the bodies of the priests and people still moaning and squirming. Rodrigo Borgia strongly hit the Staff on sleep at the altar and the hapless bodies occurred more energy in the form of smoke, which flowed into the Staff and to him.

Ezio got up and once again faced with your greatest enemy.

- You devil! Rodrigo yelled-. How can you resist?

He looked down and saw the glow of the bag on the belt had Ezio, which still contains the fruit of Eden.

- I get it! Rodrigo said, his eyes gleaming like coals-. You have the Fruit of Eden! It better! Give it now same!

-*Vai a farti fottere!*

Rodrigo laughed.

- What vulgarity! But you always fighting! As your padre. Well cheer up, my son, because to see him return *soon!*

Stir again the Staff and his hook hit the cicaEzio matrix had on the back of his left hand. Ezio is feltchill coursing through the veins and staggered, but did not fall.

"You'll *give me* Rodrigo roared, approaching.

Ezio thought quickly. He knew what he was capable of the Fruit of Eden and had to be at risk now or die trying.

"As you wish" he replied.

Fruit of Eden extracted from his pocket and held it high. It shone with such intensity that for a moment he felt that the majestic chapel was illuminated by sunlight, and when he returned to vibrate only the glow of candles, Rodrigo saw eight Ezios confronted him.

But remained unchanged.

- You can back you! Said-. How impressive. It is difficult to guess who is the true and which are Quimera ..., but that would be difficult at best, and if you thought that was a cheap trick to save you, think again!

Rodrigo stirred the Staff at the clones, and each time you gave one, faded forming a puff of smoke. The ghost Ezio pranced and dodging, attacking Rodrigo, who now seemed worried, but they proved unable to do other damage to the Spanish that was not the mere distraction. Ezio really only managed to finish real shock, though they were little, for such was the power of the Staff, that he could not bringPope is an evil enough. Ezio but quickly realized that the fight was weakening Rodrigo. When the seven fanTasman had disappeared, the repulsive pontiff was exhausted and breathless. The madness gives the body an energy that few cosas more can we do provide, but despite the Staff powers granted him, Rodrigo was, after all, a fat old man of seventy-two years ill with syphilis. Ezio then kept in his pocket the fruit of Eden.

Panting after the fight against the ghosts, the Pope fell to his knees. Ezio, panting as well, as the ghosts were usedlizado their energy into making their own, descended on him. LevanTando sight, Rodrigo clung to his staff.

"No it away from me," he said.

-All over, Rodrigo. Leave the Staff and will guarantee you a quick and merciful death.

"What a generous, mocking voice said Rodrigo-. I pregunto if you will yield a very passive way of being the opposite situation.

Gathering the strength he had left, the Pope suddenly got up and pounded the ground with the heel of his stick. In penumbra, priests and parishioners whined again and emerged from the Crosier a new surge of energy directed against Ezio, who hit like a sledgehammer and sent him flying through the air.

- What do you think of this as an appetizer? "Said the Pope, with an evil smile.

He approached the place where Ezio lay breathless and when he was about to bring back the fruit of Eden, he realized that he hasBia reacted too late. Rodrigo crushed his hand with his boot and the Fruit of Eden began to roll on the floor. Borgia stooped to pick it up.

- Finally! He said smiling-. And now ... I'll see you!

He raised the Fruit of Eden, which issued a destructive glare. Ezio had been frozen, trapped, unable to move. The Pope leaned upon him furiously, but then, seeing his adanniversary was entirely in his power, his expression subsided. Extracted from their clothes a short sword and looking at his postTrado enemy, deliberately stabbed him in the side, with a pitying look, combined with disdain.

But the pain of the wound apparently weakened the power of the Fruit of Eden. Ezio still lying face down, but even so, and suppliesdo in a blur of pain, he saw Rodrigo, believing himself safe, stood in front of a fresco by Botticelli, *The temptation of Christo*. She approached him and raised the Staff. An arc of cosmic energy of Staff and then started fresh reached, which was opened and revealed the presence of a secret door, through which passed Rodrigo after throwing one last look of triumph to his fallen foe. Ezio watched helplessly as the door closed behind the Pope and before losing consciousness, only had time to memorize itlocalization of the door.

He woke up, did not know how long later, but the sails havebian almost completely burnt and the priests and the faithful were gone. Found that despite being stretched on a pool of blood, the wound that had occurred on the side Rodrigo had not touched any vital organs. He got up trembling, acered to the wall to find a foothold and began to breathe deeply and with a regular rhythm until she felt clearer head. Gotta stop the bleeding with improvised bandagesSadas ripped off his own shirt. Codex prepared weapons, the double-edged dagger on his left forearm, the poisonous dagger in the right-and went Botticelli fresco.

Remembered that the door was hidden in the figure, right hand of a woman charged with a bundle of firewood for Hoguera slaughter. It moved a little closer to examine the painting mynucia to trace the outline, barely visible. Intonka carefully studied the details of the painting, both right and left of the woman. At his feet appeared FIGra of a child with right hand raised, and was on the tip of the fingers of the hand that Ezio found the button that triggersba the door. Opened, the cross and was not surprised to be immediately closed behind him. In any case, I would not think now turn back.

He was in what looked like a catacomb hall but as it was advancing cautiously, rough walls and dirt floor gave way to a gently carved stone and marble flooring that there would be out of place in any palace. And the walls glowed with a bright light and supernatural.

The wound had weakened but was forced to go on, fassored, and more startled than scared, although still in guardday, knowing that Borgia had also followed this route.

The long passage resulted finally in a room consideredble size. Its walls were smooth as glass and glowed with the same blue iridescence previously seen, only here it was more intense. In the center of the room was a pedestal and sober him in clear containers designed for that purpose, the Fruit of Eden and the Staff.

The rear wall of the room was dotted with hundreds of regularly spaced holes, and there was the Spanish, ltend and drawing, completely ignorant of the arrival of Ezio.

- Open up, damn it, *barren* Shouted frustrated and angry.

Ezio stepped forward.

"It's over," said Rodrigo-. Let it run. And no tiene way.

Rodrigo suddenly turned toward him.

"No more tricks," said Ezio, removing the daggers and Jandola fall to the ground-. No more artifacts. Is here Baron weapons. Now ... see what you are made, *vecchio*.

A smile slowly bathed face Rodrigo broken and corrupt.

"Okay ... if you want to play well.

He took off his thick clothes to stay only in the tunic and stockings. A body fat, although compact and poStand, run by small ray of light, therefore the power of the staff. And immediately, he stepped forward and downloaded the firstmer blow, a malevolent hook to the chin of Ezio, which left him reeling.

- Why could not you have let your father run?Pre-Rodrigo gunt lamenting at the time he lifted his foot to poke a hard kick to the stomach Ezio-. Had to continue pursuing it, though ... And you're like him. The Murderers are like mosquitoes to be crushed with his hand. I wish God had let that fool you hang yourself Alberti Juneyour whole family to do now twenty-seven.

"The devil does not live in us, but *you*, the Tunerivers," said Ezio, spitting out a tooth-. Believe you can play with people, with decent people, with normal people and cocurrent, do with it what you desire!

"My dear friend," said Rodrigo, aiming a blow below the ribs Ezio- for it serves the people. Scum that rule and use. It was ever thus, and always will be.

- Tables! "He gasped Ezio-. This match is immaterial. We expected a much more vital. But first tell me, what do you get in the vault behind that wall? Do not tietions and all the power you might need?

Rodrigo looked surprised.

- Do not know what is there behind? Have not you figured out the great and powerful Order of Murderers?

Torpid tone of his voice stopped short to Ezio.

"But what are you talking?

Rodrigo's eyes shone.

- By God! It *God* people who inhabit the Vault!

Ezio was so stunned that failed to respond immediatelyately. He knew he faced a dangerous madman.

"Listen, do you expect me to believe truly that God lives under the Vatican?

- Does not it seem a more logical that a kingdom in a cloud? "Surrounded by singing angels and cherubs? It is an imagegene charming, but *truth* is much more interesting.

- What does God down there?

-Expect to be released.

Ezio breath.

"Suppose you think. What would you do if you think withcontinue to open that door? Rodrigo smiled.

"That does not matter. What I seek not your approval ... But his power!

- What do you think He'll diaria?

"Whatever it is what is behind that wall, no postone to resist the combined strength of the Fruit of Eden and the Staff. Rodrigo paused-. The gods created to fierce ... whichwant to be the religion to which they belong.

"But the Lord God is omniscient. Almighty. Do you really think that a couple of ancient relics canyou hurt?

Rodrigo smiled with superiority.

"I do not know anything about anything, kid. You create an image ofdor taken from an old book ... a book, however, written by *men*.

- You're the Pope! How can you thus despise the most important text of Christianity?

Rodrigo laughed.

- Are you really so naive? I became pope, because this position gave me *access*. I was *power!* Do you think I believe a word he ordered that Book says ridiculous? Is carrynot lies and superstitions. Like any other religious treatedgious has been published since man learned to write!

"There are those who would kill you for saying that.

"Maybe. But I'm not losing any sleep. He paused-. Ezio, the Templars *understand* humanity, and therefore the despride in that way!

Ezio was speechless, but continued to hear the Pope's speech pretentious.

"When my work here is finished," continued Rodrigo- I think the first thing I will do is dismantle the Church, that men and women will be finally forced to take responsibility for their actions, and are finally *courts* as duedo. -Adopted a beatific expression-. It will be a beauty, the new world Templar ... governed by reason and order ...

- How can you speak with reason and order, "interrupted Ezio, when your whole life has been ruled by violence and inmorality?

"Oh, I know I am an imperfect being, Ezio," said the Pope, with a smirk. And do not pretend otherwise. But sabes? Morality has no *award*. Te stay with what you get, and you cling to it ... by all means. At the end of the extended hands-- You only live once!

"If everyone lived according to your code," said Ezio atonyto- the world would be consumed by madness.

- Exactly! As if I were not already! Rodrigo I pointed a finger-. Are you sleeping, perhaps, when I went to your history classes? A little over a hundred years our ancestors lived in the mud and manure, used by the ignorancia and religious fervor ..., starting up with the shadows, afraid of everything.

"But it's time we left that and we became more sabios and stronger.

Rodrigo laughed again.

- You have pleasant dreams! But look around you. You mymo've lived reality. The bloodshed. Violence. The space between the rich and the poor ... and that does nothing but expand. He looked into his eyes Ezio-. *Never* will be at parity. I made peace with it. And you should do them well.

- Never! The Murderers always fight to improve humanmanity. Perhaps unattainable Utopia, a heaven on earth, but every day the fight is a step out of the quagmire.

Rodrigo sighed.

-*Santa simplicitas!* Forgive me, but I got tired of waiting to awaken humanity. I am old, I saw many things, and I have few years to live. "An idea popped into his cahead and cackled maliciously-. Although who knows? Maybe the Dome is able to change that, right?

But suddenly the Fruit of Eden began to shine, with more inintensity each time, until its light completely filled the room, blinding them. Pope fell on his knees. Shielding his eyes, saw Ezio map image began to be designed so Codexber wall dotted with holes. He stepped forward and took the Staff papal.

- *No!*Rodrigo exclaimed, her hands claw giving inutil lurched into the air-. You can not! *You can not! Is my destination. Mine!!* I am the Prophet!

In a terrifying moment of clear consciousness, Ezio was Auditorst that long ago, in Venice, fellow Murderers had seen what he had wanted to reject. The Prophet istobacco was present, in this room, about to turn *its* intendedno. Rodrigo looked almost with pity.

"I never said you were the Prophet-. Poor deluded soul.

The Pope fell backwards, old, fat and pathetic. And continuoustion, spoke with resignation.

"The price of failure is death. Give me at least that dignity.

Ezio looked at him and shook his head from side to side.

"No, old fool. I returned to kill my father. Or FeDerico. Neither Petruccio. Or any of the dead, eitherfront of you, either powerless at your service. As for me, are over the deaths. He looked to the Pope in the eyes, and seemed troubled now, and frightened, and the elderly, nothing to do with the piercing brightness of his enemy-. Nothing is true, "said Ezio-. All is allowed. It's time to find your own peace.

Rodrigo and departed from the Staff approached the wall, pressdo with the end of a sequence of scattered holes, as he showed the map projection.

And it appeared the outline of a large door.

That in the time Ezio played the last hole, it opened.

Then opened a wide aisle, with glass walls filled with ancient stone sculptures, marble and bronze, and many camerasflush with sarcophagi, marked all with runic letters, which got Ezio read: were the names of ancient gods of Rome. The coffins were tightly sealed.

As he walked down the aisle, Ezio was surprised by the unknown of architecture and decoration that seemed to be a strange mix of a very old style, the style of his own time, and structures and forms that did not recognize, but whose instinct suggested that they should belong to the distant future. On the walls were reliefs depicting the ancient events that seemed to show not only the evolution of man, but also the driving forces.

Much of the silhouettes seemed human, though forand clothes but could not recognize. And there were other ways, not knowing if they were carved, painted or were part of itthe cosmic space was happening: a forest that ended in the sea, monkeys, apples, canes, men and women, a cloth, a sword, and colossal pyramids, ziggurats and juggernauts, ships sailing under the water, strange screens shiny patransmit all kinds of new knowledge, all kinds of communitytion ...

Ezio also recognized not only the fruit of Eden and the Staff, but a sword of great size, and the Shroud of Christ, all carried by figures of human form, but not pajust be. Distinguished a description of the earliest civilizationstions.

And finally, in the depths of the vault, he found a hugel granite sarcophagus. When Ezio approached him, he began to brillar with a warm light. He stroked his huge cap and rose with a hiss audible, but the cover was light, as if hitgives your fingers, and slid back. Emerged inside the tumstone bath a wonderful yellow light, warm and inviting as the sun. Ezio shaded his eyes with his hand.

Then, he got up inside the sarcophagus figure cuEzio yas factions failed to distinguish, but I knew I was Frenyou a woman. Ezio looked at changing and burning eyes and emitio a voice, a voice similar to start with birds chirping, which ended up speaking in their own language.

Ezio was wearing a helmet on his head. An owl perched on his shoulder. Ezio nodded.

"I Regards, Prophet, "said the goddess-. Took ten thousand thousand waiting stations.

Ezio dared not look up.

"I'm glad you came," said the Vision-. And LLEgo with you the fruit of Eden. Let me see.

With humility, Ezio offered it.

"Oh. He stroked his hand over the space above the fruit, but not touching. The Fruit of Eden began to glow and throb. Vision stared at Ezio-. We must talk. He cocked his head, as if reflecting on something, and Ezio seemed to glimpse a hint of iridescent smile on his face.

- Who are you? Ventured to ask.

She sighed.

"I have many names ... When I died, was Minerva. AnTES was Merva and Mera ... and so on, with the passage of timepo ... Look! He pointed to the set of sarcophagi where Ezio happened before. And as he was pointing to them, were litnandose the pale glow of moonlight. And my faily ... Juno, formerly known as Uni .. Jupiter, that are calledTinia Maba before ...

Ezio was petrified.

"You ancient gods ...

There was a sound like breaking glass or the sound that would make a shooting star ... It was his laughter.

"No ... we are not gods. Just came ... before. Howdo come into the world, yours struggled to understand ourwork life. We were more ... developed over time. Your minds were not *still* prepared for us ... He paused. And maybe they are not yet ... Maybe this neverran. But that does not matter. "Her voice became somewhat harder-. But although we may not understand, you inbuild our warning ...

He was silent. And in the silence, "said Ezio:

"Nothing you say makes sense to me.

"My son, these words were not directed to you ... Were directeddas a. .. "And he looked into the darkness beyond the Vault, a lcuridad no limits or walls or time.

- What is it? Ezio asked, timid and scared-. What are you talking about? There is no one else!

Minerva leaned toward him, approached him, and felt a ma Eziodre embracing with affection all the fatigue, all its pain.

"I wish to talk to you, but *through* you. You are the Profeta. She raised her arms above her and the ceiling of the vaultda became the firmament. The beaming face and intangibleMinerva material showed an expression of infinite sadness-. You have represented your role ... You have attached as if you were a ancla. .. But now, remains silent ... so that we can enter into communion. "I was sad-. Listen!

Ezio saw the sky and the stars, listening to her music. He saw the Earth spinning, as if looking from space. Continents and even looked on them, a couple of cities.

"When we were still meat, and our home was full, yours betrayed us. To us who you believe. To us who gave you life!

He paused, and if a goddess can shed tears, seetio. Appeared before them the vision of a war, human pheromonescs fighting against their former masters with handmade weapons.

"We were strong. But ye were many. And toWe were both craving for war.

Then came a new image of the Earth are closestma now, but still seen from Space. Then he went awayDose, becoming smaller, and Ezio saw that there was only one of several planets whose orbits revolve around a star: the Sun

"As we were busy with worldly affairs, that we forget about heaven. And when we got to pay attention ...

While he spoke Minerva, Ezio saw the sun burst into a huge cast a light crown insoportable, a light absorbing Earth.

"I gave Eden. But among all believe the war and death and turned Eden into hell. The world has burnedta be reduced to ashes. Should have ended at that moment. But I believe our image and likeness. I believe *to survive*. "

Ezio saw from the total devastation that the sun seemed to have caused on Earth emerged from the rubble a Unico ash-covered arm rose up. Grand visions of a windswept plain ran the whole speedmortality from heaven, was none other than the roof of the Dome. For he moved people ... broken, ephemeral, but brave.

"And we rebuild," he continued Minerva-. It took strength, sacrifice and compassion, but the rebuild! And little by little, the Earth was recovering, slowly life returned to the world, the green shoots emerged once again the generous floor ... And we set out to ensure that never again repeated a tragedy of that caliber.

Ezio looked back at the sky. A horizon. In it, temples and forbut, writing in stone, libraries full of scrolls, ships, cities, music and dancing ..., shapes and forms of epochs and ciCivilizations old did not know, but she recognized as the work of other human beings like him ...

"But now we are dying," said Minerva. And the timepo run against us ... Truth becomes myth and youGoing. What we build will be misunderstood. But Ezio, allowingI keep my words and to reflect the message of what we lost.

Dome building a picture emerged, and more.

Ezio looked on as if dreaming.

"But leave my words bring hope. You must find the other temples. Temples such as this. Consknew who reject are destroyed by war. They worked to protect, to save the Fire. If you can findshow him, if you can save your work, you could also save this world.

Ezio see Earth again. The horizon of the roof of the vault showed a city like San Gimignano a giant, a future city, a city with a tower built of sticksgive to the others who left in the dark streets running beneath them, a city on a distant island. And then, everything was merged again with a view of the Sun

"But you must be quick," said Minerva-. Because time is increasingly scarce. Protect yourself against Templar Cross ... as muchas will stand in your way.

Ezio looked up. He saw the sun, burning with rage, as ifhad waiting. And then it was like an explosion, although the explosion inside glimpse believed Templar Cross.

The vision began to fade. Minerva stays Eziowere alone, and the voice of the goddess also began to disappear inside a tunnel of infinite length.

"It is done ... My people must now leave this world ... All of us ... But the message is delivered ... It's up now. We can not do more.

And suddenly it was dark, silent, and the vault again became a dark underground chamber, completely empty.

Ezio broke his footsteps. Again entered the lobby and saw Rodrigo lying on a bench, a trickle of green bile loomdo from the corner of his mouth.

"I'm dying," said Rodrigo-. I have taken the poison reserved at the time of my loss, since there is now world in which to live. ... But tell me, tell me before you leave for good this place of wrath and tears ... tell me, in the vault ... What have you seen? Who have you found?

Ezio stared.

"Nothing. A Nobody replied.

He toured the Sistine Chapel and went to the sunlight to meet friends who were there waiting. There was a new world to build.

End

List of characters

Giovanni Auditore: father

Mary Auditore: mother

Ezio Auditore: Second son of Giovanni

Federico Auditore: Giovanni firstborn
Petruccio Auditore: Giovanni's younger son
Auditore Claudia: daughter of Giovanni
Mario Auditore: brother Giovanni
Annetta: housekeeper family Auditore
Paola: sister Annetta
Orazio: Mario servant Auditore
Duccio Dovizi: Claudia old boyfriend
Giulio Giovanni secretary Auditore
Dr. Ceresa: Auditore family physician
Gambalto: sergeant in charge of the guard Auditore Hand
Cristina Calfucci: Ezio young girlfriend
Antonio Calfucci: Cristina's father
Manfredo d'Arzenta: son of a wealthy family, subsequently married Cristina
Gianetto: Cristina friend
Santee: Cristina's father employed
Jacopo de 'Pazzi: Pazzi family member, Florentine bankers fifteenth century
Francesco de 'Pazzi's nephew Jacopo
Vieri de 'Pazzi, son of Francesco
Stefano da Bagnone: priest, secretary Jacopo
Giocondo Father: Priest of San Gimignano
Terzaga, Tybalt, Captain Robert, Zohan and Bernard soldiers and guards at the service of the Pazzi family
Galeazzo Maria Sforza (Galeazzo): Duke of Milan, 1444-1476
Caterina Sforza, daughter of Galeazzo, 1463-1509
Girolamo Riario, Duke of Forli, the husband of Caterina, 1443-1488
Bianca Riario: daughter Caterina, 1478-1522
Riario Ottaviano, son of Caterina, 1479-1523
Riario Cesare, son of Caterina, 1480-1540
Riario Giovanni, son of Caterina, 1484-1496
Riario Galeazzo, son of Caterina, 1485-1557
Nezetta: baby mother Caterina
Lodovico Sforza, Duke of Milan, Galeazzo's brother, 1452-Ascanio Sforza 1508: Cardinal, brother of Galeazzo and Lodovico, 1455-1505
Lorenzo de Medici, "Lorenzo the Magnificent" man ita statuslian, 1449-1492
Clarice Orsini, wife of Lorenzo de Medici, 1453-1487
Lucrezia de Medici, daughter of Lorenzo de Medici, 1470-1553
Piero de Medici, son of Lorenzo de Medici, 1471-1503
Maddalena de 'Medici, daughter of Lorenzo de Medici, 1473-1528
Giuliano de Medici, Lorenzo's brother, 1453-1478
Gorini Fioretta: lover of Giuliano de Medici
Boetie: servant of Lorenzo de Medici
Giovanni Lampugnani: conspirator in the assassination of Galeazzo, fallece 1476
Carlo Visconti: a conspirator in the assassination of Galeazzo, died in 1477
Gerolamo Olgiati: conspirator in the assassination of Galeazzo, 1453-1477
Bernardo Baroncelli: conspirator in the murder of Giuliano de Medici
Uberto Alberti *Gonfaloniere* Florence (Council chief Maistered)
Rodrigo Borgia, Spanish, cardinal, later Pope Alexander VI, 1451-1503
Antonio Maffei: priest, a conspirator in the murder of Giuliano de Medici
Raffaele Riario: supporter of Pazzi, a nephew of Pope, 1451-1521
Riario Francesco Salviati, Archbishop of Pisa, involved in the conspiracy Pazzi
Checco Lodovico and Orsi, Orsi brothers, mercenaries

Niccolo Machiavelli: philosopher and writer, 1469-1527

Leonardo da Vinci: artist, scientist, sculptor, etc., 1452-1519

Agnolo and Innocent: Leonardo da Vinci assistants

Girolamo Savonarola, a Dominican priest and political leader, 1452-1498

Poliziano (Angelo Ambrogini): scholar and poet, tutor of the children Medici family, 1454-1494

Botticelli (Alessandro di Moriano Filipepi): artist, 1445-1510 Domenico da Pescia and Fra *Fra* Silvestre, monks, followers of Savonarola

Brother Jerome, a monk of the Abbey of Monteciano, cousin of Savonarola

Giovanni Mocenigo, Doge of Venice, 1409-1485

Carlo Grimaldi, a member of the entourage of Mocenigo

Conde de Pexaro: Leonardo pattern in Venice

Nero: Assistant Pexaro Count

Emilio Barbarigo: Venetian merchant, an ally of Rodrigo Borgia

Silvio Barbarigo ('Il Rosso') state inquisitor, cousin Emilio Barbarigo

Setting Barbarigo: Silvio's cousin and Emilio

Agostino Barbarigo: younger brother Marco

Dante Moro: bodyguard Marco

Bartolomeo d'Alviano: mercenary

Gilbert Fox, *La Volpe*: Member of Murderers

Corradin: Assistant Zorro

Antonio de Magianis: head of the guild of thieves in Venice Ugo member of the Thieves Guild

Rosa, a member of the Thieves Guild

Paganino: member of the Thieves Guild

Michiel: member of the Thieves Guild

Bianca: member of the Thieves Guild

Sister Theodora, brothel owner

Glossary of terms in Italian and Latin

abominato: unfortunate

Accademico: academic

accompagnatrice: companions, carbines

addio: goodbye

Ahim: alas

Aiutami, Dio!: Help me God!

Aiuto!: Help!

the bark!: Thief!

Altezza: Highness

intimi amici: intimates

mio amico: my friend

amministratore: administrator

amore mio: my love

anche: also

anch'io: I also

aprite the portal: Open the door!

arcivescovo: Archbishop

aristocrazia: aristocracy

Artiglierie: artillery

Assassin: murderer

bacinus: dock

bambino: girl *beautiful*: handsome

ben fatto: well done

benvenuti: welcome

birbante!: Rascal

biscotti: biscuits, cakes

bistecca: steak

Bordello: brothel

buona fortune good luck

Buona sera: good night

buon'giorno: good morning

buon viaggio: bon voyage

caffè: coffee

quiet: Calm down, calm down

field: wide square

doge Rognosa!: Mangy dog!

capitano: Captain

capito?: Understand?

cappa:layer

carcass: body

camevale: carnival

expensive, face,

Carissima: dear, dear, beloved

house dolce casa: home sweet home

castello: castle

Cazzola: asshole fucking

che dire view!: How embarrassing picture!

il chiudi Becca: shut up

ciao: hello

actions: fat

Cimice: bug

codardo:coward

coglioni: balls

commandante: Commander

commendatore: commander, chief

compagno: companion, comrade

condottieri: soldiers for hire, mercenaries

coniglio!: Coward, chicken!

ducale horn: traditional hat worn by the Venetian Doge *SEW*: well

CREAP, traditore!: Die, traitor!

il crepi upo: the death of the wolf *curia*: Roman court

diavolo: Devil

Saluti distinctive: closely (in a letter)

Dottore: Doctor, doctor

ducati: ducats *duces*: dux, duke, leader

Duchessa: duchess

duomo: dome (in reference to the cathedral of Florence)

Evviva!: Hurrah!

fidanzato: promised

figa: vagina (vulgar)

figlio d'un Cane!: Motherfucker!

finanziatore: financial guarantor

Fiorini: FI

fottiti: Fuck you!

fra: Brother (religious)

Fratelli: brothers

fratellino: brother

funzionario da accoglienza: reception, welcome party

grappa: Italian liquor

grassone bastardo: fat bastard *grazie a Dio*: thank God *Grazie, amici*: thanks friends *Crane*: silly

hospitarius: monk in charge of hosting guests at a monastery

il Magnifico: Magnifico

il Spagnolo: the Spanish

Bocca in the upo!: Good luck!

infamous: terrible, horrible

infelix ego omnium destitutus help: I am unhappy, deprived of all comfort

in perfetto ordine: tidy

Inquisitor: inquisitor

intensity: understood

free: freedom

Liberta! Liberta! Popoand frees it!: Freedom! Freedom! People and freedom!

branco di cani luridi Bastardi: Disgusting pack of bastards!

luridi codardi: disgusting cowards

porco lurido: filthy pig

ma certo!: Naturally!

ma che?: What's this? "

ma che cazzo?: What the fuck was that?

maledetto: damn

marmocchio: brat

Physician: Doctor, doctor

merda!: Shit!

Messer: Mr

mia colomba: my dove

my dispiace veramente: I'm really sorry

miserabili pezzi di merda: miserable piece of shit

molto Onorato: It is an honor

NIPOYou: nephew

preoccuparvi not: do not worry

ora di pranzo: mealtime

oste: innkeeper

palazzo: palace

passeggiata: evening walk *forgive*,

Messer: excuse me, sir

prod: wee

piccola: small

popolo: people

porco: pig

porco devil!: Dirty devil!

Principessa: Princess

promesse: promised

puttana: whore

rallegramenti: Congratulations! *Requiescat in pace*: Rest in peace *ribollita*: Tuscan soup

salute!: Cheers

simplicitas holy!: Holy simplicity!

di sangue doubt!: Judas's blood!

scusi: excuse me

is it your DICI: if you say so

be: Mr

sfortunato: unfortunate

if: yes

signore: Sir, sir *Signoria*: government authority

signorina: Miss

Signorina: plural

Aiuto sounded pleased the tuo: appreciate your help

sorellina: sister

spero di if: I hope

stai bene: you okay

stolti: Crazy!

stronzo: jerk, asshole

Your Altezza: His Highness

itsBITO: suddenly

tagliagole: Cutthroat

tartaruga: turtle, simpleton

IWhooping RRA: mainland

youarrest!: 're Under arrest!

traditore: traitor

tutti per one and one per tutti: All for one and one for all!

ubriacone: drunk

Coraggio uomo: brave man

va bene: agree

vecchio: old

zio: uncle

Acknowledgements

Yves Guillemot

Serge Hascoet

Alexis Nolent

Richard Dansky

Olivier Henriot

Sebastien Puel

Desilets Patrice

Corey May

Jade Raymond

Joshua Meyer

Marc Muraccini

Ubisoft's Legal Department

Chris Marcus

Darren Bowen

Amy Jenkins

Caroline Lamache

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