



ART IS NEVER FINISHED

Leonardo Da Vinci's passion for geology and anatomy helps him delve into the very foundations of the universe and express them through his art, but when he is thrown into a Florentine dungeon accused of sodomy, he must defend himself with skills far beyond the brush and pen.

The tumultuous pounding on the door of Verrocchio's workshop shattered the Florentine dawn. It immediately set off every dog, chicken and dozing fishwife in the neighbourhood, adding to a cacophony that set off even more noise.

The door couldn't stand any more abuse and sprang open, and allowed the Florentine court guards to surge in.

"LEONARDO DA VINCI ... PRESENT YOURSELF!"

The guards immediately began to overturn furniture and scatter parchments as if it was expected of them. Those living in the workshop were already springing out of their beds in various stages of undress.

Andrea del Verrocchio bellowed from the loft, "What is the meaning of this affront?"

Leonardo DaVinci entered the main workshop at the same time and calmly confronted the Captain of the Court Guards. "I am DaVinci."

Andrea del Verrocchio shouted from above, "Don't say a word, Leonardo. They have no authority."

The Captain of the Guard peered closely at the naked breasts of a life size marble statue with an admiring eye. "I have as much authority as I need, especially having risen this early. And carrying a sword."

DaVinci smiled and shook his head in disbelief. “You could have taken your time. None of us are usually up before ten.”

As a guard each grabbed an arm, the Captain got right into Leonardo’s face. “Well, since we’re here, you are under arrest.”

“What is the ...?” began Verrocchio.

“Sodomy,” said the Captain in a matter of fact tone. Everyone immediately went quiet and stood very, very still. The guards escorted DaVinci out, leaving the workshop door on its hinges.

The hastily convened courtroom in the Palazzo Medici Ricardo was literally packed to the rafters. This was a celebrity case and everyone who was anyone wanted to be there.

Leonardo DaVinci was led into the courtroom and placed in the dock. He had chains on his hands and ankles. His clothes were very dirty and obviously slept in.

A uniformed court bailiff pounded the floor with his staff until the hubbub died down.

“This tribunal is now in session. Presiding is Lorenzo de Medici, Lord of Florence ... with Educator Christoforo Landini ... and Archbishop Antonino Pierozzi.” Everyone stood as the three men entered and took their seats on the bench. Lorenzo nodded, and everyone sat.

“Prosecuting this case is Monsignor Cornelio Priatoni, Father Inquisitor of the Holy Roman Catholic Church in Florence.”

The courtroom was swept by murmuring and sounds of indignation. The Bailiff pounded the floor for silence. DaVinci smiled broadly.

Archbishop Pierozzi glared down at him. “Do you find something amusing, DaVinci? This is a very serious charge!”

DaVinci looked around the courtroom and up into the gallery, playing to his audience. “I thought this was a civil trial, not an inquisition.”

The courtroom erupted in laughter. The Bailiff nearly broke his staff pounding the floor.

Lorenzo de Medici stood, and the courtroom immediately fell silent. “It *is* a serious charge, this *is* a civil tribunal and you, DaVinci, *will behave yourself*. The learned cleric is here to merely facilitate the prosecution and nothing more.”

DaVinci bowed slightly. “Yes, my lord.”

“And who represents you, DaVinci?”

“I represent myself. I know enough of the law to plead my case ... if necessary. Might I ask, why are the other three gentlemen I was incarcerated with on this charge not present?”

“They were discharged into the care of their families ...”

“Bribes? ... Privilege? ... My family and sponsors are not worthy of the tribunal’s ...?”

Archbishop Pierozzi smacks his fist on the bench. “DaVinci. You will not be cautioned again. Very well, Monsignor, please proceed.”

The Inquisitor drew himself up as tall as his fat five feet could manage and addressed Lorenzo de Medici. “Sire. The accusation is that DaVinci and three accomplices ...”

“... who have been absolved ...”

“Who have been absolved ... On April 26th in the year of our Lord 1476, a written accusation was deposited in the post box at the Palazzo de Signoria. It accused a young goldsmith and male prostitute, one Jacopo Saltarelli ... who also sometimes works as an artist's model ... of being ‘*party to many wretched affairs and consents to please those persons who request such wickedness of him.*’”

“The denunciation accused four people of sodomising Saltarelli ... a tailor named Baccino ... Bartolomeo di Pasquino ... and Leonardo Tornabuoni, an aristocrat ... and Leonardo da Vinci.”

Lorenzo de Medici had enough. “Monsignor, you are besmirching the names of men who have already been released ...”

“I am merely attempting to complete the court records ... I believe Tornabuoni is also your cousin ...”

“*ENOUGH.*”

The Inquisitor felt he had scored enough points. “DaVinci, the charges list you as an artist. Is this true?”

“Yes.”

“Most of your drawings are ... anatomical ... in nature. Are you a physician?”

“Not necessarily. I study anatomy to be able to draw and sculpt the human body. I also study geology, so I can draw mountains and quarry marble ... I study architecture, so I can draw houses ... I am an inventor ... a chemist ... what is your point?”

“You draw breasts and penises ... and delve within the very Mound of Venus ... You are a pornographer as well as a blasphemer! I would like to show this drawing to the council.” The Prosecutor held up a parchment with two fingers as if it was tainted. “It is a naked man with genitals *larger than life!* More proof of Da Vinci’s sick perversion and love for male anatomy!”

DaVinci smiled and shook his head, “The drawing you have there I call the Vitruvian Man ... named for the author Vitruvius ... it is merely my humble attempt to show man’s relationship with the universe geometrically and ...”

“Man’s relationship with the universe is through God!”

DaVinci rises to the challenge. “Next, you’ll be telling this tribunal that the earth is flat, and the sun revolves around the Earth. Galileo Galilei ...”

“Was a heretic.” completed the Prosecutor.

“I think our current Pope would disagree.”

“How DARE you infer what the Holy Father may think.”

Lorenzo decided to intervene. "It is well known that there is no love lost between Sixtus and I, DaVinci, but I do insist you remain civil regarding the Pontiff."

"Yes, My Lord."

"Continue, Monsignor."

"DaVinci, do you believe you can turn lead into gold?"

"Oh, for goodness sake! Do you think if I could turn lead into gold I would be a struggling artist? An inventor? Transmutation will never be possible, and if it ever is, the result will never be worth the cost."

"Do you believe man can fly? Like an angel?"

"Absolutely. It is only a matter of scale. My models have flown off the Duomo ... nearly to the Arno. If I could build one big enough, it could carry a man."

"BLASPHEMY. Da Vinci is saying a man can fly as if an angel."

"No, you said that ... and I am speaking of reality, not fantasy."

"MORE BLASPHEMY."

DaVinci addressed the Triumvirate. "Is the learned Inquisitor ever going to ask if I actually sodomised Saltarelli?"

The Prosecutor charged ahead. "You're left-handed, are you not?"

"Yes, I have never tried to hide that."

The Prosecutor turned to the courtroom, grandstanding. "This is the hand of Satan! You should have been forced as a child to use the right hand ... the Hand of God."

Da Vinci turned the attack on the Prosecutor. "And be turned into a stuttering wretch like yourself? I notice your tells ... keeping your left hand in your pocket or tucked into your belt."

The Monsignor staggered as if slapped. "I ... I ... am not on trial here."

"And what am I on trial for? Sodomy, or being left-handed? I pleasure myself with my right hand, if that is any consequence ..." The courtroom erupted in laughter.

Even Lorenzo was amused by this. "Da Vinci, please ... it does your case no good to antagonise the learned cleric."

The Archbishop once again attempted to take the initiative. "Da Vinci. This is your last warning. Sodomy is a serious charge in the eyes of the church ..."

DaVinci once again saw an advantage. "The eyes of the Church ... do you mean to imply that if I was charged with having sodomised an altar boy instead of an artist's model, I would be forgiven in the eyes of the church?"

"What do you think of torture, Da Vinci?"

"I try not to think about it at all ..." This drew laughter again.

The Archbishop stood and shouted. “Well, you had better get an inkling, because your confession may be extracted by other means *IF YOU DON’T KEEP YOUR DAMNED MOUTH SHUT AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS.*”

The Inquisitor calmed himself and started again. “Do you agree that sodomy has no purpose?”

“It produces ... I can only imagine, of course ... pleasure.”

“Yet it has no value in procreation, which is God’s work ...”

“... Unless it is to *avoid* procreation ...”

“That is a SIN. To avoid fertility. It is your *duty to God.*”

“And will God feed the unwanted mouths?”

“God will provide. We are all God’s children.”

“As far as I know, God only fathered one child.”

“Sodomite AND Blasphemer ... I will ask the court sees you are burned at the stake.”

Lorenzo de Medici decided to ask a question to once again attempt to diffuse the situation. “Do you *believe* in procreation, DaVinci? You are 24 years old, have no lawful wife or children, legitimate or otherwise.”

DaVinci gathered his thoughts. “I honestly believe that the act of procreation ... and anything that has any relation to it ... is so disgusting that humanity would soon die out if not for pretty faces and breasts and sensuous dispositions.”

The courtroom erupted again in laughter and this time, there was applause. Medici hid his laughter behind a gloved hand. Only the men of the cloth maintained a stony countenance.

“Enough.” Lorenzo shouted, half-heartedly. “Leonardo DaVinci ... artist, geologist, anatomist, architect, inventor and chemist ... etcetera, etcetera ... before this tribunal retires to deliberate and pass judgement, do you have anything you wish to say?”

The Prosecutor stood to object.

“As DaVinci has no defender ... he represented himself ... consider this his closing argument.”

The Prosecutor bowed slightly and sat.

DaVinci stood and cocked his head in thought. “Yes, I would like to face my accuser.”

DaVinci leaned out over the dock and looked around the courtroom. “So far, nobody has been brought forward to give any credence to the accusation of sodomy. I would have thought that the accusation of a vile crime that can only end up with my neck in a noose, on the chopping block or across the wheel would have a name and a face attached. My co-sodomites have been *miraculously* absolved, while I’m standing here wondering who pointed the finger.”

Lorenzo De Medici looked to his colleagues left and right, who shuffled parchments ... and then to the Prosecutor. “Well?”

“My Lord,” the Prosecutor stood. “As you understand, charges of sodomy are very serious ... and carry the death penalty ... and may be made secretly ... hence the use of the letterbox at the Palazzo ... uh ... but in this case, the accusation was anonymous ...”

Shouts and screams filled the courtroom. The Bailiff pounded his staff and Lorenzo de Medici stood, glaring down at the Prosecutor. The turmoil finally died down.

“You do realise that in cases such as this, all accusations must be *signed*? Otherwise, every man and his dog in Florence would be accused of sodomy ... sometimes rightly so.” Medici was enjoying his moment. “I declare the charges dismissed ... release DaVinci ... remove his chains.”

The other two men at the bench rose and turned to leave. The courtroom burst into applause as DaVinci’s chains were removed.

Florentines shook his hand and patted him on the back as DaVinci made his way to the door. Just before he was out, the Bailiff clamped his hand on DaVinci’s shoulder and whispered into his ear.

A heavy wooden door opened and DaVinci was shown into a warm and richly decorated chamber. Lorenzo De Medici was pouring two goblets of wine.

“Please, DaVinci, sit down. I’m sure you could use a drink.”

Leonardo accepted the wine and took a hearty gulp.

“I want to apologise,” Medici started ... DaVinci would have none of it. “Please, Sire ...”

“That should not have happened. Sex between men is fairly widespread in Florence and moderately tolerated by the public. Did you know that in Germania, the name for a homosexual is ‘*ein Florenze*’ ... The Florentine! We’re famous!”

They shared a laugh.

“We’re very much alike, DaVinci ... we’re the same age, 24.”

“Yet you are the absolute ruler of the Republic of Florence and I am a struggling artist ...

“Hardly struggling. I had heard of you ... in a flattering way.”

“I had heard of you, too, my Lord.”

“I would like to become a patron. You do paint, don’t you?”

“Yes, of course ...

“In colour? Everything I see seems to be drawings. Nothing is finished.”

“Your highness, art is never finished ... it is just abandoned.”

“Well, let’s see what you can finish for me,” said Medici. They shook hands.

FIN