



music by **Donya Lane** lyrics by **Ed McNamee**

book by

Ed McNamee & Donya Lane

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Logo artwork of Mona Lisa by Karina Vitiello

CONTACT

Donya Lane – 561-358-7456
donyalane@gmail.com

Ed McNamee – 732-278-8591
E.B.McNamee@gmail.com

Character Introductions

Setting

It's Florence in 1503. The small Italian city-state is thriving under its new democracy during the height of the Italian Renaissance!

Lisa

Lisa del Giocondo is 26 years old. She's the mother of five children.

Lisa has been married off to a much older man named Francesco who had once been her father's brother-in-law.

The two men had been married to sisters who both died in childbirth. In fact, all of their wives, including Lisa's mother, died that way and are rarely remembered for anything else.

It is out of Lisa's fear of coming to a similar fate that all of her actions and decisions arise.

By the time we meet Lisa, she has carried her unspoken ambitions for a different kind of life through six pregnancies.

As a woman coming up in society, she sees Florence bursting with modern ideas, and she prays to God every day that He help her to make a mark.

Lisa's very real expectations for a shortened lifespan have branded her with a notable gift for efficiency. Lisa leads with her practical traits. It is the source of her confidence. She certainly believes that she could help her husband to expand his business.

But we'll also see that Lisa is a woman of rare insight, into what today we would call metaphysics – the underlying nature of things. Though Lisa has learned to regard these fleeting visions as distractions.

Especially now, with Francesco's heirs all lined up, Lisa has earned a respite from her childbearing obligations. And time is short.

It is at this moment in her life that our story begins.

Francesco

Francesco del Giocondo seems a little old for 38. Lisa is his third wife.

He's a trader and exporter of silks whose business is very much on the rise.

Francesco also votes with "The Council of Twelve Good Men" in the Florentine government. He finds it to be good for business.

It was Francesco who had wanted Lisa's portrait to be painted. He had pressed the idea, every time she was pregnant, but Lisa's well-founded superstitions wouldn't allow for it. She was too afraid, always, that the likeness would become her "death mask."

That is until Francesco returns home with a list of portrait painters, personally approved by Lisa's idol, Isabella d'Este, "The First Lady of the Renaissance!"

Isabella

Isabella d'Este is the benevolent ruler of Mantua, an independent city-state, north of Florence.

It is said that she only manages to keep Mantua sovereign, and somewhat neutral, by handling all of her "foreign affairs" very personally.

Her patronage and taste in the arts and fashion have brought Isabella admiration from Royal Courts throughout Europe. And her influence trickles down to women of society.

Lisa is Isabella's biggest fan.

She and Isabella are the same age. They're both married to a Francesco and have five children.

But the similarities end there. Isabella is leaving a legacy! One that, for years, she has tried to solidify by having her portrait painted by Leonardo da Vinci.

Leonardo

Leonardo da Vinci is 51.

Known in some circles but far from a household name.

He's unusually fit. Could bend a horseshoe with his bare hands.

He is between patrons. Times are lean and uncertain.

Leonardo has taken a long break from painting to pull together the chaos of his other works.

Helping him with that is his only assistant, sometimes student, and irresistible, young model, Giacomo Caprotti whom Leonardo invariably refers to as "Salai" (meaning, "Little Satan").

Salai

Salai is 23 years old and beautiful!

And he's figured out that being an unsolvable problem to Leonardo is the best way to keep his attention and affection.

Salai started out as "Boy Apprentice" while Leonardo was Court Artist to The Moor of Milan. After Milan fell, Salai and Leonardo took their tiny, two-man studio around, looking for work.

They had an offer from Isabella, of course, to stay in Mantua, and work on her portrait, but Leonardo barely managed a sketch of her before needing to search on.

Now back in the city of Florence, in their meager and messy quarters, Leonardo survives by taking in contract work as a military draftsman from none other than Niccolo Machiavelli.

Machiavelli

Niccolo Machiavelli is 34 years old and tidy.

He is a keen and articulate observer of politics, history, and human behavior.

In fact, one day, he'll quite literally write the book but for now, Machiavelli is representing the new Republic of Florence as their Secretary of Militia.

Florence has no army of its own so Machiavelli relies on powerful allies and mercenary forces to keep a balance of powers between the various Italian city-states.

Presently, Pisa is the problem. Machiavelli must win back control of Pisa's seaport. And, to do so, he must have Leonardo da Vinci's futuristic new weapons designs.

“Little” Vespucci

Aiding Machiavelli in this, and everything else, is Agostino Vespucci, a bureaucrat, through and through. He handles the purse strings and the details.

He's well-liked and loyal. And people only call him “Little Vespucci” because Amerigo Vespucci (the famed explorer) is his closest cousin.

He doesn't care; he loves the job he has. Vespucci thrills to the palace intrigue and the gossip. And he would tell you himself, that he grows a little more “Machiavellian” every day.

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Treatment (Scene-by-Scene)

Act One

A Brand New Earth (scene 1)

It's 1503.

Inside the Duomo in Florence, the Monks begin their morning chant.

Lisa del Giocondo kneels before God praying that He will help to create a place for her in this new age of freedom and ideas.

Just as Lisa finishes her prayer, she sees a man in the piazza outside releasing a dove from its cage and quickly sketching it. She doesn't yet know that he's Leonardo da Vinci.

Lisa's Husband (scene 2)

Lisa greets her husband, Francesco, who has just returned from doing business in the city-state of Mantua, where Lisa's idol, Isabella d'Este, is the benevolent and fashionable ruler.

Excited that Isabella's buyers purchased silks from him in every color, Lisa suggests that they expand his business into finished pieces and other materials. But Francesco maintains that his success lays in specialization.

Francesco surprises Lisa with a list of portrait painters most favored by Isabella, hoping that this might finally convince Lisa to sit for the portrait he's wanted for seven years. But Lisa's six pregnancies through that time left her too afraid that any likeness might become her "death mask," and she asks that the subject not come up again. She reminds Francesco that she's finally earned some time for something else. Francesco reminds her that she's had plenty of nurses and staff.

Francesco must rush off to sit with his committee of "The Twelve" at Council Hall. A meeting has been ordered to discuss the many lost shipments of goods going into the port of Pisa; some of them his.

He leaves the list of painters with Lisa, saying, "One of them has just returned to Florence. He's the son of my lawyer from across the street."

Lisa thinks she knows just who he means.

Choose One (scene 3)

Exploring a potential connection to Isabella d'Este, Lisa practically barges into the studio of Leonardo da Vinci, only to find the distracted artist and his bungling assistant, Salai, working on a myriad of unrelated projects. Lisa encourages Leonardo to “choose one” and see it through, but Leonardo argues that his many pursuits are all deeply interconnected.

Out of their immediate repartee, Leonardo becomes fascinated with an offhand insight which Lisa shares about the nature of sunlight and encourages her to develop the idea further, but Lisa dismisses the notion.

She's still confounded by Leonardo's refusal to paint Isabella's portrait (from the sketch he had recently made) to instead work on the design of weapons for Nicollo Machiavelli.

Lisa, being familiar with Florence's plan to re-take Pisa's seaport, says, “too bad we can't just dig our own river right to the sea.” Being a pacifist, Leonardo immediately takes up the crazy idea and maps it out, pledging that, if Machiavelli buys into it, he'll grant Lisa's request, and allow her to return the sketch to Isabella in Mantua.

Can You Capture Her for Me? (scene 4)

Leonardo unveils for Machiavelli and Little Vespucci, the new plan to subdue Pisa. By diverting the Arno River through a series of canals, Florence would directly connect to the ocean and control Pisa's fresh water supply!

But Lisa interrupts the meeting with her husband in tow, under the pretense of Francesco commissioning her portrait from Leonardo. Then Lisa makes her way to the map table with the men and adds the final selling points to the canal plan!

And when Vespucci jokes about how many sandbags will be needed for all that digging, Lisa spontaneously announces her husband's “unbeatable new price on burlap and sack cloth” and wins the contract to supply the materials. Caught off guard, Francesco goes along with it.

Ultimately Leonardo denies Francesco's request for a portrait of Lisa and as he's escorting the couple out, Salai rolls up the sketch of Isabella into a baton and covertly passes it to Lisa.

From the Master's Hand (scene 5)

Francesco has escorted Lisa to Mantua to meet her idol, Isabella, and to return Leonardo's sketch to her.

Isabella and Lisa bond immediately! They find that they've both had five children from six pregnancies, despite their terror, and that now the weight of time bears heavily on them.

Lisa tells Isabella that all of her father's wives died during childbirth. Her husband's first two wives too, and that they've all been forgotten.

Isabella understands. "Leave a legacy" is her motto, which is why she must have her portrait painted by Leonardo.

Isabella confides to Lisa that she had taken her sister's husband as a lover, and that all of his other mistresses have been immortalized by Leonardo's masterful brush.

Lisa is astonished by all of this and agrees to take Isabella's sketch back to Leonardo to implore him to complete her portrait.

Epiphany (scene 6)

Following Lisa's advice, Leonardo says he has chosen one project to focus on: his Atlas of Human Anatomy. And he dismisses the idea of working for Isabella d'Este as frivolous.

Meanwhile Lisa, so inspired by Isabella's ambitious nature, is now gearing up to provide "finished sandbags" to the canal project – not just material, and Francesco is letting her set up a small sewing room with a dozen women.

But Leonardo can only return to Lisa's thoughtful insights about light, to which she credits a childhood game of making sparks under a wool blanket with a piece of amber and how she started seeing sparks everywhere, wondering if they carried thoughts and feelings and how this might all be related to prayer.

Leonardo tells her that, if she believes everything she's just said, she has "time to work on nothing else."

In a fit of epiphany, Leonardo proposes an experimental portrait of Lisa. One where the light of her "knowing" reflects back to the viewer as thoughts, all set in a thousand tiny layers of translucent glaze. A portrait of the mind.

Lisa asks what Leonardo will need of her.
"Patience," he answers.

Little Satan (scene 7)

Salai, suddenly alone with Lisa, spares no innuendo in defending his territory. He makes it quite clear to her that his relationship with Leonardo stretches far beyond student and teacher.

As he readies a panel for Lisa's portrait, Salai warns Lisa that Leonardo might not finish it. That "once Leonardo has the solution for something, he moves on." Which is why, Salai admits, he makes sure to be a problem that Leonardo can never solve.

Lisa, still worried about what she'll tell Isabella, asks Salai if he could possibly paint the Marchesa. After all, he had finished off Isabella's sketch, filling in one of the arms, albeit rather poorly.

Salai believes that he could, and probably faster than Leonardo, but only if he could somehow practice away from his master's scrutiny.

Our Wasted Days (part 1) (scene 8)

Salai finds Leonardo studying at his main archive in Vinci, inside of his uncle's farmhouse.

In the face of his lofty ambitions for Lisa's portrait, Leonardo is doubting his fading powers as an artist. And the wasted days of his abandoned projects are weighing on him as he prepares to put them off once again. Lisa's portrait must be the one work that unifies them all.

Salai acknowledges the insightful essence of Lisa that Leonardo is hoping to capture, and he suggests that Leonardo shows Lisa some of his crazier ideas, if he wants her to talk about hers. Salai also suggests that they finally take up Lisa's offer to help with all of the organizing they desperately need.

A Chicken Doesn't Fly (scene 9)

High atop the Duomo, overlooking Florence, Leonardo is inspiring Lisa to share more of her metaphysical insights. She dismisses them as foolish poetry, but he tells her, they're way ahead of their time, "by millennia, maybe."

Lisa's concepts have reminded him "that science is also an act of faith" and that we must "dare nature into revealing itself." Then, as an example, Leonardo uncovers his winged glider and reveals to Lisa his ambition to fly.

"Fly?" Lisa is terrified by the thought of it, even before it becomes Leonardo's metaphor for the leap she must take into a philosophical unknown. Lisa would rather be appreciated in this lifetime, even if just for sandbags.

But through their rollicking debate, Leonardo finally convinces her to spend some time at his archive in Vinci, where her crazy ideas may not seem so far-fetched.

How the World Looks to Me (scene 10)

Lisa is helping at the farmhouse archive now, sorting and gathering papers, especially for Leonardo's "Comprehensive Atlas of Human Anatomy." Lisa is quick to point out that under female anatomy, a certain critical body part is still missing. Leonardo admits that he's never seen a "live one," and Lisa jokes that she'll think about it.

Leonardo explains to Lisa that after being written out of his father's will (at the behest of his nine stepbrothers), his uncle will be leaving this farmhouse just to him.

Lisa's family dynamics are just as complicated. She tells Leonardo how her father and her husband had been married to sisters and that she was a "replacement wife," offered to Francesco by her father, after both of their wives died in childbirth.

She tells Leonardo she's "a little freer" now having satisfied her childbearing responsibilities. Especially, with her sandbags contract and Francesco finally getting his portrait of her. And so, to make visiting the archive easier and to make her business more efficient, she's moving her sewing operation right to the canal route in nearby Empoli.

Finally left alone to explore Leonardo's trove of secrets, Lisa lights up, wondering how it might feel to align all of her perceptions into one worldview. To finally indulge her foolish passions and to create a whole bookshelf of how the world looks to her.

The Battle of Anghiari (scene 11)

Lisa joins Francesco at Council Hall in the chamber where he votes with The Twelve Good Men. He wants to have a large battle mural painted directly behind them. If Leonardo receives the commission, Francesco believes it will greatly enhance the prestige of Lisa's portrait and likely hasten him to finish it.

Machiavelli and Vespucci must point out that the great battle being commemorated happened under Medici rule; the same Medici who lost control of Pisa's seaport and now are in exile for it. But they appease Francesco, even as they question his seemingly misplaced loyalty.

Vespucci takes Lisa aside and triples his sandbag order, in an effort to mitigate some unforeseen flooding and collapses along the canal.

Leonardo arrives with Salai in tow, ready to dismiss the mural offer. But Lisa implores him to hear it out. That is, until she understands just how enormous it has to be: "Twenty meters wide and eight meters tall!"

But Leonardo has already learned that his rival, Michaelangelo, is painting the opposite wall, and he can't shy away from this "battle of the battles." He tells Lisa that battle scenes are easy work. "All bold strokes." Still, Lisa negotiates a much higher rate for Leonardo, promising that he'll use the new "breakthrough paints" that she had read about in one of his notebooks.

The men agree. Salai is not at all happy with this manic change of course, especially once he realizes he'll be building a giant scaffold and doing most of Leonardo's prep work.

Time (scene 12)

Back in the studio with Leonardo, Lisa builds on her idea that thoughts and intentions travel like sound and are amplified by our passion and authenticity. After all, “what is prayer?” she asks.

Lisa postulates that the apparent separation between God and herself during prayer is an illusion. And that, if God follows the same laws of nature as we do, then any separation between Leonardo and herself would also be an illusion. These far-reaching revelations excite Leonardo and of course, he wants to test them.

> Salai's Lament

In soliloquy, Salai laments the deepening connection he sees between Lisa and Leonardo as they investigate the universe together. Salai then returns from Council Hall where he's been painting the undercoating for the battle mural and cleaning up drips from the new breakthrough paints.

Leonardo hopes his mural will actually dissuade votes for war, by vividly showing its brutality. He mourns his many creations that have been destroyed by invading armies and tells Lisa that only our ideas will survive if war brings “another thousand years of darkness.” That their journals may need to go underground, the same as Aristotle's. Lisa assures Leonardo that she will help to keep his personal artifacts and relics safe.

Leonardo enquires about Lisa's experiments on prayer which she's been conducting with the nuns at her sister's convent. She tells him that, the group who knew there were nuns praying for them had better outcomes! Leonardo jests that Lisa may prove inadvertently that “prayer does work, but having nothing to do with God.”

As Lisa lowers her veil, a fresh metaphysical insight strikes her. Leonardo draws close to observe Lisa and to sketch her in this heightened state. He asks her to concentrate on her next thought and to try sending it to him.

> His Holy Grail

Waiting impatiently for Lisa outside Leonardo's studio, Francesco vents to Vespucci about the obsessive perfectionism that's delaying his portrait of Lisa. That no one asked Leonardo to perfect the light that's reflecting back through her veil!

Meanwhile, in his attempt to honor Francesco's one request that Lisa appear slightly pregnant in the portrait, Leonardo is draping fabric to approximate the size of her belly and asks Lisa if she would be open to sitting nude for a session or two. Lisa says that she would.

Fate is Like a River (scene 13)

Machiavelli drops in on Leonardo, surprised to find him actively working on Lisa's portrait rather than fixing the mounting problems with both the canal project and the battle mural.

Between the flooded canal banks and the dripping of the "breakthrough paints," Machiavelli grows increasingly incensed until he shuts down the funding to both enterprises!

Lisa naturally sticks up for the projects, even as Salai pokes fun at their folly.

Then Machiavelli announces a new plan: he will personally raise a militia of Florentine citizens to march on the gates of Pisa. A home-grown army of townspeople and farmers. And if Leonardo wishes to remain on Florence's payroll, he will supply his designs for tanks and catapults. Leonardo refuses and storms off.

But Lisa sees opportunity (even as her sandbag business is shuttered) and offers to supply uniforms for the new militia. Machiavelli approves this, leaving Vespucci to handle the details.

Afterwards, Lisa accuses Leonardo of knowing all along that the canal would fail. What's important, he tells her, is what was learned, measured and documented for the future.

It may be so, but Lisa believes that only a wealthy patron like Isabella could save the studio now, and when Leonardo – a third time – bows out of making Isabella's portrait, Lisa tells Salai to pack a bag for Mantua; that she will vouch for his talent and ability as the master's star pupil. Leonardo is dubious.

The Battle of Love (scene 14)

In Mantua, Isabella is showing Lisa different fabrics she might use to make Florence's new military uniforms.

Salai enters with Isabella's brother, Cardinal Ippolito, who had been a childhood friend. Ippolito shares Lisa's faith in Salai as a portrait painter, but Isabella is doubtful, and Salai suddenly loses confidence.

Lisa responds by artfully changing tack and convinces Isabella that instead of a portrait, Salai should paint her a battle scene. An allegorical fantasy depicting Isabella as a warrior, triumphant over her lover's mistresses, and also her husband's mistresses.

Ippolito teases his sister about her own foreign affairs, and spills to Lisa just how Isabella "uses her womb as an instrument of diplomacy." That her child Federico is son of the French King, betrothed to the daughter of the Prince, and he lives with the Pope! Isabella explains that "alliances are always changing."

Lisa doesn't judge. But all of this talk has caused her to confront suspicions about her own husband's dalliances, especially with their staff.

Luckily, Isabella loves Lisa's idea for this mythical "battle of love" and orders her Guards, Nymphs and Footmen to pose for Salai as Lisa directs the court. Chaos ensues as Salai struggles to make one good sketch.

Oh Leo! (scene 15)

Lisa returns to Florence to find Leonardo packing up his studio. He's found work in Milan. He asks Lisa if she would keep an eye on the farmhouse. She will.

Somewhat kidding, Lisa asks Leonardo how he'll finish his Atlas of Human Anatomy without her as his willing model. Or even complete her portrait, for that matter.

Leonardo reminds her of the nude sketches which he does still need. Affirming herself as "modern," Lisa sits as Leonardo removes her rings. "Wait!" she says. "I think I'd have to build up to the nude."

Deflecting from her inhibitions and the intimacy of this moment, Lisa begins tracing out the twenty-seven bones of Leonardo's hand, when she asks, aren't the sketches for the Atlas even more important? "Let's finish something!" she says.

Knowing that Leonardo often needs to understand through touch, Lisa guides his fingers to the missing body part from his Atlas.

Leonardo tries to keep it academic, for as long as he can – and keep his morality straight – but Lisa is positive that their sparks have become entangled. She is having a metaphysical breakthrough. They are connected.

As Lisa extolls the divinity of the moment, Leonardo can see and hear her every thought.

~ End of Act One ~

Act Two

All Dressed Up Like Soldiers (scene 1)

In a tavern celebration, soldiers from Machiavelli's new army are crediting the fierceness of Lisa's bold uniform designs for their speedy victory over Pisa. In fact, not a single shot needed to be fired!

They toast to Lisa and Machiavelli, and also Vespucci and Francesco!

Taking Lisa aside, Vespucci approves her requisition for new military hats from her supplier in Milan, so impressed is he with "her overall level of statecraft." Lisa tells him that "Isabella taught me everything. All of her ins and outs." Vespucci wants to hear all about that and takes Lisa to the bar to buy her a drink.

A tarantella breaks out as the party continues all around them.

There's Love Here (scene 2)

Adorned in her new military hat, Lisa makes a surprise visit to Leonardo in Milan.

Leonardo tells her that his uncle has died and once again, his stepbrothers are challenging him in court. This time for ownership of the farmhouse. The thought of moving his archive from Vinci to Milan is overwhelming.

With Leonardo "out of friends in Florence" due to his botched mural in Council Hall, Lisa suggests that they ask Isabella and Ippolito for their influence. Lisa will stop in Mantua on her way home.

Leonardo asks Lisa to carry a message to Salai who is still back in Florence, packing up the studio, and has likely not yet learned of the lawsuit. "Tell Salai to bring my notebooks on the subject of flight from the cathedral vault straight to Milan now, instead of to the farmhouse."

As for the equipment up there, "It will rot," Leonardo tells her. It's the ideas and drawings which are valuable for the future, especially now that the equations finally work! And he tells her that the glider is now perfectly balanced for Salai's weight.

Lisa's excitement over this news only deepens her confusion and disappointment at how quickly he left town. She tells Leonardo how, after their last night together, she was "radiant for weeks" and that she would be surprised if he hadn't felt it, too. Leonardo admits that he'd convinced himself he could see her "in the portrait," and that he had to put it back in the crate.

Lisa is crushed. But before leaving, she turns to Leonardo and pleads that he carries no shame or regret for their experiences together. And that if the world someday learns of their story and their pursuit of truth, it will be seen in her portrait. Of this she is certain.

Foreign Affairs (scene 3)

Machiavelli and Vespucci are panicked to learn that Florence will be left unprotected if the Pope drives France (Florence's closest ally) out of Italy. Brokering peace will require significant influence from someone who knows both the Pope and the French King – intimately.

“Isabella d’Este!” exclaims Vespucci, recalling what Lisa had told him at the tavern that night.

And with that, the two diplomats are off to Mantua, where Lisa is already meeting with Isabella regarding the lawsuit over Leonardo's farmhouse. Isabella pledges a letter campaign in support of Leonardo, coming from the highest ranks, but in return she must FINALLY receive her portrait from him! Apparently, Salai's “Battle of Love” was a disappointment and was painted over by another artist.

By the time Machiavelli and Vespucci arrive at Isabella's, she has already been briefed on Florence's dire circumstance. Machiavelli predicts that as France retreats, “the Medici will pounce,” reminding Isabella that the exiled Medici have long been plotting their return to power.

Isabella seems equally sympathetic to the Medici (mostly for their role as art patrons) and wonders why Machiavelli and Vespucci believe that she could do anything to help them.

Vespucci reveals that Lisa del Giocondo told him of the Marchesa's “foreign affairs” and how her son, who now sits at the right hand of the Pope, is actually the son of the French King.

Isabella doesn't want to believe that Lisa would betray her like this, noting that she was just here, “arranging for my portrait.” Machiavelli breaks it to Isabella that Lisa's own portrait has occupied Leonardo's attention for years and that it is surely his masterpiece. Vespucci confirms this, adding that “it appears to be both living and breathing.”

Isabella is beyond irate, pledging that she will help to keep the French army in the region but only if, in return, they can deliver Leonardo's masterpiece to hang in her gallery.

His Holy Grail (instrumental reprise) (scene 4)

Back in Florence, Lisa rushes to tell Salai that Isabella will help Leonardo in his court case if she can finally get her portrait painted.

Arriving a moment behind Lisa is Francesco, and right behind him are Machiavelli and Vespucci who have come to seize Lisa's portrait (the pre-condition for Isabella's diplomatic intervention).

Lisa understands at once that Vespucci has breached her trust.

Francesco doesn't seem to care if Florence falls to the Medici and says that he is taking Lisa's portrait. And that he's already sent his children out of harm's way. Vespucci questions how it is that Francesco is aware of their enemy's timeline. Lisa points out that her husband's money is in the Medici banks.

Salai informs Francesco that Lisa's portrait is not his – he never paid for it – and anyway, it's in Milan with Leonardo, causing Francesco to become suspect of Lisa's recent trip there.

Just then, an impatient Machiavelli cracks open a crate marked "Lisa" to find a rough, painted study of Lisa in the nude! Everyone is shocked. Digging deeper, Machiavelli unearths a notebook; the exact one that Leonardo used to make his very intimate sketches of Lisa.

There's a scramble for the notebook, which Salai ultimately wins, but not before Machiavelli manages to rip out a page. Francesco goes ballistic, smashing the nude panel and dragging Lisa from the studio.

Vespucci and Machiavelli gather up the broken pieces of the nude, hoping it will be enough of a "da Vinci" to secure Isabella's favor.

Sit! (scene 5)

Now back in their home, Francesco fumes as Lisa tries to remain defiant. Francesco belittles Lisa, telling her that Leonardo grew bored of her chatter and chose to keep the painting instead of her. To add further insult, he points out that Leonardo got the better deal.

Just to compare, Francesco orders Lisa to assume her exact pose in the portrait. He demands every detail be the same: her expression, her veil, even the lighting, which Lisa informs him is dusk.

In a growing rage, Francesco decrees that Lisa will sit in that dress then, every night at dusk, for as long as she sat for Leonardo; that when those bells are heard, she will not speak a word!

Finally still, and for the first time, Lisa looks like the iconic painting of The Mona Lisa that we all know.

"Finito, complete!" declares Francesco.

Life Itself (scene 6)

Arriving in Milan, Salai immediately confronts Leonardo with his intimate sketches of Lisa, which are unlike the one he had seen in the Atlas.

Leonardo is able to calm Salai's worst fears. He won't deny the impact of his experience with Lisa, but that ultimately it was platonic.

Salai tells Leonardo that he should surrender Lisa's portrait to Isabella to stop the Holy War, but also, "for us." That the hiding of it and the secrecy is what drove his jealousy most. And that keeping it has made Lisa a prisoner in her own house. A spectacle. A living portrait.

Leonardo asks Salai if he has news of Lisa's meeting with Isabella about the farmhouse. Salai tells him that, in exchange for the favor, "Isabella wants her portrait now." Then Salai unwraps a brightly painted replica of Leonardo's original sketch from his bag and announces, "I'm going to bring her mine."

Leonardo is truly astonished by Salai's magnificent work! Asking, "why did you hide it?"

Salai gestures to the cloak over Lisa's portrait. Leonardo understands and removes it, vowing to Salai that his motive had been far more pure. "I needed you to have fresh eyes," he tells him. "Only you know everything I wanted to achieve."

Salai is transfixed by Lisa's portrait. A river of wise and insightful observations spill from his lips. "I can almost read her mind," he says. "She's life itself."

Something in the Light (scene 7)

Once again it is dusk in Florence and Lisa assumes the pose from her portrait to serve out her punishment.

Mourning the loss of Leonardo as the witness to her insights, she attempts to share her latest thoughts and discoveries with him from a distance but only dares at this golden hour when the light might carry them there.

Meanwhile in Milan, Leonardo stares deeply into Lisa's portrait. He realizes that giving it to Francesco now would not free her and perhaps only make things worse. Moreover, for the portrait to remain a true and living reflection of Lisa's spirit, it must show her fate as a caged bird. He will depict her sitting high above the raging rivers, where the mist in the air is saturating the light which carries her thoughts.

At this moment, Lisa and Leonardo connect across time and space and share a revelation that their greatest work still lay within.

Our Wasted Days (part 2) (scene 8)

Machiavelli and Vespucci finish crating up the repaired nude. Machiavelli will deliver it to Isabella while Vespucci rounds up Florence's known traitors.

Before parting ways, they look back, almost wistfully, at their past exploits and dirty deeds committed in the name of Florence. And they pray that their wasted days will be forgiven should their means ever bring about unjust ends.



In Mantua, Isabella's brother, the Cardinal Ippolito, argues that she should side with the Pope. "The French are already in retreat," he says, and if that prompts a return of the Medici to power in Florence, so much better for artists like Leonardo.

Isabella then cues a Guard to escort Salai and Machiavelli in with their respective paintings to present. Salai goes first, taking a knee, as a Nymph carries Isabella's portrait to her and Ippolito for approval.

Isabella quietly signals to Salai that he's done well, suspecting that the work is actually his and not Leonardo's. She doesn't let on to her Court, but Salai can tell that she knows.

Machiavelli is next, reluctantly taking a knee, but Isabella can see immediately that this slapdash nude is not Leonardo's masterpiece. Machiavelli's best chance for diplomacy has failed and he is escorted away with his offering as Isabella exits with her Court.

Ippolito congratulates his old friend Salai, assuring him that the case against Leonardo will never be heard. However this will be due to the toppling of Florence. "When a government is overturned, so are its courts," he tells him. Then Ippolito forewarns Salai of a massacre soon to be carried out on the town of Prato. The attack will serve as a warning for Florence to lower its gates and let the Medici take over.



Cut to: chaos in the streets of Florence as the Siege of Prato is underway. Florentines spread news of the butchery there, and the plundering of relics and virgins inside their churches.

Francesco and Lisa hear all of this from inside their home. Francesco is not surprised. "Only the birds will get out," he tells her, as Vespucci arrives with two Florentine soldiers to arrest him for treason.

Lisa learns from Vespucci that the Medici armies are coming up from Naples, through Vinci, and says that she needs to get to Leonardo's farmhouse. Francesco tells her that she hasn't a prayer. And as he's dragged off, Lisa joins her fellow Florentines in the streets.

With the enemy right at their door, and the neighboring town set ablaze, they question their strength to do more and pray that God forgive them their wasted days.

Fate is Like a River (reprise) (scene 9)

Lisa learns from others that there is no way in or out of Florence. The thunder of marching grows louder and closer. Suddenly, Lisa witnesses Machiavelli, now under arrest, being transported by Medici soldiers towards the prison.

“Defending ourselves would have been futile,” he asserts. “It’s not my fault!” as he’s pushed into the same holding cell as Vespucci.

Regime change has come so quickly that even Francesco is still in the same cell. But the Medici soldiers quickly release him as he taunts Machiavelli’s crazed bravado about someday writing The History of Florence.

A Brand New Earth (reprise) /Take Me There (scene 10)

Lisa runs into the Duomo and into the arms of a Nun, her sister. They pray together.

Lisa asks God why, with so much at stake, He has chosen her to protect Leonardo’s archive and secrets. Vowing trust in His grandest plans, she assures God, “I will be brave. Just take me there.”

And with eyes skyward, Lisa realizes that, hidden in the dome, high above her is Leonardo’s glider. And that her road back to Vinci must begin with this climb. As she ascends the spiraling stairs, she reasons it out. “Why would I be offered these wings if I were not meant to land safely?”

Reaching the vault, Lisa quickly slips into the harness of the glider. Still questioning, “Why would I need to know all of these things, unless God and man were each on one shoulder?”

Only then does Lisa notice the Notebooks On Flight which she had forgotten to tell Salai to retrieve. Realizing that their weight would perfectly make up the difference between her own weight and Salai’s, Lisa straps the books to herself – both as ballast and further proof of a plan ordained.

Now fully strapped in, Lisa steps outside onto the windy observation deck and tiptoes right up to the edge a couple of times.

She hears heavy footsteps hastening up the stairs. Medici soldiers perhaps. Holding true, Lisa sets her sights on a running start for her giant leap as an exhausted Francesco emerges suddenly, and runs out in front of her, yelling, “Stop. You’re out of your mind!”

Sit! (reprise) (scene 11)

Lisa fends off Francesco's grasp and his scolding and castigates his inability to understand. Fearlessly she declares that having these wings has all been by design and that human enlightenment may hang in the balance.

Backing down some, Francesco admits to reading Lisa's notebooks and struggling to comprehend them. Lisa tells him, "My notebooks are nothing. Leonardo has tens of thousands of pages in Vinci which need immediate protection from the marauding hordes of your Medici army!"

Francesco defends his position in the new regime, but Lisa reminds him that the Medici will not like to learn that he – "del Giocondo alone" – could have saved Leonardo's greatest works but failed to act.

Francesco sees that she's right. And Lisa sees that Isabella was right: "Alliances are always changing." She asks Francesco if he can get men, soldiers. He can. And she has a new plan.

As they stow the glider back in the vault, she's giving the orders, handing Francesco the notebooks to carry. And Francesco, now seeing that Lisa's mission may be wildly favorable to his business, offers Lisa a partnership. "Isn't that what you wanted?"

"Not anymore, no." Lisa tells Francesco that from now on, she must have time each day to be free in her thoughts. To know that when those bells are heard, she will have silence.

"You are rare," he tells her, agreeing to her terms. "Now, take me there," commands Lisa, as they exit the tower together.

Fixed to a Star (scene 12)

Leonardo and Salai return to the farmhouse, astounded to find that so many folios have been organized and bound. As Leonardo places the completed portrait of Lisa on an easel, he harkens back to the very moment of its inception saying, "He who is fixed to a star does not change his mind."

Then Lisa, who is writing in her notebook as she exits the Duomo, answers him, "In this one perfect work, find all the rest combined."

Thankful to God for giving them back their wasted days to spend immersed in their dreams and passions, Lisa and Leonardo begin a joyful prayer which each character comes forward to find resonance in for themselves. Each from their own setting, Isabella, Machiavelli, Salai, and even Francesco, all herald the theme that life, in fact, is not too short to indulge in our craziest dreams and ideas.

From Vespucci to Ippolito, from the Nymphs to the Nun, with Florentines, Soldiers and Footmen all filling out the ensemble, they join in the finale. At last, they are all "fixed to a star."

~ Curtain ~