

BLACK:

PALESTRINA'S sacred music, "O BONE IESU" (SISTINE CHAPEL CHOIR) plays. Then, after about four seconds of music...

SUPER, WHITE ON BLACK:

FRANCE 1628, WINTER

EXT. FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE - OCTOBER - DAY

A CARDINAL'S COACH with SIX HORSES and TWO COACHMEN drives swiftly and noiselessly under Palestrina's sacred music through wintry French countryside, toward an impressive PALACE, residence and throne of CARDINAL RICHELIEU (60), spiritual and civil MASTER OF FRANCE.

EXT. CARDINAL'S COACH - DAY

The coach approaches the palace GATE as it is being opened by a SERVANT. The coach slows until it is fully open then passes through, passing by two armed, sentinel MUSKETEERS on HORSES, who follow on behind the coach.

The coach moves along the long and wide GRAVEL PATH between large garden areas in the direction of the palace forecourt.

INT. COACH - DAY

Only occupant, CARDINAL JEAN COLLINEAU (55). His face is grim, anticipating bad outcome from imminent meeting with powerful and brutal CARDINAL RICHELIEU. He wears a cardinal's HEAVY WINTER COAT, CAPE, and SKULL CAP. Stares out to the passing view and rocks with the motion of the coach.

EXT: RICHELIEU PALACE - DAY

At an immense first-floor window, Cardinal Richelieu in his SCARLET ROBES of HIGH OFFICE stares glumly out to Collineau's approaching coach.

EXT. RICHELIEU PALACE DOOR - DAY

The door opens and an OFFICIAL LOOKING man (DE FANCAN, 50) Richelieu's SECRETARY and GENERAL FACTOTUM, emerges and hesitates at the door.

EXT. RICHELIEU PALACE FORECOURT - DAY

PALESTRINA'S MUSIC fades to the increasing SOUND of the coach and horses drawing up on the gravel forecourt. De Fancan walks to the coach and opens its door while bowing subserviently as Collineau exits.

DE FANCAN  
Cardinal Collineau, Eminence.

INT. RICHELIEU'S CHAMBER - DAY

Cardinal Richelieu warms his hands at a large open fire place. The fire's glow highlights his thin unsmiling face and long silvery hair. Standing with him, TWO ANXIOUS PRIESTS.

The large chamber is cheerless. One very long, solid wooden table with high-backed oak chairs arranged around it. Richelieu family, Roman Catholic, national and regional shields and flags high around the room.

The group turns to the noise of the door opening at the far end of the room. De Fancan enters, bows and announces the visitor to Richelieu.

DE FANCAN  
Éminence. Cardinal Jean Collineau,  
Bishop of Orlean.

De Fancan stands to one side as Cardinal Collineau enters and then remains standing at the door, face dispassionate.

Richelieu calls as the visitor nears him, words and tone friendly.

RICHELIEU  
Cardinal Jean Collineau. Such a  
long time since we last met.  
(searches Collineau's face)  
I am informed you live in Avignon.

JEAN COLLINEAU  
(obviously irritated)  
Yes.

RICHELIEU  
Mm. Have the goodness to tell me:  
do you still have that same grand  
estate outside Paris?

Jean Collineau pointedly turns his back on Richelieu and, uninvited to do so, sits at the table upon which he lays his leather document wallet.

JEAN COLLINEAU

(sharply)

I suggest you get to the point.

The priests evidence their shock. Richelieu sneers and sniffs. He thrusts his hands into the folds of his garment and stands across the table from Collineau, furious.

RICHELIEU

You will soon regret your disrespect for the chief minister of France. Take care what you say.

Richelieu indicates to the two priests.

RICHELIEU (CONT'D)

These gentlemen are witnesses to this meeting and everything you utter. (beat) Are those the title deeds I need to see?

Jean Collineau withdraws from his leather wallet a collection of documents bound by ribbon.

JEAN COLLINEAU

Éminence... Or do I call you honorable Secretary of State? (insulting sigh and beat) Lawyers produced these documents and have held them secure. Why would you need to examine them?

Richelieu ignores the question, leans over and peers at the papers. His words and movements severe.

RICHELIEU

Are these for *all* your properties in France? So few for so many estates?

JEAN COLLINEAU

These are what you have asked for.

Richelieu stares at the papers, clenched fist against his mouth.

RICHELIEU

I see.

He pulls a leather-bound notebook from his cassock and shoves it across the table to Collineau.

RICHELIEU (CONT'D)

Your lawyers; give them here. I require to have those documents examined.

JEAN COLLINEAU

This is ridiculous.

He pushes the notebook back across the table.

Richelieu shouts loudly toward De Fancan.

RICHELIEU

Bring them in.

De Fancan lets THREE STERN-FACED men into the room, all dressed heavily against the winter weather. One, well-groomed, is MONSIEUR DE BEAUFORT, (50). His dark townsman's coat falls over his ample girth to the heels of his boots. He coughs and ventures...

MONSIEUR DE BEAUFORT

Bon soir, Éminences.

The other TWO MEN, differing heights, bundled up in mean, heavy woolen cloaks, stand silent and gaunt as ghosts and play nervously with the shabby woolen hats in their hands.

Jean Collineau remains seated, stiff-lipped and silent, and plays absentmindedly with the chain of his silver crucifix.

RICHELIEU

(to Collineau)

These gentlemen are officials of the state. Monsieur De Beaufort is a land transaction professional employed by the government. That is, he is employed by me. He is to examine your papers. Without question, he will expose your illegal acquisition of properties that rightly belong to the Roman Catholic Church and France.

Jean Collineau scratches at an eyebrow.

JEAN COLLINEAU

I know what you are doing. Whoever examines these documents will see all of my father's property was transferred to me legally.

RICHELIEU

Dishonest man, your father. He illegally acquired property belonging to the Roman Catholic

(MORE)

RICHELIEU (CONT'D)

Church and you knew this when you signed ownership, so you are as immoral as your father. (loud, severe) Your family has been land-grabbing for centuries.

JEAN COLLINEAU

(hurt)

Utter rubbish! These properties have been in my family for more than three hundred years. I am simply in the line of inheritance.

RICHELIEU

The Church has long had problems with your family. Rebellions, false teachings.

JEAN COLLINEAU

Outrageous nonsense.

The SOUND of coach and horses moving on the gravel forecourt outside draws their attention. Richelieu moves to the window, and looks out.

EXT. RICHELIEU PALACE FORECOURT - DAY

Jean Collineau's coach and horses are being led away.

INT. RICHELIEU'S CHAMBER - DAY

Richelieu turns to Collineau

RICHELIEU

(sarcastic edge)

Your carriage has six horses!

JEAN COLLINEAU

My cardinal status allows that.

RICHELIEU

But, dear Collineau, as of this moment, you no longer have that status. Nor the horses.

Collineau stands, stunned silent.

RICHELIEU (CONT'D)

You see, our beloved Pope Urban has excommunicated your whole family. He commands we remove the demons from you before sending you off to heaven. You are going to the Bastille.

JEAN COLLINEAU

What! You have no grounds...  
 (hesitates) That is immoral and  
 illegal. You know it. I pray God  
 will protect my family from you.

RICHELIEU

Pray for the mercy of the judge.  
 (beat) Jailers await you at the  
 door.  
 (disdainfully)  
 Take him away.

The gray ghosts escort Collineau out the door. The door closes and we hear voices receding. Richelieu studies the three men remaining. He places fingers on his lips in thought then dismisses the two priests, walking them to the door and then shutting it. He returns to the table, picks up the Collineau documents and hands them to De Beaufort.

RICHELIEU (CONT'D)

Monsieur. I command you to employ  
 your fine knowledge, skill and  
 diligence to make sure these  
 properties are returned to the  
 Roman Catholic Church. With one  
 exception. You are to consider now  
 how I can best accept ownership of  
 the estate in Paris. Do you  
 understand?

START CREDITS AND DISPLAY OVER NEXT SCENES

ESTABLISHING SHOT:

ROME - NIGHT-TIME - VIEW TOWARD ST PETER'S CATHEDRAL

ROME TODAY

EXT. ROME - GRUBBY HOTEL IN NARROW STREET - NIGHT

Street filled with cars parked Italian style.

INT. ROME - CHEAP HOTEL ROOM - ABOUT 04:30

Dark room dimly lit by glow of city lights from open window. HASAN AL-QALI (22), tall, handsome, middle-east appearance, at window stares out at the city. He's in underpants sweating and agitated.

From the window, distant St Peter's cathedral lit up in the darkness.

He automatically ducks as THREE POLICE HELICOPTERS with flashing lights come into his view from overhead and fly toward ST PETER'S CATHEDRAL. As chopper noise fades, noise of a car becomes apparent. It's a patrolling CARABINIERI CAR in the street below. He draws back and flops down on the bed, stares at the ceiling and shuts his eyes. He dozes and recalls the voice of a MUSLIM CLERIC in his mind.

MUSLIM CLERIC (AUDIBLE)

Hasan Al-Qali, my son, have no fear. Mohammed will take you to Paradise. Be brave, Hasan, fulfil your destiny.

His mobile phone alarm rings. He sits up with a start, grabs the phone, stares at it.

The phone shows 05:00. He answers it.

AL-QALI

Hasan. (beat) You all ready? (beat)  
OK. (beat) Right, wait for me on the street.

He dresses in jeans and sport jacket. Straps sport bag over his shoulder. Redundant other clothes are strewn over bed. He fingers the bomb in his sport bag.

He stands erect, breathes in and out nervously and noisily.

EXT. ROME - SIDE STREET - DAWN

Densely parked cars, few people about. AL-QALI walks along the street, agitation shows. He walks toward his THREE FRIENDS waiting outside their grubby hotel, dressed like him and carrying sport bags.

SOUND of a car and then its headlights light up the street. Al-Qali hesitates as a CARABINIERI CAR passes by him. The POLICE OCCUPANTS look him over as their car passes. He stares anxiously at the car as it disappears round a corner. He continues and meets and greets his friends with Islamic embraces.

EXT. ROME - NEAR COLOSSEUM - SAME DAY, MORNING

Newly elected POPE BONIFACE X (75) leads a religious service for early Christians murdered in the COLOSSEUM, from a DAIS surrounded by cardinals, other priests, attendant boys, Swiss guard, a mass of onlookers, some waving NATIONAL FLAGS, altogether a colourful scene. The background filled with noise of Rome traffic and glimpses of speeding cars and mopeds.

Up above this, COLONEL FABIO SEBASTIANI (55), head of Rome's Anti-Terror police, stands beside his Carabinieri car looking down at the ceremony. As the pope is aided from the dais and into his POPE-MOBILE, Sebastiani speaks into his communicator.

SEBASTIANI

All units. Security Stage One ending. Stand by for procession to Vatican.

INT. ROME - CARABINIERI CAR - SHORT TIME LATER

Sebastiani drives along the VIA DEI FORO IMPERIALI checking the security setup. Glimpses of excited flag-waving crowds lining the road. Communicator beeps. It's his number two, MAJOR LUCA FERRI (30).

SEBASTIANI

Sebastiani!

FERRI (V.O.)

Ferri, Largo Tassoni. Alert from Milan, sir. Islamic suicide bombers are here in Rome.

SEBASTIANI

With you in two minutes.

EXT. ROME - LARGO TASSONI - DAY

Colorful hotels, street cafes. Area choc-a-bloc with onlookers. Ferri waiting there in CARABINIERI UNIFORM. Good-looking, strong, lean, athletic. Sebastiani stops his car by him and gets out.

SEBASTIANI

Hello Ferri. What's going on?

FERRI

Four Muslims. Italian nationals. Left Milan yesterday to bomb Rome. Duck-dived our surveillance.

SEBASTIANI

Do we know who they are?

FERRI

Yes. IDs circulated to all teams.

They scan the crowds and the Pope's procession as it passes by and makes its way onto the PONTE VITTORIO EMANUELA BRIDGE.



SEBASTIANI

(shouting against the  
noise)

If they're here, why the hell  
haven't they detonated their  
bombs already?

CHURCH BELLS RING OUT. Sebastiani turns his head sharply to the chimes and the SAN GIOVANNI DEI FIORENTINI CHURCH TOWER CLOCK AT 10:59. On last bell chime, the minute hand flips to top: 11:00.

MASSIVE EXPLOSIONS slam them and others to the ground.