

TUMANBAY

Episode 3.03 - "The Blind Man"

by

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GREGOR and CADALI wait at the gates of the palace as the BALARAC division APPROACHES from far off. The gate is being OPENED.

CADALI
Look at them come, Gregor.

GREGOR
Yes...

CADALI
A great alliance begins today.

GREGOR (V.O.)
A great alliance? All I see is a mission of war. An insidious occupation, already in progress. Look at them: they've brought horses by ship to the city. Call this what it is: a show of power.

CADALI
Perhaps now's as good a time as any to discuss his requirements?

GREGOR
What are you talking about?

CADALI
He likes to be addressed as "The Grand Master."

GREGOR
Ah. Good. So long as he's humble.

CADALI
And he doesn't like to be touched...

GREGOR
Right.

GREGOR (V.O.)
I've waited so many times at so many gates - this particular gate more than most - for people to arrive. Today it's with Cadali, that slimy snake worming his reptile body, inch-by-inch, back into favour. We're waiting for the Embassy of the Balarac.

CADALI
Oh, and one other matter, Gregor...

GREGOR

Yes, please, let's have it: should I kiss his feet? Do I wait upon him with perfumes?

CADALI

He's blind.

Beat.

GREGOR

He's blind?

CADALI

Quite completely.

GREGOR

Isn't he supposed to be some sort of great warlord?

CADALI

He *is* a great warlord.

GREGOR

Who can't see his own horse?

CADALI

He adapted. You know a bit about adapting, don't you Gregor? To whoever's in charge? The Sultan, Maya, and now a Sultana - an ever-refreshing process of adaptation.

GREGOR

What exactly are you accusing me of-

AMALRIC is upon them.

CADALI

Grand Master! Welcome to Tumanbay.

GREGOR (V.O.)

Who is this?

CADALI

What an honour...

AMALRIC

Cadali.

GREGOR (V.O.)

He has a face like granite and gaping holes where his eyes used to be.

CADALI

(to Amalric)

I hope you had a good journey?

GREGOR (V.O.)

This is a man who has been in wars.

CADALI

The sea was calm? Perhaps I could advise a rest before you see Her Majesty...

AMALRIC

I am not here to rest. I want to speak to the Sultana.

CADALI

And you will, imminently, in fact-

AMALRIC

(to Gregor)

Who are you?

GREGOR

Master of the Palace Guard.

AMALRIC

I asked who you are, not what you are.

GREGOR

My name is Gregor. May I offer you my hand, Grand Master, to-

Amalric DISMOUNTS.

AMALRIC

What you can offer me, Gregor, Master of the Palace Guard, is the Sultana. Now.

GREGOR (V.O.)

If I hadn't looked right into those eyeless sockets... I swear he could see.

3.2 INT. CORRIDOR LEADING TO THRONE ROOM - DAY

3.2

Cadali LEADS the Balarac - clanking all the way - toward the Throne Room. Gregor FOLLOWS glumly.

CADALI

We in Tumanbay pride ourselves on possessing one of the largest, most labyrinthine palaces in the world... but getting anywhere does require a fair bit of walking.

They COME around a bend in the corridor.

CADALI (CONT'D)

Now if you turn your attention to the right, you will see a sublime view of the old sculpture court - oh, no, I'm sorry, you can't see.

AMALRIC

Wouldn't look if I could.

CADALI

All ruined by Maya and her followers, I'm sorry to say.

Another bend.

CADALI (CONT'D)

And now we are passing through the menagerie, which was once famous far and wide... oh, but alas... It is fortunate that you cannot see what Tumanbay has come to, Grand Master.

Another bend.

CADALI (CONT'D)

We are entering the Hall of the Mirrors... of course, no mirrors now, even the sandalwood panelling is all gone.

AMALRIC

An indulgence.

CADALI

What's that, Grand Master?

AMALRIC

Mirrors.

CADALI

Of course, of course, Grand Master... a frightful... extravagance...

GREGOR (V.O.)

What is Cadali up to? He's being even more obsequious than usual.

They APPROACH the entrance to the Throne Room.

CADALI

Ah, yes, here we are. The Throne Room.

Cadali GOES to the door and STOPS.

AMALRIC

Well? Open the door.

CADALI

Quite so, Grand Master, but if I may be so bold, a few points of... protocol.

AMALRIC

Protocol?

CADALI

When in the presence of the Sultana. Tumanbay has a long and -

AMALRIC

Just open the door.

CADALI

Yes, of course, but if I could just advise-

AMALRIC

No. *I* advise. You open the door. Now.

CADALI

Of course, of course.

Cadali OPENS the door.

3.3

INT. THE THRONE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

3.3

MANEL, ALKIN, QULAN, and some COURTIERS RISE in reaction to the entrance of the Balarac.

CADALI

Your Majesty, may I present the Grand Master Amalric of the... er...

AMALRIC

(walking past him)

Well, which one of you is in charge?

MANEL

Grand Master. Welcome to Tumanbay.

AMALRIC

All right so if you're the Sultana, that would make the woman at your shoulder the Vizier, Alkin.

GREGOR (V.O.)

It's as if he knows the whole layout of the room just from sound and smell.

ALKIN

An honour, Grand Master.

GREGOR (V.O.)

Tumanbay may not want this "alliance", but we need it. So everyone has been told to attend and create a good impression.

Manel RISES, APPROACHES Amalric.

MANEL

Grand Master, I hope while you are in Tumanbay you will be able to explore our beautiful city. I know the shrine of the Bakhara is of significance to the Balarac.

As Manel speaks, a Courtier APPROACHES Amalric and tries to MURMUR in his ear.

COURTIER

(murmuring)

My Lord, when the Sultana rises, protocol requires you must kneel. My Lord?

AMALRIC

I will stand.

COURTIER

But Grand Master-

AMALRIC

I will stand.

MANEL

It's all right. Leave him be.

COURTIER

Your Majesty.

The Courtier SCURRIES away.

MANEL

Tumanbay is an ancient city. There are many customs. But we are amongst friends. An alliance between Tumanbay and the Balarac would benefit all of us.

(MORE)

MANEL (CONT'D)

It would bring peace throughout the region, allowing traders to conduct commerce across borders without fear of-

AMALRIC

Tumanbay is weak.

Beat.

MANEL

Not so weak, Grand Master, as one might think. An alliance between our two-

AMALRIC

(mocking)

"An alliance, an alliance."

The room goes silent.

AMALRIC (CONT'D)

I'll speak plainly. And I'll ask that you listen carefully because I'm not a man who likes to repeat myself. Tumanbay is on its knees. We are willing to offer our hand in friendship. We have a common enemy, Maya. She is building up her strength in the north. She will come again. Her ambitions are limitless. We Balarac are placed between Maya's territories to the north and Tumanbay to the south. You need us. We are what stands between you and a second occupation in as many years. And we are prepared to help.

MANEL

What sort of help?

AMALRIC

We are prepared to take Tumanbay under our protection. We will send our advisors and officials, and install a garrison to defend your walls.

GREGOR

Our walls are already defended.

AMALRIC

Oh yes: with a palace guard of a hundred men under your command, Gregor.

Qulan STEPS forward.

QULAN

So you propose to replace them with your men? Sounds like a takeover to me.

AMALRIC

Ah... General Qulan. I have studied your battles. You were once one of the greatest commanders in the field.

QULAN

I hope I still have a few battles left in me.

AMALRIC

But unfortunately no army to fight them with.

MANEL

Grand Master, with respect, we would prefer not to have your advisors or officials within our city walls. We have a great number of our own-

AMALRIC

It's up to you. If you decline our offer of friendship, then you must pay for our forces. Why should our soldiers die defending Tumanbay, if Tumanbay does not want us? If you choose to treat us as mercenaries, you will need to pay us as mercenaries.

CADALI

(whispering to Manel)
Majesty, I swear, I had no idea.

GREGOR (V.O.)

**Cadali, in the Sultana's ear,
already effecting damage control.**

ALKIN

(whispering to Manel)
Don't react, Majesty, just nod and keep smiling.

AMALRIC

Does your woman have something to say?

Beat.

AMALRIC (CONT'D)

Smiles and nods have very little effect on me.

MANEL

Then let us work with words
instead. Say we do pay you. How
much are you asking?

AMALRIC

Two million pieces of gold.
(silence)
Surely, for the most powerful, most
wealthy city on earth, this is but
a pittance.

MANEL

It has been a pittance, and soon it
will be again, but in the brief,
unusual present, Grand Master,
Tumanbay has been freshly ransacked
by Maya. We are in an ongoing
process of rebuilding-

AMALRIC

Then you know what you must do. If
you can't pay, you have to let us
in. Or simply wait for the
inevitable, with nothing but Gregor
and his hundred men between you and
Maya.

MANEL

And if we decline all your...
(acid in her voice)
... very *kind* offer?

AMALRIC

Then God help you. If there's
anything you want less than the
return of Maya, it's me as your
enemy.

Amalric turns and GOES, his men CLANKING behind him.

3.3A **OPENING TITLES - MUSIC**

3.3A

ANNOUNCER

**Tumanbay, Series 3, Episode 3. "The
Blind Man", by Mac Rogers.**

3.4 EXT. SLAVE MARKET. SMIRNA - DAY

3.4

The market is busy, bustling. Loud, contentious NEGOTIATIONS
go on all around as BAVAND LEADS HEAVEN and the CAPTAIN
through the market.

BAVAND

This way, through here!

HEAVEN

We're not stopping?

BAVAND

Not here, this sector's for amateurs. I know a more exclusive part of the market.

Heaven and the Captain FOLLOW Bavand through a passage.

3.5

EXT. SLAVE MARKET, QUIETER AREA - CONTINUOUS

3.5

The din dies down to a dull roar as they pass into a more exclusive part of the market. MERICK is waiting.

MERICK

Bavand! My God, when did I see you last?

BAVAND

I told you I would return, Merick, didn't I?

MERICK

You did, Effendi, you did.

BAVAND

This young Lady here-

HEAVEN

I am Heaven. I'm the one who will be making the purchase. You'll be talking to me.

MERICK

I... see?

HEAVEN

And this is the Captain of my ship. He'll be ensuring the safe transport of the merchandise back to Tumanbay.

The Captain GRUNTS.

MERICK

That's good, that's good. It's hard to move good slaves these days - or any slaves, for that matter. Everything's fallen apart, the suppliers can't get the product across from the east any more. There's no control of the seas, or the borders.

HEAVEN

And the Spice Road, I'm told is-

MERICK

Rife with bandits! I had a consignment due last week - paid my supplier in full, I might add - gold is the only currency they trust now... Promises were made, and what choice do we have other than to trust?

HEAVEN

I remember my father once told me, "In business it's not if everyone will betray you, but when."

MERICK

Wise words, wise words! When my consignment finally arrived, what did I get? A few old men and a couple of children. All the other slaves had been taken by bandits! It's a mess. What can you do?

BAVAND

On the matter of *our* merchandise...?

MERICK

Oh now your merchandise is prime quality. I've kept it especially for you, my friend. I knew you would be coming, but as the weeks have gone on... I had to cut their rations a bit. You understand how it is. But I knew you would come. And they will quickly put on weight. There will be a small extra charges, of course.

BAVAND

Of course, of course. I understand completely.

HEAVEN

I'd like to see them first, before we get carried away with "extra charges."

MERICK

Of course, of course, this pen over here.

Heaven, the Captain, and Bavand FOLLOW Merick to a nearby pen.

CAPTAIN

Quiet in there, wouldn't you say?

MERICK

If you look through the slats you
can see them.

They all LOOK through the slats in the gate.

BAVAND

Ah yes, of course, yes, I see them!
Marvellous, marvellous.

HEAVEN

They look thin. Sick, maybe.

MERICK

Oh no, not at all! A sea voyage
will be perfect. By the time you
get to Tumanbay they will be
perfect, prime quality.

Merick COUGHS, badly.

HEAVEN

You understand if I don't just
accept your word for it, yes?
(calling to one of
Merick's guards)
You! You there! Bring that one
over, the woman.

One of MERICK'S GUARDS brings a FEMALE SLAVE to Heaven. The
Guard translates Heaven's orders for the Slave:

HEAVEN (CONT'D)

(to Slave)
Look up. Mouth open. Lift your
arms.
(Heaven appraises her)
Thank you, you may go.
(the Guard takes the slave
back with the others)
These slaves are malnourished.

MERICK

Look, I have to make a profit too.

HEAVEN

How much did you pay for them,
Bavand?

BAVAND

Oh - well - I...

MERICK

He hasn't paid for them. Not yet.

Silence.

MERICK (CONT'D)

They will fatten up fine. The sea air. That's just what they need.

(leans in)

To be honest, the business being in the state it's in, you're not going to get a better deal than this.

BAVAND

Perhaps - perhaps we should-

HEAVEN

(to Bavand)

You haven't paid for them?

The Captain APPROACHES Bavand.

CAPTAIN

Bavand?

(the Captain squeezes Bavand's shoulder hard.

Bavand cries out.)

Heaven just asked you a question.

HEAVEN

I think we need to go somewhere and chat.

MERICK

Well, look don't be too long. I've been holding them for you. There have been many enquiries and I've turned them down for you. But I won't hold them for ever. I could sell them...

(clicks his fingers)

... just like that. I've already kept them here for you for a month - and by the way there's going to be extra charge for the food, don't forget.

3.6 INT. NEARBY INN - MOMENTS LATER

3.6

Heaven, Bavand, and the Captain sit at a table. Idle chatter, drink orders in the background.

BAVAND

All right, it took longer than I thought to get here. And yes, there were some... misunderstandings along the way.

HEAVEN

"Misunderstandings" is an interesting way to say "kidnapping and robbery."

BAVAND

That wasn't me, it was my...
associates. They betrayed me as
much as you!

HEAVEN

Even if I believed that, you're the
one who hired them!

The Captain STANDS and DRAWS a knife.

CAPTAIN

Why not just let me stab him?

BAVAND

The point is, I have delivered
these slaves. Captain, please!

HEAVEN

It's okay.

BAVAND

Sit down...

Captain GRUNTS and SITS.

BAVAND (CONT'D)

Slaves are hard to get. I've put a
deposit down. A third down-payment,
a whole third!

HEAVEN

You said they were fully paid for!

BAVAND

Yes! "Paid for," meaning,
"reserved"! You try finding five
hundred slaves elsewhere at a time
like this. Not easy! Look, our deal
was fifty-fifty, yes? You have the
ships, I have the slaves!

HEAVEN

You don't have the slaves, though!
You have a third of the slaves!

BAVAND

If you really think about it, we're
arguing over nothing.

CAPTAIN

We're arguing over a great deal.

BAVAND

When we get the slaves to Tumanbay
they will be snapped up! I'll be
able to pay my debtors!

HEAVEN

Your debtors?

BAVAND

How do you think I made the down-payment? I borrowed! I borrowed everywhere I could, even promised my daughter's hand in marriage to one of my backers. Look, you can see I'm holding nothing back. I know I made a mistake on the ship.

CAPTAIN

A mistake, we're calling it?

BAVAND

But I want to make it up to you! You know there is a great shortage of labour in Tumanbay. These slaves are better than gold. Captain, you're a man of the world, tell her I'm right.

CAPTAIN

When did I become your ally in this conversation?

HEAVEN

Is he right, Captain?

CAPTAIN

Heaven, I'm a sailor. A sailor goes for gold; gold never dies. But... under the circumstances, with the way things are in Tumanbay...

BAVAND

The point is if we do this we won't be arguing over gold because we'll all be swimming in it!

HEAVEN

Enough, enough, Bavand! Just listening to you is exhausting.

(Beat)

Here is the new arrangement. You've paid a third of the price. So, you'll get a third of the profit when we get back.

BAVAND

But Heaven, surely-

HEAVEN

And that's me being generous! You want to hear my second-best offer? It involves the Captain and his dagger.

BAVAND

But... but-

HEAVEN

Take it or leave it.

3.7 INT. THE THRONE ROOM

3.7

A war council. Manel, Alkin, Qulan, Cadali, and Gregor are present.

MANEL

I don't see that we have a choice.

QULAN

There's always a choice!

MANEL

Not a good one. And I am Sultana - my job is to find the least-bad one.

GREGOR (V.O.)**The business that can't be put aside: the raising of the gold.**

MANEL

(continuing under Gregor)
We're vulnerable. We have no army. Maya's surely not the only power looking at Tumanbay with opportunistic eyes. We have to pay.

QULAN

If you pay them once they'll keep coming back!

MANEL

Then tell me the better idea, General! Do we open the gates and just let them in?

QULAN

I'm not a politician. I'm a soldier. You are the Sultana.

MANEL

I see. You're overflowing with advice until the moment I actually ask for it.

(to everyone)

All right, I see no other path: we have to pay the Balarac.

QULAN

Pay them with what?

GREGOR (V.O.)
And as always, Alkin watching, with those impenetrable eyes of hers...

MANEL
 We'll... have to levy a new tax of some kind.

QULAN
 People are rebuilding their lives, they don't have gold to spare!

MANEL
 (livid)
 General: a word. Now.

Manel STALKS out to a side-chamber. Qulan FOLLOWS.

3.8 INT. SIDE-CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS 3.8

Qulan ENTERS the side-chamber close on Manel's heels.

QULAN
 Look, I've already told you-

MANEL
 Father, you are not the Sultan!

QULAN
 I know I'm not the-

MANEL
 You had a chance to be Sultan, you refused, and now the role has fallen to me! A role I cannot effectively fulfil if you keep undermining me!

QULAN
 I am merely your general.

MANEL
 Yes: a general with no army. Which makes you what, exactly?
 (beat)
 Do not disrespect me again.

3.9 INT. THE THRONE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER 3.9

Manel starts talking as soon as she ENTERS the Throne Room.

MANEL
 So: gold. How do we raise it? Either give me a credible option or keep your mouth shut.

ALKIN

Perhaps we can borrow it?

CADALI

Hmm...

MANEL

Something to add, Cadali?

CADALI

I only raise an eyebrow to the prospect of putting ourselves further into debt, Majesty.

ALKIN

In debt is better than defenceless, Majesty.

MANEL

Gregor?

GREGOR

Majesty?

MANEL

Do you have anything to offer?

GREGOR (V.O.)

**And that's the damnation of it all -
I don't.**

CADALI

Majesty, if I might humbly suggest an alternative solution?

MANEL

Speak.

CADALI

Some of you here - perhaps only the elder among you, perhaps I am showing my age - will remember the story of the wise mouse-mother?

QULAN

"Mouse-mother?"

CADALI

Whose family lived high on all the cheese in the larder until the owner of the house purchased a cat? Whereupon their fortunes began to change. Suddenly cheese becomes a dearer commodity, harder to come by. Except... it turns out, the mother-mouse thinks ahead.

QULAN

Is there a point to all this?

CADALI

Just another moment's indulgence.
You see, the mother-mouse is wise.
Even under the reign of the cat,
even at the very height of her
fear, she thought of her family
first. She moved the cheese
somewhere the cat would never find
it.

MANEL

Cadali you would do well to
consider the outer limits of my
patience for stories about cats and
mice and cheese.

CADALI

What if the cheese were gold?
Specifically, the gold reserves of
Tumanbay?

QULAN

What?

MANEL

But Maya took all of the gold-

CADALI

When I was vizier under Maya,
Majesty, I found myself in a
position not unlike that wise mouse-
mother. My foremost task, even at
the height of the terror, was to
protect the city's gold reserves as
best I could.

(beat)

After all, surely that is the duty
of any vizier: to look after the
essentials. Wouldn't you agree,
Alkin?

ALKIN

I would.

CADALI

And what is more essential than
gold?

GREGOR (V.O.)

Is he bluffing?

CADALI

I'm sorry, I assumed you all knew
that I would-

MANEL

Where is this gold now?

CADALI

Safe, Your Majesty. And do you know why it's safe? Because only one person knows where it is. Someone who can be trusted. Like the mouse-mother.

3.10 INT. HAFIZ PALACE - LATER

3.10

As Manel, Gregor, and Manel's personal GUARDS watch, Cadali OPENS a hidden passage, which slides open with a stony groan.

CADALI

A useful contingency, Majesty. It connects the Sultan's palace with the Hafiz's palace. There are many such hidden passageways in Tumanbay. As I had assumed you knew, Gregor. I think we will need the torches at the front, if at all possible?

GREGOR

(to the guards)

You man, you. Torches at the front. And you: two at the side.

CADALI

And perhaps someone guarding the entrance? You?

GREGOR

As I was just about to say... you, man: guard the entrance. No one follows us in.

CADALI

No one.

The various guards TAKE their positions.

MANEL

Do the two of you want to stop vying for position long enough to show me this promised gold?

CADALI

Please, follow me, Majesty.

GREGOR

Assuming the promised gold really is in there.

CADALI

Why would I forget anywhere I've hidden a lifeline?

GREGOR

Spoken like a man who has more than one.

CADALI

(a smirk in his voice)
Just through here, Majesty.

3.11 INT. HIDDEN CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

3.11

At the far end of the corridor, Cadali OPENS a second secret entrance.

MANEL

Another hidden room?

CADALI

If your men with the torches would like to illuminate matters for the Sultana?

GREGOR

(to the men)
Do it.

The men with torches WALK into the hidden room.

CADALI

I had the slaves who carried it here dispatched. It was important to be sure no one could lead the enemy here.

(beat)

Beautiful, isn't it, Majesty? And not only beautiful, it gives you power...

MANEL

This is good, Cadali. This is well done.

CADALI

Your Majesty, I merely try to do as I have always done. My duty, to Tumanbay. Isn't that so, Gregor?

GREGOR (V.O.)

And he grins, like the mouse with the cheese. And I slink away, like the cat at the end of a long, fruitless hunt, going home with nothing.

3.12 EXT. STABLES - MORNING

3.12

Gregor APPROACHES Qulan, who is inspecting his horse. A STABLE BOY stands nearby.

GREGOR

You didn't join us to see the gold, brother?

QULAN

I'm not interested in the gold. My concern is elsewhere.

GREGOR

You feel it too, then? That she's still here? Still in the city, somehow?

QULAN

What are you talking about?

GREGOR

Maya, of course!

QULAN

You need to move on, Gregor. Tumanbay has more current dangers to confront.

GREGOR

Remember Sarah? She said Maya and her followers disappear into the walls when they no longer wish to be known. She said you'll never know who they are and you'll never see them again until the time is right.

QULAN

Effendi Red's widow, that's whose word you're basing all this paranoia on?

GREGOR

What if she was right? What if that time is soon?

QULAN

(sighs)

Then we'll deal with that when it happens. *If* it happens.

GREGOR

Listen brother, you're too close to see it, that's the problem.

QULAN

Too close?

GREGOR

Manel too.

QULAN

Too close to what?

GREGOR

Alkin! Your own lover!

QULAN

Just barely. She doesn't come to my bed much anymore.

GREGOR

But you're still close, yes? Does she ask you questions? Does she still see your correspondence?

QULAN

She is the vizier, she sees many things.

GREGOR

What if Alkin's more than the vizier? What if she's something else as well?

Alkin ENTERS the stables.

ALKIN

I hope I'm not intruding.

QULAN

Alkin...

GREGOR (V.O.)

How much did she hear?

ALKIN

It's just when you overhear your own name, the curiosity is pretty hard to ignore.

QULAN

All you're intruding on is my brother's decline.

GREGOR

These are legitimate questions, brother.

QULAN

Oh Gregor, Gregor. Look, this much is true: giving them the gold is a bad idea. Tumanbay needs an army. You know it, I know it.

GREGOR

So what are you going to do about it?

QULAN

Go get one. Boy?
(the Stable Boy rushes forward)
You have this horse saddled and ready at dusk.

Stable Boy TAKES the horse away.

GREGOR

Very well then.
(starts to leave)

QULAN

Where are you going, Brother?

GREGOR

As you said: I have ghosts to chase. Vizier.

ALKIN

Gregor.

And he's GONE.

QULAN

I'm sorry, my love. It wasn't my intention to talk about you in your absence.

ALKIN

People talk; it means nothing to me. I'm much more interested in why you need that horse.

QULAN

I need to see my guard.

ALKIN

Why don't I follow you? That way I can coax the truth from you drop by excruciating drop.

QULAN

Well won't that be entertaining.

3.13 EXT. PALACE CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

3.13

Qulan and Alkin WALK through a palace corridor to where Qulan's personal guard are stationed.

QULAN

I'm going to my villa in the hills.

ALKIN

Now?

QULAN

My counsel is clearly not wanted here.

ALKIN

Tumanbay will always need its best general.

QULAN

For what? For discipline? There's no discipline here. People are living for pleasure like there's no future. Look at my own daughter's husband!

ALKIN

Prince Herod is in a different position. He has no role.

QULAN

Then he should make his own role! Preferably one that doesn't involve whoring and gambling. Maybe the rest of Tumanbay would follow his august example.

ALKIN

When I was in Mafouzda, it wasn't that different from Tumanbay right now. They had just finished defeating another type of enemy. No less mysterious than Maya; no less deadly, either. By the time the invasion was repelled, half the population was dead.

QULAN

I never heard of an invasion of Mafouzda, and I know every battle that's ever-

ALKIN

That's because the invader was the plague. And they don't teach generals about that. The point is, in the wake of so much death, there's a kind of natural rejoicing in simply being alive. That's what they were celebrating. That's what Tumanbay is celebrating now. You should allow them a little more leeway. If they are to gain strength, they need time to recover.

QULAN

There is no time. The Balarac are here now. And what are we doing? Appeasing them.

ALKIN

We're paying for a service.

QULAN

And the next time they offer a "service" we can't refuse? And the time after that?

ALKIN

Then why are you leaving? Surely Tumanbay has never needed your help more?

QULAN

When the Sultana is prepared to listen, she can send me a message. She knows where to find me.

ALKIN

What will the Balarac think when Tumanbay's greatest leader just leaves the city behind?

QULAN

They won't see me. I'll travel in darkness. With only my most trusted escorts.

ALKIN

And the Sultana? Does she know?

QULAN

Maybe you can tell her for me.

Alkin suddenly PULLS Qulan into a small alcove and EMBRACES him.

QULAN (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

ALKIN

That's not what you used to ask me when I pulled you into dark corners.

QULAN

Maybe I'm out of practice.

ALKIN

We've come a long way, you and I.

QULAN

True. The difference is I know where my own "long way" started. Where did your "long way" begin, Alkin?

(she disconnects from him)

Don't like that question, then?

ALKIN

I'll give you this much, shall I? The world is not at all what you think it is, my dear lover.

QULAN

Well, now I'm more mystified than I was before.

ALKIN

Well, perhaps you'll understand this.

She KISSES him. The kiss continues, becomes passionate - then Qulan PULLS away.

QULAN

I like you, Alkin, but I don't trust you. Not at all.

ALKIN

Perhaps you are wise.

QULAN

See that you take care of my daughter.

ALKIN

I will. Good fortune to you, my love. I will see you on your return.

She stays in the alcove as Qulan CONTINUES down the corridor.

3.13A INT. GAMBLING DEN - NIGHT

3.13A

There's a DRINKING and MERRIMENT. HEROD and SELIM are at a table. A LOCAL LAD approaches.

LOCAL LAD

So where have you two come from, then?

SELIM

We've been around.

LOCAL LAD

Someone, er...

(to passer by)
(MORE)

LOCAL LAD (CONT'D)

... Hey, you, get me a candle, I want a closer look at this.

SELIM

I just told you-

Someone HANDS the Local Lad a candle.

LOCAL LAD

Let's have a look. I don't trust them. Maybe they're spies from the palace!

HEROD

From the palace, yes, but not *spies*.

He THROWS back his hood. GASPS.

LOCAL LAD

But... you're...

HEROD

Who?

LOCAL LAD

(to friend)

Here, Barli, you were at his procession, is it...?

BARLI

(looking closer)

It is! It's the Prince!

LOCAL LAD

Majesty, what are you doing here?

HEROD

What does it look like I'm doing?

LOCAL LAD

(indicating Selim)

And him?

HEROD

My friend Selim. A master of arrangements!

LOCAL LAD

Really? Can he arrange us a drink or two?

SELIM

(low, to Herod)

Is it all right?

HEROD

Of course - I've already revealed myself!

Selim THROWS coins down on the bar.

SELIM

Drinks are on Prince Herod!

The crowd's CHEERS turn deafening.

3.14 OMITTED 3.14

3.15 INT. BROTHEL - MORNING 3.15

Herod is asleep in bed with a PROSTITUTE. She LEANS close to him.

PROSTITUTE

Are you really the Prince?

HEROD

Mmm...

PROSTITUTE

You make love like a prince.

There's a KNOCK at the door.

HEROD

Who dares? I'm in the middle of receiving a compliment!

SELIM

(through the door)

Sorry, Majesty, it's Selim! There are people at the front door!

HEROD

What people?

SELIM

They say they're from the palace!

HEROD

Dammit...

PROSTITUTE

You can just tell them to go, can't you?

(Herod sighs)

Well, can't you?

3.16 INT. THE THRONE ROOM - LATER

3.16

Manel and Alkin are waiting as Herod ENTERS, CARRYING the White Ape. He PLAYS with it throughout the scene.

HEROD

My Lady Sultana. Did you sleep well?

MANEL

I was hoping to speak to you alone.

HEROD

I hardly think my little monkey friend here will inhibit our conversation, do you?

MANEL

Perhaps you could put him back in his cage.

HEROD

Really? I don't think so. I think it's a sad thing to cage any creature. We all want to come out and play sometimes, don't we?

ALKIN

Your Majesty, the Sultana is concerned about your behaviour in the city.

HEROD

(disinterested)

I wasn't aware she was concerned about me at all.

ALKIN

It's not acceptable.

MANEL

These are desperate times, husband. We are under attack. The Balarac have their spies here, reporting back to that Grand Master of theirs, telling him how we're falling apart.

ALKIN

And you are out gambling and whoring every night.

HEROD

(to Manel)

What is she doing here?

MANEL

"She" is my vizier, and I trust her. What is that animal still doing here?

HEROD

He is my friend. I trust him. And you don't trust me.

MANEL

Is it any wonder? With your behaviour?

HEROD

I behave like that because you don't trust me.

MANEL

Can you at least try to be discreet?

HEROD

(indicating Alkin)

Like you are with her? Like your father is with her? Sort of a "family affair," isn't it? Hard to see where I'd even fit in at all.

Silence. Herod LEAVES. After a moment, Alkin APPROACHES Manel.

MANEL

I never should've married him. I should've trusted my instinct.

They KISS.

ALKIN

It was necessary. You need his father's loyalty and support. More than ever, actually, with the Balarac sniffing around outside our gates. And all the calamity they bring with them.

MANEL

You speak as if you can see the future.

ALKIN

I'm your vizier. It's my job to plan for the future. And it's your job to rule.

MANEL

Then get my father. I want to speak with him.

(MORE)

MANEL (CONT'D)

(beat)
Well?

ALKIN
He... he has gone, Your Majesty.

MANEL
Gone? Gone where?

ALKIN
To the provinces. To seek help

MANEL
Help with what?

ALKIN
To build an army.

MANEL
I never gave him... Why is everyone
doing things behind my back?

CADALI
I quite agree, Majesty.

This is the first time we realize Cadali has SNUCK IN.

MANEL
Cadali?

ALKIN
How long have you been skulking
back there?

CADALI
Merely making myself available for
any matters of policy that may
arise.

ALKIN
Naturally.

CADALI
And if I may be so bold, Majesty,
you need a good advisor. Someone
you can trust, someone who is not
your relative, your lover, or your
pet. Someone who can think clearly,
without emotion, someone who is
disinterested.

ALKIN
Are you trying to describe
yourself, Cadali? Because you are
hardly "disinterested." You're
enormously interested in yourself.

CADALI

I don't deny it. I consider it a virtue. What is good for me is good for Tumanbay. Unlike you, I don't have any other motives.

MANEL

Be careful, Cadali.

CADALI

Your father, Majesty, General Qulan, it's the oddest thing, I haven't seen him around.

MANEL

Why is that odd? Perhaps I have sent him somewhere.

CADALI

Where, if I may be so bold?

MANEL

You may not.

Beat.

CADALI

Of course, of course, Majesty. You know me: I merely wish to serve.

Pause.

CADALI (CONT'D)

Yes... Um... Thank you, Majesty.

Cadali LEAVES the Throne Room.

3.17 INT. CADALI'S ROOMS - NIGHT

3.17

Selim OPENS the door tentatively, poking his head in.

SELIM

Father!

CADALI

What do you want, Selim?

Selim COMES all the way into the room.

SELIM

I... just wanted to let you know how things are going... with the Prince.

(beat. Cadali leaves him twisting)

We're friends.

CADALI

So?

SELIM

Just... If you need help, if you ever need to use him? Look, I want to help you, Father.

CADALI

In that case, I notice my carpet is rather dusty. Perhaps you can summon one of your cleaners to take care of it. Or, failing that, do it yourself.

SELIM

Father, I did what you asked! I helped to get you back in the palace!

CADALI

And now you want what? A reward? A prize for being a good boy? A long-denied fatherly embrace?

Selim begins to CRY.

CADALI (CONT'D)

Yes. Go on. Cry. Your tears are wasted on me. What I respect is ambition, and you've never had a drop. Cleaning manager? You can't be serious. And only because of my influence. You have no idea what it is to work your way up from the bottom, to define yourself from nothing. I started life as a slave and was Chancellor of the Empire by the time I was your age. And what are you? The spitting image of your mother: an insignificant cleaning wench. So go on and cry. I owe you nothing.

3.18 INT. THE THRONE ROOM - DAY

3.18

Amalric ENTERS, FOLLOWED by his clanking retinue. Manel, Alkin, Cadali, and Gregor are waiting.

AMALRIC

Sultana.

MANEL

You do me too much honour with this return visit, Grand Master.

A moment - something's not right.

AMALRIC

Where is General Qulan? Why isn't he here?

GREGOR (V.O.)

How does he always know?

MANEL

My father is unwell.

AMALRIC

I'll give you some advice, Sultana: while you may be able to compose your face, you cannot compose your voice. I can hear the truth.

MANEL

Perhaps you overestimate your discernment.

AMALRIC

No. My men saw him leave the city. Last night.

Beat.

MANEL

Then why ask? If you already knew?

AMALRIC

Maybe to hear what you would say.

ALKIN

Grand Master you need to have a care for how you speak to the Sultana-

AMALRIC

Are you ready to receive my embassy of advisors and officials or not?

Beat.

AMALRIC (CONT'D)

I'm waiting for an answer, Sultana.

MANEL

We are grateful for your kind offer, but I believe I can rule Tumanbay without the help of the Balarac. We would, however, like to accept your even kinder offer to retreat from our city, go back to your fortresses, and stand as a line of defence between Tumanbay and Maya.

AMALRIC

(thrown)

You know that would require-

MANEL

That we meet your demand for payment? Yes. And we are prepared to do so.

AMALRIC

You... have the gold?

MANEL

We do.

AMALRIC

Where is it, then?

Cadali STEPS forward.

CADALI

Oh, my men are at this very moment waiting to transport the gold bars to your ships.

AMALRIC

"Your men?"

GREGOR (V.O.)

His men?

CADALI

Officers of the Palace Guard, yes.

MANEL

Now if that concludes our business, Grand Master, I'd like for you to pack up your camp, load your soldiers and your horses back onto the ships, sail back to your fortresses, and get started on the work we are paying you to do.

Beat.

AMALRIC

Very well, Sultana.

CADALI

Shall I escort you out?

Amalric LEAVES with Cadali FOLLOWING.

AMALRIC

I know the way.

CADALI
Undoubtedly, Grand Master,
undoubtedly...

GREGOR (V.O.)
Have you ever had that nightmare
where everyone knew a secret except
for you?

3.19 OMITTED

3.19

3.20 INT. GUARD ROOM IN THE PALACE - LATER

3.20

The RANKING GUARD on duty JUMPS up as Gregor ENTERS.

GREGOR
Who's the ranking man?

RANKING GUARD
I am, Sir, but-

GREGOR
We're moving the gold to the port
this evening.

RANKING GUARD
Yes, Sir, but-

GREGOR
I want a full contingent of men
escorting it, every man who can be
spared.

RANKING GUARD
Of course, Sir, only... it has been
done.

GREGOR
What has?

RANKING GUARD
Transport of the gold, Sir. It's
been arranged.

GREGOR
By who?

Cadali ENTERS.

CADALI
Oh good evening, Gregor! Welcome to
my office.

GREGOR
Your office? Are you out of your
mind?

CADALI

On the contrary, I'm very much in my mind, and, it seems, in my appropriate position. As Master of the Palace Guard.

GREGOR (V.O.)

And just like that, every piece of the puzzle suddenly falls into place.

GREGOR

On whose authority?

CADALI

I was hoping for a bit of outrage. Some gnashing of teeth.

GREGOR

On whose authority?

CADALI

Work it out for yourself, Gregor. It's an awfully short list.

(beat)

You should consider it a kindness, really. You haven't been yourself lately. That's understandable; we've all been through so much these past months. Maybe it's time to take your brother's advice.

GREGOR

My brother's...?

CADALI

To take a nice long rest, I mean. As he's urged you to do so many times.

GREGOR

You've been spying on us?

CADALI

Merely remaining open to the many currents of information passing through Tumanbay every day.

GREGOR

This isn't over.

Gregor LEAVES.

CADALI

(calling after him)

I'll take good care of your men, Gregor! I don't think they'll miss looking for Maya in every shadow!

He LAUGHS.

3.21 INT. THE THRONE ROOM

3.21

Gregor is appealing to Manel. Alkin is present.

GREGOR
But Your Majesty...

MANEL
Gregor, I gave the order myself.

GREGOR
You're siding with Cadali?

MANEL
And Alkin. And your own brother.
You're at your wit's end, Gregor.
Anyone can see it.

GREGOR
There's still work to do, Majesty!
Maya's agents are still here!

MANEL
Maya, Gregor? Still?

GREGOR
You don't understand her, Majesty-

MANEL
I understand you're in the grip of
an obsession that's taking every
ounce of attention you should be
devoting to the crises our city is
facing right now.
(softening)
Honestly, you haven't been yourself
since we reclaimed the city.

GREGOR
That's just what I'm saying - I
don't think we *have* reclaimed it.

MANEL
Have you been taking something?

GREGOR
Taking something?

ALKIN
To cope? It would be
understandable.

GREGOR

This is you, isn't it, Vizier?
You've been plotting against me
from the very start!

ALKIN

No, Gregor. This is entirely you.

GREGOR

I can do my job!

MANEL

I don't think you can, Uncle. Or
you would be already.

ALKIN

And if you're being honest with
yourself, you don't think you can
do it either.

GREGOR (V.O.)

**If I'm honest with myself? Why
start now?**

3.22 EXT. THE SKY OVER TUMANBAY - EVENING

3.22

Suddenly Gregor's bitter voice is swept away by an exultant
gust of wind, followed by exhilarated SCREAMS and LAUGHTER.
It takes a moment to place them, and then we realize...

... it's FROG and MATILLA, flying high above Tumanbay.

FROG

Stop yelling!

MATILLA

(calling down)
You can't catch *me*, Tumanbay!

FROG

Matilla, they'll hear us!

MATILLA

(giddy)
Let them!

Then Frog sees something below that makes him go quiet.

MATILLA (CONT'D)

Frog? Frog?

FROG

We need to land. There, by the
port.

MATILLA

Why?

FROG
But not too close...

3.23 EXT. THE PORT - MOMENTS LATER

3.23

Frog and Matilla TOUCH DOWN and watch from a distance.

We hear (from Frog's and Matilla's earshot some ways away) Amalric's orders being SHOUTED in the distance as the gold is loaded onto the ship: "Are we prepared, Sergeant?" "Yes, Grand Master." "Then we should set sail!" etc.

MATILLA
Frog? Why did we come down here?
(beat)
Frog? Who are those men?

FROG
They're called the Balarac.

MATILLA
They're frightening.

FROG
It's said they're the fiercest of fighters, Matilla. They have fortresses all along the coast. Their leader - that one there - he's called the Grand Master.

MATILLA
He's the most frightening of all.

FROG
They say he's... blind.

MATILLA
What's the matter?

FROG
I recognize him.

MATILLA
From where?

FROG
From my dreams.

Beat.

FROG (CONT'D)
Do you really think it's possible to change the future?

MATILLA
Change the future you foresaw in your dream?

FROG

Yes.

MATILLA

What do you want to change? Frog,
you're scaring me. That look in
your eyes, it's more frightening
than a hundred Balarac.

Frog abruptly GETS UP, starts WALKING away at speed. Matilla
PURSUES him.

MATILLA (CONT'D)

(calling)

Frog, where are you going? What are
you trying to change? You said it
was impossible! Wait, you're going
too fast, I'm losing you, Frog!
What do you need to change so
badly? Frog! Come back!

She LOSES him in the crowd.

MUSIC.

End of Episode 3.03.