

TUMANBAY

Episode 1.01 - "A Head Start"

by

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1.1 INT. ROOM - DAY

1.1

Darkness. The sounds of a hot climate - high pitched BUZZING of early morning cicadas and the distant sound of a call to prayer.

Closer, a lamp flickers into life. BASIM (30s) is putting on his uniform.

He makes his way to an adjoining room where his child, FROG, is sleeping.

BASIM
Wake up... Wake up.

Frog STIRS.

FROG
Something's going to happen.

BASIM
Is that so, my little frog?

FROG
I had a dream.

BASIM
A dream...?
(to wife)
You hear that?

FROG'S MOTHER
(coming through with the
child's food)
What's that?

BASIM
Frog's had another dream.

FROG'S MOTHER
Well, you can tell me all about it
after you've had your breakfast.

FROG
Don't go, Papa.

Basim leans in and KISSES his son.

BASIM
Be good. And obey your mother.

Basim OPENS a wooden door and EXITS into the street.

1.2 INT. TUMANBAY. PALACE RECEPTION ROOM - DAY

1.2

We pass through the city streets. An ALMS BELL RINGS. A HORSE CANTERS by. Distant voices talking. MUSIC swells ominously.

GREGOR (V.O.)

There are moments in life I call "beginnings", when everything you've come to expect changes. You hardly ever recognise them - until it's too late. And then there's nothing you can do about it...

A heavy wooden DOOR OPENS. Basim WALKS along a palace corridor. He enters a large hall where ENVOY (30s) waits.

GREGOR (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Observe a man, a man who loves his family. He leaves his home, leaves his wife and child and goes to the palace where he works... and he thinks he will do a day's work... and then come home...

Basim approaches the Envoy.

BASIM

The Sultan will receive you now...

The Envoy steps towards him.

ENVOY

Lead the way.

Basim gestures and they walk.

BASIM

Gifts are usually handed to the servants to be presented later.

ENVOY

What?

BASIM

It avoids any awkwardness.

(gesturing to what the Envoy is carrying)

I presume that is a gift for the Sultan.

ENVOY

You know who I am.

BASIM

Of course, it's just that -

ENVOY

Then I will keep it with me.

BASIM

As you please... This way...

They WALK through a series of doors and interior and exterior spaces as Basim shows off the Sultan's opulence and wealth.

The first room is full of screeching BIRDS.

BASIM (CONT'D)

This is the Menagerie. An Oryx calf was born two days ago.

ENVOY

Mmm.

BASIM

The Hall of Mirrors. The Sultan designed it himself.

They CONTINUE.

BASIM (CONT'D)

The Gold Room.

They STOP outside the Throne Room.

BASIM (CONT'D)

We must wait here. Sit... When the time comes, the doors will open and I will announce your name.

ENVOY

As you please.

BASIM

Only then step forward. There is a mark on the floor in front of the throne where you should stand. Don't worry, I will point to it when we are inside.

The Envoy sighs, bored.

BASIM (CONT'D)

How was your journey?

ENVOY

Fine.

BASIM

I've never been to Amber province. I hear it's very beautiful. My name is Basim by the way... of the palace guard. I've been assigned to look after you.

ENVOY

Basim... You've just been promoted?

BASIM

How did you know?

ENVOY

You seem so... fresh. This is a new opportunity for you isn't it? You, what, are promoted from the ranks of the army?

BASIM

Yes.

ENVOY

It's a great honour. To be so trusted. You know what's always interested me about Tumanbay? Everyone scurries around looking over their shoulder all the time. Why is that?

BASIM

I... don't know what you mean, sir. We are fortunate to serve under such a mighty and benevolent ruler.

ENVOY

Of course.

The DOORS OPEN.

BASIM

Ah... They are ready. Come...

He leads the Envoy towards the Throne Room.

BASIM (CONT'D)

One more thing; keep your head bowed at all times. And only speak when you are spoken to...

1.3 INT. TUMANBAY. PALACE THRONE ROOM - DAY

1.3

The Envoy is ushered into the presence of Sultan AL-GHURI (60s) and his advisor CADALI (similar age).

BASIM

Effendi Red - emissary of Maya.

ENVOY

Good afternoon, Your Majesty. And greetings from my Queen.

AL-GHURI

Your queen? Indeed...

BASIM

(quietly to Envoy)
Stand here please. Remember what I told you.

ENVOY

(ignoring Basim)

I trust Your Majesty is in good health today.

Silence. Then some WHISPERING between al-Ghuri and Cadali.

CADALI

(after a moment)

His Majesty would like an explanation.

ENVOY

An explanation?

Silence.

CADALI

The new governor sent by the Sultan... Perhaps you will explain the humiliation he endured at Maya's hands?

ENVOY

I have not come prepared to discuss any business that is not -

CADALI

Well I suggest you get prepared because that is what the Sultan wishes to discuss.

(beat)

And I suggest you choose your words very carefully. His Majesty is a patient man but this... this outrage... has -

AL-GHURI

(losing it)

Stripped naked! Paraded through the city with a bucket of manure on his head! This is my chosen representative!

ENVOY

Yes... Regarding that...

CADALI

That outrage!

ENVOY

... incident...

CADALI

Yes?

ENVOY

...I have no specific details or message to convey from my queen...
Your Majesty.

Al-Ghuri stares at him in icy silence.

ENVOY (CONT'D)

But I think you can take it that Maya's message is implicit in the, er, outrage, if you wish, itself.

More WHISPERING.

CADALI

His Majesty would like to know what is the purpose of your visit?

ENVOY

I've come to convey my Queen's detailed instructions.

CADALI

What are you talking about?
Instructions for what?

ENVOY

The surrender of the city. The procedure for handing over control of the palaces, the army, the law-courts... all the arms of government... and of course, His Majesty will wish to know how best to prostrate himself in front of the Queen when he presents her with his sword.

A moment of baffled silence. Then al-Ghuri starts to LAUGH. His courtiers including Cadali join in.

AL-GHURI

And tell me, if I fail to obey your queen's *instructions*?

ENVOY

She will destroy you.

More LAUGHTER.

Envoy CLEARS HIS THROAT.

ENVOY (CONT'D)

I will leave you to consult your -

BASIM

No, please... stay where you are until the Sultan has dismissed you.

After a moment the whispering STOPS.

CADALI

Your "queen" seems to be confused.

ENVOY

How so?

CADALI

She is the mere wife of a dead provincial governor. She has no authority to rule there. The Sultan decides who governs his provinces. Over two years we have been sending messages and have had no replies. And now this...

ENVOY

Yes, I understand your frustrations, but -

AL-GHURI

I don't want your understanding! Tell your whore-bitch queen I'm going to send the governor of the eastern province, to smash her.

ENVOY

Ah, yes... Qasaba.

AL-GHURI

Cadali, send orders out to him today.

CADALI

Yes, Your Majesty.

AL-GHURI

And when he returns with her head on a spear -

ENVOY

Your Majesty, there's no need to send orders. Why don't you consult Qasaba on this right now?

AL-GHURI

What? What are you talking about?

Envoy starts UNPACKING something from a box.

BASIM

Please, sir. No gifts here -

ENVOY

No, it's okay.

AL-GHURI
 What are you doing?
 (to Cadali)
 What is he doing?

CADALI
 Guards! Take him.

BASIM
 Yes, Your Excellency. Leave your
 gift, sir. You need to come with
 me.

Basim continues PLEADING with the Envoy in the background.

ENVOY
 (defiantly)
 He's here.

AL-GHURI
 Who?

ENVOY
 The governor of the eastern
 province... Qasaba.

The Envoy REVEALS a severed head.

ENVOY (CONT'D)
 Why don't you put your heads
 together now?

The Envoy HURLS THE SEVERED HEAD across the floor. Al-Ghuri
 STAGGERS BACK, horrified.

ENVOY (CONT'D)
 Is there anything else you would
 like me to convey to Maya?

1.4 **OPENING TITLES - MUSIC** 1.4

ANNOUNCER
Tumanbay, Episode 1. "A Head
Start", by John Dryden.

1.5 **EXT. SHIP AT SEA - DAY** 1.5

The wash of WAVES as a large sailing ship slices through the
 ocean. Music underscores as a young woman speaks.

HEAVEN (V.O.)
There's a city far away... My
parents often spoke of it as if it
had always been there and always
would be... I had seen it in
paintings, I read of it in stories.
(MORE)

HEAVEN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The richest, most powerful place on earth... the centre of everything. It drew people from every corner of the empire and beyond, hungry for wealth and power, or in some cases, more wealth and more power. They were dazzled by its brightness. And like moths drawn to a candle... many were burnt alive by its fire... Tumanbay...

On deck, HEAVEN (14) whose voice it is, and her mother ILA (30s) watch the CAPTAIN and crew at work.

HEAVEN (V.O.)

...A city I always wanted to visit - who didn't? - but not under these circumstances...

ILA

Are you going to talk to me?

HEAVEN

I *am* talking to you.
(beat)
See?

ILA

You know what I mean. You've been sullen ever since we left port.

HEAVEN

I don't *want* to go there.

ILA

You don't want to see your father?

HEAVEN

Of course I do.

ILA

You don't want to see the great palaces and place of -

HEAVEN

I do. I want to experience everything Tumanbay has to offer... just not as someone's wife.

ILA

Not that again.

HEAVEN

I don't want to be married off to someone I've never even met.

ILA

I did it. And you can too.

HEAVEN

I'm not you.

They are interrupted by some shouting on the deck. A SLAVE is pulled up from the lower deck. He is tied to the mast. The women look on.

CAPTAIN

I apologize ladies, but it's better you go back to your cabin.

ILA

Why? What's happening?

CAPTAIN

It's better you go back.

ILA

Nonsense. My husband is a merchant of slaves. I have seen it all before.

CAPTAIN

Please yourself.

Captain walks away. The WHIPPING starts. The women watch.

HEAVEN

What do you think he did?

ILA

It doesn't matter. An example to show the others.

HEAVEN

Does father do *that* to his slaves?

ILA

Of course. It's the only way.

HEAVEN

He's not even flinching.

ILA

Who?

HEAVEN

The slave. It's as if... he doesn't care.

ILA

They don't feel pain like us. They are barbarians.

HEAVEN

Then what's the point of whipping him?

Snort from Ila.

1.6

INT. TUMANBAY. QUAYSIDE OFFICE - DAY

1.6

IBN (40s), a slave merchant, enters the HARBOUR-MASTER's office.

IBN

Ah, excuse me - the ship from Cyrene. Due into port today?

HARBOUR MASTER

Cyrene? Hasn't arrived.

IBN

I know. I have a consignment of thirty slaves on board. I want to sort out the levy.

He RIFLES through some papers.

HARBOUR MASTER

It hasn't arrived yet.

IBN

Yes, I know that. I want to get the papers stamped so that when it does arrive I can be on my way.

HARBOUR MASTER

You can't. Not till they get here.

IBN

There'll be a queue then. Why can't I do it now?

HARBOUR MASTER

Because I need to see the slaves before I can stamp their papers.

IBN

(frustrated)

But...

(he calms himself)

My wife and daughter are on the ship too. I haven't seen them for eight months. I was hoping we might get this business out of the way *before* they arrive so that we could just -

(off the expression of the Harbour Master)

- never mind. Is there any news of the ship?

HARBOUR MASTER

Nothing yet. Try tomorrow. Or the day after.

IBN

Thank you.

He SIGHS and WALKS OUT.

1.7 EXT. TUMANBAY. QUAYSIDE SLAVE MARKET - DAY

1.7

IBN WALKS along a row of cages which contain slaves. It's a BUSTLING slave market.

SLAVE TRADER

Hello, Sir. What you looking for?

Ibn STOPS.

IBN

What?

SLAVE TRADER

Domestic? Labour?

IBN

No, no - thank you.

SLAVE TRADER

I've got four boys from the Asir Mountains. Quite rare. Easy going. Loyal. Good with children -

IBN

No... But these two... The blue eyes. Where are they from?

SLAVE TRADER

You got family?

IBN

Er, yes. Yes, I have.

SLAVE TRADER

Children?

IBN

A daughter.

SLAVE TRADER

How old?

IBN

Fourteen?

SLAVE TRADER

Oh, then I would not consider them if I were you.

IBN

Why not?

SLAVE TRADER

Difficult to handle. The male especially. Unpredictable.

IBN

She has a baby?

SLAVE TRADER

She can come with or without the baby. No problem.

IBN

Do they... understand? Do they speak?

SLAVE TRADER

That, er, that you will have to take a chance on. I haven't been able to get anything out of them.

IBN

Give me a moment.

SLAVE TRADER

Of course. Take all the time you want. Just don't get too close to the cage. If you need anything call me I'll just-

He starts SHOUTING something at another slave and DISAPPEARS.

Ibn comes CLOSER and peers in through the bars.

IBN

You. Come closer...

Nothing happens.

IBN (CONT'D)

You want to stay with your baby. I understand that. I have a child too.

Nothing. We hear her BREATHING. We hear the child GURGLING.

IBN (CONT'D)

You're something special aren't you? You used to wear a ring on your left middle finger. You're educated.

(MORE)

IBN (CONT'D)

It's all right - I'm not going to tell. I just notice these things.

Silence.

IBN (CONT'D)

(to the male slave)

What about you? Are you related?
Are you the father of the child...?

The male slave APPROACHES IBN.

IBN (CONT'D)

That's right. Come. You can talk to me.

Suddenly the slave lurches forward and grabs the bars and SCREAMS. Ibn staggers back and FALLS. There's a COMMOTION as the Slave Trader intervenes. The BABY CRIES.

SLAVE TRADER

(assisting Ibn)

Are you all right my friend?

IBN

Yes.

SLAVE TRADER

I warned you.

(sighs)

That slave. I might have to sell him to the fights if I can't tame him. You want to try something else?

MUSIC fades up. Baby cries.

IBN

I think I could tame him.

SLAVE TRADER

Huh?

1.8 EXT. ROAD - DAY

1.8

Ibn steers a RUMBLING cart. In the back, in wooden cages are the two slaves he has just purchased (one of whom is SARAH). He chats to them - and has a disarmingly jolly manner for a slave merchant.

IBN

You're lucky... To have been bought by me. I have contacts in the royal palace. You'll fetch a good price there because you're both educated. Education can get you anywhere in the world. That's why I'm here.

(MORE)

IBN (CONT'D)

I know things. And you do too, so you'll probably be all right.

They don't answer.

IBN (CONT'D)

I'm new here too, you know. Well, not as new as you.

Silence.

IBN (CONT'D)

I don't know what purpose you think your silence will serve. In the end you'll talk. I've been in this business long enough to know that. But if silence is what you prefer, fine, we'll just...

Silence.

IBN (CONT'D)

But if there is one thing I know, it's when a slave is not really a slave. So where are you from? What happened?

No response.

IBN (CONT'D)

You are educated, I can tell.
(beginning to doubt)
Please tell me you are...

Silence.

IBN (CONT'D)

You know the empire is ruled by slaves? Well, they *came* as slaves and now they run the place - everyone's a slave here. Well, I'm not. I'm a free man. You're lucky - anywhere else you would have been a slave forever. Here, if you have the right attitude, you can be anything, *anything*... even a Sultan...

Silence.

IBN (CONT'D)

I can see this is going to be a long -

SARAH

- My baby.

IBN

Huh?

SARAH

What about my baby?

IBN

(pleased she's talking)

What is it? Boy? Girl?

SARAH

Girl.

IBN

Good, good. Well... She can be a doll.

SARAH

A what?

IBN

You know... the princesses? They need dolls. To play with. She might end up a friend. A good friend, a confidante. But of course, she might get broken, thrown away, who knows. Life is chance here. There's everything to gain, but nothing is certain...

MUSIC fades up as Ibn CHIVVIES his horse forwards.

1.9

EXT. TUMANBAY. PALACE GARDEN - DAY

1.9

A beautiful garden. We hear fountains and the song of birds.

Al-Ghuri is lying on a couch, being attended to by YOUNG MEN and a PHYSICIAN (50s) who is ADMINISTERING some flowers.

GREGOR (V.O.)

What does a sultan do when someone has just tossed the head of his most loyal provincial governor at his feet?

PHYSICIAN

Why don't you... Why don't you take this? It is your very own "Queen of the Night".

AL-GHURI

I don't want it.

PHYSICIAN

But, you majesty, it will calm your nerves.

AL-GHURI

I don't need to calm my nerves, I
need the war council. Cadali!
Cadali!

Cadali SCURRIES towards him.

CADALI

Majesty?

AL-GHURI

What's happening? Is everyone
ready?

CADALI

I'll just check.

He GOES.

AL-GHURI

(shouting after him)
And where is my nephew? I want him
to attend too.
(noticing the Physician
still beside him)
Yes?

PHYSICIAN

Your Majesty, these emeralds from
Samarra - hold one, keep one in
your pocket. They will emanate
strength and wisdom.

Al-Ghuri reluctantly TAKES them.

MADU (16), his nephew, APPROACHES.

AL-GHURI

Ah, Madu. Where have you been? Sit
here. *Sit...*

Madu SITS - almost collapses - on a chair.

AL-GHURI (CONT'D)

You all right?

MADU

(not all right at all)
Yeah... Yeah...

AL-GHURI

I want you by my side in the war
council. It will be a useful
experience, you will learn how
decisions are made.

MADU is silent.

AL-GHURI (CONT'D)

Sit up. You need to be attentive
and focused.

MADU

I... I had a dream, uncle.

AL-GHURI

What?

MADU

A snake entered my room, through
the open window. I tried to find
something to shoo it away. But
everything I grasped hold of fell
from my hands - just slipped out.
So the snake came closer and
entered into my body and tried to
come out of my left eye...

AL-GHURI

Are you...? Have you been...?

MADU

I... I don't...

He THROWS UP.

AL-GHURI

(leaping up, disgusted)
Get him out of here.
(to Physician)
Doctor, attend to him.

PHYSICIAN

Yes, Your Majesty.

AL-GHURI

(to servants)
And clean it up.

They SCURRY around as the Physician TRIES to get Madu up onto
his feet.

AL-GHURI (CONT'D)

I suppose you've been up all night
with your friends again? You're a
total disgrace. If it wasn't for
your mother -

Cadali APPROACHES.

CADALI

Majesty, the council is ready.

AL-GHURI

(to Madu)
I will deal with you later.

Al-Ghuri FOLLOWS him.

CADALI

Your nephew will not be joining us,
Your Majesty?

AL-GHURI

No.

They GO inside.

1.10 INT. TUMANBAY. PALACE CORRIDOR - DAY

1.10

Al-Ghuri and Cadali are WALKING along a corridor to the war council. They pass through a heavy wooden DOOR.

GREGOR (V.O.)

Who are these people? Well, the Sultan you've met already, and his nephew Madu, son of the brother he murdered...

AL-GHURI

I want to know how this happened.

CADALI

Your Majesty?

GREGOR (V.O.)

And Cadali, the grand vizier, a self-serving bastard - very good at his job.

AL-GHURI

How could Qasaba have been defeated without our knowledge? It's your job to know these things.

CADALI

Ah, yes. But you see Your Majesty, he... he wasn't defeated.

AL-GHURI

What do you mean?

CADALI

He was killed in his own palace by someone close to him. His head was smuggled out before anyone even knew...

Al-Ghuri STOPS in his tracks.

AL-GHURI

A spy?

CADALI

Yes. One of Maya's.

1.11 INT. TUMANBAY. PALACE. WAR COUNCIL - DAY

1.11

Al-Ghuri presides over a meeting with his key Generals and Advisors including QULAN (50s) and GREGOR.

QULAN

Rebellion in one province - if not dealt with swiftly - will spread like a disease across the empire.

GREGOR (V.O.)

The war council...

QULAN

We need to send a clear message.

GREGOR (V.O.)

That's Qulan, the finest general in Tumanbay. Oh yes, and my brother too... and a lot of other things...

QULAN

Any hesitation will be seen as weakness.

CADALI

It's the weak man who reacts at once, General Qulan. The strong man bides his time. This is a small provincial uprising. A province on the very edge of the -

AL-GHURI

(distracted by someone else)

Yes. What is it?

He starts WHISPERING to an Attendant. It shouldn't be immediately clear what they're talking about.

AL-GHURI (CONT'D)

...No, not down there. Bring him up here. I want everyone to see it...

The Attendant SCUTTLES OFF through a door.

AL-GHURI (CONT'D)

(shouting after him)

And get the doctor. I don't want him to die too easily...

(to Cadali)

Yes?

CADALI

Yes...?

AL-GHURI

You were saying?

CADALI

Ah... We have nothing to fear from this self appointed "queen". Let us bide our time -

AL-GHURI

Who said anything about fear?

CADALI

Majesty?

AL-GHURI

I'm not afraid.

CADALI

Of course, I merely meant -

AL-GHURI

I want that bitch's head on a pole so I can see it from my bedroom window.

CADALI

Yes.

AL-GHURI

Yes, what?

CADALI

Yes, I agree with everything you -

AL-GHURI

Enough. Gregor...

GREGOR

Majesty?

GREGOR (V.O.)

Ah, that's me. Gregor, master of the palace guard, intelligence chief... and a few other things too...

AL-GHURI

You have nothing to say?

GREGOR

I'm more an administrator than a general. Both General Qulan and His Excellency Cadali make convincing arguments.

AL-GHURI

And which argument do you find most convincing?

GREGOR (V.O.)

You never know with the Sultan which way he'll go. Everyone here chooses their words with the utmost care. Their lives depend on it...

GREGOR

We need... to punish her.

AL-GHURI

At last someone is talking sense!

CADALI

If I may just say, Your Majesty-

AL-GHURI

No, you may not, Cadali. We need to send a new governor, someone to sort it out and do what I want them to do. Gregor... you have brought whole kingdoms under our control.

GREGOR

Ah, it seems such a long time ago, majesty. And I cannot take the credit -

AL-GHURI

I appoint you governor of Amber province. Take the elite army, whatever you need. Go there and restore order.

GREGOR

Majesty, this is indeed a great honour.

AL-GHURI

Good. Get the envoy up here. Let's start the entertainment.

Palace guards ACKNOWLEDGE the order and LEAVE.

GREGOR

But...

AL-GHURI

Yes?

GREGOR

My responsibility is here - keeping Tumanbay safe. Keeping you safe, Your Majesty.

AL-GHURI

And who let this envoy come into my presence with... carrying...

GREGOR

A severed head. Yes.

AL-GHURI

Who was it?

GREGOR (V.O.)

Well actually... My responsibility. But what's the point of being in charge if it's you that pays...

GREGOR

Your Majesty... A young officer in the palace guard. Recently promoted. I will be dealing with him personally. Such incidents are the reason I need to remain here. General Qulan, on the other hand... a great military leader...

QULAN

What are you up to, brother?

GREGOR

(sotto)

Isn't this what you wanted, brother? To take on Maya in battle?

1.12 INT. TUMANBAY. PALACE. CELLS - DAY

1.12

A heavy metal door swings OPEN.

GUARD

Bring him.

The Envoy, in chains, is HAULED UP onto his feet.

ENVOY

You remember who I am.

He's PULLED along.

ENVOY (CONT'D)

Where are we going?

GUARD

This way.

Doors OPEN.

1.13 INT. TUMANBAY. PALACE. WAR COUNCIL - DAY

1.13

A Guard LEADS the Envoy in.

AL-GHURI
Bring... Bring him into the centre.

GREGOR (V.O.)
And here we go...

ENVOY
Your Majesty... Why am I being
detained?

He is being rough handled and STRAPPED to a pole.

ENVOY (CONT'D)
I am a mere messenger -

AL-GHURI
Of course. I know that.

QULAN
(getting up)
Your Majesty, I must go and make
preparations for the task ahead -

AL-GHURI
Sit General Qulan! You will stay
and watch.

GREGOR
Yes sit, brother. You might enjoy
it.

Qulan sits, frustrated. The Envoy STRUGGLES against his
chains.

AL-GHURI
You say you are a messenger. Well,
I have a message I would like to
send a message to your queen.

ENVOY
Of course. Yes.

AL-GHURI
So you agree?

ENVOY
Agree? Yes. Give me any message you
like.

AL-GHURI
(enjoying this)
He agrees!

There is some LAUGHTER around the room.

AL-GHURI (CONT'D)

Let's begin then...

A SWORD is drawn.

ENVOY

You can't kill me.

AL-GHURI

And why is that?

ENVOY

The ovens...

AL-GHURI

What ovens?

ENVOY

In the palace kitchens. Were they causing some trouble yesterday? Was a dead rat found in them?

AL-GHURI

What is he talking about?

ENVOY

And last week, did the water in the fountain in front of the al-Dar Gate go red?

AL-GHURI

Well, you have a good network.

ENVOY

Oh yes. Even in the privacy of your own bed chamber. I know for instance, Your Majesty, that your first wife, Shajar... She had a disturbed night. What was it? A dream that she was being attacked by mosquitoes. They were everywhere, all over the kingdom...

Al-Ghuri GETS UP.

AL-GHURI

Who are you?

ENVOY

You need not fear Maya and her armies. This is a kingdom that will be destroyed from within...

Silence. After a moment...

CADALI

Shall we start, majesty?

ENVOY

One moment... Did I forget to tell you? Your nephew... Madu, isn't it? Was he feeling unwell this afternoon? What did he have for breakfast? Was it his usual dates brought daily from the orchards of the Zaghloul Plains? Hmm... Such a pity.

MUSIC swells.

AL-GHURI

(sotto)

How does he know these things, Cadali?

CADALI

Majesty, it's a trick, he is -

ENVOY

He hasn't got long I'm afraid... There is a poison working in his blood now. He will die within two days. Sad.

(beat)

Unless...

AL-GHURI

Unless what?

ENVOY

He is administered the antidote.

AL-GHURI

What antidote?

ENVOY

The one that will be found in the palace - don't worry it will be found - *once* I have passed through the Gates of Dawn...

The DOORS OPEN. An officer APPROACHES al-Ghuri. He talks in urgent, hushed tones.

OFFICER

(quietly)

Your Majesty, Your Majesty the First Wife requires your urgent attention.

AL-GHURI

What?

OFFICER

Your nephew. He's... He's unwell. The physician is with him.

ENVOY

Majesty, if I could press you...
time is of the essence.

AL-GHURI

Release him. Escort him to the city
gates. Go! Go! Go!

Lots of ACTIVITY. Chains coming off, people rushing about.
The Envoy takes a bow.

ENVOY

Your Majesty, generals, lords...
thank you for your indulgence.

He is LED out of the room.

Al-Ghuri TURNS to Gregor.

AL-GHURI

Gregor, find them. All of them. I
want the spies rooted out. I want
them lined up, all of them, in
front of me and... and..

CADALI

Majesty, please...

AL-GHURI

Shut up, Cadali! Gregor, you
understand me?

GREGOR

It will be as you say, majesty.

Gregor EXITS swiftly.

1.14 OMITTED 1.14

1.15 INT. TUMANBAY. IBN'S HOUSE - DAY 1.15

There are builders WORKING. IBN enters with DANIEL and Sarah,
both still in CHAINS.

IBN

Come... Come through here.

Sarah hesitates.

IBN (CONT'D)

It's all right. I'm not going to
touch your child. Look, you can
sit...

She SITS.

IBN (CONT'D)

(to Daniel)

Not you. You stand there.

(to Sarah)

I'm sorry about the mess. The builders are here. I'm preparing the house for my wife and daughter who are joining me. We are from El-Sharba, in the west. You know it?

Silence. He INSPECTS Daniel.

IBN (CONT'D)

So, what skills have you got? You can fight I can see that. What else?

(beat)

You *will* speak. You can ride I assume?

DANIEL

Why should I tell you?

IBN

Ah, he speaks. Well, if you don't I will beat you.

(beat)

I'm not going to ask you a second time.

(beat)

All right. Asim take him to the cages.

An Assistant PULLS Daniel out of the room.

IBN (CONT'D)

Your husband?

SARAH

My...

(beat)

... brother.

IBN

So who is the baby's father?

(beat)

Don't cry. It's just business. I'm a merchant.

SARAH

You're a merchant of people.

IBN

Yes, that's what I do. I am a merchant. You are my commodity, a slave. Understand that?

Music SWELLS ominously.

SARAH

I understand that very well.

IBN

Ah... look she's smiling... The baby. She's smiling at me.

He COOS at the baby.

IBN (CONT'D)

What's her name?

(beat)

It's all right. You don't have to... She reminds me of my daughter when she was small...

(chuckles)

May I?

Ibn REACHES to hold the baby. Baby GURGLES.

SARAH

Please, no.

IBN

I love babies.

SARAH

Please, *no*.

IBN

No. Of course.

(to Maid)

Sabira, take her down to the cells.

The Maid LEADS Sarah away.

IBN (CONT'D)

(to himself)

You are such a fool, Ibn. Never sample the merchandise. When will you ever learn?

He WALKS away disgusted with himself.

1.16 INT. TUMANBAY. PALACE KITCHENS - DAY

1.16

Kitchen staff are lined up, listening nervously to Gregor.

GREGOR

You will tell me because if you don't your death will be... unpleasant.

GREGOR (V.O.)

So this is what I do. I find out what's going on in the palace, I ask questions...

GREGOR

You are all going to die, don't think that you're not.

GREGOR (V.O.)

Oh, yes, and as you see, I have people executed...

GREGOR

Some of you may be innocent of this, but you've got to go, you're already tainted. So make no mistake, you're going to die, the question is, how? Got that? Does anyone have any questions?

Some WEEPING and quivering.

GREGOR (CONT'D)

So... I want to know everyone whose hands were on the dates, please. From who brought them into the palace, who stoned them, who added the rose water, who ground the herbs, who carried them to the young prince's rooms? To all these questions you will give me an answer. So shall we start?

(beat)

You. What was your job?

COOK

Cook, my lord.

GREGOR

Were you present when the dates arrived?

SHAJAR (30s), the Sultan's First Wife, ENTERS.

SHAJAR

Gregor, what are you doing? You're wasting your time with this lot.

GREGOR

Ahhh... Sometimes I wish I could have *her* executed... The Sultan's chief wife, Shajar.

SHAJAR

Why are you not looking for the antidote?

GREGOR

My lady, the emissary will be passing the Gates of Dawn any moment now, we must wait.

SHAJAR

Who can wait? My son is sick. He is dying. And you are just asking questions?

GREGOR

My men are everywhere, and as soon as the antidote appears -

SHAJAR

And you believe this so-called ambassador?

GREGOR

His Majesty believes this man. Who am I to...?

SHAJAR

You are a snake. I will have your head if my son dies.

A BELL can be heard - a long deep tone.

GREGOR

He has passed through the gates.

SHAJAR

So... where's the antidote?

The bell CHIMES again. They listen.

SHAJAR (CONT'D)

Where is the antidote?

A servant APPROACHES in a highly agitated state.

SERVANT

Your Majesty... please, come quickly...

They LEAVE swiftly as the bell CHIMES a final time.

1.17 INT. TUMANBAY. SHAJAR'S CHAMBERS - DAY

1.17

Cicadas sound outside. Madu is semi-conscious, lying on a couch. The Physician tries to FORCE HIM TO DRINK. The Sultan, Gregor, Shajar, and her MAID watch on, anxiously.

PHYSICIAN

Drink this my prince.

(beat)

He's lost a lot of fluids. I don't understand how he can be...?

Madu starts COUGHING. After a moment...

MADU

I'm hungry.

There is a collective SIGH OF RELIEF from those gathered around the couch.

PHYSICIAN

Extraordinary!

AL-GHURI

What did you give him?

PHYSICIAN

Nothing.

SHAJAR

You must have. You were attending to him all this time. What did you administer?

PHYSICIAN

I swear. Maybe the vomiting emptied his stomach of all the toxins but -

AL-GHURI

It is all right. The boy is recovering.

(to Madu)

How are you?

MADU

What... Where am I?

He tries to SIT UP. While al-Ghuri and the Physician talk to him, Gregor TAKES Shajar aside.

GREGOR

Who else has been with him? Apart from the physician here?

SHAJAR

No one. Just me.

GREGOR

Who's she?

SHAJAR

Her? That's my maid...

(picking up on Gregor's suspicion)

No, no, she's been with me for ten years.

GREGOR

Has she had access to...?

SHAJAR

No. No... Not without my supervision. She brought the water when the physician asked her - Oh, you think...?

GREGOR

My job is to ask questions.

He MOVES toward the maid.

GREGOR (CONT'D)

Do you know who I am?

MAID

Master of the palace guard.

GREGOR

Come with me.

MAID

But... my lady needs me.

SHAJAR

Go with him, Miriam. It will be all right. Go.

They EXIT the chamber.

1.18 INT. TUMANBAY. PALACE CORRIDOR - DAY 1.18

Gregor LEADS the Maid along a corridor.

MAID

Thank god he is better.

GREGOR

Yes. This way...

Gregor DRAWS a set of keys. A door creaks OPEN. They GO IN.

1.19 INT. TUMANBAY. PALACE BASEMENT ROOM - DAY 1.19

It's a small, windowless cell.

GREGOR

Sit down... Just there. Good.

(beat)

This is where I spend much of my day. Away from all the noise of palace.

(sighs contentedly)

Peace... You can't hear a thing. It's like a tomb. And you know what's best of all?

MAID

No.

GREGOR

The knowledge that when I'm down here, no one ever disturbs me.

(beat)

Are you comfortable?

MAID

Yes.

GREGOR

Good. Now tell me who you work for?

MAID

My lord, what are you - ?

GREGOR

No questions - you leave that to me. Just answers. Who do you work for?

MAID

Lady Shajar, of course.

GREGOR

You seem nervous. Are you nervous?

MAID

A little.

GREGOR

Why would you be nervous?

MAID

I don't know. I feel I... I'm being accused of something terrible.

GREGOR

If you are innocent you have nothing to fear?

MAID

Like the kitchen staff? Did they have nothing to fear?

Gregor doesn't respond.

She STANDS UP.

GREGOR

What are you doing? Stay seated.

She REACHES out towards him.

MAID

But my lord, I want to show you something -

GREGOR

Don't touch me. Stay back.

He PUSHES her against the wall. A SMALL BOTTLE FALLS and rolls across the floor.

GREGOR (CONT'D)

What's this?

She STRUGGLES.

GREGOR (CONT'D)

No, no...

He draws his SWORD. He FORCES HER BACK into the chair, then kneels down and PICKS UP the bottle.

GREGOR (CONT'D)

What is it? Flying death? Moon seed? Hemlock?

MAID

They are among us.

MUSIC swells ominously.

GREGOR

Who?

MAID

First a few, and now many.

GREGOR

And who do you belong to?

MAID

One of them is inside you too. She will wake inside your head.

GREGOR

Who?

MAID

The queen. You might have seen her in your dreams. You think her armies are nothing, but this is an empire that will be destroyed from within... All you can do is save yourself.

GREGOR

What do you mean?

MAID

Find that thing which Maya desires.
Take it to her.

GREGOR

What does she desire?

MAID

The heart of the empire.

GREGOR

You need to be more specific. Tell
me.

(beat)

I can make you tell me.

MAID

Maya doesn't want the palaces, or
the empire. She wants what she can
hold in her hands.

GREGOR

Which is what?

The Maid, growing in confidence, LAUGHS.

GREGOR (CONT'D)

If you tell me, I can help you.

MAID

But how can I trust you?

GREGOR

How can I trust *you*?

MAID

Yes, how can you?

She CHUCKLES to herself, become more distant and withdrawn.

GREGOR

Look, you can make this difficult
for yourself or you can make it
easy. I can make you talk.

MAID

No... You can't.

She starts to CHOKE.

MAID (CONT'D)

Hemlock.

GREGOR

What?

MAID

The answer to your question.
(beat)
Hemlock. For me, not you...

GREGOR

No, no...!

MAID

The mind remains sharp to the end,
while the muscles die slowly.

GREGOR

You will tell me what Maya wants!

MAID

You don't need me to tell you.
You're inquisitive. You're
powerful. You can find it if you
want to.

GREGOR

Find what? If I don't know what I'm
looking for how can I find it?

MAID

The time has come.

GREGOR

No! Wait. You will tell me...

She DIES.

Music swells.

GREGOR (V.O.)

**I could have handled that...
better.**

A KNOCK on the door. A BOLT shifts. The DOOR OPENS.

GREGOR

Yes?

OFFICER

Excellency, the officer of the
palace guard you wanted to question
has been apprehended.

GREGOR

Where is he?

OFFICER

In the cells.

GREGOR

Good. I will come shortly and...
 (thinking better of it)
 No, just execute him.

OFFICER

But I -

GREGOR

Yes? What is it?

OFFICER

I thought you wanted to interrogate
 him?

GREGOR

He has nothing of any use to me.
 He's nobody.
 (walking out)
 Oh, the girl's dead. Dispose of
 her.

Music swells.

1.20	OMITTED	1.20
1.21	OMITTED	1.21
1.22	OMITTED	1.22
1.23	OMITTED	1.23
1.24	EXT. SHIP AT SEA - DAY	1.24

A gentle BREEZE. The sound of WAVES. Ila and Heaven on deck.
 Ila is ill and COUGHING.

HEAVEN

Sit here mother. The air will do
 you good.

GREGOR (V.O.)

**I didn't know her then, but I wish
 I could have disposed of this girl
 too. Because she was to be the
 cause of my... well... my fall...**

The Captain PASSES BY.

HEAVEN

Captain - Captain? How much longer?

CAPTAIN

If the wind keeps up... the morning?

(beat)

You see the tower on that headland? We call it the Mad Sultan.

HEAVEN

Why?

CAPTAIN

They put a Sultan there once. Bricked up all the doors and windows. There was just a hole to pass food in. They say he's still in there and if you listen carefully... You can hear the screaming... Listen.

She listens.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

Can you hear it?

HEAVEN

No.

CAPTAIN

Well, when you hear the screams, you'll know we are in safe waters.

HEAVEN

I don't believe you. It's just the wind.

The Captain LAUGHS.

HEAVEN (CONT'D)

You seem to know a lot about Tumanbay. Are you from there?

CAPTAIN

No one is from Tumanbay. Everyone has come from somewhere to be there.

HEAVEN

Why?

CAPTAIN

Why, what?

HEAVEN

Why does everyone want to go to Tumanbay? It sounds like a cruel place.

CAPTAIN

That it is. But show me a place where that is not the case.

HEAVEN

Where we come from it's not like that.

CAPTAIN

Then why did you leave?

HEAVEN

Well, it wasn't up to me. My father thought it would be better for his business.

CAPTAIN

You are going there to marry I hear.

HEAVEN

My father needs me to marry a resident of Tumanbay in order to licence his business or something.

CAPTAIN

And what business is that?

HEAVEN

Same as you captain.

CAPTAIN

The sea?

HEAVEN

Slaves.

He LAUGHS. Ila starts to COUGH.

CAPTAIN

(to Ila)

Are you feeling all right madam?

ILA

Yes... I will go and lie down. Heaven, come with me.

1.25 INT. SHIP AT SEA. CABIN - DAY

1.25

They DESCEND into the cabin. Ila SCREAMS.

HEAVEN

What is it?

ILA

It's a rat. A rat.

The Captain APPEARS.

CAPTAIN
Is everything all right?

HEAVEN
Look.

The Captain DRAWS A KNIFE and KNEELS down.

HEAVEN (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

CAPTAIN
(picking it up by the
tail)
It's all right. It's dead.

He SWINGS it towards them. They SCREAM. He LAUGHS.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
There are always rats on ships.

HEAVEN
There's blood oozing from it's
nose.

The Captain EXAMINES it.

HEAVEN (CONT'D)
How did it die?

Ila THROWS UP. Huge projectile vomit.

HEAVEN (CONT'D)
Mother?

ILA
I'm sorry, I just need to -

HEAVEN
Come, you need to lie down. Don't
worry... Captain send someone to
clean up.

A door OPENS. The MATE APPEARS.

MATE
Captain.

CAPTAIN
What is it?

MATE
You need to come down to the aft
hold, captain.

CAPTAIN

Why, what's happened?

The Mate is clearly distressed, BREATHING HEAVILY.

HEAVEN

What is it?

MATE

(to Captain)

Just come, please.

CAPTAIN

(to Heaven)

It's nothing. Take care of your mother.

They GO. Heaven HELPS her mother onto a bunk.

HEAVEN

Lie here, mother. Rest. Everything will be all right, you'll see. You'll see.

MUSIC.

End of Episode 1.01.