

TUMANBAY

Episode 1.05 - "Strangle Hold"

by

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5.1 EXT. DESERT - DAY 5.1
Horses. Foot soldiers. The sound of a large ARMY ON THE MOVE.

5.2 INT. PROVINCIAL PALACE - DAY 5.2
Doors OPEN. QULAN STRIDES IN with his retinue of OFFICERS. FATIMA, wife of the governor of the province is there to greet him.

FATIMA
I bid welcome to General Qulan,
commander of the armies of the
empire.

QULAN
Where is the Governor?

FATIMA
My husband, Lord Usman will be with
us shortly. As will our dear
friends, the governors of our
neighbouring provinces.

She KISSES him on each cheek.

FATIMA (CONT'D)
Your officers can wait here.
Come...

OFFICER
General?

QULAN
Stay here.

She LEADS Qulan through a set of DOORS and ALONG a corridor.

FATIMA
Do you like the chandeliers?

QULAN
What?

FATIMA
The finest crystal. We had them
specially made in Vinta and brought
here. Very delicate. It was quite
an enterprise actually - by sea,
then on the back of a camel across
the desert. And amazingly, we had
no breakages.

QULAN
Oh. May I ask -

FATIMA

Anything, general. Here in the provinces we are much less formal than in the great city.

QULAN

Yes. May I ask why you did not bring your goods through Tumanbay?

FATIMA

My husband says the import tax is so high when goods come through Tumanbay. I suppose I shouldn't say such a thing to you General... But it's no secret is it really? We already pay so many taxes to the Sultan. Why should he take it all?

Qulan is shocked into silence.

FATIMA (CONT'D)

Don't you feel the same, General?

QULAN

All this, your husband's position, this palace, the very province he governs... is all at the discretion of the Sultan and the Sultan alone.

FATIMA

Now General. We all know that's not true, don't we? The Sultan is nothing without the provincial governors. They serve each other's interests... Ah, here we are.

She OPENS a DOOR into a palatial room. There are some PROSTITUTES waiting there.

FATIMA (CONT'D)

I hope you will be comfortable here.

The Prostitutes CALL to Qulan, luring him.

QULAN

What is this?

FATIMA

Oh, I thought you might like a little company after your long march with all your horses and men.

QULAN

No! The empire is at war. I've come here to gather the provincial armies. Your husband should be here reporting to me. Get him.

FATIMA

Yes, of course, but I-

QULAN

Get him! And you tell him - and all the other governors - to report to my camp immediately. And get out of my sight.

He turns and STRIDES away.

5.3

EXT. ARMY CAMP - DAY

5.3

Horses APPROACH. Qulan and his retinue arrive back at the camp. He DISMOUNTS. The SERGEANT greets him.

SERGEANT

General. Governor Usman is here.

QULAN

Where?

SERGEANT

In your tent...

5.3A

INT. ARMY CAMP. QULAN'S TENT - DAY

5.3A

Qulan and the Sergeant ENTER to see USMAN, a well-fed, self-satisfied governor.

USMAN

Commander Qulan, your grace, firstly let me apologise for my lateness. I had meant to meet you at the gates but I got called away on business. I hope my good wife provided you with a warm welcome to our... humble home?

QULAN

Where are your men?

USMAN

Don't worry. They will be here, ready to serve our Sultan, General.

He takes a SEAT.

USMAN (CONT'D)

How is our good friend the Sultan?

Qulan observes him with derision.

QULAN

Where are the other provincial governors?

USMAN

You need to relax commander.
Remember, you are my guest here.
I've organized a banquet tonight in
the great hall-

QULAN

Forget the banquet. We will meet
here, at camp. At sunset. Send me
your musters. I want to see it
before we meet.

USMAN

But-

QULAN

Yes?

USMAN

Under whose authority?

QULAN

The Sultan's.

USMAN

Can I see it?

QULAN

See what?

USMAN

Your authority.

QULAN

(to Sergeant)

Sergeant. Take Governor Usman to
see the Sultan's seal.

The SERGEANT escorts Usman OUT.

QULAN (CONT'D)

This is exactly why Tumanbay has
allowed Maya to flourish...

5.3B EXT. ARMY ENCAMPMENT - EVENING

5.3B

Evening sounds. Cicadas. The odd horse neighing. Footsteps
APPROACHING a tent.

5.4 INT. ARMY CAMP - EVENING

5.4

Inside the tent the local GOVERNORS, a dozen confident men
who know their own power, are chatting. It's a party-like
atmosphere with old friends seeing each other after a long
absence.

As Qulan ENTERS the chatter falls SILENT.

QULAN

I bid welcome to the Governors of
the Eastern and Southern Provinces.

He bows to them and they nod casually back. Many are still eating or drinking.

QULAN (CONT'D)

And also to the Commanders of the
Border Regiments.

A group of younger men answer his bow with greater respect.

QULAN (CONT'D)

I have news... The garrison town of
Kareeba, has fallen to Maya's
forces. She's on the move. The war
has begun...

(beat)

And I have been looking at your
musters...

(furious)

... and they are a disgrace! You
have all got used to peace. You
have not kept up your records.
Governor Usman, you don't even have
a glimmering of the number of men
of fighting age in your districts,
never mind oxen, horses and camels
and foodstuffs. The army needs
arrows... by the hundred thousand;
and you are supposed to keep a
ready supply.

The Governors are hostile.

USMAN

With respect, General Qulan, the
Sultan seems quite happy with the
taxes we raise for him.

GOVERNOR 2

And besides, haven't these threats
been rather exaggerated, General?
Of course readiness should be our
watchword...

USMAN

Please do assure the Sultan of our
support but we would like, in our
turn, to be assured of his-

A CUP is THROWN across the room, splashing wine. WOLF, a
young barbarian, STEPS forward.

WOLF

What do you expect, General? These are not men, they are fat pink grubs that you put on your hook to catch fish!

OUTRAGE from the governors.

USMAN

Who do you think you are, young man?

QULAN

Yes, who are you?

WOLF

I am Wolf. I come from the Hill Country with my cavalry. For centuries we have fought for Tumanbay.

QULAN

I summoned you but I didn't know if you would come.

WOLF

We don't come at any man's call; we come when we want to, for the fight... and Maya the Grim is an enemy worthy of our time. Unlike these... grubs!

The governors SCOFF.

WOLF (CONT'D)

So what do you want me to do with them? Hang them? Waste of good rope.

He DRAWS his sword.

USMAN

Stop him, I demand you do something, General Qulan.

QULAN

Very well. That one, Commander Wolf, the fat one. You say he's a grub? Spit him on your hook!

USMAN

No, please, I am the governor of the province of-

He SPLUTTERS as he is SPITTED. CONSTERNATION among his fellows.

WOLF

At your service, General.

QULAN

Take that away. The rest of you listen to me. Your musters will be complete within three days, three days after that you will deliver men and all supplies. If not, each one of you will find himself on the hook as well. Any questions?

Silence.

QULAN (CONT'D)

Good. Now, Commander Wolf, I would like to inspect some men who are ready to fight.

They LEAVE the tent.

5.5 OPENING TITLES - MUSIC

5.5

ANNOUNCER

Tumanbay, Episode 5. "Strangle Hold", by John Dryden.

5.6 EXT. TUMANBAY. PALACE. GARDENS - DAY

5.6

A tranquil garden. AL-GHURI and the PHYSICIAN.

The light sound of a pair of scissors SNIPPING.

GREGOR (V.O.)

They say if you want peace, you should prepare for war. But what happens when your enemy *offers* you peace? Perhaps then you should remember that the most beautiful flowers have the sharpest thorns.

AL-GHURI

Just one petal?

PHYSICIAN

Yes, Your Majesty. That's all that is required.

He takes the petal and starts GRINDING it in a bowl. He UNCORKS a jar and POURS in some liquid. CADALI approaches.

CADALI

(approaching)

Ah... your highness, I have some news.

AL-GHURI

Yes, yes... Cadali. Smell this...

Cadali SNIFFS and REELS back gagging.

CADALI

It's... It's erm...

(disgusting)

... wonderful. Delightful.

Al-Ghuri LAUGHS, enjoying watching Cadali squirm. The Physician LAUGHS with him.

AL-GHURI

It's supposed to be terrible. One sip of it and you'd be dead. Isn't that right doctor?

PHYSICIAN

Without a doubt Your Majesty.
Without a doubt.

CADALI

Well, yes... I have something I need to tell you...

AL-GHURI

Now this.

PHYSICIAN

(uncorking a another
bottle)
Here, your highness.

AL-GHURI

(to Cadali)

Sniff this.

Cadali cautiously SNIFFS this time.

AL-GHURI (CONT'D)

Well?

CADALI

It's... It's...

He's too nervous to say.

AL-GHURI

Bitter. It's bitter.

CADALI

Yes.

AL-GHURI

But put the two together and...

Cadali SNIFFS a third bottle.

CADALI

Yes, very good your highness -

AL-GHURI

You see, it's the balance of the opposing forces. It's like you and Gregor.

Cadali LAUGHS.

AL-GHURI (CONT'D)

As long as we can keep the balance, eh?

CADALI

Well, your highness I have found a way to do that. It's good news. This so called "Queen" Maya... she wants to negotiate...

AL-GHURI

What are you talking about?

CADALI

Well, I have my contacts. Of course I do. It's my job. She wants to send a delegation to Tumanbay to negotiate.

AL-GHURI

Beg more like. For mercy.

CADALI

No doubt. She has heard about our armies marching out to the provinces. She is awed by our Sultan's power.

AL-GHURI

Let her beg me in person. Tell that to her "delegation".

CADALI

Yes, Your Majesty.

AL-GHURI

And keep them waiting. The bitch.
(working himself up)
Who does she think she is?

PHYSICIAN

Your Majesty, shall I get the smelling salts?

Al-Ghuri starts to GO.

AL-GHURI

I gave her dead husband a province to govern. I put him there. And now she wants to challenge me!

Physician tries to RESTRAIN the Sultan.

PHYSICIAN

Majesty please, sit down-

AL-GHURI

Get off me! You tire me.

PHYSICIAN

Sorry, Your Majesty-

AL-GHURI

What is the point of you?

PHYSICIAN

I have no point. I merely exist to-

AL-GHURI

Yes, you merely exist. That's the problem.

PHYSICIAN

Your Majesty, I'm sorry if I have offended you in any way. I am your physician. Your health and wellbeing are my-

AL-GHURI

Yes, yes, then shut your mouth!

PHYSICIAN

Yes, yes, Your Majesty, I am sorry.

AL-GHURI

Go!

PHYSICIAN

Yes, I will go.

The Physician goes.

Silence. Al-Ghuri calms himself.

AL-GHURI

Play a game with them. Make them think we are grateful. We'll organise a reception...

CADALI

Er... Of course Your Majesty. But why?

AL-GHURI

Let them beg us for mercy and then...

CADALI

And then?

AL-GHURI

We'll kill them. Send a message to my first wife Shajar to attend. She will enjoy it.

5.7 INT. TUMANBAY. PHYSICIAN'S ROOMS. LAB - EVENING

5.7

A bottle UNCORKS. A few deep inhalations. The Physician is SNIFFING something and getting a high. He lets out a long SIGH. A SERVANT ENTERS. The Physician composes himself.

SERVANT

Doctor...

PHYSICIAN

I told you not to disturb me when I'm working? What do you want?

SERVANT

Lady Shajar is here.

PHYSICIAN

Shajar? Here?

SERVANT

Yes.

PHYSICIAN

What does she want at this time?

5.8 INT. TUMANBAY. PHYSICIAN'S ROOMS. RECEPTION - EVENING

5.8

SHAJAR ENTERS and stands before the Physician.

SHAJAR

I want your help.

PHYSICIAN

Please. Sit. Are you unwell?

SHAJAR

No. I have business I need to deal with... discreetly.

PHYSICIAN

Business?

SHAJAR

There are two ways we can do this:
either we can talk in a round-about
way with me saying such things as,
"I have a friend who needs help"...
Or we could get straight to it -
what would you prefer?

PHYSICIAN

My lady, I...

Shajar SIGHS impatiently.

SHAJAR

We both know what I'm talking
about. A woman in my position has
many enemies. I need to protect
myself. I want to talk to you about
poison.

PHYSICIAN

Poison? My lady, I am a physician.
I don't-

SHAJAR

I *know* what you are. What do you
think the Sultan would do if he
realized he was treated by a slave
of the poppy?

Physician SIGHS, resigned.

PHYSICIAN

Does it matter if it is discovered
afterwards that the victim was
poisoned?

SHAJAR

Hmm... no. I don't care what
happens afterwards.

PHYSICIAN

That makes it easier. There's
something I've been working on...

He OPENS a drawer and TAKES OUT a jar. He SPRAYS the air.

SHAJAR

What are you doing?

PHYSICIAN

Perfume. You spray it like a
perfume. You spray it in the face.
It's simple, surprising...
effective...

5.9 EXT. TUMANBAY. STREET - EVENING 5.9

Horses and people.

GREGOR (V.O.)

The First Wife, Shajar... ruthless.
As far as she's concerned her son
could have died in the army. Better
a dead son than a weak son. I need
to be ahead of her. I need to move
faster than she can move... And
then stop her...

5.10 INT. TUMANBAY. THE HAFIZ'S PALACE - EVENING 5.10

A door shudders OPEN, CLOSED. GREGOR ENTERS, his boot heels
ECHOING. A cadaverous priest, BELLO, emerges from the
shadows.

BELLO

Your Excellency?

GREGOR

Where is His Holiness?

BELLO

This way, my lord.

Bello indicates a low entrance. Gregor GOES through. We
emerge into a room where the HAFIZ sits at a table TURNING
the velum pages of an ancient text. He is already drunk and
still DRINKING.

HAFIZ

What are you doing here? No one is
supposed to be here.

GREGOR

How are you, Eminence? Are they
looking after you well?

He PLACES a bottle on the table.

GREGOR (CONT'D)

Arak. The best. I hear you like the
best.

HAFIZ

I know you. You're Al-Ghuri's dog.
When there's dirty work to be done,
you do it. Gregor, your name is
Gregor.

GREGOR

Here...

He UNCORKS the bottle and POURS. A pause.

GREGOR (CONT'D)
It's not poisoned. I'll drink...

He GLUGS from the bottle.

GREGOR (CONT'D)
Ahhh, good stuff. When you came here, our Sultan gave you sanctuary. You are the spiritual guide to all believers, the jewel in the Sultan's turban, why would he want to kill you?

HAFIZ
(drinks)
What do you want, Gregor?

GREGOR
Just to talk.

He DRAGS a chair across the floor and SITS.

GREGOR (CONT'D)
You've no objection?

HAFIZ
Would it change anything if I had? I thought not.

GREGOR
When you were making your way here...

HAFIZ
Ahh, a long journey and hard too.

GREGOR
Were you alone?

HAFIZ
Alone. Just me and Bello.

GREGOR
Bello?

HAFIZ
My priest.

Out of the dark Bello REAPPEARS.

BELLO
My Lord.

GREGOR
And how did you travel. On foot?

HAFIZ

Yes... and if we found a
sympathetic traveller, sometimes
there was a donkey for an old man.

GREGOR

And as for resting?

HAFIZ

The hard ground.

GREGOR

So cold, the nights.

HAFIZ

So cold.

GREGOR

And your burden?

MUSIC swells.

HAFIZ

Burden?

GREGOR

The things you carried with you?

HAFIZ

No, no, nothing... I had to leave
quickly... There was no time, no
time at all.

He sinks his drink in one agitated GULP.

HAFIZ (CONT'D)

Bello, tell him there was nothing.

BELLO

We took nothing.

HAFIZ

Nothing.

GREGOR

Not any little keepsake to ensure
you of a warm welcome wherever you
might end up?

HAFIZ

Nothing, nothing. We were wanderers
on the face of the cold earth. Is
that not so, Bello?

BELLO

It is as you say, Eminence. Wisdom
was our only freight, as the poet
has it.

GREGOR

But now you've come to rest? How fortunate. Well, I shall take no more of your time. A blessing perhaps, before I go?

HAFIZ

Yes, yes, go in peace, may all the Gods give you good fortune.

Gregor STANDS to leave.

GREGOR

But just in case the gods withhold their gifts, it is wise, is it not, to take what may not be given? And you are generally accounted a wise man, are you not?

HAFIZ

Bello will see you out.

He DRINKS.

GREGOR

...For a drunk?

He GOES through the dark arch. Bello WALKS with him.

BELLO

My Lord...

GREGOR

Hmm?

BELLO

In our holy books there is a verse about the wise Sultan who does not venture into the dark without a lantern so that when he needs, he may see what is hidden.

GREGOR

And what *is* hidden, Master Priest?

BELLO

Many things but that wise Sultan-

GREGOR

With the lamp?

BELLO

May find them out.

GREGOR

And be well rewarded for his...

(beat)

... foresight?

BELLO
He might hope so.

GREGOR
He might...

In a sudden flurry he DRAWS his SWORD - LUNGES. Bello CRIES OUT.

BELLO
No, please!

GREGOR
Hush, Master Priest.

He LIFTS his sword. Pinned on the end, a rat.

GREGOR (CONT'D)
It was merely a rat.

BELLO
(nervous)
They are everywhere here.

GREGOR
Well here's the thing: service and betrayal; rewards and punishments. Serve me well, Bello, and you will prosper, serve me ill...

Gregor steps CLOSER to Bello, with menace.

GREGOR (CONT'D)
Good night, lamplighter.

The door creaks OPEN, he is GONE.

5.11 EXT. TUMANBAY. STREET - DAY

5.11

IBN is at a toy stall. Something is SPINNING on the counter.

STALL HOLDER
You see, it spins like this.

IBN
No, no, this is too advanced for her.

STALL HOLDER
How old is your child?

IBN
She's just a baby.

STALL HOLDER
Then something soft like this...

Gregor APPROACHES.

GREGOR

Ibn Bai... I went to your house.
They said I would find you here.
(noticing the stall)
What is this?

IBN

It is what it is, Your Excellency.

GREGOR

I'm touched by your devotion to the
task I gave you.

IBN

While she is in my care, she will
want for nothing, Excellency.

GREGOR

Good. But my advice is not to get
too close. The child will not be
with you for long.

IBN

No... of course not. I realise-

GREGOR

I need your help.

IBN

Yes?

GREGOR

A little mystery. Remember the
scrolls I described to you?

IBN

Yes.

GREGOR

Come with me.

IBN

What, now? But, the child is
waiting for me...

GREGOR

When I told you to take care of it,
I didn't tell you to become its wet-
nurse. Come...

5.12 EXT. TUMANBAY. MARKET - DAY

5.12

Gregor and Ibn are WALKING through the market.

IBN

They *all* look old - that's the whole point of scrolls. That's what people want. These artisans - they use every trick in the book...

GREGOR

But I have a feeling these might be different.

IBN

What, here? In the market?

GREGOR

Just wait. See them and then decide. You know about these things, I don't. This might be an opportunity for you.

IBN

Can I ask you something then?

GREGOR

What?

IBN

Why are you so interested in them?

GREGOR

Do you know what I do? For the Sultan?

IBN

I know you are not responsible for his collection of art and calligraphy.

GREGOR

Ah, this is it. The Hameed brothers.

He KNOCKS on the door.

IBN

No one home. So why don't we-

He KNOCKS again.

GREGOR

One of them will always be here.
(trying the door)
They are an eccentric couple.
Brothers, I believe from - oh...

Gregor PUSHES the door open...

5.13 INT. TUMANBAY. SHOP - DAY

5.13

Gregor and Ibn ENTER.

GREGOR

Hello? Hello?

He MOVES through a musty room.

IBN

(looking about)

Workshops like these. They're all
over Tumanbay, churning out
reproductions.

GREGOR

Hello?

He GOES towards a back room.

GREGOR (CONT'D)

Ah...

(Seeing someone)

Gentlemen, here we are again. I
apologize for the intrusion. Your
door was open. This is my
associate.

IBN

Good day.

GREGOR

He is a scholar, you might say. I
have brought him with me so that we
might examine the pieces again.

No reply.

GREGOR (CONT'D)

Gentleman, perhaps you would be so
kind as to-

IBN

They're not moving.

(approaching)

Wake up, wake up...

He TOUCHES one of the brothers on the shoulder.

A body FALLS off a chair onto the floor. Ibn recoils back,
shocked.

IBN (CONT'D)

Oh God... What is that? The plague?

Gregor examines and SNIFFS the bodies.

IBN (CONT'D)

What are you doing? Cover your face!

GREGOR

No those aren't plague pustules.
(looking around)
There was a struggle - see? Here...
And then they were carefully
propped back up onto their chairs.

IBN

Poison?

GREGOR

Yes. It must have happened recently
- there's no sign of bloating yet.

IBN

But who...?

GREGOR

You would be a wiser man not to ask.

IBN

What about the scrolls...?

GREGOR

(pulling open drawers
anyway.)
Huh? Oh, they won't be here any
more. That moment has passed.
(going back out)
Come... It's better not to be
discovered here.

5.14 EXT. TUMANBAY. MARKET - DAY

5.14

Gregor leads Ibn OUT of the shop. Ibn CLOSES the door behind them.

IBN

I shouldn't have come. I shouldn't have come...

GREGOR

Quickly. Hide your face.

They MOVE quickly through the market.

GREGOR (CONT'D)

I should have known.

IBN

Known what?

GREGOR

She wanted me to go to see the Hafiz. She wanted to delay me so she could do her work here.

IBN

And this, this woman, whoever she is... You think she has the scrolls now.

GREGOR

Of that I am certain.

They STOP.

GREGOR (CONT'D)

Look at the market. It's busy and full of life, yes?

IBN

Yes...

GREGOR

Have you ever seen a bee hive when it's dying? It looks busy but the bees are aimless.

IBN

No, I haven't. But I don't understand-

GREGOR

When the queen's dead the bees are everywhere, flying around. To the outside observer it looks as though the hive is healthy, but it's not. It's dying, because the heart of it is dead, and it just doesn't know it yet.

(beat)

Go back to your home, take care of the baby. You will hear from me in due course.

He stands for a moment watching Ibn WALK AWAY.

GREGOR (V.O.)

Shajar... That's the trouble with ex-lovers - they know you too well. And no one has the capacity to hate you quite like an ex-lover.

5.15 INT. TUMANBAY. PALACE. SHAJAR'S ROOMS - DAY

5.15

Shajar is at her dressing table. She is examining the scrolls.

There is a KNOCK at the door.

SHAJAR
Who is it?

CADALI
(from behind the door)
My Lady?

SHAJAR
Cadali...

CADALI
I need to talk to you.

SHAJAR
My maid isn't here. Please come
back later when I can receive you
properly.

CADALI
I'm afraid that is not possible.
The Sultan sent me.

SHAJAR
Yes?

CADALI
May I come in? It would be easier
if-

SHAJAR
Wait one moment.

She takes the scrolls and PLACES them in a box. She then
TAKES the box and puts it in a safe. She LOCKS it.

She goes to the door and OPENS it.

SHAJAR (CONT'D)
It's is quite inappropriate for you
to come here to my quarters without
an appointment.

CADALI
Hmm, yes. My apologies.

He STROLLS IN looking around.

SHAJAR
Well?

CADALI
Yes?

SHAJAR
You said the Sultan...?

CADALI

Yes. This peace delegation from Maya. The Sultan asked me to inform you that your presence will be required at the reception tonight.

SHAJAR

Is that all?

CADALI

Yes.

SHAJAR

Then I will be there.

CADALI

Good.

SHAJAR

Good.

She USHERS him to the door. He lingers.

CADALI

There was just one other thing.

SHAJAR

Yes?

CADALI

Gregor.

SHAJAR

What of him?

CADALI

I was hoping you might know of his whereabouts.

SHAJAR

And why would that be?

CADALI

No reason... Except, well... weren't you close once?

SHAJAR

Now, now Cadali. I didn't think you were the sort of man to listen idle gossip.

CADALI

No, not *idle* gossip.

SHAJAR

I am the Sultan's chief wife. My husband is *all* my delight, always has been and always will be. Everything I do is for him.

CADALI

Of course, of course. But you and Gregor-

SHAJAR

I serve one master Cadali - the Sultan.

CADALI

As do we all. I was merely *enquiring* after Gregor. After all he has been rooting out the spies here in the palace, keeping us all safe...

SHAJAR

Well, he's not here.

CADALI

My point precisely. He never seems to be around. Are we to believe he has rooted out all the spies?

SHAJAR

I wouldn't know about anything like that.

CADALI

Well, no, no... You wouldn't. We can but trust that Gregor is doing his job.

SHAJAR

The Sultan trusts him. That's good enough for me.

CADALI

Yes. Well, I must be off. Goodbye, my lady.

He TURNS to go.

SHAJAR

Of course, if Gregor himself were disloyal in any way...

CADALI

In what way precisely?

SHAJAR

I don't know. He talks to a lot of people.

(MORE)

SHAJAR (CONT'D)

Perhaps that's his job - watching everyone, looking for spies, as you say. But who watches the spy catcher?

CADALI

Just... Be vigilant.

SHAJAR

Vigilant?

CADALI

Especially now, with all that is happening. Better to be suspicious than to - Ah...

SARAH is STANDING there carrying a tray. It gives Shajar a START.

SARAH

Your sherbet, My Lady.

SHAJAR

Yes, put it down there.

SARAH

Is there anything else, Madam?

SHAJAR

No. Go.

Sarah goes.

SHAJAR (CONT'D)

Wait. Yes. Tell the wardrobe master that I am to attend a reception tonight.

SARAH

Yes, My Lady.

She GOES.

CADALI

So, this delegation. It may mean everything. It may mean nothing. But we have to show our unity, our might. You are the queen. Wear your best jewels.

SHAJAR

What do they want?

CADALI

They say they want peace.

SHAJAR

And what do you think they want,
Cadali?

CADALI

Well, perhaps we are like the child
on his birthday morning waiting for
his present. And there it is all
wrapped up. What is it? He can
barely wait. He unwraps it. He
reaches in. Is it a beautiful model
canon that he will be able to fire
at his model soldiers? Or is it...
(snaps his fingers)
...a deadly scorpion.

5.16 INT. TUMANBAY. PALACE CORRIDOR - DAY

5.16

Sarah WALKS along the corridor. Gregor APPEARS from a doorway.

GREGOR

Where are you going?

SARAH

I have some duties to attend to,
for My Lady.

GREGOR

Go to my rooms.

SARAH

My Lord?

GREGOR

You heard me.

She hesitates.

GREGOR (CONT'D)

I have some news. Your baby...

He WALKS away.

5.17 INT. TUMANBAY. PALACE. GREGOR'S ROOM - DAY

5.17

Sarah APPROACHES Gregor's room. A quiet KNOCK. Gregor OPENS the door. She ENTERS. He CLOSES the door.

GREGOR

You are serving your lady well?

SARAH

What news of my child?

GREGOR
We will come that.

SARAH
Has something happened?

GREGOR
Just... sit. We need to talk. We will talk about what I want to talk about first. All right? Sit.

She SITS.

GREGOR (CONT'D)
Nothing to worry about. I prefer being down here. It's... peaceful. No one will disturb us.

He SITS down close to her.

GREGOR (CONT'D)
Tumanbay is under attack. There is grave danger from this... Maya.

SARAH
(alarmed)
My Lord?

GREGOR
Not by her armies. General Qulan will see to that. I'm talking about an enemy within. I am responsible for that.

He lets that hang for a moment, making Sarah very nervous.

SARAH
My lord, if you think that-

GREGOR
What do I think?

SARAH
That I am-

GREGOR
Are you?

SARAH
No. I am a slave, My Lord. You put me in Her Lady's chamber. I am loyal to you.

GREGOR
I have reason to believe your lady, Shajar, is hiding something. Something that may harm us. I need you to search for them.

SARAH

What are they?

GREGOR

Two scrolls, about so long, they have been restored - ornately decorated. In a jewelled box.

SARAH

I've seen them.

GREGOR

You have?

SARAH

She brought them back from the market. She keeps them in the-

She STOPS not wanting to give it away.

GREGOR

Yes?

(chuckling)

That's all right, I don't need to know where they are. I just need you to bring them to me.

SARAH

But... how?

GREGOR

Take them when she is not there?

SARAH

And when she discovers they are missing?

Gregor shrugs.

GREGOR

I only want to see them. For a short while. And then you can return them.

SARAH

I can't, she keeps them in a safe.

GREGOR

Then get the key.

SARAH

She carries it with her. On her gold chain.

GREGOR

Hmm...

He STEPS AWAY, thoughtful.

GREGOR (CONT'D)
I saw your child today.

SARAH
How as she?

GREGOR
I worry about that man, the one who
is looking after her for you.

SARAH
Worry, why?

GREGOR
I don't know if he's taking proper
care of her. She cries a lot. She's
looking very thin. I wonder if he's
feeding her?

Silence.

GREGOR (CONT'D)
Perhaps you would like me to
intervene?

Silence.

GREGOR (CONT'D)
Of course. Anything to help. If the
child were to die, I could never
forgive myself...

SARAH
I'll bring you the scrolls.

GREGOR
Good.

He GETS UP.

GREGOR (CONT'D)
Now, both of us need to be
somewhere else...

5.18 EXT. TUMANBAY. PALACE COURTYARD - DAY

5.18

Cadali and a small group of OFFICIALS wait for Maya's
delegation to arrive.

Gregor WALKS swiftly towards them.

CADALI
Ah...

GREGOR
Not late am I?

CADALI

You are. But as it happens, so are they. Busy catching spies?

GREGOR

The work goes on. Excuse me, Cadali...

(to Guard)

You there...

He MOVES away towards one of his Palace Guards and has a CONVERSATION which Cadali can only partly hear.

GREGOR (CONT'D)

Good... They have arrived and are being escorted through the imperial gates by the Palace Guard.

They PACE.

CADALI

You appear to be spending more time outside the palace than in, Gregor. What do have out there? A secret family? A love nest?

GREGOR

The security of the palace requires a long reach.

CADALI

Day and night.

GREGOR

Yes. If I have to work day and night in the service of my Sultan, that is my honour.

CADALI

Of course. Well it is a great honour for us all to serve under such a wise and benevolent ruler.

GREGOR

It is. It is.

Cadali starts LAUGHING. Gregor JOINS IN.

CADALI

Why are we laughing?

GREGOR

You laughed first.

CADALI

We are very alike, you and I, Gregor.

(MORE)

CADALI (CONT'D)

We don't have wives, we don't have children, we live only for the glory of Tumanbay. And we are ambitious too. It's just unfortunate things have not worked out for you... Or your brother.

GREGOR

How so?

CADALI

Well, clearly Maya is defeated or why has she sent her envoy to beg us for mercy? That is my triumph. A triumph of diplomacy. While you have been sneaking around the palace doing - well I have no idea what you've been doing - and your brother, the great general, has been wasting his time in the provinces building an army that isn't required, I have been-

A GONG sounds. Horses APPROACH. Metal gates swing open.

CADALI (CONT'D)

Ah, here they are...
(calling)
Welcome. Welcome...

The ENVOY (from Episode 1) dismounts.

CADALI (CONT'D)

Welcome back to Tumanbay, Effendi Red.

ENVOY

(looking around)
This is... a rather meagre welcome. One fat man, a spy-catcher, a bunch of slaves.

Cadali LAUGHS.

CADALI

Well, after last time, perhaps we are... a little less open-hearted. How is your queen Maya?

ENVOY

Let's get on with things. Where is the Sultan?

CADALI

All in good time. All in good time. Come, come...

GREGOR

You will excuse me. I have business elsewhere...

ENVOY

And have you found your master spy yet?

GREGOR

What?

ENVOY

Isn't that what you are looking for?

GREGOR

I think you have been misinformed, Sir.

ENVOY

You are Gregor, head of the Palace Guard?

GREGOR

I am.

ENVOY

Come and talk to me if you want to know things.

GREGOR

What things?

ENVOY

Come and talk to me. I can save you time and effort. It doesn't matter to us any more...

(he makes to leave)

Excuse me...

Gregor and Cadali look at the Envoy, uneasy.

CADALI

Through here, Effendi Red. Er...
Your men can wait here.

(to his Guard)

Officer, see that they are made comfortable.

OFFICER

Certainly, Excellency.

CADALI

(to Envoy)

Would you like to follow me...

5.19 INT. TUMANBAY. PALACE. CORRIDOR - DAY

5.19

Cadali LEADS the Envoy through the palace.

CADALI

I see you have brought no "gifts"
with you this time?

The Envoy doesn't respond.

CADALI (CONT'D)

You know the palace well, it seems.
You know what time we get up, what
we have for lunch, what we do...
You are like a conjuror. You
conjure up illusions for us and we,
like children at a party, are
supposed to believe that you have
these great powers.

ENVOY

You are right. I have no power at
all. I am merely the messenger for
My Queen... And I only know what my
informants tell me. I rely entirely
on the quality of their
information. Their future depend on
it.

CADALI

Their future depends on His
Excellency Gregor. If he finds
them, they have no future.

He stops and guides the Envoy into a large room.

CADALI (CONT'D)

I don't think you saw the Sultan's
fine collection of ancient
sculptures last time. They are just
in here.

They GO in.

CADALI (CONT'D)

Some are very old. They depict the
gods of ancient times. Before men
knew there was but one God...

The Envoy glances at them with disdain.

ENVOY

I want to see the Sultan, not his
stones.

CADALI

Of course, of course... And he
wants to see you.

(MORE)

CADALI (CONT'D)

(leading him in)
We have prepared some light refreshments for you here. After such a long journey-

ENVOY

I don't need anything.

CADALI

No..? Then just wait here.

The Envoy SITS.

CADALI (CONT'D)

We have arranged... well... a little entertainment for your amusement.

He claps his hands twice. MUSIC starts. A curtain is pulled back revealing a group of DANCING GIRLS with ANKLE BELLS.

CADALI (CONT'D)

Some local flavour. Our custom... Enjoy...

Cadali CLOSES the door, LEAVING the Envoy.

5.20 INT. TUMANBAY. PALACE. SHAJAR'S ROOMS - EVENING 5.20

Shajar lies in her bath. Sarah POURS in some more hot water.

SHAJAR

It's hot enough.

SARAH

Yes, My Lady.

SHAJAR

More unguents.

Sarah PUTS DOWN the jug and CROSSES the room. She starts FILLING another jug.

SHAJAR (CONT'D)

Hmm... Pour it in here.

She soaks for a moment. Lost in thought.

SHAJAR (CONT'D)

The city is so empty now with all the soldiers gone. It's quieter too - it must be all the men who make the noise. What's the market place like? Is it quieter there too?

SARAH

I haven't been to the market.

SHAJAR

No? You don't go out? You don't have any... friends that you meet?

Sarah is silent, not quite sure how to answer.

SHAJAR (CONT'D)

Yes, in the end, it all comes down to who your friends are. And to loyalty.

(beat)

You remember what I said about loyalty?

SARAH

Yes, My Lady.

SHAJAR

It's important that you look after your own people and that you know you can count on them. Do you remember when you first came to me, what I said? What did I say?

SARAH

You said, if I was loyal... you'd be kind to me.

SHAJAR

And if you are not loyal? Do you remember what I said?

SARAH

I think you said you would be *unkind* to me.

SHAJAR

No, I think I said... you would suffer like you've never suffered before...

(beat)

I see you watching me. You keep a close watch on me.

SARAH

Of course, My Lady.

SHAJAR

Of course. To serve me better.

SARAH

Yes.

SHAJAR

But you are being watched too, you know?

SARAH
My Lady? I don't-

SHAJAR
No.

SARAH
My Lady-

SHAJAR
No, I don't want to hear it.

Shajar STANDS.

SHAJAR (CONT'D)
Now you can go and prepare my
dress. Should it be the blue silk
or the gold banares? I have to meet
a peace delegation. We all have to
make decisions in this world, don't
we?

SARAH
Yes, My Lady.

She GOES into another room.

5.21 INT. TUMANBAY. PALACE. RECEPTION ROOM - EVENING

5.21

The musical entertainment continues. But the Envoy is getting impatient. He stands and MOVES towards the doors. He OPENS them and looks out along the corridor. He spots an ATTENDANT.

ENVOY
You! Slave!

ATTENDANT
Your Excellency?

ENVOY
Get me someone I can talk to.

ATTENDANT
Yes... Of course... but why don't
you relax and enjoy the-

ENVOY
Don't tell me what to do!

Cadali APPEARS further along the corridor.

CADALI
Your Excellency, how are you
enjoying the entertainment?

ENVOY

I don't care for it. I will speak to the Sultan and I will speak to him now.

Cadali smiles and considers this.

CADALI

His Majesty, Sultan Al-Ghuri is eager to see you too. Let me - Ah, Gregor.

GREGOR

(approaching)

The Sultan apologizes for keeping you waiting. Affairs of state. Please, follow me...

CADALI

After you, Effendi Red...

They LEAVE.

5.22 INT. TUMANBAY. PALACE. SHAJAR'S ROOMS - EVENING

5.22

Sarah helps Shajar to GET DRESSED.

SHAJAR

(looking in the mirror at Sarah)

Where do you come from Sarah with your lovely blue eyes? Who are you?

SARAH

I told you, My Lady.

SHAJAR

But where do you come from really?

SARAH

My Lady, far from here. A small country. I told you.

SHAJAR

Yes, yes, but I don't believe you.

SARAH

Well My Lady, what can I say? I'm telling you the truth.

SHAJAR

Are you?

SARAH

I came from a country in the North. Kassik. I was sent with my brother... As a gift.

SHAJAR

Where were you sent?

SARAH

Far away... We were captured by pirates.

SHAJAR

Where were you sent? Where did you learn all your graces and languages, your skills. You're no ordinary slave. Where were you educated?

Sarah remains silent.

SHAJAR (CONT'D)

Don't worry, I worked this out some time ago. Why do you think I've kept you so close to me? You can be useful. Never throw away anything that can be useful.

She LEANS FORWARD and PICKS UP a gold necklace from her dressing table.

SHAJAR (CONT'D)

See my gold chain? It's useful, it looks beautiful and if I need to sell it I can.

SARAH

Can I hold it, My Lady?

SHAJAR

Yes. If you wish.

She HANDS it to Sarah. Sarah examines it closely.

SHAJAR (CONT'D)

I dare say you once wore such fine chains...

SARAH

Yes.

SHAJAR

I knew it. You see, you can talk to me. I can help you.

SARAH

Shall I put it on for you?

SHAJAR

Please.

SARAH

And may I ask you something?

SHAJAR

Go on.

SARAH

The box in the safe...

SHAJAR

Oh, that.

SARAH

You brought it back from the market. You keep it hidden away. What is it?

SHAJAR

That, my dear girl... is my insurance. And that of my son, Madu. Think of it as our future, if you like.

SARAH

I'm sorry, My Lady, but you don't have a future.

Sarah PULLS the chain hard around Shajar's neck. Shajar STRUGGLES, but Sarah doesn't let go. Shajar GASPS and TWISTS, her feet kick, as she CHOKES to death.

5.23 INT. TUMANBAY. PALACE. CORRIDOR/THRONE ROOM - EVENING 5.23

GREGOR

Your Majesty, Effendi Red.

AL-GHURI

So good to see you again Effendi Red. How is your "queen"?

ENVOY

She is well, Your Majesty.

AL-GHURI

Good. I'm so pleased. You look flustered.

ENVOY

Far from it.

AL-GHURI

I hope you have been enjoying the modest entertainment we have arranged for you. A banquet is, as I speak, being prepared in our kitchens. We had to replace the kitchen staff last time you were here, so I can't guarantee the quality...

He LAUGHS.

AL-GHURI (CONT'D)

Now I understand you wish to discuss terms for peace.

ENVOY

That is right.

AL-GHURI

Well?

ENVOY

Queen Maya has instructed me to inform you that she will withdraw her armies and cease all hostilities...

AL-GHURI

"Queen Maya"... Good...

ENVOY

On these conditions...

AL-GHURI

(humouring him)

Conditions? What conditions would they be?

ENVOY

That you hand over the reliquary and that the Hafiz, currently under your protection, comes with us. He will live in Maya's court under *her* protection and be her spiritual guide.

CADALI

This... this reliquary. We have no knowledge of it.

ENVOY

It is our information that the reliquary was carried out from Bakur by the Hafiz. Bakur is now under Maya's protection. It was therefore stolen from us. We want it back.

AL-GHURI

Are you mad?

ENVOY

I'm sorry... What?

AL-GHURI

(getting rally agitated)

How dare you dictate terms to me!

(MORE)

AL-GHURI (CONT'D)

Our army is in the field. We will destroy you and hang your queen from the imperial gates. Are you insane giving terms to me? We are ready to destroy your queen and raise your whole damn province.

CADALI

Majesty, Majesty-

AL-GHURI

Shut up, Cadali. I'm not playing this game any more. I want this son of a whore-

ENVOY

No, Your Majesty, think about this. Yes, you have your army in the field, you are on a war-footing...

Over this: an OFFICER APPROACHES Gregor and WHISPERS in his ear.

OFFICER

Excellency, you need to come.

GREGOR

What? Not now. Can't you see I'm-

OFFICER

No. You need to come *now*.

Gregor senses the urgency in the Officer's tone and MAKES HIS WAY OUT.

ENVOY

...All for what? Because I threw the severed head of some worthless governor in front of you? Because your nephew got poisoned - or was he? Perhaps it was something that just gave him a belly ache, and he was never in any danger at all...

(beat)

Perhaps this has all been an illusion. It's the pairing of the nail of the smallest finger of Maya's left hand. If she really wanted Tumanbay, she would take it. But all she wants... is the reliquary.

5.24 INT. TUMANBAY. PALACE. CORRIDOR - EVENING

5.24

Gregor HURRIES along a corridor with the Officer.

GREGOR

Who found her?

OFFICER

One of the eunuchs, Excellency. I came to get you at once.

GREGOR

And her maid. Where is she?

OFFICER

I don't know.

A Servant is waiting for them.

SERVANT

Excellency. In here...

He OPENS a door. Gregor GOES IN to see Shajar's lifeless body.

OFFICER

Is she...?

GREGOR

Yes, she is. Get out. Get out!

He PUSHES the Officer and Servant OUT of the room and closes the door. He KNEELS beside her.

GREGOR (V.O.)

She was beautiful once. She still is, even in death.

GREGOR

You clever bitch. You knew what Maya wanted and you had it. But...

He starts looking around. He OPENS the door to the unlocked safe.

GREGOR (CONT'D)

... someone was even cleverer than you.

There's a KNOCK on the door. The STEWARD ENTERS, followed by the Physician.

STEWARD

Excellency, the physician...

PHYSICIAN

I came as soon as I could.

GREGOR

You're too late doctor.

(to Steward)

The Lady's maid. Sarah...

STEWARD

We can't find her. Shall I send for
the palace guard?

GREGOR

(getting up)

Yes. Do that. When you find her
bring her to me.

GREGOR (V.O.)

**If I'm still in this world. If the
Sultan hasn't put my head on a
spear for failing to keep the
palace safe from spies and
assassins...**

GREGOR

Now I must inform the Sultan that
his favourite wife is dead...

He WALKS away.

MUSIC.

End of Episode 1.05.