

The Faun

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Cast of Characters:

MICHELANGELO: Age 14 to 15, small, perhaps autistic, suffers bullying, wants to be a sculptor, but his overbearing, abusive, miserly father wants him in the wool business.

GRANACCI: Age 16 to 17, a nobleman's son and his best friend.

TORRIGIANI: Age 16 to 17, a nobleman's son and a conceited bully.

MAINIARDI: Age 17 to 18, a serious student with talent and ambition.

RUSTICI: Age 15 to 17, a serious female student.

MONTELUPO: Age 15 to 17, the class clown who draws too many nudes.

MASTER BERTOLDO: A master sculptor in bronze and marble tasked with teaching these wild students.

LODOVICO: Michelangelo's money grubbing, abusive father. He is timid with his wife.

LUCRETIA: Lodovico's second wife and Michelangelo's kind stepmother. She knows how to handle Lodovico. She's one of the best cooks in Florence, Italy.

LORENZO DE MEDICI: The generous, enlightened and cultured ruler of Florence. Patron of the arts and literature, he wishes to turn Florence into a hub of learning and culture.

CONTESSINA DE MEDICI: Age 15 to 16, Lorenzo's youngest daughter, she is kind, open minded, supportive, strong, clever, kind, frank, teasing and playful, and a bit pushy.

Constanza: Age 17 to 18, her older female cousin, open, kind, generous.

BOCCHINATA: Age 15 to 16, a girl puffed up with self importance, snide, catty, an annoying snob with a taste for mockery.

Faun: Ancient bust who only Michelangelo can hear.

New Faun: A modified copy who only Michelangelo can hear.

Lady-in-Waiting: A member of Contessina's Retinue.

MICHELANGELO'S THREE BROTHERS: They can be doubled.

The parts of Mainiardi, Montelupo, Lorenzo, Lodovico, the Fauns, can be doubled up when needed. Females *can play the* roles of all the apprentices with the exception of Torrigiani and Mainiardi. A production can be done at least nine players.

Two Female Models: Female players may double up.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

Scene 1: The Sculpture Garden.

Scene 2: The Sculpture Garden after class.

Scene 3: The dining room of Michelangelo's home.

Scene 4: The Sculpture Garden early in the morning.

ACT II

Scene 5: Lorenzo's study.

Scene 6: The Sculpture Garden.

Scene 7: Lorenzo's Study.

Properties:

Easels and benches for the students,
Sketch pads and drawings,
Pedestals for busts and clay models,
Pedestals can be inverted plastic trash cans covered with
sheets,
Models can be draped in sheets like Grecian women,
Chisels and mallets,
Modeling clay for Michelangelo to fidget with,
Plates cups and pots and pans, and wine bottles for the
dinner scene and the snack scene.

ACT I**SCENE 1**

(At rise, students are working in the Sculpture Garden of Lorenzo de Medici. Some students are sketching models, some are carving and some work with clay or wax models. Each student has a bench and a table to work at. Master Bertoldo is moving about and instructing.)

Michelangelo

Draw, draw, draw, translating sketches to wax, and wrapping stinky mud soaked cloth around clay figures! I've had it! I've been here nearly a year! I want to carve marble!

Torrigiani

Want to carve some stone? You can start with your head, and fix your ugly face. *(The students laugh.)*

Master Bertoldo

Just be patient Michelangelo. We're developing your talent. Like I always say... *(They groan.)* If you want a muscle to be strong, you have to work with it. *(They laugh again.)* You houseapes shut up and listen! *(He pauses, as everyone gets quiet.)* It's that way with talent when you want it to be strong. *(Everyone laughs except Michelangelo. His hand goes up)*

Master Bertoldo

What now, Michelangelo?

Michelangelo

How're drawing charcoal lines on paper and pricking wax with bone tools going to develop my carving muscles?

Master Bertoldo

Estupido! Don't you understand metaphors? Think of talent as dough. If you want to make it useful, you'll have to work with it until it's soft and pliable. Then you can use it. If it just sits, it becomes hard like stone.

Torrigiani

Yeah, just like his head and then he'll have something to carve on. *(They laugh and jeer.)*

Master Bertoldo

That's enough, you overdressed jackass! You're all here to be the next generation of Florence's sculptors, not comedians! Everyone, get back to work... Now, not last year! *(Everyone works again. Bertoldo moves around instructing. Granacci sits next to Michelangelo.)*

Michelangelo

They're always picking on me. I ask an honest question and they make fun of me. Why does everyone hate me?

Granacci

They don't hate you. They're only teasing you. It could be worse. If they didn't like you, they'd just ignore you. It's all in fun! Dude, come on, start laughing, play along with them, it's how to get accepted. Smile and say something nice, or funny. People like that.

Michelangelo

That's easy for you, but not me. I'm no good at that stuff. I'm not going to fake smiles or say stuff just to make people like me. That's not what I'm about. It's lying, especially after they've been messing with me. Granacci, do you know what it's like when people laugh at you? You want to find a deep, dark cave, dive in, roll into a tight ball, and wait for the end of the world!

Granacci

Oh, come on. They're just having a little fun. They'll ease off if you start giving it back to them.

Michelangelo

Do you know what they call me?

Granacci

Let's see, there's Marblehead, Fiercface, Muleangelo, and Chickenlegs Buonarrotti, The life of the Party, Tombface, The One Shirt Wonder of Florence, The Grim Sweeper, Bonehead Buonarrotti, and Old Smelly!

Michelangelo

...Old Smelly? I haven't heard that one!

Granacci

Well, I just made it up.

Michelangelo

What?! Why would my best friend do such a rotten thing?

Granacci

I wanted to bring your attention to something.

Michelangelo

What's so important you have to insult me?

Granacci

...Maybe bathing once in a while?

Michelangelo

Come on, Granacci, spit it out. What are you saying?

Granacci

I'm trying to help you.

Michelangelo

You really mean...?

Granacci

Yes!

Michelangelo

Me?

Granacci

Yes.

Michelangelo

I smell?

Granacci

You smell.

Michelangelo

You're wrong, Granacci!

Granacci

A good nose never lies.

Michelangelo

I'm sorry, you're dead wrong.

Granacci

How's that?

Michelangelo

I stink! You smell! You pathetic crowd pleasing poser.
(Annoyed, he lies down and starts manipulating a ball of clay.)

Granacci

You're doing it again.

Michelangelo

I'm not doing anything, leave me alone! *(He's still playing with the clay.)*

Granacci

You're not in the deepest, darkest cave. *(He pauses.)* The world isn't ending anytime soon. *(He still plays with the clay.)*

Michelangelo

I'll wait as long as it takes. *(Rocking)*

Master Bertoldo

Holy Mother of God, he's at it again! Granacci, get him back to work! *(Everyone is watching to see what happens.)*

Granacci

Yes, Master! Buonarrotti, stop it or I'll do something drastic. *(He's still playing with his clay.)*

Michelangelo

Like what, giving me a bath? Go ahead and try! You won't survive! *(Torrigiani gets an idea and takes a pitcher of water. He walks to Michelangelo, and pours the pitcher over him. He stops playing with the clay and stands in shock and anger as everyone laughs.)*

Michelangelo

That was cold and wet! *(There's more laughter. He goes back to playing with his clay.)*

Torrigiani

That's Noah's Flood! The world's just ended, get back to work, Marblehead! *(Granacci takes a blanket off a statue and wraps Michelangelo with it. He hands him a piece of marble to fidget with.)* Look at Baby with his blankie and toy!

Master Bertoldo

You only made it worse, Torrigiani, shut your trap and get back to work!

Granacci

Calm, calm and cool like stone, Michelangelo. We're carving a path for you to get to that marble. *(He plays with the marble.)*

Michelangelo

Stop treating me like a kid! You're making me look stupid!

All the Pupils

You already looked that way! *(He pulls the blanket tighter and becomes comfortable. Granacci whispers in his ear. He rocks for a little while more, stops and nods to Granacci.)*

Michelangelo

Alright, I'll get back to work!

Granacci

He's working now, Master

Master Bertoldo

Good, now all of you get back to work or I'll kick you all out and start over with monkeys! *(Everyone resumes work.)*

Michelangelo

Yes, Master. *(He resumes drawing. Granacci brings him a towel.)*

Granacci

Sorry, I had to do that. (*Michelangelo dries off and gets back to work.*) You needed that. I'm giving you good advice.

Michelangelo

Alright, so I'm stubborn and hard to get along with!

All the pupils

No, Really?

Granacci

You don't need to be. Just try listening to people more. Hey, what you said about you stinking and me smelling?

Michelangelo

Yes?

Granacci

That was a good joke. Being funny's a good thing. You should try it more. You should try other things.

Michelangelo

Like taking a bath?

Granacci

Yeah, at least once a month.

Michelangelo

You made me look stupid. But I'll think about it.

Granacci

Good. But don't just think about it.

Michelangelo

It follows logically. But you still made me look like an idiot!

Granacci

It's hard reaching you sometimes. You shouldn't waste a whole day of work like that. I needed some desperate measures.

Michelangelo

You didn't need to make me look stupid!

Granacci

I know that. But you had to get working again somehow!

Michelangelo

Consider my feelings before making poor judgments and acting on them! You really made me look stupid!

Granacci

Michelangelo, I was just trying to...

Torrigiani

Granacci just shut up. You're getting into an argument with him! Just ignore him like you're always telling us. Practice what you preach!

Granacci

Oh, yeah, you're right. *(He gets back to work.)*

Michelangelo

Humph! Those who say they know you best know you the least! *(He makes a martyr face while he works. Bocchinata enters sculpture garden from the right.)*

Bocchinata

Is Master Bertoldo around?

Montelupo

He's over there.

Bocchinata

Thank you, sir.

Montelupo

Think nothing of it.

Bocchinata

Don't worry, I won't.

Montelupo

You little snob! *(She walks to Master Bertoldo.)*

Bocchinata

Master Bertoldo?

Master Bertoldo

Yes?

Bocchinata

The Magnificent One, requests the pleasure of your company to look over a piece of ancient sculpting he's just bought.

Master Bertoldo

Interesting! I'd be delighted to get away from these house apes for a little while! Hey, Mainiardi, you take charge in my absence. I want to see results when I return. Let's go, girl. *(He leaves with her. The students work but quickly become distracted.)*

Mainiardi

I wonder what kind of statue he's got this time.

Montelupo

A nice, hot looking Venus would suit me just fine!

Michelangelo

Montelupo, you're a pig!

Montelupo

At least I don't smell like one! *(Laughter.)*

Torrigiani

It's probably some old Roman wine a servant found in the cellar.

Michelangelo

Lorenzo has more important things for the Master to do.

Rustici

Let the Magnificent One and Bertoldo chug wine in peace.

Michelangelo

You're so disrespectful to Master Bertoldo and Lorenzo!

Torrigiani

Listen to Marblehead, now, he's calling the Magnificent One by his first name. That's really disrespectful!

Michelangelo

I have more admiration and respect for Lorenzo the Magnificent than any of you!

Montelupo

What do you know about the Magnificent One?

Michelangelo

I know more about him than any of you do!

Mainiardi

Prove it, Marblehead!

Michelangelo

Lorenzo De Medici succeeded his father Piero as ruler of Florence in 1469. He's one of the greatest rulers of Florence. He's a firm, fair, but flexible ruler. He's never accepted titles of nobility but Florence respects and reveres him as if he were born to one. The only title attached to him is Lorenzo the Magnificent! (*Everyone groans and mutters in irritation.*) He's called that out of love. He's a great patron of the arts, literature, learning, and is a wonderful poet!

Montelupo

Oh my, I think it's time for lunch! (*Michelangelo bores Montelupo, Mainiardi and Rustici and the models being to leave.*)

Michelangelo

He provides Florence with lavish entertainments and works. Florence loves him. But there are problems. Powerful people grow jealous. In 1478 the Pazzi family tried to murder Lorenzo and his brother Giuliano in church, but succeeded only in wounding him... (*Torrigiani leaves. Granacci stays.*) They succeeded in killing his brother, Giuliano. It's suspected that Pope Sixtus IV...

Granacci

Hey, Michelangelo!

Michelangelo

...may have been involved a foul conspiracy...

Granacci

Michelangelo, I'm going to lunch. Smell you later. (*Granacci walks off.*)

Michelangelo

I haven't finished. Wait, I have ...more ...to say. *(Alone, he looks to his left, to his right, smells his armpits, shrugs and goes back to work. He freezes in mid stroke and the lights fade dark.)*

END SCENE 1**SCENE 2**

(At rise, it's early evening. Everyone is dismissed. Michelangelo has pretended to leave and remained in the Sculpture Garden. He's borrowed Granacci's sculpting tools and experiments on discarded marble. His concentration is intense. He doesn't notice Contessina de Medici, and Bocchinata enter.)

Contessina

So, you're the noise maker! *(He's startled, dropping the tools and stands in alarm at discovery.)*

Bocchinata

He's acting like he's been caught with his hand in the poor box! *(They laugh.)* He's not too smart if those tools are all he's taking! What were you doing? And...Wooooo, do you stink, kid!

Michelangelo

I was...was prac...I was practicing my art.

Bocchinata

Since when is stealing an art? *(She laughs cruelly.)*

Michelangelo

I meant Master Bertoldo's training.

Bocchinata

Master Bertoldo's training you to steal? I don't think so.

Contessina

Explain what you're doing here after class has ended. Are you cleaning up in exchange for lessons? *(He looks into her eyes. There's an attraction and a connection, but he is uncomfortable. She sniffs and pulls away a bit.)*

Michelangelo

I...was practicing stone carving. I'm not supposed to yet, but I want to start soon!

Bocchinata

I wonder what your Master will do when he finds out you're carving with tools and stone that aren't yours? I bet he'll string you up by your filthy, scrawny neck, you stinking little thief!

Contessina

What's your name, boy? Come on, speak up...You have a name, don't you? (Pause.) Everyone and everything has a name. (Pause.) What's yours?

Michelangelo

N...Na...name...boy?

Contessina

Your name is Boy?

Michelangelo

N...n...no, not Boy!

Bocchinata

What a stupid name. Naught-Boy! Maybe he means Naughthead! (*Michelangelo doesn't speak.*) I know his name, my lady. Shall I tell you?

Contessina

I want to smell...I mean hear it from Naught Boy. I'm asking a question and when a Medici asks you'd better answer.

Michelangelo

You're a Medici?

Contessina

Yes, and I'm still want an answer.

Michelangelo

I am Michelangelo Buonarrotti of Florence, a student of Master Bertoldo.

Contessina

You're an art student?

Michelangelo

I'm studying to be a sculptor.

Contessina

Is that so? Are you any good, Naughtboy? I'd like to smell... excuse me...I mean, see some of your work.

Michelangelo

My lady, I haven't done anything that very interesting. All I have are sketches, wax and clay models, and they're only exercises. They're kind of boring. Now, if you don't mind, I need to get back to work. (*He turns and bends down to pick up the tools.*)

Bocchinata

How dare say that way to her ladyship! You must be too stupid to understand how much trouble you're in! (*She turns him around roughly.*) This malodorous little street beggar doesn't know his place, my lady! Just say the word and he goes back to begging and shinning boots on the corner! (*Michelangelo turns slowly to them and straightens up to his full height in pride and anger.*)

Michelangelo

I am Michelangelo Buonarrotti, of the Florence Buonarrotti. My father, Lodovico Buonarrotti was mayor of the cities Caprese and Chiusio at one time. It's true he's fallen on rough financial times, but we're still a noble family. My family is as old as yours. And I don't beg, blacken boots, or steal. My lady, your friend doesn't know her place.

Contessina

You're right, Buonarrotti. Bocchinata, we must never judge a person by looks, or act on superficial judgments.

Bocchinata

Yes, my lady. Mr. Buonarrotti, I offer my apologies for misjudging you. (*She curtsies grudgingly, catching him off guard. He returns the bow awkwardly and spits at her feet.*)

Contessina

It's my fault. I let her to tease you, and I've been very unkind. Allow me to introduce myself. I am Contessina de Medici, the youngest daughter of Lorenzo de Medici, ruler of Florence. (*She curtsies to him with true grace. He bows again.*)

Michelangelo

I'm sorry, too. I'm not used to things like this.

Bocchinata

You don't seem to be used to taking baths...
(*Contessina signals her to be quiet.*)

Contessina

Michelangelo, may I call you by your name?

Michelangelo

If...if...you like.

Contessina

Michelangelo, what do you mean when you say you're "not" used to these things"?

Michelangelo

I mean girls, my lady. I don't know a single thing about girls. (*She laughs.*)

Contessina

The first thing you should know is that we're quite human, and not, as you call us, things. Aren't there any women in your household? Don't you have a mother or sisters?

Michelangelo

My mother died when I was six. I have a step-mom but no sisters. I'm ignorant in this kind of stuff. I don't have experience. Sorry, I'm so crude. I don't mean to be different. It's just the way I am.

Contessina

But that's a good thing, Michelangelo. That means you're your own man. You should always be who you are! You don't have to be like those apes in the Sculpture Garden. Be your own ape...ohh...

Lady in Waiting

Ooops, that didn't come out right!

Bocchinata

Are you sure about that?

Contessina

I meant... man. Don't give in to superficial conventions! I know they tease and bully you, but don't stop being who you are.

Michelangelo

You've been watching the garden?

Contessina

Yes, for almost a year, when I'm bored with my studies, or curious, I start watching from that balcony. Up there! *(She points off to the upper right.)* And I knew your name all along. *(Pause.)* I find myself envying you. Perhaps, one day, everyone will know your name, even if it seems like nothing now. *(Contessina's excited older cousin Constanza de Medici enters the garden.)*

Constanza

Contessina, there is something you have to see! It's very exciting! You and Bocchinata need to see it now! *(His smell takes her by surprise.)* Ohhh...Mother of God! *(She puts a hanky to her nose.)* Who's you're fragrant friend?

Contessina

He's Michelangelo. *(Points to Constanza.)* This is my cousin, Constanza de Medici.

Michelangelo

I'm honored to meet you, my lady.

Contessina

Constanza, He's a Buonarrotti, of the Florentine Buonarrotti. He's a protégé of Master Bertoldo. He's

reviving the art of sculpting and bronze making in Florence. Isn't that so?

Michelangelo

I, I, I...well...I'm still pretty much a student...nothing really special or anything...

Constanza

Oh, a creative genius with humility. Now that's refreshing and charming. Have you ever tried perfume?

Contessina

Shhhh, Constanza! He was going show us some of his work when you came by. Would you care to see it too?

Constanza

It sounds interesting. Perhaps we can see two interesting things this evening.

Contessina

That sounds like fun. What is it?

Constanza

Your father bought an old Roman or Greek bust. He wants you to see it. We can all see it after we see Michelangelo's stuff.

Contessina

What do you say, Michelangelo?

Michelangelo

I don't really have much to show you. They're just some exercises. I don't think you'll find them interesting.

Contessina

Why do you smell...I mean...sell yourself so short? Let us decide on our own. *(Bocchinata grabs the sketchbook, and passes it to Contessina. She studies it seriously, smiles and passes it to Constanza. She is impressed and hands it back to Michelangelo.)*

Constanza

These aren't so dull, uninteresting, or unexciting. They show extreme sensitivity and passion. God's given you a great gift Michelangelo. You shouldn't belittle it, or yourself.

Contessina

You should believe in yourself. You don't think you were selected to study here with Master Bertoldo for nothing, do you?

Michelangelo

I studied with Master Ghirlandaio before he sent me here. Sometimes I wonder if he was just getting rid of me.

Contessina

The others tease and bully you because they're jealous apes. Don't stop because of them.

Constanza

Michelangelo, life's about overcoming obstacles. Without struggle there's no triumph. I'm surprised an aspiring artist, hasn't learned this yet!

Contessina

Come along, Michelangelo. Constanza wants you to see something new in the palace. Perhaps it could inspire you.

Constanza

Yes, you'll enjoy this! It's fantastic! It will take your mind off your worries.

Contessina

Yes, please come along!

Constanza

(Aside to Contessina.) Are you serious? I was only being polite!

Contessina

Of course I'm serious. Now, please be quiet. I know he smells a little, but I think he's kind of interesting.

Constanza

I hope he cleans up nice, for your sake. Honestly, I wonder about you sometimes. *(They both turn back to him.)*

Contessina

Please come along with us.

Michelangelo

I really shouldn't.

Contessina

Why not? We are Medici and we invite you.

Constanza

Oh...of course...You're our guest.

Michelangelo

Thanks for inviting me. But I can't until Master Bertoldo gives me permission. I don't want to make him mad.

Contessina

I admire your loyalty, integrity and respect for your Master.

Constanza

Another time, then, when you have permission from your teacher. (She sniffs.) And you're a little more prepared.

Contessina

I'll see you again, and we can have a longer conversation about life and the world. After I've seen this bust with Constanza, I can tell you all about it.

Michelangelo

Yes, that would be nice.

Contessina/Constanza/Bocchinata

Goodbye, Michelangelo Buonarrotti. *(They leave him alone on stage. He's confused by the conversation and his feelings of the moment. He shakes his head, sniffs his armpits, shrugs and goes back to work with the discarded stone. The lights fade.)*

END SCENE 2

SCENE 3

(At rise, it's dinner time in the Buonarrotti home. The evening meal is served. Three brothers at the table, Bunonarrto, Giavonsimone, and Lionardo, one chair is empty. Lodovico, the father, sits at the head of the table as Lucretia, Michelangelo's stepmother serves dinner.)

Lodovico

Lucretia, this dinner's too expensive. You're always getting the most expensive ingredients! You're cooking us into the poorhouse!

Lucretia

Your stingy penny pinching will take us into starvation! Being frugal and poor doesn't mean eating badly!

Lodovico

A modest meal from simple ingredients is all I ask! Keep things under control and watch those prices. It's not impossible.

Lucretia

You never turn down these "expensive" meals. You complain while I'm cooking! But you shut up when it's time to eat, don't you! Then you start complaining again after you've eaten it all up. You only complain so you can hear yourself talking about money and your nobility! And you've never thanked me once, you arrogant, old Tuscan mule!

Lodovico

Lucretia, the Buonarrotti are still a noble family. We've just fallen on difficult times. I must account for every last penny that's left of our fortune. Our estate must survive!

Lucretia

If you want to increase the Buonarrotti fortune go and find a better position than sitting on your big, round, noble rump!

Lodovico

A family as noble and ancient never does manual labor!

Lucretia

My cooking isn't driving us into poverty! It's your mule headed Tuscan pride!

Lodovico

Be quiet, woman, it's time to eat! *(She finishes serving the meal and looks at the empty chair and shakes her head. Everyone else begins eating.)*

Lodovico

More wine, please. *(She pours.)* Ah, thank you. *(Pause to drink.)* Hey, Michelangelo's late again. Why is he always so late?

Lucretia

He's at the Medici school for artists Ghirlandaio sent him to.

Lodovico

That's no good. At least Ghirlandaio paid him. Now he brings home nothing. That school's a big waste of time. His daydreaming of this art business must stop!

Lucretia

He's dreaming of a future while others in this house dream of the past! *(He slams down his drinking tankard, giving her an angry look. She looks at him in defiance. There is an ugly silence. Michelangelo enters and everyone but Lodovico relaxes.)*

Lodovico

You're late again! Next time you're late, no dinner! Now, sit down. You and I must discuss some important matters. *(Michelangelo sits but does not eat.)*

Lucretia

Eat, boy, eat. *(He eats a bit of bread.)*

Lodovico

Why are you always late? It's nearly dark.

Michelangelo

I'm working on my skills, Father.

Lodovico

Does Master Boracchio think you have less skill than the other students?

Michelangelo

No.

Lodovico

Does Master Beertoos say you need to improve?

Michelangelo

Master Bertoldo says we all need to work harder on our skills.

Lodovico

Are the other students working as late?

Michelangelo

I'm the only one.

Lodovico

Why does Master Beartoad make you work so late?

Michelangelo

I'm doing it on my own.

Lodovico

What? You're doing this on your own, why?

Michelangelo

I want to impress the Master by improving my work.

Lodovico

Hasn't Master Tomatohead said anything about your work yet?
(Pause.) Doesn't he like it?

Michelangelo

I don't know. He's been giving me instruction, but he's hasn't really said much about my work.

Lodovico

Hasn't Master Beerhead taken a real look at your work?

Michelangelo

Yes, but like I told you, he hasn't said much.

Lodovico

Maybe you haven't impressed him because you aren't very good. Have you thought of that?

Michelangelo

I don't know.

Lodovico

How do you get along with the other students?

Michelangelo

They bully and make fun of me, except for Granacci.

Lodovico

I think they don't like you, or your work. I think it's pretty much the same with your master. *(He sighs.)* You're wasting your time, son. You've been there nearly a year. It's time to quit and be apprenticed to the Wool Guild. That trade will bring in some money for us. I'm getting you released to them tomorrow.

Michelangelo

I'm not ready to make a final decision, Father. *(Lodovico stands from his chair abruptly. Everyone but Lucretia and Michelangelo flee. Lodovico moves to center stage before the table.)*

Lodovico

What did you say to me?

Michelangelo

It's not time for a final decision, Father.

Lodovico

I didn't really hear you! Stand in front of me and repeat it. *(Michelangelo walks to center stage and stands before Lodovico.)* Now, say that again.

Michelangelo

Father, I'm not ready for a final decision.

Lodovico

The decision's no longer yours to make. Starting in the morning you quit this dreaming of being an artist and become apprenticed to the Wool Guild.

Michelangelo

But Father... *(Lodovico strikes him across the face. Michelangelo wobbles from the blow, but stands! Lucretia is outraged and on her feet.)*

Lodovico

How dare you talk back to me! Keep your mouth shut and listen! Tomorrow you quit this school for bums and start learning a useful trade!

Michelangelo

No. *(Lodovico strikes him again.)*

Lodovico

This is not about your will or useless dreams! *(He strikes him twice in the face. Lucretia rushes to center stage and gets between the two antagonists.)*

Lucretia

Stop it! Stop it right now, Lodovico, or so help me...!

Lodovico

Stop interfering or I'll sock you one, woman!

Lucretia

Go ahead and sock me, you stubborn, miserly mule and see what happens. But don't you dare hit this boy again! Do you understand!

Lodovico

Lucretia, he needs to stop dreaming and earn a real living. Can't you see that?

Lucretia

He won't earn anything if you knock his brains out!

Lodovico

What are you sticking your big nose into this?

Lucretia

I have an idea.

Lodovico

Oh, you have an idea? Why should I even listen?

Lucretia

You will because it involves Michelangelo, food, time, the wool guild and money.

Lodovico

(Sighs.) I may as well, I've tried everything else.

Lucretia

Let's make a deal we can all agree to? Will you listen, now?

Lodovico

Why not? Let's hear your big deal.

Lucretia

You give Michelangelo one more month at Master Bertoldo's school to make progress and impress him. I'll shop for cheaper ingredients and cook modestly and save money. If at the end of this month nothing's changed, he'll quit art and join the Wool Guild. What do you say?

Lodovico

You're not just beating your gums, woman? You'll really cut back on the expenses?

Lucretia

Give Michelangelo that month and I will. What do you say?

Lodovico

(Pause.) You and I can agree all we want. It means nothing until he agrees.

Lucretia

It's up to you, now, Michelangelo. Will you agree? *(He is silent. He looks at his father and then to his stepmother and sighs.)*

Michelangelo

(Pause.) I agree.

Lodovico

Then I agree also. I'm going to go read now, my appetite's been ruined. *(He leaves the room in frustration and defeat.)*

Michelangelo

Mama, you shouldn't do this! You love cooking. You're an artist in the kitchen. You shouldn't give up what you love.

Lucretia

I'm not giving anything up. I know that Tuscan Mule's palate and stomach. He may be stingy, but he loves eating like a nobleman. He'll be begging for those fancy meals in a month. I've bought you a little more time with a tiny sacrifice. Your dream's worth the effort, Michelangelo.

Michelangelo

What if nothing changes?

Lucretia

You might go back to Ghirlandaio's studio. At least he paid you. Maybe the Wool Guild won't be so bad. Besides, we'll have a month to come up with another idea. Make the best use of your time. But, I believe you'll succeed. Your dream comes from the Creator. *(He kisses her with affection.)*

Michelangelo

Thank you Mama, I promise to do my best.

Lucretia

I know you will! Let's see to those cuts and bruises. Pheww! And you're getting a bath my little stray cat. *(She begins cleaning the wounds.)*
Freeze, lights out.)

END SCENE 3

SCENE 4

Lights on the sculpture garden. (It is early morning. Michelangelo, his face covered in cuts and bruise, he's rocking in the fetal position.)

Michelangelo

One month and it's the stupid wool guild! I have to give up art because of money. I just want to be happy. What's wrong with that? Why don't people let me to do what I want? I'm not stealing, destroying property, hurting or killing anyone. But they're going to make me do something I'll hate! Why do I have act like everyone else because that's what everyone else does? One last month of my dream and then off into a world of stinking dyes and itchy wool! Wool, I hate it. I really hate wool! Why do I need to find a position, build up wealth, respect, marry, have children and die, with wool. They may as well suffocate me in a pile of wool and set it on fire. What difference will it make if I don't do what everyone else does? How many people can write a poem, paint a picture, or carve a masterpiece from marble? And how many people can build an Acropolis or the Pyramids? It's going to be a miserable life in the crummy Wool Guild! *(Pause in thought, then sigh.)* I wonder how you can kill yourself with wool bolts. *(He plays with his clay. Lorenzo De Medici enters to look over the sculpture garden five beats after Michelangelo's rant and notices Michelangelo.)*

Lorenzo

Well, Good Morning, kid. Aren't you here a little early?

Michelangelo

(Michelangelo is startled as gets to his feet.)
Good morning, Excellency.

Lorenzo

Oh please, don't call me that. "Your Excellency" was my Dad. You can all me Lorenzo.

Michelangelo

You're Lorenzo de Medici, the Magnificent One?

Lorenzo

Yes, but I'm not really that magnificent. A ruler of a city is really trapped man. Artists and poets have far more freedom.

Michelangelo

But you're one of the most powerful men in Italy. When you want something done, you just have to snap your finger... bang, it's done.

Lorenzo

Yeah, Yeah, but they shouldn't me call Lorenzo the Magnificent. They ought to call me Lorenzo the Overworked. I'd really like to lock myself in my office and a poem or two, maybe a play, or enjoy the art I've been collecting. But the world's pretty demanding. That's why I like to come here and see the work you kids do. Hey, I don't believe I've met you yet, kid.

Michelangelo

I am Michelangelo Buonarrotti of Florence.

Lorenzo

My little girl told me about you. Hey, what happened to your face?

Michelangelo

I had an argument with a Tuscan mule.

Lorenzo

What?

Michelangelo

I wanted to go one way and he had other ideas.

Lorenzo

Why haven't I seen you in the Palace?

Michelangelo

Bertoldo hasn't given me permission to see your art collection yet.

Lorenzo

You ought to come and see my Faun. It's quite unique! I think you'd really like it!

Michelangelo

I can't go until Master Bertoldo gives me permission.

Lorenzo

Hmmm, well, I give you permission.

Michelangelo

Master Bertoldo might not like that, Lorenzo.

Lorenzo

Your Master works for a man called Lorenzo the Magnificent. When The Magnificent One requests the pleasure of someone's company no one objects. I'll send for you after lunch, and don't forget to bring your sketchbook.

Michelangelo

Thank you, sir. I'm honored.

Lorenzo

I'll see you after lunch. *(He shakes his hand, bows and leaves.)*

Michelangelo

(Michelangelo stands stunned.) I'm sure glad I got a bath last night. I may be kicked out in a month, but I'll get to see some great art and hang out with Lorenzo the Magnificent! *(The other students begin to enter and set up their projects. There is not much work going on, just classroom gossip and horseplay as they await Master Bertoldo. Granacci enters last.)*

Granacci

What happened to your face?

Michelangelo

I was arguing with the Tuscan mule.

Granacci

What did your muledaddy say?

Michelangelo

He gave me a month to impress Master Bertoldo with my work. If the month goes by and there's no change, it's the Wool Guild. My stepmother came up with the idea, so I agreed.

Granacci

You need to tell Master Bertoldo.

Michelangelo

No, I don't!

Granacci

It's only fair.

Michelangelo

He hasn't been very fair with me.

Granacci

What do you mean?

Michelangelo

Look, if I tell him about this, he'll kick me out for sure!

Granacci

He's never kicked anyone out. What makes you think he'll kick you out?

Michelangelo

He never praises anything I do and he makes me do the same stuff over and over again! He's never lets me try for any prizes and I never get to keep anything I've done! He takes everything away. And he's pushing me harder than anyone else. How welcome would you feel getting treated like that?

Granacci

Dude, he's gives everyone a hard time.

Michelangelo

Yeah, but he tells then how they're doing! Everybody keeps their portfolios, and they get to win prizes. He must be using my sketches to wrap fish or wipe his bum in the privy! I haven't carved stone yet, but everybody else has, even you. *(He goes to the ground with his clay.)*

Granacci

Hey, stop it with the clay, I just got an idea! *(He stops. He looks at a discarded marble.)* Get up! Instead of complaining and crying you need to work hard to stay here! Now start thinking!

Michelangelo

That's your grand plan? *(The other pupils file in.)*

Granacci

You're thinking, aren't you? Hey, are you still using my tools for practice after class? *(Bertoldo enters carrying rolled up sketches and a plate of fruit, the students bow.)*

Michelangelo

Yes, so what? Why's that so important?

Granacci

You're carving, that's what! Keep it up! We'll come up with idea soon. A month is a long time. *(Bertoldo enters carrying rolled up sketches and a plate of fruit, the students bow.)*

Everyone

Good morning, Master Bertoldo!

Bertoldo

Good morning, you fakers! After looking at your assignments I think my monkey plan looks better. *(He returns the sketches to the students as they line up.)*

Bertoldo

Granacci, you do very pretty work! It's very decorative! It would look very beautiful on a country outhouse! But decoration tells no story! Do it again, and this time tell a story!

Granacci

Thank you, Master.

Bertoldo

Torrigiani, you draw good portraits of horses. If horses pay for portraits you'll be a wealthy man someday. Since horses don't, you'll need a human subject. Find one and start over!

Torrigiani

Yes, Master, at once.

Bertoldo

And make sure it's not another self portrait! *(Everyone laughs, except Torrigiani.)*

Montelupo

I always said he had a horseface!

Bertoldo

Montelupo! My boy, you work makes me worry for your mind and immortal soul?

Montelupo

But why master?

Bertoldo

You've been drawing too many nudes.

Model 1

You drew us without our clothes?

Model 2

You said you weren't that kind of artist!

Montelupo

But it was only artistic license!

Bertoldo

Stop drawing so many nudes! Start dressing them in robes now! This is a studio, not a tavern, or a Roman brothel!

Montelupo

But Master...

Bertoldo

No buts! *(Everyone laughs at Montelupo.)*

Models 1 and 2

Montelupo, you're degenerate! *(He walks to Granacci.)*

Montelupo

What's a degenerate? *(Granacci whispers in his ear. Montelupo walks back to his bench in dejection.)*

Bertoldo

Rustici, your boar hunt scene is very exciting. There's much movement in it! But it will be even more exciting when you remember to put the boar in!

Rustici

Yes, Master.

Bertoldo

Mainiardi, you can start making wax or clay models from this. Once those are completed, pick out some marble.

Mainiardi

Thank you, Master. *(Master has no more sketches.)*

Michelangelo

Master, where's my work?

Bertoldo

We'll talk another time, I'm still studying them. I have a job for all of you young fakers! The sculpture garden needs a serious cleanup! Rustici and Mainiardi take a basket and fill it with all these discarded sketch paper! Torrigiani and Montelupo, start arranging the finished statues and studies in some sort of order where they aren't blocking each other from view. Granacci and Michelangelo, you get those broken, useless chunks of marble out of the way. We'll get rid of them later. Well, don't stand there like stunned sheep, get to work! Hmmm, monkeys have more sense! And they do what they're told for bananas! *(The garden bustles with activity. Each pair begins their task. Bertoldo stands watching the for a while, but then sits and begins eating from his morning fruit. Granacci and Michelangelo move three badly damaged chunks of marble. The last one is the size of a bust. It's in good condition.)*

Michelangelo

Master Bertoldo! *(He continues eating and does not look.)*

Bertoldo

What now? *(Granacci motions for Michelangelo to be silent.)*

Michelangelo

Oh, nothing, I thought you said something.

Bertoldo

Perhaps you've been hearing the voice of the muse, boy. *(Bertoldo laughs at his own joke.)*

Granacci

Take a look at we were about to be throw out. I've been watching of for this piece! *(He points to the marble.)*

Michelangelo

There doesn't seem to be too much wrong with it.

Granacci

Let's test it. *(He hands Michelangelo a hammer. He taps it in a few places.)*

Michelangelo

Hey, the cracks don't go deep at all. It's a really good piece of marble!

Granacci

Let's move it behind those bushes and cover it up with a blanket. *(They move the marble and cover it. The sculpture garden is tidy.)*

Bertoldo

The garden looks pretty good now. Your assignment for the morning is to start those revisions on the work I returned to you. Come on, get started now! Stop wasting time. Oh, if I really trained some monkeys to carve, I'd be immortal.

Granacci

(Michelangelo takes his pad and begins something new. He taps Granacci on the shoulder.)

What?

Michelangelo

That's a nice piece of marble. What are you planning for to do with it?

Granacci

It's for you, Cheese-for-brains. You have tools, talent, and now you have marble.

Michelangelo

I don't have a theme.

Granacci

You'll need to find that yourself. I can't do everything for you!

Michelangelo

Thanks, Granacci. At least I'll carve something before I get kicked out.

Granacci

Quit worrying about getting kicked out and start looking for a theme to keep you here. Use the time your mom got you.

Michelangelo

Hey, isn't this stealing?

Granacci

It isn't stealing until you're caught. Besides, they're throwing it out.

Michelangelo

I guess I've got nothing to lose.

(Freeze. Lights fade to dark.)

End Act I

