

THE GIANT

Written by

Andrea Nocchetti

Based on, If Any

Address
Phone Number

FADE IN:

A razorblade emerges from a basin of water. **LAURO**(45), a man of myriad of secrets, shaves the unkempt beard he sees reflected in a jagged shard of glass.

Across from him sits what, based on its shape and size, appears to resemble a "Kindle" e-reader with an image of Michelangelo's "David" on it's display.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

A heavy grey skies hang over a ruins of a scattering of stone buildings, churches and towers overgrown with vegetation.

INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

A once majestic residence of God now offers refuge to the survivors. Two rows of army cots are lined up alongside each other.

As Lauro lies atop his, he swipes a fingertip against the screen of a tablet looking at an endless stream of selfies taken with his teenage daughters. The photo all have one detail in common; over present in the background is the replica of the marble statue that symbolizes the city of Florence.

Lauro's facial muscles gradually tighten as a series of tiny black cigarette burn-like spots obscure entire portions of the image.

Lauro closes his eyes, then rubs them. The spots vanish.

The name ANNA appears in a corner of the screen with the text: **Chief has cancelled the stopover in Florence and moved up our departure till dawn... See you anon buddy!!!**

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Preparations for the imminent departure are busily under way. As some survivors gas up the vehicles, other check pistols and rifles and still others pack up foodstuffs and other provisions.

INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

Lauro stares at the tablet and, turning it face down on the cot, kneels down to slide a crowbar out from underneath it and ties it with a rope to a rucksack leaning against the foot of the bed.

He leaves the room.

The screen remains lit on a photo of Lauro in a dark suit embracing a woman in a pearl-coloured dress as the marble King of the Israelites acts as witness to an impromptu wedding ceremony.

EXT. GRANARY - DAY

One by one Lauro reviews the half a dozen jeeps lined up. The steering wheel lock on each snuffs any hope of borrowing the vehicle.

Lauro notices a crack on the building's facade through which the interior is visible.

INT. GRANARY - DAY

Lauro finds one of the jeeps without a steering lock.

He opens the glovebox and rummages around, looking then under the passenger seat; still nothing. He slips his hand under the mudguard.

The keys are nowhere to be found.

As the principle of Okham would suggest, the keys are right there in the ignition. Lauro flings open the garage doors.

ROAR!!! Lauro turns the key, puts the jeep in reverse and slams his foot down on the accelerator -

- after only a couple of metres Lauro is forced to an abrupt halt.

ANNA(23), curiously both wise and naive in her expression, is blocking his exit.

ANNA

Tell me this is not what I think it is.

Lauro turns off the engine, allowing Anna to take her place on the passenger side.

ANNA (CONT'D)

It'll still be there even after we've completed our mission.

Lauro shakes his head.

ANNA (CONT'D)

What's the big rush?

LAURO

Florence will still be there, but we may not.

ANNA
 Maybe not, but we have to take the
 risk anyway.

LAURO
 Not this time.

Anna looks away from Lauro.

ANNA
 Don't you even think about us?

LAURO
 Us?

ANNA
 Us as a community obviously.

LAURO
 As soon as we get to the coast,
 we'll all be going our own way.

ANNA
 Since when are you the all-seeing
 prophet?

LAURO
 Wake up Anna! We're survivors of an
 epidemic, not a happy little family
 out on a picnic together.

ANNA
 Oh, so sorry if this little flock
 of sheep has slowed the lone wolf
 down.

Lauro lowers his eyes.

ANNA (CONT'D)
 Anyway, it won't happen again.

Anna swings open the jeep's door and sets her feet on the
 ground. Lauro reaches out his hand and brushes hers.

LAURO
 If you come with me I'll be more
 likely to make it back by sundown.

A smile spreads across the girl's face.

ANNA
 I've never been to Florence.

LAURO
 But aren't you from this area?

ANNA
 The opportunity never came up.

LAURO
Point taken!

ROAR!!! Once again Lauro turns the key and steps on the gas.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Lauro drives down a dirt road, Anna leans her cheek against the headrest, eyes closed.

Some heavy bushes are blocking the road. Lauro skilfully manoeuvres the vehicle as a fog gradually settles in and, with the jeep lurching from left to right, he has a hard time making out the road ahead. He begins to slow down when -

- suddenly they hit a fallen branch and roll over it. The front right wheel is gone and the vehicle seems doomed to end up at the bottom of a ditch.

Anna opens her eyes wide.

Lauro steps on the brakes with all his strength, but the jeep doesn't slow down; by now it's out of control.

Road and vegetation magically come back into focus. Lauro once again able to see, yanks the emergency brake with one hand as he turns the wheel in the opposite direction with the other. The jeep comes to a halt only a few centimetres from the edge of the canal. By some miracle they've been spared.

Anna gets out to assess the damage.

LAURO (O.S.)
I must have dozed off for a second.
I haven't been able to sleep at
night for ages now.

Anna lifts the spare tyre out of the boot of the jeep.

ANNA
I see!

EXT. FLORENCE CITY WALLS - DAY

The stone walls battle the roots of the rising vegetation as if they were the last bastion of civilization. The jeep rumbles past the FORTEZZA DA BASSO.

Tilt - up on PALAZZO DELLA SIGNORIA emerging above the other buildings like a Mayan temple in the Amazon jungle.

EXT. PARKING AREA, FLORENCE - DAY

A dusty billboard overlooking a cemetery of abandoned cars shows the faded image of a group of young men dressed in the same purple football uniform.

Lauro parks the jeep behind the billboard and opens the boot, he tosses Anna a pistol and takes a rifle for himself.

Anna pushes two buttons on the side of her watch.

ANNA
We have a hour.
(beat)
We'll never make it..

LAURO
Yes we will.

ANNA
How?

EXT. PITTI'S PALACE - DAY

A cube-shaped building with two lateral entrance, each of which faces onto a large formal garden.

GROTTA DEL BUONTALENTI,

An artificial cavern decorated with marble stalactites and statue. Lying in front of an iron gate is the carcass of a deer.

LEFT ENTRANCE,

Lauro and Anna are crouched down next to each other looking up at a work by Buontalenti. Anna raises a pair of binoculars.

Through their lenses we see a small wooden door next to the grotto's entrance.

LAURO (O.S.)
The secret passage that Cosimo I de Medici commissioned Vasari to build so he could cross the city of Florence unseen by his subjects.

Anna shifts the binoculars to the exterior corridor connecting the grotto to the Palace of the Signoria.

LAURO (CONT'D)
You can get from here directly to the Palace in no more than fifteen minutes.

Anna puts the binoculars on the ground and turns to Lauro.

ANNA
You never told me you were a
teacher.

LAURO
I wasn't a teacher.

ANNA
How come you know so much about
this stuff?

Anna stops herself for a while.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Don't tell me you were one of those
lonely kids with no friends that
spent all their time in the
library.

Lauro smiles amused by this rather stereotypical description.

LAURO
Before all this happend I worked as
a guide at the Uffizi.

ANNA
Uffizi?

LAURO
Don't tell me you don't know the
Uffizi Gallery?

ANNA
It's where there're all those
clothes shops.

Lauro gasps as if someone had just punched him right in the
stomach.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I'm just kidding... Everybody knows
it's a contemporary art gallery.

Lauro shakes his head in dismay but it's clear from his face
that he's happy to have the company.

BUONTALENTI GROTTTO,

Two deer limp towards the remains of the dead animal, their
hooves red and swollen. They dig their teeth into it and
strip away its flesh.

LEFT ENTRANCE,

LAURO

We don't have time to wait for them to finish their meal, we'll have to distract them somehow.

ANNA

Hand me that rifle.

LAURO

What're you thinking of doing?

Anna takes hold of the weapon as Lauro holds the binoculars to her eyes, she takes a deep breath and then lets it out, looking to gather all the calm and concentration she's capable of, takes aim and -

- BOOM! BOOM!! Two perfect bull's eyes.

LAURO (CONT'D)

Where did that come from?

ANNA

From a father obsessed with guns and a daughter willing to do anything to get his approval.

BUONTALENTI GROTTO,

CRACK! Lauro kicks the door down. Now they are inside...

INT. CORRIDOIO VASARIANO - DAY

The roof and floor are mostly caved in. A few metres separate one section of the passageway from the other. Rays of sunlight filter through wooden beams and what little remains of the bridge reflecting on the crystalline waters of the Arno.

Anna goes first; she leaps up to grab onto one of the roof beams and then swings her legs up around it.

As if on a training course for Navy SEALs, she then shimmies forward bit by bit as Lauro watches, memorizing each of her movements.

Suddenly the light goes out - AGAIN! Darkness floods in.

LAURO

(to himself)

Not now, please God, not now!

His prayer is answered. A few instants later Lauro's sight returns. Anna has nearly arrived at her destination. Careful to keep her balance, she walks across a wooden platform.

Placing one foot in front of the other, she reaches the opposite side of the passage and turn to face Lauro.

ANNA
C'mon, now it's your turn.

Lauro proves no less able than his young travelling companion as he repeats her movements.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Not bad for a fifty-something.

Lauro stops to catch his breath.

LAURO
Forty-five kiddo..

Anna smiles. As Lauro continues down the passage another black-out strikes. He stops short, frozen in fear, sweat streaming from his forehead.

The smirk on Anna's face gradually begin to morph into worry.

ANNA
What's going on?

Lauro goes stock-still as he mutters something like a prayer.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Can you hear me?

No answer, Lauro is paralysed.

ANNA (CONT'D)
I'll come get you.

Anna mounts the beam, wich begins to shake. Bad idea, the bear will not hold the weight of both.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Damn!

The beam begins to sag. Lauro is now in serious danger.

LAURO
These things only last a few seconds.

ANNA
The beam is going to give away.
You've got to get to the platform.

LAURO
If I move now I'll fall right into the river.

ANNA

If you don't hurry you'll go down anyway. You have to trust me and follow my instructions.

Lauro does not reply.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Squeeze your legs in tight and stretch your arms out as far as possible.

Lauro obeys.

HIII! The beam creaks as it gradually bends a few centimetres downward at a time.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Bring your legs up to your belly but without making any sharp moves.

Once again Lauro follows her instructions to the letter, arriving a couple of metres from the platform.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Just another little push.

CRACK! the beam snaps in two - Lauro is thrown by the force of gravity toward the river but remains suspended in the void.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Listen and try to move in the direction of my voice.

Lauro repositions himself in the direction of Anna's silhouette.

LAURO

Now?

ANNA

Start winging like a pendulum and then with all your strenght throw yourself upward.

LAURO

Are you out of mind?

The section of the beam wavers threatening to split off from one moment to the other. Only a few sections of wood separate Lauro from Anna.

ANNA

Do as I tell you.

The beam is not going to hold out much longer under his weight.

As though on a children's swing, Lauro launches himself forward and backward coming face to face with the river below.

ANNA (CONT'D)

Now!!!

Lauro lets go.

BOOM! He reaches the platform with his upper body and without losing his balance hoists the rest up with his arm.

Lauro crosses the platform like a tightrope walker. A blue spot appears in the middle of nothing. A few seconds later he's looking into Anna's eyes as she reaches out to help him along the final metre.

The nightmare is over.

INT. UFFIZI GALLERY - DAY

A sombre setting where, without its visitors, time seems never to pass. Lauro and Anna walk side by side.

ANNA

How long have you known about this?

LAURO

I noticed the first symptom about a year ago.

ANNA

And there's no cure for it?

LAURO

It's a genetic degenerative condition that eventually brings blindness. I'm in the final stage.

ANNA

Now I understand your hurry. But why did you hide it from me.

LAURO

Because you would have tried to keep me from leaving the compound.

INT. UFFIZI GALLERY - SUNSET

Anna walks over to a large window. Viewed from the balcony of Florence's most ancient museum, the city across the Arno is magnificent with its historic houses, churches and palaces.

ANNA

Well, by now it matters little, the important thing is to get back.

LAURO
What are you talking about?

ANNA
Isn't obvious?

LAURO
We can't give up now, not after all
this..

ANNA
Now is when we're going to have to
quit, ten minutes from now could be
too late.

Lauro come closer to Anna, stopping a few metres from her.

ANNA (CONT'D)
Is there another way?

LAURO
Another way?

ANNA
A way to get back to the jeep
without crossing the Ponte Vecchio.

LAURO
There is an entrance to the
Basilica of Santa Felicita.

ANNA
We'll resume the passage from
there.

Lauro hesitates for an instant and says a name..

LAURO
.. Lucrezia.

Anna turns toward him.

LAURO (CONT'D)
My wife.. It was for her sake that
I decided to take this risk. She
too was a guide and adored
Michelangelo's David more than
anything else in the world. You
should have seen her telling
visitors all about it, how her eyes
shone.

ANNA
Where is she now?

LAURO

In heaven with our daughters. They were coming back after an outing at the lake one day when their car spun out of control and they were all killed instantly.

ANNA

I don't know what to say..

LAURO

Look, I'm as scared as you are but we can't live with the regret for not having completed our task. If you want to leave, go ahead, I will more than understand. It'll just be a bit harder for me to get back to the jeep.

ANNA

A quick look and we're out of here.

As the sunlight bounces off the window, a rainbow illuminates the Ponte Vecchio which is now a great deal less forbidding.

Lauro shifts his gaze to a window looking onto the opposite wing -

- The Palace of the Signoria is only few steps away.

INT. SALONE DEI CINQUECENTO, PALAZZO VECCHIO - EVENING

The first building on the planet where the destinies of politics and art entwined.

HIII! One door of an ebony wardrobe slowly opens.

Lauro gradually moves closer to the center of the sumptuous hall and gazes upward. Anna follows him. Lauro is awestruck at the sight of Michelangelo's David.

Anna parts her lips as if to speak but emits nothing but a tremulous sigh.

Lauro approaches the statue.

Closer.

Closer still.

The only thing separating him from the King of the Israelites is a small wooden scaffold that covers the statue up to the waist.

Anna glances at her watch. They only have a minute.

Lauro climbs a ladder leaning against the wooden scaffold leading to a platform at the level of the statue's lower abdomen.

He now stands face to face with the David.

ANNA

Get down here now! Our time is up.

Lauro sets his rucksack down and unties the crowbar attached to it and suddenly, as if a demon possessed him, begins to strike the statue.

Anna watches in shock.

BIP,BIP, BIP!!! The watch alarm sounds.

LAURO (O.S.)

Now there really is no more time.

Anna dashes for the wardrobe, the first step to getting back to the jeep.

CORRIDOIO VASARIANO,

Anna runs as if her lungs were made of steel. Suddenly her pace begins to slow until she comes to a complete halt. She edges closer to the portrait of a bearded man with thick curly hair. A small plaque on the picture frame carries the name of the artist; MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI.

SALONE DEI CINQUECENTO, PALAZZO VECCHIO

Shards of marble litter the scaffold. Dust everywhere. Lauro's face is white with it.

The forearm clutching the stone that slew Goliath is by now a distant memory.

DENG! DENG!! The metal claws at the chest of the biblical hero.

Anna throws herself against the scaffold which trembles slightly with the impact and placing one hand in front of the other she climbs toward Lauro.

Just as Anna reaches her hand up to mount the platform, Lauro steps on it with one boot. She grits her teeth yet remains glued to the wooden floor. Brandishing his crowbar, Lauro strikes the girl's hand and breaks it.

Shrieking in pain, Anna falls from the scaffold to land on her back on the floor below.

The last hope of saving the masterpiece appears to have fallen away with her.

But wait.. Her eyelids flutter. She's alive.

Lauro goes back to the statue, ready to strike a final blow to the face of the David.

LAURO

If you can no longer be mine, you
can belong to no one else.

ANNA (O.S.)

I suppose your wife and daughters
were all just an invention.

Lauro stops himself for a while.

LAURO

You've got a thick skin alright.

ANNA

Answer me!!!

LAURO

No, they are quite real.

Between one spam of pain and another, anna pulls the pistol from her back pocket.

ANNA

What really happened to them?

LAURO

My wife took them away to live with
her and her new husband. I haven't
had any news of them since the
start of the epidemic.

Lauro grips the crowbar with both hands, raises it back above his head -

- BANG! Blood spatters across the eyes of the great David. Lauro takes two staggering steps backward before plummeting to the floor in a pool of blood.

FADE OUT.