

Rusty Red – Like a mermaid

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RUSTY RED
THE ANIMATED SERIES

Pilot episode.

LIKE A MERMAID

by Francesco Filippi

Length 26' (including opening and closing tunes)

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NOTE: this pilot is not the first episode of the series, but is placed around the middle of the whole story arc and can be seen as an independent and self-concluding episode.

1) EXT. CLIFF - DAY [length 01:10]

The waves of the stormy sea hurl themselves fiercely against a cliff, under a dark and gloomy sky.

NARRATOR (OFF)

Not long ago, the cold Northern seas were troubled by a great war between Kerania and the Republic of Meidan.

2) EXT. SEA - day

In fixed pictorial shots: magnificent ironclads are plying the sea and clash in a battle. Their paint mingles with rust, they have mighty and elegant shapes, often bizarre and ancient looking. Their rudders are very high and the slim chimney stacks stand up towards the sky, pouring thick black clouds.

NARRATOR (OFF - cont.)

Nibbled at by salt, their magnificent ironclads were corroded by rust and consumed an ocean of coal. But the sea and the war bring along their mysteries...

3) EXT. FORBIUS CRUISER / SEA - DUSK

A cruiser from Meidan is slowly plying the sea. The wide disc of the sun is disappearing under the sea horizon and immediately fog banks appear.

NARRATOR (off)

One day, something unusual happened to a cruiser from Meidan.

An evocative MUSIC OF ACCORDION, accompanied by three more instruments, comes from a fog bank by the ship. The lonely light of lantern comes from there too. Then, the silhouette of an ancient sailboat (about 36 feet long) appears.

Lit by the warm light of the lantern, we see the FOUR MUSICIANS on board: they're masked people, wearing colored and worn out uniforms, like ancient and mysterious carnival characters. Their masks show monstrous features, reminding of Japanese demons.

Many seamen, chaotically flocked to the bulwarks deck, throw their weapons away and jump into the sea. High-ranked officers shoot them. Some seamen get hit, others drown while swimming in the freezing water.

NARRATOR (off)

That seductive and heady music turned out to be an irresistible call for the soldiers, who jumped into the water in order to reach that boat. Those poor guys were executed on the spot, because those who abandon a ship are regarded as traitors. This is the martial law...

Meanwhile, the boat tacks and, wrapped into a thick fog bank, vanishes into thin air, accompanied by the accordionist's evil and impudent laugh.

ACCORDIONIST

AHAHAHAHAH!!!

The music stops too and thus silence goes back to reign again over the sea around the lone cruiser. The waves break on the hull.

In the dark and foggy night, jackets and hats of the soldiers who lost their lives there float on the sea waves...

NARRATOR (off)
What happened remained an inexplicable event, but it was actually bound to happen again...

FADE TO

4) BLACK SCREEN

A sweet FEMALE VOICE (Captain Red's MOTHER) sings the first notes of a

SWEET MELODY

It seems the voice of a mother singing to her own child...

5) EXT. THE MILLENNIA IRONCLAD - DUSK [01:10]

FADE IN

...the melody is continued by a very small wind instrument, which is played by somebody we don't recognize.

The music gently spreads over the Millennia ironclad, which stands out on the calm sea, lapped by the lukewarm evening sun.

WRITING (superimposed)

A few days later - the Millennia, a Kerania ironclad

The warm sun is reflected on the large windows of the Millennia and this melody seems to give an unusual lightness to the mighty smoke coming out of the very tall chimney stacks of the ship.

Playing the strange instrument is CAPTAIN RED, lonely on the ship deck. Despite his old sea dog appearance, and his hands as strong as those of an experienced fisherman, he's placing those notes on the evening breeze with the touch of a poet.

Not far from him, watching the scene with admiration, is JOSEPH, a recruit still in his teens with a lost look, ill at ease in a uniform which is too big for him. With the boy we see BOCCAPORTO, a gritty mechanic with an irreverent tongue and some still a bit childish drives. Boccaporto is peeling an apple with a jack-knife.

JOSEPH

(fascinated by the Captain)
I didn't know Captain Red could play, he's so good at it...!

BOCCAPORTO

(bored, closing his knife)
Even too good...

And while saying so, he approaches the Captain, interrupting him and clapping his hands in a nicely corrosive way.

BOCCAPORTO

(finishing chewing his apple)
Alright, Red, your time's up. When are you going to move on to some more cheerful stuff?

The Captain replies, kind-heartedly accepting the interruption and smiling at his friend.

CAPTAIN RED

Be patient, Boccaporto, today the sea is making me a bit melancholic...

BOCCAPORTO
(snatching his instrument)
Then, I'm taking care of it!

CAPTAIN RED
(taking back his instrument)
I'm very sorry, this remains with me!

BOCCAPORTO
Come on! Just once!

CAPTAIN RED
No...!

BOCCAPORTO
(begging him)
I swear I won't leave this one on the boiler!

CAPTAIN RED
I said no...!

Joseph appears, interrupting the little squabble.

JOSEPH
(serious)
Captain Red... is this instrument so dear to you?

CAPTAIN RED
(watching the boy intensely)
Yes, Joseph, I always take it with me... It's the only memento I have of my mother. I think you might understand me...

Joseph smiles sadly to the Captain (he actually lost his parents not long ago), while Boccaporto, snorting, has turned to the other side, watching the sea.

6) FLASHBACK - EXT. BEACH - day

CAPTAIN RED (OFF).
She gave it to me when I learnt how to swim...

In a warm and pleasant summer light, RED as a CHILD (5 years old), all wet on the beach, receives with great joy the little wind instrument from his MOTHER.

MOTHER
(to little Red)
Blow into it. If you get a note at once, it'll bring you luck!

Red blows in a funny way, letting out a nice note.

MOTHER
(clapping her hands)
Bravo!

Red blows again a few times, but, to his disappointment, only unpleasant noises come out of it!

END FLASHBACK

7) EXT. THE MILLENNIA IRONCLAD – DUSK (cont.) [06.00]

The deck

Boccaporto snorts, sulky, leaning to the rail.

CAPTAIN RED (OFF or behind him)
(to Joseph)
That's why I'm not giving it to that brute...

But, from far away, we hear the MELODY OF ACCORDION that had hit the Forbius cruiser.

BOCCAPORTO
(plaintive, without turning)
Come on, Red, are you starting again the same old story?

The Captain is suddenly aware of the music coming from the sea too and, sensing its strange nature, rushes to a more panoramic spot on the ship, in order to have a better view: in the mighty reflection of the sun on the sea, the four musicians' boat has come very close!

The musicians' boat

These mysterious characters are playing, preparing to attack, in their own way, the Millennia too.

The deck of the Millennia

RED
How can we possibly hear this music so well, if it comes from so far away?

BOCCAPORTO
(appreciating it)
Hey! They might well be melancholic, but these notes work really well! Captain, follow the example!

Red does not reply, he's concentrating on making out the nature of this music, and how it can possibly spread through the air... Moments go by, then Red goes into action:

RED
(worried, to Boccaporto)
This is not regular music!

And, alarmed, he runs away.

Outside stairway (or the like)

Captain Red runs up to an upper part of the ship, running into several seamen, who are actually flocking in order to get a better view of the boat, entranced by the evocative and enveloping melody.

SEAMAN A

It's an incredible music!

SEAMAN B

If a woman is playing it, I swear I'll fall for her!

SEAMAN C

Let's go down and see!

CAPTAIN RED

(making his way)

Let me pass!

8) INT. CONTROL ROOM - dusk

The mighty silhouette of ADMIRAL KOMMEL dominates the control room, which is not reached by the music. Standing at the helm, the man watches through the wide windows of the room the ferment of the seamen on the facing deck of the ship. Then he speaks with severity in the communication pipe.

KOMMEL

Lieutenant Kave, what's all this ferment? Who authorized it?

KAVE (off - through the pipe)

(enthusiast)

An enchanting music is coming from the sea! Admiral, come and listen to it!

But Kommel remains impassive, thinking for a moment.

KOMMEL

(without turning)

Major Nitra!

Behind Kommel comes NITRA, a woman with charming, icy and mean looks. She's wearing a special, dark uniform. She's a real *femme fatale*, faithful executor of Kommel's will.

NITRA

At your orders, Admiral Kommel.

KOMMEL

I can't tolerate personal initiatives by the soldiers. Restore order on board, immediately.

NITRA

(with a disturbing smile)

Yes, Sir. With great pleasure...

9) EXT. DECK OF THE MILLENNIA - dusk

Captain Red runs, alarmed, to the deck (the higher area of the ship), where he bumps into RUBIE, a charming girl pilot with sinuous red hair. She's running too, and she stops the Captain for a moment, in order to share her joy with him.

RUBIE

(enthusiast)

Captain, Captain! I'll go and find out where the music comes from! It's so great!!!

And she runs down, followed by SAPPHIRE, her faithful turquoise cat.

CAPTAIN RED
(puzzled)
Have they all gone crazy?

Then, he leans over a railing addressing Rubie, who's now farther.

CAPTAIN RED
Rubie, don't take off! It might be dangerous!

But the girl seems not to hear him and keeps going on her way... Red, worried, keeps running.

10) EXT. LOOKOUT TERRACE - dusk

The Captain finally gets to a terrace where there's a sighting post with a spyglass, used by the sailor in charge.

CAPTAIN
(to the sentry, taking his place)
Let me see, quick!

SENTRY
(leaving, enthusiast)
Goodbye, Captain!
I'm boarding that boat!

CAPTAIN RED
(confused)
What?

Then he watches through the spyglass, seeing well (his POV) the four musicians' boat, which is now not very far. But he also sees that on the ship deck, in the direction of the boat, many seamen are gathering, attracted like moths by light.

11) EXT. THE MUSICIANS' BOAT - dusk

On the boat, which is approaching the Millennia, the four masked musicians are playing, drawing the seamen, while the accordionist is performing his threatening laugh.

ACCORDIONIST
AHAHAHAHAH!

What's happening is actually exactly the same thing that happened to the crew of the cruiser from Meidan.

12) EXT. LOWER DECK - dusk

On the banister in the direction of the boat, a number of seamen have gathered, and they're enraptured in listening to the music coming from the sea.

SEAMAN B
I've never felt so happy!

SEAMAN C
(shedding tears of joy)

It's wonderful...

13) EXT. THE SEA - dusk

Montage of fascinating scenes: the sun sinks into the sea, decorating the wandering clouds with an intense pink color. This ancient sailboat and the warm breeze make the atmosphere on the magnificent ironclad, pervaded by the melancholic melody, even more attracting. Even the single tubes and the cannon barrels seem to listen, tamed.

14) EXT. LOOKOUT TERRACE - dusk

On the terrace, Captain Red too, caressed by the wind, is listening to the music, moved. He is almost spellbound too, while tears stream down his face.

CAPTAIN RED

What in the world is happening to me?...

But a sudden metallic THUD awakens the Captain from that spell. And so he realizes that, at the bow, the hangar with Rubie's plane has just opened. The catapult is coming up and the plane is appearing with the engine on.

CAPTAIN RED

(alarmed)

No, Rubie...

(then, speaking into a communication pipe)

Boccaporto!...

15) INT./EXT. HANGAR - dusk (cont.)

CAPTAIN RED (OFF - through the pipe)

...Boccaporto, stop Rubie! She must not take off!

Don't listen to the call of the music!

But Boccaporto's post in the hangar is empty and the Captain's words fall on deaf ears.

The launching catapult, with its gears and steam puffs, settles down. The airplane engines are at maximum power! Despite this, we keep hearing the sound of the music very well!

Airplane Cockpit

Rubie is preparing to take off in the pilot's seat, with her cat funnily placed on her legs, a bit crushed in a relevant belt pouch.

RUBIE

(dreaming)

Ah! To fly free with the music! We'll follow it till the last drop of fuel! Isn't it wonderful, Sapphire?

The cat, appalled at the idea, moves his head as if saying "no no no!" Rubie sets her glasses and works the controls:

RUBIE

Take off!!!

Outside

The engine revs up, but a sudden detonation makes the plane fall from the deck catapult.

It's Red, who, with a small light gun, not far away, has cut off the props the airplane was resting on, therefore averting the take off.

CAPTAIN RED
(shouting alarmed)
Rubie! Don't listen to the music!
(finding an idea)
Cover your ears!

BOCCAPORTO (OFF)
Well, it doesn't work at all!

Boccaporto passes quietly by the Captain.

BOCCAPORTO (cont.)
(covering his ears)
This way you can hear it even better!

And he leaves cheerfully, swinging to the rhythm of the music, keeping his fingers in his ears, like a modern boy listening to the music with his I-pod earphones.

The Captain, puzzled, puts his fingers in his ears, and suddenly starts shedding abundant tears again, moved by the music! And he immediately feels his wet cheeks with his hands, shocked..

16) EXT. THE MUSICIANS' BOAT - dusk

It's the moment of the great music attack.

ACCORDIONIST
AHAHAHAHAH!!

At his gesture, all the musicians move to an even more pressing and vigorous music!

17) EXT. LOWER DECK - dusk

Many soldiers, on the rail, undergoing the irresistible lure of this magical music, throw their weapons away and jump into the sea, trying to get to the boat.

SEAMAN C
It's wonderful! I've got to get on that boat!

SEAMAN A
I can't resist!

But as soon as the first ones jump, a threatening order comes from behind them.

NITRA (OFF)
Stop!

Nitra appears, holding a gun in each hand with a very long barrel, determined to use them.

NITRA
Those who abandon the ship are traitors!

SEAMAN B
(Terrified by Nitra, anguished)
No...I don't want to be a soldier!

And he jumps into the water!

As cold as a machine, Nitra shoots at the seamen who have dived into the water, killing them. But more seamen are jumping, exposing themselves to her shots.

Not far away, Red and Boccaporto are watching the dramatic, highest tension scene.

CAPTAIN RED
Nitra, stop!!! Don't shoot!

But Nitra keeps shooting, unperturbed.

CAPTAIN RED
(alarmed, to himself)
What? Doesn't she feel the effect of the music?

BOCCAPORTO
(with obviousness)
Why? Has Nitra ever been sensitive to anything?
She doesn't know what she's missing!

And he jumps too!

CAPTAIN RED
(alarmed)
Boccaporto, no!!

But Boccaporto has astutely tied himself to a rope, which prevents him to leave the ship.

BOCCAPORTO
(swimming blissfully, funnily)
It's sheer bliss! I'm coming!!!

18) EXT. THE MUSICIANS' BOAT - dusk

The four musicians play with energy (the music is feverish, like a tarantella), and the accordionist shows a smug, almost revengeful laugh...

ACCORDIONIST
AHAHAHAHAH!!

Meanwhile, the sky has become darker and fog banks are approaching..

19) EXT. LOWER DECK - dusk

Nitra keeps shooting those who jump into the water.
But Captain Red gets at full speed on the spot, and, like an American football player, grabs two seamen (E and F), preventing them from jumping.

CAPTAIN RED
Don't get spellbound!

SEAMAN E
(trying to wriggle free, desperate)
No! I don't want to stay here! It's so beautiful
over there!

The Captain instinctively turns to watch the musicians' boat, suffering again the fascination of the music: and while seamen E and F jump into the sea, Red slowly starts to shed abundant tears of joy again.

CAPTAIN RED

(spellbound, moved)
They are right...
I've never been so happy...

20) MONTAGE: EXT. LOWER DECK / EXT. SEA / INT. UNDER THE SEA

Montage in time with the music (Kubrick-style): Nitra keeps shooting with the precision and the swiftness of a mantis, killing those who dive. Seamen E and F are hit and disappear among the waves.

SEAMAN E
(hit)
AAAHH!!

SEAMAN F
(hit)
AAAHH!!

Underwater, the seamen, hit, sink. The montage is a whirling and quick crescendo, up till when, underwater, in the vastness of the sea, we see many soldiers sink at the same time, like a rainfall. (MLS or LS)

21) EXT. LOWER DECK - dusk

The music stops for a little pause.

CAPTAIN RED
(spellbound, moved)
That boat is paradise... I've got to reach it!

And the music resumes with another whirling piece.

22) INT. CONTROL ROOM - dusk

Admiral Kommel is watching, worried, through the window, what's going on on the ship's lower deck.

KOMMEL
(worried)
What on earth is happening over there?
(then, with determination, unsheathing his sword)
Colonel Jordi, call my personal guards, there's a mutiny to be put down.

Meanwhile, the music is now also pervading the inside of the control room, alarming all the officers there present.

KOMMEL
How can the music get in here?

COLONEL JORDI
(at the controls)
Admiral, the doors are closed, the radio is off.
It's scientifically impossible!

KOMMEL
(after a moment of reflection)
Cannons K6 and K7. Fire at will on the boat to your left!

23) EXT. THE DECK OF THE MILLENNIA – dusk

Two cannons of the Millennium fire some shots in very quick sequence.
An explosion envelops the musicians' boat, awakening Captain Red, Joseph and the other seamen from the spell.

JOSEPH
What's going on?

But, among the smoke produced by the explosion and amidst the fog that's coming down over the sea, the accordionist's laugh starts booming again.

ACCORDIONIST (out of sight)
AHAHAHAHAH...

The music too can be heard again and the boat reappears inexplicably.

CAPTAIN RED
(alarmed)
That's not possible! It was hit squarely!

24) INT. CONTROL ROOM – dusk

KOMMEL
(tense)
All the cannons K and J: FIRE!

25) EXT. THE DECK OF THE MILLENNIA – dusk

Two groups of cannons on the side of the Millennium fire in quick sequence. The musicians' boat is shelled with shots and is enveloped again by a number of explosions.

Silence is finally restored. The boat seems to be really disintegrated, disappeared. But there's a thick fog..

26) INT. CONTROL ROOM – dusk

Admiral Kommel shows a smile of satisfaction.

27) EXT. LOWER DECK – dusk

NITRA
(watching the explosion with a cynical smile)
Too bad, I really liked those four musicians...
(then, harshly, to the remaining seamen)
Soldiers, all in your cabin! I'll report your act of insubordination to the Admiral!

28) EXT. LOOKOUT TERRACE – dusk

Captain Red runs to the spyglass, trying to spot the remains of the boat..

29) INT. CONTROL ROOM – dusk

Admiral Kommel receives Captain Red's information.

CAPTAIN RED (through the communication pipe)
Admiral, I can't see any remains of the boat...

30) EXT. LOOKOUT TERRACE - dusk

Captain Red watches more closely and sees the boat appearing amidst the fog, still perfectly undamaged!!

CAPTAIN RED
(disconcerted)
That's not possible...

31) INT. CONTROL ROOM - dusk

CAPTAIN RED (through the communication pipe)
The musicians' boat is still undamaged!

KOMMEL
Get ready to fire with all the broadside cannons!

CAPTAIN RED (through the communication pipe)
Admiral, wait! Somebody's swimming towards the boat!

32) EXT. LOOKOUT TERRACE - dusk

Through the spyglass, Red sees Boccaporto approaching the boat (by) swimming.

CAPTAIN RED
Boccaporto, no!
Damn, he cut the rope...

Then Red goes back to speak through the communication pipe:

CAPTAIN RED
Admiral, save our ammunitions, I don't think we'll
ever be able to destroy that boat...

33) INT. CONTROL ROOM - dusk

KOMMEL
(shifting the helm)
Let's tack to the right! Engines at full speed!
Let's get away from here!

34) EXT. THE MILLENNIA - dusk

The high rudders of the ship turn, the engines puff, the blades run at full speed, while the horn of the Millennia resounds over the sea.

35) EXT. LOOKOUT TERRACE - dusk

While the Millennia passes not far from the boat, through the spyglass, Captain Red attentively watches the musicians, taking a good look at their frightening masks (always his POV). Joseph comes up beside Red.

CAPTAIN RED (off)
(to himself, analyzing)
They're wearing four very different masks, I wonder
why..
(noticing Boccaporto on board)
Boccaporto!!

The Captain leaves the spyglass position, worried about his friend who has ended up in the hands of those mysterious characters.

CAPTAIN RED
Boccaporto, my friend..

Joseph and the Captain exchange a very concerned look.

36) EXT. THE SEA - dusk/nightfall

While the dark fog of the evening starts enveloping the boat again, some clothes belonging to the soldiers who have been killed float on the sea waves. While the Millennia sails away, the disturbing laugh of the accordionist echoes in the incipient night..

ACCORDIONIST (off)
AHAHAHAHAH...!!!!

FADE OUT

37) INT. DORM - night [00:28]

The seamen are sleeping in the dark dorm, packed with cots (on several levels, like bunk beds). Only young Joseph's SOBS break the SILENCE: he is overcome by melancholy, thinking, in anguish, about the seamen who have lost their lives and about Boccaporto's sealed fate [some **flashbacks** of the relevant scenes can be inserted here in montage]. He wraps himself even tighter in his sheets.

Meanwhile, Rubie's legs are actually walking among the cots. The girl goes to comfort him, holding his hand. For a moment Joseph blushes, because, after all, he is in love with her. The two of them look at each other silently for a little while, while the boy's eyes are still bright with tears. It's a moment of consolation.

JOSEPH
Boccaporto won't die, will he? I would really like
to help him..

RUBIE
Sleep, now. I'm sure Captain Red will find a way to
rescue him..

38) INT. KOMMEL'S OFFICE - night [00:55]

In his luxurious office, Admiral Kommel is studying the course under a lamplight, with a strange tool, while Red, standing, is boldly trying to talk him out of sailing. But Kommel is cold, inflexible, self-controlled.

CAPTAIN RED
Admiral Kommel, let's delay our departure, we can't
abandon Boccaporto!

KOMMEL
(without looking away from the nautical chart)
He's the one who left the ship.

CAPTAIN RED

(pressing)

I was about to do it too! I was shedding tears unwillingly! That music had a supernatural effect!

KOMMEL

...you mean not yet explained. I know.

(getting up)

However, we've got to join the 14th fleet off Cape Pinchwind in 43 hours. With or without one of our men.

(opening the door, inviting Red to leave)

Now, if you pardon me, I have to finish my work...

CAPTAIN RED

(changing strategy)

But we've got to get information on those musicians! What if they are a secret weapon of the enemy? Are we letting them attack this way more of our ships?

Red's appeal reaches the Admiral's mind, even though he replies quite formally.

KOMMEL

(with a covert smile)

Captain Red, I must admit you know well how to arouse my interest...

(getting cold again)

I've already informed the government about the presence of that unidentified boat. I'll give you 20 hours to find out its true nature. Tomorrow at dusk, the Millennia will sail for Cape Pinchwind; even without your friend.

39) INT./EXT. HANGAR - dawn [01:17]

[fast montage, martial music] The hatch of the hangar opens up, letting in a blinding light. A powerful steam puff, pistons of the engine running at full speed, with a quick movement of gears the plane gets out of the hangar.

40) EXT. AIRPLANE COCKPIT - dawn

Rubie, in the pilot's seat, operates a lever with determination.

RUBIE

Take off!

41) EXT. THE MILLENNIA/THE SEA - dawn

With a big steam puff, Rubie's airplane takes off wriggling in an acrobatic way and skimming the sea surface. It makes a spectacular turn, altering course, passes very dangerously between the two tall chimney stacks of the Millennia, and then it leaves it behind, leaving the seamen on the ship deck astonished.

42) EXT. AIRPLANE COCKPIT / THE SEA - dawn

Behind Rubie, in the passenger's seat, Captain Red is sitting with Joseph who is sitting on his knees [or stuck in a trunk, depending on the airplane model].

CAPTAIN RED

(a bit scared by the acrobatics)

Damn, Rubie, did you want to crash into the chimney stacks?

Meanwhile, Rubie has activated a mechanism that makes two small automatic arms, equipped with a mirror and lipstick, get out of the instrument panel. While the first one allows Rubie to look at herself in the mirror, the other one is perfectly coloring her lips.

RUBIE

(ironically vamp, replying)

I'm a woman, I only wanted some attention...

(then she kisses herself in the mirror)

Bravo Rubie!

...and the airplane flies away, slithering in the blue sky.

43) EXT. SEA – dawn

Flight scenes. The airplane is flying in a spectacular way among some small and low clouds, wandering over the sea heated by a lukewarm sun heralding fair weather.

RUBIE (off)

Captain, what are you hoping to find in Lamp of the South?

CAPTAIN RED (off)

Information about those who attacked us. Perhaps, somebody, in that old mercantile town, will be able to help us.

44) EXT. AIRPLANE COCKPIT – dawn (cont.)

JOSEPH

Finding the musicians' hideout?

CAPTAIN RED

I'm not sure they really are musicians.

RUBIE

What do you mean?

CAPTAIN RED

Those four were wearing very peculiar masks...

45) FLASHBACK: EXT. MUSICIANS' BOAT – dusk

We see the four musicians again, very close up, as Red saw them while watching them with the spyglass before they disappeared with Boccaporto. Now we can give more attention to the features of their masks, starting with the accordionist's one.

CAPTAIN RED (off)

One of them represented a north-European man, another one an African man. The third one an Asian man and the last one an American.

This reference to the four continents doesn't seem to be fortuitous at all...

End flashback

46) EXT. LIGHTHOUSE - dawn

A heavy wind is blowing around the Lamp lighthouse, while a huge billow crashes powerfully against the rocks.

CAPTAIN RED (off - cont.)
Perhaps they had to do with the War of the Four
Continents, even though it ended decades ago.
But I wonder what may have urged them to get
together...

47) EXT. THE SEA - dawn

In front of the airplane is the town of Lamp of the South.

RUBIE (off)
Hold on tight Captain, there are no calm waters
awaiting us.

And with a twirl the airplane hurls itself down, acrobatically.

48) EXT. THE SEA/HARBOR - dawn

...and the airplane makes a brusque landing on the stormy sea, not very far from the Lamp of the South harbor.

49) EXT. THE HARBOR/AIRPLANE - dawn

The airplane, like a speedboat, slowly enters the Lamp harbor, heading for a dock, while the old town of Lamp of the South stands over the harbor.

CAPTAIN RED
Let's scatter around the town, we'll save time.

50) EXT. THE TOWN OF LAMP - day [01:10]

Montage [cadenced music]: Red, Rubie and Joseph are walking separately down the crowded streets of the town, asking for information to passers-by or storekeepers, who actually cannot help them. Weird steam vehicles are moving around the town too. One of them, the most wrecked and noisy of them all, belongs to an old Eastern fortune teller, GUNWALE, probably a crook, who shows an aggressive sensuality not yet assuaged by age. The vehicle, which also works as her stage, moves on approaching Red.

FORTUNE TELLER
Hey there, handsome man, would you like to know your
future?

CAPTAIN RED
You talkin' to me?

And the vehicle stops with abundant steam puffs and with rusty pieces falling off in a funny way [end montage]

FORTUNE TELLER
(sensual)
Yes, I'm talkin' to you; it's rare to meet people
with such a deep look...

Red is now more alert, trying to investigate in turn the eyes of that weird fortune teller.

CAPTAIN RED

Can you read into the past too?

FORTUNE TELLER

Yours?

CAPTAIN RED

No, that of four men wandering in the sea with the looks of a European man, an African, an Asian and an American.

FORTUNE TELLER

(Starting to get more alert)

Have you seen them with your own eyes?

CAPTAIN RED

Precisely.

FORTUNE TELLER

That's really something new...

CAPTAIN RED

Do you know them?

FORTUNE TELLER

What I know about them isn't of much importance. But don't you believe in what they will tell you.

CAPTAIN RED

(tossing her a coin)

Thanks, that's great information.

The fortune teller catches the coin and says goodbye, acting in a theatrical way.

FORTUNE TELLER

I am Gunwale, the witch: with wind I come, with smoke I leave.

And steam puffs make her disappear, while her wrecked wagon starts moving clumsily again down the street.

CAPTAIN RED

(ironic)

For some mysterious reason, that woman reminds me a bit of Rubie ...

51) INT. THE LIBRARY, HISTORY HALL - day [02:15]

Surrounded by a messy pile of history books she just checked, Rubie, with a book on her head, opened like a hat, is eagerly leafing through the umpteenth book.

RUBIE

(leafing through)

Damn, is it possible that those musicians have nothing to do with that War of the Four Continents? No one talks about them.

(then, noticing a paragraph)

What? The Four Conspirators...

Rubie reads with interest.

RUBIE

(reading)

Eight months after the first battle of Urd, the most terrible conspiracy of the century took place, which put the world in serious danger...

52) FLASHBACK: INT. ATELIER - night

The tip of a brush quickly paints the scenes read by Rubie with all their details. Close, quick shots, conveying a feeling of mystery and conspiracy. The light which illuminates the painting is the flickering one of an oil lamp.

RUBIE (VO - cont.)

Four officers, serving in the armies of their respective continents, were guilty of high treason. The conspirators were Justhein, Ukaba, Yao-kai and Blue Deer.

On the painting, the brush finishes off details of flags, weapons, an island, then of a huge explosion, sweeping away whole cities.

RUBIE (VO - cont.)

Even though coming from armies fighting against each other, the four traitors gathered on a secret island, in order to create the Final Solution. So was called the most powerful weapon in the world, which would have swept away entire countries in few seconds...

END FLASHBACK

53) INT. CHURCH - day

In a dark millenary church (Romanesque style), where only faint sun rays filter through the small windows, a PRIEST is talking to Joseph. The atmosphere is austere and disquieting, as well as the priest's face.

JOSEPH

What does Mason mean?

PRIEST

It means that Colonel Justhein was conspiring behind the society's back. He was a real strategist of evil...

54) FLASHBACK: INT. ATELIER - night

The same brush finishes off the face of a possessed ogre, showing the features of the North-European mask (the accordionist's mask).

PRIEST (VO - cont.)

...who carried out a deadly extermination plan...

Now we also see the silhouette of the YOUNG PAINTER who's making the big painting.

JOSEPH (VO)

(anguished)

That's absurd... and he also made the bomb?

The brush draws another monster, with the features of the African mask.

PRIEST (VO)

I don't think so. It was designed by engineer Ukaba; he became part of the Royal Legion with the merit of having slaughtered his own people for money.

END FLASHBACK

55) INT. CHURCH - day

Joseph, a bit upset by the story, watches the curate, who, with a nod of approval confirms it's all true.

56) INT. THE COLONEL'S VILLA - day

Captain Red is talking to an old retired COLONEL. His luxurious study room is full of awards for military valor. He surely was a big shot in the Navy. The atmosphere is very formal and the colonel's way is persuasive..

CAPTAIN RED

And the third one?

COLONEL

Captain Yao-Kai was an expert in explosives..

57) FLASHBACK: INT. ATELIER - night

Once more the brush runs on the canvas, portraying a monster with the features of the Asian mask.

COLONEL (VO - cont.)

...he had served 10 years in jail for torturing his wife experimenting corrosive substances on her.

Details on objects of the atelier and on the painter.

CAPTAIN RED (VO)

How were the four of them planning to attack contemporarily the main States in the world?

We go back to the canvas, where the brush is finishing off the monster with an American pre-Colombian, sort of Incas face.

COLONEL (VO)

With suicide attacks. Major Blue Deer recruited hundreds of desperate people in South America, often young boys, and he persuaded them to give their life for his cause.

END FLASHBACK

58) INT. THE COLONEL'S VILLA - day

CAPTAIN RED

I've never heard about these attacks.

COLONEL

Because, fortunately, the conspiracy was stopped in time..

59) INT. THE LIBRARY, HISTORY HALL - day

Rubie keeps reading.

RUBIE

It was thanks to bold general Cikut...

60) FLASHBACK: INT. ATELIER - night

On the painting, an officer in a heroic pose, armed, celebrating his victory on the bodies of the four monsters.

RUBIE (VO - cont.)

...who, with the help of the 3rd Detachment of Jukai, heroically found the four conspirators, executed them and destroyed their arsenal. The world was thus saved from total destruction.

END FLASHBACK

61) INT. THE LIBRARY, HISTORY HALL - day

Rubie closes the book.

RUBIE

(a bit perplexed)

Well, the story seems to have a happy ending...

62) EXT. THE PORCH OF THE BARRACKS - day

DOORKEEPER

(replying to Rubie)

...young lady, the happy ending's always for those who rule.

In a wide and well-lit porch, an old DOORKEEPER, all hunchbacked and grumbling, passes near Rubie, Red and Joseph, who are watching the big painting portraying the narrated story (the same one we saw being painted in the flashbacks).

CAPTAIN RED

(to the doorkeeper)

What do you mean?

DOORKEEPER

Just what a simple doorkeeper like me said.
(going on, grumbling on his own)
Power, always power!

(and he spits on the ground with contempt)

At least they could have paid me for that painting!

JOSEPH

Wait, you painted it?

DOORKEEPER

(leaving, grumbling on his own)
Better a doorkeeper than a regime painter!
They do nothing but celebrate themselves!
Glory to them and poverty to us! Yuk!

Red, Rubie and Joseph remain a bit puzzled, in front of the huge painting, where we see the story of the four monstrous conspirators and of the hero who defeated them (painted).

FADE OUT

63) EXT. LIGHTHOUSE - day [00:35]

A violent wave breaks on the rocks. By the lighthouse, Gunwale, the sorceress, all alone, is watching the sea horizon. A light shines in her eyes, melancholic and hopeful at the same time. The wind moves her hair. Now she doesn't look grotesque and surreal anymore, but she reveals the dignity and nobility of somebody who has suffered in the past.

GUNWALE
(to herself)
Still alive... Is it possible?

Her attention is then drawn by the NOISE OF Rubie's AIRPLANE, flying grazing the lighthouse and then moving farther, over the sea, in the sky.

GUNWALE
(watching the airplane)
Good luck, Captain...

64) EXT. COCKPIT / AIRPLANE - day

While the afternoon sun is now low on the horizon, Red, Rubie and Joseph (sitting on the Captain's knees) are flying over the sea on board of the airplane.

JOSEPH
Then, those four were crazy criminals?

RUBIE
Yes, but they are dead.

The airplane is slithering in the sky, heading for the Millennia.

JOSEPH (off)
So, who are the musicians?

RUBIE (off)
I don't know. I think today we just wasted our time.
Captain, what do you think?

But Red doesn't answer.

RUBIE (off)
Captain, what's on your mind?

65) EXT. THE MILLENNIA - dusk [01:33]

The big disc of the sun is about to sink behind the sea horizon, while disturbing fog banks are creeping in over the sea like pirate ships driven by the cold evening breeze.

On the deserted deck of the Millennia, Captain Red is carefully watching the sea, hoping to encounter the musicians again.

66) FLASHBACK - CONTROL ROOM - day

Not much earlier, in the well-lit control room, Red and Kommel are discussing what to do. The two men have a high opinion of each other, but there's also tension between them and they have different opinions. The words punctuate the silence.

CAPTAIN RED

Admiral, I ask for your permission to get on that boat.

KOMMEL

I deny it. Not even the cannons were able to defeat those musicians. Boccaporto isn't worth your life.

CAPTAIN RED

This is what you think.

KOMMEL

Exactly.

CAPTAIN RED

(after a moment)

I'll come back, you have my word.

Kommel and Red exchange a long and silent look, not without tension.

KOMMEL

I trust you. We'll seek that boat keeping the crew below deck, where the music will reach them less easily. And I'll let you go. But when the sun goes down, the Millennia will set sail. Remember this.

END FLASHBACK

67) EXT. THE MILLENNIA - dusk

While the sun is approaching more and more closely the horizon, the musicians' melancholic and heady MUSIC can be heard again from the sea. Their boat appears too, behind a fog bank. The notes reach the cannons, the chimney stacks and the windows of the Millennia, which is enveloped in a very attracting atmosphere. Watching through his binoculars, Captain Red notices that his friend is still aboard the boat.

CAPTAIN RED

Boccaporto...

The Captain closes his eyes, as if starting to listen, looking for concentration.

68) EXT. ABSTRACT WORLD

The setting disappears and we see Red in a mental world, basically empty (black?). There's only him and the boat with the musicians. Behind it, the huge frightening masks of the four characters, out of whose mouths flows of glitter (shining sprays) carried by the wind are coming, representing the notes of the melody, that reach the Captain. Red, keeping his eyes closed, actually sheds some tears, as luminescent as the sprays.

CAPTAIN RED (off)

These notes are tormented... I clearly feel it... they quiver with vengeance...

Why? What has really happened?

Boccaporto, my friend, don't be fooled...

69) EXT. THE MILLENNIA - dusk

Captain Red opens his eyes with determination and goes into action: with a leap he goes down to the lower deck, runs to the edge of the ship and jumps into the sea!

70) INT. CONTROL ROOM - dusk

From the control room, Admiral Kommel (and, behind him, Nitra) is watching everything with his impenetrable look. The music hasn't got here yet.

71) EXT. THE SEA - dusk

The Captain swims mightily amidst the waves, approaching the boat.

72) INT. CABIN - dusk

In a crowded and silent cabin (like refugees in a shelter during a bombing), Joseph and Rubie share a worried look...

JOSEPH

(anguished)

What if Red and Boccaporto don't come back?...

Rubie squeezes the boy's hand.

73) EXT. THE MUSICIANS' BOAT - dusk [05:15]

Captain Red reaches the boat, notices with anxiety the name "LIMBO", and gets on board. Meanwhile, the musicians have just ended a piece, while Boccaporto, with a blank, hypnotized look, claps his hands with enthusiasm.

BOCCAPORTO

Bravo! Bravo!

Then, the musician wearing the American mask addresses Red.

BLUE DEER (THE AMERICAN)

Welcome on board for ever and ever...

These words freeze Captain Red's blood. Then, he seeks Boccaporto's eyes, but he replies dazed with a stupid smile.

BOCCAPORTO

That's great, Captain, we'll be together forever, in this heaven, in peace...

CAPTAIN

(worried)

Boccaporto...

(angry, to the musicians)

...what did you do to him?

The European accordionist quietly begins to speak, in an elegant and quite a formal way, introducing, in order, the African, the Asian and the American.

JUSTHEIN (THE ACCORDIONIST)

(slightly bowing, to Red)

Captain... I'd like to introduce to you Tenente Ukaba, Captain Yao-Kai and Major Blue Deer. And he who's speaking is Colonel Justhein...

UKABA (THE AFRICAN)

(to Red)

...but you can forget the military rankings. They are of no importance to us.

CAPTAIN RED

(still a bit harsh)

I've come to bring back Boccaporto. I'm kindly asking you to let us go.

JUSTHEIN

(scornful)

I'm sorry, *c'est pas possible!*

CAPTAIN RED

You have no right to kidnap us!

JUSTHEIN

(disturbing)

Ahahah! Captain, I'm telling you again, this is a one way trip..

The wind rises and the sail of the boat swells. The disc of the sun is sinking into the sea and Red watches, worried, the boat moving away from the Millennia. Then he carefully watches the four masks.

BOCCAPORTO

These monster masks are great, aren't they Red?

CAPTAIN RED

(to Boccaporto)

They are frightening monsters only on the surface..

(to the accordionist)

...am I right, Mr. Justhein?

The four musicians have a surprised reaction, because no one, before Red, had ever caught the truth. And with him we find out details, hidden features and painted symbols.

CAPTAIN RED

(to Justhein)

Your features, so stern and composed, and that square drawn on your forehead, don't they represent intransigence, moral intransigence?

(to Ukaba)

And you, Mr. Ukaba, with that drop of blood under your eyes and your features so torn, it seems you're wearing the mask of desperation..

The four men have a new reaction, because Red is deducing the truth. But the Captain goes on.

CAPTAIN RED (cont.)

(to Yao-Kai)

Mr. Yao-Kai, that crack crossing your pale and elegant face, so rosy on your cheeks, that's not incidental. In the past you must have suffered for love..

(to Blue Deer)

And finally you, Blue Deer.. Many tears only may have hollowed out those deep furrows that go down your face. But your sensitive soul has been devoured by terror, as your wide eyes tell me..

The musicians' reply is not immediate, moments of silent tension go by.

YAO-KAI

Our compliments, Captain Red, we didn't think there still were people like you...

And the four men take off their masks, showing the faces of soldiers, of the same ethnic group as their masks. Even though their clothes are worn out and torn, as if they were very old, the faces of the four men are still fresh and young.

JUSTHEIN

Please, allow us to honor your attention by telling you our story...

Captain Red becomes even more attentive.

JUSTHEIN

As you know, sixty years ago the terrible War of the Four Continents broke out...

74) FLASHBACK: EXT. VARIOUS SETTINGS -

Sequence in episodes: a succession of scenes and fixed pictorial shots visualizing (completing it) what the narrating voice is telling; so, we see scenes of battles both on land and at sea, the flags of the four continents, fat politicians, poverty in the popular streets, destroyed houses and soldiers who died in the battles.

JUSTHEIN (off - cont.)

...this exacerbated the hate among the populations, one against the other. The Lords of War were making great deals, while people were suffering and dying. But one day, during the first battle of Urd, four officers, one for each continent, deserted.

The sequence continues, with images of a young Justhein, lawyer in a court hall, of his enlistment in the Navy and of his escape by swimming.

JUSTHEIN (off - cont.)

In my Country I was a lawyer for human rights. War is unfair, always. I escaped from the army not to have to make compromises with my conscience.

Ukaba is working as a sculptor in his workshop, he is happy with other people. Then, as a soldier, with tears in his eyes he fires against civilians. Then he loses heart and runs away with a child.

UKABA (off)

I was a sculptor, a soldier only under constraint. They ordered me to shoot at my neighbors and my relatives. So I ran away driven by despair, only managing to save my cousin.

Yao-Kai is a sort of samurai, at his General's service. Then he leaves on a train of the army, painfully parting from his sweetheart (a young Gunwale). The woman cries alone, prostrate on the floor, then she's wearing her white dress at her wedding, beside a slimy looking husband-to-be. After fleeing at night from the battlefield, we finally see Yao-Kai, happily running away riding an ostrich together with the bride, chased by a horde of wedding guests!

YAO-KAI (off)

Me too, Yao-Kai, a sword-professional, I had to leave for the war. But the girl I loved would have unhappily got married in an arranged marriage and we

would have lost each other for good. When I knew it,
I ran away from the army and... not only from that!

Among the houses of a small village in the tropical jungle, Blue Deer is lovingly educating a group of enthusiast children.

BLUE DEER (off)
I was a teacher in my village, teaching was my
passion...

Then, during a bombing on a battlefield, we see Blue Deer cowering in a trench, terrified, wearing a helmet much bigger than his head. In the end, we see him running away from the battlefield, frightened.

BLUE DEER (off)
But I've never had the guts to even kill a worm. I
deserted because I was awfully scared of dying...

End of sequence in episodes – END FLASHBACK

75) EXT. THE MUSICIANS' BOAT – dusk

Six cormorants fly against the light before the huge disc of the sun, for a great part already sunk into the sea.

JUSTHEIN (off)
So, after deserting, we ran away to an island in the
middle of the ocean, where we would have lived
together, in peace and happiness, with no bombs or
guns.

The accordionist goes on with his story.

JUSTHEIN
But the news leaked out and the Lords of War did not
like it...

CAPTAIN RED
Among the four continents that hated each other, you
were the symbol of a peace that was possible. The
weapon which would have destroyed the idea of war
itself...

YAO-KAI
(with grievance)
That's why they came with a whole detachment and
killed us all! I only managed to save my wife,
protecting her with my body...

UKABA
This is our sad story, Captain Red.

And the four men put on their respective masks again. Captain Red keeps being very watchful.

CAPTAIN RED
So, if you say you're dead, how can you be here,
alive in front of me? What's more, there's a
different story being told about you... Which one
should I believe?

BLUE DEER

Tell me, Captain, what's more true: what is true, or what one believes being true?

CAPTAIN RED
(smiling ironically)
It depends on what's more convenient...

The sun disappears under the horizon and the now foggy sea is gone through by the sound of the HORN of the Millennia, preparing to leave. Captain Red becomes restless, he must find a way to escape. The boat is enveloped by a thick fog bank, which darkens the place.

JUSTHEIN
(shifting the helm)
Say goodbye to your ship, Captain, you'll never see it again...

Yao-Kai lights up the lamp. Blue Deer unfurls the sail.

76) EXT. THE MILLENNIA - dusk

On the deck of the Millennia, Joseph, in anguish, calls out for the Captain at the top of his voice.

JOSEPH
REEEEEEED!!!!
REEEEEEED!!

But no answer comes from the foggy sea. The boat seems to have disappeared for good.

77) THE MUSICIANS' BOAT - dusk (cont.)

CAPTAIN RED
Wait, I've got one last wish...

And he hands the musicians the small musical instrument he always brings along.

CAPTAIN RED
It's an instrument of great value. I'm glad to give it to you, in exchange for Boccaporto's freedom and mine.

The musicians have a surprised reaction and examine the instrument with interest.

UKABA
It's very fine wood, hand-carved with great craftsmanship...

BLUE DEER
The holes for the fingers are very small, for a child's hands...

YAO-KAI
The mouthpiece is worn out, like the blade of a sword that has fought many battles...

JUSTHEIN
Tell us the truth, Captain, this instrument is of great value because it was made with love and given

to you. And because you are fond of it since when you were a child...
There really is no more valuable sound.

THE FOUR MUSICIANS
(together, slightly bowing)
We thank you, Captain Red.

JUSTHEIN
And we grant you your freedom in exchange.

CAPTAIN RED
(slightly bowing)
I am grateful to you.

Then, he takes a still dazed Boccaporto by the hand.

CAPTAIN RED
Come, it's time to go...
(to the musicians)
So long, and may your wish for vengeance find peace.

Red and Boccaporto jump into the sea.

78) EXT. THE SEA - dusk

At the contact with the cold water, Boccaporto's mind becomes clear again.

BOCCAPORTO
AAAHHH!! It's freezing!!
Hey, Captain, where the hell are we? What happened?

CAPTAIN RED
Boccaporto, swim quickly, without turning back! The Millennia won't wait for us!

And he starts swimming energetically.

BOCCAPORTO
Waaaaait!!

The horn of the Millennia sounds powerfully and the huge dark silhouette of the ironclad appears amidst the fog, reaching Red and Boccaporto.

79) EXT. THE MILLENNIA - dusk [01:10]

From the ship, Rubie tosses a rope ladder for the two to climb, while Joseph greets them with enthusiasm.

JOSEPH
Captain!! Boccaporto!

While Boccaporto goes up first on the ladder, the Captain turns back, trying to catch a glimpse of the musicians' boat amidst the fog. But by now the boat has disappeared.

80) EXT. THE SEA - nightfall.

In the thick dark fog, where only the cold waves of the sea are heard, the light of the musicians' lamp can barely be made out. And, from there, come the delicate and moving notes of Captain Red's instrument...

81) EXT. THE MILLENNIA - nightfall

[The MUSIC becomes background, extra-diegetic music, accompanied by the other instruments, till where marked]

The Millennium goes on, mightily.

On the deck, Kommel, with Nitra, Rubie, Joseph and other seamen at his side, salutes Red and Boccaporto, in front of them, who return the salute.

CAPTAIN RED

Mission accomplished, Admiral Kommel.

KOMMEL

Great job, Captain Red.

And he smiles slightly.

Joseph, with tears of joy in his eyes, breaks ranks, running to hug tightly Red and Boccaporto. Rubie and the other seamen reach them too, happy to see them back.

Meanwhile, the Millennium is leaving, continuing its journey through the incipient night.

82) EXT. LIGHTHOUSE - night

Under a starry sky, the lighthouse cuts the sea with its beam of light.

83) INT. FARO - night

In front of a large window, Gunwale is watching the sea, still waiting to catch sight of something. A candle is beside her, and it's the only light illuminating the room.

Gunwale's face is mirrored in the window; beside it, for a moment, appears, fading, that of young Yao-Kai, whom, after all, she still hopes to meet again. A delicate teardrop runs down her cheek.

84) EXT. PAINTING - day

We browse the battle scenes portrayed in the painting hanging in the porch.

NARRATOR (off)

The traitor's and the pacifist's waves mingle in the sea of war...

Thus, each time bullets and cannon shots rage, the temptation's strong, for a soldier, to leave everything and run away... At times, it is as irresistible as a mermaid's call...

85) EXT. CLIFF - night

The waves move, delicately breaking on the beach, watched over, in the distance, by the lighthouse.

NARRATOR (off - cont.)

They say, actually, that when the waves of the sea whisper the notes of a sad melody, it's for all the soldiers who ever died in battle...

86) EXT. THE PAINTING - day

In a corner of the painting there's a hidden detail. The four deserters hold each other's hands, happily dancing around a fire.

[end music]

87) INT. LIGHTHOUSE - night

Gunwale, her eyes full of tears, blows out the candle. And it all turns dark.

THE END