

Pre-Publication Excerpt

LOVE THAT MOVES THE SUN

Vittoria Colonna and
Michelangelo Buonarroti

LINDA CARDILLO



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Cover art by Eliza Moser

BELLASTORIA PRESS
P.O. Box 60341
Longmeadow, Massachusetts 01116

For my family

“...but my desire and will were moved already...
by the Love that moves the sun and the other stars.

Dante Alighieri, *Paradiso*, Canto XXXIII

AUTHOR'S NOTE

As a writer of historical fiction, I am grateful for the scholarship and research of historians who have provided me with fundamental details of the lives of Vittoria Colonna and Michelangelo Buonarroti. I have attempted to remain faithful to the facts, but in instances where the record is either obscure, conflicted or missing because of lost or nonexistent documents, I have chosen—as writers of fiction are wont to do—to make things up.

What follows is not a biography but an imagined story of a relationship between two extraordinary artists. Based on their own words, in the remaining letters and poetry they shared with one another, I have created an inner life that reflects their mutual search for transcendence. To readers who may ask “What is true?” or “Did that actually happen?” I answer that I have followed the trajectory of what is known, with perhaps a slight adjustment of time now and then. But within the walls of the Castello d’Aragonese or the Convent of Santa Caterina or the house in the Macello dei Corvi, it is the heart that speaks the truth.

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CHAPTER ONE

Having Seen Your Face

Michelangelo

1534

Florence

“Florence does not love you, Michelangelo, but Rome will.”

Night visitors. Subdued voices. Despite the low murmurs, it is impossible to ignore the urgency, the warning in their message.

“His Holiness, Pope Clement, summons you. Not merely for his own pleasure, but for your safety. You have too many enemies in Florence. The Duke Alessandro de’ Medici you know. His rancor toward you has only been held in check by his fear of his uncle on the papal throne. But there are others, hidden behind false smiles. The pope says, ‘enough of hiding in the closets of your friends.’ He can better protect you in Rome. You must leave now,” they insist.

Michelangelo observes the faces of these papal messengers in the candlelight. They had not awakened him. When they made their stealthy entrance, he was bent over his worktable, sketching the staircase for the Medici library. Marble dust spills from his hair where it had settled earlier in the day, when he’d been at work on another project, an unfinished sculpture of Apollo.

He is almost sixty. Tired of being pursued to fulfill the demands of others. Weary of the complaints of his ungrateful relatives, currently asleep below. Bereft at the loss of his beloved younger brother. The words spoken by these midnight visitors strike a nerve.

Florence does not love you.

“Urbino!” He shouts for his assistant.

The young man rouses himself and enters the studio, his eyes widening at the presence of strangers.

“Prepare the horses and saddlebags for a journey. We leave tonight.”

“Where are we going? What shall I bring? Shall I inform anyone of our departure?”

Michelangelo answers the last question first. "Leave no word at all. Pack only the drawings I have been working on for the pope's altar wall and enough money to get us to Rome. These gentlemen will accompany us."

He sees the visitors exchange glances. They must have been expecting a more difficult task in persuading him. When Julius was pope, his messengers had been chased back to Rome empty-handed by a much younger Michelangelo. Not tonight.

Urbino moves silently around the room, gathering the drawings Michelangelo requested and rolling them into a leather pouch. He finds Michelangelo's warmest cloak thrown in a heap by the door and presses it into his master's hands, along with fur-lined gloves and the battered felt hat he refuses to replace. Michelangelo takes the warm clothing as Urbino descends to the horses.

"Do not wake the rest of the household," he cautions.

The young man turns his head and nods.

The pope's men are pacing, casting anxious glances at the eastern sky for the first signs of dawn. Michelangelo observes them as he pulls on his boots. He has done this before, escaped one city or another ahead of enemies; fled through secret passageways; eluded those who would break down doors or pursue him over mountain passes. He vows to himself that this will be the last time.

He forces himself up from the bench as he hears Urbino's whistle. The horses are saddled. He grabs the satchel with the drawings, wraps the cloak around his shoulders and heads down the stairs.

Urbino waits in the courtyard with a lantern, stamping his feet in the cold. He hands Michelangelo a sack, weighty with coin.

"I had to climb over three snoring men to get to the strongbox, but I woke no one," he assures Michelangelo.

"Well done. Now to the road, before the whole city, let alone the household, realizes we're gone."

The artist, Urbino and their papal escort ride hard in the bitter cold and push beyond the boundaries of Florentine jurisdiction before they stop. Michelangelo never turns to look back.

When they finally arrive in Rome, the pope's men insist on bringing him to Pope Clement at once.

“Are you afraid I’ll slip away from the pope as I have from his nephew?” But he goes with them. Clement is not the first pope he has served. He has learned to pick his battles, and this is not one of them.

As their small party charges through the Vatican corridors, he catches the shock of recognition on the faces of various men in the papal court. At least one, a bishop, moves quickly away.

“That one will have a messenger galloping to Alessandro de’ Medici within the hour,” he murmurs to his travelling companions.

“Did we not warn you truthfully?”

“I came, didn't I?”

They are halted outside the pope's audience chamber by two of the Swiss Guards installed by Pope Julius decades before.

“His Holiness is in conversation with two noblewomen from the south. We have been ordered to deny entry until they depart.”

“Maestro, perhaps I should go on and open up the house and find us some dinner?”

Michelangelo sees the wisdom in Urbino's suggestion. There is no need for his young assistant to wait for Clement. It is not Urbino the pope has summoned. Some of the weariness brought on by the journey is relieved by Urbino's mention of the house in the Macello dei Corvi. Michelangelo had purchased it with money secured when he'd renegotiated his contract with Pope Julius's heirs for the tomb that has burdened him for far too long. Clement had stepped in, found him a lawyer and made known his own interest in having Michelangelo freed from the overwhelming demands of Julius's original grand plans.

“I have waited long enough to have you for myself and *my* plans,” the pope had shouted when he first took office.

The statues for the much-reduced tomb stand in the garden of Michelangelo's house. They are a reminder of the still-uncompleted work, but the house itself is a well-ordered refuge, not a hovel of a workshop and makeshift living space as he'd had when he was a younger man.

“Buy us some fish for tonight. And get the fires going. My body will need warmth before I can begin whatever it is Clement has as his heart's desire.”

Michelangelo seeks out a bench and leans against the wall, the weariness that had been kept at bay by the urgency of their departure now creeping through his old man's bones. He closes his eyes but is granted only a brief respite as the door to the pope's chamber is thrust open.

He rises to his feet as two women emerge. One is dark-haired, severely dressed, agitated. The other, attired in a Spanish gown, moves serenely. But the haunted quality of her face suggests an intimacy with anguish. From beneath her veil, a wisp of gold curl is visible. She moves past without noticing him, her head bent as she listens to the high-pitched chatter of her companion.

“Who is that woman?” he asks the guards.

“The poet Vittoria Colonna, the Marchesa di Pescara. The widow of the hero of Pavia.”

He knows the name. He knows the poems. *Of course*, he reflects. This is how he would have imagined her face, her presence. This is how he would have painted her.

He watches her move away, still attentive to the other woman, and is glad he has come to Rome.



Michelangelo has slept only fitfully since his arrival in Rome two days before. Despite his investment in a good bed, he has tossed uncomfortably, trying to find a position that eases his aging muscles, sore from the strenuous pace of the journey. If he were honest with himself, however, he would acknowledge that his lack of sleep has more of a mental than a physical cause.

Once again, he is at the mercy of yet another demanding pope. Giulio de' Medici, Pope Clement VII, is dying and wants a legacy. A fresco of Christ's Second Coming.

How many times must I tell them, he reflects, that I am a sculptor, not a painter?

He drags himself from the rumpled site of his nightly struggle, shrugs off the breakfast Urbino offers him and trudges in the direction of the Vatican, unable to avoid any longer the blank wall that awaits him in the Sistine Chapel.

When he arrives he is relieved to see that the altar end of the chapel is empty. He has successfully avoided the morning Mass, and most of the attendees have dispersed. He dislikes the drone of voices that reverberate off the walls and the ceiling. When the room is full, he can hear the din from several corridors away. Today, however, all is blessedly quiet.

He has brought neither measuring tools nor the preliminary sketches Urbino carefully packed when they made their escape from Florence. He wants no encumbrances on this first encounter with the wall. He needs to observe the expanse, to touch it, to grasp its dimensions so he can begin in his mind to fill it. Before he paints, he always imagines.

He paces, mainly to stretch his tightened muscles, still coiled from gripping the flanks of his horse. The pacing helps him concentrate, blocking out any distractions as people enter and leave the chapel. He has also noticed that it dissuades people from approaching him with intrusions.

His concentration is broken by a sudden squall of movement—the heavy footsteps of guards followed by a gust of white. Pope Clement's unmistakable voice calls out from the midst of this cloud of motion.

When they were boys in Lorenzo de' Medici's house—Michelangelo as a student in Lorenzo's art school and Giulio, the orphaned, bastard son of Lorenzo's brother Giuliano—Giulio had been the noisy, demanding one. As the youngest, Giulio had to work hard to be heard. When he flies into the chapel now, Michelangelo stops his pacing and faces him with folded arms, waiting for his explosive tirade to end.

“They told me I would find you here. I was about to march over to your house myself and drag you out of your bed or your workroom—wherever you have hidden yourself for the last two days. I told you. I do not have much time left, Michelangelo. God

has already whispered twice in my ear that He was calling me home, and both times I answered Him that I still had more to do. This wall is what remains of my legacy. I *will* see you paint it before I die.”

“Am I not here? Did I not promise you?” The artist continues to stand. He does not kneel to kiss the pope's ring.

“You are here. But where are the drawings, the scaffolding, the pigments? Have I not advanced you sufficient funds to undertake this endeavor?”

I cannot work if I am to be continually interrupted on his whim, Michelangelo broods. *Better to speak of my need for solitude now before he gets in the habit of stopping by for a visit every day.* He is not afraid to express himself frankly with the pope. He and Giulio understand each other.

“I have everything I need, Holy Father, except the solitude to implement what resides up here.” Michelangelo taps his brain with a stained finger.

“Just see that those ideas start migrating to the wall. Soon.”

With a flourish, the pope turns away from Michelangelo and leaves the chapel.

When the pope makes his departure as abruptly as he has burst in, Michelangelo resumes his solitary contemplation. But out of the corner of his eye he senses hurried movement, hears the rustle of silk sweeping across the marble floor and a woman's voice murmuring urgently, “Come, Vittoria.”

The poet. Was she here again? Michelangelo follows the voice to see the serene woman from two days before trailing her companion. The other woman appears to be in a great hurry to pursue the pontiff, but Michelangelo detects in the poet almost a reluctance to leave the chapel.

When she reaches the doorway she stops and faces him. At first he assumes she's paused for a final glance at the ceiling. It is what people often do, although he himself never wishes to contemplate the fresco again after the years he spent painting it.

But the poet does not look up.

She regards *him*, with intention. Not accidentally, as if her gaze is focused on something else and he happens to fall into her line of sight. No, she has deliberately altered her path to see him.

He studies her as purposefully and knowingly as she considers him. She intrigues him. Her poems have made their way to Florence and have certainly been a topic of discussion in his circle. But she is an enigma, despite the grief and deeply felt emotion revealed in her words. Her beauty, tinged with ineffable sadness, is remote, detached. That he sees all this, in the flash of time since she moved past him and then turned to face him, astonishes him.

With her glance alone she appears to be offering this insight into her. She is pursuing something, of that he is sure. And she seems to be seeking it in him.

He cannot avert his eyes. He has never before encountered a woman with such a direct and compelling gaze. She conveys a power and authority that both unnerves him and makes him hungry to be engulfed.

And then her spell is broken. The voice of the other woman beckons her. But before she leaves, the poet nods to him, acknowledging their wordless exchange.

As she departs, he notes the stiffness and formality of her Spanish gown in sharp contrast to the vulnerable beauty of her pale face. One of the ribbons on her sleeve has become undone, a sliver of black silk that ripples behind her when she turns away from him.

He casts a final, fleeting look at the wall and realizes he has no more room in his thoughts to consider the pope's commission this morning, even though the angel of death is hovering in Clement's shadow.

He leaves the Vatican and wanders slowly back to his house, aware of his yearning and his loneliness.

The next day he is in his garden, surrounded by the half-finished statues that remain to be completed for Pope Julius's tomb. But he ignores their hulking presence and sits sketching in the sunlight, taking advantage of the unseasonably warm fall day. Urbino insists on wrapping a cloak around his shoulders and brings him a heated cup of wine. The young man is good to him. Sensible, caring. Not a burden as some of the others have been, foisted upon him by misguided family members.

He dozes for a few minutes, warmed by the sun and the wine, when a commotion at the gate rouses him.

Urbino comes running back.

“Maestro, it's Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici with a beautiful woman.”

Michelangelo groans. Now Giulio is sending his nephew to urge him along. Despite the very real dangers to Michelangelo in Florence, perhaps he should have stayed, rather than submit to being constantly watched and prodded. He rises to greet the cardinal and his companion. He wonders which of Ippolito's mistresses is with him. The cardinal's red cassock and broad hat obscure the woman as they approach. And then he sees the dress, unmistakable in its cut and fabric. The dress worn by the poet the day before.

He runs his hand over his hair and beard, smooths his jerkin and throws off the woolen cloak.

“Urbino, bring more wine and cups. And see if we have any cakes. If not, run to the baker.”

The young man looks at him in astonishment, frozen.

“Go!” Michelangelo orders and Urbino scampers off.

“Maestro, good afternoon! I hope we are not disturbing your work or my uncle will not forgive me. May I present the Most Honorable Marchesa di Pescara, Vittoria Colonna? Lady Vittoria has expressed an interest in your current work and His Holiness asked me to arrange a meeting.”

Like your uncle, you believe you can come unannounced whenever you please, Michelangelo reflects. *I am your servant, subject to your whims.* But the words he speaks out loud are quite different. He takes her hand and bends over it with a kiss. Her touch is delicate yet confident. He notes that despite exuding the fragrance of lavender in which they were probably bathed, her fingers still retain the tell-tale ink stains of a dedicated writer.

“My lady, you honor me with your visit.”

“And you honor me by so graciously accepting our intrusion. Please forgive us for coming unannounced, but the cardinal assures me that you do not stand on ceremony.”

“My house is always open to Rome, my lady. Especially to a Roman such as you.”

Neither one of them mentions the striking encounter they had the day before, but the memory of it lingers in the look that passes between them.

“Come, come sit with me! Unless the air is too cool and you wish to go inside?”

“On the contrary, Maestro, I relish the outdoors and have missed the opportunity to be in the open air since my arrival in Rome.”

“If I may ask, what brings you to Rome?”

“The same thing, I imagine, that calls you here. The pope.” Her eyes twinkle as she speaks. She glances at the nephew, but he seems to be in agreement. All three of them obey Clement.

She launches into her own question. “I am eager to hear of your plans for the altar wall. I know that it’s to depict the Last Judgment, a topic that transfixes me with its message. I can think of no subject more fitting for our times. Would you not agree?”

“We live in a world very different from the one that inspired my earlier work. And I am a different man. To be honest with you, my lady, I have only begun to envision how I might portray Christ’s Second Coming.”

He sees that Ippolito is already inattentive. Word is, the young cardinal is more interested in parties and plays than the theology of his uncle’s wall.

“Shall we wander around the grounds to see the statues, Eminence?” he asks Ippolito. “My servant will be bringing refreshments shortly and we can sit then.”

He hopes if they meander through the garden, Ippolito can more easily drift away from their conversation, relieving him of the pretense of courtesy and allowing Michelangelo to pursue his exchange with the poet. She rises enthusiastically in response to his suggestion.

“I have always enjoyed walking as I discuss the great questions that challenge my thoughts.”

As Michelangelo anticipated, Ippolito soon finds another path and leaves them to their conversation. But even without him nearby and listening, Michelangelo refrains from bringing up the previous day. The poet avoids the topic, as well, keeping their dialogue focused on art.

“I am fascinated by the role art can play in devotion. Do you consider the uses to which your work will be put when you first set out to create it?”

“I am always mindful of my patron's intentions when a work is commissioned, but as it grows beneath my hands, it often takes on a life of its own. And how others respond after I complete it, well, I cannot control that. As much as I would prefer to....”

“It must be a great responsibility, knowing that all eyes will converge on your work and take meaning from it.”

“But surely you’ve experienced the same terror when someone reads your poetry.”

She stops and looks at him with the penetrating gaze that had stirred him in the Sistine Chapel.

“It *is* terrifying! In the beginning, I didn't write my poems for others' eyes and ears. They were my private grief. But now that moment is past. The words do not belong solely to me anymore.”

“Is that why you’ve stayed away from society?”

He senses her closing down her openness. He has never been adept at courtly conversation. He prefers to delve beneath the surface of things or not at all. Clearly he has ventured too far in this first conversation, assuming a level of affinity between them because of their unspoken communication the day before. He is an old fool. Better to engage in these philosophical discussions with his intimate circle of friends, with whom he can bare his soul. No matter how intensely she has seen into him, no matter how eager she seems to be in her search for answers, she is still a noblewoman and a pious widow. The barriers between them are as impenetrable as the fortifications he once designed but never saw completed for Florence. He hopes he has not frightened her off.

At this moment Urbino arrives, breathless, with a carefully wrapped packet of cakes. Michelangelo and his guests return to the rough-hewn table where they began their visit.

His sketches are still lying about and he begins to roll them up. She stops him, placing her slender hand on one that he has not yet retrieved.

“Is this a preliminary sketch for the wall? May I?”

He nods.

She holds it out in front of her, examining the figures scattered haphazardly across the page. Her eyes flare with that same intensity she directed toward him in the chapel. She traces one of the figures with her finger, pausing on the countenance of a woman filled with undefined longing. He has drawn it from memory, his hand working swiftly to capture what he saw there.

She puts the sheet down and covers her face, stifling a barely audible sob that he senses only he has heard. The cardinal is too busy selecting a cake. But Urbino, observant young man that he is, grasps that something has happened.

“My lady, you have caught a fleck of dust in your eye. Please allow me to offer you this handkerchief and a glass of wine.” Urbino leaps to her side, each hand offering a remedy.

She smiles at him, wipes her eyes and takes the wine. “To the artist,” she proclaims, lifting her goblet in Michelangelo's direction, “who sees humanity's secrets and brings them to life on the page.”

CHAPTER TWO

Pulled from Seclusion

Vittoria

1534

Rome

When I saw the face he'd sketched in red chalk on a corner of the page, I recognized both my image and my longing. Since the death of my husband, I live behind a mask, surrounded by the convent walls of San Silvestro here in Rome or atop the impregnable Castello d'Aragonese on Ischia. I allow no one—not my family, not my friends, not the literary world that passes my manuscripts from hand to hand—to breach the defenses that protect me from memory and loss.

And yet, this one sees me, pierces me with his perceptive insight. How long did the unspoken pass between us when I turned to him in the Sistine Chapel? Surely not more than a minute or two. I knew who he was, standing there before the blank wall, simmering after his sharp words with the pope.

But how does he know me to enable him to recognize my heart, to convey it in those brief, spare strokes?

I find myself terrified, challenged, awakened.

I retreat from Michelangelo's garden, from the frivolous but useful Cardinal Ippolito de' Medici and from the page of sketches, dropping it back onto the table as if it declared my secrets. I go back to my guest quarters at the Convent of San Silvestro and lose myself in my words, trying to recapture in poetry what he has revealed with a piece of chalk held in a lined and color-stained hand.

I am in Rome, pulled from my widow's seclusion at the request of my friend Caterina Cibo, the Duchessa of Camerino and a passionate advocate for the Capuchin monks.

Pope Clement has banned the Capuchin order—less for spiritual reasons than political ones, although that makes the ban all the more difficult to undo. Caterina helped fund the

Capuchins when they broke off from an older order, the Observants. Despite her money and her influence, however, the Capuchins have been unable to defend themselves against the powerful allies of the Observants, who have convinced the pope to ban the new order. Caterina introduced me to the Capuchins in the hope of gaining my financial commitment. I am drawn to their simplicity, their return to the ideals of St. Francis of Assisi, and was happy to provide them with funds when she asked me. I assumed that was enough. But a few weeks ago, a monk sent by Caterina showed up at the citadel begging to see me, and I recognized a need beyond gold in his unwillingness to go away without speaking to me. I felt I could not deny him whatever words he had traveled here to say. And so, I left the solitude of my study, went to him and listened.

“My lady, I am more than grateful for your willingness to see me. I had nowhere else to turn.” His face reflected a conflicting struggle of emotions—a core of anguish tinged with a thin veil of hope.

“I do not know what I can do for you, but I will listen to what you have come to ask.”

“Her Grace, Duchessa Caterina of Camerino, assured me that you share her concerns for our order. We humbly beg you to accompany the duchessa to Rome to petition the Holy Father to rescind our banishment.”

“I am happy to write to His Holiness on the order's behalf, Fra Matteo, but as you must realize, I have withdrawn from public life since my husband's death. It saddens me greatly that your desire to establish a spiritual path far removed from the excesses of the Church is now forcing you to beg for your very existence. But I do not have the strength of spirit to become entangled in papal politics, nor do I wish to resume the demands of a life at court, which my presence in Rome would surely entail.”

“My lady, I appreciate your offer and respect your reluctance to return to Rome. But I beg you to reconsider. Your words of support are welcome and would serve our cause, but your personal appeal to His Holiness has far more power to effect change. In these few minutes, your words have imparted a deep

compassion and warmth of heart. The Holy Father will be moved by such ardent eloquence. If you cannot give me an answer at this moment, I shall withdraw to the church I passed in the village beyond the gate. I will wait there in prayer as you consider my entreaty.”

The monk departed in humility, leaving me to pace the room. I didn't want to go to Rome.

If anything could disrupt my retreat from the world, it would be a cause of such goodness as the Capuchins. And yet, I realized that once I opened that door, I'd then be vulnerable to all the others I've kept at a distance.

Pacing provided me with no answers, so I sought the wisdom of Costanza d'Avalos, the Principessa di Francavilla, ruler of Ischia and the woman who, after my mother, has had the most influence in shaping who I am.

I spent much of my life on the rock of Ischia, spewed from the mouth of Mount Epomeo in the midst of the Tyrrhenian Sea. Still, Michelangelo is correct in calling me a Roman. I am the daughter and granddaughter of warriors, a noblewoman of the ancient house of Colonna, whose strongholds ring the hills surrounding Rome—Marino, Paliano, Amelici, Rocca di Papa. It is my father, Fabrizio Colonna, whom Machiavelli named as the voice of experience and wisdom in *The Art of War*.

My childhood at Marino was idyllic, filled with the lyrical sound of my mother's learned voice opening a world of discovery to me in her library and the commanding but loving tones of my father's encouragement. But then, when I was ten, one of the many wars that embroiled our family in its tangles tore me away from all I had known.

LIST OF MAJOR CHARACTERS

Historical Figures

Michelangelo Buonarroti, the artist

Vittoria Colonna, the poet

The Colonna Family

Fabrizio Colonna, military leader and father of Vittoria

Agnese di Montefeltro, daughter of the Duke of Urbino and mother of Vittoria

Ascanio Colonna, brother of Vittoria

Federigo Colonna, brother of Vittoria

Pompeo Colonna, cousin of Fabrizio Colonna, military leader and cardinal

Prospero Colonna, cousin of Fabrizio and Pompeo, military leader

The d'Avalos Family

Ferrante Francesco d'Avalos, Vittoria's husband and a celebrated military leader

Costanza d'Avalos, chatelaine of Ischia, aunt of Ferrante

Alfonso d'Avalos del Vasto, nephew of Costanza, adopted son of Ferrante and Vittoria

Beatrice d'Avalos, sister-in-law of Costanza and aunt of Ferrante

Gian Giacomo Trivulzio, husband of Beatrice and uncle of Ferrante

The Popes and the Years They Reigned

Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia) 1492-1503

Pius III (Francesco Piccolomini) 1503

Julius II (Giuliano della Rovere) 1503-13

Leo X (Giovanni de' Medici) 1513-21

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Paul III (Alessandro Farnese) 1534-49

The Monarchs and their Courts

Kingdom of Naples

King Federigo IV of Naples (1452-1504)

Queen Isabella, wife of King Federigo IV

Ferdinando d'Aragona y Guardato, brother of King Federigo

Castellana Cardona, wife of Ferdinando d'Aragona

Giovanna d'Aragona, daughter of Ferdinando d'Aragona and wife of Ascanio Colonna

Maria d'Aragona, daughter of Ferdinando d'Aragona and wife of Alfonso d'Avalos del Vasto

Ramón de Cardona, Spanish Viceroy of Naples and commander of the Holy League forces at the Battle of Ravenna

Isabella de Cardona, Spanish Vicereine of Naples

Spain

Ferdinand II (1452-1516), King of Spain, also known as Ferdinand III of Naples

Charles I (1500-1558), King of Spain and later Charles V, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire

France

Louis XII (1462-1515), King of France

François I (1494-1547), King of France, cousin of Louis XII; rival of Charles V for leadership of the Holy Roman Empire; military leader in the Italian wars

Marguerite d'Angoulême (1492-1549), Queen of Navarre, sister of François I; poet, supporter of humanists and reformers, and friend of Vittoria

The Dukes and their Courts

Alfonso I d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, ally of France during the War of the League of Cambrai

Isabella d'Este, sister of Alfonso I and wife of Francesco II Gonzaga, Marquess of Mantua

Delia, lady-in-waiting to Isabella d'Este

Mario Equicola, secretary to Isabella d'Este

Ercole II d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, son of Alfonso I and husband of Renata di Francia

Renata di Francia (also known as Renée of France), Duchess of Ferrara, wife of Ercole II d'Este and daughter of King Louis XII of France

Lucia of Narni, mystic and spiritual advisor of Alfonso I

Military Leaders

Gaston de Foix, Duc de Nemours and commander of the French at the Battle of Ravenna

Pedro Navarro, commander of Spanish infantry and artillery at the Battle of Ravenna

Charles de Lannoy, leader with Ferrante d'Avalos at the Battle of Pavia

Charles III, Duke of Bourbon, leader with Ferrante d'Avalos at the Battle of Pavia

Poets, Writers and Vatican Emissaries

Pietro Bembo (1470-1547), secretary to Pope Leo X, scholar, poet and writer promoting Italian as a literary language; later instrumental in the dissemination of Vittoria's poetry

Giovanni Pietro Carafa, cardinal and founder of the Italian Inquisition

Ippolito de' Medici, cardinal and nephew of Pope Clement VII

Paolo Giovio (1483-1552), physician, historian and close friend of Vittoria

Tommaso Inghirami, Vatican librarian

Jacopo Sadoleto, secretary to Pope Leo X, humanist, poet and reformer

Jacopo Sannazzaro (1456-1530), court poet to the house of Aragon; author of *Arcadia*; frequent member of Costanza d'Avalos' salon

Reformist Religious Writers and Preachers

Bernardino Ochino (1487-1564), general of the Capuchin order of monks and itinerant preacher who gave voice to the reform movement in the Church and ultimately converted to Protestantism

Juan de Valdés (1509-1541), Spanish religious writer and preacher who influenced Ochino and Pietro Carnesecci

The “Spirituali”—A Circle of Writers, Poets and Clerics Who Explored Questions of Faith

Cardinal Reginald Pole

Cardinal Gasparo Contarini

Pietro Carnesecci

Marcantonio Flaminio

Vittoria's Friends

Caterina Cibo, Duchess of Camerino and supporter of the Capuchins

Giulia Gonzaga, Vittoria's cousin

Carlo Gualteruzzi, Vittoria's secretary and agent

Innocenza Gualteruzzi, daughter of Carlo Gualteruzzi

Michelangelo's Friends and Household

Baccio Rontini, Florentine physician

Urbino (Francesco d'Amadore, called “Urbino”), Michelangelo's assistant

Fictional Characters
(in order of appearance)

Beata, Vittoria's childhood nurse

Nicolo and Salviata, Vittoria's servants

Arturo, chamberlain to Costanza d'Avalos

Alberto Moretti, singer and guest of Costanza d'Avalos

Giancarlo Brittonio, tutor to Alfonso d'Avalos del Vasto

Giacomo Porzio, Neapolitan baron

Suora Carita, gatekeeper of the Convent of San Silvestro

Suora Francesca, secretary and later Reverend Mother of the
Convent of San Silvestro

Suora Ursula, gatekeeper of the Convent of Santa Caterina

Clara and Barbara, members of Vittoria's traveling group of
women

Lady Alessandra, member of the court of Ercole II d' Este

ITALY IN THE 16TH CENTURY



HISTORICAL NOTE

In the late 15th and 16th centuries, the Italian peninsula was home to widely divergent and unstable forms of government—small principalities, mainly in the north, led by powerful dynastic families; republics, such as Florence and Venice, ruled by equally powerful merchant families; the papal states, a vast temporal territory in the middle of the country controlled by the pope; and, to the south, the Kingdom of Naples, alternately held by Spain and France.

Between 1494 and 1559, Italy was in an almost constant state of war as Spain and France fought violently to establish and maintain control over the divided country. Territory was gained and lost; allegiances swung from one side to the next; and the condottieri, leaders of mercenary armies, moved from one battle to the next as treaties failed or changes in rulers set off yet another round of fighting.

During the same time period, the Roman Catholic Church was in a state of upheaval as the ideas of Martin Luther made their way south to Italy, threatening the power of the pope and introducing revolutionary ideas about individual spirituality.

LOVE THAT MOVES THE SUN

Vittoria Colonna and Michelangelo Buonarroti

On sale
December 1, 2018

Print ISBN: 978-1-942209-54-6
E-Book ISBN: 978-1-942209-55-3

Available at
Amazon
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Independent Retailers
Bellastoria Press

