



## The Lion and the Rose

*Kate Quinn*

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**From the national bestselling author of *The Serpent and the Pearl* comes the continuing saga of the ruthless family that holds all of Rome in its grasp, and the three outsiders thrust into their twisted web of blood and deceit . . .**

As the cherished concubine of the Borgia Pope Alexander VI, Giulia Farnese has Rome at her feet. But after narrowly escaping a sinister captor, she realizes that the danger she faces is far from over—and now, it threatens from within. The Holy City of Rome is still under Alexander's thrall, but enemies of the Borgias are starting to circle. In need of trusted allies, Giulia turns to her sharp-tongued bodyguard, Leonello, and her fiery cook and confidante, Carmelina.

Caught in the deadly world of the Renaissance's most notorious family, Giulia, Leonello, and Carmelina must decide if they will flee the dangerous dream of power. But as the shadows of murder and corruption rise through the Vatican, they must learn who to trust when every face wears a mask . . .

## The Lion and the Rose Details

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Author : Kate Quinn

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## From Reader Review The Lion and the Rose for online ebook

twelvejan [Alexandria] says

### 5 delectable stars for L&R!

*So good, so damn good.* That was the first thing I thought when I finished it.

The Serpent and the Pearl introduced the characters, took us within the walls of the Vatican to witness the Pope's illegitimate children's political weddings, and then left us to ponder about the deaths of those women. It ended with Giulia Farnese, Leonello, and Carmelina being captured by the French. Giulia was about to whore herself out to the French in order to get Leonello, who's suffering from multiple bone fractures, the medical care that he needed. Carmelina huddled up against her apprentice, exhausted by fear and guilt.

*"Is your conscience bothering you?"* Rodrigo made the sign of the cross over my forehead with his thumb. *"There, you are washed clean of all your sins. Come kiss me."*

The Lion and the Rose picked up where we left off. And then it took us deeper into the lies, deceit, and murders that adorned the Holy City. It was revolting, how the Pope abuses his power; instilling values in his children that the Borgias is above the law. No, he made them believe that the Borgias **is** the law. It was dark, twisted, and absolutely riveting.

This Pope pretended nothing, hid nothing, was ashamed of nothing. I supposed that was the most unforgivable sin of all.

There was one particular scene, the Pope made his concubine stripped naked in front of his papal secretaries and pages, to get her portrait sketched by a reluctant painter, within the walls of the Vatican. The entire situation is blasphemous!

There were so much darkness and despair. At one point, I was already missing S&P. I wanted Carmelina to be in the kitchen, cooking up some sweet treats. I wanted Giulia to be out in the garden, sunning her floor-length hair; her pet goat 'baaahing' beside her. I wanted Leonello, at the corner of a room where he can get a good view, a book in his hand, muttering rudely at his mistress. It didn't come. But something better came, and it took my breath away.

*Love is when he gives you a piece of your soul, that you never knew was missing.* - Torquato Tasso

I may not have an extensive knowledge about the Borgias. But I believe Kate Quinn had impeccably surmised it in The Borgias series.

Unlimited power turned their virtues into vices: Rodrigo's affection for his children became blind nepotism, Cesare's ambition became hubris, Juan's arrogance became violence, Lucrezia's love for her brothers became an eagerness to excuse them every crime.

**Conclusion: A page-turner that left me breathless. Words are powerless to express my deepest love for Kate Quinn's masterpiece. I was glad I took Amazon's Recommendations seriously, cos it led me to her Rome series, and now to The Borgias series.**

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### **Kristin Contino says**

Fans of Showtime's "The Borgias" will eat up the second novel in Kate Quinn's series about Italy's most infamous family. In "The Lion and the Rose," we pick up where the story ended in "The Serpent and the Pearl," following the stories of Giulia Farnese, mistress to Pope Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia); Leonello, her acid-tongued dwarf bodyguard; and Carmelina, her shrewd cook.

When the first book left off, the trio and the rest of their traveling party had been captured by a French army, and Leonello was gravely injured in the process of defending Giulia. As the group is returned safely back to Rome, Giulia finds out that life at the Vatican has changed in dangerous ways.

While Rodrigo was always overly lenient with his children, turning a blind eye to their escapades, he grows more and more obsessed with protecting his family, no matter how extreme the measures. Lucrezia goes from a cheerful young girl who wants to follow Giulia around to a vain, mean-spirited teenager who tries to out-do Giulia at every turn; Cesare's schemes get even darker and Juan's drinking and whoring results in a tragedy that no one expects. Soon Giulia realizes that she needs to get out of Rome or risk her life, and the life of her daughter.

Meanwhile, Carmelina's secret that she's an escaped nun is discovered by Leonello, and she's constantly afraid that she'll be discovered. Leonello, however, is facing his own demons, and must confront the darkness inside him when the series of murders he's been chasing are finally solved.

The book alternates between the viewpoints of Giulia, Leonello and Carmelina, bringing a distinct voice to each character. Giulia's character development is especially strong, and instead of following the Pope's every command like usual, she starts to stand up to him and the rest of his family, especially when it comes to her daughter. With his bravery, determination and loyalty (mixed with a dark side) Leonello rises above the usual description of "dwarf sidekick" in historical fiction and stands taller than many heroes. Finally, an unexpected love story for Carmelina is one of the highlights of the story, and her food descriptions are enough to make anyone's mouth water.

Filled with romance, deceit, murder and a satisfying surprise twist at the end, "The Lion and the Rose" is an entertaining read that will satisfy new and old fans of Quinn.

\*I received a copy of the novel in exchange for an honest review

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## Allison Thurman says

I tend to read a lot of books at once. Seldom do I find anything so compelling that I can't set it aside for something else.

This book was one of the rare instances that I just couldn't put it down!

The story is built around the 15th century court of the Borgia Pope Alexander VI, a time and place both well documented and full of historical questions: Who killed the Pope's favorite son Juan? Who was the mother of the Infantus Romanus? And what became of Guilia Farnese once the pope set her aside? The author has some surprising and wonderful "takes" on what happened in these undocumented gaps.

There are three POV characters, all with distinct personalities and compelling stories: the papal mistress, the bodyguard dwarf, and the argumentative cook. All of their stories are balanced well, and the action has enough troughs, rises, and downright cliffhangers that I kept going page after page!

Recommended, for history buffs or just anyone who likes a page -turner!

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## Donna says

I didn't care for this book, but there were still things to like about it. I liked the different POVs and how it shifted from each of them. They each had a different outlook to offer. Two of the three were very likable (Carmelina and Leonello).

For being historical fiction, this was light on the historical side. It was more about people. I've read this author before and she tends to have a very contemporary feel in her books even though her books are set in the very distant past. In this book, that didn't work for me. I just read her *Mistress of Rome* and didn't mind that feel at all in that book.

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## Komal says

*Won through Goodreads Giveaway*

Whereas *The Serpent and the Pearl* fell just sort of perfection, Quinn redeemed her story with *The Lion and the Rose*. While Quinn intends to tell us the twisting tale of Giulia Farnese, her loyal bodyguard Leonello, and her mysterious cook Carmelina, she sneaks in it a gripping and rather scandalous account of the Borgias. A family both powerful and vindictive who burn everything in their path, even themselves. Quinn binds together the story of the Borgias with that of our protagonists and she does it with complete eloquence and humility as only Kate Quinn can.

Giulia: it is not secret that La Bella is my favorite. She is brave, cunning, and infinitely kind. She loves with her whole heart, even when that same love is one that can destroy her. Her love for Rodrigo, for Laura, and at one point, her love for her husband becomes her driving force and eventually threatens to be her downfall. Giulia is a character so thoroughly nuisanced that it is hopelessly easy to fall into her charm. I love her so much that she's right up their with my favorite warrior goddess Thea.

Leonello: man, oh man, what to say about our Little Lion Man. His personality can be as sharp as a knife but inside he's a big puddle of sensitivity - a juxtaposition that makes him unbelievably endearing. Every facet of his personality is perfect. I loved the ending he gets. From the very start, he is more than just a killer and his true colors are eventually revealed. A more perfect hero cannot be found.

Carmelina: This sassy chef is embroiled up to her ears in secrets & lies. Not much changes and nor does she. Carmelina remains ferocious even when things go horribly wrong. She is a woman who truly loves what she does and loses herself in her passion. I was amazed at her persistence and her bravery. Adored her too.

I've really tried to get across how wonderful this book, but it's hard for me to convert feelings into simple words that are inadequate. Like Homer, Kate Quinn is magic. Even if you don't read historical fiction, you are bound to lose yourself in this book. It is too good to pass up.

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### **Deborah Pickstone says**

[as Lucrezia's legitimate child with Sforza,

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### **Hana says**

All the Borgia devils are here. The Lion and the Rose is a far darker and a more accomplished novel than The Serpent and the Pearl the first in Quinn's Borgia series. Pope Alexander VI, born Rodrigo Borgia, now holds court in a Vatican that is very much a center of worldly power.

Rome and Rodrigo face challenges from the French, from Fra Savonarola in Florence--and from the pope's ambitious, unscrupulous offspring.

Juan Borgia

Cesare Borgia

Lucretia Borgia (here looking saintly in fresco by Pinturicchio, in the *Sala dei Santi*, the Borgia apartments in the Vatican)

Giulia Farnese, the Pope's concubine, is older and wiser but she is increasingly isolated in the corrupt, murderous world of Renaissance Rome. Her only allies are her bodyguard, the deadly, knife-wielding dwarf, Leonello, and the chef at the seraglio, Carmelina--both fictional but inspired characters. The period details such as the scene featuring Savonarola's Bonfire of the Vanities are splendid; the historical research is impeccable; the many historical figures memorably drawn; and the story is breathtakingly suspenseful. I could not put this down and read into the wee hours of the night. Highly recommended.

Content rating strong PG warning for rape, murder and other dark thematic material.

### **Tania says**

3.5 stars. Extremely easy-reading, but still accurate historical fiction. I really like the characters in this series, and felt quite sad that this was the last book in the series. Can't wait to read Kate Quinn's The Empress of Rome series. I will also be reading Blood and Beauty by Sarah Dunant to get a different point of view of the events of the Borgias.

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### **Amy Catherine says**

**Re-Read May 2016.** After recently re-reading *The Serpent and the Pearl*, naturally I had to read its follow up to continue the rest of the story. *The Lion and the Rose* was also just as good as I remembered it - amazing story, great characters, and lots of juicy historical details. This is kick-ass.

I will read anything this author writes, she is just that good. Roll on the next novel Ms. Quinn, both series are rockin'.

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### **Sonja Arlow says**

A very good friend of mine introduced me to this author by saying: "You will like this Sonja, its easy sleazy historical fiction". Clearly she knows me very well ?

The murder mystery from book one continues and all the favourites (Carmelina, Leonelle and now also Bartholomeo) were present but this time around the story was noticeably darker than the first. The glamour of being the Pope's mistress has tarnished for Giulia and more and more one can see the source of all those rumors branding the Borgias as incestuous, backstabbing, bloodthirsty and depraved.

For some reason I was under the impression this would be a trilogy and I was actually quite put out to discover that it was not the case. I also felt a tinge of pity for Rodrigo Borgia as his biggest downfall was his inability to see the corruption in his own children.

The author notes at the end of each book shows just how closely she followed the historical facts surrounding the Borgia family and the easy style in which historical facts are woven into gripping fiction makes for a wonderful reading experience.

I can happily recommend this author to anyone who loves historical fiction but who may find the likes of Hillary Mantel a bit heavy handed.

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### **Angie says**

SO excited I won this through goodreads first reads! Can't wait to get it and start reading!!

Finished this in the wee hours of the morning... So so good! I really liked it's predecessor, but this one is even better. Lots of drama & action to keep your heart racing about what's going to happen next. It was an exciting read.

All of our "friends" from the first book are back and the story picks up right where it left off. We get to see "the rest of the story" involving the Borgias and also how very wicked the leaders of the Catholic church had gotten. So hard to believe! I really appreciated the author's note in the back separating fact from fiction on each character. That was wonderful. Read this book to find out what happens to Giulia, Rodrigo, Carmelina and the whole bunch.

Definitely recommend to fans of historical fiction, the Borgias, or Kate Quinn!

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**Libbie Hawker (L.M. Ironside) says**

**OH, LEONELLO!!!!**

Yes.

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**Samantha says**

I picked this book up to read for a little while this morning. I just finished it.

I can think of no better way to express how captivating this book is. Yes, I ignored my children, chores, and anything else that vied for my attention in order to reach the conclusion of the characters that I had grown to love. Never did I think I would find myself saying these words, but I just adore Giulia Farnese.

Well, I adore Quinn's version of her at least. This installment in the Borgia drama is darker than the first. Giulia is no longer a starry-eyed teenager, but a clever woman who can stand firm when everyone else is afraid or be demure and submissive, depending on what the situation demands. She is caring, unselfish, and always anticipating the needs of others. If she was anywhere near this sweet of a woman in real life, I hope that she did get her own happy ending after escaping from the evil Borgia web.

The real hero of the story though has got to be Leonello. This character that I initially had written off as silly novelty, how I wanted to drag him away from his bad decisions, force him to admit his true feelings, and comfort his pain. Though he gives in to some demonic impulses, in the end the reader can not hate him but pray for his redemption.

The Borgias, who seemed harmlessly blasphemous and cheerfully irreverent in *The Serpent and the Pearl* become something more like evil incarnate in this novel. I found myself amazed by some of their actions (which the author's note points out the authenticity of). No longer just fun, tolerant, and alluring, each of the family members becomes selfish, cruel, and just plain scary. But how does one escape their grasp once they are within it?

This was a wonderfully written book that was impossible to put down. I am only sad that anything else that I next pick up will be bound to be a disappointment.

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## Gaele says

So – who's obsessed with the Borgias on Showtime? The one where Jeremy Irons is the deviant Pope Alexander VI, father of one of the most notorious families in Italian history even though they are all Spanish? I am. And while the television show is modernized and prettied up for modern tastes, the chain of events set in motion as Rodrigo Lanzol de Borgia used his power, his family, his enemies and his papacy to amass power and riches is an interesting treat into the less 'palatable' history of the Catholic church.

In *The Lion and the Rose*, the second installment in Kate Quinn's *The Borgia Chronicles*, the author brings us a story revolving around the pope's infamous mistress Giulia Farnese. Those familiar will recognize the name as a long-standing association with the pope, married yet traded for favors by her less than loving husband, Giulia is not all sweetness and light. She is a keeper of secrets, with gentle and not so gentle manipulations to further her own position, and to make her indispensable to the pope. She, unfortunately, is discovering that her indispensability also make her a liability, and could even lead to her death.

Such a twisted and tangled plot with plenty of corruption, dubious religious morality, murder, war and danger are present in nearly every situation: as the Pope is seeking to condense his power base and rule over a rather unruly Rome. With nearly every character having at least one, if not more allegiances or grudges to fight for, the potential pitfalls to the grandiose plans for the Borgia dynasty are everywhere.

Kate Quinn manages to build characters that draw your attention and hold you in their power even as you may not appreciate their cunning and manipulation to gain their own ends. So many twists and turns, the story is laced with actual events and retelling of legends in new ways: endlessly dramatic and gripping. Although this is the first of this series that I have read, it stands alone comfortably, allowing the reader to approach these 4 years (1494 – 1498) as a point in time with relevant information to follow the story is provided neatly and without overwhelming the reader.

A lovely storytelling style highlights this curious mix on the fictional retelling of one of history's most notorious and infamous dynasties in an era when war, money and the grasp for power and supremacy across the European continent were at their highest levels.

I received an eBook copy from the publisher via Edelweiss for purpose of honest review. I was not compensated for this review: all conclusions are my own responsibility.

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## Ace says

Even better than the first book. I loved Leonello's development in this and his search for Ana's killer was

much more convincing. Carmelina on the other hand even though a fabulous cook was a bit ditsy and easily manipulated by Bathelemeo. I'm sorry to see the end of this tale. I commented at the end of book 1 to my hubby that they made those pope's a bit different back in the day and he said that he didn't think anything had changed much. Well lo and behold, I see on the news yesterday that there was a drug induced orgy in one of the Vatican apartments hosted by a Cardinal. I wonder what Carmelina and Batholomeo would have served up for nibbles?

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