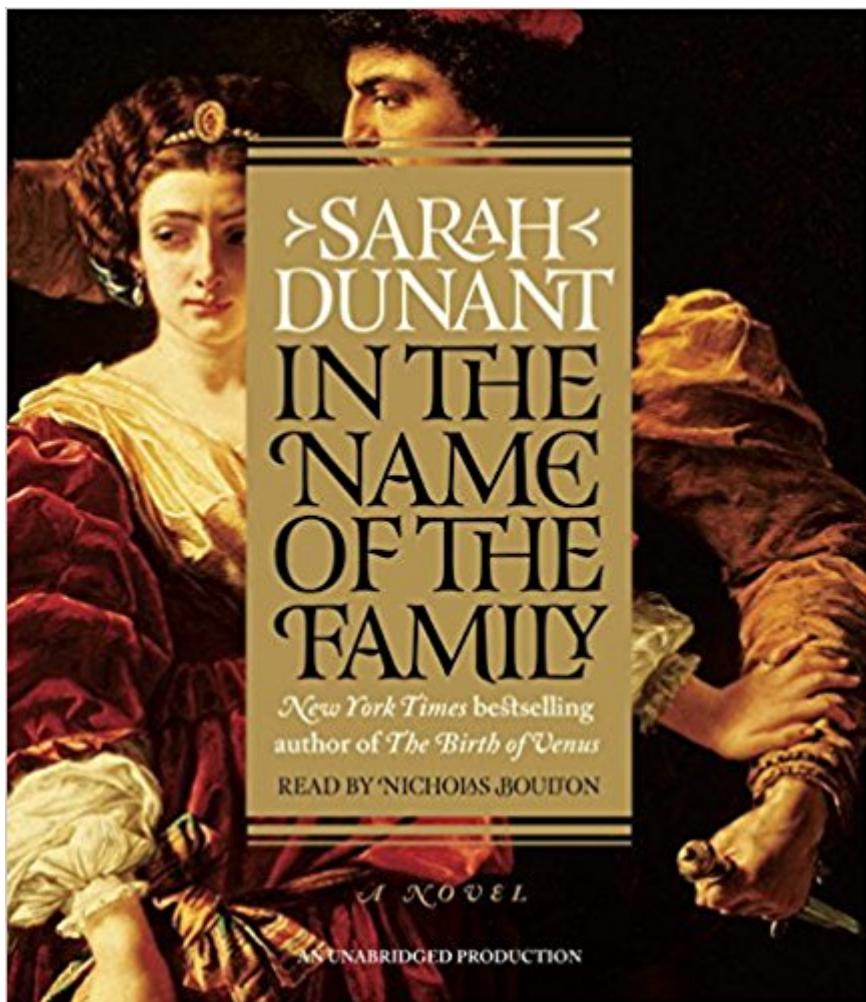


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In The Name Of The Family: A Novel



Synopsis

Before the Corleones, before the Lannisters, there were the Borgias. One of history's most notorious families comes to life in a captivating novel from the author of *The Birth of Venus*. "In the end, what's a historical novelist's obligation to the dead? Accuracy? Empathy? Justice? Or is it only to make them live again?" Dunant pays these debts with a passion that makes me want to go straight out and read all her other books.

• Diana Gabaldon, *The Washington Post* Bestselling novelist Sarah Dunant has long been drawn to the high drama of Renaissance Italy: power, passion, beauty, brutality, and the ties of blood. With *In the Name of the Family*, she offers a thrilling exploration of the House of Borgia's final years, in the company of a young diplomat named Niccolò Machiavelli. It is 1502 and Rodrigo Borgia, a self-confessed womanizer and master of political corruption, is now on the papal throne as Alexander VI. His daughter Lucrezia, aged twenty-two, is already three times married and a pawn in her father's plans. She is discovering her own power. And then there is his son Cesare Borgia, brilliant, ruthless, and increasingly unstable; it is his relationship with Machiavelli that gives the Florentine diplomat a master class in the dark arts of power and politics. What Machiavelli learns will go on to inform his great work of modern politics, *The Prince*. But while the pope rails against old age and his son's increasingly erratic behavior, it is Lucrezia who must navigate the treacherous court of Urbino, her new home, and another challenging marriage to create her own place in history. Sarah Dunant again employs her remarkable gifts as a storyteller to bring to life the passionate men and women of the Borgia family, as well as the ever-compelling figure of Machiavelli, through whom the reader will experience one of the most fascinating—and doomed—dynasties of all time.

Praise for *In the Name of the Family*

• "[Dunant] has an enviable command of this complex political scene, with its shifting alliances and subtle betrayals. . . . [She] has a special gift for attending to her female characters." —The New York Times

• "An intimate knowledge of Renaissance history powers a story crackling with energy." —The Daily Mail

• "What distinguishes and elevates to the first order Sarah Dunant . . . is that she combines flawless historical scholarship with beguiling storytelling." —The Guardian

• "A thrilling period vividly brought to life." —Woman and Home

• "Renaissance-rich details fill out the humanity of the Borgias, rendering them into the kind of relatable figures whom we would hope to discover behind the cold brilliance of *The Prince*." —NPR

• "Dunant has a storyteller's instincts for thrilling detail and the broad sweep of history. This, and her glorious prose, make Dunant's version irresistible." —The Times

(UK) "With a vibrant cast of characters both iconic, including the vastly influential Niccolò Machiavelli, and rarely highlighted, Dunant's captivating Renaissance Italian saga will thrill her fans and bring more into the fold." •Booklist "Skillfully drawn characters and an excellent sense of place will entice readers of historicals." •Library Journal "One of Dunant's great strengths as a writer is illuminating the lives of women who were able to amass and wield power despite having no authority." •Kirkus Reviews

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"[Sarah Dunant] has made completely her own the story of Italy's most infamous ruling family. Retaining the knack for plotting and pacing from the crime novels that began her career, she depicts history in a way that we can see, hear and smell. The aging pope on his boat worries that his grasp of history is becoming blurred inside the accelerated creation of his own myth. Identifying historical blurrings and myths about the period, Dunant's Italian novels are an enthralling education. Her status as a writer needs no reputation management." •The Guardian "[Dunant] has an enviable command of this complex political scene, with its shifting alliances and subtle betrayals. . . . [She] has a special gift for attending to her female characters." •The New York Times "An intimate knowledge of Renaissance history powers a story cracking with energy." •The Daily Mail "What distinguishes and elevates to the first order Sarah Dunant . . . is that she combines flawless historical scholarship with beguiling

storytelling. • The Guardian “A thrilling period vividly brought to life. • Woman and Home” “With a vibrant cast of characters both iconic, including the vastly influential Niccolò Machiavelli, and rarely highlighted, Dunant’s captivating Renaissance Italian saga will thrill her fans and bring more into the fold.” • Booklist “Beyond the attraction of the characters and the history, [Sarah] Dunant has a great immersive style. Her hallmark is the penetrating detail. . . . In the end, what does a historical novelist obligations to the dead? Accuracy? Empathy? Justice? Or is it only to make them live again? Dunant pays these debts with a passion that makes me want to go straight out and read all her other books.” • Diana Gabaldon, *The Washington Post* “Reading *In the Name of the Family*, I began to smell the scent of oranges and wood smoke on the Ferrara breeze. Such Renaissance-rich details fill out the humanity of the Borgias, rendering them into the kind of relatable figures whom we would hope to discover behind the cold brilliance of *The Prince*. • NPR “Dunant has a storyteller’s instincts for thrilling detail and the broad sweep of history. This, and her glorious prose, make Dunant’s version irresistible.” • The Times (UK) “Skillfully drawn characters and an excellent sense of place will entice readers of historicals, especially those interested in the Italian Renaissance.” • Library Journal “One of Dunant’s great strengths as a writer is illuminating the lives of women who were able to amass and wield power despite having no authority.” • Kirkus Reviews

Bestselling novelist Sarah Dunant has long been drawn to the wonders of Renaissance Italy: power, passion, beauty, brutality, and the ties of blood. With *In the Name of the Family*, she offers a thrilling exploration of the House of Borgia’s final years, in the company of a young diplomat named Niccolò Machiavelli. It is 1502 and Rodrigo Borgia, a selfconfessed womanizer and master of political corruption, is now on the papal throne as Alexander VI. His daughter Lucrezia, aged twenty-two—already three times married and a pawn in her father’s plans—is discovering her own power. And then there is his son Cesare Borgia, brilliant, ruthless, and increasingly unstable; it is his relationship with Machiavelli that gives the Florentine diplomat a master class in the dark arts of power and politics. What he learns will inform his great work of modern politics, *The Prince*. But while the pope rails against old age and his son’s increasingly maverick behavior, it is Lucrezia who must navigate the treacherous court of Urbino and another challenging marriage to create her own place in history. Sarah Dunant again employs her remarkable gifts as a storyteller to bring to life the passionate men and women of

the Borgia family, as well as the ever-compelling figure of Machiavelli, through whom the reader will experience one of the most fascinating and doomed dynasties of all time. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In the Name of the Family is the second of Sarah Dunant's novels, following *Blood and Beauty*, about the infamous Borgia family of the Italian Renaissance. Over the years, the Borgias have gained a reputation for being brutal, bloody, and corrupt. In Dunant's version of the story, there is some truth to this, but the worst stories about them, including poisonings and incest, are untrue, and inventions of their enemies. The patriarch of the family is Pope Alexander VI (Rodrigo Borgia). Originally from Spain, he is seen as a foreign upstart by the Italian nobility. He has fathered several illegitimate children, most notably Cesare, leader of a mercenary army, and Lucrezia, who serves as her father's marriage pawn in the complicated political games of Renaissance Italy. The book opens in the winter of 1501-1502, as Lucrezia, at twenty-two, journeys to the court of Ferrara to marry her third husband, Alfonso d'Este, the heir to the Duke of Ferrara. She is still grieving for her beloved second husband, another Alfonso, who was murdered at her brother's orders when her marriage became politically inconvenient. With only her loyal ladies-in-waiting for support, Lucrezia enters the hostile environment of the Ferrarese court. Her husband is a surly, uncommunicative man, whose chief interests are forging cannons and sleeping with prostitutes, from whom he has contracted syphilis. Lucrezia's miserly father-in-law withholds the enormous dowry her father had promised her. He and Lucrezia's snobbish sister-in-law, Isabella, regard Lucrezia as too low-born for the Este family, who are members of the old Italian nobility. But Lucrezia asserts her rights, and eventually she is allowed to keep her dowry. She finds comfort in her friendship with the poet Pietro Bembo, and becomes his muse. But when it seems that their relationship will develop into something more, she realizes she cannot act on her feelings for Bembo without shattering her father's alliance with Ferrara. Meanwhile, Lucrezia's brother Cesare plunders his way through the cities of the Romagna at the head of his army as he attempts to carve out a Borgia state. He becomes more and more unstable as he descends into syphilitic madness. Even his father starts to fear him. Cesare brutally puts down a rebellion against him among his subordinates. But Cesare, who always seems to do the unexpected, has a tenderer side, as can be seen when he rushes to Lucrezia's bedside when he hears she is ill. Dunant tells the story from several points of view, including Lucrezia, Cesare, and the Pope. A compelling addition is the point of view of Niccolò

Machiavelli. A young Florentine diplomat, Machiavelli goes as an envoy to Cesare Borgia and becomes fascinated by him. His experiences with Cesare will become the inspiration for *The Prince*. Machiavelli is a complex character, who drinks heavily and spends time with prostitutes, but with strong feelings for his new wife, Marietta, a young woman with an interest in politics that is unusual for a woman of her time. In fact, I would have liked to see more of Marietta Machiavelli. *In the Name of the Family* is a masterful historical novel. It's not the easiest book to follow, with its many points of view, but it makes for rewarding reading. It is probably best to read *Dunant*'s first novel about the Borgias, *Blood and Beauty*, first, but *In the Name of the Family* can be read on its own.

Dunant is a terrific historical-fiction writer (I also read *In the Company of the Courtesan*). She uses wonderful imagination to weave historical facts and persons into a compelling and pressing story that gives you insight into history and human nature at the same time. She's a literary writer, but not to the degree of, for instance, Hilary Mantel; some people find Mantel impossible to read (though I adore her). Dunant is literary without being impossible or difficult to read. This book may contain an incident or two of anachronistic use of language, but it's rare enough to overlook and does nothing to diminish my admiration and enjoyment of Dunant's work.

I was disappointed in this book by Ms. Dunant. I found that the story line was jumbled and jumped from person to person without connectives. I was especially sad that there wasn't more about Lucrezia Borgia and her husband. Although I was disappointed, I'm always impressed by the amount of research that goes into writing an historical novel.

Dear Sarah Dunant, I am a fan of your books. *In the Company of the Courtesan* is one of my favorite all times books (I have it in both print & ebook) and this book was good but, please, enough with the Borgias. Please use your considerable talent elsewhere now.

Interesting read.....a very different portrait of L. Borgia.....worth the read! D.M.

This was good historical novel and is the second book in a series, I enjoyed both books and would recommend them if you like historical fiction.

Excellent rich descriptive writing! Loved it! This kind of writing makes reading history fun! I loved

every minute of it.

I'm enjoying this book so much! Am having a hard time putting it down.

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