



The Prettiest Love Letters in the World: Letters Between Lucrezia Borgia & Pietro Bembo, 1503- 1519

Hugh Shankland (editor)

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If history remembers Lucrezia Borgia at all, it is as a woman of extravagant vices whose name has become synonymous with political intrigue and poison. Cardinal Bembo is remembered primarily as the namesake of a popular typeface. But as this book of letters reveals, there was real substance, and real faces, to both of them. Borgia, a child bride who was ruthlessly exploited for political advantage by her three husbands, proved to be a girl of surprising resilience and cunning, anything but a monster. Pietro Bembo, the learned and (as demonstrated here) surpassingly gentle scholar, was the perfect product of the Renaissance. The covert love affair they conducted over sixteen years under the nose of Borgia's ruthless brother, Cesare, was as dangerous as it was impassioned and their letters, which provide a unique record of life during the Italian Renaissance, are a testament both to a relationship of rare beauty and to a feudal society of strict boundaries, dark dynastic drives, boundless political ambition, and extraordinary gallantry. Set in (what else?) Monotype Bembo, illustrated with the charming and delicate wood engravings of Shirley Smith, this elegant paperback will be a memorable gift for modern lovers.

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