



Madonna of the Seven Hills

Jean Plaidy

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The most beautiful woman in Rome, Lucrezia Borgia, was born into a family—and a destiny—she could not hope to escape . . .

Fifteenth-century Rome: The Borgia family is on the rise. Lucrezia's father, Pope Alexander VI, places his illegitimate daughter and her only brothers, Cesare, Giovanni, and Goffredo, in the jeweled splendor—and scandal—of his court. From the Pope's affairs with adolescent girls to Cesare's dangerous jealousy of anyone who inspires Lucrezia's affections to the ominous birth of a child conceived in secret, no Borgia can elude infamy.

Young Lucrezia gradually accepts her fate as she comes to terms with the delicate nature of her relationships with her father and brothers. The unbreakable bond she shares with them both exhilarates and terrifies her as her innocence begins to fade. Soon she will understand that her family's love pales next to their quest for power and that she herself is the greatest tool in their political arsenal.

From the inimitable pen of Jean Plaidy, this family's epic legend is replete with passion, intrigue, and murder—and it's only the beginning.

Madonna of the Seven Hills Details

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From Reader Review *Madonna of the Seven Hills* for online ebook

Katherine ??? says

Sebelum membaca buku *Borgia* ini, saya sudah menonton film miniseri *the Borgia* yg dilansir tahun 2011. Maka saya tertarik utk membaca bukunya. Beruntung saya membaca buku karya Jean Plaidy ini, yg terdiri dari 2 buku.

Dalam buku ini dibahas sejak kelahiran Lucrezia Borgia dimana dia sudah jadi permata hati keluarganya, diperebutkan kasih sayangnya antara abang-abangnya yang saling iri hati, Cesare dan Giovanni. Lucrezia digambarkan sbg gadis cantik, penurut dan selalu berusaha menyenangkan semua orang. Sampai pernikahannya pun diatur utk kepentingan keuntungan politik ayahnya. Dan pergolakan perseteruan kedua kakaknya, terombang-ambingnya perasaan Lucrezia yang harus mengindahkan saran dan perintah ayah serta kakaknya, dan kepatuhan sbg istri dari Giovanni Sforza, suami yang dipilih oleh ayahnya.

Saya lebih suka membahas masing-masing karakter tokoh-tokoh sejarah dalam buku ini. Pengarang menulis dgn lihay nya ttg kelebihan dan kekurangan masing-masing individu yang memiliki peran penting dalam kehidupan awal Lucrezia, walau ada indikasi dari pengarang yang terlihat tidak menyukai Sforza dan Orsini (suami Giulia Farnesse) yang dikatakan sbg pria lemah.

Aleksander VI aka Roderigo Borgia, sang kepala keluarga, ambisius luar biasa, sangat sayang pada semua anak-anaknya terutama kesayangannya, Giovanni. Dia piawai memainkan politik seperti seorang maestro, mengubah kekalahan menjadi kemenangannya. Namun sayang sekali, dia tidak bisa melihat potensi dan bakat masing-masing anak lelakinya terutama Cesare dan Giovanni, yang menjadi "bumerang tragedi" bagi Aleksander karena perselisihan kedua anaknya ini mengakibatkan dia harus kehilangan anak kesayangannya, Giovanni yang dilenyapkan oleh Cesare (yang ini mengingatkan saya pada kisah raja Tang Taizong muda sbkm mjd kaisar, yang membunuh kakak dan adiknya, serta meraih tampuk singgasana dari ayahnya).

Cesare Borgia, digambarkan berandal yang di saat dewasanya berubah menjadi sosok dominan, dingin dan mematikan, tetapi berdarah panas dan tidak ragu-ragu utk membunuh lawan2nya. Mungkin jika Aleksander "tidak memaksa" Cesare utk menjadi kardinal, "tidak memaksa" Cesare utk membunuh Virginio Orsini, yang dikaguminya ketika dia remaja, Giovanni Borgia mungkin tidak akan dilenyapkan oleh Cesare. Tapi sejarah sudah menakdirkan demikian.

Lucrezia Borgia, gadis cantik manja, yang menurut saya tidak punya ketetapan hati, lebih menyukai keindahan duniawi, sama seperti ayah dan kakak2nya. Dia tidak bisa luput dari cengkeraman keluarganya, dgn pemberian kasih sayang yang keterlaluan dan tidak normal (bahkan di mata Sforza, suaminya), menjadikan dirinya sosok pembimbang dan mudah dirayu utk dimanfaatkan scr politis oleh ayahnya. Lucrezia melakukan skandal pertamanya dgn memiliki anak haram dgn pelayan utusan ayahnya ketika surat-surat menyurat antara Lucrezia dan ayahnya ketika Lucrezia ada di Biara San Sisto. Inilah "bukti" bahwa Lucrezia impulsif dan tidak bisa menahan godaan.

Giovanni Sforza, pion malang yang menjadi suami Lucrezia. Dia sebenarnya lumayan cerdas, tapi karena terlalu pemalu dan minder, membuat dirinya gentar dan benci terhadap keluarga Borgia. Dirinya tidak pernah dianggap sbg anggota keluarga oleh ayah dan kakak2 Lucrezia. Dan perceraian dgn tuduhan impotensi dan pernyataan bahwa Lucrezia masih perawan, benar2 menggelikan.

Giulia Farnesse, gundik kesayangan Aleksander yang sepantaran dgn Lucrezia, namun lebih matang dan

cerdik daripada Lucrezia. Giulia sadar dirinya cantik dan bisa memberikan keuntungan bagi keluarganya dan keluarga suaminya, Orsini. Adriana, ibu mertua Giulia pun yang soleh dan taat, tidak berdaya dgn kekuasaan uang dan politis yang ditawarkan Aleksander, malah mendukung Giulia utk menjadi kekasih Paus bejat ini. Kemunafikan dan korupsi pada zaman Aleksander VI tampaknya adalah hal lumrah dgn "menutup mata". Sayangnya belakangan Giulia tidak diceritakan lagi setelah dia "disandera" pihak Perancis dan ditebus oleh Paus Aleksander.

Skandal-skandal seks (adik ipar menjadi kekasih kakak-beradik Borgia), politik suap-menyuap (Aleksander berhasil menjadi Paus karena janji-janji politis dan uang, dan sebagai Kardinal terkaya pada zamannya, tidak mengherankan dia bisa berhasil dgn ambisinya itu), nepotisme (Cesare dijadikan Kardinal, dan Giovanni dijadikan Duke of Gandia) merajalela di buku ini. Saya suka jalan ceritanya dgn alur maju, dan penggambaran karakter tokoh-tokohnya dan pergolakan batin mereka digambarkan bagus sekali. Utk yang menyukai genre historical fiction ttg politik Eropa zaman abad perntengahan seperti saya, buku ini akan memukau benak Anda seperti yang saya rasakan pada saat membacanya.

Allie says

My first Plaidy and I am hooked! I will say it did take me longer than expected to really get into the book. But once I did, I didn't want to put it down. I am waiting for the 2nd book in this series to arrive in the mail! The Borgia family is very interesting! I read The Borgia Bride a few months ago and wanted to read more. I enjoyed this version of the Borgias maybe more than Kalogridis' perhaps because it doesn't seem as exaggerated. It is a quick read which was a nice change of pace for me since lately it seems as if I have only been reading books that are 500 pages long!

Sharon says

This is a story of the Borgia family taking place in Italy during the fifteenth century. I read this story because of my interest in the Borgias after the episode on TV. The novel focuses on the lives of the father (who became Pope Alexander VI) and his four illegitimate children. Most of the story centers around his daughter Lucrezia. It is a story of power, luxury, murder and heartbreak.

Jean Plaidy has written over 100 historical fiction books under several names (many as Jean Holt.) There are the Tudors Saga (11), Stuarts (7), Queens of England (11) and many more. Madonna of the Seven Hills was first published in 1965 and was republished this year in a two volume book entitled The Borgias. It also includes Book 2 of the Borgias, entitled Light on Lucrezia, which I look forward to reading. I will definitely be looking for more of this author's work, hoping more will be republished in the future. Her style is light and easy to read, combining a pleasing combination of fact and fiction.

Denise says

Raised surrounded by riches in an atmosphere ripe with scandal, Lucrezia Borgia, daughter of Pope Alexander VI, is both the apple of her father's eye and an important pawn in furthering his ambitions. In the midst of power struggles, bribery and assassinations as well as her older brothers' intense rivalry, her innocence cannot last for very long.

The Borgias are a source of endless fascination for many - myself obviously among them. Jean Plaidy can generally be relied upon for deft characterisations and well-paced plotting that takes historical facts into account and pays little heed to unfounded rumours. While not my favourite among her works that I've read so far, this first part of her Lucrezia duology following her protagonist from birth until her second wedding day was a solid, enjoyable effort.

Jacqi says

Totally addictive thus far. Purchased for my Kindle - but I think this one is certainly a keeper - so I'll be ordering the actual book. Looking forward to the HBO/Showtime series now...

Changed this to FIVE stars - and I downloaded the next installment immediately to my Kindle...

Kara says

A good story, but drag down but a little too much telling rather than showing. However, I appreciate that Plaidy didn't use a lot of foreshadowing or irony that is all too easy to go overboard on in historical fiction.

Pauline Montagna says

As a schoolgirl I devoured Jean Plaidy's novels. Her tales of intrigue and passion in high places were heady stuff for a girl attending a convent school. I longed to be one of Charles II's mistresses, or live in Renaissance Italy. The books that remained with me most were her Lucrezia Borgia series. To a sheltered Catholic teenager, the ambitions and amorality of the Borgia pope and his family were shocking and titillating. Recently, I thought I might revisit Jean Plaidy and found second-hand copies of *Madonna of the Seven Hills* and *Light on Lucrezia* on the internet.

My strongest memories came from the first volume, *Madonna of the Seven Hills*. Even after thirty years I could still recall images of Cesare Borgia murdering his brother from sheer jealousy, of his father, Roderigo Borgia, smoothly transferring his affections from his favourite son to the son he knew had killed him, of Lucrezia Borgia, heavily pregnant from a passionate affair held within convent walls, standing before a panel of cardinals declaring herself virgo intacta in order to obtain a divorce from an inconvenient husband.

Plaidy's version of Lucrezia Borgia was also a lesson in historiography. In portraying a woman whose name had come down in infamy as the innocent pawn of her father and brother, Plaidy taught me that history is not a set of fixed truths, but a narrative that can be turned and manipulated to the teller's purposes.

Yet for all that, on taking up the book again in my maturity, I was sorely disappointed and wondered how I could once have read it so avidly. I can only imagine that it was not for the style, but for the content, for those glimpses of sex and passion that appealed so viscerally to an adolescent becoming aware of her own desires. But yet how innocent an age it was, for they are only glimpses, a few passionate words, a post-coital smile, coy references. How different to the blow by blow descriptions we expect today.

I struggled to read this book, spurred on by my determination to write this review, and, I must guiltily admit, to relive those old memories. The only way I could keep at it was by taking it to work with me where I would read anything as a diversion on a long and boring tram ride.

Plaidy's style transgresses the one important precept of novel writing. She tells rather than shows. The novel is mainly exposition interspersed with occasional, uninspiring dialogue. We are told everything about the characters' internal workings, yet they still remain fundamentally unconvincing. Her character development moves from point A almost as far as point B. Cesare is angry and violent in the nursery only to get more angry and violent as a man. Lucrezia's thoughts are actually more sophisticated in the nursery than in her treacherous adult world. Roderigo's subtlety is celebrated, yet we must believe that he can turn a blind eye to whatever does not please him.

The novel's flaws are evident from the first few pages where we are introduced to Lucrezia's parents and follow their separate musings on their lives. These long passages float from one subject to another, touch back on the first subject, go elsewhere and then return. Joycean perhaps, but not what the novelist was aiming for. In fact it read as a first draft in need of tidying up, and furnished the key to the underlying problem of the novel. Given the author's output (over 200 historical novels under several pseudonyms) and the amount of research that must have gone into each novel, it is not surprising that they had to be written quickly, with little time for second thoughts.

However, reservations aside, although I might have outgrown her, I have Jean Plaidy to thank for firing my interest in history and for introducing me to a world beyond the convent walls.

Dahlia says

Zaista ne znam kako bih ocijenila ovu knjigu. Mislila sam dati tri zvjezdice, ali onda pogledam kojim sam sve knjigama dala tri zvjezdice a puno su lošije. Dati četiri opet bi bilo previše. One stvari koje su mi se svidjele istovremeno bi mi išle na živce u nekim poglavljima.

Ali prije toga, evo ukratko o čemu se radi u knjizi. Za one koji ne znaju, „Madonna of the Seven Hills“ (na hrvatskom prevedena kao Gospa od sedam brežuljaka) govori o Lucreziji Borgiji, vanbračnom djetetu kardinala Rodriga Borgije, koji će kasnije postati papa Aleksandar VI.

Roman počinje njenim rođenjem. U početku je opisano njeno djetinjstvo u domu njene majke Vannozze Cattanei. Radnja se odvija polako. Nema nekih napetosti osim ako ne računate vječno rivalstvo njene braće Giovannija i Cesarea Borgie. Lucrezia odrasta u takvoj sredini gdje su ljubavnici, umorstva, zavjere i spletke smatrane normalnom pojavom.

Dalje vam neću pisati. Morat ćete sami pročitati.

E, sad. Prije čitanja knjige malo sam znala o Lucreziji. Nisam puno kopala po Wikipediji jer sam gledala prve dvije epizode serije The Borgias pa sam imala neko „predznanje“ prije čitanja. Međutim, serija je jedno a roman drugo.

Evo što me smetalo:

1) OPISI likova!

- Lik Lucrezie. Spisateljica je pokušala pokazati Lucreziju žrtvom okoline, njenog oca i braće. Htjela je da čitatelji osjete neku vrstu žaljenja prema Lucreziji. Međutim, njeni jednostavni opisi dvanaestogodišnje djevojčice nisu joj dali nikakvu dubinu. Umjesto osjećaja sažaljenja samo sam je doživjela kao površnu i poglupu.

I da, zlatna kosa. Zar nema nikakvog drugog opisa za kosu?! Njena duga, zlatna kosa. Njena ljepota. Kakva ljepota? Jedino spominje zlatnu kosu milijun puta i ništa drugo. Je li bila visoka, niska? Kakve je imala oči,

usta? Malo više opisa ne bi škodilo!

-Giulia. Zanimljiv lik, ali opet... Koliko god bila zanimljiva, ovo je knjiga o Lucreziji i dosadilo mi je ?itati pedeset stranica o Giuliji koja ljubi sa muškarcem koji joj može biti djed!

-Sanchia. Još jedan ženski lik koja osim lukavosti i zavodljivosti nema nikakvu kvalitetu. Zanimljiv lik, ali je previše stranica zauzela njena jako bitna pri?a.

-Cesare Borgia. Piše na wikipediji kako je bio okrutan, ubojica, manipulator. Kad pro?itaš nešto takvo dobiješ odre?enu predstavu kako bi lik trebao biti opisan. A ne... On je tako opisan da odmah padneš na njega. Zloban i zavodnik. Magnet za žene. Oh, to je takooo romanti?no. Uff. Opisan je kao razmažen klinac koji stalno kuka kako je on trebao biti veliki vojskovo?a koji osvaja cijelu Europu, kao Julije Cezar. Jedina rekacija kad je ljut je stiskanje šaka. Mislim,stvarno? A namrgo?eno lice, stisnuti zubi?

-Giovanni Sforza. Prvi Lucrezijin muž. Možete pogoditi kako je opisan-meek, weak, coward. I tako stotinu puta na stotinu stranica.

2)OPIS Italije tj. Rima ili manjak opisa Italije tj. Rima.

Ženska napiše nazive dvije ulice i sad joj trebam povjerovati da je radnja smještena u Rimu?

Kad bi izbacili nazive ulica i talijanska imena, radnja bi lako mogla biti smještena u bilo koji grad u bilo koje vrijeme! Uop?e nemaš osje?aj da se radnja odvija u Italiji u 15. stolje?u!

A sad što mi sviđjelo:

1) Pri?a. Kako je ovo ipak povijesni roman, podloga mu je u ?injenicama ili iskrivljenim ?injenicama. Zavjere, spletke, umorstva. O tome nije nikad dosadno ?itati.

2) Radnja pred kraj romana. Zamjeram što se nešto interesantno po?inje doga?ati pred kraj romana.

spoiler alert

Tek na kraju romana Lucrezija dobija jednu novu dimenziju nakon što se nesretno zaljubi u Pedra. Ali, naravno, njena sre?a ne potraje kratko jer joj brat i otac ubiju ljubavnika da ne bi osramotila cijelu obitelj. Nakon ovog dijela shvatiš u kakvom je vremenu i okruženju živjela pa se možeš na neki na?in povezati s likom. Ali, trebalo je 200 stranica kako bi se došlo do toga.

Bilo kako bilo, knjiga nije loša i kad je postala zanimljiva-bam! Kraj romana. Plaidy je jako lukava što je ostavila roman nedovršenim pa sad moram pro?itati i drugi dio. Lukavo Plaidy, lukavo.

Robin says

Once again, Plaidy's character assessment is what makes this book. Her characterization of all the characters, but particular Cesare and his relationship with Lucrezia, worked so well to bring them alive and allow us to understand them.

Plaidy's forward note which states "Only by judging the Borgias against their own times can they arouse our sympathy, and only if they arouse our sympathy can they be understood" is incredibly accurate, not just of this novel and the Borgias but of history in general. And Plaidy certainly succeeds in accomplishing this. If you want a novel that will make sense of the shocking lives of the Borgia's, this is it. I'm already diving into it's sequel (Light on Lucrezia).

Sue Law says

A late '50s Plaidy when she was producing some of her best historical novels. Lucrezia is the third of the illegitimate children of Cardinal Rodrigo Borgia who later became Pope Alexander VI. In an age of corruption Alexander takes nepotism to a new level, using his children as pawns in his power game. Plaidy portrays Lucrezia not as a scheming poisoner but as a naive, not very bright beauty manipulated by her family. Well paced, this first of 2 novels takes us through Lucrezia's childhood to the start of her second marriage.

Kate Sherrod says

This is the first Jean Plaidy book I've ever read that did not concern itself with a Queen of England. I was expecting the reading of it to be a stranger experience.

But Jean Plaidy is always Jean Plaidy, writing as if she's telling a fairy tale but not sparing us any of the unsavory or unpleasant details. So of course she had to take on the infamous Lucrezia Borgia.

I've noticed a tendency, in Plaidy, to build the tale around the most popular anecdote about her subject known at the time, whether it's truth or folklore. Thus, for instance, *The Follies of the King* is one long argument/justification for the infamous (and possibly fanciful) murder, at the behest of his long-suffering wife, of Edward III by means of a red hot poker. And thus this first of two books Plaidy wrote about Lucrezia and the rest of the Borgia family is just a giant bit of foreshadowing for the legendary fratricide of Lucrezia's brother Juan/Giovanni by her other brother Cesare.

Thus even as it tells the story of Lucrezia's father's elevation from Cardinal Roderigo Borgia to Pope Alexander III despite being the father of three and possibly four illegitimate children by a courtesan, which is a tale quite worthy of a novel in its own right, *Madonna of the Seven Hills* focuses on perhaps the most famous case of sibling rivalry gone wild since Cain and Abel, except this time, instead of God's favor, the brothers are dueling for that of their own sister and father.*

Some later writers (*Madonna of the Seven Hills* was first published in 1958) might have gone all out for the scandalous, salacious incest plot, but Plaidy, as always, was more interested in who Lucrezia really was and why she would accept and even embrace a situation that most modern women would find intolerable. From the first pages, we see Lucrezia as a girl born to a bizarre station in life (tartly observing at one point to her friend Giulia Farnese [who has also by that point taken over Lucrezia's mother's job as the pope's mistress] that accepting bribes and telling her father all about them is her job) but who never knew anything else; the only daughter of a family of vain, proud, selfish and violently passionate pseudo-aristocrats who can't afford not to stick together however much they have gotten sick of each other.

So of course Plaidy's Lucrezia** grows up to be a pathological people pleaser. She is rich and powerful and beautiful and educated, but despite these advantages her self-worth is bound up only in how her father and brothers react to her; if they are adoring her, they are not fighting each other, or killing people, or starting wars or seduce-raping innocent girls (or boys) -- so it's very important that they keep on adoring her, even if it means keeping them trapped as rivals for her attention and affection. Whether or not she had a sexual relationship with any of them is quite beside the point, for Plaidy; if she did, it was just another symptom. Plaidy is more interested in how the rumors got started than if they were true.

As I said, though, all of this is just foreshadowing for the culmination of the big and legendary hatred between Cesare and Giovanni***, the two brothers who have only ever been friends when they were teaming up against an outsider whom they perceived as a threat to the family (usually a husband or lover or would-be lover of Lucrezia's). It's a tricky thing Plaidy has done here, making us sympathize for their prize even as our author so obviously taps her foot impatiently waiting for the Big Showdown. Lucrezia gets humanized only to be turned into a thing, a prize, anyway.

Which is to say that in *Madonna of the Seven Hills*, Plaidy may have achieved her greatest degree of verisimilitude, of art imitating life almost painfully perfectly, of all.

But that's not quite what we turn to historical fiction/romance for, is it?

*Alexander VI was an infamously indulgent and doting father, but even so, imposed his will on his children somewhat mercilessly. Giovanni, his favorite, he chose to be the soldier and the secular nobleman, blind to the fact that Giovanni was about as much a soldier as, as, well, as Cesare was a clergyman. And, famously, Cesare was the one who got trained up in the priesthood and made a Cardinal by age 18. Of course, had this not happened, Niccolo Macchiavelli wouldn't have had his model for *The Prince*, because Cesare wouldn't have had to become the consummate schemer he was, etc.

**And possibly the historical Lucrezia, too.

***Peculiarly, the actual murder is dealt with offstage, which feels like a bit of a cheat after all of the build-up, but again, is the sort of anti-climactic "truth" writers like Plaidy most like to highlight, even at the expense of causing the last third or so of the novel to fall flat.

Therese says

Who hasn't heard of the name Borgia? That is the only thing I have heard of, their name, until picking up this book. Roderigo Borgia, a Spanish Cardinal (who knew he was Spanish and not Italian), had many mistresses but he had a favorite and with her Giovanni, Cesare, Lucretia and Goffredo. However Roderigo was not content to be a cardinal. He was determined to be the Pope no matter what the cost. I don't know that I knew any popes had children that were openly acknowledged, but Alexander VI did. And after being elected Pope, Alexander was not afraid to use nepotism because the Borgias were going to rule and in order to rule they had to stick together. The children were adored, but of course he had a favorite, and like all stories of sibling rivalry since Cain and Abel, this was not going to be a happy ending. Lucretia, not unlike her father and brothers, enjoyed everything that was beautiful and only wanted things to be pleasant. If they weren't, she wasn't interested. She couldn't bear to have people spread cruel rumors about her brothers because she loved them dearly, but not in any way that I recognized. The author did a good job of giving the feeling that things were horribly twisted with the Borgias without coming right out and saying exactly what it was because so many things haven't been proven. Lucretia is painted as extremely naïve, and I can't believe she could be so gullible and so blind as to what her father and brothers were capable of, not to mention what they actually did. Cesare knew he could get away with murder and still be accepted and therefore was never punished accordingly. After all he was a Borgia and they lived by a different set of rules. I don't pretend that this was anything but historical fiction, heavy on the fiction, but it was an adequate introduction into the Borgia world.

The Idle Woman says

I've always felt I should read Jean Plaidy's books. She's ubiquitous in the historical fiction sections of bookshops and libraries, and she writes about periods that I find interesting. It was only a matter of time. Last winter, I went slightly wild at the Book Barn and came away with a pile of her novels, which I'm only now starting to tackle. I chose to begin with the first of her two novels about Lucrezia Borgia, which may have been a mistake, as it hasn't done much to win me over. Over-seasoned, two-dimensional and extremely dated, it feels like stepping back in time for all the wrong reasons...

For the full review, please see my blog:
<https://theidlewoman.net/2017/11/21/m...>

Chris says

Because of the TV Series on the Borgias, I reread this and *Light on Lucrezia* by Jean Plaidy. I believe anyone watching this series would gain a lot by reading a Plaidy first. She lived from 1 Sept 1906 until 18 January 1993. Her real name was Eleanor Alice Burford Hibbert. She wrote under many names (8-15). Over 31 novels were written as Victoria Holt and sold over 51 million copies and were gothic romances. She also wrote fiction as Philippa Carr that were set in historical times, though the characters were imaginary. Her 30 romantic tales/ mystery novels written under Eleanor Burford are hard to find. She spent 15 years in the 50s and 60s writing well researched historical novels numbering about 90. There are the Plantagenet Series, the Tudor Series etc. and far surpass any college history class I ever took, presenting accurate accounts of history in a credible manner. I researched a few and found little poetic license. Then came Victoria Holt (her most successful alias selling over 75 million copies in 20 languages). Her last pseudonym was as Philippa Carr and the novels took place just before WWII and are narrated by a 'woman of the time' centered around authentic historical episodes. I have never read a Plaidy under a 5 due to her ability to make history come alive through her characters. Her other books are enjoyable and range from a 3 to a 5. Unfortunately I do not own all the Plaidys - but am working on it.

MV Mariani says

I really *really* wanted to like this book. I really did!

After seeing the show about their family, I wanted to immerse myself in a juicy book about it, especially about Lucrezia, and I believe that's the reason I even reached the end of this book in the first place.

I was starved for a story about them, and as any starved person, at first, I devoured what was in front of me without giving it much thought but then, when I slowly became full, I realized how dull it was.

I kept on waiting for Lucrezia to wake up, for the dynamics to change and become more intricate and interesting but it was to no avail.

- "Oh, how I love my brothers, my family. Oh, how I miss them. Oh, I can't be happy if I'm not near them. They scare me a little bit, they do, but- oh how I need them and love them" -

That's the whole book! That and Cesare insinuating to Lucrezia how they could be more than siblings, but then, I didn't believe him to be as obsessed with her as Plaidy wants us to believe. He seems to remember his said obsession only when he's bored or when it most suits him.

And really, let's be frank, a *whole* book where the protagonist it's always acting like an over dramatic pure soul? *Especially* when she has a family like that? I just can't believe it. It's unreal and far-fetched. In my opinion, if we take in consideration the family she grew up in, there's no way Lucrezia was so innocent, *no way*. And at first, the writer (it's actually one of the first things we read) says that to understand them we have to take in consideration the times they lived in. And I get that, I really do, but she kept trying to make Lucrezia into an innocent and good young girl, and it felt out of place.

For me it lacked substance; with so many scandals they had, you would think a writer would make a feast out of them, but no, we get stuck with how much Lucrezia loves his family and how much she yearns for passion. For God's sake! It was insufferable.

If you want to read about a badass Lucrezia, then don't even look at this book. And if you want to read about the Borgias and their lives, then don't either. The book goes over their matters and problems in such a brief manner that you keep wondering if you read them at all.
