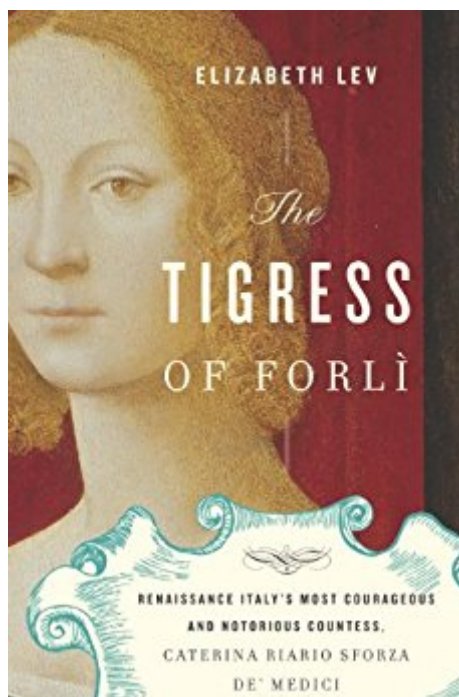




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# The Tigress Of Forli: Renaissance Italy's Most Courageous And Notorious Countess, Caterina Riario Sforza De' Medici



## Synopsis

In this insightful, fascinating portrayal, Elizabeth Lev brings Caterina Sforza and her times very much to life. "Kathleen Turner, actress and author of *Send Yourself Roses* A strategist to match Machiavelli; a warrior who stood toe to toe with the Borgias; a wife whose three marriages would end in bloodshed and heartbreak; and a mother determined to maintain her family's honor, Caterina Riario Sforza de' Medici was a true Renaissance celebrity, beloved and vilified in equal measure. In this dazzling biography, Elizabeth Lev illuminates her extraordinary life and accomplishments. Raised in the court of Milan and wed at age ten to the pope's corrupt nephew, Caterina was ensnared in Italy's political intrigues early in life. After turbulent years in Rome's papal court, she moved to the Romagna province of Forlì. Following her husband's assassination, she ruled Italy's crossroads with iron will, martial strength, political savvy, and an icon's fashion sense. In finally losing her lands to the Borgia family, she put up a resistance that inspired all of Europe and set the stage for her progeny—including Cosimo de' Medici—to follow her example to greatness. A rich evocation of Renaissance life, *The Tigress of Forlì* reveals Caterina Riario Sforza as a brilliant and fearless ruler, and a tragic but unbowed figure. A rich, nuanced portrait of a highly controversial beauty and military leader, and her violent, albeit glittering, Italian Renaissance milieu. "Publishers Weekly "Well-written and meticulously researched, *The Tigress of Forlì* recreates the world of Renaissance Italy in all its grandeur and violence. At the center stands a remarkable woman, Caterina Riario Sforza. Mother, warrior, and icon, Caterina is unforgettable, and so is the exciting story that Elizabeth Lev tells here. "Barry Strauss, author of *Masters of Command: Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar, and the Genius of Leadership*

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## Customer Reviews

This is a story that holds the interest. The political schemes, wars, and assassinations of that era are covered in detail, often with the horror and suspense which medieval cruelty and duplicity invite. As a writer of talent, this author brings the characters to life with an abundance of details which one cannot find elsewhere. Moreover, her use of adjectives is masterful, so precise and evocative that I cannot refrain from complimenting the author on their use. This biographer has chosen a historical episode and a leading character of great interest. Caterina of Forli was certainly courageous and resourceful during the multitudinous and perilous changes of fortune which characterized the Italy of that time. She also proved as devious and unsparing as any of the male rulers, faced as she was by the many enemies of her family. Following the assassination of her beloved second husband, for instance, she destroyed the conspirators and even their families with great cruelty. She will be remembered forever, however, for her defiance of the Borgia pope and his ruthless son Cesare. The author triumphs in telling the story of the assault on the fortress at Forli and the capture of a woman unbowed by the fortunes of war. By contrast, the indifference of her elder sons to her imprisonment and suffering, their cupidity, their ambition for higher positions in the Church while making no effort to help her are both shocking and disgusting. You will not find a more complete recounting of these tragic events than in this history of a valiant woman fighting against all the hardships of medieval Italy. After her capture by the terrible Cesare Borgia, I had to pause often before continuing with this record of the indignities and suffering inflicted on this woman. I recommend this biography to anyone seeking history related in an interesting way. This biographer, moreover, provides an extra benefit by adding to the book a brief account of the career and death of Caterina's youngest son, the great warrior Giovanni dalle Bande Nere.

I have always loved and been fascinated by powerful women, both in history and in fiction. I'm

especially fascinated by these sorts of women who lived in eras where their lives were highly circumscribed. As the saying goes "well behaved women seldom make history". It's a shame because history is filled with great women of strength, resilience and resourcefulness and their names need to be better known. To be honest, I actually came across the amazing and wily Catarina Sforza while watching Showtime's 'The Borgias' (my guilty Jeremy Irons pleasure). As I watched this powerful reddish-gold haired virago lift her skirts and taunt the army of Cesare Borgia by pointing at her genitals and telling him that she could make more sons (a story that was highly embellished by Machiavelli who was NOT a fan of hers), I thought, this woman's real story has GOT to be pretty darn interesting and fact actually pales in comparison to fiction. She was, even to her detractors, a remarkable woman who literally went toe to toe with the incredibly dangerous Borgia clan alone. Catarina Riario Sforza de Medici was in short, one hell of a woman. Elegant, cultured, literate, a fighter, a huntress, a tactician, a healer, a mother and a very beautiful and forceful woman. She often stood alone, fighting for her family's legacy and her right to exist in a Renaissance Italy which alliances shifted on the winds and death was a mere heartbeat away. She could also be very stubborn and make serious errors in judgment. Be that as it may, Catarina took control of her life in ways that were quite rare for that time period. Far from perfect, she was a woman determined to be in charge of her destiny.

What a truly fascinating book. Well written, interesting, and you can tell it has been thoroughly researched. I was interested to know more about this woman after seeing her as a side character in the Borgia and I have to say, her true story seems so much more interesting than the Borgia story! I have plans to read more about this unique woman in history because of this author and I love finding out more about strong women in history like this. Although it talks a bit about fashion and clothing (it is Italy during the Renaissance after all!) what I really liked was the focus on her artful approach to war and her fearlessness in the face of persecution. She refused to give up what was rightfully hers and protected her land for her children, but also chose to ignore pressure to marry men she felt were unsuitable and instead followed her heart as much as she could. She managed to stare down the Borgia and live to tell about it, which in itself is quite a feat.

This book is excellently written and researched. It was a touch slow in the beginning, there was a lot of back story told, but it certainly added to the overall story. The last half of the book went way too quickly. It was riveting. Here is a woman who is not well known today, but if she were, she would make an amazing Italian leader. The writing style puts the reader right in the story. Ms. Lev gives us

the names of many people but I never felt I was lost and couldn't follow characters. The book was well organized. This is a wonderful read for anyone who likes History, Italian History, or Biographies. This is the kind of amazingly detailed story that should be turned in to a shorter biography for Elementary school children. Ms. Lev had so many exciting and courageous details about Caterina, all young Italian, and any nationality, girls should have the knowledge of someone this spirited.

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