



The Competition: Da Vinci's Disciples - Book Two

Donna Russo Morin

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In a studiolo behind a church, six women gather to perform an act that is, at once, restorative, powerful, and illegal: they paint.

Under the tutelage of Leonardo da Vinci, these six show talent and drive equal to that of any man, but in Renaissance Florence, they must hide their skills, or risk the scorn of the church, the city, and the law.

A commission to paint a fresco in the church of Santo Spirito is about to be announced and Florence's countless artists each seek the fame and glory this lucrative job will provide. Viviana, a noblewoman freed from a terrible marriage, and now able to pursue her artistic passions, sees a potential life-altering opportunity for herself and her fellow artists. The women first speak to Lorenzo de' Medici himself, and finally, they submit a bid for the right to paint it. And they win. The very public commission belongs to them.

But with the victory comes a powerful cost. The church will not stand for women painting, especially not in a house of worship. The city is not ready to consider women in positions of power, and in Florence, artists wield tremendous power. Even the women themselves are hesitant; the attention they will bring upon themselves will disrupt their families, and even put them in physical danger.

All the while, Viviana grows closer to Sansone, her soldier lover, who is bringing to her a joy that she never knew with her deceased husband. And fellow-artist Isabetta has a flame reignited, sparked by Lorenzo himself. Power and passion collide in this sumptuous historical novel of shattering limitations, one brushstroke at a time.

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