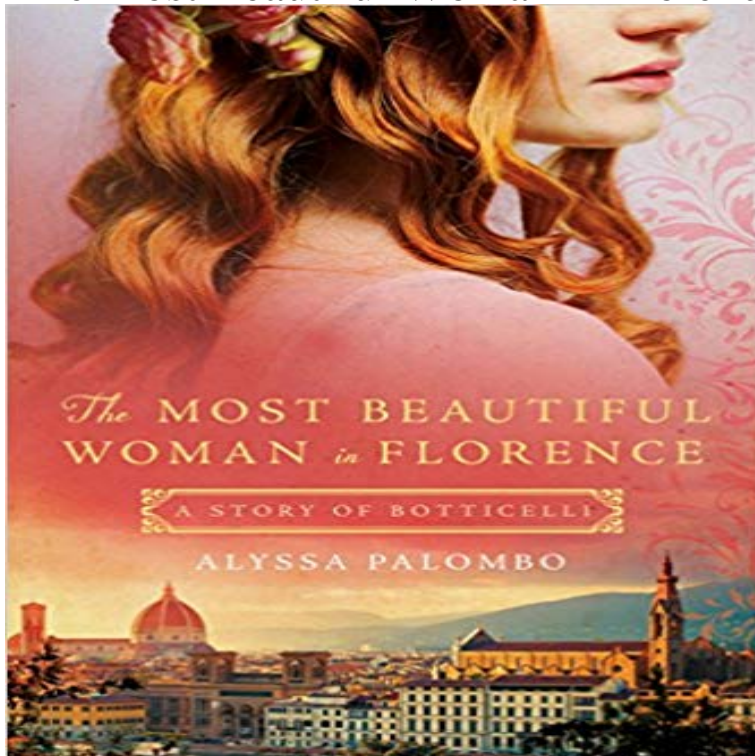


The Most Beautiful Woman in Florence: A Story of Botticelli



A girl as beautiful as Simonetta Cattaneo never wants for marriage proposals in 15th Century Italy, but she jumps at the chance to marry Marco Vespucci. Marco is young, handsome and well-educated. Not to mention he is one of the powerful Medici family's favored circle. Even before her marriage with Marco is set, Simonetta is swept up into Lorenzo and Giuliano de Medicis glittering circle of politicians, poets, artists, and philosophers. The men of Florence?most notably the rakish Giuliano de Medici?become enthralled with her beauty. That she is educated and an ardent reader of poetry makes her more desirable and fashionable still. But it is her acquaintance with a young painter, Sandro Botticelli, which strikes her heart most. Botticelli immediately invites Simonetta, newly proclaimed the most beautiful woman in Florence, to pose for him. As Simonetta learns to navigate her marriage, her place in Florentine society, and the politics of beauty and desire, she and Botticelli develop a passionate intimacy, one that leads to her immortalization in his masterpiece, *The Birth of Venus*. In the grand tradition of *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, Alyssa Palombo's *The Most Beautiful Woman in Florence* vividly captures the dangerous allure of the artist and muse bond with candor and unforgettable passion.

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