

LETTERS FROM LUCCA by Kim Baccellia

EXCERPT

1936

Sunny rays flitted through the partition blinds in Conte D'Alba's Villa. The festive air and musical background, along with the tantalizing scents of limonada and sweets, competed with the heavy cigar fumes overhead. Many special guests attended the party. Dignities from afar and a few rich aristocrats cluttered the small foyer. Silk, diamonds, and custom-designed outfits with brilliant hues flitted around the more muted clothing of the friends. A few of the adults wrinkled their noses in disdain for Rosa.

Rosa hung on the peripheral, waiting for a guest to say more about the battle in Africa, where her pappa fought. Only laughter, whispers, and scowls flew back.

Rosa might have only been ten, but nervous energy drove her to tag on Pele's hand. She had enough of the boring adults.

"Let's go," she urged.

Pele quickly grabbed a biscotti from the table, shoving it in his mouth. "What about Valerio?"

She shrugged. "He knows where we'll be." Though she tried to act indifferent, she snuck a furtive glance over her shoulder. Sure enough, their friend mingled with his father's important friends. Valerio's slick black hair and serious countenance made him look like a Conte in training, but Rosa knew better.

War.

The word tasted bitter with the fear-laced anxieties of her beloved Pappa, who fought alongside other courageous Italians. Rosa had hoped to hear more but doubted the vain Conte would reveal the status of her Pappa. Rosa bored of such adult talk. The call of outdoors prompted her to take Pele's hand and scurry past the guests. They ran through the crowded foyer, nearly colliding with the servants and their loaded plates of wine and expensive treats. Rosa's hand snatched a lemon biscotti off the tray, giggling at the hump of disapproval.