



# Lucretia Borgia: An Exceptional and Notorious Woman of the Renaissance Papacy (Women & Conflict)

*Ferdinand Gregorovius*

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A legend of beauty and seduction

The very name of Lucrezia Borgia remains, some 500 years after her time, enough to send a frisson of a thrill down the spine-particularly of men! The Lucrezia of legend has become an archetypal 'femme fatale'-beautiful, seductive and potentially deadly. She was a member of the notorious Borgia family who under the ruthless Rodrigo Borgia (Pope Alexander IV) presided over the period of the Renaissance Papacy. Of her brothers, Cesare, who bore a particularly bloody and ruthless reputation has become the most notorious and infamous. To add inevitable spice to their story, the two were said to have indulged in a torrid, incestuous affair. Fact often parts company with popular myth, but there is no doubt that Lucrezia, although actually illegitimate, was a beautiful, sophisticated and highly educated woman. She spoke five languages fluently. It was inevitable that a young woman of this background would become a political bargaining tool in the game of marriage and power. Indeed to further the Borgia family ambitions she was married three times. To what degree she participated in these machinations has, of course, become a matter of speculation and an essential component of this famous lady's allure.

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