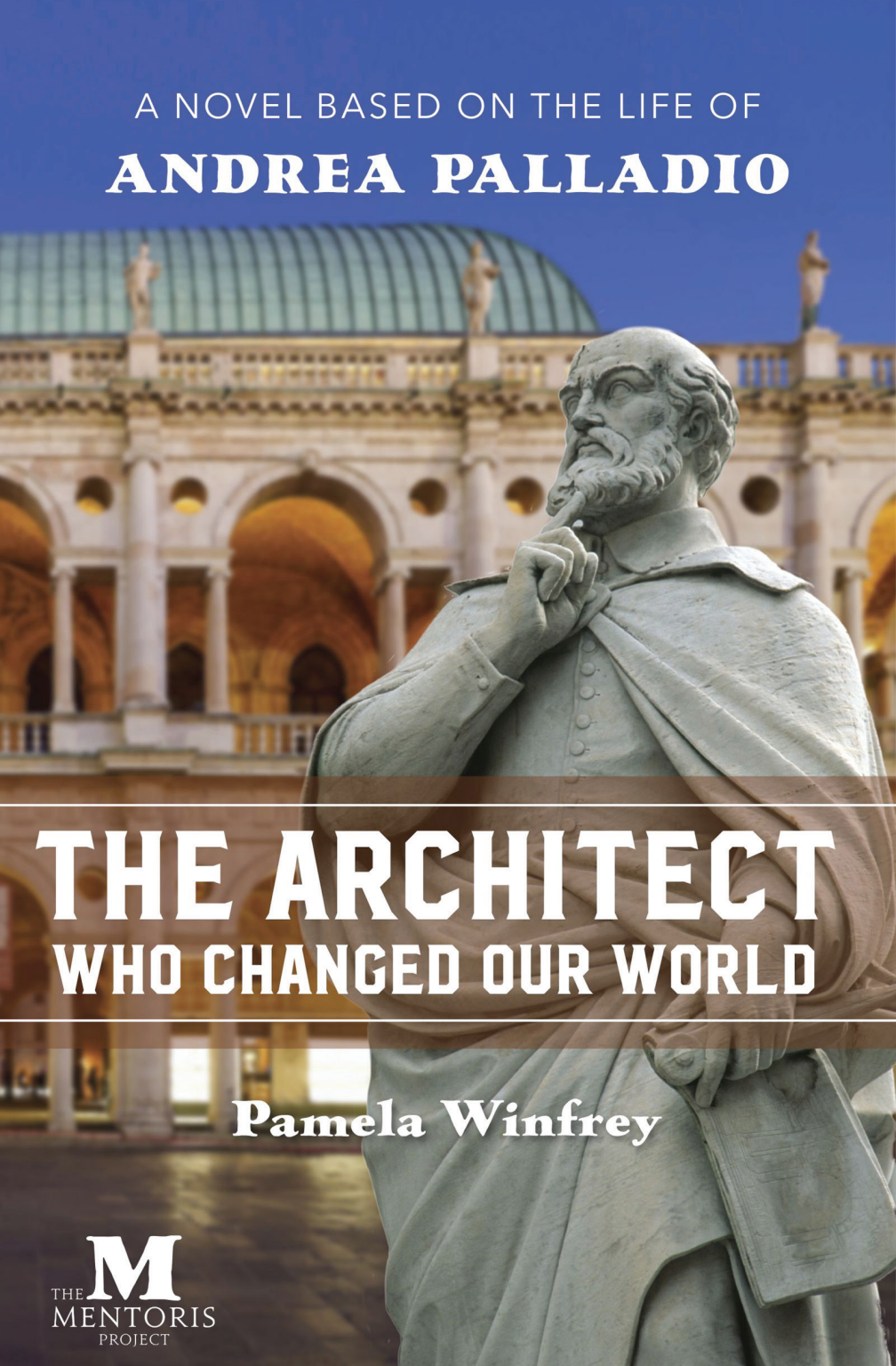
A NOVEL BASED ON THE LIFE OF

ANDREA PALLADIO



THE ARCHITECT WHO CHANGED OUR WORLD

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THE MENTORIS PROJECT

Chapter One

1508: ANDREA'S BIRTH

Marta gazed at the geranium petal in the palm of her hand. It was the color of blood. The color of the ribbon her own mother had worn in her hair. The color of sacrifice and pain, joy and the richness of life. So much to observe in a single petal of a single flower plucked from the one flowerpot on her own singular balcony. She sighed, allowing the petal to drop from her hand and out the open window where it caught the light for a moment before disappearing.

With effort, she crossed to the rough wooden table. Marta was a woman who would not be defined by a limp even though her limp was more pronounced now that she was about to give birth. She knew who she was and what she could do. She was one of the best seamstresses in Padua, she was wife to a wise man who was a miller, and she was going to give birth to a beautiful child that she would love and nurture; a person who would change the world. That was the way her mind worked.

Childbirth was frightening, true, but so was much of life. *If you let it scare you, it defeated you*, she thought as she continued to wash up after breakfast. Their apartment was small with only one bedroom, but it was on the third floor, so when she opened the shutters in the morning, the sunlight poured into the room and warmed the white stone floor so it, too, was emitting light.

She always made sure to keep geraniums and roses outside the window so that their red and pink petals could always be seen when the shutters were open. She put her elbows on the windowsill and watched as the chittering swallows swooped by. She smelled a faint fishy whiff from the Brenta River and the curious smell that wafted from her husband's mill nearby.

Suddenly, Pietro appeared, surprising her, making her jump a little. He came up behind her and hugged as much of her as he could, for it seemed that during the last few days, she had increased twofold in size. He, too, was worried, for women died from childbirth so often. Everything would go well, and then afterward, they seemed to sicken and die. *God will provide*, he thought, and crossed himself. It was the thirtieth of November, the Feast Day of Saint Andrew the Apostle. If both his wife and child survived, Pietro would call the child Andrea after the saint.

As it turned out, there was never such an easy baby to birth as Andrea di Pietro della Gondola, for he slid into the world effortlessly. For Marta, it was easier than so many things—washing the parquet floors that belonged to her mistress, the Lady Bossiglio, or sewing a thousand pearls into her best dress. Or listening to Lady Bossiglio's mother drone on endlessly about the problems between the papal powers in Rome and the rulers of

Venice. Every day she would cross herself, look fearfully around the room, and shriek, "They will be here any day now! The wars will come to Padua and blood will be painted upon our door!" Marta had been prepared for the worst, for it was a tradition for experienced mothers to scare the expectant mother with war stories of their own, the stories of the blood of giving birth.

The boy was so tiny that he fit into the crux of Pietro's arm. He had dark curly hair and a quiet, watchful way about him. Marta was worried that he would not last a day—he was so silent and small, he seemed to take up a sort of negative space. She could fold his ears for they were as pliable as velvet and lacked any cartilage. For months, Marta instinctively kept him home. She breastfed him and kept him warm, since November could be a month of chills and drafts. She made certain that he stayed close to the fire.

Pietro continued to go to the mill, and because of this, the family always had fresh milled grain for bread. Slowly, they began to accept visitors at home. His uncle Lucca, the boatman, visited. He always smelled of water and mud, and had a way of making each room he entered seem small. Lucca would tell them of his latest passengers and the stories they told as they flowed down the river. He'd heard it all—happy marriages, unhappy boys; solid, healthy minds and those that were broken by some insidious war; people who loved life and people who were ready to leave it. Marta, with her studied ways, took it all in with a small smile as she continued to care for her precious Andrea, and Pietro would slap his thigh in response.

A year and a half passed. Marta loved her domestic life. The

wondrous nature of a child filled the rooms with all of the complexities of a young life. Andrea was a watchful boy, seemingly aware of all that went on in his parents' lives. Marta noticed that when Pietro held him and his head peeped over his father's shoulders, Andrea looked like a cat after a full bowl of milk, sated and safe.

But now, the sweetness of her home clashed horribly with the streets of Padua. As Lady Bossiglio's mother had predicted, it was under siege. Marta and Pietro spent many evenings trying to understand what had transformed their peaceful city. They sat in front of the fire, Andrea asleep in Marta's arms, and pored over the details. Prior to this year, Padua had been under Venetian rule and most Paduans were bonded both economically and spiritually with nearby Venice.

Marta's murmuring voice carried an edge to it. "Rome is as far away as the moon. I don't understand why they think they can invade us as though we were . . ." and then she hesitated, thinking, *English!*

Pietro, too, carried a black spot in his heart for Rome. He blamed Pope Julius and called him "the fool who designated that idiot Maximilian" as Holy Roman Emperor. Maximilian was part of the League of Cambrai, an anti-Venice alliance made up of Pope Julius, Louis XII of France, and Ferdinand II of Aragon. And Pietro felt that Maximilian would do anything, everything to make a name for himself.

He had not been far wrong, for Maximilian captured the city in June. Venetian forces responded with fury and marched from Treviso under the command of Andrea Gritti, who had

been sent by the powerful Council of Ten who ruled Venice. Gritti brought with him *stradioti*, professional mercenaries from the Balkans. In turn, Maximilian had hired *landsknechts*, German professional soldiers. This resulted in the streets ringing with strident voices that could be heard crying and dying in a rainbow of languages.

The town was like a field fire with areas that would flare up and die down. One never knew when a skirmish would erupt, when a hot spot that had been smoldering unseen would break out. This made everyday life especially dangerous, for one could be convinced that all was well and then turn the corner to be plunged into the middle of a battle.

Pietro managed to keep the mill in operation sporadically, responding to people who, sometimes dodging bullets, managed to bring some grain to be ground. Unlike in times of peace, they could only bring as much as they could carry, for if they brought a cart drawn by a sturdy ox, chances are the ox and the cart would be commandeered, and the farmer would not be able to make a living.

Chapter Two

1510–1515: WAR AMONG THE TOYS

1510

Andrea, although only two years old, was obsessed with wooden blocks. He spent hours stacking them, and he would cry when the vibrations of the cannon, only a mile off, would shake the foundations enough to make them fall. But Andrea was already tenacious; time and time again, the blocks would fall, and time and time again, he would set them up again, as patient as an old man.

He looked up, for the sculptor Vincenzo Grandi had come through the door. His godfather. To Andrea he was a giant. From his perspective, Vincenzo was all looming belly and ringing voice. Everything he did was large. Vincenzo scooped him up and lifted him up over his head and high into the air. He squeezed Andrea like an accordion, and Andrea whooshed out a

laugh. Marta looked up from stirring her pot and smiled indulgently, for Vincenzo was a trusted friend.

Vincenzo took his job of being Andrea's godfather seriously. He often brought the child over to his sculpture studio and allowed Andrea to run his hands over the half-finished sculptures. Andrea was careful and respectful, understanding that the shapes beneath his hands were in process and needed to be treated with care. Vincenzo used to joke that the statues were like small boys; if they were treated with care, they would grow up to be works of art.

Pietro and Vincenzo were good friends and had been since the early days before Pietro had started a family. Vincenzo had been honored when Pietro had asked him to be Andrea's godfather. Vincenzo made certain that Andrea was well versed in the merits of sculpture, painting, frescoes, and pottery. He had him plunge his hands into clay and challenged him to shape ducks, trees, and nutrias, the large mammals that frequented the rivers.

That Christmas season, on January 6, the Epiphany, Andrea surprised him with a small clay sculpture. Vincenzo could not see what it was intended to be until Andrea explained that it was a sculpture of Vincenzo himself. For once, Vincenzo did not respond with a roar, but instead examined the gift carefully, respectfully. He asked Andrea about his choice of materials, to which Andrea answered "Clay." He asked him about the color and Andrea said "Gray." He asked him where his nose was and Andrea grabbed Vincenzo's real nose so hard that it made tears spring to Vincenzo's eyes. That was when his roaring laugh erupted.

Marta served another small glass of wine to both Pietro and Vincenzo in celebration of a beautiful Christmas free of fighting in the city. She raised a glass to Vincenzo, thanking him, for like the Magi, he had brought the family many gifts.

Andrea adored going to the mill with his father for it was a secret place that most people were not allowed to enter. Due to the secrets of the trade, Pietro, like most millers, made the farmers stay outside with their horses and carts while their grain was being ground. Only the workers, the hopper boy, and the mill's calico cat were allowed in.

Each morning, the mill sat quiet. Pietro and Andrea would unlock the massive oak door and stand in the middle of the yawning space. The sun found its way down in shafts and the motes of dust and grain would make them look as though you could slide down them. The space contained a multitude of small noises—scampering mice; shifting, creaking slabs of wood; the fluttering of wings high in the rooftop. But when the lever was pulled and the water began to fill the buckets on the wheel, the place sprang alive with sound. There was such a loud collection of watery noises that Andrea always felt a little afraid, because he sometimes had nightmares about drowning. The reluctant creaking of the wheel reminded him of bones and the gritty sounds of the millstones, scraping heavily against each other, sometimes made the hairs on the back of his neck crawl.

The day truly began with the bell, announcing that someone was at the door ready with grain. The workers would jump to

their positions, for each one had a job to do and they knew that without their contributions, the mill would not function.

The mill was a place of conversation as waiting was inevitable. Pietro knew everyone: Father Lorenzo's baker; the sisters at the Saint Anthony cloister; the militia's cook, Giancarlo; and the seven-year-old who worked at the bakery next door and was the one responsible for fetching flour. Pietro made sure that everyone was content to wait and would frequently offer them water from the well in the yard.

This gave him the chance to find out about the daily battles and whether he would need to close to avoid a skirmish that came too close to the mill. He was deathly afraid of these battles—not because of the bodily harm they might cause him, but for one single thing: fire. It would spell disaster. Mills had been known to burn so quickly and so hot that no one could do anything but stand and watch. Therefore, fire was the stuff of Pietro's nightmares. He would toss and turn in his bed so violently that he would land on the floor. Marta would lean over from her side of the bed and lay a comforting hand upon his back, reassuring him that it was only a dream.

But Pietro was only too aware that dreams can become reality, so he was as vigilant as a general in understanding the waves of troop movements and the outcomes of each battle for his business. The lives of his family depended on it.

Marta was late. She had slipped out the door early in the morning, hoping to find some grain and perhaps even a bit of lamb for the table. Perhaps some fish from the river. Pietro had slept through her departure but now paced anxiously, risking a look out of the window every few minutes. He could not chance leaving the house because outside a battle raged. They could hear it through the barricaded door—the men shouting, dying, the clash and clang as sword met sword, the occasional faint booming of the cannons. The soldiers would fight and then tire, fight and then tire. Periodically, they would quiet, as though exhausted by their own folly.

The Spaniards, the Germans, and the Venetians died outside of their door, for across the street was the Castello, which the Venetians were gallantly trying to defend. Andrea risked peeking out through a crack in the wall and Pietro grabbed him by his shirt and dragged him away from the front of the house, scolding him, and in a gesture driven by fear, gave him a whack on the backside. Andrea's cries echoed the deeper cries outside, but they were soon soothed away by Pietro, who stroked the boy's hair until he quieted.

After dark, when the battle had subsided, Pietro risked going out to look for Marta. He passed the still-warm bodies of the scarlet Spanish soldiers, their dark-haired heads bent at odd angles. The hefty Germans lay draped across stone and ground. The Venetian knights with their colored plumes resembled brightly colored birds struck down in mid-flight. Pietro brushed

back a tear. He took the scarf from around his neck and pulled it over his nose, for the stink of death was already emanating from the bodies. Part of the horror of this war was that there were so many different factions causing confusion, uncertainty, and accidents. The "fog of war" was as common as the fog that rose from the Brenta River in the mornings.

It wasn't until the small hours of the morning started to reveal the monumental carnage that Pietro finally spied her. Her body was lying on the side of the road. Unlike most of the bodies that surrounded her, she was seemingly free of injury. She looked as though she were asleep. Her eyes were closed; her head tilted to the side. Pietro knelt down and swept her up in his arms. It was then that he could feel what killed her, for her bones were crushed. She must have been run down by something very heavy. Something had mown her down like a dog.

When Pietro brought her back home, Andrea did not cry. Instead, he crawled up on the bed next to her body and tenderly leaned his head next to hers. To lose your mother at the age of seven is a terrible thing. You are old enough to understand that something irrevocably terrible has happened, but too young to find ways to cope with it. Her untimely death would haunt Andrea throughout his life, cropping up at moments of doubt and sorrow.

Chapter Three

1519–1521: THE FIRST APPRENTICESHIP

Pietro made sure that his son was educated. By the time he was ten, he could read and write. Pietro also taught him how to add and subtract, and how to keep accounts, because there were, as he put it, always people who were prepared to put their thumb upon the scale.

One day, Vincenzo rode up to the mill on a black mule that he had just bought at the livestock auction. He dismounted and ran his hand along the animal's withers. He showed Pietro the mule's teeth.

"Fifteen years old. Not a day older," he said proudly. "Only ridden by an old man on Sundays." He clapped the animal on the rump and the mule turned around and bit him on the shoulder. Vincenzo yelped and jumped out of range of the mule's surly, eye-rolling head. "Well, they didn't tell me about that!" he said and rubbed his shoulder gingerly.

Pietro offered him a glass of wine, which Vincenzo gratefully drank in one gulp.

But he was here for another purpose. Andrea was now almost eleven. He had exhibited an uncanny gift for numbers and drawing, and seemed to have not only an excellent facility with concepts of shape and form, but also a talent with materials and was already able to coax out beautiful forms in the soapstone that Vincenzo kept at his studio. *The boy had a gift*, he thought, and he said as much to Pietro.

Pietro responded by drawing a line in the soft dirt with his toe. He had always imagined that Andrea would apprentice with him. He had seen himself growing old, wizened and stooped, with his young son, now a man, at his side, shouting at the hopper and making deals with the cloister's baker. It was as it should be. A son carried on his father's work.

Vincenzo sat down on a bench, rubbing his shoulder. He pushed his shirt aside and examined it. The mule's large spatulate teeth had not broken the skin, but left deep indentations in two neatly curved lines. Neither man said anything for a few minutes. Vincenzo wanted to give Pietro the space and time to consider what he was suggesting.

He looked at his new prized mule. It had transformed in front of his eyes from a friend to an enemy. The mule looked at him through thick brown eyelashes, bored. "What is a nip between friends?" he seemed to say. "Forget about it." But Vincenzo was not about to forget. He thought about selling the mule for meat and then realized he would take too much of a loss. He considered trying to take him back to the auction

house. What a ruckus he would cause. He would rail and cry, and they would listen patiently and then turn their backs, for everyone knew that sales were final at the livestock auction. Let the buyer beware.

Pietro, meanwhile, had been thinking as well, but he had been thinking about his only son. Andrea was slender and quick at everything he did. He would make a fine miller. He would help his father until he died and then carry on in the family tradition. He would raise a family, raise a son who would in turn take the mill as his life's work, and the cycle would continue.

But Pietro knew that the stones that ground the wheat would hang heavily around his son's neck. Although Andrea tried to hide it, he only had eyes for stone that he could shape—not the stones of a mill.

His eyes would light up when he described his most recent trip to Vincenzo's. Pietro saw Andrea's hands enthusiastically scribing in the air, trying to show him how the rock was being shaped. He heard how much faster the boy would speak. Andrea continually brought back small artifacts from his day—a fossilized shell discovered in a chip of stone, the beginnings of a small marble wreath that he had been working on, the drawing of a whippet. He delivered these to his parents with pride, and the house filled with stone and paper, wood and chalk.

Vincenzo knew that Andrea could find himself a good living in stone masonry, for as he grew up, it became clear that Andrea had a facility with numbers, an appreciation of form, and he was not afraid of heavy or difficult work. He also sported a kind

of honest charm which made him a favorite with his peers and with his elders.

Vincenzo introduced him to architectural drawings and one of the first buildings that Andrea became enamored with was the Basilica di San Lorenzo. Vincenzo showed him a piece of *pietra serena*, Italian dark stone, which was used as foundational material. He taught him about the concept of proportion—and had Andrea choose his favorites from a variety of drawings. They would discuss why one proportion seemed more pleasant than another, why architects chose certain materials over others, why this form followed this function.

Pietro and Vincenzo accompanied Andrea on his first day as apprentice with the stone cutter Bartolomeo Cavazza da Sossano. At eight in the morning the streets were already filled with people. It was Sunday, October 31, 1521. They were overtaken by a confraternity, a group of men dressed in flowing white robes, most carrying banners or crosses, some with red chasubles covering their shoulders. Andrea felt as though he had been overtaken by a flock of swans. He was reminded that he had not gone to church for many months. Perhaps some Sunday he and his father would go to Santa Sofia, the oldest church in the city. He enjoyed the ringing echoes of the choir and the chance to spend time leisurely looking up at the elegance of the soaring arches.

As they approached the stone cutter's studio, they heard a rough voice shouting. A few seconds later, a young man came flying out of the arched opening and landed sprawling in the

dust before them. They helped him up and beat the dust from his clothing. Between coughs, he managed to gasp, "Signore Cavazza caught me using the wrong chisel."

Pietro, Vincenzo, and Andrea exchanged looks. This was not an auspicious start.

Cavazza met them at the door. His face was mostly lower jaw with a mouth that pulled the rest of his face downward. His eyes had the meanness of a pig; enveloped by extra flesh, they peered at Andrea as though he were a piece of slightly rotting veal. He smelled of spilled wine.

Pietro was tempted to take his son away, to save him from a man who was obviously callous and abusive. He squeezed Andrea's shoulder, telegraphing *Should we go?* But Andrea, only thirteen, had a stubborn spine that had always kept him upright in times of trouble. He shouldered the extra packet his father had carried for him and went into the stonemason's studio, thinking about the Christians going into the lion's den. Vincenzo gave him a few coins and a look that said *Let us know.*

Cavazza did not disappoint. He was as mean as his face. No matter the weather, each morning he woke his seven charges up with a ladle of cold water. Andrea's trick was to train himself to wake up when Cavazza came into the room. He would leap from his pallet a hair before Cavazza could start his day with shivers. It became a little game between them, and when Cavazza succeeded in throwing water in Andrea's face, the stone cutter would smile, satisfied that he had inflicted yet another small injustice on one of his many apprentices.

Although Andrea was not a young man prone to hatred,

he grew to hate Cavazza, for the man was a bully, a tyrant, and a sycophant, groveling around the wealthy like an obsequious duck.

The boy who had been booted out of the door became one of Andrea's best friends and they often manipulated their day of work so that they could be together. His name was Stefano and he had been born to a poor family in Rome. His mother had been forced to sell him to Cavazza when her husband had been lost to a wasting disease. Stefano still got teary when he spoke about that awful day when his mother had avoided his eyes and turned away from him without looking back.

Andrea's first job was to carry stones from the ox cart to the storage area, and since Stefano was often in trouble, he was usually working side by side with Andrea. Together they survived Cavazza's torturous ways and they both managed to graduate from simply carrying stones to carving them.

There was no denying the fact that Cavazza enjoyed causing tears to flow. He would often cuff the boys about the ears if they made mistakes and his punishment for a bad cut was to starve them for the day. As far as Andrea could tell, he never drank anything but wine and he was drunk most of the time.

As Andrea's hate for Cavazza grew, his love for the alabaster, marble, and granite that transformed into fantastic shapes under his hand grew as well. He might have stayed there forever if it hadn't been for an event that propelled him to try to escape.

Stefano died.

The dust from the stones had always made Stefano cough and his lungs wheezed and clanked like a badly built forge. He

tried to wear a cloth around his mouth, but Cavazza rudely jerked it off his face when he saw it, claiming he needed to see their faces to "keep them honest."

Stefano developed a racking cough that tortured him through the night so that he never truly slept. Andrea attempted to wake Stefano up before Cavazza entered the shed that served as their room, but Cavazza would enter from the other door, wearing soft shoes, or enter before dawn and drown Stefano with freezing water. This only exacerbated Stefano's cough, and after a few weeks, he was unable to rise from his bed. In two days, he was dead.

Because he had lost his mother at such an early age, death was especially painful for Andrea. It resonated in his head and his heart, and when he realized that Stefano would never rise from his bed again, his loss turned immediately to fear. He would run.

He had seen what happened to boys who ran, for Cavazza had made friends with some members of the military, giving them free cornices with only minor flaws. These men brought the boys back and pocketed the finding money, and like Stefano's mother, never looked back.

Andrea knew that Cavazza beat every boy who ran, stopping only when they passed out or when his arm tired, but Andrea didn't care. He would leave, go back to his father's house, and begin his life again. Perhaps he would follow in his family's footsteps and become a miller. Or perhaps he could be like his uncle, a gondolier. Punting boats around a placid lake or a riling river would be preferable to this torture.

The night after Stefano's body was removed and presumably

buried in a pauper's field, Andrea made his break. He waited until the snores of the boys reached that moment when all tension in their bodies had ceased and their breath had stretched and calmed. As he pushed the shutters open, they made only one small squeak of a sound. He leapt out of the window and began to run. He hadn't realized how oppressive the atmosphere had been in that cloudy, dust-filled environment, and as he ran, he began to shed the heaviness of the past year. He walked all night and fell asleep under a willow tree near the Bacchiglione River, listening to it whisper and sigh to him.

He was kicked awake by a boot. The boot belonged to one of Cavazza's military friends who yanked Andrea to his feet. He began to claw and punch in anger as though he could bring Stefano back with every blow. But he was no match for a military man of that size. The man clubbed him in the chin and lifted the dazed Andrea over his shoulder. Andrea's bloom of anger was doused by the blow. Andrea found himself dumped in the dirt in Cavazza's stone yard, and true to every rumor, Cavazza beat him until blood ran from his ears and he lost consciousness.

The next morning, Cavazza woke him with his customary cold water. Andrea stumbled painfully out of bed and to the stone yard. As he began to polish a fine piece of alabaster, his first thought was that he would kill Cavazza or be killed by him. He was certain that blood would be seen in the dust, and whether it was his or Cavazza's scarcely mattered to him. Cavazza swept by and ignored him, which made Andrea even angrier. He was swimming in his own anger, so caught up in planning revenge

that it took several minutes for him to realize that someone was standing next to him. It was his father.

Pietro took one look at Andrea's swollen face and, without another word, picked him up—which was not difficult to do since Andrea had lost so much weight—and began to stride out of the yard.

Cavazza ran up to Pietro and grabbed him by the arm. "I have put money into this boy," he whined. "I have trained this boy. He is good for nothing, but I have tried my best with him and he has rewarded me by running away. You owe me money for all of the time I have trained this boy."

Pietro stared at Cavazza and said in a quiet, steely voice, "If you ever touch my boy again, I will kill you myself." And then he turned and walked away without looking back.

Andrea buried his face in his father's shoulder, smelling him, taking in his warmth. Once again, he was safe.

Chapter Four

1523: THE BIG MOVE

Pietro tightened the ropes that covered the canvas on their rented ox cart. Fifteen-year-old Andrea was busy cutting a rosebush switch that he could use on the stubborn oxen. The one nearest to him, the one with tan spots, craned his neck and stared at him as though he understood exactly what was in Andrea's mind.

It would take two days of travel. Both Andrea and Pietro were looking forward to it. It was time to leave Padua and its sad memories behind. They stopped off and put yellow roses on Marta's grave and then set off. Indeed, the tan-spotted ox was always a little behind his white companion, and Andrea found that he had to use the rosebush switch all the way to Vicenza.

The trip was a chance for Andrea and Pietro to enjoy each other. That night, after they had fed and watered the thin oxen, they sat by the fire and talked about everything from the sun to the moon, wars and peacetimes, and what made people act the

way they did (God made them that way). Pietro told stories of Marta, her warmth, her ability to—as he put it—"make cakes out of two grains of wheat."

Andrea listened attentively. He leaned back and stared at the rotation of the heavens. He watched as the stars moved across the sky and marveled at their beauty.

Later that night while they were both staring up at the sky, Pietro told a story that had been told to him by his brother, Lucca, the gondolier. One bright night, a certain passenger beckoned to him from the pier, a man with a long face and a sheaf of dark hair that cut across his forehead. The man needed to be taken downriver from Vigodarzere to Cadoneghe, so it took quite some time. Lucca remembered it as a quiet evening free of wind or even moonlight, so the stars were staring down on them and they were bathed in starlight. The man was a little drunk and sipped wine as he talked. He said that he had been thinking about the heavens and how the heavens might not be spinning around the earth, but rather around the sun. He said this with a laugh, as if the thought were a kind of joke.

As Lucca docked and helped his odd passenger out of the boat, the passenger slipped and one foot disappeared into the mud. It took the two of them several minutes to recover the man's slipper, rinse it free of mud, and then return it to his foot. The man sat on the dock and laughed until he cried, saying something about the largeness of the heavens and the smallness of a shoe. He introduced himself as Nicolaus Copernicus, and Lucca had remembered the name, for the man and the night had been memorable all around.

Andrea thought about the idea—the heavens rotating around the sun—and decided that indeed the man had been drunk and creative with his thoughts. One could clearly see that the stars went from one horizon to the other, spinning around the earth as surely as God sat at the head of his Holy table. Still, it was refreshing to have to grapple with new ways of thinking; it stretched and exercised the mind, and Andrea enjoyed the heady feeling.

Soon after that, Pietro rolled over and started his customary heavy snoring. But Andrea stayed up, his arms behind his head, staring at the night sky. One could travel so far in one's own mind while hardly moving an inch.

When they neared Vicenza, Andrea marveled at the ancient Roman wall that surrounded the city. It was built out of brick and stone in a striation that was somehow both chaotic and planned. Greenery cascaded down parts of the walls and Andrea imagined it as trickles of green water. *How the Romans had labored over this wall*, he thought, seeing each brick and stone as a record of an effort from long ago. *Perhaps that is what buildings are: simply recordings of human effort and imagination.* He made his father stop the cart so that he could brush his hand over the wall, feeling its roughness and the way each brick had been placed.

For a moment, he was that mason, long ago just a pile of ash, and yet immortalized in this bit of wall, this stone, which was such a small part of such a large wall and yet so critical. For what is a wall without every stone? He laid his ear against the wall and listened, imagining that he could hear the voice of the long-ago mason as he sang an ancient song.

His father called to him and Andrea leapt back in the ox cart, eager to get on to his new life, for he had landed a new apprenticeship—hopefully with a kinder master and a more generous situation than the one he had left behind in Padua.

Andrea's first impression of Vicenza was of winding cobblestoned streets defined by rows of buildings that served a wide variety of purposes. Houses were side by side with churches, storefronts were capped by city palaces that were owned by the wealthy, and everyone walked the slender streets together. It was a city where the rich and the poor flowed through the narrow streets like amiable trout in a stream.

The central square, the Piazza dei Signori, however, was dominated by the Palazzo della Ragione, a large building that had seen better days. Crowned by a long domed turquoise roof, it must have been a beautiful edifice that the people of the city had been proud of. Now, it stank of neglect. Although a variety of shops were on the lower floor and people flowed in and out of them, the southwest corner had collapsed and ill-fitting scaffolding propped the walls up. Pietro clicked his tongue. What an eyesore. Andrea could not take his eyes off of the collapsed corner. It was like looking at a gaping wound. They turned away from this sad sight.

The next day they were able to rent a small apartment on the second floor near the square on a lovely little street called Stradella dell'Isola. But they would often pass through the Piazza dei Signori and the neglected Palazzo della Ragione continued to bother them both like an itch that they could not scratch.