

# Chapter 1 - Death in España

She'd been locked up for months now.

Being sent to Venezia was a godsend, but now Rosa realised that it would no doubt be the death of her. The initial arrival was desperately exciting. Seeing the hustle and bustle of the city was a sight to behold, and one she would remember forever.

Of course, there were other sights she would remember forever too. Ones from before the move, from when the heavens tore open. The bodies washing up on the new shorelines. The fires spewing forth from the earth.



España had become a living horror. Rosa was sure that had she stayed Hell would have opened up and swallowed her whole. The family villa had been mostly untouched by the calamity, save for cracks appearing across the flagstones. Thankfully the foundations had held true.

Rosa and her family had been blessed with a small amount of money. Not a fortune by any rate, but when the sky opened they were high up enough to avoid the floods and had enough food stored to last a short while at least. She was thankful for it now, although her and her two sisters had taken their food for granted in the past. They'd been able to snack whenever they wanted, and father always made sure they had a full meal on the table each night. In the time since the calamity, the food stores weren't just a luxury, but invaluable.

After the earthquakes and floods, it wasn't long before the true terror took hold. The townsfolk marched on the villa after several weeks. Hungry, cold, and ill, their frustration led them to lash out, taking it out on the lords of the province. With burning torches and whatever weapons they could assemble the rabble shouted and cried out. Rosa had no idea if they were aware that the Lord of the villa wasn't even



at home. Father had left his family several months earlier to charter a trade ship to Constantinople. Had they any idea of what would happen to the world, she was sure he wouldn't have gone. But at this point they had not heard from him. There were scattered stories by the guards that the sea had swept through and destroyed Rome, but no direct news of Constantinople. Mother kept telling them that everything was fine, but Rosa heard her sobbing in her room at night, the same as the rest of them.

For hours the rabble clustered outside the gate, yelling and berating the guards. It wasn't long after that the shouting turned violent and a skirmish erupted. Rosa huddled inside with her sisters and mother as the guards did their best to fight off the rabble. The soldiers held their own valiantly, but it wasn't enough to stop the villagers from breaking down the gates.

Rosa's mother told the girls to stay hidden in her bedroom and nervously opened the door. Rosa peeked over the edge of the bed, keeping Beatriz and Catalina down as low as possible. She saw through the door and out to the courtyard, the townsfolk struggling through the soldiers. Her mother stood defiantly, but in their fury the attackers beat her to the floor. The remaining guards forced their way in and cut down several of the mob. The casualties broke the courage of the attackers, and they fled back to the village, leaving Rosa's mother trampled and broken.

The townsfolk never did return to the villa, at least not while the sisters were still there. Shortly after they finally had correspondence from their father. His voyage had been waylaid before the sky opened, and he stopped over for several weeks in Venice. The jewel of the Adriatic had been a place of squalor, but after the calamity it remained unscathed. Now, in the year that had passed, the city stood at the forefront of all of Europe, and its economic power was becoming weighty. A nobleman



from España who arrived just before with a ship full of valuable cargo was in a prime position to take advantage, and that he did.

The captain had read them the letter. Father had sent for them to join him in Venice. He did not know about mother's death yet, asking for them all to join. The captain and a few soldiers were assigned to guard them on their trip, and the rest of the soldiers were paid and disbanded. Rosa and her sisters collected anything of personal value (the captain sold anything of real value) and the family left the villa behind.

When Rosa arrived at the docks after months of arduous travelling, father met her and her sisters to show them the city. It was glistening in the sunlight, the tear in the heavens seeming to coat the entire place in a beautiful dewy light. Every surface was bright and colourful, the vibrant paint of the buildings even more vivid under the colossal rift shining from above.

There were thousands of people milling back and forth., speaking in a strange dialect. Rosa had learned the language of Tuscany and the Holy See, but this new language had several inconsistencies. She managed to keep up though, hearing the bellowed cries of fishermen selling their wares and merchants offering passage on their ships.

Barely off the boat, father took the sisters back onto the water in a gondola. Catalina groaned. Rosa's sister had been seasick the whole journey, and was not excited by the prospect of leaving dry land. Rosa was excited by the opportunity though, and despite her sister's protests, the gondolier took them on a long tour of San Polo before eventually arriving at father's residence – her new residence.

It was certainly a day she would never forget, and one that she had relived daily while locked in the room.

