

My Dialogues

by Plenaria di Paradiso

As my great contemporary Pietro Aretino wrote his Dialogues concerning a Roman courtesan, I will endeavor to recount some of my memoirs as a courtesan of Venice and occasionally Florence. It is my hope that when future generations reflect back on this point in time that they will know what our everyday life was like.

I live in the fashionable part of Venice. My villa is quite comfortable and I have the good fortune of having many generous patrons who see to its furnishings and upkeep. In my household currently, I have a cook, a gardener, a personal maid and a seamstress. I also have several neighborhood boys available to run errands, deliver messages, and occasionally help out when I entertain special gatherings. At this writing, I have such an event coming up.

I have my seamstress working furiously on a new gown, deep crimson in color. I know that this particular color is the most expensive to make but for my guests, nothing is too good. I have asked my seamstress to use the most current style worn by the nobles in the area. She has already made new underdrawers just to go with this dress. I particularly asked that she make the sleeves in much the same way as the Duchess of Urbino, Eleanor of Toledo's. Her new portrait executed by the reknowned Agnolo Bronzino is quite lovely and has inspired me. Since it is such short notice, I have ordered a pair of black velvet shoes from the cobbler and they may be embellished with some of the leftover trim to match the dress if we have the time. I have also ordered a matching pair of chopines, but alas they will not be ready in time for the party, but since it is indoors, not a major concern.

I commissioned from the local lace maker a bobbin lace partlet similar in style to Duchess Eleanor's. The design is going to be popular. The pearls were a gift from one of my lovers, Ludovico, I used the remainder of the string for my hair. He also gifted me with a large quantity of smaller pearls, too small to become a necklace. So I have instructed my seamstress to use them to embellish some trim that caught my eye at the dry goods shop. The good merchant, Mario, surprised me with the quantity of trim I desired after a night of company. He also gave me the cording to match my fabric. I am so lucky to have such generous men in my life!

I have instructed my cook to prepare a full remove of foods for my guests. I want this to be an intimate affair with dishes that includes my beloved Rinaldo's favorites. She has come up with a delightful menu, using many of the local ingredients and available spices. We will start with roasted pine nuts, sugared almonds, olives, and dried apricots on the table. She has created a new dish Pork Rolls with Tarragon and Provolone inspired by two old favorites, Veal Rolls with Herbs and Beef Rolls. She has also adapted a French recipe, Dried Fava Bean Puree with Onions, Apples and Sage for us. An Everyday Torta will also be made but without the currents (Rinaldo doesn't like them). Finally, we'll have Apples Paradiso to finish off the remove.

The tables are being prepared as instructed with white linens as Platina instructs and flowers will be strewn about as our beloved Aretino mentions in his account of Nanna's adventures. Several games are to be laid out to idle our time away such as cards, dice, and backgammon.

I have written all the invitations myself, my education comes in handy in such situations and have several of the boys ready to deliver them. They have been specially instructed to hand deliver the missive only to the person to whom it is addressed. They are very careful about that and I always reward them generously.

Well, I have another fitting so I must close for now. This is so exciting to be keeping an account of my "adventures". When they are more complete, I must show them to Pietro. I believe he will approve.