Author's Note

The Etruscans have long absorbed me. I was inspired to write the Tales of Ancient Rome series when I chanced upon a photo of a sixth century BCE sarcophagus upon which a husband and wife were sculpted in a pose of affection. These lovers, known as "the Married Couple," intrigued me. What ancient culture exalted marital fidelity with such open sensuality? The answer led me to Etruria and the story of the siege of Veii. This conflict raged for ten years between two cities that lay only twelve miles apart across the Tiber. Amazingly, the customs and beliefs of these enemies were so different that it was as though an expanse of water divided a Renaissance society from one living in the Dark Ages. Given this disparity, I was inspired to create a couple from these opposing worlds whose love must not only transcend war but also withstand the pressures of conflicting moralities, allegiances, and beliefs.

For those new to the series, you might like to read my author's notes for *The Wedding Shroud* and *The Golden Dice*, in which I discuss topics such as the origins and religion of the Etruscans (including the Etruscan Discipline), bisexuality and pederasty, human sacrifice, and the status of women in Etruria and Rome

(including information about prostitution and concubines). You can access these notes under the Learn More tab on my website, http://elisabethstorrs.com, together with pieces of research and photographs on my blog, *Triclinium*, at http://elisabethstorrs.com/category/blog/triclinium. An extended version of this note is also posted on my website.

The ancient sources I mainly consulted were accounts from Livy and Plutarch. Unfortunately, contemporaneous records of events in early Rome were destroyed centuries before these historians were born. As a result, they lacked the same access to primary sources that modern researchers do today. Furthermore, no extant body of Etruscan literature exists to enable us to judge the other side of the story. In effect, the conquerors of Etruria wrote about Etruscan history with all the prejudices of the victor over the vanquished.

The men of the Furii clan were patricians originating in Tusculum in Latium. The first to gain fame was Marcus Furius Camillus, who despite being wounded in the thigh, fought on against the Volsci at Mount Algidus. Lucius Furius Medullinus was also an esteemed general who historically had struggles with the Icilii clan.

Camillus, so called because he was a "camillus" altar boy, was named the second founder of Rome by Plutarch. Interestingly, he was five times chosen as dictator but never elected consul. Any intimate characteristics I've attributed to him are purely my own invention (as is his love affair with Pinna). Nevertheless, we know this general showed incredible political acumen, military innovation, bravery, and charisma. Plutarch praised him: "That even when the authority rightly belonged to him alone, it was exercised in common with others; while the glory that followed such exercise was his alone, even when he shared the command." This humility clearly followed his downfall after the hubris displayed in his triumph after the conquest of Veii. Indeed, the need to retrieve

the tithe to Apollo from the populace caused vitriolic resentment. This escalated when the question arose as to whether the plebeians should remove themselves to Veii, leaving the patricians in Rome. Camillus strenuously opposed this, claiming that such a geographical division would lead to the demise of the Republic. As a result, he was temporarily exiled despite immunity from prosecution usually afforded to dictators for decisions made in office.

Camillus's tears upon seeing the enormity of his victory are reported, as is his plea to Jupiter that he should, if necessary, suffer retribution instead of Rome. However, his consequent small stumble was considered by Livy as "an omen of his [Camillus's] subsequent condemnation and capture of Rome [by the Gauls], a disaster which occurred a few years later."

The mystery of Lake Albanus forms an integral part of the legend, as does the betrayal by the anonymous Veientane soothsayer. The decrypted omen seems obscure, but the assistance Rome offered to its Latin allies to irrigate their land makes sense as a stepping-stone to conquest. The renewed support of the Latin League would have boosted manpower at a time when continuing warfare with the Volsci and Aequi was diverting Rome's resources from Veii. Given this, the rationale of gaining advantage by placating the Latin goddess, Mater Matuta, is also feasible. Accordingly, the idea that Pinna, a girl with origins in Latium, could convince her lover of the deity's power was irresistible.

The dictator's devotion to solar deities such as Mater Matuta is explored by Georges Dumézil in his book *Camillus*. He hypothesizes that Camillus worshiped the dawn goddess after seeing the success achieved at Mount Algidus by attacking at daybreak. Livy records the date of that victory in mid-June in the immediate period of preparation for the summer solstice, which was opened by the Matralia festival of Mater Matuta on June 11. Dumézil asserts that Camillus thereafter employed this tactic in all his campaigns.

The serendipity of research always delights me. After establishing Pinna's devotion to Mater Matuta, I delved into the background of the divinity and was drawn into a web of mythologies connecting mother deities and goddesses of light. This included Roman Juno and Etruscan Uni together with the dawn goddesses Thesan (Etruscan), Ino/Leukothea (Greek), Aurora (Roman), and the Phoenician Astarte. Immediately apparent was that all these goddesses helped women in childbirth and protected children while being associated with some aspect of the diurnal or seasonal patterns of the sun. And the strange rites of the Matralia, where matrons embrace their nephews and nieces instead of their own children, establishes Mater Matuta as a surrogate mother (as Pinna became at the end of the novel). However, for those who know Greek mythology, please note that, at the date at which the book is set, Mater Matuta wouldn't have been associated with her Greek counterpart Ino/Leukothea, who was the nurse of Dionysus, because the cult of Dionysus (Bacchus) was reputedly not introduced to Rome until 186 BCE.

The concept of an afterlife where the deceased's soul remained intact was not adopted by the Romans until much later in the Republic. Instead they believed in the Di Manes, the "Good Ones," who were a conglomerate of spirits existing underground who needed to be appeased to prevent them from rising up to torment the living. In contrast, the Etruscans had long believed in the concept of maintaining individuality after death in a world where the dead could look forward to rejoining their ancestors.

There is conjecture among modern historians as to the nature of Dionysiac worship in Etruria. Funerary art depicting symposium scenes of men and women enjoying a world of wine and music are interpreted as revealing how inebriation connects the participants to the "otherness" of a divine dimension. Hedonism is therefore linked to the concept of exorcising death in the celebration of a passage to the afterlife. These murals do not depict

the more familiar portrayal of satyrs and maenads associated with Dionysus. However, the discovery of other representations of the attendants in the wine god's retinue in bronzes, vases, and sculpture provide evidence that this "Dionysism without Dionysus" transitioned into the more familiar orphic cult with its orgiastic initiation rites, which emphasized the inversion of social order. However, it's difficult to ascertain if the Etruscans indulged in the more savage Mysteries reputed to be conducted by the Greeks in addition to the civic aspects of a pomp, games, and sacrifice. It should be remembered, though, that the Greeks invented a gruesome mythology surrounding the wine god to discourage the obvious equality granted to women, slaves, and foreigners via the cult. Accordingly, the fact that the Etruscans afforded their women high status, independence, education, and freedoms well beyond the constraints of cloistered Greek women or second-class Roman matrons supports my supposition that the infidelity involved in Dionysiac worship could be acceptable when viewed as a sacred act. Indeed, as is consistently the case in the Etruscan pantheon, there is an emphasis of gods as married couples—hence Fufluns is often portrayed with his wife, Areatha (Ariadne), rather than with his wild retinue. Vel's gift to Caecilia was inspired by an engraved mirror showing the divine lovers with their lips a fraction from a kiss.

At the time my novels are set, the more life-affirming portrayal of the afterlife became a fearful one where demons threatened safe haven in the Beyond. This gradual change in the national psyche is presumed to be due to the encroachment of the Syracusans, and later the Romans, who succeeded in destroying a once invincible sea and land empire. The Calu Cult is my interpretation of this darker vision of gaining immortality through human sacrifice, which was undoubtedly practiced.

The tactic of using the cuniculi to infiltrate the plateaued city is given credence by the network of tunnels that riddle the territory

around Veii, in particular the area of Formello, which span about thirty miles and are used to support drainage, divert flood waters, and distribute water during droughts. The more famous of these are the Burrows of Olmetti and Formellese and the Ponte Sodo. The Etruscans were incredible engineers who also created deep well shafts, although to my knowledge, there are none on the citadel now known as the Piazza D'Armi. However, archaeologists have discovered that, in a period earlier than the 396 BCE invasion, the Veientanes moved their religious center from the citadel to the highest point on the plateau, so it may well be that Camillus's forces managed to access the temple of Uni situated there through the cuniculi leading to the city proper.

Livy and Plutarch chronicle the story that the Veientane king was offering sacrifice at the time of the assault, but both are dubious as to its veracity, as Livy states, "This tale, which is too much like a romantic stage-play to be taken seriously, I feel is hardly worth attention either for affirmation or denial." Alas, as a novelist, the drama of the scene was too enticing.

Evocatio was a ceremony by which a Roman general lured the chief divinity of a foreign city to Rome through the promise of games and temples. The first and most famous example of this was by Camillus. Research also revealed that, although Rome adopted foreign cults, alien gods were not allowed within the holy boundary, or pomerium. The pomerium, however, did not always fall within the footprint of the city wall. This is the case with the Aventine Hill. Presumably Camillus built the temple for Juno Regina there rather than on the Capitoline because Uni was a foreign deity. Hence the traitorous Veientane deity was unable to truly place a footstep in Rome's sacred territory.

Very little remains of Veii, although more and more is being discovered by Iefke van Kampen and her team. I was honored to be shown around the beautiful site of the Portonnacio d'Apollo by her. The sanctuary is serene with its curative pool and cistern.

Various gods such as Minerva, Apollo, and Dionysus were worshipped there. The incredible terra-cotta statues I described that once adorned the roof ridge can be seen at the Villa Giulia in Rome, including the remarkable Apollo of Veii.

Finally, I must mention my favorite piece of Etruscan sculpture. It's an example of the symplegma, or "erotic embrace," which is an apotropaic symbol invoking the forces of fertility against evil and death. The relief depicts Larth Tetnies and Tanchvil Tarnai lying naked on their bed beneath a transparent shroud, staring into each other's eyes. I see Caecilia and Vel in this same way, embracing each other even now, their love eternal. The thought helps me hold back tears whenever I think of bidding farewell to the two characters I've lived with for more than fifteen years.

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Last but not least, my love and gratitude to Natalie Scott and Joyce Kornblatt, to whom this book is dedicated. Both were mentors at the very beginning of my literary journey. Their words of wisdom remain with me always.

A complete bibliography is available on my website, http://elisabethstorrs.com, but sources of particular value for this book include the following: Eva Cantarella's *Bisexuality in the Ancient World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992); *Etruscans: Eminent Women, Powerful Men*, edited by Patricia S. Lulof and Iefke van Kampen (Amsterdam: W Books, 2012); Larissa Bonfante's *Etruscan Dress* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); *The Religion of the Etruscans*, edited by Nancy Thomson de Grummond and Erika Simon (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006); Georges Dumézil's *Camillus* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Livy's *The Early History of Rome*, translated by Audrey de Sélincourt (London: Penguin

Books, 1971); and Plutarch's *The Lives of the Noble Grecians and Romans* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1952).