

# An Italian Villa in Africa...



*According to a local legend, long before other Europeans set foot on their beautiful shores, was built an Italian Villa, fit for a beautiful fleeing noblewoman, who never fled...*



At the dawn of the 15<sup>th</sup> century lived a beautiful Italian noblewoman with an unbelievably story. Her name was Caterina Sforza. She once confided: "If I were to write the story of my life, I would shock the world." Here is her true story and the legend of a villa in the south...

Caterina was the illegitimate daughter of the Duke of *Milan*. So she grew up in the greatest court of the time – *Milan*. Because of her first husband she became the *Countess* of two Italian city states – *Forli* and *Imola*. Caterina was admired as one of the most beautiful and elegant among the Roman noble ladies. She was welcomed everywhere, treated with great respect and lavishly praised by all high society – including the Pope. She loved her children dearly and posed for dozens of portraits with them. Looking at her portraits it is quite shocking to learn that as a descendant of the Italian knights, the “*condottieri*”, she was trained from her youth in the use of weapons and warfare. That she actually had a forceful and militant character and that the training of their militias was sometimes executed by her *in person*. That she once shouted



*Caterina Sforza Medici*

from a tower to her enemies "*Ho con me lo stampo per farne degli altri!*" ("I have the instrument to bear more!"), when they threatened to kill her captive children!

In war times, Caterina's resistance against the French was admired throughout all of Italy. Many songs were composed in her honour.



*Caterina, Lady and Countess of the Italian city states Forlì & Imola*



*Caterina loved her children. Here she is with some of them "at the gates of heaven"*

Caterina lost both her first two husbands through assassinations. After brutal revenge against her second husband's assassins *and* their families she married Giovanni Medici (pronounced *Me-dee-chi*).

Now Giovanni's is the twist in her story. His family and ancestors are of course well known for their role in the renaissance, which brought an end to the dark ages. Caterina had one only child with Giovanni before again losing her husband to a premature death through illness. Later their only son, Giovanni junior, would also have only one son before again meeting his premature demise. This time a canon ball wound while fighting as "the last of the great *condottieri*" (a title Caterina's youngest would earn from historians).

Through this precarious line – almost wiped out by premature deaths of two generations' of fathers – Caterina would become the direct ancestress of Kings of Spain, France, England and stunningly, in modern times, of none other than the late Diana Spencer, Princess of Wales. The lady named by historians as *Il Tigre* (The Tiger) is therefore the great great grandmother of the current future British king, Prince William Duke of Cambridge.



*Caterina, a prisoner of France*

But the Medici line indeed came close to being wiped out. After her husband's death, Caterina lost their city states to French invaders. One source describes this event as follows...

*“Caterina herself continued to resist, personally fighting with weapons in her hands until she was finally captured and taken prisoner.”*



*Caterina. The dancer on the far right*



*Caterina's youngest.  
Giovanni Medici*

Being detained by the French invaders her beloved Giovanni junior was placed in the care of family. Also during this time the new Italian Pope decided to annul her lordships over her two city states (1500). Knowing that these events severely influence her children's inheritances, Caterina entered into a legal battle to regain custody of Giovanni junior.

Three years later in 1503 Caterina was still under house arrest and still involved in her legal battle to regain custody of her youngest. At this stage she would have been desperate. She might have contemplating abducting her youngest and escaping with her children to a land free from the influence of France and Italy. She would then be able to raise her children to return one day to claim their rightful heritage. She certainly had the influence and the means to make such a dream a reality. If only there was a suitable Villa somewhere hidden to escape too...



*Villa Medici di Castello in Florence, Italy where Caterina served much of her house arrest*

Now according to history, *coincidentally* around this time (1503) a great ship left Italy's shores. A ship capable of sailing the great oceans. Navigating its journey was the famous Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci. According to history Vespucci did a few previous voyages for the Medici family, among other places to the Americas, which incidentally got its name from his. The voyage of 1503 was to be his forth and *last* great voyage. He was in his late forties and unmarried...



*The ship of Amerigo Vespucci*

But Vespucci's last great voyage is surrounded by mystery. According to one source: "*Little is known of his last voyage in 1503–1504 or even whether it actually took place...*" Yet the document below makes a stunning claim of a visit to the African continent. Indeed the mark seems to be exactly on the spot where non other than *La Villa Vita* stands today...



But according to history Caterina in 1504 miraculously won her legal battle to regain custody of Giovanni jr, "because the judge recognized that her confinement as a prisoner of war (in what amounts to a palace) was not comparable to the detention of a criminal." She

therefore never fled Italy and only 5 years later at the young age of 46, *The Tiger of Forli* who had frightened all of Romagna, died of pneumonia... (1509).

Three years after her death the great Amerigo Vespucci also died of causes unknown.

About 30 years later, against all odds, at the age of only 17, Caterina's grandson Cosimo Medici became the Duke of Florence & Tuscany.



*Cosimo Medici Grand Duke of Florence & Tuscany*

Some locals claim that La Villa Vita was never actually built by inhabitants of the south. They claim that it was merely discovered and renovated during the past century from a semi ruined and overgrown state. That it was a hidden treasure prepared centuries ago by an explorer in love with a beautiful and unknown noble lady. That it was cleverly hidden by bush and guarded by *condottieri*. But that in the end, the noble lady died before embarking on the great journey, and that the explorer died a few years later of a broken heart – leaving her treasured prize and its protectors behind for ever...



*Portrait of Amerigo Vespucci and his men landing on a shore somewhere*

To read more about Caterina's fascinating life go to [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caterina\\_Sforza](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caterina_Sforza) .

To read more about Caterina's son Giovanni – known as “the last Italian *condottiero*” go to [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giovanni\\_dalle\\_Bande\\_Nere](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Giovanni_dalle_Bande_Nere) .

Giovanni's terrible escapades required him to change his name from *Medice* to *Dalle Bande Nere* and lead to his early death in battle at the age of 28.

Or read more about Caterina's grandson Cosimo Medici at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosimo\\_I\\_de%27\\_Medici,\\_Grand\\_Duke\\_of\\_Tuscany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosimo_I_de%27_Medici,_Grand_Duke_of_Tuscany) .

Or about the great explorer Amerigo at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amerigo\\_vespucci](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amerigo_vespucci)

Or simply Google their names!

### [Images for Caterina Sforza](#)



### [Images for Amerigo Vespucci](#)

