

# The Sparrow



A NOVEL

MARY DORIA RUSSELL

NEW YORK TIMES bestselling author of *A Thread of Grace*

"A startling, engrossing, and moral work of fiction."

—THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW







THE  
SPARROW

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FOR MAURA E. KIRBY

AND

MARY L. DEWING

*quarum sine auspicio hic  
liber in lucem non esset  
editas*

## PROLOGUE

IT WAS PREDICTABLE, in hindsight. Everything about the history of the Society of Jesus bespoke deft and efficient action, exploration and research. During what Europeans were pleased to call the Age of Discovery, Jesuit priests were never more than a year or two behind the men who made initial contact with previously unknown peoples; indeed, Jesuits were often the vanguard of exploration.

The United Nations required years to come to a decision that the Society of Jesus reached in ten days. In New York, diplomats debated long and hard, with many recesses and tablings of the issue, whether and why human resources should be expended in an attempt to contact the world that would become known as Rakhat when there were so many pressing needs on Earth. In Rome, the questions were not whether or why but how soon the mission could be attempted and whom to send.

The Society asked leave of no temporal government. It acted on its own principles, with its own assets, on Papal authority. The mission to Rakhat was undertaken not so much secretly as privately—a fine distinction but one that the Society felt no compulsion to explain or justify when the news broke several years later.

The Jesuit scientists went to learn, not to proselytize. They went so that they might come to know and love God's other children. They went for the reason Jesuits have always gone to the farthest frontiers of human exploration. They went *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*: for the greater glory of God.

They meant no harm.

# 1

## **ROME: DECEMBER 2059**

ON DECEMBER 7, 2059, Emilio Sandoz was released from the isolation ward of Salvator Mundi Hospital in the middle of the night and transported in a bread van to the Jesuit Residence at Number 5 Borgo Santo Spirito, a few minutes' walk across St. Peter's Square from the Vatican. The next day, ignoring shouted questions and howls of journalistic outrage as he read, a Jesuit spokesman issued a short statement to the frustrated and angry media mob that had gathered outside Number 5's massive front door.

"To the best of our knowledge, Father Emilio Sandoz is the sole survivor of the Jesuit mission to Rakhat. Once again, we extend our thanks to the U.N., to the Contact Consortium and to the Asteroid Mining Division of Ohbayashi Corporation for making the return of Father Sandoz possible. We have no additional information regarding the fate of the Contact Consortium's crew members; they are in our prayers. Father Sandoz is too ill to question at this time and his recovery is expected to take months. Until then, there can be no further comment on the Jesuit mission or on the Contact Consortium's allegations regarding Father Sandoz's conduct on Rakhat."

This was simply to buy time.

It was true, of course, that Sandoz was ill. The man's whole body was bruised by the blooms of spontaneous hemorrhages where tiny blood vessel walls had breached and spilled their contents under his skin. His gums had stopped bleeding, but it would be a long while before he could eat normally. Eventually, something would have to be done about his hands.

Now, however, the combined effects of scurvy, anemia and exhaustion kept him asleep twenty hours out of the day. When awake, he lay motionless, coiled like a fetus and almost as helpless.

The door to his small room was nearly always left open in those early weeks. One afternoon, thinking to prevent Father Sandoz from being disturbed while the hallway floor was polished, Brother Edward Behr closed it, despite warnings about this from the Salvator Mundi staff. Sandoz happened to wake up and found himself shut in. Brother Edward did not repeat the mistake.

Vincenzo Giuliani, the Father General of the Society of Jesus, went each morning to look in on the man. He had no idea if Sandoz was aware of being observed; it was a familiar feeling. When very young, when the Father General was just plain Vince Giuliani, he had been fascinated by Emilio Sandoz, who was a year ahead of Giuliani during the decade-long process of priestly formation. A strange boy, Sandoz. A puzzling man. Vincenzo Giuliani had made a statesman's career of understanding other men, but he had never understood this one.

Gazing at Emilio, sick now and almost mute, Giuliani knew that Sandoz was unlikely to give up his secrets any time soon. This did not distress him. Vincenzo Giuliani was a patient man. One had to be patient to thrive in Rome, where time is measured not in centuries but in millennia, where patience and the long view have always distinguished political life. The city gave its name to the power of patience—*Romanità*. *Romanità* excludes emotion, hurry, doubt. *Romanità* waits, sees the moment and moves ruthlessly when the time is right. *Romanità* rests on an absolute conviction of ultimate success and arises from a single principle, *Cunctando regitur mundus*: Waiting, one conquers all.

So, even after sixty years, Vincenzo Giuliani felt no sense of impatience with his inability to understand Emilio Sandoz, only a sense of how satisfying it would be when the wait paid off.



THE FATHER GENERAL'S private secretary contacted Father John Candotti on the Feast of the Holy Innocents, three weeks after Emilio's arrival at Number 5.