



# FIORELLA DE MARIA POOR BANISHED CHILDREN

A NOVEL

An explosion is heard off the coast of seventeenth-century England, and a woman washes up on the shore. She is barely alive and does not speak English, but she asks for a priest . . . in Latin.

She has a confession to make and a story to tell, but who is she and from where has she come?

Cast out of her superstitious, Maltese family, Warda turns to begging and stealing until she is fostered by an understanding Catholic priest who teaches her the art of healing. Her willful nature and hard-earned independence make her unfit for marriage, and so the good priest sends Warda to serve an anchorite, in the hope that his protégé will discern a religious vocation.

Such a calling Warda never has the opportunity to hear. Barbary pirates raid her village, capture her and sell her into slavery in Muslim North Africa. In the merciless land of Warda's captivity, her wits, nerve, and self-respect are tested daily, as she struggles to survive without submitting to total and permanent enslavement. As she is slowly worn down by the brutality of her circumstances, she comes to believe that God has abandoned her and falls into despair, hatred, and a pattern of behavior which, ironically, mirrors that of her masters.

*Poor Banished Children* is the tale of one woman's relentless search for freedom and redemption. The historical novel raises challenging questions about the nature of courage, free will, and ultimately salvation.

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## Praise for *Poor Banished Children*

**"Catholic writer De Maria deserves a wide audience."**

— *Publishers Weekly*

**"A soulful, beautifully written, and haunting novel."**

— **Ron Hansen**, *NY Times* Best-selling Author, *The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford*

**"A meditation on guilt, innocence, and transcendence that will haunt the reader long after the book is done."**

— **Mary Eberstadt**, Author, *The Loser Letters: A Comic Tale of Life, Death, and Atheism*

**"This is serious fiction with prose that is clean, strong, and worthy."**

— **Thomas Howard**, Author, *Narnia and Beyond*



## THE AUTHOR

**Fiorella De Maria** was born in Italy of Maltese parents. She grew up in Wiltshire, England, and attended Cambridge, where she received a BA in English Literature and a Masters in Renaissance Literature, specializing in the English verse of Robert Southwell, S.J. She lives in Surrey with her husband and her three children. She won the National Book Prize of Malta (foreign language fiction category) for her novel *The Cassandra Curse*.

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