

Giselle Capretta takes a job at an art institute in Italy where there's an old and majestic fountain. Attracted to her supervisor, widower Alec Stahlberg, but a charming artist named Bernardo Abbadelli pursues her. When learning what's holding back Alec, she must make the most important decision of her life.

The Fountain: A ROMANCE

by David Gatesbury

Order the complete book from the publisher

[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/9335.html?s=pdf>

or from your favorite neighborhood

or online bookstore.

The
*F*OUNTAIN
A Romance...

DAVID GATESBURY

Copyright © 2017 David Gatesbury

ISBN: 978-1-63492-470-2

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the author.

Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida.

Printed on acid-free paper.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to any actual persons, living or dead, events or locales is entirely coincidental.

BookLocker.com, Inc.

2017

First Edition

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter 1: A LETTER ARRIVES	7
Chapter 2: SPEAKING TO A VOICE IN A FARAWAY LAND.....	12
Chapter 3: A FOUNTAIN LONG SINCE IN DISREPAIR	18
Chapter 4: ARRIVING AT THE INSTITUTE	24
Chapter 5: GETTING AQUAINTED WITH THE FACULTY	33
Chapter 6: A VISIT FROM A CHARMING ARTIST	41
Chapter 7: AN UNEXPECTED CALLER	48
Chapter 8: VISITING VILLA ADRIANA AND VILLA d’ESTE	55
Chapter 9: GETTING ROMANTICALLY INVOLVED	66
Chapter 10: A MEETING AT THE TREVÌ FOUNTAIN	74
Chapter 11: GETTING HER COMPOSURE BACK	81
Chapter 12: A GLIMPSE INTO AN ANCIENT WORLD.....	87
Chapter 13: AN EVENING IN ROME.....	92
Chapter 14: AN ARCHEOLOGICAL DIG	98
Chapter 15: SEEING THE SIGHTS IN ROME	108
Chapter 16: VISITING ROME’S CHURCHES	117
Chapter 17: AN EVENING AT PIAZZA NAVONA.....	125
Chapter 18: PREPARING FOR THE WEDDING	136
Chapter 19: THE CEREMONY	147
Chapter 20: FATHER ROBERTO ADVISES	156
Chapter 21: THE PERSUASIVE ARTIST	165
Chapter 22: A LONG GOOD-BYE.....	178
Chapter 23: CONFRONTING A HARD REALITY INTO NIGHT	188

Chapter 1: A LETTER ARRIVES

Giselle Capretta, an academically accomplished, sophisticated, cool brunette, had just returned home from the Chicago History Museum where she's employed as a secretary. She's studied history, art, and archeology all of her life with the intension of one day becoming the director of a museum. Finding she'd set her sights high, she's continued looking for an opportunity while at the same time sending out job resumes. Finding a letter in the mail with a return address from Italy left her hopeful that an opening had come, and she immediately opened the communication.

The letter was from the *Institute of Classical Architecture and Ancient Artworks*, Italian Chapter, specializing in Roman, Renaissance and Medieval history. The heading at the top gave indication that the correspondence came from the office of Alec Stahlberg, the institute's chief administrator. The heading on the letter read as: Cultivating an influence and appreciation in Classical antiquity, our Hall of Architecture offers detailed drawings of the principal ancient monuments and their ornament. Our art studio and gallery collection is constantly expanding, offering Renaissance, Impressionist and 19th Century, Abstract, Figurative, Scenic, Surrealism and Decorative styles.

The letter read as follows:

Dear Giselle,

The institute strives to connect with passionate people dedicated to the arts. We are looking for individuals who want to become part of something special, but who also want to play a role in preserving history.

We are currently offering a variety of employment opportunities in the areas of secretarial, accounting, marketing, fundraising, library science, facilities management, human resources, information

David Gatesbury

systems, and other highly technical areas. You may work your way up to taking a post covering several of these areas. Our school is small in that our focus is on students who show promise, offering tuition remission to those that lack funding, while attracting the world's most talented faculty and professional staff.

The institute offers competitive salary and benefits, plus paid time off, and a robust retirement plan. We have a policy committed to ensuring equal employment opportunity.

I know this isn't what you're looking for, Giselle, but it does offer you a rare opportunity that will look good on resumes you send out in the future. The Institute is located in scenic hills outside of Tivoli, and room and board, including meals from our kitchen, is offered with this appointment. We're looking for applicants willing to make a six-month commitment, and during that time you can make up your mind as to whether you want your stay here to be a permanent one. Should you find any interest in taking a position with us, please contact me immediately.

The letter ending with a personal note helped, but it really didn't sound like what she was looking for. At the same time, the job she'd taken here in Chicago didn't offer any upgrade position changes in the near future either, and she felt as though she was growing stale waiting for something to develop. She noticed the letter was signed by both the institute's secretary Victoria Sapianti and Alec Stahlberg. There was an e-mail address as well as a toll-free phone number to call for giving a response to the letter.

Not sure how this school had gotten her name and information, she recalled taking a weeklong trip to Greece and some of the Greek islands the year before. While traveling about Athens, she'd filled out an application of employment at an institute with a similar name, and she thought this may have been how the Institute in Tivoli had acquired her personal information. The opportunity for that trip to Greece had come through the museum, and she was quick to take it

The Fountain

for advancing her education and to give study to ancient sites in the region. A few years prior, on a weeklong Mediterranean cruise with a friend, she'd visited Lisbon, Portugal, Barcelona, Spain, Marseille, France, and had a one day visit to Rome, Italy, with stops in the Canary Islands and Morocco. The one day in Rome she'd spent visiting the Vatican, Sistine Chapel, the Colosseum, and squeezed in a quick walk through the Forum, and the artworks and sculptures she'd seen were spectacular.

Later that same evening, feeling optimistic about this position offered to her in Italy, she phoned her mother who lives in St. Louis seeking advice and to express her interest in the *Institute of Classical Architecture and Ancient Artworks*.

She heard her mother's voice, "Hello."

"Hello Mamma, I'm calling to let you know I received a letter today from an art institute in Tivoli, Italy that's not far from Rome."

Her mother sounded curious, "How did they get your name and address?"

"You may not remember, but I had approached the museum about advancing my education in archeology and was offered that fieldwork programs trip to Greece I'd taken with a team of archeologists maybe eighteen months ago. We visited historical sites in Greece and some of the Greek islands, and while traveling about Athens, I filled out an application of employment at an institute with a similar name. It may be that they're affiliated and that's how these people in Tivoli acquired my personal information. . . Here, I'll read you a segment of the letter and you can tell me what you think."

Giselle began reading passages from the letter. "The institute strives to connect with passionate people dedicated to the arts. We are looking for individuals who want to become part of something special, but who also want to play a role in preserving history. . . We are currently offering a variety of employment opportunities and you may work your way up to holding several positions. Our school is

small in that our focus is on students who show promise, while attracting the world's most talented faculty and professional staff."

She paused before commenting, "There's a personal note here at the bottom that makes it sound somewhat inviting, but I really don't think it's what I'm looking for."

Her mother gave encouragement, "Giselle, you've given years of your life to that museum and for some time now you've felt as though you're stuck in a rut. This is a rare opportunity and I think it's what you've been hoping for. Art, history and archeology have been your life. There's that one time you went on a cruise with a friend and spent one day in Rome, so you know what it's like there. I don't have to tell you that in this country, a person may be impressed when seeing a building over two hundred years old, but in Rome there are two thousand year old buildings and monuments. To see, touch, and study such things is what you live for, and even if it doesn't work out, I believe it will be a pleasant experience for you. This nice letter they sent you, it sounds like you are someone they're looking for, and that's what makes the idea of going there so exciting."

"My time at the museum hasn't been wasted though. I've established a good repertoire with the museum's administration, and they must've given me a high recommendation. They've helped me further my education—I've acquired a degree in cultural and biological anthropology and a bachelor's degree in archaeology. I am now cleared for entry-level archaeology positions, such as field assistant, surveyor or museum technician."

Her mother now felt downcast at the prospect of her daughter traveling into dangerous regions. "You do as you wish, Giselle, but I think you should go to Italy. To be an archeologist studying the workings of societies around the world means going to third world countries and I worry for your safety."

The Fountain

Twenty-nine years of age, Giselle didn't want to leave the museum in Chicago for concern she'd lose her position and seniority there.

Approaching the museum for assistance to gain extra credits to advance her academic status, she was offered practical experience through fieldwork programs. This is what made the trip to Greece, the cradle of Western civilization, possible and she traveled with a team of archeologists to historical sites there, including the 5th-century B.C. Acropolis citadel where the Parthenon temple stands. They also visited Apollo's shrine at Delphi located along the slopes of the awe-inspiring Mount Parnassus, its twin peaks rising more than 8,000 feet above the nearby Gulf of Corinth. The ancient theatre of Delphi overlooks a dramatic ravine, providing spectators a breathtaking view of the entire sanctuary and the spectacular landscape below. The ancient ruins of a once sumptuously decorated temple located about two and half hours from Athens, the site played a prominent role in Greek mythology, as it was home and sanctuary for the oracle of Apollo. While there, they accessed a stadium by walking through a peaceful pine forest. The team also made a stopover at the Island of Crete, visiting the capital of Minoan Crete—Knossos, the archaeological site that is considered Europe's oldest city. The palace complex, highlighted by the decorative fresco of a charging bull, was once the center of Minoan culture.

That night, Giselle couldn't sleep for feeling excited about the idea of moving to Italy, and if it really became reality, she wouldn't be far from the Eternal City, the City of the Seven Hills—Rome. Wrestling with mixed feelings on starting fresh in a far off place, but at the same time it was like a dream come true. On top of it all, for a well over a year she'd felt as though she needed a change in life and this could be it. In addition, she hadn't dated anyone or had a serious relationship with a man in what seemed like ages, and in the back of her mind she thought it possible she might meet a romantic interest there.

Chapter 2: SPEAKING TO A VOICE IN A FARAWAY LAND

The next day, Giselle went to work at the museum and told her supervisor she was considering making the move to Tivoli, Italy, and she was excited for her. For one thing, she'd known for some time that Giselle wanted more out of life than holding a secretarial job at the museum, but the institution had little else to offer at the time. Giselle had considered teaching, and even going freelance to join several archeological digs at sites around the world. However, most of these locations were in areas of the world where there was unrest, and her mother had pleaded with her not to go on these adventurous exploits. When venturing off to explore isolated archeological sites, there was no police force and little protection for outsiders, leaving one to fend for themselves. She'd once given thought to pairing up with another archeologist to go into the jungles of the Yucatan Peninsula in search of a long forgotten pyramid. Reports of people being tortured and murdered by a drug cartel put an end to that happening.

Later that same day, she phoned the toll-free number and the voice on the other end of the line gave an upbeat greeting, "*Institute of Classical Architecture and Ancient Artworks*—Vickie Sapiienti speaking."

A sweet female voice came back, "Hello. My name is Giselle Capretta, and I am calling to let you know that I have decided to take the institute up on its offer of employment."

Vickie sounded pleasingly anxious, "I remember writing to you, Giselle, and that you live in Chicago, and we're very happy that you've decided to join us. It's far different than the hustle and bustle of a big city here, as you'll find the area quiet and quite scenic, so I think you'll enjoy your stay here. You'll be at first assigned a position as secretary with additional duties, and you're already a secretary so I don't think you'll find it the least bit difficult. Over the next few months, we'll learn your capacity for taking on more

responsibilities, and if you rise to the challenges, you'll make quick advancements."

"I think I ought to mention that I speak very little Italian."

"That's not a problem. I'm an American who speaks little Italian, too, but most everyone we deal with here speaks English fluently. The woman whose job I took years ago spoke English clearly and concisely. When I asked her where she learned how to speak it so well, she told me she learned it as part of her educational studies and that she'd never been to an English speaking country. She now has her own travel agency and makes her home in San Diego.

"It may help to tell you the institute's first consideration is research promoting interest, appreciation and discovery in the material record of the human past for discovering evidence of diverse cultures. We are devoted to preserving ancient sites for furthering human knowledge and dedicated to protecting relics and artifacts of antiquity. Working with people of all ages in the study of archeology, our professional members have conducted fieldwork in Africa, Asia, Europe, and North and South America. We are an affiliate of the American School of Classical Greek Studies located in Athens. That's where we acquired a list of names of people who may be interested in this position, and quite possibly where we got your name."

They went on talking for a short while making arrangements for Giselle to fly to Rome, and checking scheduling for the airlines. During their discussion, Vickie told her that she'd be waiting for her on the day of her arrival at the airport holding a sign with her name.

Vickie last said, "There will be at least one other individual competing for the position we're looking to fill, but there are several openings we need people for. I made a note about your educational achievements, and the institute puts emphasis on archeology, classic architecture and art, so it's likely you'll find a place with us in one of these fields. One person the institute is looking to replace is me, so if things go well you'll eventually be occupying my place here. I've

been the institute's office manager for almost ten years, and the reason that position is being vacated is because I'm engaged and soon to be married."

Giselle replied, "How wonderful, and allow me to wish you great happiness."

After giving farewell, Vickie hung up the phone, and she opened the door to the adjoining office where Alec Stahlberg sat at his desk, his black hair graying at the temples.

Having a pale complexion and not looking the least bit of Italian descent, Vickie wore a cheerful dress over a slender build. She smiled when remarking, "That was Giselle Capretta on the phone calling from Chicago. She's thirty-two-years-old, sounding pleasant and excited about coming to the institute."

Stahlberg's eyes scanned his desk top, attempting to be humorous when saying, "This Hector Gespari is a good catch. I understand he has ideas of putting you to work at his florist shop after the wedding. . . . If I'd thought proposing to you would have kept you on here, I'd have asked you to marry me a long time ago. . . . How is this institution going to function without you?"

"Oh, I think you'll manage. Change is sometimes difficult to adjust to, but I'm confident you'll find a way to carry on without me. After all, Hector has been patient, and I can't expect him to wait forever."

Her eyes went down as she turned away to return to her office.

Stahlberg rose from his chair in a dark blue suit to meet her at the door, "You know it goes without saying that I'm very fond of you. I've been a bitter man for losing a wife I loved dearly and over the course of putting that experience behind me I know there have been times I've made your life difficult. I've never said it, but I'm grateful for the tolerance you've shown. I'm only now seeing how much I value your presence, but you're getting a fine gentleman who cares deeply about you in Hector."

"Yes, I know, and I think we'll be very happy together."

The Fountain

After Vickie left Stahlberg's office, he thought she looked troubled about something, and he opened the door to a room occupied by two desks spaced apart, but facing each other. "How is that Decree of Nullity or annulment coming along for allowing the two of you to be wed in the church?"

She sounded slightly perturbed when saying, "It's a never-ending process and I'll be an old hag before they reach a judgement. I had no idea it would be so complex or that it would take so long. I entered the bond of marriage for five years with a man who never took it seriously. He was a drunk and a philandering fool, and even though I haven't seen him in ten years, he still brings me misery. Before moving to Italy, I'd come to hate and loathe him so that I had my name changed back to my maiden name."

Stahlberg had heard all of these things before, but he wanted Vickie to find happiness. "I know that a church wedding was what you wanted, but if the church won't consecrate the marriage, why not get married by a justice of the peace here at the institute. You're two good people in love, who want to live the rest of your lives together. Father Roberto has offered to bless the two of you after the service, and that should be enough to gain heaven's blessing. We rarely get any use out of our chapel here, so the wedding can be performed there. You know you're welcome to use the cafeteria for the reception hall at no cost, and we'll arrange the catering as well. If you think the chapel is too small, and the weather is agreeable, use the courtyard and grounds for holding the ceremony. Should we expect it to be a warm day we'll set up a white tent to give shade, and the new girls can assist you decorating the place."

She smiled, "Thank you. You're far too generous."

Alec then commented, "It'll be an event to be long remembered. For the years of service you've given to the institute, it's time we gave something back to you."

Reentering his office, Stahlberg sat down, and his eyes were drawn to his wife's photograph on the desk top, as he once again dwelled on how he lost her to cancer a few years ago.

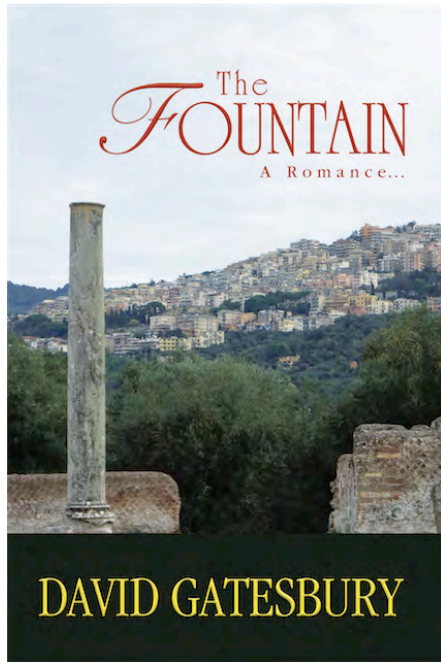
For the longest time living in the shadows of memories, he'd often see her in remembrances from days long since gone by. She had a favorite chair in the parlor she'd use when reading or knitting to repair clothing. He could easily picture her sitting at the kitchen table where they'd many times shared a meal, or there were the many instances he'd see her there in the morning holding a cup of coffee. The countless times he lay beside her watching her sleeping peacefully with sunlight breaking over the horizon to stream into the bedroom; he'd observe her for a short while, a vision of beauty. The most haunting memories were having seen her health deteriorating, as she lie withering away, and he was powerless to do anything about it. There were also those bright, clear eyes that had depth and held the promise of the future they'd share together, an enchanting smile and the sound of her choked up laughter. These were visions branded in his mind, never to be forgotten.

During the period after Lisa's passing, and for a long time thereafter, Victoria Sapianti had done all she could to console him. Losing this woman whom he'd so deeply loved nearly robbed him of his very soul. He'd become a shell of a man, but only over the past year had he come to accept her death, putting it behind him for moving on with his life. It was the idea of his secretary's departure that resurrected thoughts of those times when his life was in turmoil, watching the woman he loved drained of life. Even now, dark, troubling thoughts were closing in as he had an episode of ponderings, recalling how helpless he felt for not being able to do anything to aid her in fighting the condition that led to her death.

Lisa, an exceptionally beautiful woman whose maiden name was Passerini, was the love of his life and for a long time he couldn't see himself going on living without her. When seeing a doctor about a persistent cough she couldn't shake free of, she was given a physical examination, and X-rays showed a spot on her lungs that was diagnosed as a fast-growing type of lung cancer. An operation led doctors to believe they'd removed the entire cancerous tumor, but a year later she began slipping away, as the cancer had returned. She never once complained, and Stahlberg, like most people, thought

The Fountain

she was recovering fine, but it was thought she'd succumbed to weakness when falling down a set of outdoor stairs, an incident that quickened her death. She lived only two weeks after that fall, leaving him devastated and bereaved.



Giselle Capretta takes a job at an art institute in Italy where there's an old and majestic fountain. Attracted to her supervisor, widower Alec Stahlberg, but a charming artist named Bernardo Abbadelli pursues her. When learning what's holding back Alec, she must make the most important decision of her life.

The Fountain: A ROMANCE

by David Gatesbury

Order the complete book from the publisher

[Booklocker.com](http://www.booklocker.com)

<http://www.booklocker.com/p/books/9335.html?s=pdf>

**or from your favorite neighborhood
or online bookstore.**