



Gioconda

Lucille Turner

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We know him as the Renaissance genius: inventor, scientist, artist. Visionary painter of the Mona Lisa, the smiling, enigmatic Gioconda. They knew him as Leonardo from Vinci, Leonardo the Florentine: heretic, butcher, lunatic. It is dawn in the barn. On a wooden plinth lies a terrifying creature, part lizard, part dog, part cockerel, pieced together from several slaughtered animals. Sitting in front of it, a boy draws an image of a monster. His first thought: men need saving from each other. His second: men need saving from themselves. A solitary child, Leonardo's only intimate is Lisa Gherardini, the girl who spies on him in his workshop. Spurned by his tutor, he is sent by his despairing father to Florence as an apprentice. Under the guiding hand of Verrocchio, the master sculptor, he begins to make his name. But success requires sacrifice; Florence demands a level of conformity impossible for him. Forced to leave, Leonardo places himself at the service of the charismatic, power-thirsty Duke of Milan. His journey leads him back to Lisa and the portrait he has waited so long to paint, the culmination of his life's work. From the glittering court of the Medici to the mortuaries of Milan and the battlefields of the Po valley, Lucille Turner's powerful novel vividly imagines Leonardo's lonely struggle to convince others of his vision of the world.

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