

THE DON SEBASTIAN CHRONICLES:

Where Chivalry Lives, Love Burns Immortal.

As the Spanish Inquisition rages, a bloodstained hero rises, life after life.

Forbidden love transforms Don Sebastian de la Villanueva, Catholic knight of high chivalry to vampire. Through his wife, Ana de Costa, stunning Jewess and secret Alchemist, Sebastian acquires sacred powers that kings, queens and even death cannot kill. Traveling through time, across oceans, centuries, and cultures to reunite over and over with his soulmate Ana, Sebastian seeks reason and honor in the darkest turnings of history.

A Unique Twist on Historical Fantasy

The Black Castle, Book One of the five intriguing Don Sebastian Chronicles novels by DC Anthologist Les Daniels, is the inspiration for the first seasons of this dark, lyrical Historical Fantasy series. The books follow the quest of charismatic Sebastian de la Villanueva; chivalrous, swashbuckling, time-traveling 15th century knight turned vampire, and his enchanting soulmate, gifted Jewish Alchemist Ana de Costa.

Every journey has a beginning, if not an end. Our initial voyage originates in Spain and envelopes Europe from late 15th to early 16th century. In subsequent seasons and centuries 16th, 18th, 19th and early 20th we discover Sebastian as he reemerges by ritual, sorcery, or occultism in Mexico, France, England, and India. During the episodes, he flashes back to his first life in Spain for answers, comfort, connection, reflection, justice. His endless chivalric quest in new lands *leads his path to Ana, who reincarnates in 5 different lives. Visually the same Ana*, but with a different identity, persona, and pursuit to fascinate him anew. Facets of Ana's original character are reconfigured in the women she becomes; an Aztec Priestess, a decadent French countess, an innocent English heiress, and finally Kali, the Indian goddess of death.

The Beginning

The displeasure of Queen Isabel and Sebastian's estranged brother, Inquisitor Diego de La Villanueva at this marriage is no secret. Isabel has other marriage plans for Sebastian as wealthy, newly-minted Lord Aragon and endorses Diego's plan to arrest and burn Ana at the stake as a 'false convert.' Sebastian has yet to discover that Ana is an Alchemist of the highest order. Her gift is for the 'science' of occult medicine. Ana is no psychic. She only grasps their fate in bits and pieces – in dreams and visions. Ana knows that her beloved husband must sidestep mortality, for their unborn child, and the future of Spain.

It so comes to pass.

Don Sebastian, Lord of Aragon, cousin to King Fernando, confidant of Cristobal Colon, enemy of the Inquisition, is denied death by rough science. Mortally wounded in Granada, Sebastian is overdosed by his squire with an alchemical potion devised by Ana to staunch blood loss. This concoction—a mixture of precious oils, rare herbs, sacred ashes, crushed gems, and the mystical traits of animal [bull, bat, hawk, serpent] and human blood coaxed by enchantment, alter the structure of his cells. Sebastian acquires powers that defy – and redefine nature. To sustain himself, he requires blood, animal or human; each bestows a quality, or detriment, of the source.

Through his eyes, heart, and soul, over five books, we travel through time from 1489 to 1900, to history's iconic moments as this swoon-worthy warrior pursues his destiny, and reclaims his beloved Ana, in life after life.

THE WORLD

It is 1489. Europe is a dangerous, electrifying place. On the cusp of the renaissance, still tinged by medieval darkness, this world is propelled by cloaked greed, false piety, calculated lust, artistic brilliance, scientific enigmas, rival explorations, and brazen butchery. Power is a disease, as deadly as the plague. Kings flip mistresses for trade routes, burn towns and level towers, bestow, and revoke titles. Dynasties preen, prosper, and perish as royal offspring deliver, default, or die. In the hate-filled reign of Abu Abdallah Muhammad XII, AKA Boabdil, the 22nd and last Nasrid ruler of the Emirate of Granada, fathers and uncles plot non-stop against brothers and sons for control.

The constant family drama divides, weakens, and ultimately invites defeat.

Gold drives all. Cutthroat Catholic Monarchs Isabel and Fernando reap lavish profits from the Inquisition by burning wealthy Jews to claim their fortunes and liquidate the crown's debts. Some 16,000 plus Jews are burned "in God's name" during the reign of the Catholic Monarchs.

Moors too are expelled, but they fight back ferociously, killing off much of the promising young nobility and seasoned, high-born knights of Spain, while sustaining heavy losses as their own soldiers are killed defending their lands and property. The Moors also fight amongst themselves for control of their crown, and this too, weakens them. The abundant spoils from these acts of war, expulsion and extermination finance the Catholic crown's nine-year war for the conquest of Granada and the ultimate capture of the legendary Alhambra, the last Muslim kingdom.

The Moors are outspent as 'reigning superpower' Spain, secures her place at the 'center of the universe' buying massive canons and state-of-the art dungeons from Germany. Alliances with their heirs are bartered with Portugal, France, Italy, and England.

A shared appetite for hunting witches, heretics and 'sodomites' poisons Spain, England, France and Germany as *"The Witches Hammer"* the bestselling guide to torture and exorcisms, penned by German inquisitor and exorcist Thomas Kraemer, and second only to the Bible in popularity, makes its way across Europe. Kraemer and his colleague Sprenger, will darken Spain's dungeons with grisly torture 'innovations' that render 'the rack' a laughable tease for the pain ahead in their wake.

A HERO CONTEMPLATES.

Behind the thick stone walls of his splendid castle, loyal knight and Lord of Aragon, Don Sebastian de la Villanueva contemplates his future in a country increasingly at odds with his deeply-ingrained chivalric principles. Even as he serves his king and cousin, Fernando, Sebastian will follow his heart as it leads him where legends fear to tread. Death abandons Sebastian on an endless path in time, as each future epoch's new identity brings strange quests in his search for his adored Ana.

THE MOOD OF "THE BLACK CASTLE"

MALEVOLENT MAJESTY: As centuries of coexistence crumble to a singular will, evil rules on high thrones of false glory and pyres of perverse justice. Wicked wear crowns of gold and hoods of black. Laws are lies, cloaked as prayers. Desperate men trade silver for souls. Myths carry dreamers and devils across oceans. A curse unfolds upon the crown, infecting the legacy.

IT'S PERSONAL: By marrying Ana, Sebastian, a landed, favored, loyal Catholic knight of Spain, snubs their Most Catholic Majesties, Isabel, and Fernando. He also sends his envious brother Diego, a recently appointed Inquisitioner, into a tailspin of anger. Estranged from childhood, disinherited by their father for reasons that quickly surface, Diego's bile now

bubbles over, and all hell breaks loose as he plots his popular brother's demise. Queen Isabel's choice of a well-connected Burgundian countess for his wife is diverted, but not abandoned.

A false calm surrounds Ana and Sebastian as they welcome a son and enjoy temporary bliss. As the last phase of the brutal war nears, Sebastian is ordered back to Granada by Fernando.

Sebastian equips 1,000 men, sending them ahead. Reluctant to leave Ana and their infant son, he postpones his trip until the very last. Ana has foreseen Sebastian's death blow in a dream and has been secretly formulating an elixir from ancient formulas hoping to keep him alive to raise the child. She has also seen her own death at the stake but feels helpless to stop it. Her great love for Sebastian has kept her in Spain, and she has no regrets. Meanwhile, Diego, eager, crown-endorsed assassin has Isabel's blessing to bind Ana to the stake at any opportune moment, without due process.

In this ruthless quagmire, Sebastian has something worth fighting for. Love. Of family, country, of culture, of honor, and the chivalric quest of ideal love.

THE BLACK CASTLE VISUALS

MAGNIFICENT. Approaching THE BLACK CASTLE, you sense a thrill of anticipation as you enter the rich, sensual mix of cultures and history of old Spain from north to south. Dance, art, music, rituals, preparation, and the art of battle are authentically inspired. You 'get' why Spain's unique magic has endured for two thousand years.

MYSTERIOUS. Crossing the moat, strange chills sweep over you from a bottomless pit of whispered secrets. Alchemy and Kabala are defined and woven through the series. To protect the man she loves, Ana applies her mystic art, moving heaven and earth to keep the vampire Sebastian alive as she seeks the antidote to protect their son. Her powers grow, ripping through the lies surrounding the crowns in and around Spain.

MASTERFUL. Lord of Aragon, Don Sebastian de la Villanueva is handsomer than his portrait, and the very soul of chivalry and gracious wit. His beautiful Ana is a vision of exotic splendor, her forbidden Jewish ancestry, and powerful gift of Alchemy are concealed by the regalia of Spanish nobility. The charismatic pair radiate the power to defy every convention to preserve their love and principles--- at no small cost in the haunted Europe of the Inquisition. Spain's best knight only 'bites' royalty. Others simply die.

MONDIAL. Everything is connected in this oh-so dark, small, and power-thirsty world.

Colon and Portugal's King Juan II have a side deal on the explorations. Sebastian secretly invests in Colon's maiden voyage. Colon introduces Sebastian to Ana and helps them escape Spain. Colon and Fernando share an untamable mistress, the equally cruel and beautiful, former lady in waiting to Isabel, Beatriz de Bobadilla. Exiled to the Canary Islands, she's now the bloodthirsty dictator of that native population where Colon builds a house...and on.

LOCATIONS

Spain, Portugal, Italy, France, Germany: Authentic Castles, Palaces, Cathedrals, Monasteries. Interiors shot on sound stages in locations contingent on co-pro partners.

PRODUCTION DESIGN

Opulent, authentic, detailed, lived-in. Creation of distinctive furnishings. Manly and luxurious in Sebastian's domain, magical and ethereal where it touches Ana. Dark and austere elegant where it meets Diego, lavish and regal where it concerns the Monarchs.

IMAGES

Recreations of iconic scenes from paintings. CGI in measured doses. Wide vistas, rich visual storytelling but not overwhelming fantasy.

COSTUMES

Rich, detailed, researched, extraordinary, extravagant yet authentic, mingling a bit of Italian and possibly some French [for women] influence. Fascinating details for close-ups, impeccable period fabric use, true to time embroidery, with character. Not fake-period 'fantasy' but not boring either. Distinctive jewelry.

MUSIC

Important in Spanish life music is a character. The Don Sebastian Chronicles requires a great score and more. Heroic. Evocative. Orchestral to intimate. Sweeping, Creeping. Soaring. Moody, Dark. Melancholic, Joyful. Ironic. Dramatic. Classic Spanish and European, some lute mixed with folk and modernized to effect. More renaissance-leaning than Medieval. Use of some later iconic Spanish-themed composer works shaped 'backwards' to a more 16th century feel. Some Moorish overtones, La Perre Mora /Anonymous. Jose de Nebra, Bizet, Manuel De Falla, Luigi Boccherini 's Guitar Quintet#4 Fandango in G.448, Gustav Holst "Jupiter", etc.

THE BLACK CASTLE CHARACTERS

SEBASTIAN DE LA VILLANUEVA

Sebastian, brave, beloved chivalric knight, Spain's most eligible bachelor, inherited the title of Lord Aragon upon the recent passing of his father, Rodrigo, the beloved, respected 9th Lord Aragon. Chosen over the moody, secretive Diego, Sebastian assumes the title with gravity, and excels, wisely managing the estate and growing his own fortune from investments in Africa.

Cultivating modesty, Sebastian effects a carefree demeanor. This is countered by a bone-deep chivalry instilled from boyhood through his father's admiration for a legendary French knight, Sir Geoffroi Du Charney, revered for his chivalry and bravery. Sir Geffroi died in 1356 at the Battle of Poitiers with his king's standard in his grip. Before this noble death, Du Charney had authored three works on chivalry which Sebastian inherited from his father. Rodrigo instilled in Sebastian the importance of honor, in battle and in life, as the true gate to Heaven. On his deathbed, he assured Sebastian that Du Charney will aid him when all seems lost quoting Charney he reminds Sebastian "*He who does more is of greater worth.*"

This struck deep in Sebastian's heart, and never left him. Chivalry kept him from frivolous romances, bad business deals and unwarranted prejudice. Sebastian saw first the merits of men, not their color, or religion. Whilst obligated to fight for the crown to retain his title and lands, Sebastian's own rarefied world is diversely populated by his loyal retainers, Pedro, his Moorish squire, Fez, his Arabic page, and Azucar, his Gypsy winemaker. This was all fine

before the Inquisition, and despite rumblings he declines to change his staff. He will also defy the crown by marrying Ana, introduced to Sebastian by Colon at the port of Barcelona.

None of these choices stem from spite—contrary to his brother Diego, for whom most actions are motivated by spite. Sebastian has clarity, and pretty much does as he pleases and deems correct as bound by chivalry. Sebastian invests in Cristobal Colon's voyage, befriends, and hides Rabbi Josef, helps Friar Miguel rise above the Inquisition fray. A thoroughly good fellow is Sebastian, a knight of honor, a swashbuckling idealist. This makes for a reluctant vampire. As medical advances go, Ana's effort to keep a battle-wounded Sebastian alive succeeds all too well, rendering him immortal. Seeking a philosophical response to his tragedy, Sebastian's belief in God's will has a hand in this destiny providing the means, and power to fight the injustice of the Inquisition that arrives at his castle door.

DIEGO DE LA VILLANUEVA

Diego de la Villanueva, envious, cranky, venomous brother of Sebastian (and thorn in his side), is appointed by the crown as local Inquisitionist. He is the antithesis of Sebastian's good humor and grace. Diego is perpetually angry, burdened with a life-long secret at odds with the religious constraints he feels forced to assume as the disinherited brother. Mocked by his church superiors as a dilettante, Diego is bullied and indoctrinated by a debauched older friar into inmate abuse in the name of the Inquisition. Here, Diego has finally found his 'calling.' Tricked by this errant friar orchestrating his downfall to assume his place, Diego channels his frustrated lust for men into flagrant abuse of power and grisly torture through his office. After his pyre for Ana fails, he nearly dies from his own burns, but he is rescued by Jewish silversmiths hiding in the hills who nurse him back to health. For most, this would be cause to repent. Not Diego. He has his saviors arrested and intends to burn them. His descent into darkness continues with the new friendship of German authors, friars and exorcists Heinrich Kraemer and Jacob Sprenger who deliver the latest in torture equipment from the order placed by Friar Aguero. This installation and the visitors light the fire of fanaticism in Diego.

Eager to excel and win Isabel's approval, Diego seeks out two German torture experts; Heinrich Kraemer and Jacobus Sprenger the famous inquisitors/exorcists from Nuremberg who authored the bestselling "Witches Hammer" manual. He invites the men to outfit his dungeons and help him write his own wicked opus. This does not help his standing in the Inquisition.

By season two, Diego's overzealousness and other assorted offenses bring scorn and he falls definitively out of favor with Torquemada. His days numbered, Diego barter the whereabouts of Sebastian's son for his knowledge of vampirism, now hoping to win the dying Torquemada's job. This will finally 'bury' him when Torquemada gets ahold of his accounts, but until then, Diego has an angst-ridden romance with another friar, and enough setbacks to keep even the worst villain busy.

ANA DE COSTA

Ana, clever, exquisite, indulged, is the well-educated only child of a wealthy Jewish money lender. She dabbles somewhat secretly in the occult having acquired Kabala and Alchemy knowledge during studies in Italy and Greece. Unbeknownst to Ana, her father has lent Queen Isabel substantial gold against a ruby and pearl choker, and as the Inquisition solidifies, her parents do not need convincing to leave Spain for Portugal.

The night before their journey to Barcelona's port for their ship to Lisbon, Ana dreams of black horses. Hours later, the same black stallions pull Sebastian's elegant black carriage on the road just ahead of Ana's wagon. Destiny calls. Ana gives her parents the slip in Barcelona to follow her instinct and these horses lead her to Sebastian.

A dream mate for any woman in the royal court, Sebastian is a dicey choice for a Jewish female practicing mystic arts. Despite this, they fall in love at sight. Ana finds in Sebastian an educated, gracious, witty, gentleman, and an irresistibly sensual suitor. She knows she has met her long-awaited soul-mate, a match born in the blood. Ana seeks the freedom to be herself, and Sebastian is secure enough to allow what he initially perceives as merely cultural quirks or distinctions. It takes him a moment to acknowledge that his new wife may be dabbling in more than just holdovers from the faith she has sworn to forsake. The urgency of the times, with their intense mutual attraction quickly overcomes doubt, and they wed. Ana converts to Catholicism to marry Sebastian, and quickly conceives.

After a vision of his bleeding to death in battle, Ana is determined to keep him alive to protect their coming child. In search of a blood coagulant, she conducts clandestine experiments fusing biology, alchemy, and kabbala in a hidden room of the vast Black Castle cellar. Ana is discovered by Pedro, Sebastian's Moorish squire. She swears him to secrecy and he promises to administer the liquid if Sebastian should fall in action.

All seems well for a time, Ana's pregnancy is smooth, and Sebastian is untroubled by Diego who is quietly sharpening his torture tools, entertaining evil guests, and waiting.

Sebastian equips and Pedro trains 1,000 new men for the final siege. When it can no longer be avoided, Sebastian departs reluctantly for Granada, under Fernando's command. As Sebastian wages war. Ana and the infant, a boy, are arrested at night by Diego who arrives with guards and threatens her staff with imprisonment if they dare to defend her. Only Fez puts up a fight and sets his prized falcon on Diego. Fez is arrested with Ana. Diego locks up Ana then takes the baby to a secret convent and leaves him there with the puzzled nuns. Diego tries to torture Ana, but she is shielded by her alchemy, Kabbala prayers and the ceaseless chanting of Jewish women in the dungeons to the Angel Michael. Oddly resistant to his whip, and the footbath of hot coals, Diego, frustrated and fearful, decides to burn her quickly before Sebastian can catch wind of it.

Ana's earlier vision of Sebastian struck down in battle now comes to pass. His squire Pedro, nervous, overdoses Sebastian with potion. Pedro sees him die, return to life, and levitate. Spooked, Pedro abandons him. Sebastian is furious, fascinated, and *flying*. His now-acute hearing leads him north, in the direction of the women chanting.

Ana, bound and gagged by Diego is tied to a pyre on the side of a ravine under a full moon. No questions, no ceremony, no witnesses. As he lights the dry tinder around Ana, she curses him, the Monarchs, and their royal progeny in the name of Spain's Jews.

Anxiously lighting the pyre, Diego's sleeve catches fire. As he tries to put the flame out, *his entire robe catches*. Ana watches in silent amusement from her own circle of flame as Diego rolls around in the brush. *That* catches fire as well. He is immersed, screaming.

Ana hears her name called. She looks up to see Sebastian.

Flying.

Rescued, Ana and Sebastian take Diego's horse to Sebastian's tavern in the Pyrenees, run by his business partner, the gypsy Azucar. Sebastian returns to the pyre to finish off Diego, but he is gone. Found burned to a near-crisp by Jewish silversmiths hiding in the hills from the Inquisition, who mistake him for a victim of the church.

Ana does her best to adjust and seeks the antidote to her 'creation' but life is indeed complicated for them, especially after Diego resurfaces, scarred but determined to prove what he has witnessed as the Devil's work.

PEDRO RODRIGUEZ

Sebastian's closest retainer...until.

Pedro Rodriguez, dark of Moorish blood, but long converted to Christianity for marriage, has been Sebastian's trusted squire for years. They trained and fought together in countless skirmishes. Pedro's impressive height, horsemanship and strength were a perfect support to Sebastian's strategy, speed, agility, and sword-craft. Pedro is responsible, dry of wit, and sharp of eye. A long-time widower, Pedro adores his lovely daughters--feisty Dolores, 12 and dreamy Teresa, 16. Handsome and calm-spoken, Pedro 'romances' women on campaign, but never thought to remarry.

Pedro has watched Sebastian's 'relationship' with Diego go from nonexistent, to bad to horrible as Diego's secret became harder to hide, and their father Rodrigo chooses Sebastian over Diego as heir. This surprised no one except Diego, who had little inclination to heroism, battle, jousts, or defense of his family. Diego was good with a whip, and as he learned to use it on others, Pedro found ways to dismantle them. He and Sebastian share a mutual distrust of Diego. Pedro greatly admires Sebastian and appreciates his independent swagger, gracious chivalric values, and acts. However, Pedro is not prepared to die for him, due to his parental obligations. Thanks to Sebastian's own battle skills, Pedro has not been tested to this degree, Sebastian is unaware of this failing. It will emerge soon. When Sebastian is 'changed' Pedro will reluctantly, but quickly retreat. Pedro's own morals are tested, not knowing what or who he serves. To his shock Pedro will find love in Granada with Fatima, a Muslim woman—a doctor, of stronger character than he who will draw him into the cause of the weakling king, Boabdil, The Unlucky.

CRISTOBAL COLON

The man and the myth are both here as we watch the spell he casts, and the web he weaves. Proud, persistent, and patient, the charismatic Colon is also egotistical, ambitious, and eventually greedy. Tireless in his pursuit, Colon sought patronage in Portugal, France, and England before Spain and was turned down by all. Willing to do whatever necessary to advance his journey, he woos Isabel with flattering verse in front of the court, she then demands his body, and holds him 'captive' until she is ready to give the 'go-ahead.'

Colon was never 'wrong' and this led to some 'problems' at sea and on land. He was also a bit of a lady-killer with snobbish ambitions. When he leaves Palos for "Asia" his ship first makes a detour for 'repairs' to the Canary Islands, home of the tempestuous Beatriz, the wild, blue-blood seductress. Actually, Colon loves two Beatriz—the lowborn mother of his beloved sons, and the beautiful high-born monster.

BEATRIZ DE BOBADILLA

Every era has their evil temptress. Inquisition Spain's is La Bobadilla. Beatriz de Bobadilla, just as famous for her cruelty as her beauty, enslaved men—literally and figuratively. From King Fernando to Colon and many others in between, La Bobadilla was a man-eater, a power-grabber, a stunner described as the most beautiful and cruelest woman in Spain. That is quite a feat with an Isabel burning Jews by the cartload, but Beatriz managed it. Recognizing trouble under her nose, Isabel married her off to a barely noble, older man, and charged them with the management of the then-wild Canary Islands. Beatriz' husband did not last very long. When

her husband dies, she prowls about, popping up on campaigns, causing trouble for Fernando. As a ruthless despot dealing with the resistant natives of Berber and African lineage she is a passionate, bloody queen of her own jungle kingdom. She fascinates men of power. Colon bent over backwards to impress her, and she ventures out with him when she is not toying with Fernando. A constant thorn in the side of Isabel, she outlasts the sturdy queen by years, but never becomes queen; Fernando chooses a young bride hoping in vain to sire a male heir.

ISABEL, QUEEN OF CASTILE AND LEON

There is the legend, and then there is the woman. This well-researched Isabel is jealous, mercurial, and an oft un-pious, luxury-loving, bath-hating queen who enjoys ribald 'literature' read aloud in court, more than her bible.

Tough and ruthless, she advises her inquisitors to 'operate in secret' thereby sanctioning all kinds of dungeoneer misbehavior. Neglected by her adored Fernando who collects mistresses and has produced a clutch of illegitimate offspring, Isabel spitefully demands Colon's attention in her chambers. She strings him along for four years, forbidding him to take other backers, lest she deny him the rights and titles to his discoveries. Colon is finally funded—by Isabel's Jewish courtiers. To eliminate a mountain of debt, and fund her path to the Alhambra, Isabel shackles and burns her Jewish financiers, renege on their loans as her dynasty self-destructs. Isabel trades her daughters like pawns to spread Spanish blood through the courts of Europe.

Karma has its way with her dynasty. Her son Juan dies, daughter Catalina as Henry's queen, suffers life-long indignity in England, her daughter Juana, tortured by her husband Phillip's infidelities, loses her sanity, and her ability to rule over Spain...! Can this be the idealized queen of history?

FERNANDO, KING OF CASTILE AND LEON

Power-loving Fernando enjoys the military prowess of his great army. Quite the dude, he joins his men in battles on occasion, sweeping to the head of an exciting charge for the thrill of it. He relies mightily on his knights and royals; his dukes and lords do the heavy lifting at his behest. Fernando knows that if he dies, Isabel could run Spain; it is less certain that he could do it without her. He likes the raw power of cannons and weaponry. He is a brawny man's man. Fernando outwardly admires his sturdy, adoring, ambitious wife, but behind closed doors he takes his leave to enjoy his lithe kingly mistresses elsewhere. His extended affair with La Bobadilla took its toll on his marriage, the horrible, gorgeous Beatriz manipulated him enough to be a danger to the throne, and even as she was married off to a rich old man and sent to the Canaries, she still manages to be in the king's bed from time to time, stealing secrets and flaunting her influence. Going along with the Inquisition program, Fernando is in it for the spoils. He partakes of the royal life with a certain distance, knowing that without Isabel he would be a boring, unimaginative king, it is she who aspires; but without him, she would not have the throne. It is a marriage that began as a strong-willed partnership and ends in death as one. Fernando acknowledges his illegitimate children and gives them duties, partially to keep Isabel's ego in check. Fernando remarries soon after Isabel dies, hoping for an heir that never comes, and finds himself a surprisingly unpopular solo ruler.

KING JUAN II

Described by Machiavelli as 'The Perfect Prince,' Juan II is a fine king, an independent thinker, and a bit of a visionary, but he does not suffer fools or liars, and he is famous for unceremoniously ending a betrayer with his own dagger in the throne room in full view of his stunned courtiers and nobles. Mercurial, his open arms welcomed Colon who first came to his

shores, shipwrecked and penniless. Despite Colon's petition for his support, Juan declined, funding instead the expeditions of Vasco de Gama, his countryman ahead of Spain, reaping the rewards of de Gama's Indian discovery. He and Colon remained in contact and worked on side exploration deals that neither shared with Spain.

Juan welcomes the Jews and Moors from Spain, including, eventually, Ana who eventually leaves for Portugal after her escape from the pyre. Married to Leonora of Spain, Juan has an uneasy relation with Spain's aggressive dual monarchs whose clumsy attempt to annex his country is implicated in the suspicious death of his son and heir, Manuel at the hand of a Spanish groom. Juan's ax is forever grinding as he considers how best to deal with the duplicitous duo to his right border.

FRIAR MIGUEL

A Dominican friar by default, Miguel Carrillo gamely joined the friars to honor his family tradition as the second son; his love of God is real. But lately, his tenure under Diego has grown increasingly demoralizing as the Inquisition slips past discipline to debauchery and torture under the blossoming BFFs Aguero and Diego. As Miguel's friendship with Sebastian and Ana grows, Miguel realizes that he may want a love of his own, of the earthly female variety. In Ana's sweet Jewish maid Sara, Miguel believes he has found a reason to leave the cloth, but to do what?

Choosing to free the abused Inquisition prisoners from the dungeons in Diego's absence, he leaves himself little option but to flee Spain with Ana and Sebastian's entourage to Lisbon and beyond as they evade the Inquisition. Here he discovers there is a bit of pirate in every seaman, and a bit of knight valiant in a man who loves.

FEZ

Sebastian's Moroccan Page, Fez is a delightful, humble, loyal, observant, and surprisingly brave young man. He adores Sebastian and Ana, and while he has little formal education, he is determined to better himself. Fez has trained his falcon, Noor, as a spy, to deliver and retrieve messages and precious objects for Sebastian. He is engaged to Maria, a maid in Ana's service. They will be important in future episodes as accomplices to the secrets of the Black Castle.

RABBI JOSEF RUBINO

Ana's guardian may be the bravest Jew left in Aragon. Josef Rubino accompanies Ana and her parents to the port of Barcelona to see them safely off to Portugal. When Ana stays behind in Spain to interrogate the black horses she's seen in her dream, Josef explodes. As the skies open and it begins to pour, Rabbi accepts defeat stepping aside to allow Ana's destiny to take hold as Sebastian offers them a ride in his closed carriage back to Aragon. It is a long journey of 12 hours and during that time, Josef knows Ana's fate is sealed. He hopes that Ana will be safe with Sebastian, but he doubts it. Regardless he gives his blessing and tries to protect Ana until she is safely married. Afterward, Josef continues to help the Jews who remain in Spain and stages a daring rescue of dungeon captives with Friar Miguel when Diego goes missing after sustaining the full-body burns at Ana's botched pyre. At Yom Kippur, Rabbi visits the three clueless silversmiths nursing the unrecognizably burned Diego back to health. Swathed in bandages head to toe, Diego doesn't speak, but when his face is unbandaged, Rabbi recognizes him. Before he can warn his friends, Diego escapes, and of course, being Diego, has the men arrested. Rabbi has a dark night of the soul, one of many to come, as his friends burn.

FRIAR AGUERO

Glutton, pervert, liar, fraud...this foul friar arrives on Diego's doorstep and unleashes a beast. Ousted from Madrid for unspeakable crimes, Aguero heads north after overhearing whispers of the rogue Inquisitor Diego. Successfully evading the truth, Aguero bullies his way into Diego's Holy House with subtle threats and manipulation, 'teaching' Diego how to 'correctly' torture prisoners, especially the young, pretty women. Sensing Diego's preference leans otherwise, he uses this leverage to coerce him into footing the bill for a state-of-the-art torture chamber.

Aguero convinces Diego that their job is to make the prisoner's lives hell. Aguero advises Diego that his dungeon is woefully under-equipped and must be outfitted by the best German torture tools. Diego, thrilled to be rid of Aguero, supplies funds for his trip to Germany to place an order.

In Aguero's absence, Diego sends Miguel on a fact-finding trip to Madrid, where he discovers in a confessional who—and what—Aguero is. Miguel returns to Aragon full of news, but Diego is away. Miguel leaves behind a wrapped packet of chicken biscuits spiked with poison to kill the dungeon rats and goes to his room.

That night Aguero returns ravenous and scared from Germany after witnessing a real exorcism. He ransacks Diego's desk for the key to his precious wine closet. To Aguero's greedy relief, the room is stocked to the rafters. Snatching up the biscuits and an empty chalice, Aguero opens the closet door and enters. Juggling a candle, he closes it behind him. For the last time.

HEINRICH KRAEMER

Evil scout: professional witch hunter Heinrich Kraemer, a busy German inquisitor, exorcist, and torture equipment innovator became famous in the 15th and 16th centuries, with his thick tome, *The Witches Hammer*. after the installation of their gruesome gear.

Published in 1486, this book was a bestseller for centuries second only to the Bible.

Friar Aguero visits Kraemer in Germany ordering his elaborate gear for Diego's dungeons.

As a 'special treat' Kraemer takes a reluctant Aguero along on an exorcism house call, where to Aguero's chagrin, a local demon takes a liking to him. Kraemer's enthusiasm for exorcisms scares the robustly perverse Friar Aguero who, for all his callous rhetoric, proves a coward.

Aguero returns to Spain and dies before the equipment is delivered. When Aguero does not respond to his letter, Kraemer and Sprenger, his writing partner, charter a ship to deliver the torture devices from Nuremberg to Aragon personally, along with copies of their best seller.

In Spain, Kraemer is welcomed, and treated like a medieval Elon Musk as his equipment is installed and 'tested.' On the advice of Huesca locals wishing to be rid of them, he and Sprenger are directed to Galicia – supposedly the retreat of witches, and the Pyrenees and discover the decadent enchantment of gypsies, a cultural distinction-- 'not to be confused with witches.' [they are indeed bewitched, but clueless]

As the ultimate guide to grilling women, heretics, and misfits, the Hammer of Witches makes its rounds in Spain's court.

The success of 'Hammer' and Diego's desperation to reestablish his merits in the eyes of Isabel, prompts Diego to later invite the authors back to Spain for personal coaching on his own book of evil expertise.

Kraemer's conflicting interests in gold, glory, punishment, power, influence, and gratification make him an interesting villain and accomplice to Diego's untethered ambition.

JACOB SPRENGER

Kraemer's partner, Jacob Sprenger is less enthused about the dirty work. At first a genuinely concerned friar, he gets caught in the spotlight and spun by the charisma of Kraemer. The rhetoric of Kraemer and the material wealth are powerful lures. Sprenger convinces himself that he is the conscience in the dungeon, and thereby finds himself tested, and torn, as Diego and Kraemer are full-on villains, egging each other to horrors unexplored.

This buffer role makes him unpredictable, and a powerful witness, when Diego's time for comeuppance finally comes. It also makes him vulnerable to feminine persuasion as an antidote to the evil in dungeons below. Sprenger knows the difference between good and evil, and ultimately, is not afraid to call it by its name.

AZUCAR

Sebastian's expert Gypsy winemaker, stunner, and seductress Azucar manages Sebastian's lively tavern and secret mountainside inn tucked behind the Pyrenees. She dances flamenco and reads cards with a direct line to the ascended Masters and good spirits. Azucar knows a thing or two about supernatural beings, and of course, vampires. She advises Sebastian on the essentials and even hides Ana from the Inquisition. All this is done out of unrequited love for Sebastian...but even gypsies have their limits. When she is asked to babysit for Ana and Sebastian's toddler, Azucar is startled to see that the boy has inherited Sebastian's gift for flight. On top of this, the witch hunting German inquisitors decide to hike in the mountains and stumble upon her hideaway inn. Soon, only the mountain caves can protect her until she enlists the help of the cave-dwelling gypsies whose magic can send the exorcist packing.

FATIMA

Widowed doctor Fatima is a warrior-tall, self-confident Muslim woman. Strong of spirit, lovely Fatima nurses wounded Pedro back to health in Granada after he plummets from his horse on the road north. He nearly loses an eye after an attack in retaliation for the death of a man at Granada when Pedro was a squire. This happens as Pedro is at his lowest, having abandoned the freshly immortal Sebastian. Pedro marries Fatima, and she convinces him to help a royal patient, Morayma, the embattled wife of King Boabdil, trapped in the Alhambra. This fails, but Fatima returns to Aragon with Pedro when Granada falls, and urges him to make peace with Sebastian. Instead, he gets a job with Diego.

TORQUEMADA

Isabel's sour-faced henchman in the Inquisition trenches, Grand Inquisitor Torquemada is a Converso, a turncoat Jew who despises his roots and punishes his own people from the depths of self-hate. A complicated villain, Torquemada does Isabel's bidding when it suits him but in his waning years, he goes off script with increased vengeance. He despises Diego whom he has secretly—and not so secretly followed and considers him a disgrace. This matters not to Isabel who is using Diego to control [she thinks] Sebastian. While Diego seeks to 'outdo' Torquemada in torture, he neglects 'the process' of The Question, and free-wheels his way around interrogations, asking questions that go off script. When this gets back to Torquemada, he is furious, and Diego has secured a new enemy—his boss.

CARLOS DIAZ

The first fake news. The Inquisition pays well for unsubstantiated information and sleazy tavern owner Carlos Diaz knows this better than anyone. His half-truths have put many to the pyre. Diego being the new 'sheriff' in town needs Diaz to offers up fictitious stories to fill Diego's dungeons. Diaz spies at will on every new face in town. For a price.

SIR GEOFFROI DE CHARNY

14th century Knight of France, Sir Geffroi du Charney was born in 1300 and died in 1356, in service to King Jean II, at the *Battle of Poitiers*. As the carrier of the *Oriflamme*, the standard of the crown of France, this immensely privileged, not to mention dangerous, honor made Du Charney a key target of enemy forces on the battlefield. An expert on chivalry, with a reputation for not only skill at arms but also piety and honor. It was said that in his time he was known as a "true and perfect Knight." The legend of Sir Geffroi du Charney lives on. is still considered the 'world's greatest knight.' Sir Geffroi has been with Sebastian since childhood, introduced by his father as the definitive guide in all things chivalric. *As Sebastian's conscience and counselor in chivalry, the knight and author of three books on the subject, quotes over situations with brevity and beauty.*