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Autor: Graham-Dixon, Andrew

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In the tradition of John Richardson's Picasso, a commanding new biography of the Italian master's tumultuous life and mysterious death.

For four hundred years Caravaggio's (1571-1610) staggering artistic achievements have thrilled viewers, yet his volatile personal trajectory—the murder of Ranuccio Tomasini, the doubt surrounding Caravaggio's sexuality, the chain of events that began with his imprisonment on Malta and ended with his premature death—has long confounded historians. In a bravura performance, Andrew Graham-Dixon delves into the original Italian sources, presenting fresh details about Caravaggio's sex life, his many crimes and public brawls, and the most convincing account yet published of the painter's tragic death at the age of thirty-eight. With illuminating readings of Caravaggio's infamous religious paintings, which often depict prostitutes and poor people, Graham-Dixon immerses readers in the world of Italy at the height of the Counter-Reformation and creates a masterful profile of the mercurial painter's life and work.