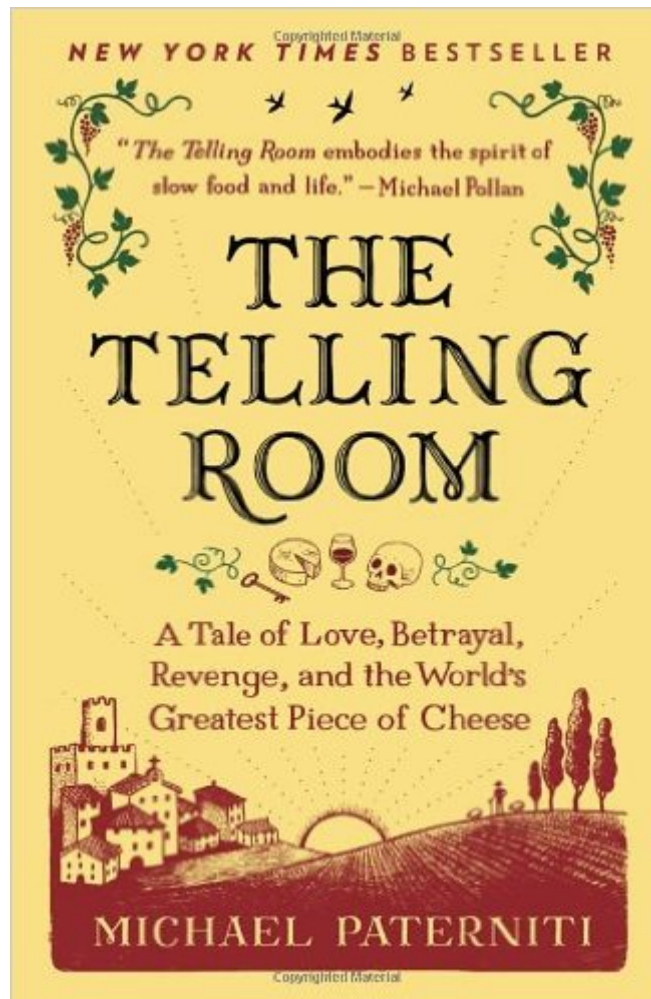


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# The Telling Room: A Tale Of Love, Betrayal, Revenge, And The World's Greatest Piece Of Cheese



## Synopsis

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER  
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In the picturesque village of Guzmán, Spain, in a cave dug into a hillside on the edge of town, an ancient door leads to a cramped limestone chamber known as the telling room. • Containing nothing but a wooden table and two benches, this is where villagers have gathered for centuries to share their stories and secrets—usually accompanied by copious amounts of wine. • It was here, in the summer of 2000, that Michael Paterniti found himself listening to a larger-than-life Spanish cheesemaker named Ambrosio Molinos de las Heras as he spun an odd and compelling tale about a piece of cheese. An unusual piece of cheese. Made from an old family recipe, Ambrosio's cheese was reputed to be among the finest in the world, and was said to hold mystical qualities. Eating it, some claimed, conjured long-lost memories. But then, Ambrosio said, things had gone horribly wrong. . . . • By the time the two men exited the telling room that evening, Paterniti was hooked. Soon he was fully embroiled in village life, relocating his young family to Guzmán in order to chase the truth about this cheese and explore the fairy tale—like place where the villagers conversed with farm animals, lived by an ancient Castilian code of honor, and made their wine and food by hand, from the grapes growing on a nearby hill and the flocks of sheep floating over the Meseta. • What Paterniti ultimately discovers there in the highlands of Castile is nothing like the idyllic slow-food fable he first imagined. Instead, he's sucked into the heart of an unfolding mystery, a blood feud that includes accusations of betrayal and theft, death threats, and a murder plot. As the village begins to spill its long-held secrets, Paterniti finds himself implicated in the very story he is writing. • Equal parts mystery and memoir, travelogue and history, *The Telling Room* is an astonishing work of literary nonfiction by one of our most accomplished storytellers. A moving exploration of happiness, friendship, and betrayal, *The Telling Room* introduces us to Ambrosio Molinos de las Heras, an unforgettable real-life literary hero, while also holding a mirror up to the world, fully alive to the power of stories that define and sustain us.

Praise for *The Telling Room* • • • Captivating . . . Paterniti's writing sings, whether he's talking about how food activates memory, or the joys of watching his children grow. • • • "NPR • • • A gorgeous and impassioned monument to the art and mystery of storytelling, *The Telling Room* is rich, funny, humane, devastating, and beautiful. It made me want to applaud, it made me want to cry, it made me want to move to Spain. Michael Paterniti is a genius. • • • "Elizabeth Gilbert, author of *Eat, Pray, Love* • • • Unforgettable . . . a must-read for all who think of Spain as magical, who consider cheese as the ultimate gift of love, who love stories of betrayal, despair, revenge and redemption. • • • "The Wall Street Journal • • • The Telling Room

embodies the spirit of slow food and life.â•“Michael Pollan Â•œElegant, strange, funny, and insightful, *The Telling Room* is a marvelous tale and a joyful read, a trip into a world peopled by some of the most remarkable charactersâ•“and, yes, cheeseâ•“in memory.â•“Susan Orlean, author of *The Orchid Thief*From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A couple of chapters into this book, I was asking myself, "How have I never heard of this writer before?" And before even finishing the book, I was ordering his previous work (*Driving Mr. Albert*) simply because I didn't want this book to end. This is a masterpiece, on a level with Jon Krakauer's *Into Thin Air* or Richard Preston's *The Hot Zone*, in which it doesn't matter that you had no previous interest in Mount Everest or biological warfare, or in this case, Spanish cheese. Paterniti takes a more or less simple story of a farmer in Spain who creates a fantastic cheese and then, through mismanagement, loses the company he has built, and turns it into a reflection on how life is to be lived, how it feels to be a young father, what is worth living for, how time changes, and yet doesn't change, everything. He has a huge man-crush on this guy whose language he doesn't even speak at first, and he manages to spend so much time with him that he falls completely under his spell, bringing his wife and kids not once but twice, to spend weeks in a dessicated village in Spain. Life in the village of Guzman is everything that life in modern America is not. People spend their time in rooms that Paterniti calls Telling Rooms, caves, actually out on the hillside, where wine flows freely (wine they themselves have made) and food is shared lovingly with friend and stranger alike. No

"stranger danger" here, no hours spent before screens "chatting" electronically with disembodied strangers. This is life as it has been for centuries. And yet, it is also real, not a stage-setting put on for the benefit of lost americanos who always go home to their clothes driers and air conditioners and ipads.

The first 40 pages of this book did me in. I almost just tossed it. But it finally started picking up and getting to the actual story. There are two things I don't like about this book. The first is, the author uses way too many adjectives and similes, etc., for my taste. The unusual part though, is that sometimes he uses them, and other times he doesn't have any at all. (Once he gets into the actual story, there aren't nearly as many.) The second is, he has far too much information that doesn't apply to the story. He includes things about his personal life and family, and lots of other side items that aren't pertinent to the story. I WILL say though that many of the things he does puts in footnotes, so it's easy to skip over them. Some of them are actually good stories and worth the read. But I really think this book could have been shorter and more on point, and I would have enjoyed it more (I would have given it a 5 then.) Now for the story. The story was WONDERFUL. It pulled me right in (when he got to it) and kept me going. Ambrosio was larger than life, and the small Castilian town he lived in sounded like a really nice, old-world place. The story of the cheese was just spectacular. The author was really drawn into this, and I can understand why. Ambrosio was definitely bigger than life (I picture him as looking just like Eli Wallach) and he didn't do anything by halves. I want to say more about him, but I don't want to ruin it for those who haven't read it yet. This book is definitely worth a read, and seems very heartfelt by both the author and the participants in the story. [For those who have already read the book---I LOVED the author's story of his special trip to Mon Virgo.

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