



A love & travel
very short novel by

Sabrina Barbante

Dublin

**The sound
of the snow**

excerpt from
'Faintly Falling - il rumore della neve', a novel by Sabrina Barbante



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excerpt from "Fainlty Falling – Il rumore della neve"*

I can perfectly remember my dialogue with Cristina the night Laura was not with us. He only night she left her alone to go to town.

So, it was grand to talk with her. Cristina tried to be happy and had such a vitality that, if only she could, she would cross the wall of that gaff. Maybe she would have followed me here in Dublin or who knows where in Ireland, and all around the world if I only had been brave enough to ask her.

"You're so lucky to have Laura close to you".

I had just told her about the game I used to play when I was a cub, when I rolled and rolled, and twirled around with the eyes shut just to see how long did it take to be driven mad and loose the sense of balance. I also told her about Joseph. She was the very first one in the world I told about him. I was sure she would have been able to see him.

"Sometimes I think she'll drive me mad. Blindly mad!" And she laughed as she always used to about her blindness.

I could go deeper in the subject, I could ask why was she saying that. I could ask why she was talking like that about someone who was devoting her the very best of her life, without asking anything.

But I didn't, because I knew the answer. As she didn't ask me how came Joseph was unseen and unheard by no matter who, and could decide not to go to school and he could walk barefoot deep at night without caring about anyone and anything. When she said that sentence I immediately thought about my mother, about her cares and hyper protectiveness. I thought about that love that for 12 years took me prisoner in the big and silent gaff in Cork. And then took me to Dublin and left me in paradise with the everlasting need to leave as if I wasn't worth it.



Laura was her salvation and, as all the salvations deserving this label, was slightly becoming the end of everything, the end of her world. The end of the world of both of them.

This is the way the world ends

Not with a bang but a whimper.

They were so different. Both in the appearance and in the personality; it was as if summer and winter were haunting the same home. And for me it was so clear that the more vulnerable of the two was doubtless Laura. They were equal and different just like me and Joseph. Just like me and the child I invented to escape my loneliness, and that I had to escape from to become a man.

Despite her absent eyes, Cristina was stronger. Laura seemed to be lulled by that walls and that snow. Cristina was bursting in her house more than in her everlasting darkness. Her assassin wasn't darkness, but silence.

To save her from the silence, I had to save her from Laura. And so, maybe, Laura would have saved me and I, her. And Cristina, both of us. But to save the world is not easy. Moreover if the snow, and the darkness, are around.

In the darkness we can imagine what is not, even of ourselves.

I had just asked for a couple of candles, the very first night I knocked their door.

And indeed I was even able to invent an non-existent fear of the dark. Why then? Just for a bit of company?

The first impression I had of Cristina was of a black panther, soft and nimble, at ease in the dark, running in her sister's help and looking for some light to offer to a stranger.

Maybe that was the first and last time I saw her doing something for her sister.

It was hard to distinguish, in that darkness, people and shadows. Even the roles they played were different in that totally black setting. Laura looked like a girl resigned to a darkness and blindness and Cristina seemed to be there just to give her some sort of support. To move and run all that dark that was making her sister unarmed, paralyzed.

I was the stranger of the next door. I understood none of them needed to know exactly who I was, and why was I a guest in the next door.



Cristina didn't because all she needed to know was that something still existed around that gaff, Laura didn't 'cause she was sure my presence in their life wouldn't have lasted more than some minutes.

My father first met Mario, the owner of that 'next door' I came from for the two sisters, during a College conference and soon they became friends thank some beer in the Dublin's shallows. Than the friendship became stronger when they met again in Tuscany. When I had the opportunity to make researches for the university in Italy I choose for Siena to take advantage of the hospitality of my father's friend. When he talked about him he looked like he was talking about another self, in another life. He was free when he referred about those crazy nights with his College colleagues, earning their daily bread following dead poets, useless triviality they loved and the society didn't care about. I wanted to meet Mario. And I and loved him since the first moment, as I would have loved my father if only he had been a different man, the one he was when I wasn't born yet. When he was a free man.

After some long dark minute in front of Laura's silhouette, only after that little flame was on and saw the blond nuance of her hair, I realized I didn't know her name.

That silence was so heavy on my heart as nothing else in the world. So that, I have to admit it, I invented some scent of lavender to smell as a pretext to talk. Maybe I really could perceived it, but I wouldn't have if that silent boulder hadn't been torturing me, in a truly unusual way since I could think all about myself but being a person not used to silence.

When the light was back I saw a new Cristina, different than the one hidden behind the door when I arrived. And I realized, just at a glance, that also Laura was not the same I imagined when we were in the dark.

She had a guilty look, unease, as if she was the cause of that black out and even of its end. I realized she was more beautiful than I had perceived at a candle and ember light.

It was snowing, when I first met them.

That snow was not like the rain. Rain has its course, like the wind and river's water. Snow doesn't knock the window panes like the rain does; so she falls and doesn't bother. You have to watch her to know she's there. Laura often thought about how much Cristina should miss the snow. She hadn't been able to hearing her knocking, like



the rain, for four years. Snow was dramatically and irritably discreet and she imagined that sense of isolation of her sister when the snow fell around the house.

“Can you hear the sound of the snow?” ? – Laura asked me, leaving me wordless.

“So... no, actually”.

“Neither can I. But I can see it, and I like it. I think Cristina hates it more than anything else in the world”.

“Have you ever asked her?”

I was quite irritated, sometimes, by the way she was sure to understand her sister’s thoughts.

“No, but I can feel it. If I could make a wish, I’d ask for the snow to have a sound”.

I think the most meaningful reply would be “It has a scent. And you can touch it”.

But in that moment I didn’t think about the right answer, the one that could have opened the doors of a new universe of truth in front of her, and maybe save her.

So, I didn’t because my head was overwhelmed by something else in that moment. Because it was then, while she was wishing the snow had a sound, that I realized in a sudden epiphany, that I was falling in love

and that falling in love has the same sound of the faintly falling snow.

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