

Le donne di Orolé

SALVATORE NIFFOI
Giunti Editore, 2020

[excerpt]

I've never said this to anyone, but ever since I was a little girl I've been afraid of the dark. Afraid of going inside it and never coming out. That summer night in 1932, I fell in as though into a trap. The dreams I had were black, with only a sliver of white light to illuminate the eyes of the ghosts that kept me company until dawn. I was still young, but one of the first things my mother taught me was that in the dark, we women have visions very similar to the circles of hell, while the men in our family were prohibited from dreaming, and if anyone did so in secret, they weren't to tell anyone to avoid being considered a spy.

Tum, tum, tum.

Sharp beats that woke me up in a fright, because it felt like my heart about to fly out through my ears.

Tum, tum, tum.

It was seven in the morning on a Sunday in August of 1932, when the sun was already a blazing host up in the sky and not a soul was to be seen on the deserted streets of Orolé.

Battore Lettorina, the lame sacristan, knocked six times on our door in the Sos Moribundos neighborhood, looking for my father Felle Licanza and my mother Agustina Murristile.

“Mistress Lidia sent me to tell you that she wants to see little Isoppa right away, it’s urgent!”

My father licked his lips and ground his teeth with the sound of iron rubbing against stone. It was what he always did when he wasn’t sure exactly sure what surprise the Easter egg of his existence had in store for him.

Then he invited Battore Lettorina to sit down, offering him some cheap brandy to loosen his tongue and get a better handle on his intentions.