



Mattanza: Love and Death in the Sea of Sicily

Theresa Maggio

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A magnificent journey inside the world of a Sicilian fishing community and its thousand-year-old rituals. . . Every spring for untold centuries, great schools of giant bluefin tuna have swum through the Strait of Gibraltar to spawn in the Mediterranean Sea. And there, for untold centuries, men have been waiting for them. In this stunning debut, Theresa Maggio brings us inside the insular world of the tonnara-the ritual trapping and killing of bluefin enacted by fishermen since the Stone Age. In a single, bloody spectacle-called the mattanza-the fishermen harvest the bluefin, lifting them by hand from the Chamber of Death, the last room in an elaborate trap. Theresa Maggio witnessed her first mattanza on Favignana, a butterfly-shaped island off the coast of Sicily. Brought to the island by a fisherman who was in love with her, Maggio in turn fell in love with Favignana, with its white magic and stonework, its anchors and nets. Penetrating this exotic, all-male world as no woman has before her, Maggio documents a dark and beautiful ritual that might soon disappear-a casualty of the modern fishing industry. Part memoir, part natural history, part travelogue, Mattanza is a riveting narrative of one woman's journey into another world, a world where moon lemons grow wild, and where the sea holds the promise of renewal.

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