

Giulia Morello

I'm in love with Pippa Bacca.
Ask me why!

Translated from the Italian
by Livia Maranzana

LdiLibro

Author's Note

This book is not a biography. It doesn't want to be. It cannot be.

I decided to write this story — a story that touches you, that makes you laugh and cry like all real things do — for I believe it is unique.

Because before knowing Pippa Bacca, I thought that certain stories could only exist in the realm of fantasy.

But, perhaps, not even fantasy would dare to go this far.

Preface

Pippa Bacca is an explosion in the history of humanity. She shatters comfortable mental habits and prejudices that are encrusted in our timorous consciences, scraping away the comfort of the enclosure we live in without even realizing it confines us.

This young woman, barely over thirty, terrifies us as she marries diversity with her enchanting white dress and her unwavering trust in people; petrifying us as she smiles with ruthless foresight. She forces us to face our daily hypocrisies as “good people”, consumed by the most brazen and ridiculous desire for the superfluous.

I did not know this woman’s story but through these pages, Giulia Morello and her generous sisterhood, were able to change my perspective on the world.

I wondered if these words could come through as exaggerated — I reflected on it all night after finishing the book. But the roar of this story’s detonation reverberated through me, and so my answer is “no,” there is no exaggeration.

I thought about all the time I wasted traveling without hitchhiking. About how I haven’t taught it to my children,

worried about keeping them warm, wrapped in a cocoon of false security that really prevents life instead of protecting it.

As a judge, I only know the pathology called Evil. But as Sissi, a young woman who writes *catastrophic humor* to turn impotence into power, likes to warn me and as Franci, a young man who invented the *clever glasses* to offer a new point of view on the world, repeats: “Mom, the reality you see is distorted — people are not like that”.

Pippa Bacca, with her bloodstained dress, proves my children right. This may seem paradoxical, but it is not. Before reading Giulia Morello’s explosive book, I would have sworn with blind certainty that I was correct. Today, a new journey begins.

PAOLA DI NICOLA TRAVAGLINI

To Pippa Bacca, of course

Dead body of missing Milanese artist Giuseppina Pasqualino found in Turkey, buried naked near Istanbul.

Killer caught, betrayed by his cellphone

Murdered and buried in a deserted area, an hour's drive from Istanbul. The Milanese artist had set off with a friend, aiming to hitchhike through countries considered dangerous while dressed as a bride. An unconventional journey to prove that others can be trusted.

Strangled to death by a man who offered her a ride. This is how Pippa Bacca, the artist, was killed in Turkey, as she attempted to hitchhike through the Balkans, dressed as a bride.

**An adventure trip as a provocation,
an artist's journey along the roads of
the world in a wedding dress**

**Strangled and possibly raped during her original
journey aimed to promote the exaltation of peace**

The first time I hear about her is from the news announcing her tragic disappearance. It was 2008, on the night between April 11th and 12th. A Friday that was turning into Saturday.

I turn on the television after tossing and turning in bed, struggling to fall asleep. The drowsy effect of the screen is my last resort.

After a few seconds, I distractedly hear the name “Pippa Bacca.”

Pippa Bacca.

What a funny name.

I switch on the light. Who is this Pippa Bacca?

I turn up the volume and lean forward, putting on my glasses. There she is.

A smiling bride standing at the edge of the road, just behind a guardrail, her thumb extended in the air.

She’s wearing white gloves.

The news segment ends quickly, leaving me no time to grasp the full meaning of the story.

I change channels, hoping to find another broadcast. Then another.

Nothing.

The only things changing are the tones and timbers of detached and impassive voices that deliver the same message.

She is dead.

Each newscast delivering the story in the same quick, cold and ruthless manner.

Then silence.

I turn the television off and switch on my computer.

I type the words “Pippa Bacca” in the search bar.

Who was this Pippa Bacca?

Why was she in Turkey, dressed as a bride?

Why was she hitchhiking?

What was her art?

I was in a muddle.

Even today, I don’t have a rational explanation for why the news struck me so profoundly that night.

They assaulted me, seeping inside, for no obvious reason.

Perhaps it was because she was a young artist.

Perhaps because she died in the midst of an artistic performance.

Perhaps because of the sheer force of her message on peace and friendship among nations.

Perhaps because of the brutal injustice of it all.

After seven months my mind is set: I am to write an email to Pippa’s family. I want to dig deeper into her story, to turn it into a theater production.

I decide, instinctively—almost viscerally—that this story must not be forgotten.

Today, with the prized clarity of hindsight, I say: This is a story that must be told.

Told for the poetry that was infused into her life.

And into her art.

Which, in the end, were one and the same.

“Society often forgives the criminal;
it never forgives the dreamer”

OSCAR WILDE

Brides on Tour—Spose in Viaggio is the name of her final project.

The idea was born in Pippa’s mind and materialized through her encounter with artist Silvia Moro, who had already devoted several artistic performances to the theme of travel.

Their project consisted in hitchhiking, dressed as brides, through countries scarred by recent wars. Lands still permeated by the stench of destruction and ruins.

They wanted it to be a marriage—one with the people, with the land, with the unknown.

A bride is in fact by definition a bearer of life, of love.

She is purity, she is white.

She is peace.

She is the opportunity of rebuilding, of starting over.

She is a new beginning.

The possible interpretations of such an artistic performance are countless.

Their journey began in Milan on March 8th, 2008.

The eleven countries selected for the performance were Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, and Israel, with the ultimate goal of reaching Jerusalem.



The Journey of Brides on Tour

Pippa and Silvia created a website to explain their project in detail, to document everything about their journey. Their days, all their impressions, their exchanges with artists they met along the way, and to publish photos taken on the road.

On the homepage of the site, a flashing message read: «Leave a message for Pippa».

Indeed, countless thoughts were dedicated to her.

One particular message from a certain Diego stands out, as it breaks into the blog precisely during the days of Pippa's disappearance, between March 31st and April 12th of 2008. It shows up like this:

"A girl, alone, dressed as a bride, hitchhiking with strangers through places that any sane person would be afraid of, even with a security convoy – what did she expect!!... And now Italy has to go through the trouble of looking for her...With all the problems this country already has, Italy is is even forced to worry about idiots who define themselves as artists... Piss off!!!!"Diego

It was the choice to hitchhike that divided public opinion, sparking a debate between those who saw it as a dangerous way to travel and those who did not.

I found myself asking friends, acquaintances, and even strangers, what they thought about Pippa's story for months.

Almost everyone had heard of it, but their knowledge could be summarized in only three words: hitchhiking, wedding dress, Turkey.

After talking with people from all walks of life, from fruit

vendors to intellectuals, from shop assistants to students, from office workers to entrepreneurs, one thing became clear—the way information had been hurriedly regurgitated by the media in a bulimic frenzy left no room for anybody to understand how and why these words had come together in this story.

As a result, most people believed that Pippa was just an unhinged woman, who got up one day and decided to throw on a wedding dress and hitchhike to Turkey.

This is what anyone who came across this story from the TV, opened a newspaper or turned on the radio would grasp.

The haste with which news are relentlessly fired into the ether imposes fast paces and extreme terseness.

The issue lies in defining exactly the indispensable minimum that should be dispensed to the audience.

When we don't understand the news, we feel attacked by it.

We sense its heft, its violence—but not the depth of it all.

Furthermore, what we don't understand frightens us.

The belief that Pippa somehow brought this upon herself provides instead a form of reassurance. It pushes us as far away as possible from the idea that evil exists, and that it can be encountered by anybody.

Anywhere.

Anyway.

Some even went so far as to suggest that traveling through Turkey in a wedding dress could have been a provocation to the local culture.

This, too, was far from true—and Turkey's reaction to the tragedy proves it, since countless messages of solidarity and support poured in for Pippa's family.

The Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, publicly expressed his condolences, extending them to the entire Italian nation, stating:

“I cannot fathom the words to describe this heinous murder. We are deeply saddened by the killing of this emissary of peace.”

The Turkish daily newspaper “Hurriyet” ran an editorial headlined “*Utaniyoruz*” (We must be ashamed) while “Milliyet” reads: “*Turkey—where brides are killed*”.

The newspaper “Sabah” writes: “*Pippa, please forgive us*”.

Probably, what causes the most confusion—and thus prejudice—was the image of the bride itself.

When we imagine a bride on her wedding day, we picture her with perfect make-up and lacquered hair, perfect, beautiful, provoking and flawless.

But the way Pippa wore her wedding dress and how she looked carried a completely different meaning.

It held an immense symbolic power, of course, but certainly not a provocative one.

Especially because a provocation to the local culture would have been in obvious opposition to the message of friendship and unity among peoples that Brides on Tour wanted to spread.

I manage to retrieve the various editions of the Italian news programs that broke the tragic story.

In retrospect, two things are clear: all the news reports use more or less the same phrases to describe the incident, and all of them, at the conclusion of the report, carry an extract of an interview made with Pippa before her departure in

which she declares, *“The only thing that scares me is the cold... and wild beasts, but I don’t think there are any where I’m going!”*

On Wikipedia it is possible to read a debate under the entry “Pippa Bacca” where it is proposed that her page be removed because so many don’t consider her an artist.

I do question the point of this discussion

I ask myself on how many so-called artists such a discussion on legitimacy has been opened. And wonder the point of opening it today against Pippa Bacca.

A poll then follows, in which the majority chooses to keep the page.

I often sense a fury of sorts against this story, against a person who can no longer defend her ideals or art.

That is why family, friends, and acquaintances immediately felt the responsibility of defending Pippa’s story.

How?

Simply by telling it to anyone who will listen.

To anyone who is willing to withhold judgment—or rather prejudice—long enough to simply listen to what the media has not been able, willing or capable of telling.

She is the one being attacked, once again, and not a single word is spent on the person who committed the insane crime.

Why?

Why do people feel the need to judge someone who’s already paid the price with their life? Where does it come from?

I have come to the conclusion that perhaps it is just a desperate attempt to make sense of something that has moved us.

And perhaps made us very afraid.

One thing is certain. Pippa Bacca, once again, has not left us indifferent.

From the *Brides on Tour* website

When I heard the news, I was gripped by a wave of emotions: first, the beauty, the innocence, the hope embedded in this idea of traveling, of sharing the process of discovering others.

Then, the deep sadness for your end—so unfair, especially because it betrayed your soul and your ideals.

But this doesn't mean we have to stop—stop dreaming, stop opening ourselves to the world or stop meeting people who seem so far from us...

Reaching out to others is our greatest wealth.

Our different colors, scents and languages are what make us who we are.

Pippa, you were so special. You still are. Thank you.

Violence is everywhere in this world! Your message of peace was so great, but now it is even greater.

I admired your courage... but in this cruel world, there is no room for "good".

I am writing from South Africa. I too, have experienced violence on my skin—I still don't know how I managed to fight it... but I am alive.

God tells us to forgive. Now, I pray for YOU.