



Catch the Rabbit

Lana Bastaši

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In Lana Bastaši's inventive, passionate novel *Catch the Rabbit*, childhood friends reunite for a road trip from Bosnia to Vienna.

Sara fled Bosnia to build a new life in Dublin with her boyfriend, Michael. Enconced in an apartment with Leonard Cohen records and a stubborn avocado tree, Sara is now a writer and translator, while Michael writes computer code. When Sara receives an unexpected call from her childhood friend, Lejla, it lures her back to Bosnia, and to drive across Eastern Europe and visit Lejla's exiled brother, Armin.

The women travel the Bosnian countryside, including the village where they grew up, on their way to Zagreb and Vienna. Though they were inseparable when young, Sara is now startled by her wild, impulsive friend, with her "fake blonde hair" and "icy throne." One night, Lejla convinces their kind hostess that Sara doesn't speak Bosnian, and then offers mutilated English translations that mock the woman.

In powerful flashbacks, Sara reconsiders her school days, and her infatuations with both Lejla and Armin. The foreboding scenes include a crushed sparrow, poisoned dogs, and a stolen bunny. Walking the streets where she grew up, Sara notes the darkness is a "living, tangible substance," and that the street lamps flicker like the "shy girl at a nightclub." The book's images are evocative and captivating:

Memories might be like a frozen lake to me—blurry and slippery—but every now and then there's a crack in its surface and I can put my hand through it and catch a detail, a recollection in the cold water.

Set against the striking backdrop of post-war Bosnia, *Catch the Rabbit* is a poignant, wrenching novel about the power of memory and the challenges of knowing another person.

KRISTEN RABE (May / June 2021)

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