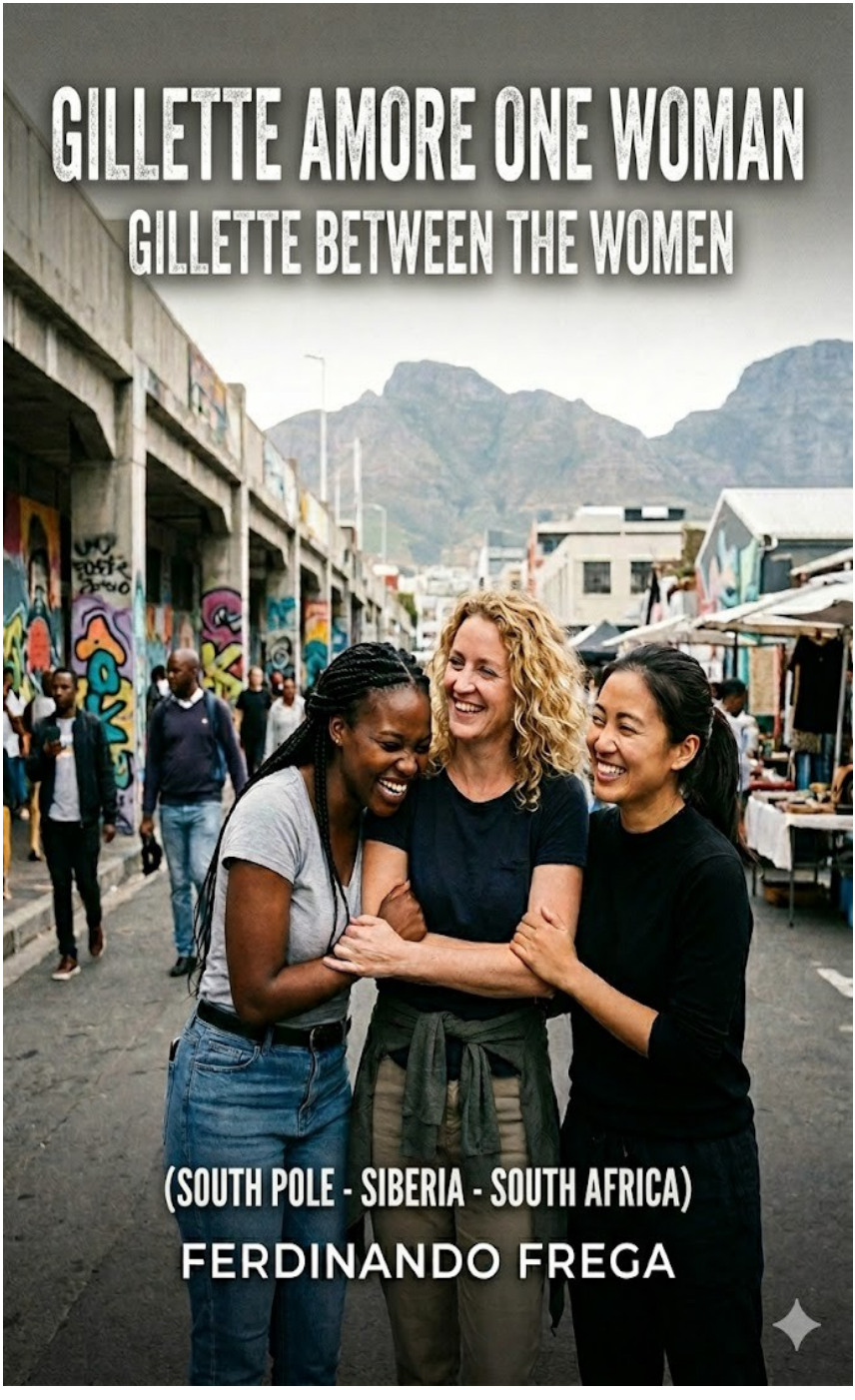
GILLETTE AMORE ONE WOMAN

GILLETTE BETWEEN THE WOMEN



(SOUTH POLE - SIBERIA - SOUTH AFRICA)

FERDINANDO FREGA


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INTRODUCTION

Women do not tell their stories: they pass through each other. Not because they are incomprehensible, but because every attempt to reduce them to a formula fails in the face of the complexity of their presence. In every latitude, they bear the weight of continuity: they hold together families, memories, homes, children, relationships, communities, and often they do so without public language, without protection, without recognition.

This book begins here. From the need to see what holds the world together while the world looks elsewhere. Not to idealize women, but to free them from simplification. Not to offer a eulogy, but to restore substance to a presence too often consumed by stereotypes, narrative habits, and cultural blindness.

The chapters that follow move between extreme and interior territories. Cold, loneliness, violence, the absence of the State, personal memory, love, loss: everything converges toward the same truth. Woman is not a marginal element of the human narrative. She is one of its fundamental structures.

PROLOGUE TO THE NATIONS

To the nations of the world:

Measure your level of civilization not by what you declare in treaties, but by how your women live when no one is looking. In the corridors of isolated bases, in the mines, in the townships, in the forgotten villages, in the ports, in the suburbs, in the homes where fear has dwelt for years, the truth of every system is revealed.

A nation does not fail when it loses prestige. It fails when it normalizes female sacrifice. When it uses women as a silent

scaffold of social order and then leaves them voiceless, defenseless, and without memory. That is when its moral legitimacy crumbles.

This book does not speak against a single geography. It speaks against every form of organized blindness. Against every culture that claims to rely on the energy of women while simultaneously condemning them to invisibility. If there is a decisive frontier of our time, it is this: finally recognizing that where women are humiliated, ignored, or consumed, the entire nation is already spiritually bankrupt.

SOUTH POLE

The Continent of Total Silence

The South Pole is not a place.
It is a state of mind. It is the only space on Earth where nature has no interest in human beings. Ice, wind, darkness, no cities, no communities, no protection. Only scientific bases, chains of commands, protocols that are more valuable than people.

In Antarctica, there are no citizens.
There are **functions.**

Here, women do not enter as individuals:
they enter as *operational variables.*
One of the most expendable parts of the system.

The Scientific Stations

The Real "Country" of the South Pole

Americans, Europeans, Russians, mixed missions.
The flag does not matter: the base is a rigid, hierarchical, claustrophobic organization.

For eight months of the year, no one comes in, no one leaves. Total darkness. Wind that cuts through metal. Mental pressure that eats away at the bones.

Inside these cubes of steel and ice, women live like this:

– men vastly outnumber women
– vertical hierarchies – protocols more important than personal safety – impossible shifts – forced isolation – abuse that is not reported “so as not to ruin the mission” – colleagues who become psychological jailers

At the South Pole, there are no police.
There is no press. There is no society. If something happens, stay inside.

Here a woman can disappear
mentally before she physically does.

The Female Body

As a Technical Variable

There is no woman as a subject.
There is woman as a *parameter.*

The operational units decide:
– how many women are “needed” for social balance – in which modules they must sleep – which spaces they can share – which shifts they must cover – which areas they must not frequent – what they must not report.

It is all coordination.
Zero romance. Zero psychology. Zero humanity.

At the South Pole, the female body is treated like a component: useful only as long as it functions.

Absences That

They do not leave the registers.

If a woman gets lost on the ice
, or collapses under the pressure, or attempts suicide, or suffers covert abuse, or is forcibly evacuated during a storm:

It does not appear in the newspapers.
It does not appear in the statistics. It does not appear in anyone's memory.

The base records the event.
Command closes the case. The world will not know.

The South Pole is the only place on the planet
where you can disappear **without leaving a trace,**
because here the concept of “memory” does not even exist.

The Violence

“Ordered.”

There are no screams.
There is no blood. There are no movie scenes.

The violence here is **methodical,** surgical, silent:

– personal blackmail
– planned isolation – mental punishment – total control of movement – psychological pressure – covert abuse “so as not to compromise the mission” – women used as social stabilizers of the base

It is violence that leaves no bruises,
it only leaves **invisible fractures** in the mind.

The Women

That Resist

No heroes.
No glory. No American fiction.

Only survivors.
Researchers keep their heads down. Doctors work inhumane shifts. Technicians repair instruments in the harshest cold on the planet. Women navigating four-month nights with the discipline of those who want to return home in one piece.

Every day at the South Pole is like a year.
Every step is a choice between resistance or surrender. Every silence weigh like a boulder.

This is the real South Pole:
no beauty, no innocence, no mercy.
Just ice and hierarchy.

American Base

South Pole

Her name was Mara.
A researcher, stubborn, with pale skin that the cold cracked like glass. I was a support technician, working impossible shifts, endless nights, identical days. At a base in the South Pole, you do not "live": you resist. And resistance is made of silence, protocols, and forced distances.

For eight months you do not see the sun.
For eight months you breathe recycled air, walk in the same corridors, see the same faces. Men become shadows. Women become targets, rare presences, protected and at the same time exposed.

With her, there was no flirting, no games, no romance.
It was survival. Two minds recognize each other in total cold.

That night it happened; it was -47 degrees Celsius.
The wind was a blade. We only went out for five minutes, the minimum to check for a fault in the external cables. Five minutes of darkness. Five minutes without mental protection. Five minutes in which your head gives out, your heart races, your oxygen burns.

It was then that she looked at me and said a sentence I had never heard in my life, neither before nor after.

It was not a proposal.
It was not madness. It was extreme clarity: the awareness that the South Pole is the place where the body decides instead of the mind.
Where you feel alive precisely because you know you might not be alive in a minute.

We did not say anything that night.
There was nothing to say. We had crossed a line. And when you cross a line at the South Pole, you either die or you change.

We survived.
And that is why I can tell it. That is why you can read it. That is why you can imagine it.

No one would believe it.
But there, in that icy desert, I was there.

SIBERIA THEMATIC

Siberia is not Russia.
Siberia is not a territory. Siberia is **a continent of survival,** a closed system where climate, solitude, alcoholism, poverty, and geography are more powerful than the state and more ferocious than any government.

It is a world where women do not exist as individuals:
they exist as biological resistance. And it is precisely this resistance that erases them.

To understand Siberia, you must understand one thing:
there is never anyone here to save you.
Here, those who do not fall survive. And those who fall disappear. Literally.

Siberia has six different Siberia's, six distinct wounds:

Western

Former deportation territories.
Endless forests, forgotten villages, men destroyed by alcohol, women forced to support families that have been dead for years.
Here, the absence of women is simple:
there is no energy to see women.
There's only fatigue.

Central

Mines, vast rivers, industries that grind lives.
Women work like men but are worth less than machinery. Here, women are a faceless workforce. A pawn without protection.
Absence is **industrial.**

Oriental

Below -50°C, life is not life.
The body is a limitation; the mind is a repository of survival.
Domestic violence is extremely high. No means of escape. No physical escape: there are no roads, no shelters. Here, absence leaves no body. You disappear and no one asks you why.

Russian Far East

Ports, traffic, borders.
Between China, Korea, and the ocean, everything circulates money, men, weapons, women. Whoever enters may not leave. Here, women are merchandise. Absence is **commercial criminal.**

Yakutia

The harshest cold on the planet.
Indigenous ethnic groups live between ancient spirituality and modern poverty. Women are shamans, mothers, total strength, and slaves to tradition at the same time. The state arrives slowly. The cold always arrives. The absence is **climatic-cultural.**

Chukotka

The edge of the world.
More bears than people. More wind than words. More ice than future. Here, disappearing is not a tragedy: it is routine. Women sustain microscopic communities. If they die, no one looks for them. Absence is **permanent.**

The fundamental social dynamics

Siberia has three forces that decide the fate of women:

Systemic alcoholism

Men destroyed by cold and boredom.
Women are the primary targets: violence, abuse, isolation.

Absence of State

It is not negligence.
It is logistical impossibility. There are no roads to intervene. There are no hospitals to treat. There are no shelters to escape to.
So, the woman stays.
And she wastes away.

Memory of the Gulag

Deportees dead or melted into the landscape.
Untold stories. Inherited traumas. The deportees' women have never had a voice. Never. Not even in history books.

Indigenous ethnic groups – the dark heart of the narrative

Groups where women are everything and nothing:
– powerful shaman or slave of tradition, – central mother or expendable body, – ritual force or spiritual property. In all cases: women are bound by rules older than Russia itself.

WESTERN SIBERIA

Former deportation zones. Cold, alcoholism, forgotten villages.

Omsk, 54 years old

Valentina lives in a wooden house that leans to one side.
Her husband has been drinking for thirty years. Her children have run away: one in Moscow, one missing. She does everything: firewood, water, food, elderly neighbors.

When the man returns drunk and smashes the dishes, he does not call anyone:
the police do not arrive, the village does not intervene, the neighbors pretend not to hear.

Her absence is **social:**
there is no protection here, only silence.

Tyumen, 29 years old

Olga worked at a supermarket.
One day her boyfriend beat her so badly he broke three of her

teeth. She went to the clinic. The clinic asked her, "Do you really want to report him? Things don't change here."

She quit her job and now cleans offices at night.
No one helps her, no one exposes themselves, no one breaks the cycle.

Her absence is **institutional:**
the law does not protect those who live too far from the capital.

CENTRAL SIBERIA

Mines, forests, rivers. Extreme labor. Invisible women laborers.

Norilsk Mine, 41 years old

Tatyana works in a mine canteen.
Twelve hours a day, her hands burned by the steam, her back destroyed. Men come in, scream, consume, and disappear.

No one greets her by name.
No one sees her. For them, it is a function.

Her absence is **industrial:**
it is worth less than the machinery it cleans.

Yen River Village Isei, 63 years old

Lidia is a widow surrounded by wood and freezing water.
Every winter, she is isolated for two months: no roads, no doctors, no help.

Once she had an extremely high fever.
Her son tried to cross the ice to get medicine. The ice broke. The son died.

Her absence is **geographical:**
too far away to be saved.

Eastern SIBERIA

Inhuman temperatures. Extreme domestic violence. No escape route.

Irkutsk, 37 years old

Marina has put up with an abusive husband for ten years.
Not because she loves him. Because there are no ways to leave.

The nearest shelter is 280 km away.
She has no car. She has no money. She has no relatives.

Her absence is **logistical:**
escape is impossible.

Yakutsk, 24 years old

Alena lives in a college dorm.
In winter, temperatures drop to -50°C.
One night, a man follows her.
She runs through the freezing cold, the door jams, and her hands lose sensation.

A random taxi driver saves her.
The police tell her, "You did the right thing running. You don't always survive."

Her absence is **climatic:**
frost kills more than violence.

RUSSIAN FAR EAST

Ports, traffic, borders. Women disappearing in the flow.

Vladivostok, 31 years old

Irina worked as a hostess at a bar near the port.
One day she went out with two foreign men. She never returned.

The police say it is a "probable runaway."
The family knows that it is a lie. Here, girls just disappear.

Her absence is **criminal:**
bodies that enter the port and never return.

Khabarovsk, 45 years old

Natalya sells fish at the market.
She wakes up at three. She brings ice, weighs slices, and breathes in the smell of sea and blood.

Her husband controls her.
Her son ignores her. Clients treat her like an object.

Her absence is **economic:**
without her the market collapses, but she does not exist.

YAKUTIA

Mysticism, indigenous ethnic groups, absolute cold. Women as pillars and prisoners.

Yokuts Village, 58 years old

Saaskiya is a shaman.
She holds together a community that lives amidst rituals, alcoholism, and the cold. They listen to her when they need to heal. They ignore her when she suggests changes.

She is a woman, so she "can't command."
But everyone depends on her.

Her absence is **ritual:**
she is only needed when it is convenient.

Yakutsk, 33 years old

Elvira works at a school.
Every winter she must decide whether to close classes due to extreme cold: -45°, -50°, -55°.

No one thinks about her.
About how she must leave the house. About how she raises her children in the dark.

Her absence is **environmental:**
here the climate commands and the woman suffer.

CHUKOTKA

End of the world. Ice, wind, absolute isolation.

Chukchi village, 47 years old

Ninana lives in a wind-bent corrugated iron house.
Her husband froze to death while returning from fishing. She is left with two reindeer and a young granddaughter.

There is no state.
There is no help. The village has sixty-two people.

Her absence is **demographic:**
too few to count.

Anadyr, 22 years old

Tatiana works at a small weather station.
Endless shifts, zero human contact. Her boyfriend is abusive. She does not file a complaint: the police are two days away.

Her absence is **physical:**
even if she screams, no one hears her.

SIBERIA

Author's Note

Writing about Siberia is not a geographical exercise.
It is a surgical act.

Anyone who has lived long enough to understand these latitudes knows one simple thing:
here, dignity is not a right,
it is a struggle.
And women fight alone.

There are no heroes.
There are no consoling endings. There are no revolutions coming. There is only a silent resistance that will not end tomorrow and did not start yesterday.

Telling the story of these women means doing something difficult:
looking at what everyone avoids. Naming them when their own land does not mention them. Not as victims, but as pillars of a world that survives only thanks to them.

The truth is, Siberia will not change for a book.
But a book can prevent one thing: their silence from being mistaken for absence.

Here I did what had to be done:
say what exists without fear of how it sounds.

Epilogue

Siberia does not change.
It does not evolve. It does not heal. It is a place where climate is stronger than politics, solitude stronger than religion, silence stronger than memory.

The women who live here do not have a story to tell:
they have a sentence to bear.

In the slow-moving villages of the West,
in the toxic mines of the Center,
in the ice of the East,
in the ports of the Far East, in the rituals of Yakutia, in the white deserts of Chukotka—woman holds everything together. Families, communities, old people, children, animals, work, tradition.

And while she supports everything,
no one supports her.

In Siberia, the absence of women is not a mystery:
it is structure. It is a way of functioning. It is a perverse equilibrium where women are the pillar of this world, but without a name.

Here, disappearance is not an event,
it is routine. Here, violence is not a scandal, it is a statistic. Here, sacrifice is not a gesture, it is a season.

Siberia ends like this:
a place where women exist only in toil and disappear from the narrative.

Reflection

Siberia teaches you the truth that no other place in the world tells you so clearly:
a human being is worth nothing without someone to recognize them.

And women here are not recognized by anyone.

Not from the state,
which never comes. Not from men, destroyed by alcohol, cold,

and failure. Not from the community, which demands everything and gives nothing back. Not from history, which only remembers the male Gulags and ignores the women who endured them.

Siberia is an endless archive of absences:
women dead in the ice, women worn out by work, women used in ports, women locked in villages, women who keep the stove lit but their voices muted.

It is a continent of silent sacrifices,
and the world looks at it from afar as an “extreme” landscape.

It is not extreme:
it is cruel. And cruelty, here, is daily.

In the end, this remains:
in Siberia, women disappear not out of weakness, but because no one has ever had the courage to truly see them.

SOUTH AFRICA

And within this vast continent,
there is a country that perfectly captures it all:
South Africa.
Its beauty and its violence. Its history and its present.
Its picture-perfect cities
and its streets where a woman never returns home.

South Africa is the symbol:
the place where the absence of women is not a side effect, but a social structure.

Intro

South Africa is a beautiful and violent country.
A living contradiction. An open wound that continues to bleed even as it pretends to heal.

Here the woman does not live:
she resists.

Her story is a double prison:
– the private violence of men – the public violence of a country built on fracture.

Apartheid

It ended in the laws,
not in the bodies. Not in the streets. Not in the townships where millions of black women live within a daily survival made of:

– poverty
– systemic rape – male alcoholism – armed gangs – corrupt police
– urban disappearances that do not make the news

In the monster cities—Johannesburg, Pretoria, Cape Town—women live as if under a subtle siege. Every move is risky. Every night there is a gateway. Every home is a frontier.

Women

South Africa has one of the highest femicide rates in the world. Not by chance. By design.

Among the Zulu, Xhosa, and Sotho peoples, you will find a harsh, ancient patriarchy that marks territory with rituals, clans, and male hierarchies that no one openly questions.
Yet, within this rigid structure, women resist with a strength that would bring other continents to their knees.

The final truth is simple:
in South Africa, a woman who disappears is often absent *first* and then absent *again.*
No one protected her when she was there. No one looks for her when she is gone.

This country does not hide its darkness.
It lives within it.

CITIES

SOWETO

Woman, 32 years old

Nomvula sells vegetables at the market.
Every morning, she gets up at 4:00 a.m. Every evening, she miraculously returns alive.
She has been robbed three times and stabbed once.
She does not report the incident; the police laugh. Her absence is **STATUS-RELEVANT:** IT MATTERS TO NO ONE.

ALEXANDRA

Female, 29 years old

Thandi lives in a tin shack.
Her brother is in a gang. She does not want to join, but a woman here does not choose: if you are someone's sister, you are already in. Her absence is **criminal:** property of the clan.

DIEPSLOOT

Single mother, 41 years old

Ayanda lives with three children and a door that does not close properly.
Every night she hears footsteps, screams, and broken bottles. Her husband left her for a "better life" in Cape Town. He has disappeared too. Her absence is **familiar:** he holds everything, but he is nobody.

HILLBROW

Migrant, 27 years old

Zinhle is from Zimbabwe.
She works as a waitress. Men, theft, xenophobia, corrupt police: a constant war. A customer followed her home; she escaped onto the roof. Her absence is **geopolitical:** foreign, therefore expendable.

PRETORIA NORTH

44 years old

Martha works as a maid in a wealthy household where they call her "girl."
The pay is low. Dignity is zero. When money goes missing, they blame her. When she tells the truth, they laugh. Her absence is **social:** useful only if she keeps quiet.

DURBAN SUBURBS

I am 23 years old.

Naledi accompanies her mother to work every evening because the area is too dangerous.
One night, two men stop them. They rob them. They threaten them. They make them walk barefoot for miles. Her absence is **urban:** a city that devours women.

UMLAZI

50 years

Sibongile has an abusive husband who works every other day. She manages the house, the debts, the grandchildren, and the food. One evening, he hits her with a chair. She stays silent: reporting him means dying later. Her absence is **cyclical:** violence that repeats and becomes normalized.

MITCHELLS PLAIN

36 years old

Kelebogile drove a shared taxi.
One day, a man gets in, does not pay, and threatens her with a knife. He takes her day's wages.
She returns home empty-handed and fearful.
Her absence is **financial:** she works, earns nothing, and survives.

KHAYELITSHA

29 years old

Busi lives in a township where even the sound of the wind seems like a warning.
Every house has a story of theft, rape, and brawl. Hers is simple: one night, three men forced their way into the door. She hid under the bed. Her absence is **domestic:** the house offers no protection.

JOHANNESBURG CENTER

I am 38 years old.

Lindiwe works at an electronics store.
A gang enters, points guns, and takes everything. The police arrived two hours later. The owners accuse her of failing to "protect the store." Her absence is **work-related:** guilty even when she is a victim.

GUGULETU

I am 57 years old.

Dineo has seen her entire life spiral into a single phrase she often repeats:
"No one will save us here." Her husband is dead, her son is in a gang, her daughter has been missing for two years. She goes to the police station every week. They always tell her, "We'll see." They never see.
Her absence is **total.**

Epilogue

South Africa is not a divided country:
it is a *fractured country.*
A crack runs through every street, every family, every woman.

In the townships, life is a constant negotiation with fear.
In wealthy cities, the Black woman is a useful but invisible presence. In the suburbs, crime is a system, not an exception. The police are not protection: they are just another threat. The law is a poorly hung sign on a door that will not close.

Women here are the only barrier to violence,
and at the same time the most vulnerable target. They keep houses that would collapse in a day afloat, they raise children that the country devours, they carry a burden that no man accepts, and they live knowing that, if they disappear, their absence will change nothing.

In South Africa, women are not invisible:
they are *taken for granted.*
And therein lies the tragedy.

Reflection

The truth is simple and ugly:
South Africa is built on the female body. Not as a celebration, but as a sacrifice.

Women pay for the historical debt of Apartheid,
the poverty of the townships,
the anger of men without a future,
alcohol, gangs, corruption, silence.

A South African woman lives with one certainty:
no one will come to save her. She must save herself, always, every day, against everything.

Yet, despite this,
the community is supported by her: she is the one who works, she is the one who cooks, she is the one who protects the children, she is the one who works in two places, she is the one who returns home knowing that the darkness does not forgive.

In real South Africa,
the one without filters, women are the backbone of the country.
And the country pretends not to notice.

The absence of women here is not a phenomenon:
it is a diagnosis. And no one wants to heal.

WOMEN OF THE WORLD

ALBA RODRÍGUEZ

Editorial Director, Barcelona

"This book doesn't belong to any genre.
It is a new narrative object: an atlas of absence. The world was waiting for it without knowing it."

DR. MAYA OKAFO

African Sociologist, University of Lagos

"Frega doesn't tell the story of oppression.
It maps it. It dissects it. It restores it without mercy. It's a work that many men wouldn't have the courage to sign."

HANA SUZUKI

Anthropologist from Northern Japan

"The approach is ruthlessly structural:
place → context → absence → history. No concessions, no embellishments. It's a method that would have made anthropologists in the 1970s tremble."

GIULIA BIANCHI

Italian Literary Curator

"It's not travel literature, it's not nonfiction, it's not reportage.
It is a device. An archive that dismantles the illusion that history is complete."

SARAH MCKINNON

Former New York Times correspondent

"There are books that show.
And books that reveal. This one reveals. And it does so with the surgical coldness of someone who doesn't have to please anyone."

DR. NADIA EL MANSOUR

MENA Researcher, Tunis

"Absence as the narrative center is a radical choice.
Here, women are not symbols: they are the world's supporting structure. A position that overturns everything publishing has done so far."

KATARINA HOLM

Professor of Nordic Studies, Oslo

"The part about the South Pole and Siberia is straight out of a college textbook.
Cold, essential, geometric. It shows how humanity can disappear without anyone noticing."

MARIA BELTRAN

South American Women's Rights Activist

"This book is an involuntary political act.
It wasn't created to denounce, but to denounce precisely because it tells the truth without anesthetics."

PROFESSOR ANA CARVALHO

Brazil, Institute of Cultural Studies

"There's one thing that few male authors understand:
you can't write about women from above. Frega does it from the side. That's what makes the work credible, raw, necessary."

ELEANOR WELLS

London-based publishers specializing in non-fiction.

"This isn't a book.
It is a documented judgment.
It seems written to disturb the reader, and it succeeds.
Important work doesn’t reassure them wound."