

## **A story that urgently needed to be told has changed the author who tells it. Silvana Gandolfi speaks about her book.**

### **How did “Io dentro gli spari” begin?**

It all started from a true story a judge friend of mine once told me. He was working on a case where a young boy was called as a witness. He had this trial at heart because his son was the same age: less than seven years old. I can't mention who he was, and to protect the people involved I had to change many things: the names, places, whereabouts, times. Yet the story is true and it never stopped guiding me, even though in my book everything is very different. I had the feeling that my main character, being a real child living in hidden Italian city, was next to me guiding me all along while I wrote.

### **What struck you most in this story?**

The torn childhood. The fact that a boy, after seeing his father die, has to decide whether or not to tell what he knows. A boy that in order to survive, has to erase a part of his life. The code of silence is rooted in the Sicilian culture since birth. To break it is very serious. Even more so, for a boy that age who is frightened to lose the approval of his family. All this plus the style of life this boy has to live the following years, with a false identity, in an unknown town, without contacts. A broken life, a fact which has urged me to look into it to be able to give a voice to those who have none.

### **To support your writing did you undertake research work?**

I “plunged” into reading all I could on Mafia, on the people involved, on the work of Judges and Police force, on Mafia turncoats, witnesses, their families. I lived in Palermo to absorb the scent and feelings, I tried to work on the language. I also stayed in the other city of the book, Livorno, which was picked because it's a port and because it had all the necessary characteristics of the “hideouts” chosen for the witnesses.

**These are the elements linked with reality. But “Io dentro gli spari” is not a fact finding novel, or an autobiography: it is first and foremost a story lived at a “child level”...**

I would love the readers to identify with the characters, to walk with them through this story which is – I repeat – flourished with various fictional elements even though I had to give up on the magical aspects which normally depict and are the centre of gravity of all my other books. Here all fantasies would have been out of place. You cannot defeat Mafia with magic. This is why “Io dentro gli spari” is a great challenge.

### **Any particular feeling bound with this book ?**

I am torn between two strong and opposite desires: on one hand I would like “io dentro gli spari” to be read by the real protagonists who inspired this book. On the other hand I wish they would never read it, because maybe with time they might forget. Even if I'm quite convinced that a story such as this one is impossible to delete.