



The Glass Ocean: A Novel

Lori Baker

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I write in retrospect, from the vantage of a distant shore.

Flame-haired, six-foot-two in stocking feet, eighteen-year-old Carlotta Dell'oro recounts the lives of her parents—solitary glassmaker Leopoldo Dell'oro and beautiful, unreachable Clotilde Girard—and discovers in their loves and losses, their omissions and obsessions, thecircumstances of her abandonment and the weight of her inheritance. Thomas Pynchon calls debut novelist Lori Baker “a storyteller with uncanny access to the Victorians, not only to the closely woven texture of their days but also to the dangerous nocturnal fires being attended to in their hearts.”

Carlotta’s story begins in 1841, when Leo and Clotilde meet aboard the *Narcissus*, on an expedition led by Clotilde’s magnanimous, adventuring father. Leo is commissioned to draw the creatures of the deep sea, but is bewitched instead by golden Clotilde, beginning a devotion that will prove inescapable. Clotilde meanwhile sees only her dear papa, but when he goes missing she is pushed to Leo, returning with him to the craggy English shores of Whitby, the place to which Leo vowed he would never return.

There they form an uneasy coexistence, lost to one another. The events of the *Narcissus* haunt them, leaving Clotilde grieving for her father, while Leo becomes possessed by the work of transforming his sea sketches into glass. But in finding his art he surrenders Clotilde, and the distance between the two is only magnified by the birth of baby Carlotta.

Years have passed, and Carlotta is now grown. A friend from the past comes to Whitby, and with his arrival sets into motion the Dell'oros’ inevitable disintegration. In hypnotic, inimitable prose Lori Baker’s *The Glass Ocean* transforms a story of family into something as otherworldly and mesmerizing as life beneath the sea itself.



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