



Falling in Love

Donna Leon

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Donna Leon's *Death at La Fenice*, the first novel in her beloved Commissario Guido Brunetti series, introduced readers to the glamorous and cutthroat world of opera and one of Italy's finest living sopranos, Flavia Petrelli—then a suspect in the poisoning of a renowned German conductor. Years after Brunetti cleared her name, Flavia has returned to Venice and La Fenice to sing the lead in *Tosca*.

Brunetti and his wife, Paola, attend an early performance, and Flavia receives a standing ovation. Back in her dressing room, she finds bouquets of yellow roses—too many roses. Every surface of the room is covered with them. An anonymous fan has been showering Flavia with these beautiful gifts in London, St. Petersburg, Amsterdam, and now, Venice, but she no longer feels flattered. A few nights later, invited by Brunetti to dine at his in-laws' palazzo, Flavia confesses her alarm at these excessive displays of adoration. And when a talented young Venetian singer who has caught Flavia's attention is savagely attacked, Brunetti begins to think that Flavia's fears are justified in ways neither of them imagined. He must enter in the psyche of an obsessive fan before Flavia, or anyone else, comes to harm.

Falling in Love Details

Date : Published April 7th 2015 by Atlantic Monthly Press (first published January 1st 2015)

ISBN :

Author : Donna Leon

Format : Kindle Edition 274 pages

Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Crime, Cultural, Italy

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From Reader Review Falling in Love for online ebook

Tamsinwilloughby says

Flavia Petrelli is a famous opera singer and as such is used to getting flowers. So she's not worried when she starts receiving yellow roses. Until hundreds of them show up in her changing room and in front of the door to her apartment...

This was a great entry in the Brunetti series. Reading it was like slipping in a well-worn sweater. I enjoyed following the familiar characters around, learning what they are up to, drooling at the descriptions of the food and seeing beautiful Venice through their eyes.

Flavia Petrelli is a great character, talented, headstrong, down to earth and kind. I liked her a lot and thus was invested in how the story would end.

If you enjoy slow mysteries with great atmosphere and characters, you will probably like this.

LJ says

First Sentence: The woman knelt over her lover, her face, her entire body, stiff with terror, staring at the blood on her hand.

Flavia Petrelli, the operatic soprano from “Death at La Fenice” has returned to Venice, singing the lead in “Tosca.” Although it is usually flattering to receive flowers, an anonymous fan seems to be following Flavia around Europe, sending her increasing quantities of yellow roses. Although it’s disturbing, things change when a young singer, with whom Flavia spoke, is brutally attacked.

Leon opens the story in a way that conveys drama and excitement and, without an obvious portent, still establishes that sense of “something wicked this way comes.”

For those who read Leon’s first book, “Death at La Fenice,” it is nice to see one of the characters return. For those who did not, there is no feeling of information missing.

Leon has such a wonderful voice and subtle humor. When referring to Brunetti’s mother-in-law ...”The fact that she did not mention the year of that debut only reminded Brunetti that the Contessa’s family had contributed a large number of diplomats to both the Vatican and the Italian state.”

The characters come alive. One cannot help but admire, and perhaps envy a bit, the relationship Brunetti has with his family. Not only is it enjoyable to have him be happily married, but scenes with his family are always natural and delightful. One also sees his pride at being a Venetian. On the other hand, Signorina Elettra, secretary to Brunetti’s boss, is intriguing and enigmatic which only adds to her appeal.

The plot is well-paced and fascinating in its addressing the subject of fans, particularly obsessive fans; the physiology of fandom and the effect being stalked has on the victim.

“Falling in Love” is yet another excellent book from Ms. Leon. The sense of threat and danger is subtle, but very well done.

FALLING IN LOVE (Pol. Proc – Comm. Guido Brunetti – Venice, Italy – Contemp) – VG+

Leon, Donna - 24th in series
Atlantic Monthly Press – April, 2015

Mal Warwick says

By all accounts, Donna Leon's long-running series of detective novels featuring Commissario Guido Brunetti is widely popular, even loved. I wish I could understand why.

Falling in Love, the 24th installment in Leon's series, is an insipid tale of an opera diva and her violence-prone stalker. I kept reading until the end in hopes that something at least mildly interesting would happen. No such luck. Instead, the painfully slow-moving action is further retarded at far too many places by useless verbiage such as the following:

“Paola said she'd bring coffee into the living room or — if he thought it was warm enough — they could drink it on the terrace. It wasn't warm enough, so Brunetti went to the sofa and thought about literature. When Paolo joined him a few minutes later, two cups of coffee on a wooden tray . . .”

Snooze! There is no excuse for such boneheaded excess! And don't think for a minute that that was an isolated example. Here, more or less at random, is another one:

“He called Vianello, who must have been at home or at least in a place where there was a television, for in the background Brunetti could hear the patently artificial voices of the Italian-speakers who did the voice-over for foreign films. Vianello told him to wait, and the sound diminished as he moved away from it.”

Elmore Leonard would gag if he read filler-copy like this! (I certainly did.) It's reminiscent of the bad old days, when the writers of genre fiction were paid by the word.

But wait — there's more.

The novel is punctuated by dialogue in Italian that's nowhere translated into English; I complain when pretentious writers do that with French, which at least is spoken by a halfway reasonable number of people, so I regard a showoff in Italian as a worse offender.

If the plot of Falling in Love were interesting — if it were more than a simple, straightforward, linear story — some of this nonsense might be excusable. Regrettably, nothing relieves the tedium of the boring plot-line in this unfortunate excuse for a mystery.

Biblio Files (takingadayoff) says

Donna Leon's mysteries are not your standard police procedural see-if-you-can-solve-the-crime stories. You are not going to be able to figure this one out, so just let the (mostly) congenial gang at the Questura (police department) handle the investigation and enjoy the gondola ride through Venice.

If you're a regular reader of Donna Leon, you'll enjoy the banter between Guido and his wife, Paola, and between Guido and his colleagues. If you are new to these mysteries, you will no doubt find the pace slow and the mystery so subtle as to be nearly nonexistent. The pace is something that comes with the territory,

which is of course, Venice, nicknamed La Serenissima, The Serene One. No car chases here.

The drama in Falling in Love is provided by the opera Tosca, which features the center of our attention, Flavia Petrelli, a diva that Guido met in the very first mystery in the series, Death at La Fenice. Back for another encore (she appeared in at least one more book), Flavia is feeling stalked by an anonymous fan who is leaving her too many flowers and giving her ostentatious gifts. Guido isn't too concerned until another singer that Flavia has recently met is assaulted and left for dead.

The action picks up in the second act and as the music reaches a crescendo, there's a dramatic confrontation that threatens to mimic the opera's tragic ending. Meanwhile, back at the Questura, the usually hyper-efficient Signorina Elettra makes a wrong move in her computer hacking and may have jeopardized her own career as well as Guido's and several others.

So, plenty of atmosphere, banter, Venetian delicacies, opera, and yes, even a mystery thrown in for good measure.

(Thanks to NetGalley and Grove Atlantic for a digital review copy.)

Ellinor says

This 24th Commisario Brunetti mystery is an exception in this series as a former main character, Flavia Petrelli, makes another appearance. This rarely happens in Donna Leon's books, apart from the main cast (Brunetti's family and friends, the police corps and the people working in the various places Brunetti frequently visits) all characters usually don't appear more than once. I was looking forward to this because Flavia is a very memorable character and it had been a while since her last appearance.

I also enjoyed that parts of the book were told from her perspective, also something uncommon in this series. The setting at the opera was also well-chosen. It reminded me of the first book, Death at La Fenice, one of the most memorable and best crime novels I've ever read.

But even though all the conditions were set for me to expect a great mystery I still found the book rather mediocre. I found Brunetti and his colleagues quite slow-witted: my Italian is very rudimentary but I saw the meaning of "É mia" much faster than any of the police did. I also found Signorina Elettra's strike rather ridiculous and wondered why no one found Alvisè's suspension without payment weird.

On the positive side I liked the idea of the stalker, something I find very scary. The show-down was great but I wish that the stalker hadn't died and we would have found out more about her motives and why it was exactly Flavia she was after.

(I received a free digital copy via Netgalley/the publisher in exchange for an honest review. Thanks for the opportunity!)

Dale says

I've been terribly critical of Leon's recent work, so it was nice that this time around there was nothing especially not to like. Even at her worst (as in *The Jewels of Paradise*) Leon writes intelligently and well, especially by comparison with most police procedurals, so my criticisms have been mostly out of disappointment that not every one of her books can be as good as the best of her books. Here, in *Falling in Love*, she returns to the character of Flavia Petrelli, introduced in her first Brunetti novel, *Death at La Fenice*, seeking, perhaps, to recapture the brilliance of those early novels. She doesn't quite succeed, but

comes close.

So, why doesn't this succeed? I think, in part, it is that Leon has lost much of her earlier political passion. In the early novels there was always something that she delighted in tearing apart: corporate greed, political corruption, environmental spoilage, the power of the military. More recently I believe she has lost that passion and has, perhaps, even turned to the right. Her ire, now, is aimed at the hordes of tourists in Venice and the resultant "cheapening of everything" there. She aims her guns at "shoddy Chinese-made" goods, without going further and looking at the political causes of the influx of cheap foreign goods. She has one of her characters deride workers for going on strike during the great financial crisis: "They're crazy! We need these jobs", says the character (approximately). Leon does have Brunetti think to himself that the character is not showing much working class solidarity - but even that is expressed ironically, as if Brunetti doesn't think much of such solidarity. Paola, especially, has entirely given up her leftist and anti-clerical views. And in *Falling In Love* we are even treated to the spectacle of Brunetti going into a church to reverently light a candle for his mother.

Having this novel feature Flavia Petrelli, the opera singer from the first novel, makes us think a little about the passage of time in the Brunetti series. In this latest novel, Chiara is still at home, in high school as far as I can tell, and Raffi is still in college. This suggests that the novels must be spaced about 3 months or so apart, so the 20 years that separates the first from the most recent novel in real time is about 5, maybe 6, years. That's quite a short time for Brunetti and Paolo to have shed their outrage over the ills of capitalism and to have become apathetic or resigned. But, I guess, 20 years is not too short a time for Leon to have done so.

Once again the publisher, Grove Atlantic, has managed to do a perfectly awful job of typography. They clearly do not care about their readers or authors: if they did, they would make an effort to make their books look like something published by professionals. I do hope that Leon is not in a long term contract with Atlantic Press: she deserves far better.

Jaksen says

I was very happy to win this book, as it's one of a series and I do love mystery series. Having said that...

Well, I'm a sucker for a good mystery. Especially set in a foreign country, with an inspector, his sidekicks and assistants, his long-running feud with superiors, etc., etc. Give me a new one that's pretty good and I'm in heaven...

This didn't turn out to be one of those. A bit long-winded when it comes to obsessing over trivial and frivolous matters, this writer just isn't doing it for me. Also obsessed with repetition, commas and endless phrases in every fourth or fifth sentence, something which left me confused and often flabbergasted. I read several chapters in, found myself constantly re-reading whole paragraphs because on the first read they just didn't make sense. But I told myself once I got into the 'swing' of so many phrases, and commas, and repetition, the book would just breeze along.

It didn't. Then I thought, well...one must, really, allow for artistic license, the writer's writing style, the witty dialogue and banter, did I just say banter? Let me say it again. Banter this and that and if there are people bowing, say it once, twice, say it a dozen times! And the scene with the roses. How many ways can one say roses? At least a dozen.

However, if one does love a story filled with banalities and an excess of dwelling on the obvious, this is surely the book for him, or her, or them, or anyone.

Just not the book for me.

Rita says

This is #24 in the series and I don't know if I'm tired of Guido Brunetti and Venice, or if I just didn't like the return of Flavia Petrelli for the third time as a damsel in distress. She was not a likable character in this book. She played more of the prima donna in *Falling in Love*. I found her a much more sympathetic character in *Death at La Fenice* and *Acqua Alta*. In this book she wants help but doesn't want to cooperate with the Commissario and acts like he's beneath her. I tend to believe it's the return of Flavia that detracts from the book. It's hard to be sympathetic to an arrogant character.

Flavia Petrelli, the famous opera star has a fan that seems to be a little too ardent. This fan is more like a stalker, showering her almost everywhere she goes with countless yellow roses and ultimately a priceless necklace. This fan also seems to be getting into places they shouldn't be able to get into. Flavia also start missing articles from her dressing room such as her address book. People that this fan thinks are too close to Flavia are being attacked.

The characters in this book seem very flat, even Commissario Brunetti. I was very disappointed in this book. I will probably read the next one just to see if it's any better.

I am posting this review on Goodreads and Amazon

Hapzydeco says

In this character-driven mystery, Donna Leon reprises opera singer, Flavia Petrelli. This time Flavia is the victim not the murder suspect. With the able assistance of the ever-so-resourceful and devious Signorina Elettra, Guido Brunetti once again triumphs. Too bad it seemed to take forever.

Damaskcat says

Flavia Petrelli - world class opera singer, is back at La Fenice singing the role of Tosca. Fans of this excellent series will remember her from the first book - *Death at La Fenice* in which she was a suspect in the suspicious death of a famous conductor. Now she is the potential victim of a stalker who bombards her with yellow roses. Brunetti is at first inclined to pass it off as a fan's over enthusiasm but when a young singer is attacked and left for dead he starts to realise things could be more serious than he first supposed.

This is Leon at her best. In the recent books in the series she has concentrated too much, in my opinion, on ecological issues but now she is back to the territory of the earlier books. Her writing is as ever subtle and elliptical and conversations and people always have multiple layers which often only reveal themselves on second reading. Here are all the favourite series characters - Elettra, the expert at tracking down information; Brunetti's wife, Paola with her head in a book but still finding time to cook delicious meals for her family; Patta, Brunetti's boss who seems to have mellowed slightly.

This is a compelling read and kept me up long pasts my usual bed time as I just had to finish it to find out what happened. The nail biting finale was well worth staying up for. Recommended to all Guido Brunetti

fans as well as anyone who hasn't read this series before. I received a free copy of this book from NetGalley for review.

Hana says

Everyone in this book is tired. They actually say they are tired and I believe them--so was I after reading this last sad entry in Donna Leon's once marvelous Guido Brunetti series. Venice is dying, overrun by tourists and immigrants from points south. Leon's dream world that gave power to a few honest souls with courage, a sense of justice and devotion to family, a special city, great food and a handful of friends is dead.

Soprano Flavia Petrelli is back for an encore performance in *Tosca* in Venice but the magic is gone. Death at La Fenice and *Acqua Alta* (both featuring Flavia) had suspense, brilliant characters and a rich sense of place. But Flavia is almost unrecognizable and all of the elements that made those books special are missing in this phone-it-in sequel.

The jacket blurb noted that Leon now divides her time between Venice and Switzerland. I'm guessing that she spends most of her time in her Swiss enclave. The sense of furious righteousness that gave her Brunetti novels their strength has succumbed to old age and disillusionment. I sort of liked the opera bits but the plot was thin and the denouement so predictable that I guessed it half way through. It's sad to see an author force herself to write when her heart is no longer in it.

Marianne Perry says

Would You Like To Visit Venice For A Few Days?

Book Review: Falling In Love by Donna Leon

Falling In Love is book number twenty-four in Donna Leon's crime series set in Venice, Italy featuring Commissario Guido Brunetti. It is about a mysterious stalker who threatens Flavia Petrelli, a fortyish opera singer performing the lead role in *Tosca* at Teatro La Fenice, and Brunetti's attempts to catch the culprit before she is murdered. The author explores the love-hate relationship between a star and her admirers giving us an intriguing tale of obsessive fans, sibling rivalry, illicit affairs and lustrous jewels.

The novel unfolds in twenty-eight chapters and prior to the first, there is a black and white aerial map of Venice. Marked with clear text and directional arrows, it identifies the six sestieri, major canals, location vis-à-vis the mainland and some of the other islands in the Venetian Lagoon. Donna Leon, however, uses the map as more than a tool to define place. Sites where pivotal action occurs are also noted. By providing the opportunity to track developments, therefore, she draws readers into the story.

Opera is a complicated art form and Donna Leon fosters our understanding of it through many means. In Chapter 26, for example, Commissario Brunetti and Inspector Vianello observe Flavia Petrelli perform so they might guard her. In this instance, she weaves technical and staging details necessary to mount the production without interrupting flow.

As the following sentence evidences, she articulates the musical score beautifully. "Although there was only death to come, the scene opened with soft flutes and horns and church bells and the utter tranquility of night's slow mellowing into day."

Donna Leon excels at creating complex characters. Guido Brunetti is a methodical detective committed to his duties as a Venetian detective. This passage from Chapter 23, however, demonstrates he is also a man of passion with tenderness for his wife, Paola Falier. His definition of love is especially poignant.

“Perhaps life had been too generous to him, for the only woman he had ever desired to the point of pain at the thought of not having was Paola, the woman he had married and who was now part of himself. For her, and for his children with her, he willed the good: he couldn’t remember which philosopher had defined love this way, but he thought it was as perfect a definition he had ever heard.”

Related to this talent is her deftness at character description. I cite Flavia Petrelli’s comments in Chapter 3 with regards Guido Brunetti and Paola Falier to elucidate this point.

“She noticed, in the midst of the remaining people, a middle-aged man at the back of the group: brown-haired, head lowered to listen to something the woman next to him was saying. The woman was more interesting; natural blonde, powerful nose, light eyes, probably older than she looked.”

The author also captures the minutiae of everyday life with precision often referencing food and meal interactions to illustrate family dynamics. In a Chapter 12 lunch scene, Brunetti and Paola have a “frittata with zucchini and stuffed turkey breast” with their children, Raffi and Chiara.

She writes, “The meal passed quietly, with the idle chat of people who were at ease with one another.” This parsing testifies to Donna Leon’s keen powers of observation as well as her skill as a wordsmith.

And a final thought. Venice, Italy is a popular tourist venue but Brunetti’s reflections challenge the reader to view it from a resident’s perspective. In Chapter 17, he ruminates, “Since the city illumination had been changed about a decade ago, Brunetti had grumbled about how bright the night had become: some of his friends complained that they could read in bed with the light that came in the windows.”

Whenever I yen to spend a few days in Venice to escape my current reality, I reach for a Donna Leon book. I have enjoyed the visit *Falling In Love* has afforded me and encourage you to travel with this author, too.

Marianne Perry

Author of *The Inheritance*

Writing inspired by genealogical research to solve family mysteries.

<http://www.marianneperry.ca>

Andrei Cioat? says

Dou? stelu?e doar pentru c?-mi plac opera ?i teatrul. ?i atmosfera din prima jum?tate a c?r?ii chiar mi-a pl?cut. Sfâr?itul m-a enervat foarte tare, prea brusc ?i tras. Îs ok dou? stelu?e, chiar 1.5! ?i coperta chiar îmi place.

Jeanette says

Absolutely delightful Brunetti episode with the opera singer soprano of the first books returning to Venice for her staging of Tosca. And she is being stalked?

Loved it. Every nuance of the Commissario, his wife- our always defiant Signora Elettra is in top form and some of the lunches alone so delectable that I cannot venture to describe them.

We are behind the scene sets, at stage Right and Left. And in the dressing room on the 5th floor. Freddy is an escort of timely manners.

And I almost forgot the dozens and dozens of yellow roses in glass blown exotic vases- and the priceless necklace of a dozen plover sized gems left next to the Diva's make up mirror.

I did not guess the perp, wasn't even close.

These are getting better and the depth of characterizations deeper as time goes on.

Venice again, of course, is a 5 star.

Andrew Smith says

If you like the excitement of a gruesome murder and the ensuing chase of a cynical serial killer then you'd better look elsewhere. On the other hand, if you enjoy observing the native Venetians as they go about their daily routines and listening to them as they bemoan the 'loss of the city that was' then this might just be the place for you. Little of criminal consequence happens in this book – well insufficient, you'd think, to occupy a high-ranking police officer and his team – but there is plenty to delight existing fans of the series and anyone who just loves the city and its people.

I think Venice is the most wonderful of all cities - it's just so different from anywhere else. Already enchanted by Donna Leon's Brunetti books, I travelled to the municipality some years ago with my wife and (then) young son. I'd already circled, on my tourist map, the location of the Questura (police station) that features in all of the books and is home to Brunetti and his colleagues. Determined to track it down, I dragged our small group around, through and over the calli and canals until I came to the spot marked on my map. I knew that, in reality, the police had moved to a new site some years ago and there would be no sign to identify the building. Nonetheless, I was convinced I had enough of a description to be able to spot it and therefore gaze upon the office window Brunetti regularly stands before as he ruminates upon his latest case. But I just couldn't identify the building. We didn't spend long there – my companions were more anxious to track down the nearest gelateria – so I left disappointed. The rub to the tale is, upon my return to the UK I checked my map against available reference material only to find that I was looking on the wrong side of the canal. The building I'd had my back to as I scanned the area (of which I have no memory at all) was the fabled Questura!

Leon has written 24 books now featuring Venice based policemen Commissario Guido Brunetti. The cast have barely changed: his wife and children feature prominently as do his boss (the pompous Vice-Questore Patta), and his other work colleagues. Every time I pick up a new book I instantly feel at home and am transported immediately to this delightful place. In this latest episode we are returned to the scene of the original crime, described in the very first Brunetti book *Death at La Fenice*. This time the volume of yellow roses lavished upon her by an adoring, yet anonymous, fan spooks a renowned opera singer (well I did say not to expect a hunt for a serial killer).

As always with this series, it's the small things I love. There is much talk of food (*lentils with hot salami and candied currants... veal roll filled with sweet sausage*) and Brunetti is apt to put his temporary lethargy down to the simple fact he's had insufficient coffee. A glass of wine with your lunch? Not a problem – even if there are witnesses to interrogate later.

It's all wrapped up nicely in the end and here's a nice mix of humour and pathos. Moreover, we're able to track another period in the lives of this long running cast. Time for a coffee or maybe a glass of Prosecco - it'd be rude not to.
