

...Margherita sat with Agnoletta... and suddenly began to sob.

“*Madonna?*”

“It’s just that I have never before seen such majesty...”

“It is very beautiful, *madonna*, but that is not all.”

“Not all?”

She shook her head smiling as at a child and said, “You are in love, *madonna*.”

They stared at each other for a long time. “Am I?” she finally replied... “Perhaps you are right, for I am quite certain I have never felt this way before.”

“You are in love, *madonna*.”

She thought, “Then after all I will not die without ever having known love...”

After a while [Tiffany] rose again to walk around but whenever she stopped he stood close and when their hands brushed he again took hers and they continued hand in hand until she led him back to a pew where he took her waiting hand again as they each pretended to look at the church and she said, “What are we doing?”

“I’m holding your hand. What are you doing?”

“I don’t know what I’m doing.”

“We can stop.”

“That’s just it, I don’t want to.”

“Have you seen it?” When he didn’t answer [Margherita] concluded that he had. “[The preacher] told us a true story... about when a priest refused to bury an unrepentant usurer. His family insisted on burial so the priest said they would leave it to divine will and they loaded the body onto a donkey to see if it would take it to hallowed ground. But it didn’t, it headed straight for a dunghill where robbers were hanged.” Francesco said he didn’t believe such stories but his face lost color all the same.

It seemed a fantastic world in which everything was possible no profit goal too high to attain with everybody scratching everybody else’s back even as they competed fiercely; and exulting in his victory Bob threw himself into the firm’s future with full confidence in his abilities and the almost unbelievable potential of the new securities in which his firm was a market leader and in which as he saw it he was one of the chosen insiders the elect of the elect.

“...I do not believe there is sin in our love. The poets assure us there is none and I cannot feel any. I could almost say my marriage is sin, because it is a lie...”

“Then again I say I’m confused. Your thoughts seem jumbled, mine certainly are... Perhaps we try to think too much?”

“Intellect is our gift. Surely one cannot reason too much, only incorrectly.”

“I would have said love is our gift and that one cannot love too much.”

I have a high-stress job with a lot of responsibility... and yet the prospect of walking for four hours over level terrain the day after tomorrow has me worried. About what, I don’t know... I hope I’m as ready to be tested as I think I am, but I’m also excited. I think it’s going to be beautiful. I think I’m going to meet interesting people. After seventy days of walking I’m going to be in Santiago de Compostela and I’ll be able to look back and say, “I just climbed over the Pyrenees, I crossed deserts. I walked a thousand miles.”