

MANY VICES AND FEW VIRTUES

Italy, Seen Up Close

Being unpredictable has its advantages, but also its blind spots.
Those moments when you wait for clarity to arrive on its own.
And it does arrive.
You only have to know how to wait.
Which is not an Italian talent.

No upstream project.
No planning.
That is work reserved for those who are paid handsomely to appear thoughtful, while the real data stays tied to instinct and intuition.
Two absolute values.
Never forgetting that we are sons of capable women.
Never forget that.

Americans call it work in progress, and they say it with ease.
We Italians have no managerial vision.
After two thousand years we are still defending our positions.
Arguing about who owned what, and never about who truly owned what.
And always invoking the ancient Romans.

Skilled builders of aqueducts and latrines.
Masters of submission, domination, usurpation, discrimination.
Wrapped in endless entertainment and orgy.
Many vices and few virtues.
A people who nailed to a cross the colleague who arrived two thousand years ago carrying a word and a book.
He had not come to announce the arrival of Bezos and Amazon.
He had come to show how a business gets built and owned on somebody else’s skin.

Two thousand years later the confessional is still in the same room.
The sins are the same.
Only the penance has been renegotiated.

A people who lost everything and were left with the public urinals, and a government that governs the way one prays in a hurry.
Eyes closed.
Words learned by heart.
The mind already outside the door.

We ask Washington for protection and call it sovereignty.
We ask Brussels for money and call it dignity.
Then we go to communion with one hand still in somebody's pocket.

The Church at least admits that it has dogmas.
Our politics has the same dogmas and calls them common sense.
Both ask you to believe without checking.
Only one of the two has the decency to call it faith.

And there is a lesson this country has never learned, though it has stood in front of its altars for centuries.
Apparent submission is the real hidden conquest.
It is readable only by a man with empty pockets.

While the capital mounts on one side, on the other someone holds exactly what she can contain, the way a croupier works a casino table.
The house never raises its voice.
The house waits.
Which is the one thing we established that we cannot do.

Italy.
A country where you come for a twenty-day vacation, eat well, then leave immediately.
Because it is not a place I recommend.

Nando

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