



Sienna

The flat I had rented turned out to be part of an old palazzo. It had frescoed ceilings and perfectly proportioned rooms. The modest exterior of the building made the beauty of these private spaces even more acute. Over the coming days, and whenever I left the house, I was often conscious, even without looking back, of the sober façade. It was like an ally to whom I wanted to unburden all sorts of secrets. The place reminded me how the buildings we encounter, like new people we may meet, can excite passions that had up to then lain dormant. Most of the time we are not even aware of such adjustments. They happen mid-stride, and are often mutual, for, just as we influence and are influenced by others, the atmosphere of a room too is marked by what we do in it. And most of what we do vanishes, but a slight and shadowy remnant remains. How else then to account for why we can perceive awfulness where awful things have occurred, or be quietly inspired by a room where for a long time attention had been given to what is beautiful and kind. Every time I returned to the flat I felt my anticipation grow. And over the coming days, everywhere I went in Siena, I did, in effect, carry with me, like a private song, the pleasure of those rooms.

Matar, Hisham. A Month in Siena (pp. 9-10). Penguin Books Ltd. Kindle Edition.

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