

DAVIDE PICCOLO

The sense of courage



NOVEL



Martyn Fogg

The Sense Of Courage

«Tektime S.r.l.s.»

Fogg M.

The Sense Of Courage / M. Fogg — «Tektime S.r.l.s.»,

The story of a man in search of happiness. Marco Grassi, a successful manager, loved and respected by friends and colleagues, about to be married to a very beautiful woman and very close to his loving mother, finds the courage to abandon everything to pursue the "American dream". But all that comes with a price. Will the Big Apple know how to repay all his sacrifices?

DAVIDE PICCOLO

The sense of courage



NOVEL



Davide Piccolo

The sense of courage

Original title: Il senso del coraggio

Translated by: Martyn Fogg

DAVIDE PICCOLO, Scientific high school student was born at Chiari (Brescia) in Italy in 1997. Il senso del coraggio [The sense of courage] is his first novel.

.....

Marco Grassi, a successful manager, loved and respected by friends and colleagues, about to be married to a very beautiful woman and very close to his loving mother, finds the courage to abandon everything to pursue the "American dream".

But all that comes at a price.

Will the Big Apple know how to repay all his sacrifices?

THE SENSE OF COURAGE

First edition: December 2015

Editor: Streetlib

English edition: May 2017

Translator: Martyn Fogg

Publisher: Tektime- www.traduzioneLibri.it

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/davidepiccoloautore>

blog: davidepiccoloblog.wordpress.com

e-mail: davide.piccolo@hotmail.it

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced in any form, including by any mechanical or electronic system, without the writer permission of the editor, except for brief passages taken for the purposes of review.

Prologue

It was 7 o'clock in the morning of that cold 21st December, when Marco's alarm-clock went off, announcing the start of his day, in more anticipation than normal.

Sleepy, he opened his eyes with difficulty, stretched weakly and sat on the double bed. Next to him was his fiancée Francesca, who he had been living with for only a year, was sleeping blissfully, with her hair covering her beautiful face.

After caressing her face gently and tucking in the sheets, he put on his slippers and, dragging his feet heavily, went towards the kitchen to make a quick breakfast, consisting of hot milk, fruit and cereal.

Having finished his meal, eaten while listening to the morning news on television, he put on a plain white shirt, a black chalk-striped suit and a pair of shiny shoes, and checked the result in the mirror.

The mirror reflected the image of a young man, over 6 feet tall, slim and with a fair complexion.

His brush-cut brown hair perfectly matched his brown eyes, which emanated the brightness that characterises the look of people on whom life seems to smile from all points of view and in whom a healthy ambition suggests the possibility that it could improve further.

After having fixed his still uncombed hair, he glanced at his brand-new wrist-watch, that showed the time as seven-forty.

Realising that time was pressing, he quickly put on a wind-jacket as if in a rush against time.

At 8 o'clock, the party to celebrate the start of the Christmas break was planned at Russo S.p.A., the firm he worked for as a manager and member of the Board of Directors.

After coming out of his house, he stopped for a moment, enchanted by the beauty of the flakes of snow which, slowly, but inexorably, were falling from the sky and covering everything indiscriminately.

Then, re-awakened with difficulty by that splendid vision, he opened the door of his flaming red Maserati Ghibli and left making the four hundred horses, champing at the bit under the bonnet, whinny.

Only a certain elasticity in his interpretation of the rules of the highway code and the exhortations for prudence in bad weather allowed him to reach his destination with impeccable punctuality.

For almost a minute, stopped in the parking place, he stayed to admire the firm's luminous sign, unable to look away.

The memory came to mind of the day when two years before, just twenty-five years old, he had for the first time in his life crossed the threshold of the factory in which he had grown up personally and professionally, finally becoming the spearhead of the staff in the service of Mr. Russo, his employer and founder of the company.

Then, remembering the duties which awaited him, he went sure-footedly towards the entrance hall, where his secretary greeted him cheerfully.

“Good morning, Marco”, she called out.

“Good morning to you, Luisa”, he replied, displaying his smile for big occasions.

“You seem to be in a good mood”, she commented.

“Well, the imminence of the holidays always has that effect on me. Speaking of which, how are the preparations coming along for the Christmas party?” he asked casually.

“They have just been finalised, Mr. Russo is waiting for you in the conference room for his traditional end-of-year speech”.

Marco, thrilled, almost ran to the conference room, impatient to hear his superior’s monologue which, considering the excellent results achieved, should be unforgettable.

When he opened the door to the room, he was received by the thunderous applause of everyone there, who greeted his arrival with great enthusiasm.

“Here, finally is our hero”, exclaimed Mr. Russo with a broad smile and a cordial gesture of greeting aimed at Marco.

Slightly embarrassed, the young man took his place in the front row, beside another member of the Board of Directors.

The deafening noise produced by the crowd of employees quietened down good-naturedly, Mr. Russo grabbed a microphone and, after having switched it on, solemnly announced: “Good morning, friends! Today, as you all know, is the last working day before the Christmas holidays, which we have all been waiting for anxiously for weeks, wanting to spend the time in the company of our dear ones.

Before kicking off the celebrations, however, I’m proud to announce that this company’s turnover has increased by 25%, exceeding 5 million Euros, the result of expanding the market abroad”.

His words were followed by a moment of silence, witness to the bewilderment of his colleagues at such amazing news.

“For this reason, I would like to offer each one of you”, he continued enthusiastically, “sincere thanks for your efforts, professionalism and the great ability you have shown, talents which have contributed to the fortunes of Russo S.p.A.

Nevertheless, without playing down the importance of every one of you, I consider it opportune to underline the fundamental role performed by our Managing Director Marco Grassi, whose extraordinary work has allowed this company to make the leap in quality which has been proved in the last twelve months.

For this reason, I suggest we dedicate a special round of applause to Marco!”

Suddenly, the polite silence that reigned during Mr. Russo’s speech was broken by the yell “Well done Grassi!” from Alberto and Davide, his best friends, and from the shouts of joy from all the other employees who, excited by the news, jumped to their feet in elation.

Mr. Russo, who in the meantime had got down from the stage, was overwhelmed by a crowd of employees, who involved him in wild celebrations to the rhythm of the music, useful to release all the tensions accumulated over the long months of hard work.

Notwithstanding that, he soon decided to return to his office, to enjoy a quiet morning.

Marco, instead, the principal proponent of that success, was constantly inundated with glasses of champagne, which very soon ended up totally soaking the elegant suit he was wearing that day, as if he had dived fully-dressed into a swimming pool.

As regards the party atmosphere that reigned inside the room, it did not seem to have been affected in any way, Marco was aware of the fact that it should not be like that.

The moment had arrived to give Mr. Russo a notice that would have overwhelmed the history of his company.

Having received a last spray of champagne in his face, Marco took his leave from his colleagues and, gathering up all his will-power, went towards his superior's office.

Chapter I

Seize the day

Arriving at the door to Russo's office, Marco knocked and the boss called out: "Come in! "

Marco entered the room slowly, overwhelmed at having to disappoint Mr. Russo's expectations.

"Marco, pleased to see you! Please take a seat."

The manager sat on a leather armchair, sighing.

For a moment they stayed looking at each other in silence, waiting, in an atmosphere characterised by a palpable tension.

Then Marco decided to finally break the silence, announcing: "I've received an offer from JW Corporation of New York."

"What?"

"Yes, you heard me right."

Mr. Russo opened his mouth to speak, but then shut it again, waiting for his trusted Managing Director to provide more details about the proposal from the well-known American company.

"A few months ago", Marco explained, "I was contacted personally by Mr. Walker.

After the usual introductions, he confirmed that he knew about the excellent work I had done for Russo S.p.A. and that he intended to give me the job of Managing Director."

"And you refused, right?" Mr. Russo asked, in a pleading tone.

"No, I accepted."

Silence.

"But then - why are you still here?" he asked suspiciously, hoping that it was a joke that Marco had come up with.

"Because I accepted on the condition that I could defer my departure until the end of this year. You know me, I detest leaving things half-done. I felt the need to repay the trust I have received in these two years, by completing, in the best way possible, the plan we had developed together."

"How much is Mr. Walker offering you?"

Just to get me to work for him, he has offered me a very generous five-year contract at £500,000 a year and a luxurious 500 square metre villa to live in, a Bentley Continental GT, a maid and a gardener who will also be my driver."

"Marco, I understand how attractive this offer is, but – please – stay."

"Mr. Russo, even though I'm really sorry to leave this firm, believe me, but this kind of opportunity only happens once in a lifetime."

"I'm prepared to triple your salary to £150,000 a year. Certainly, the resources available to me are not even nearly comparable to Jason Walker's, but I intend to do anything in my power to keep you."

"It's not only a question of money", replied Marco firmly, even though moved by Mr. Russo's extreme attempt to avoid losing his best manager. "My greatest ambition is to become a manager at an international level and I'm convinced that some experience abroad, and especially in a world-renowned company like JW Corporation is right for this purpose."

The discussion was over. It was obvious.

Then Mr. Russo, by now resigned to saying goodbye to Marco, admitted in a more submissive tone: "Look, I partly understand, because twenty years ago, as a manager and all-powerful owner of

a small firm on the outskirts of Naples, when as it was just at the peak of its success, I received an inviting offer from the North of Italy, actually from Brescia, to be precise, where we now are.

As much as I also had always been happy to work for that company, I decided to follow my instincts and leave, in order to make my mark for once on my modest career.

Certainly, it turned out very difficult to leave my dear ones, my homeland and the firm which, under my guidance, had achieved ambitious objectives, but my desire to obtain a more important role gave me the necessary courage to embark on a new professional adventure, which certainly looked to be more satisfying and remunerative.

And so, convinced of having made the right decision, I made the move.

With hindsight, I can confirm, with the certainty of not having made a mistake, that accepting that new challenge, as you can see, made me achieve the objectives that would have been outside my capability if I had decided to stay in my home town.

For this reason, I perfectly understand your decision to accept the offer from JW Corporation.

Obviously you can't be certain that your experience will match up to your expectations, but I hope with all my heart that you can realise your dream of becoming an international manager."

At those words, Marco took a sigh of relief and his mouth opened into a smile.

Finally, Mr. Russo had pronounced the words that Marco was waiting for, dispelling any remaining doubt that he had made the right decision.

On the other hand, who better than him, who had always represented for him a model to emulate for his professional capacity and willpower, he could have given him the security that that was the best route to an enviable career.

"I am happy that you understand the reasons for my decision", said Marco.

"Certainly I understand. But it was my duty to try to fully protect my firm. I don't know how we will get on without you."

"Don't worry. I'm sure that you will know how to manage brilliantly without me. You're all exemplary professionals, you'll soon find a manager capable of filling the gap that my departure will leave.

By now this is an established firm, even high-level managers would die to be taken on by Russo S.p.A."

"I really hope so."

Satisfied with the outcome of the discussion, Marco got up from the armchair and decided to go back to the room set up for the Christmas party, followed by Mr. Russo, anxious about the future that awaited his company.

While they made the short walk that separated them from the conference room, the young manager realised that he had been left stunned by the imminent change and walked almost unconsciously, deaf to the music at full volume that delighted his colleagues, ignorant of the fact that nothing would be the same as before any more.

When he stepped into the room he was immediately hit by an incredible noise, caused by his partying colleagues, who cheered him with vociferous admiration, singing like in a football stadium.

Notwithstanding this magnificent reception, his response only consisted of an uncaring, forced smile, without feeling.

The wave of affection from the other employees made him feel like he had betrayed all the people around him.

This impression was reinforced by the knowledge of having left his friends and colleagues to their own destiny, abandoning them to the future care of an unknown manager.

While these thoughts ran through his mind, he looked at the joyous faces of his companions, deaf to their words, thinking that, in his new professional adventure, he would have to work with strangers, who spoke a different language, did not even know who he was and probably would not be interested in his personal history, but only in the work and business plan.

God, how he would miss them so much.

But the decision had been made, and he could not turn back now.

Thus, anxious about the thankless task of quelling his colleague's enthusiasm with his own farewell speech, he got up on the stage, lifted the microphone to his mouth and, having got the attention of everyone present, said: "Friends, the moment has come to advise you that, as I've just announced to Mr. Russo in a brief conversation, I've made the irrevocable decision to accept a prestigious job offer received from the United States, from JW Corporation."

These words were followed by a murmur of anxiety, which spread quickly among all his audience.

"It is for me an offer that I can't refuse from a financial and professional point of view", he continued, "anyway, I would like to offer special thanks to all of you, because it is with your most precious contribution and your total availability and cooperation that I have had the possibility of making this company great and giving my working life a turning-point that will allow me to get closer to my dream of becoming a successful manager, known also beyond the borders of Italy and Europe.

I am, however, above all grateful for the sincere friendship that you have always shown towards me since I became part of this firm. Now", he concluded, moved, "It just remains for me to say goodbye to you and to wish you to continue to produce even better results in the future."

His farewell speech touched, deep down in their hearts, his colleagues, who showed, with a deafening silence, their displeasure at the departure of their manager who, with his own talent, had coordinated their work.

Sharing their regret, Marco put down the microphone and, with his head bowed, joined the rest of the employees, still dazed by the emotional earthquake that he had just overwhelmed them with.

The only person who had the guts to speak, was his dear friend Massimo, a massive man with a cheerful character and a ready, witty remark, and who had already lost his contagious good humour.

"Giovanni" he said, disconsolately turning to a colleague on his right, don't switch the music back on, by now we don't have any reason to celebrate any more. Without Marco, our firm is finished and soon we will find ourselves unemployed."

His expression was fully shared by everyone, including his secretary Luisa who, having run in to hear her manager's speech, stared with dead eyes at the recently repainted wall.

The party having sadly ended, Marco spent a few, but interminable, minutes saying goodbye to his ex-colleagues and left the building, listening with profound melancholy to their shocked comments.

Not even the roar of his car's engine managed to arouse him from his reflections while he drove home.

Only at the moment when he glimpsed the house in which he lived with Francesca did it occur to him that she might have been able to hear about the news of his move with understandable anger, inasmuch as even she had been kept in the dark about Jason Walker's offer.

"I should have talked to her about it", thought Marco.

But by now it was too late.

Troubled by this realisation, he parked the car and rang the bell, waiting for his fiancée to open the door for him.

Chapter II

Exodus

After a few seconds, Marco heard the key turn in the lock and the door opened, showing a tall and slim girl, whose fair complexion was framed by a thick head of sleek brown hair, that created, with her blue eyes, an irresistible colour contrast: it was Francesca.

At the sight of her companion, her generous mouth opened instinctively into a large, candid smile, which lit up her face.

"Hello, darling", she exclaimed with joy, while she opened the door to the house.

Marco returned the greeting with a forced smile, not sufficient to hide the evident worries that afflicted him.

“How did it go at work today? Did something go wrong?”, she asked, seeing acutely the discomfort of her fiancé, who had just crossed the threshold.

“Everything went all right, a quiet day”, he lied, carefully avoiding her gaze.

Francesca scrutinised him for a moment, but then shrugged her shoulders and served up lunch.

During the meal, Francesca tried to start up a conversation, but Marco, distracted by the fear of revealing to his fiancée what had happened that morning, limited himself to replying in monosyllables and to nod in silence.

This unusual behaviour did not go unnoticed in the eyes of Francesca, still perplexed about the previous reply she had received.

“Is there something wrong?”

“N - no”, stammered Marco.

“Are you sure?” she insisted.

Silence.

“Look me in the eye”, she ordered in a vaguely threatening tone.

Marco, reluctant, lifted his gaze, until he met the blue eyes of Francesca.

“The eyes are the mirror of the mood”, she commented with a bitter smile.

Well, there was no way out. A single glance was enough for her to understand that something was wrong. As always.

Marco sighed deeply and, gathering up all his will-power, whispered weakly. “I’ve accepted a move to JW Corporation in New York.”

“What?” asked Francesca, keeping calm with difficulty.

“Yes, I’m moving to New York for work”, he confirmed, preparing himself to be assailed by a reaction.

“And do you think this is the moment to tell me?” she asked furiously, with her eyes looking daggers.

Still silence.

“Considering that we live under the same roof, didn’t it come into your head to discuss the job offer together with me, before giving your word? Don’t you remember that before we started living together we promised each other that we would decide everything by common agreement?” Francesca pressed on, without showing any sign of calming down.

“But can’t you manage to understand my desire for a better life and job? You don’t want to move for your own reasons!”

“I didn’t say that I would have forced you to refuse, for you, I would have accepted this and more! You, instead, didn’t have the courage to confront me, for fear that I might have hampered you in this dream.

It seems to me that it is more important to you than our plan for a life together”

“Instead, to spend the rest of my days with you has always been my greatest desire, but evidently you don’t understand it, otherwise you wouldn’t make these accusations!”

“But do you realise that you’re only putting the blame onto my shoulders? You’re just a coward, I can’t find any other word for it”.

“Well, if you think I’m a coward, then goodbye”, Marco replied, his pride hurt by this unacceptable term.

Having said that, he turned around and marched off into their bedroom upstairs, angrily grabbed his clothes from the wardrobe and put them quickly into a black leather suitcase.

“Don’t be crazy” implored his fiancée, who in the meantime had joined him. “Come on, put your clothes back away and snap out of it.”

“Well, isn’t this what you wanted?” replied Marco, provocatively, going down the stairs.

“Don’t be ridiculous, you know I didn’t mean to chase you away.”

“It’s too late now”, he concluded, turning a final angry glare in the direction of Francesca, who looked impotently as her fiancé angrily put on his overcoat and shut the door behind him, leaving her alone, in tears over the unexpected break-up.

And so, still thinking with incredulity about the quarrel with his ex-partner, Marco drove fast towards the home of his mother, who still did not know of the imminent departure of her son and the end of his relationship with Francesca.

After a few minutes, he arrived at the complex of town houses and parked in front of number 16, where he had lived until a year ago.

Then he got out of the car and opened the gate with his copy of the keys and knocked on the entrance door.

“Who is it?” asked his mother.

“It’s Marco. Did you think a burglar would have knocked on the door to come in?” replied her son, irritated by her far-fetched caution.

Reassured, she opened the door for Marco, who came into the house.

Lucia was a fifty-five-year-old woman of average height and looking well-cared for.

She had died blond hair, always kept perfectly in order, and a pleasantly shaped face, but at the same time lined with evident wrinkles, reflecting the atrocious suffering that had afflicted her over the course of her life, among which there stands out the premature death of her husband, struck down many years earlier by a merciless cancer.

“You look upset. Has something happened?”

He really wasn’t capable of hiding his emotions.

“Yes. Now let me explain everything, without bombarding me with questions” he begged her, fearing that his plea would not be listened to. “I must talk about a very serious matter, and I’m asking you to stay and listen to what I have to say without interrupting. When I’ve finished, you will be free to express your opinion.”

“As you prefer”, she agreed, sitting down on the sofa, waiting for her son to start talking.

“Some months ago, I received from the United States an offer of an unmissable job opportunity and today I told Mr. Russo that I would be leaving soon” Marco declared drily, taking the weight off his shoulders by the disclosure.

Although it was evident that Lucia had received the blow like a stab in the heart, she managed to maintain her usual well-known calm and objected: “But - what will happen to Francesca? Have you already given her the news?”

“She will no longer be part of my life, that’s all. That’s not a problem.”

“What’s happened between you two?” asked his mother. “If I’m allowed to know, obviously”, she quickly clarified, struck by her son’s hint of irritation.

“When I told her that I had accepted a job in New York and that I would have to move she didn’t take it well, because, according to her, I should have waited to check if she was prepared to come with me.

Therefore, she accused me of being a coward, and for that reason I decided to leave her”, replied Marco drily.

“She must have exaggerated using such heavy words, but don’t you think she was right? Effectively, given that you live together, she had good reason to want to be actively involved in such an important decision.

In fact, deciding to leave your own country and the people you love is very difficult, and requires a careful evaluation of all the pros and cons”, Lucia replied wisely, but the look of furious disapproval that Marco gave her persuaded her to stop.

“I, instead, think that the irrepressible Francesca” he accused her with clenched teeth, “she could equally understand that opportunities of that kind arise only once in your life and any hesitation

would have run the serious risk of pushing the firm in question to turn to a different candidate, who would have been given the job that I had the good sense to not miss out on.”

Gathering that there was no room for discussion, Lucia opted opportunely to give in, knowing the resolve of her son.

“When do you intend to leave?” she asked in a more agreeable tone.

“As soon as possible. I will share this experience only with my colleagues and my boss, therefore I don’t see any reason to delay my departure”.

Having said that, he put an end to the conversation and went to the bedroom in which he had slept since adolescence, its wall still plastered with posters of Juventus footballers, the team closest to his heart.

For some minutes, sitting at the desk in front of the computer, he was busy searching for a flight that would soon take him to JW Corporation, thousands of miles away.

Finally, he found a flight scheduled for 11.30 the next day, leaving from Milan-Linate airport, and booked an expensive first-class ticket, aware of the increased financial resources he would soon have available.

Then he entered the telephone number of a Milan taxi firm on his smartphone and called them.

“Hello?”

“Good evening, I would like to book a taxi from Castrezzato to Linate.”

“I should advise you that it will be rather expensive, it’s quite a long way.”

Marco smiled smugly. Obviously, they didn’t know how much money he would earn at JW Corporation.

“That’s not a problem.”

Having booked the taxi for 8.30 p.m., he went back downstairs, where his mother was already preparing the last meal she would share with him before he left for the United States.

Marco stayed watching her for hours, fixing in his mind every single gesture, aware that he would not see her again for a long time, sharing in her sadness about their imminent separation.

They hardly spoke a word to each other during dinner, both busy thinking how much their life would soon change.

Suddenly, a car horn aroused them from their thoughts.

Lucia looked at her son with a questioning air, startled by that unexpected sound.

“What was that?”

“The taxi’s arrived. I’ll spend the night at the airport.”

At these words, Lucia threw herself into her son’s arms, deeply moved. “Promise me that you will phone me every day, otherwise you know I get worried. Especially knowing you’re far away.”

“You can count on it” he reassured her, returning her gesture.

After long seconds, Marco freed himself from her embrace and, collecting his suitcase from the living room, said goodbye to his mother.

Then he tapped with affectionate sadness on the bonnet of his Maserati, destined to remain unused for a long time, and sat in the back seat of the taxi, which left at a moderate speed onto the road made slippery by the snow which was still falling on the asphalt.

For a moment, his mother remained on the threshold of her house to watch the car go off, until it disappeared round a bend and she could no longer follow her son with her eyes.

The taxi-driver, in the meantime, was driving through places that had been the background to the life Marco was hurrying to leave, asking himself when he would see them again.

Calling on all his will-power, he banished from his head all those thoughts by starting up a conversation with the introverted driver, as professional as he was silent.

When, finally, the robotic voice of the Satnav announced their arrival at their destination, putting an end to the monotonous journey, Marco paid the fare and calmly got out of the taxi, wanting to be able to get some rest in anticipation of the long flight the next day.

Then he entered the airport dragging his bags behind him and, having also put behind him the emotional day of which he had been the protagonist, took a seat on a bench, thinking again about all that he was leaving behind and that he had always loved so deeply.

“At least I won’t have to see my dear friend Morgan again” he reflected in search of comfort, with a grimace that encompassed all his antipathy for that person.

In that moment, the image of his most hated acquaintance formed in his head.

About 6 feet tall, he had a pointed pale face, straw-coloured hair and brown eyes framed by spectacles with squared-off lenses, that didn’t however manage to give him an intellectual air, totally irreconcilable with his moronic expression.

His wide mouth often emitted expressions of hilarity with a hysterical sound, typical of those trying to hide the absence of other people’s laughter at the witty remarks with the auditory evidence of his own laughter.

This mix of odious features was added, moreover, to a rather unpolite behaviour towards Marco.

In fact, he remembered again, with extreme irritation, the evening on which, with his unmistakable swaying walk, he had approached Francesca, showing off in a ridiculous attempt at courtship, ignoring Marco’s presence.

“Is it by any chance a crime?” he had asked presumptuously at Marco’s demand about the girl’s heart and his prompt urging him to go away.

“I don’t think so, and I would like to remind you that we live in a free country, or am I mistaken? Anyway I’m going, keep her for yourself” he had added, going away with the same walk.

From that moment on, deeply annoyed by his attitude, Marco had started to hate him and hope that the opportunities to encounter him would be very limited.

Anyway, this hope was duly dashed, in reality.

In fact, Marco was frequently forced to have dealings with him for work reasons.

Notwithstanding it sometimes happens that by getting to know certain people better, an instinctive judgement proves to be disproved, in that case the saying “the first impression is the one that counts” was prophetic and their relationship continued in a spirit of reciprocal antipathy.

Slightly reassured by these thoughts, Marco was overcome by tiredness and fell into a deep sleep.

Some hours later the cheerful shouting of a large crowd of people interrupted his brief rest.

Marco, with his vision still bleary from sleep, rubbed his eyes to make out the figures that surrounded him more clearly and noticed lots of families and youngsters intent on buying their final gifts Christmas, into which he hurried to participate, with great joy.

The young manager stopped a long time watching the babies running carefree alongside their mothers, who were attentive to not lose sight of them in the crowd of people walking along, looking in the shop windows.

Anyway, the atmosphere of the imminent festivities, which you breathed in the air and perceived clearly in the relaxed faces of everyone, contrasted with the state of mind of Marco, who thought of how different that 25th December would be from all the others.

In fact, he would not be taking part in the traditional lunch with his family at his mother’s house, but would spend that day with people he did not yet know, and that he might end up not liking very much.

When he woke up from these reflections, Marco got up from the bench, stretching himself, and went to the check-in desk, where the young and smiling woman in charge gave him his boarding card.

Then he found another bench and sat down next to an old lady.

Chapter III

Pedro Gonzalez

“Good morning”, the man greeted him cheerfully, with a slight Spanish accent.

“Good morning to you”, replied Marco to the unknown person.

He was a man of around seventy years old, as suggested by his short white hair, which gave him an aura of wisdom.

Although he was quite aged, the old gentleman gave an impression of exceptional vigour, both mental and physical, as shown by the vivaciousness which lit his face, and his slim figure, determined by be taller than normal and his body being slim, but with no semblance of fragility or weakness.

The fact that his exterior appearance was cared for in a fanatical manner, just like his elegant clothes, worthy of the most prominent of businessmen, caused Marco to believe with good reason that he had in the past held an important managerial role, like the one he was getting ready to take up in the United States.

“Are you also on your way to my beloved Spain?” he asked in a friendly manner.

“No, I’ve booked a flight to New York, I’m moving there for work.”

“I suppose it must be an important job opportunity to cause you to make a move of that kind” he observed in practically perfect Italian.

“Yes, exactly. A few months ago, I received an important offer from JW Corporation, which I promptly accepted, on the condition that I could finish the working year here, without therefore prejudicing the plans of the company I was working for.

As you can imagine, I met some resistance from my loved ones and my employer, but I decided to stick to my decision, determined to take an opportunity like the one that had presented itself to me.”

“What job have you been offered?”

“Managing Director, the same as I have been doing at the Brescia firm that I helped make successful.”

“It reminds me a lot of my own story.”

“Are you in business?”

“Yes, I also worked as a manager.”

“Can I ask you for some advice about managing important firms? Doubtless from the heights of your working experience you can give me some useful advice.”

“Considering your achievements, which from your account seem to me to be grandiose, I don’t think you need any advice”, the man cut short with a gracious smile. “Anyway, if you like, I can share with you my own life experience.”

“I would be honoured”, replied Marco with unusual respect, inspired by the strong personality of his interlocutor.

“Also I, Pedro Gonzalez, managed a small firm in the country of my birth, with appreciable results”, he began modestly. “Everything seemed to be going well, anyway my ambition had often caused me to desire a higher level role, notwithstanding the fact that the humility which characterises me did not excessively fuel these dreams of glory.

Anyway, one warm Spring afternoon, I received a fax from a leading firm in the textile industry in Italy, which offered me the job of Managing Director.

Suddenly, what I had long been secretly aspiring to had materialised and, after discussing at length with my family over what to do, I decided to leave, as I had already decided right from first reading of the communication I had received.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.