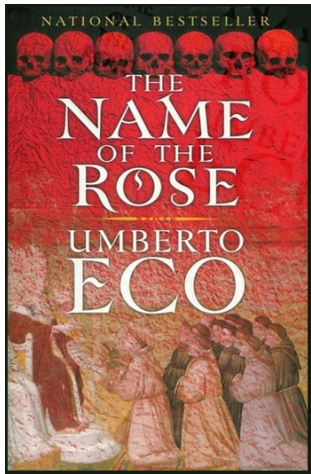


## THE NAME OF THE ROSE - Umberto Eco 1980 ( translation William Weaver)



And so Abo arrived. He apologized for the intrusion, repeated his welcome and said he had to speak to William about a very serious matter. He began by congratulating his guest on the skill he demonstrated in the business of the horse and asked how he had been able to give such confident information about an animal he had never seen. William explained briefly the path he had followed and the abbot congratulated him highly on his acumen. He said he would have expected nothing less from a man preceded by his reputation for great wisdom. He said he had received a letter from the abbot of Farfa that not only spoke of William's mission from the Emperor (which they would discuss in the coming days) but also added that in England and in Italy my master had acted as an inquisitor in some trials, where he had distinguished himself by his perspicacity along with a great humility.

"I was very please do learn", the Abbot continued, "that in numerous cases you decided the accused was innocent. I believe, and never more during these sad days, in the presence of the Evil One in human affairs" - and he looked around, imperceptibly, as if the enemy were looking around within those walls - "but I believe also that often the Evil One works through second causes.

And I know he can impel his victims to do evil in such a way that the blame falls on the righteous man, and the Evil One rejoices then as the righteous man is burned in the place of his succubus. Inquisitors often, to demonstrate their zeal, wrest a confession from the accused at all costs, thinking that the only good inquisitor is the one who concludes his trial by finding a scapegoat ..."

"An inquisitor too can be impelled by the Devil," William said.

"That is possible," the abbot admitted with great circumspection, "because the designs of the Almighty are unscrutable, and far be it from me to cast any shadow of suspicion on such worthy men. Indeed, it is as one of them that I need you today. In this abbey, something has happened that requires the attention and counsel of an acute and prudent man. Acute in uncovering, and prudent (if necessary) in covering. If a shepherd errs, he must be isolated from other shepherds, but woe onto us if the sleep begin to distrust shepherds."

"I see your point," William said. I had already had occasion that when he expressed himself so promptly and so politely, he was usually concealing, in an honest way, his dissent or puzzlement.

"For this reason," the abbot continued, "I consider that any case involving the error of a shepherd can be entrusted only to men like you, who can distinguish not only good from evil, but also what is expedient from what is not. I liked to think you pronounced a sentence of guilty only when ..."

"... the accused were guilty of criminal acts, of poisoning, of corruption of innocent youths, or other abominations my mouth dares not utter ..."

"... that you pronounced sentence only when," the abbot continued, not heeding the interruption, "the presence of the Devil was evident to all eyes that it was impossible to act otherwise without the clemency's being more scandalous than the crime itself."

"When I found someone guilty," William explained, "he had really committed crimes of such gravity that in all conscience I could hand him over to the secular arm."

The abbot was bewildered for a moment. "Why", he asked, "do you insist on speaking of criminal acts without referring to their diabolical cause?"

"Because reasoning about reasons and causes is a very difficult thing, and I believe the only judge of that can be God."