

THE LAST PICTURE

By Linda Rogers

It is hot in church. Sweat gathers in their groins and armpits, creeps down their spines as they attempt to keep their minds on Holy Communion.

After they sing the last beatitude and genuflect to the Holy Child, the lovers rush home and put on their bathing suits, make a quick picnic: a slab of provolone, some pears and grapes, bread and wine, then hurry to Torregavela Beach, where the Roma children often swim naked.

While they rub one another's backs with olive oil, two gypsy girls who've been selling trinkets to tourists approach a family building sandcastles. "*Insetto!*" the mother hisses, collecting her children and shooing the filthy Roma away.

The photographer catches Mother with her mouth open so wide insects could fly in. He snaps the Roma girls shrugging off their dresses and running into the surf, which spits them back out in the single moment that separates now and never.

The lovers are hungry. They eat their lunch and think about *later*. Later, they hope they will make a child. They don't even notice when the photographer takes their picture. And they don't appear to see the Roma girls laid out on the beach beside them, their lifeless bodies covered with towels. They keep on kissing and feeding one another grapes, ignoring the stunned photographer, who now has a photo that will shock the world.