

RENAISSANCE 1994

by Susie Aybar

He buys her prosciutto and fontina in Cuban Spanish
they sit in plastic chairs
in the hotel garden
tearing bread, gulping Chianti

Right before they study Dante's Inferno
curled up on the couch of the Hotel California
he tells her about the girl from home he will ask to marry him
after their trip

They dive down into the second circle
home seems so far from the piazzas and bronzed Duomo doors
her pictures of Paradise will not be tainted
by his news

Her flat sandals
bend over the cobblestones
her feet blackened,
she inhales mopeds and cigarettes
while she walks to the San Lorenzo Mercato
for peaches
ripe and ready

Tomorrow she will cross the Arno with him
they will climb the hill
to San Miniato

They will climb the steps
and climb
the June sun
will bake their shoulders
and her feet
will burn from the hot cement

By the top they will each be St. Minias
carrying their own heads up the mountain

They will sit in a pew and rest
inside the quiet sanctuary of cold marble
hands apart but clammy from having been together

They will step on the zodiac mosaics in the nave
and wonder how putting so many broken pieces together could make
something
better than whole

Outside a drizzle will begin to wash down the city
they will look out over Firenze one last time
and so high up
she will think that there may not be anywhere beyond this place