

## **Venice**

*by Eileen Guibone*

It's like waiting at a gaudy *palazzo*. Everything feels polished yet dirty at the same time. There's an elegant oxymoron in the stained glass depiction of the crucified Jesus below an enormous crystal chandelier. Dead skin cells litter the marbled floor of the spacious and grandiose rooms with different names from Florence to Milan to Venice to Padua to Assisi. The gold curtains drape the high windows giving off a vibe of aloofness, an alluring coldness. There is no warmth here. Everything is cold and dull as I sit on a creaky metal bench, looking at Florence, watching people come and go like the natural ebb and flow of water and life. Somehow I feel like I'm part of the fixture. I sit here looking pasty and feeling deprived of the power of sensation as I stare at the gold cross in front of me. Everything is icy to the touch, I'll freeze if I don't watch out. Like those cherub statues placed outside the entrance with empty eyes and plastered smiles, holding their harps poised unto their naked bodies like the gods and goddesses in Fontana di Trevi that birds shit on daily.

Is this all there is? We're a lot like the Romans. No matter what happens to the world around us or how many people come and go into our lives, we'll always live on forever. To be remembered and then forgotten only to continue living through memories.

Is there more?

The lobby is echoing with choir singers singing *Butuing Walang Ningning* at Padua and I can only imagine roaming the medieval churches in Rome with you. How glorious it would be but I am not in Rome. I'm in a kitschy imitation of the Eternal City inhabited by transients in a stream. Its white walls as stark as the soot coming from the candles now melting like tears among wilting flowers. There's something touching about hearing the song echoing through Cosmopolitan. It reminds me of all the love that I sometimes fail to acknowledge. I could hear countless of people crying and heaving, taking in deep shallow breaths as occasional cries escape through the thin gaudy walls around the chapel. I close my eyes and absorb all the sounds into my body. I let the music of life seep through me and create a home in my skin before slowly opening my eyes and coming back to life.

There's a boy in headphones passing me by and he's going inside Venice. I think he looks like you. I wait for the lights to illumine the room but it stays completely dark. I remember the security guard locking it an hour ago.