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# Venice, Our First Time

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# VENICE, OUR FIRST TIME

SALLY STRATFORD

The highway curved  
like a loose noodle in a pesto dish.  
The yellow line hypnotized us  
with talk of European chocolate  
and the freedom of speed on the Autobahn.  
Then we told stories of past lovers,  
Switzerland to Italy, our laughter  
occasionally replaced by sad silence.

When we arrived,  
tourists packed in shops, looking for silk ties  
and swirled patterns of fine paper.  
Tired men pushed couples  
through tight canals and under bridges.  
We took the ferry back to the car,  
the smell of fish and gasoline.

Far from the Piazza San Marco,  
an office light flickered in the burgeoning storm.  
The clerk's Italian was like static on an old radio.  
"Una camera doppia con un letto matrimoniale."  
Maybe he understood, "just friends." Probably not.

In our bungalow, back in the trees  
we flipped a 100 lira for the bed—

I got the floor with our sleeping bags.  
We breathed a few more thoughts,  
then you slept  
beneath the rain playing the tin roof,  
as the water shivered  
through the canals of Venice.