

Italy *a memoir*

**being an art student's journal and
photo-documentary
of a tour of Milan, Venice, Assisi,
Rome, Pisa & Florence**

by keith sarver



*design
illustration
photography
& text
by the
author*

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To my parents,
for their support,
and helping make the tour
and this book possible

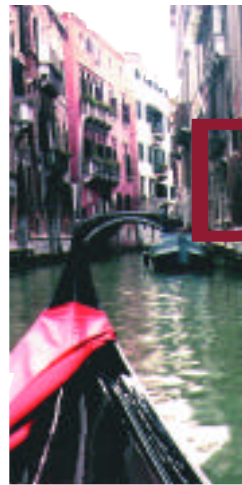
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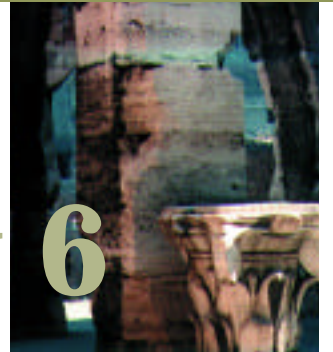
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Day 1

We've arrived in Milan and are now in the lobby of our Hotel Ibis awaiting our rooms to be ready.

Milan with plenty and with wealth o'flows,

It seems like it's been more than 1 day since we arrived, because of the

And numerous streets and cleanly dwellings shows:

overnight flight (we only slept about 2-3 hours) and I really have to think

The people, blessed with Nature's happy force,

about what day it is and what time it is. The city is arranged very differently

Are eloquent and cheerful in discourse;

and the drivers are maniacs. They'll park anywhere and drive very fast.

A circus and a theatre invites

The unruly mob to races and to fights.

Kim and I walked to the Castle Sforzano. We took lots of pictures outside and

Moneta consecrated buildings grace,

inside the courtyard, then we walked through the myriad rooms of the

And the whole town redoubled walls embrace;

museum—keys, knockers, dresses, ceramics, tapestries, etc. Then we walked

Here spacious baths and palaces are seen,

through the plaza to the Arch of Peace. The courtyard was packed with kids—

And intermingled temples rise between;

playing music, drinking beer, making out, playing soccer—there had to be over

Here circling colonnades the ground enclose,

a thousand. What an awesome hang-out! Rebels and social rejects unite! We

And here the marble statues breathe in rows:

even did all that and returned home with an Italian map, not knowing the

Profusely graced the happy town appears,

street on which our hotel was. We ate dinner, then went to sleep exhausted.

Nor Rome itself her beauteous neighbor fears.

(The beds and curtains are rainbow colored.)

—Ausonius

Day 2

W

e're on the Cosmos Tourama bus on the way to Hotel Poppi in Venice, and our current guide says it will be about 3 hours, including a lunch and coffee break This morning- oh, someone's wrecked. I had to stop and do a quick sketch. I had a few seconds at the red light. Next page for this morning's events...

*Where sunless rivers weep
Their waves into the deep,
She sleeps a charmed sleep:
Awake her not.
Led by a single star,
She came from very far
To seek where shadows are
Her pleasant lot.*

*She left the rosy morn,
She left the fields of corn,
For twilight cold and lorn
And water springs.
Through sleep, as through a veil
She sees the sky look pale,
And hears the nightengale
That sadly sings.*

*Rest, rest, a perfect rest
Shed over brow and breast;
Her face is toward the west,
The purple land.
She cannot see the grain
Ripening on hill and plain,
She cannot feel the rain
Upon her hand.*

*Rest, rest, for evermore
Upon a mossy shore;
Rest, rest at the heart's core
Till time shall cease:
Sleep that no pain shall wake;
Night that no mourn shall break,
Till joy shall overtake
Her perfect peace.*

We took a taxi (Kim and I) to the Santa Maria della Grazie (it's where the Last Supper is) because we couldn't find the others. We figured they'd already be gone. While inside Melissa found us. It was not a big place. It was dark and with little lighting- we couldn't use a flash. The woman who is restoring it is doing an unbelievable job. She only has about the right half completed. We went into the Cathedral next door. It was Palm Sunday, so I bought a palm branch (for a donation). I'm not sure why tourists are allowed to walk around during mass...

On the way back to the hotel, we stopped at the Duomo Cathedral. [We just passed Bergamo.] Duomo was (duomo)jestic! Breathtaking. Gothic. Cream-colored statues everywhere on the outside, must have taken centuries to decorate. The doors had a mass of many bronze sculptures and inside were wonderfully patterned marble floors, groin vaults and massive pillars.

We went (walked) up to the terrazzine and the roof. I could have spent years there. We found about 100 things to look at every step of the way. [It's hard to write on the bus...] I've got to come back later this week...

Dream Land

by Christina Rosetti



Milan Cathedral

Day 4

We're on the bus on the way to Rome. Yesterday we were on Venice. We bussed from the hotel to the docks and then we boarded a small, but tightly packed boat, which took us over to Venice. We docked four bridges down from St. Mark's Square.

Once at the square, Breda turned us over to a local guide. She gave us a seemingly long, but brief history of Venice, the Square, the Basilica, the Clock Tower, the Bell Tower and some general helpful information about Venice. She finished her part of the tour by dropping us off in the shop of the Venetian glass blowers.

We watched one of the masters make a horse in about 15 seconds. It was amazing. We met at 10:50 to take a gondola trip, which was nice, but cold. I'm glad we did it because they are being phased out.

Venice was absolutely amazing and hypnotizing. Bridge after bridge connecting each island, galleries; alley after alley, history at every corner, architecture and art everywhere. [We're just passing Ravenna. Dante's tomb is here. And the only school of the Mosaists.]

Wait, soldier, wait, fleeing your comrades' death,
wounded here at Perugia's bloody wall,
turning your bloodshot eyes, hearing my labored breath—
I was the man beside you through it all.
Save yourself now, escape back to your family,
but hide your tears, nor let your sister know
how Gallus, though he fought free of the enemy,
was by a random spear at last brought low—
for if she find men's bones scattered in Tuscany,
I would not have her guess I perished so.
—Sextus Propertius, *I. xxi*

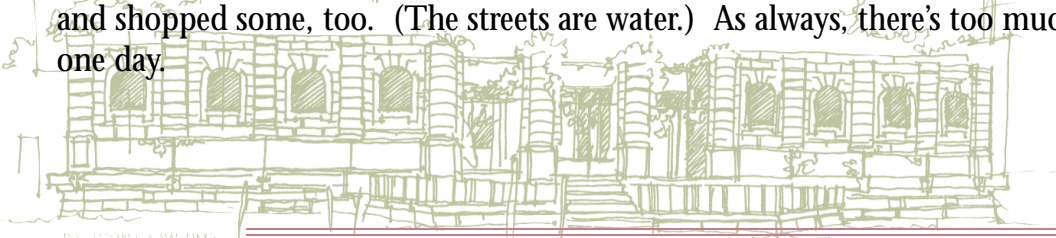
The Bridge of Sighs



Following is a history lesson from our guide... San Mareno, the oldest republic in the world, was founded by Marinus in 301 AD, who fled from Dalmatia. It is famous for truffles (rare mushrooms that are black, look like coal and smell musty) and herbal liqueurs (as many varieties as you can think of, even artichoke!). It is also a tax-free state.

Rome has a population of 4 million people and consists of three sections: the Papacy (the Vatican is a state within a state), Ancient Rome and Modern Rome (after the 1870 unification). The Catacombs in Rome are carved out of volcanic rock and are comprised of about 64 sets. Tivoli is a villa of fountains (800) that are a natural aqueduct built by Hadrian, son of Lucretia Borgia. She was one of only two female Popes.

We visited the Peggy Guggenheim Collection and L'Academie, where there were Tintoretto's and many Byzantine works, as well as some other styles and rooms. In the afternoon, until 4:50, we wandered the alleys and visited the previous museums, and shopped some, too. (The streets are water.) As always, there's too much to see in one day.



DAY 4: VENICE & ROME

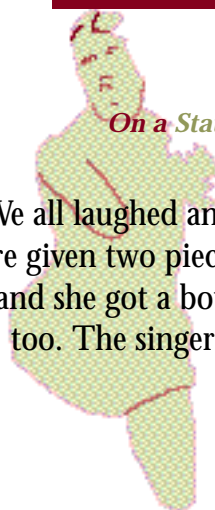
Day 6

I did not write yesterday because after things started happening, I did not have time. We left around 7:30am and stopped in Assisi in the early afternoon. We walked up the hill through the town to find the Basilica which houses St. Francis's Tomb and one of the best, if not the best, panoramic views I've ever seen. We walked into the Basilica and down the stairs to get a glimpse of the tomb. Then we walked back outside and up more stairs to the top level where we found the walls to be covered with frescoes by Giotto. They were not ones with which I was familiar, except for two, but they were remarkable in person. The rest of the walls and ceiling were covered with patterns and decorations and scenes, too much to ingest with one or two looks. The time taken to decorate almost every inch of space seems incomprehensible. Then off to Rome...

We did a quick introductory tour of Rome last night before dinner. We went by the "Wedding Cake" and the President's Palace with statues of the twins Castor and Pollux attending, the Trevi Fountain, Castello San Angelo, a quick view of the Colosseum and the ruins of the Caracalla Baths. Dinner was what we had been waiting for, four courses with all the wine we could drink. Fabulous. We had a flautist and guitarist/singer strolling around during dinner for entertainment. They actually played "Country Roads" (you can't get away from it!). We all laughed and had a wonderful time. The Sandland's from northern England were given two pieces of cake and a bottle of champagne for their 30th anniversary and she got a bouquet of roses. Women traditionally receive a rose after dinner, too. The singer will be in the States in July. Small world...

*Disce mihi quum portas,
volumus regem? "Tonatem"*

Tell me, fierce eagle, through the air
Whom do your mighty pinions bear?
"I carry Jove omnipotent."
Then why no longer grasp a flaming brand?
"He is in love—his thunder's spent."
For whom, fierce eagle, is great Jove
Fired with the leaping flames of love?
"For a fair boy his heart does bleed."
And why so mildly do you turn
On Jove your eyes that used to burn?
"I speak to him of Ganymede."
—Marcus Valerius Martialis
BOOK 5, EPIGRAM 55
On a Statue of an Eagle Carrying Jupiter



We did a whirlwind tour of Ancient Rome, the Vatican and St. Peter's Basilica, as well as the Sistine Chapel. We looked down on the Roman Forum from a terrace. The Colosseum was phenomenally over-whelming, but we did not have much time, only enough for a few pictures. Our guide, Stephano, told us that it could hold 60,000 people and could be exited in about twenty minutes. Constantine's Arch was there, too, and an old ruin of a temple to Venus and Rome, which still gave an impression of being huge, even though not much was left...



The Colosseum

Day 7

We're driving through Tuscany now, where the Etruscans first settled and were wiped out by the Romans. I've seen lots of olive groves. The Etruscans drained the marshes in this area with underground channels, which the Romans continued to do. We passed through Tarquinia a little earlier and the Silver Mountains and the Tyrrhenian Sea are to our left...

We're just passing through Grosseto where there is an air force base and where they make Sambucco. I think it is interesting how they plant rows of trees around the fields, sometimes in ones or twos, sometimes in groves to help fertility. These are some type of pine. These trees and the others they use for this purpose, poplar, are trimmed around the bottom so only the top is allowed to branch and leaf out.

We went to the Vatican and Sistine Chapel. On the way to the Sistine Chapel, we passed through the Hall of Candlesticks, with original Roman sculpture (most in fragmented shape), the Hall of Tapestries, in which the color and detail was stunning, the Hall of Maps, which some monk painted, fairly accurately (in the 17th century?). Then we went into the Sistine Chapel, after our guide talked for what seemed a long time and gave a sales pitch for a couple of books, leaving us about ten minutes to see the inside of La Cappella Sistina.

I would have liked to have been able to have stayed longer. I mainly focused on the ceiling, since the lower areas had not been restored and the Last Judgment was covered. The ceiling of the Chapel, our guide told us, was and is flat, but it is painted to look curved—an optical illusion, just like the tapestry where Christ is dining with two doubters and the angle of the table seems to move with you as you continue down the hall to the right. The ceiling looks amazing restored, but all I have to compare it to are the pictures I have seen in books, etc., before and during restoration. A good example of how much better it looks is the panel where God is creating the Sun and the Moon. It was very hard to find the Moon, except the one man's derriere in the old version, which Stephano pointed out. In the restored version, it is easily seen next to his right side.

Good Friday



Among the public works Caracalla left at Rome were the splendid Thermae named after himself. Architects declare that the cella solearis, as built by him, defies imitation. For the whole vaulting is said to rest on gratings of copper or bronze, placed underneath it; but its size is such that those skilled in mechanics say that it could not have been made that way.

—**Historia Augusta** , Caracalla, 9

The Caracalla Baths

Too soon we moved on and, being late on tour, Stephano basically ran through the next part of the Halls. Consequently we only saw the pieces on exhibit as we walked hurriedly by them. We did stop for about three seconds to see the world's largest and smallest books. Then on to the world's largest and most richly decorated basilica—St. Peter's Basilica. It was enormous. The scale was hard to determine. Stephano said it took 300 years to complete. Bramante started it as a Greek Cross and Michelangelo added more to make it a Latin Cross and another artist completed the facade. The Basilica is breathtakingly beautiful and almost incomprehensible. The decadence in

Shadows

Then, too, our shadow in the light of sun
Will often seem to move,
To follow in our steps and mock our gait.
If indeed, you choose to think,
That air bereft of light can move,
Follow the footsteps and the gait of men;
That which we call a shadow can be nothing else
Than air bereft of light.
Assuredly,
Because in certain spots in due array
The ground is cheated of the light of sun
Where we in strolling block the light of sun
But as we leave, the ground again is filled with light;
On this account it comes to pass
That what was body's shadow seems to follow still
As we proceed by straight on course.
New rays of light are ever pouring forth;
The old ones go as fast as fire burns wool.
And so, the ground is easily despoiled of light;
Is filled again with light to wash away the shadows dark.
In this we don't admit it all
That eyes are fallible.
It is the task of eyes to see the various spots of light and shade.
To reason out—whether the light's the same or not;
Whether the shade's the same, which now is here, now there—
This is the task of mine.
Eyes can never know the nature of the universe.
Do not assign to eyes the faulty reasoning of the mind.

—Lucretius

Square of
Miracles



The next day, Friday, was spent mostly on the bus, again, with a lunch stop in Pisa's Square of Miracles, which includes the famous leaning Tower of Pisa. It is sinking because of subsidence. Every building in the square is leaning, but not so drastically as the Tower. It was leaning at a steeper angle than I thought it would be. It was strange to see it in person. People can walk to the top, at their own risk: there are no railings. This is only allowed at certain times of the year. Afterward, we had lunch: minestrone soup and my main dish was pasta with a spicy tomato sauce.

Back on the bus, I slept most of the way to Florence, waking up just as we arrived at a tour hotel. We drove to a nearby restaurant for an included three-course dinner. The House Chianti wine was fabulous. We started with Minestrone Soup and bread, then had roast pork or turkey with potatoes and carrot (every vegetable I have had here has been cooked perfectly). Dessert was a mixed fruit cup: Mista Fruitte.



Santa
Croce

Ameana
worn out whore
know what she wanted
a whole sawbuck
(yeah that's the one
with the ugly snoot
shacked up with that chiseler
Dickie-boy from Formiae)
she got any uncles or cousins or anything
supposed to look out for her?
they better call in her friends
and send for the medics
that gal's screwy
how long's it been
since she took a look
in her mirror?
—Catullus, # 41

Day 9

I'm behind again, but I hope to catch up now. As of the moment we're on the bus from the Hotel Valmarina in Florence to our first hotel, the Ibis, in Milan. We stayed at the Hotel Poppi in Venice and the Hotel Caravel in Rome. Now to bring the journal to the present...

We rode back into town for dinner on Wednesday and ate at a small ristorante in one of the piazzas a few blocks from the "Wedding Cake" (The Memorial to Emmanuel II). When we were on the bus (not our tour bus, but on a public bus), going back to the hotel, we realized we could have caught the bus right on the doorstep to where we ate because it drove around that piazza on its route. I had Lasagne al Forno, Mista Insalata and a delicious torte with loads of liqueur in it—Topsy Cake, as the menu read.

Thursday morning we drove to the meeting point in front of St. Peter's Square, and a local arrogant, boring guide took us to the catacombs. We just went hurriedly through one, guided by a Fra, who gave us a little history about the catacombs while we sat on the pews in the underground chapel. Throughout the tombs and the chapel, fragments of tombstones were mounted in the walls, the oldest in Greek (few) and the rest in Latin. The tombs were short; the Fra told us the people who stayed in there averaged much shorter height and that one-third of the tombs were tombs of children. We saw one fresco in the arch of a tomb: St. Peter, I think, and St. Jerome. It was hard to see, dark, faded and falling away.

After leaving the Catacombs, we went to Santa Maria Maggiore, which housed the chains that supposedly were used to shackle St. Peter. Miraculously, the two had linked themselves together after his crucifixion. Then we went to a little unknown church on the hill, which became famous because it houses the Moses by Michelangelo.

Sonnet XXXVIII

Give back to my eyes, you fountains and rivers, the waves of
those strong currents that are not yours, which make you swell
and grow with greater power than is your natural way.
And thou, heavy air, that dims the heavenly light to my sad
eyes, so full of my sights art thou, give them back to my weary
heart and lighten thy dark face to my eye's keen sight.
Earth, give back my footsteps that the grass may sprout
again where it was trod; and Echo, yet deaf to my laments, give
back thy sound; and you blest pupils give back to my eyes their
glances;

that I another time may love another beauty,
since with me you are not satisfied.

—Michelangelo

It also has, below the altar, like St. Peter's Chains, what are believed to be splinters from Christ's coffin. A marble sculpture on the wall depicted the Angel of Death—a skeleton with wings and a scythe. In the Hall of Tapestries, three tapestries depicted the Slaughter of the Innocents and other violent events. The Catholics seem to be fascinated by death...

Our guide told us some interesting information about the Moses, who

commissioned it, etc. It was supposed to be first in a series for the Pope, but he died and, to make up payment to the next Pope, Michelangelo quickly created the two statues on each side when he was seventy years old. The veins in the hands of Moses are different sizes because of the difference in the way the arms are situated. There is a scar on the right knee where Michelangelo became frustrated and struck it when it would not talk to him, even though he believed he had created perfection. One of his students tried to claim the work as his own, so Michelangelo carved his profile into the beard right below the chin as a signature.

CITTA' DEL VATICANO 1000
P.M. ANGELOTTI

After going back toward the meeting place, our local guide let some of us off in the Piazza Venezia because it was closer to the Pantheon, which is what we wanted to see next, instead of going back to the hotel early. Kim and I walked to the Forum Romanum and, we were going to walk on it, but it was too expensive, so we walked to Trajan's Column and then to the Pantheon. It was carved out of one piece of stone, with a hole in the top (oculus) to let out smoke. It was originally a pagan temple. The Christians, or whoever, have made it grandiose and, I suppose holier, by decorating the whole inside with patterned marble floors, walls, statues and paintings. I guess it is so holy that no one can even sit on the floor, because we tried to sit down just to take pictures and change film, but they freaked out and made us stand up.

**nice little set-up those bastards have got
darling Mamurra and Caesar dear
no wonder; the same brush tarred them both
one caught it at Rome and the other at Formiae
the spot sank right in and'll never wash out
(two little twins with the same disease
same sweet little school for their Ph.D.'s)
one's as bad the other: just take your pick
they've started a partnership "Girlie's, Inc."
nice little set-up those bastards have got
—Catullus, # 57**

The Pantheon

**Forum
Romanum**



We took bus 94 back to the hotel for a small break, then we walked to the Caracalla Baths, on the Circus Maximus below the King's Palace and to the Temple of Vesta and the Temple of Fortune. We had to walk all the way to the "Wedding Cake" just to find film, because we had both run out. So on the way back, we took almost a whole roll of 36 exposures each. We walked through the Caracalla Baths and took most of our pictures there. The Baths were huge. Many of the mosaic floors and even the drain holes were still partially or totally intact. They used dark red, white and dark green colored marble stones to create the various patterns on the floors. Some of the capitals and other mosaics from the walls or ceiling were lying around, mostly in fragments. It is hard to believe the whole thing was covered in marble. We were pretty tired, but after we walked back to the hotel, going by the beginning point of the Appian Way and through Hadrian's Wall at the Southern entrance to Ancient Rome, we walked around the corner to a Chinese restaurant. Why Chinese food in Italy? It was wonderful. The menu was in Italian and English and some of the dishes were Italianized. The waiter only spoke Chinese and Italian. It was kind of ironic and funny. I had Szchechwan soup with noodles, fried wontons and Chicken with Chili Sauce.

Day 1100

We have just boarded our Delta plane in Malpensa, Milano. I still need to write about Friday and Saturday. We just received the menu and the choices of entrees all look tasty. The movie is going to be The Age of Innocence. Can't wait to see it. Now, Florence...

On our bus ride, we drove through the "rich" part of Florence (and it looked it) before going into the hills for a panoramic view of the city. In the center of the parking lot was a bronze copy of the David. In the city, we stopped briefly on the steps of Santa Croce while Breda gave us our briefing and instructions. Breda had arranged a demonstration in Petrucchi—The Leather Factory across the piazza. We watched a man apply 24kt. gold powder in a pattern onto a photo album cover. Later, I bought one to hold some of the pictures I took. I also bought a \$165 pair of Italian leather nero shoes. I had needed a good pair of dress shoes for a long time and they are beautiful.

Kim, Mrs. Grassell and I walked to the Uffizi and the line was extremely long, so we set off for L'Acadamie, where the David is. Mrs. Grassell was worried about time because she, her brother, sister and husband were leaving at noon to visit some family in Monte Catini Terma, so she broke off from us and went to the Medici tombs with Mr. and Mrs. Cornfeld. Kim and I only waited about twenty minutes to get into L'Acadamie, but we thought it would have taken longer. One of my preceding sketches humorously depicts our first impression of the David, but it wasn't quite so bad, though the scaffolding on each side was distracting and interfering. We both liked the 6 unfinished works lining the hall preceding the David better than the David itself. But the David was gorgeous, pristine white marble, flawlessly sculpted. We did not look at much else in L'Acadamie because we had to go to the Uffizi...

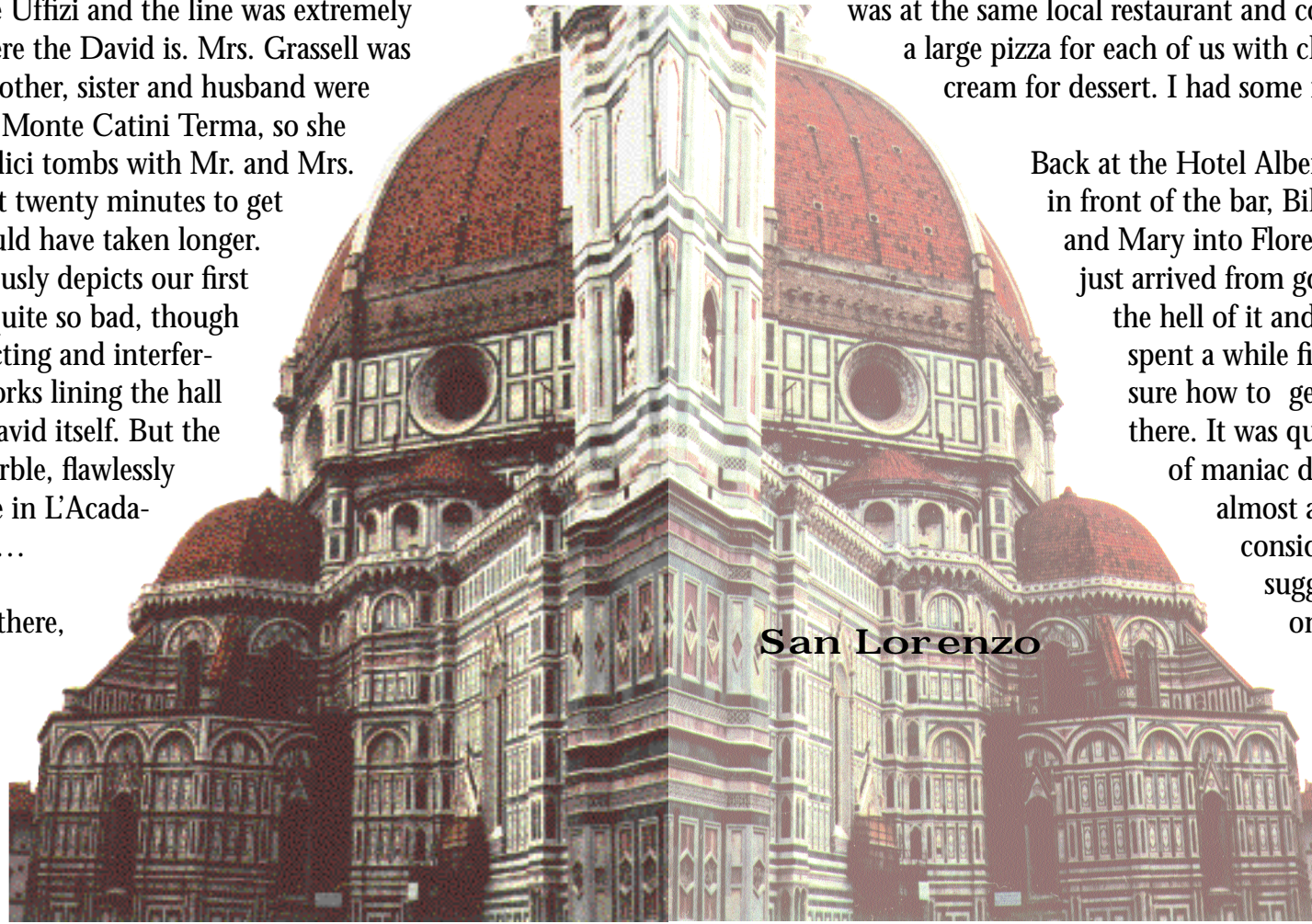
We waited in line a little over an hour there,

and I got lunch for Kim and I while we waited. The halls of both wings were lined with Roman portrait busts and other Roman sculptures. In the rooms adjacent to the hall were various groups of paintings, most specifically, a few rooms of Byzantine art, including the three famous Madonna and Childs, a room of mostly Botticellis, a couple of Da Vincis, some Michelangelo paintings and the Modest Venus which we only saw as we walked by because the line for the room was too long.

After the Uffizi, we shopped and almost dropped, including browsing through the gold and silver shops on the Ponte Vecchio, which was too expensive, but nice nonetheless. We took a short break in a cafe after picking up our leather shoes, etc. from Petrucchi. We ordered water and ciaccolato- it was wonderfully thick and rich. In an attempt to fit in as much as possible before the meeting at 5:45, we quickly walked through Santa Croce. I'm glad we did because one whole wing contained many frescoes by Giotto, and the tombs of Michelangelo and many others were housed there, as well as a memorial to Dante Alighieri. Dinner was at the same local restaurant and consisted of pasta with tomato sauce, a large pizza for each of us with cheese and tomato sauce and ice cream for dessert. I had some more of the Chianti red house wine.

Back at the Hotel Albergo Valmarina, while we were chatting in front of the bar, Bill asked if anyone wanted to ride with he and Mary into Florence to return their rented car. They had just arrived from going to Monte Catini. I went just for the hell of it and to see Florence at night. They had spent a while finding the hotel and were not exactly sure how to get to the Avis building, not being from there. It was quite fun because the Italian roads are full of maniac drivers—everybody drives fast, parks almost anywhere and, like Stephano told us, considers the lights and markings as suggestions or decoration. We only took one wrong turn, but that was easily fixed.

San Lorenzo



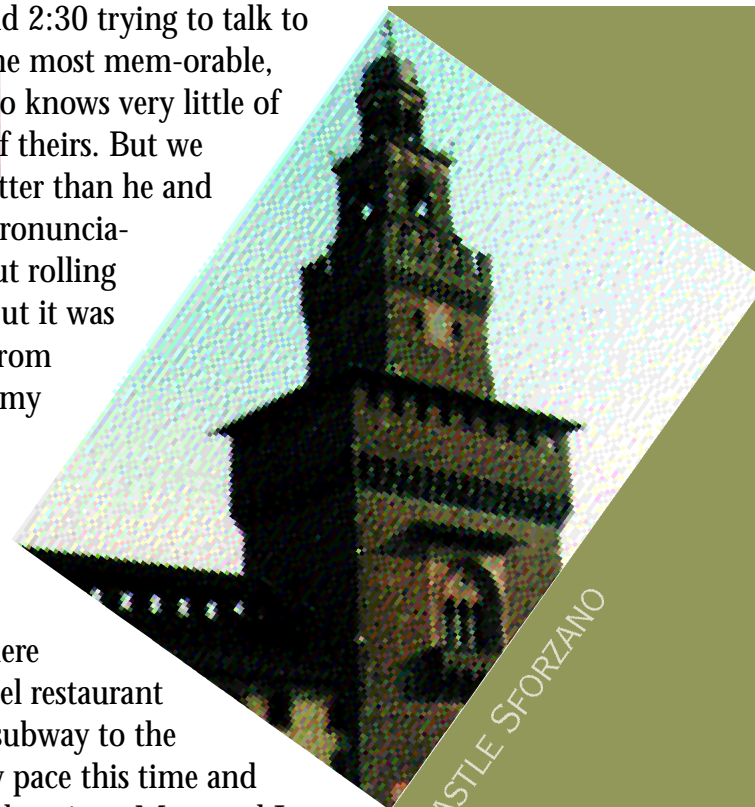
The problem was waiting an hour for a bus, of which we were not even sure if it would take us to our hotel. Luck was with us and we got to the hotel after midnight. Tamara was still at the bar talking to Giovanni Melini. We decided we needed a drink after that experience. Mary and Bill especially needed one after driving through the mountains and city without being familiar with them.

Bill bought all of our drinks. Mary left after her first because we had to pack early (which was not stopping me). I had a Jagermeister, a beer and some other things I do not remember the name of at this second. Bill went upstairs about 2am and Tamara and I stayed until around 2:30 trying to talk to Giovanni. We had a great night, one of the most memorable, trying to communicate with someone who knows very little of your language while knowing very little of theirs. But we did it. Giovanni and I communicated better than he and Tamara: we both made fun of some of her pronunciations. Giovanni gave her a hard time about rolling too many R's in prego. I was exhausted, but it was worth it to communicate with someone from Italy in a casual setting. It just reinforced my idea that we are all the same, we just have different customs and ways of communicating.

The next day, Sunday, was our last day in Italy. We drove back to Milan, arriving there about 12:30pm. We had lunch in the hotel restaurant and then Mary, Bill, Kim and I rode the subway to the Duomo. We wanted to see it at a leisurely pace this time and Mary had not gotten to go to the top the last time. Mary and I discovered a good topic for a master's thesis: studying each statue to find out who they were and why they are there. Some of them, very few, differed in style from the rest or were placed where none of the others were, which piqued my curiosity. We

were all amazed at the amount of work that went into creating it, the sculpture, the decorative sculpture—all different, the design of the roof, and the thought put into the design for the water drainage system.

We had some drinks and fries at a Burghy—it sold beer, was severely clean and the bathrooms had a doorman! We took the subway back to have dinner. I had Tuscany Ham with Cabbage in Vinegar and Rice with Herbs. They were both very good. Then we packed to leave...



CASTLE SFORZANO

On illusions

Now often in the distance we perceive
The square towers of a town, which yet seem round.
The cause is this:
All angles in the distance must seem flattened out;
Or better said—
The angularity is not perceived at all;
The blow which at closer range would strike the eye
Is dead and never strikes the battlements of sight;
The blows which journey through the distant air,
By frequent buffetings of passing wind
Are rendered blunt.
And so
When every angularity in distant objects has escaped our eyes,
The hard stone piles seem round and smooth
Like objects turned by lathes.
Though not like things which to our closer eyes are really round
They seem with outline shadowy resembling them.

—Lucretius



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Day 6, Assisi, Rome

Day 7, Rome, Pisa

Day 9, Rome

Day 10, Florence, Milan

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