

He searched for her among the horses
Wearing carnival masks of black and red
Filigreed silver and burnished gold
Musical notes on their braided manes
Fluted Antonio Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*

Swallows sped above the Grand Canal
Fondamenta and bridges of Venice
Islets duomoed by pearlescent sky
Harlequin equines hummed melodies
Honeysuckle and jasmine emanated

He vaulted a magenta diamantine beast
Glimpsed algae-green hemmed skirt
Above waterlogged Florentine stilettos
She spun around revealing legs
Battered bricks and crumbling stucco

Blind Venetians drifted vaporetti
Plied crimson silk-lined gondolas
Past doges' sinking palaces
Moorish pointed-arched windows
Gilded barber-pole moorings

Trattoria seduced with sparkling prosecco
Chestnut-porcini soup warmed heart cockles
Octopus ink linguini and salmon slivers
Capped by pineapple carpaccio
Pizzicatoed his lemoncello lust

He touched the dowager ankle
Distracted by Murano chandeliers
Illuminating opulent boudoir thighs
Above her dressed-marble facade
Frescoed sepia face-paint peeled

Puccini's *Nessun dorma* mused the air
Sleepless outside Teatro La Fenice
Honing his Italianate senses
She soared heavenward
Chemise swishing around his head

He ogled her wrought balconied
Burano lace-boosted décolletage
Their mutual water-vessels bumped
Passing thralling shadow-muted
Beneath the Bridge of Sighs

Gondolas rocked to oar-rhythm
Each a slick-black gold-bedecked marvel
He gripped her slip-free knees
Exposed her hips and white mound
Of ornate lace ceiling medallion

Masked steeds danced Campo Manin
Over the summer evening bridges
To leaning campanile echoing
Verdi's glorious chorus *Va pensiero*
Undulating the world's oldest ghetto

He surged the Grand Canal spume
To Campo San Marco's golden mosaics
Heard the clapper strike clock-tower bell
Power clutching buffed gondolas
Humid moans escaped night's silence

Breathless retreat under Rialto Bridge
Bereft of bewitching dowager
Music muffled colors calmed
Adriatic whitecaps faded befogged
He hitched a gelato delivery-boat ride

And sensed she dallied elsewhere
While he wallowed in familiar warmth
Opened his eyes to sunlit
Harlequin horse-ghosts receding
In operatic death throes

Dawn's early-bird chorus trilled
Beyond glittering white-water views
Bluff-refreshed spirits rising
Home he greeted sleeping
His Pacific wife's sweet face