

That day in Salamanca

you'd take me to touch history, you said
after we'd lain in bed late into the afternoon
so in the stillness of the siesta hours
we crept through empty alleyways
past carved façades of dripping lace,
the sightless gaze of peep-holed doors,
and slipped into a silent space
poised between then and now.

You touched my fingers to your chest
when we stopped in a sun-split street
where light and dark divided us
sharply as a guillotine.
This city softens stone, you said,
and pressed my palm against the wall.
Sudden heat scorched my skin
where you pinned my hand with yours;
this no holy palmers' kiss
but the gauntlet of a challenger,
your silken lips urging me
to listen with my fingertips.

I felt the slip of shifting sand
the yield of porous masonry
and understood why sculptors speak
of freeing forms that live beneath
the surface of unhewn stone.
Held shaded by your silhouette
I felt the ebb of summer heat
a restive chill that welled and seeped
from within the soft sarcophagus
of Salamanca's sandstone walls,
their fragile beauty testament
to the corrosiveness of passion spent.

I wonder
does it linger there
the imprint of your hand on mine
faint ghost left behind
in the shadows of a summer
when we shared the tender touch
of stone now aged and hardened.

Salamanca's traditional building material is the highly porous Villamayor sandstone. Soft and brittle to the touch, it can be carved into delicate filigree that hardens and weathers over time to radiate a rich golden glow in sunlight.