

1990

## Above Grey Water

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## Above Grey Water

Within  
the darkened light  
the sweet smoke  
swallows me.  
Outside  
the canal splits  
the cobbled streets;  
this side blinks red.

I walk out

through the narrowed lane,  
turn to cross a bridge  
above grey water.  
Another cobbled street,  
sets the same scene.  
Signs jut into the street  
announcing the sport  
of women kept inside.  
Women  
stripped  
down to lingerie  
look down through  
dusted panes.

Beyond that,  
uniformed sex shops,  
at least three to a block,  
their windows filled  
with unfamiliar toys.

I walk on,  
turn a corner  
into a sidestreet.  
Music rumbles  
from cold hands  
in small groups against walls;  
a hat  
awaits reward.  
Amid crated vegetables  
turns a man  
cucumber in hand,  
eyes on me,  
words spoken  
through a slit  
of no teeth.  
Quickly paced,  
a man hisses by.  
"Cocaina, hashisha?"  
Whispers  
down my spine.  
People on all sides,  
their faces mock me  
with foreign smiles.

I do not even  
know with  
whom I came.

I walk on,  
pass the dizziness  
to an open square,

through a door  
down dark steps,  
sit on a stool  
and in the coolness  
breathe  
the welcomed air.

*Susanna Duff*