

In Florence

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On the Piazza della Signoria,
under the gaze of Michelangelo's *David*
(a decent copy rather), among the crowds,
a horse-drawn carriage or two, afternoon sun
assaulting the air, an English bulldog made
his deliberate way from the Uffizi,
heedless of the horses, carts, and people,
all of whom stopped to let him pass, as clearly
he knew they would. *That dog is tight!* exclaimed
a teenage American to his two friends.
Insouciant, regal, fat, the dog strolled to
a gelato shop he entered to lie down,
his legs splayed out, on the cool floor. *He's very*
English, declared the proprietor, who knew
his name, which I've forgotten. Sitting beside
my new acquaintance where he snorted at ease,
I stroked his back and struck up conversation
until a server bent politely over
to say I wasn't allowed to sit on the floor.
Bidding the English gentleman goodbye,
I took my leave, back to the plaza where,
centuries ago, Savonarola
conducted his bonfire of the vanities,
and where, a few years later, church officials
oversaw his hanging for heresy,
his body burned, where Michelangelo's
David (a copy rather) now looks over
the scene I walked across convinced that if
we had a thousand people in the world
with the bearing and tranquility of that dog,

our troubles here would very soon resolve.