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With my eyes closed, I listened to the quiet sounds of daily life in Florence, the chattering of pedestrians, the smooth talk of waiters taking orders for espresso and cappuccino, the rub-rub of rolling tires on a bicycle going by. I inhaled deeply and breathed in the aromas of a classic European city, where scents of baked goods and roasted meat mingled with the effervescent smell of fresh flowers. Even the occasional whiff of cigarette smoke seemed in place in this menagerie of aromas.

I rose, paid the bill, and walked on. I made my way toward the Palazzo Vecchio, framed now in the sliver of daylight between the buildings that sandwiched La Borsa café. As I emerged from the shadows, the towering edifice of the Palazzo before me, I walked directly to the spot where Savonarola had been burned at the stake. He was a seer, a monk who warned Florence of their sins in the 15th century, but he paid for his popularity with his life. But such was life in Medieval times.

Life and death were not supposed to be so fickle in the 21st century.