Vesper Time

This is how I learned to love:
watching a couple climb
the twenty-five stairs
from Spoleto’s old quarter
to the new, even on a day
it was so hot a dropped egg
fried on the stone steps.
Every afternoon at five,
they arrived at the gelateria,
he nearly blind, she guiding
him by the arm, they ordered
one scoop between them.
Some days nocciola, others
pistacchio or amarena.
Always at the same table
she would dip a plastic
spoon in the paper cup
and he would open his lips,
receive her offering
like a communion wafer.

Rarely talking, only looking
into each other's eyes.
Then they headed home
the way they came,
to the house I imagined:
painted espresso cups
on a cedar table,
lace doilies on sofa arms,
framed image of Santa Rita
di Cascia staring from a wall.
Another afternoon adrift
in their calendar of graces.