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When Fire Meets Water

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the blaring staccato of trumpets
the thumping of the guitarrón,
all the jive and sorrow
of two or three languages.
All day the tourists eat and pay.

Children laugh
and slap the burro's flanks.
Flies ride the flicking ridges
of his ears. It's all the same.
The sun moves slow on the burro's back
as he stares through the exhaust
of failing trucks at the great cottonwood
with which he shares, in his way,
the dignity of a rooted life.

When Fire Meets Water / Martha Clark

When I was seventeen
my uncle gave me
three coins from China,
old, with a hole
in the middle of each one.
I learned to throw them six times
and construct a hexagram from their falling.
Each day I would close my eyes
and throw them, reading
Chinese lore to comprehend their meaning.

I learned about the lake upon the mountain,
how the superior man
must keep his mind humble and free,
that he might be receptive
to good advice.

* * *

I had a master who lived
above a purple head shop
selling hash pipes and fluorescent posters.

He taught me Kundalini Yoga
and I learned to move
my fiery serpent up my spine
until light exploded in my head.

We were in love but
his body repulsed me as earthly.
Once we made love in a cave
on top of a mountain
and my spirit rose up,
out of control.
He turned into a demon
with fangs and lashing tail and flames
broke forth from his mouth and freckled skin.

* * *

I learned that I was highly evolved
spiritually because my eyes
were far apart in my head.
That is the sign of an old soul,
he told me. I was the perfect
receptive woman-pupil, always reflecting
the beauty of my soul through my eyes
which shone like pools of water in the sun.

From my coins I learned
of the abysmal lake
and the light-giving fire.
Once my hexagram read:
Fire in the lake: the image of Revolution.
In time you will be believed.
But, it said, revolutions
are extremely grave matters
and should be undertaken only when
there is no other way out.

Tui above, Li below:
the great man changes like a tiger.
With my coins, I left him.