Masthead Logo

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¹⁹⁷⁷ 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.

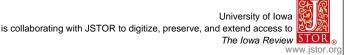
I learned about the lake upon the mountain, how the superior man must keep his mind humble and free, that he might be receptive to good advice.

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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.

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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.