We headed to the water. There was no shock of cold or hot, only the immersion, sinking into the water. A few minutes of adjusting gear, my apparatus for breathing. Pale, white luminous jellyfish, a pause until they became harmless, swaying, they enfolded me. A dance of light on coral, living coral, flickering reflections from delicate sea fans and rich green, towerlike cones. I examined a lionfish, keeping a respectful distance and made my first dive.

I held my breath, and pushed my body from the surface of the ocean to what lies below. It was then I heard the Silence, el silencio.

I came sideways along a cluster of living coral, and felt the delicate sway of clear white jellyfish, an encouraging applause of invisible hands.

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Cuba. Underwater and away from the world, the world of invasion and tour busses, cruise ships and what is to come.

Americans will ruin this place, I thought: jet skis and the hoards of tourists.

Later, when I couldn't hold my breath any longer, I came back up for air. The quiet so deep my skin was glistening, thankful for the green mangroves and the invisible cities that lie beneath.

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It's all so beautiful here. Waterfalls fall into waterfalls, green into sandstone, white foam erupting under falling water. Desire, of course, is in the mix, but it's colored the richest green. Muy rico; rich and varied, this new green. It is cobbled stones that lead the way up a worn trail, worn smooth from hundreds of years of people passing, it is suckling pigs running around in the yard waiting to be captured, it is the brightness of birds, like the drop of blue on the wings of the smallest hummingbird in the world, the Cubans call zun-zun, and of Passion Flowers like droplets of pink held in the palm of the little Cuban girl, Allie's hand. She picks one for me and, as we hike down the trail holding hands, letting the wind pull whips of hair out from behind our ears. She tells me a story in Spanish with such emphasis I cannot begin to translate. “It is a story just for you, so I cannot translate it for you.” Her languid father says as he follows us down the trail. He says it is a story just for me. It is about water, that much I know, and how water is life. I heard the words from the girl.