



≈ CUBA CASCADE ≈

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.

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.

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.