

CANE | FIRE

SHANI MOOTOO

POEMS

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FIRE

MOOTOO

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Book*hug Press

Right there behind me, Vahli.



Up ahead, Deborah.

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*My mother was an Anglican
My father was a priest
Together they prayed real hard
When spring came (and the Pitch Lake overflowed)
They reaped the smoothest stones you've ever seen*



Did Water Fall?

It was definitely not the rock-a-bye kind of rocking
nor did the world
gently swing.

I believe the ship's bells
clanged. Of course

I would have wanted
sanctum

in her hands. The lights winked.

I winked back.

When she cried out, so did I.

No one sang.

I thought I heard, *When the bough breaks.*

More likely, she'd have asked, *Will the bow break?*

He did not say, hush. Or laugh.

The water jug on the dresser trembled.

I always hear her

scream

my name.

Veranda

From city eaves dangled Jack Spaniards' papery nests

like schoolboys' term tests, crumpled

tossed and caught in the black-painted

wrought-iron garden

that rose above rows of pots

of curly-leafed

bread-and-cheese begonia

lushly fringing

the wraparound

black-ledged veranda

and though your belly was full

of cake and milk

you pressed each shell-pink pillow of begonia

for a soupçon smear of yolk-yellow citrus sour

and waited

and as you waited, you contemplated

mechanics of de-stinging

principles of taming

red-bellied yellow-banded Jack Spaniards

then slowly, below, begins the babbling

and the flow

you crouch behind your potted jungle

and watch

the charm of girls in green skirts and white blouses

glimmer through the latticed doors

of a white-walled madrassa

whose golden star and crescent moon

shine brighter than heaven's own stars and earth's own moon

and you marvel

at how hummingbirds know

why the muezzin sings

and why at this time on the street below

white-capped men in white dresses flow