a chat between Li Bai and Du Fu

by strannikov

Du Fu: midnight

western lodge atop a stark thousand-foot cliff:
at midnight past reed-blinded windows I stroll.

shooting stars on the river flash arcs of white.
sands glow dim in the leftover moonlight late.

birds are hiding in the dark homes of their trees—
likewise, in their waters, large fish find their depths.

friends and relations scattered over the world:
in these days of raging war, no word gets through.

Li Bai: tippling with the moon

beneath blossoms, a lone jug of juice—
just as alone, I fill but one cup:

I raise it to toast the rising moon
and spy my shadow toasting with me!

the moon never understands my thirst,
my shadow goes along with my gag:

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here, moon and shadow, friends of my cup!
isn't this the pulse of life in spring?

I sing—the moon, a pendulum, sways!
I dance—my shadow writhes higher still!

tippling, we shared a grand good evening—
tippled, we each crawled off on our own:

but agreed on the wisdom of wine,
we plot to take our task to the stars!

Du Fu's first dream of Li Bai

graves left or graves lost, into silence death sinks:
it's leaving the living that leaves us such pain.

south of the Yangtze, where swampy fevers plague,
an exile banished, from whom no words have come.

—and now my old friend visits my dream
(to memories, I add those of dreams):

he does not look quite himself, it's true,
but he's walked a long or longer road.

his ghost blew in from maple groves blue and green
then blew past, leaving me in gathering shade.

ensnared now in someone's sticky legal web,
could you fly to escape on a pair of wings?

the moon sinks low and lights the rafters,
I can't fail to see it light your face:

never sink into deep waters dark,
never let horned dragons conquer you!