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Weighing Coal in Oaxaca

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Weighing Coal in Oaxaca

Behind the oldest door in the city
which is not a door so much
as a pair of fractured stones,

in a house filled with shadow
works a woman sorting coal.
In the hours before customers come

she digs at the foot of her dark mountain
separating good coal from shake,
weighing the stone that rings

like delicate silver. Tacked to the bin
beneath a patron saint, gilded,
hangs a calendar blackened with dust.

Young women speak kindly to her,
who like a quiet goddess brings
fire to their hearths.