

Tregenza Roach

ANNIE MASON GARVEY 1915



I wish that
you had been
afraid of the sea,
that you had kept
a clear memory
of its awful strength,
that somehow
you had remembered
how it kept you
from reaching
out to touch
the golden coast
whenever
you longed
to go home.

And had they
not taken and
sealed the books,
to put them
so far beyond
your sight and reach
then you just might
have had the chance
to read of Homer
and the creatures
of the ocean deep
who made hell
the lives of men
as they challenged

the water.

Maybe then,
with fear and
with knowing,
taken together,
you might perhaps
have chosen
to make
this island place
a lasting home,
and to wait
with the land
so you could keep
our company
when it was
our time
to come down
from heaven.

But no doubt
that other things
were meant to be
and that not even
our lion king,
the man called
Freeman Garvey
with strong loins
blazing fire, loins
which took you
to death's door
six times over,
that he neither
could inspire you
to condemn the sea.

Then on that day,
all the sinners
who could stand
to suffer more,
they gathered
and watched you sail,
watched you work
the cruel wind
to make of us
a tribe bereaved.

Zewa held her own,
a quiet mourning,
did not bawl down
her young belly,
did not then know
how very much

she would need you
to teach her
how to manage
the canepiece
and husband,
and the flock,
as well how
to get blood
from a stone.

She honored you
with anthems
at morning
and with vespers
at the dusk,
and made it so
that no man
could speak
your name
except with
an inclination
to worship,
her mother,
Annie, our queen
in Frederiksted
with her face
against the sun,
still remembering
the Mountain
called Misery
and all those
she left to its care.

Calabash

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