

# Calabash

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*Not Dancing with my Mother*

**By:** ROXANNA FONT

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*Calabash: A Journal of Caribbean Arts and Letters* is an international literary journal dedicated to publishing works encompassing, but not limited to, the Anglophone, Francophone, Hispanophone and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. The Journal is especially dedicated to presenting the arts and letters of those communities that have long been under-represented within the creative discourse of the region, among them: Aruba and the Netherlands Antilles, Maroon societies, and the Asian and Amerindian societies of the region. Calabash has a strong visual arts component.

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## *Roxanna Font*

### NOT DANCING WITH MY MOTHER

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We bottleneck into thick  
air, bodies just now swaying down to the last song  
and leaning in for the next. *This place looks like*  
*a Spanish plaza I danced in once--*

*all night* you say

and then the Cuban band starts up again,  
the floor, a pot of white rice lifting  
into a boil, expanding.

You elbow to and grab  
the rail, displace a couple who edge out  
resentful. Squeezed beside, I watch  
a platform at the room's heart  
where bodies move  
like onions in oil.

*¿Qué creen que es? ¿un waltz?*

Then your feet pounce into a three-step,  
a stamping that grows into your hips' wide  
pendulum, through to your mouth opened  
to the chandelier overhead,

letting go

laughter under drum, tres, horn.  
My hands grip the rail, counter your pull  
on each downbeat. It shakes so much  
it might just give.

I watch a mother take the floor  
with her teenage daughter. Neon lace gloves  
to the elbows. I swallow hard and ask  
*¿Quieres bailar?*, rail trembling.  
*But I AM dancing*  
you cry.

On our way out before the set ends,  
car keys readied in my hands, I turn toward  
a thumping above, find a ceiling  
of beveled glass squares--

windows

to shoe soles stepping, footprints  
for a hundred paper dance lessons  
at once.