

# Calabash

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*Chez Zouhra*

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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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*Calabash: A Journal of Caribbean Arts and Letters*

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*Peggy Garrison*

**CHEZ ZOUHRA  
(A MOROCCAN SONG)**

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Casablanca  
at night  
phosphorescent city  
orange building rectangles  
through Zouhra's apartment  
windows  
by day  
the gray Atlantic  
from 9 stories high  
(her mountain windows)

afternoon wind  
conversation on her  
worn couch and chairs—  
sweet tea  
gold-trim tea glasses  
a few biscuits—  
Zouhra's—  
family way-station  
stopover  
en route to  
en route *from*

from our Marrakesh  
honeymoon  
we bring her cookies  
shaped like pebbles,  
a polished wood egg—  
from the Rabat zoo  
my imitation of a giraffe

microscopic life episodes  
make Zouhra  
and her daughters  
laugh—

goats, the *hammam*'s vapors  
a farmer's hand-ploughed field  
move through  
her living room—  
a conversation museum

\*\*\*

late afternoon—  
the magazine kiosk  
in front of  
the tall white building—  
pharmacy in shadows  
across the street—  
the view from  
Zouhra' roof—  
blowing swatches of  
colored laundry—  
pale lemon sun  
cream-color buildings—  
nostalgia twisting  
my chest—  
nostalgia  
slanting  
and pulling

\*\*\*

Zouhra the tree—  
her dark beautiful  
daughters  
the ornaments—  
chubby in her pale green djellaba—  
brackish-pool eyes  
(so many mouths  
to feed)  
Zouhra breeding schemes

Zouhra, the well's pail—  
down  
9 flights of stairs—  
up  
9 flights of stone—  
empty  
full  
empty—  
empty  
full  
empty—her day's  
rhythm

\*\*\*

night—  
one weak bulb  
lights the iron-grille  
*ascenseur*  
the long-dead *ascenseur*  
metamorphosed  
into a huge wastebasket

after the day's  
journey  
our bags stuffed  
with *petites contes*  
we climb the dark  
stairway  
climb  
climb  
climb  
climb  
the dark  
dark  
stairway  
'til the high windows  
'til the shining orange buildings