

*Tregenza Roach*

## WHAT TO TELL A CHILD ABOUT THE SURRENDER



On the day  
I forced you  
from my womb,  
precious daughter  
I saw his face  
your father,  
and so believed  
the loud chorus  
of old women  
who proclaimed  
that with his features  
you were born  
for good fortune.

And in this way  
I lived your life,  
taking for granted  
this blessing  
which was yours,  
while I gave  
to the others  
of my body  
all I could spare  
to mitigate  
the suffering  
which seemed  
their part and parcel  
to carry, to bear.

So it was not  
the perfect choice  
to leave you  
behind me,  
at the mercy  
of the years,  
while I played out  
the conspiracy  
with raging water  
which in truth  
was no culprit,  
innocent, too,  
just as the rain.

And it has been  
my single prayer  
that you forgive  
any trespass  
now that you know  
what it requires  
the title mother,  
with no life  
to call your own  
neither space  
nor solitude,  
just so much  
the weight  
of hungry tears  
which follow  
the troth.

For what  
to tell a child  
about surrender  
so as to make her  
neither humble  
nor weak.  
What to say  
in those times  
when a soul  
grows tired  
of blackness  
and the burden  
it conveys,  
when your dreams

are not safe  
in the land  
that did birth you  
and night wind  
sounds the call  
that you must go.

I have made  
my own peace  
with the water  
for each time  
that I cursed it  
to its core  
for each wave  
I disdained  
which gave support  
to that vessel  
so it could dash forth  
and carry me  
from the only  
world I knew.

I kept you  
as I washed away  
and though my eyes  
grew old and weary,  
until no single thing  
no thing remained  
to interrupt the sky.  
Then to gaze  
instead before me  
so to discover  
a world anew,  
prepared to pay  
the price of dreaming  
in this raw life  
so long as  
breath sustains.

And know that  
this old heart  
did never once  
forsake you  
although beloved  
you might recall best  
the angry welts

which I crafted.  
onto your back  
that childhood day  
when in play  
you set fire  
to a canfield  
before the harvest,  
and I poor woman  
was bereft  
at the thought  
of owing them  
all of our lives  
for such damage.

It pleases me  
that you are woman  
with a flock  
to call your own  
that in your eyes  
you see me still,  
but not martyr  
not the sainted,  
just as warrior  
riding high  
atop these lands  
until we are called  
into the fire.

December 27, 2006

# Calabash

A JOURNAL OF CARIBBEAN ARTS AND LETTERS

Volume 4, Number 2 / Spring-Summer 2007

## Information about this work:

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*WHAT TO TELL A CHILD ABOUT THE SURRENDER*

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**URL:** <http://www.nyu.edu/calabash/vol4no2/0402015.pdf>

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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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