

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