

Jacqueline Bishop



Pa

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A small house backed by blue dark hills  
started out one room board shack.  
Mortar grew around it cement added  
bedroom veranda living room;  
was still unfinished when my Great Grandfather died,  
never got as big as he wanted —

now wild grass fills the house up.

To the right of the house earth dropped;  
to the left, earth rose;  
stones were packed against the down side  
that we would not fall over,  
lose ourselves to the leaves  
so many fruit trees. Do you remember

how we all sat quietly, waiting  
for an avocado to fall,  
roll on down the down.  
How we scrambled —  
all ten-twelve of us —  
to get the avocado first.  
Do you remember that, Pa?

Near the outhouse,  
big nutmeg tree —  
dark brown nuts,  
cream/yellow skin —  
we tried forcing open,  
you said, *"No, it will come open  
in its own good time."*

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Calabash

When the nutmeg flowered  
Ma used it to flavor cocoa  
she grew on the down  
beaten to dust  
in hard wood-brown mortar,  
drunk each morning  
with fresh cow's milk.

How we'd come rolling from the up,  
that rich green grass,  
thickest in the world, Pa,  
greenest too,  
Ma chasing us around the house with a whip,  
grass stains being the hardest to get out.

Now I stand in the old, abandoned house,  
shout your name to the blue mountains —

Not even an echo returns.

