

Jacqueline Bishop



## Those Were My Young Green Days

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Great Grandmother over me making sure I pounded  
the cocoa beans right.  
It took me all summer to learn,  
Great Grandmother shook her head, said:  
“Listen girl,  
cocoa pods grow green,  
ripen yellow,  
          mature purple,  
burst them open with a stone,  
look, like this,  
*eat the soft white insides;*

Or grind them in a mortar  
until the cocoa is your color,  
roll into balls,  
put to sun,  
then drink cocoa-tea hot in the mornings.”

Huddled between Great Grandmother’s legs  
as she combed my hair, she reached for  
the pomade that made Mother hold her nose.  
          “*But see here,*”  
Great Grandmother would cut her eyes,  
          hiss her teeth,  
“Same oil you use to use,  
but stop,  
Kingston make you into fool-fool girl.

Calabash

Now be careful with Star Apples —  
them will bind you up.  
The big tree at the edge of our land  
    bear only purple fruit;  
Some trees only green fruit.  
Break the Star Apple open,  
    eat only the white part,  
    stay far from the pink part —  
bind you bad girl.

At night you walking,  
let somebody call to you twice before you answer —  
never answer a first call.  
Turn 'round twice you pass silk cotton tree.  
Rolling Calf start to run you down  
make sure you reach junction before it  
lie down like a star.

Spirits can take the shape of animals,  
if you ever catch a fish that is too big,  
have eyes that look strange,  
put it back where you get it from.  
Don't carry home stray animals,  
one start to follow you home —  
spin two times to confuse it.

Sunday you going to church, cover your head,  
and I hope your mother don't have you going  
those none-soul churches in Kingston.  
Learn first to dance a yard  
before you dance abroad,  
keep your head up high,  
you will go far,  
you is you great grandma's child."

