

# Maghreb

by Brandon Marlon (August 2016)



Swart villagers compelled by the magnet of loot  
suborn mulish asses during a nighttime jaunt  
toward snow-capped peaks of the High Atlas  
in a quest to encounter the Berber marabout  
reputed to be encaved in a vaulted cavern  
hoarding riches amassed from votaries.

At the base of the heights the pack animals,  
firm of frame and fine of feature, abruptly resist,  
displaying their independent temperament

and an eldritch awareness of the mischief to come.  
The villagers forgo all quarrel, snatching up sacs  
designated for spoils then clambering over scree,  
cudges in search of a doddering codger.

Footsore and wayworn, they discover at last  
the remote marabout hunched over a prayer rug,  
kowtowing eastward, immersed in muttered verses  
and oblivious to their uninvited presence,  
unaware as they disperse to comb his subterrane  
for lucre rumored to astound the sighted.

The sedate figure stirs as his guests regroup  
empty-handed, lorn in their frantic pursuit of pelf.  
Seemingly abristle, the marabout cannot help  
grin at the predation of scapegraces  
credulous and susceptible to hearsay,  
succumbing to overheated imagination.

He strokes a tercelet's pinion with a gentleness  
setting the villagers at ease; in a clement tone  
he assures them of his scanty assets,

instead beguiling them with a wondrous  
store of lore to defy the gloom until  
daybreak relieves the stars and prayer's hour recurs.

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**Brandon Marlon** is a writer from Ottawa, Canada. He received his B.A. in Drama & English from the University of Toronto and his M.A. in English from the University of Victoria. His poetry was awarded the Harry Hoyt Lacey Prize in Poetry (Fall 2015), and has been published in 100+ publications in Canada, U.S.A., England, Scotland, Ireland, Spain, Greece, Romania, Israel, India, Pakistan, Thailand, Singapore, South Korea, Australia, South Africa, Nigeria, Trinidad, & Mexico. [here](#).

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