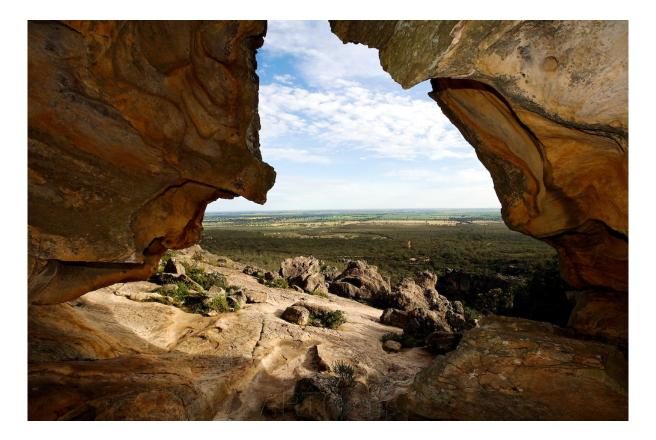
Maghreb

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, cadges 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.

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. <u>here</u>.

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