

*Natasha Marin*

## MALADE IMAGINAIRE



Back home his mamá is still sweat-stuck  
to a folding chair. Her wide bottom welted  
by bands of plastic and unrelenting time.  
She examines the point in her palm  
where her life-line fades and her son returns  
with feet heavy as the yellow icebox carcass—  
molting curls of sun-bleached paint.

He supposes that she is not thinking of him—  
her big baby boy cut from her own  
skin after 14 hours of rib-scraping mutiny.  
She is only there—hoping for an Indian daughter-  
in-law to make *douglas* with, so she can watch  
the arch of their feet stiffen  
like wet candle wax.

It is now 10:44 p.m. and Monsieur Duránge  
is reading post-colonial theory. He is not  
mesmerized by the machete-streak of orange  
makeup along her chin. No part of him crumples  
like her shoulders in that hot crevice of a kitchen.

She is not fingering the damp scarf of her hair  
when he leaves ink prints on clean pages.

# Calabash

A JOURNAL OF CARIBBEAN ARTS AND LETTERS

Volume 4, Number 2 / Spring-Summer 2007

**Information about this work:**

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**URL:** <http://www.nyu.edu/calabash/vol4no2/0402031.pdf>

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*Calabash: A Journal of Caribbean Arts and Letters*  
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