

Lelawatee Manoo-Rahming

PARANG SERENADE IN TWO PARTS



I.

It wasn't your song.
No Rio Manzanares di you beg,
"Dejame pasar" neither
Did you open the door
When paranderos cajoled,
"Abreme la perta! Abreme la puerta!"

Los esposos Maria y Jose
Van desde Nazareth,
But you climbed
Onto a donkey cart,
Burrowed deeper into tall, tall,
Sugar canes La Paille, Caroni, Morong.

Quatro and mandolin Din Din Din,
Es hora de partir,
Did not rouse you from a coir mattress
Sleep that only Cannes Brulee
Sweet smoke sugarcane fire
Could rouse you awake in Petit Careme.

Las maracas Clap Clap Clap,
Bottle and spoon Ping Ping Ping.
Daisy Voisin Parang Queen,
Serenno sereno her pagnol rhythm
As foreign as ground beef pastelle
You never ate sacred Mai Gaay

Nor did you speak Espanol.
Your lights weren't candles at Christmas
But dejays at Divali.
El nino Jesus was no Baby Krishna blue
And Jesus' birthday went with rum,
Curry manioc and chutney.

II.

But I have songs for you my mothers
In my blood. I take you with me
My Ajee, my Nani, my Mowsee
My Kaakee, my Daadee, my Phoowaa.
I serenade "Dejame pasar Rio Caroni",
On my way to Chacachacare,

"Dejame psar Rio Valencia",
On my way to Toco,
"Dejame pasar Rio Ortoire",
On my way to Guayaguayare,
"Dejame pasar Rio Guapo",
On my way to Icacos.

I sprinkle your ashes on every corner
Of this Iere, Land of the Hummingbird.
I absorb parang through my pores.
I partake of pastelle and puncha crème.
I understand, "Din, din, din,
Es hora de partir."

"Din, din, din, camino de Belen,
Los esposos van desde Nazareth."
I know the Christmas story,
The gift of Baby Jesus born in a manger,
And how in his name Guanahani
Became San Salvador,

Then sugar became king.
They crossed you over the Kala Pani,
But when you cried, "Darvaza kholna prasann!"
No one understood you.
All the knew was, "Abreme la puerta!"
And they kept the door closed.

Per oven, vena qui mi Ajee, mi Nani,
Mi Mowsee, Kaakee, Daadee, Phoowaa.

Come, walk with me,
I have opened the doors for you,
Vaya con dios, “Shubh Christmas,
Naya saal mubarak ho!”

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