

Monique S. Simón

NIGHT LIGHT (Ode to Bolans Village, Antigua –‘Home’)



It was night, so it was dark.
Island dark
Bodies shades of dark
Dark of pure, unadulterated legacy from the earliest thoughts, arts, struggles
Dark of mixed ideas, sciences, faiths, romances
Dark lightened to a hue fashioned by imperialistic subjugation

It was night, so it was dark
Island dark
Black pepper, clove, cinnamon, nutmeg, vanilla bean, cocoa bark dark
Pot “bun”, *pegao*, burnt crust dark
Mamma hand turn stew round, throw-little-sauce-in-palm-of-hand-and-taste,
add-more-spice-till-food-taste-like-‘de-cook- hand-good-tonight dark

Daddy say fish sale no too good today, dark
Brother say can’t get work no matter how much he try dark
Aunty say she pregnant again and can’t self pay she first child school fees dark
Sister looking ‘pon American picture-book and want dress, shoes, bag in new color dark

Granpappa say he get good joke by rum shop today
Make him laugh
Mamma, daddy, brother, aunty, sister, young child who shouldn’t understand joke all start to laugh
What a laugh!
Mamma say she shouldn’t laugh
“De joke directly too devilish,” too dark...

It was night, so it was dark
Island dark
A car pass and shed light on ‘de porch and Granda shiny silver teeth in his mouth

look shinier still when he laugh
And sister look up to 'de sky and see a spattering of stars and 'de moon nearly full;
and close picture-book
Brother find record player and old Bob Marley album and play *Rat Race*
Mamma light candle and draw curtain
Curtains start to look different with light behind it--pink get soft like cotton,
green look like sea water, and blue look like sunny sky

A neighbor man run an extension chord from his house to his yard, hang a bulb
over an old wood table and spread out a set of dominoes on top
Whole village start to show light
Lamp light,
Porch light,
Flash light in hand, lighting dark road in front of walk to neighbor yard

A neighbor woman start to laugh light, light, like a man say something to she, she
can't repeat

It was night, so it was light
Island light
Home for the night light
Man whispering to woman light
Child teasing child 'bout daytime, schoolyard game light
Extension chord attached to hanging bulb over old wood tables with dominoes, cards,
and checkerboards light
Bob Marley, Short Shirt, King Obstinate, Charlie Pride, old-time calypso light
Home from 'de week doing live-in maid job light

It was night, so it was light carried like electric current throughout the night in the small
village...

Tonight, Saturday night
Bolans was dark but it was light, real light
Free from the rest of Antigua light
Free to be a small, old town, with dark, ancient people light
Reaching towards something remembered in between the despair of Island dark
Dancing sparks carried from house to house, porch to porch, yard to yard

A stereo blasts out Redemption Song, "Oh Pirates, yes they rob I..."

And people get light with song, with smiles, with tears, and say "play that one again,
Sah!..."

It was night. Island night.
For a few moments, dark and light danced so sweet and light

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