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**Para sa Iyo  
This is not Poem**

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this is simply a lift like others before,  
 others to come, no counseling session here, no  
 crisis hotline, no lifeboat thrown to save the drowning.

So nothing happens: only silence for the rest  
 of the ride, like the quiet shipwrecked sailors share  
 when food, water, and words have ran out.

What a trip this has turned out to be: the hum  
 of engine the only music soothing the lack  
 of speech, the mumble of ads, license plates,

and road signs taking the place of conversation.  
 I find solace instead in the sight of buildings,  
 overpasses, taillights, speed. Nothing happens.

I get off at Ayala, you head home to Parañaque,  
 we bid each other goodbye: see you tomorrow,  
 thanks for the ride, study for our quiz. Your door

shuts tight on the last of my syllables. End of story,  
 end of the road. As I walk to the jeepney stop,  
 I feel like the sea on an empty beach: ceaselessly

repeating to itself its wash of words, the sea shattering  
 to shore, to no one; the same stories over and over:  
 waves rushing into wide open ears of coves.

**RAMÓN C. SUNICO**

**Para sa Iyo**

*(Para kay P.)*

Natanggap ko ang iyong liham  
 malayo kong kaibigan  
 isinilid sa sobrang  
 binalot sa kalungkutan.

Nang aking buksan  
 agad-agad sumingaw—  
 hindi halimuyak  
 ng pabango  
 o ng dahon ng ilang-ilang—  
 kundi ang amoy  
 ng ulan, ng hamog,  
 ng lamig at pangungulila.

Hindi ko na tatanungin—  
 “Kumusta ka na ngayon?”  
 (Malalalim ang kagat ng titik  
 sa papel na iyong pinag-initan.)

Kaibigan, malungkot ang tulang  
 kinopya mo para sa akin.  
 Ibigin ko man, hindi ko ubos-maisip  
 kung paano kita pangingitiin.

Ito lamang:  
 sumisid na rin ako sa dagat  
 na maitim. Saksi ko  
 na nagwawagi rin  
 sa liwanag ang dilim.  
 At kung meron mang  
 magtatangkang humalik pa  
 sa akin, sa dulo ng ligaya,  
 sa puso ng yapos  
 na ayaw magpakalag,  
 kanyang malalalahan  
 ang katas ng amargoso.

Ganito pa man,  
 ganito pa man,  
 pilit kong sinasagot  
 itong liham mo sa akin.

Bakit nga ba  
 nilikha ang kalungkutan  
 kundi para may magawa  
 ang ating mga kaibigan?

**This is not the Poem**

*(For Karina Bolasco)*

This is not the poem  
I started to write for you  
About men whom I do not know  
Who live along the coast of China.

They roll boulders back to the sea,  
The weight breaking their hearts  
The sand under their feet giving way  
Offering countless opportunities to despair.

While the air sprays more salt on their eyes  
Blinding them to the differences  
Between sweat and tears and sea.

Years after these men have died  
Their children will harvest these stones  
Now rubbed smooth by the sea's hundred hands  
Now licked clean by the sea-god's cats.

Shaped by storm and fathers' love  
They'll serve as garden ornaments,  
Counterweights for fern and frond.  
They become grace notes for landscapes  
With ponds that know only ripples, not waves.

But this is no longer that poem  
I meant to write for you:  
Its stanzas have cracked  
Under the weight of these stones.  
The brine has scratched off  
All its rhymes.

And the sea, leaking out  
From between its lines, is gone.  
Escaped. Leaving me to drown  
In all the things I want to say.  
Washing all the metaphors  
it bears for you  
Away.