

Het volgende fragment is het begin van een kort verhaal van Josef Essberger.

To Chapel

She was walking lazily, for the fierce April sun was directly overhead. Her umbrella blocked its rays but nothing blocked the heat - the sort of raw, wild heat that crushes you with its energy. A few buffalo were tethered under coconuts, browsing the parched verges. Occasionally a car went past, leaving its treads in the melting pitch like the wake of a ship at sea. Otherwise it was quiet, and she saw no-one.

In her long white Sunday dress you might have taken Ginnie Narine for fourteen or fifteen. In fact she was twelve, a happy, uncomplicated child with a nature as open as the red hibiscus that decorated her black, waist-length hair. Generations earlier her family had come to Trinidad from India as overseers on the sugar plantations. Her father had had some success through buying and clearing land around Rio Cristalino and planting it with coffee.

On the dusty verge twenty yards ahead of Ginnie a car pulled up. She had noticed it cruise by once before but she did not recognize it and could not make out the driver through its dark windows, themselves as black as its gleaming paintwork. As she walked past it, the driver's glass started to open.

"Hello, Ginnie," she heard behind her.

She paused and turned. A slight colour rose beneath her dusky skin. Ravi Kirjani was tall and lean, and always well-dressed. His black eyes and large white teeth flashed in the sunlight as he spoke. Everyone in Rio Cristalino knew Ravi. Ginnie often heard her unmarried sisters talk ruefully of him, of how, if only their father were alive and they still had land, one of them might marry him. And then they would squabble over who it might be and laugh at Ginnie because she was too simple for any man to want.

"How do you know my name, Ravi?" she asked with a thrill.

"How do you know mine?"

"Everyone knows your name. You're Mr Kirjani's son."

"Right. And where're you going Ginnie?"

She hesitated and looked down at the ground again.

"To chapel," she said with a faint smile.

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