

Princess Urduja to the Arab

By PACIFICO M. CANLAS

*I would still wish those boundless joys were lost to me;
Those slaves of yours black and powerful
Bearing gold upon their shoulders
Your jewels sparkling on your shimmering robes
Fleet camels trekking miles of golden sands
Dusky footmen wielding sharp Damascan blades
I shall not learn to love these.*

*I still refuse your desert air
Perfumed by flowers fragrant on your palms
Your silvered music flutes playing atop mosaic domes
Shall never win my virgin heart.*

*Could I leave these, these lovely isles
Which like my soul are virgin still?
These mountains blue and silent shall be mine
My bamboos whispering above my purling brooks
The break of day upon my forest hills, the vagrant
call-of woods
My stalwart trees noisy with homing mayas
I shall not leave these for Arabian sands.*

*Your perfumes?
I have my "kämpuput" blooms, my dimpling "sampaguitas"
Drooping "ilang-ilangs" magic to the morning air
Singing rivers fragrant with fallen leaves in June
I shall thirst for dew glistening—upon banana leaves.*

*Black slaves? Your sleek Damascan swords?
I have my lordly Maharlikas, more powerful than blacks

Men fierce at war, spears sharper than Damascan blades
Men, singing sad kundimans to the crescent moon
Men gathering white rice and camote roots
From my brown earth's bosom.*

*Could I crave more for Arab chieftain braves
Drifted to my shores by Fortunes fickle waves?
Upon these isles a virgin I was born
Till living out my years, a virgin I must die.*