

When Children Sang

When children sang that night in Poza Rica,
the crickets hushed. Bristling roosters forgot
how to answer their rivals down the street
called Salvador. Two thieves repented at the
crosswalk, giving up all their plans to rob
the jeweler. Pilgrims abandoned their march.
They snuffed out candles, stopped to listen. Each
child became my child—her white dress a robe,
his red tie a blossom of *sangría*.

“I am a child of God,” one sang, each note
a prophet’s staff parting the sea around us,
and when the other children’s voices found us,
far from home, no matter how dark the night,
we felt at home that night in Poza Rica.

—Donnell Hunter

This poem won second place in the BYU Studies 1998 Poetry Contest.