

# The Night That Sings

by [Dario Beniquez](#) (September 2023)



*The Angel, Standing in the Sun, J.M.W. Turner, 1846*

## Stranger in a Strange Land

I was born in Queens, NY, during a cold October day.  
Rockaway Beach was my playground when I was a child.

But *why* do I think this is not so? One time  
the Atlantic tried to carry me away, to a distant land,  
  
to an island, I think.

A dolphin saved me, took me to shore.  
I was thirteen. Later, I flew to the Mojave Desert  
  
where scorpions raised me.

## Seekers

So I walk out into the universe to test my existence.

Why does worry preoccupy the city, the planet?

In the migrant center, I hand out a box lunch  
to a little boy drumming a cartoon tune.

A mother sits on the floor, bottle-feeds a child.  
She looks up at me. I give her two boxes.

Souls in a strange land, different pace, mortal time...

A man stands in a cold corner of the migrant center,  
he carries a canvas tote bag, inside the bag, one short sleeve  
shirt and dungarees.

He cautiously walks up to me and says, "Tengo hambre."  
I reach for another box lunch.

The stench of God is everywhere, in the water, on the walls,  
in the air.

The world spins on, the city stamps on. Migrants,

folks, knock on doors.

## **Angel of Poetry**

I am the poem you refuse to hear,  
the one on the edge of your tongue  
the one resounding in your ear,  
your mind.

I repeat myself for lack of want.  
I come to you in your dreams,  
an angel in disguise.

I tell you intimate things about yourself,  
your life your lies. Each wingbeat  
tells you who you are, you are isolated,  
deserted, in a crowd of solitude.

I am soul speak, a lyrical truth, singing to you  
in an ancient tune. Open your world let me  
in. I will bless you; comfort you. I am the voice  
of light, a luminaria unto your soul.

## **From the 22nd floor** ***For Judy***

of Skyline Flats on Beach 20th street  
beyond the jetties, one cannot see  
the maritime vessels departing Jamaica Bay  
for the mighty Atlantic,

but one can see the Manhattan nightlights,

to Battery Park, beyond that to Freedom Tower  
that reaches to the seventh heaven.

If you were to walk these streets,  
you would be awestruck by the stream of luminous  
sparkles racing by, and then you would wonder  
if you were in a universe where light-creatures rule.

And as snowdrops fade on Park Avenue,  
you in your oceanic dream world  
would not want to leave this place,  
Lucky City—not even in your far-off dreams.

## **Red Robin**

Nothing startles me, not even the red robin swishing by, or  
the crashing sound of a tall waterfall crunching the ground.  
Stillness reigns like a moonlit blanket of snow in the Alps  
where the crawling eye lives that slimy sci-fi creature waving  
tentacles, saying, “I got you, now, sucker!”

Nothing jolts me, except, perhaps, that one earthquake in  
California that hit 6.7 on the Richter scale. It woke me up at  
4 a.m. to books smacking the floor. Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*  
tore me from my spell with a knock on the head. But the ground  
stopped shaking in 1994, and the world seemed safer.

What triggers me now is a humming plane overhead; it turns out  
nothing, after all, but a hummingbird over an orange flower.  
Or, my Lord! A virus has gone mad.

## **The Night That Sings** ***For Trinidad Sanchez***

I dream angels. I see angels, behind doors, peering out of high-rise windows, wings, dark, ready for flight. Angels perched on roofs like gargoyles at Notre Dame.

I see them on the avenue in the supermarket at the vegetable counter, fruit stand, grabbing crab apples no one eats.

All over, angels hover on street corners, at bus stops, some on benches eating sandwiches; angels with dark eyes looking at people as they rush by.

I once saw an angel under a bridge, wings folded, homeless. At the playground, I saw small angels climbing the monkey bars. But most of all I see them at hospitals, angels waiting at the ICU, a place where Trinidad once slept. At night, they rub their wings as souls travel to paradise.

## **Skynet** ***For Bill Grace***

Flossy our cow was the first to go,  
swooped up by a green beam,  
up to the underside of a blinking

Tobacco pipe airship. Then  
the rusty John Deere Tractor, Nelly,  
my beloved dragster, our economic

means taken too, gone, leaving  
the cornfield in dismay.

What would they want with a machine?

How can I ever be happy again without

Nelly's sweet touch? And Flossy, where  
is she now? The ice cream maker not taken

sits frozen, grinning, by the back shed.  
This is crazy; I fear alien dissection. They,  
also, took the tattered Britannica from the barn.

What's up with that? How can I survive?  
I could turn to writing about farming  
like Klinkenborg, the writer, who sold his farm.

But the sky has swallowed my inspiration. My wife  
and kids took off to the city; I pray—not to return.  
Who knows what these strange beings will take next?

The house is gone. I want Flossy back. They can keep  
Nelly.

I'll just live in Papa's clapboard house,  
and write and write about those stinking aliens,  
who took my cow away.

## **The Green-Blue Sea**

They will go first  
before we do  
the roaches, rats, sparrows,

or the possum with the glass eye that waits  
every day by the stairs  
for the leftovers,  
no one brings

because we may not be here  
unless we change our natural  
point of view.

We may perish, no doubt about it,  
no land to spare, no water in the pale-blue tank  
glistening,

“Holly Oaks Township, Welcomes You, Drive Safely!”

We’ll have no place to play.

*We still have time*; we can survive,  
with or without science. We’re sentient

beings, no doubt about it.

Scallops, crawdaddies,  
even a chicken or two, field-fed  
heifers,

add a plot of land to the ranch:  
we can survive. The earth

taketh away; the earth giveth.

Listen to the ants,  
follow the pelicans,

out toward the green-blue sea.

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