



The Theater of Night

Alberto Rios

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“Ríos writes in a serenely clear manner.”—*The New York Times Book Review*

“Ríos’ verse inhabits a country of his own making, sometimes political, often personal, with the familiarity and pungency of an Arizona chili.”—*The Christian Science Monitor*

Following the success of his National Book Award nomination, Alberto Ríos’ new book is filled with magic, marvel, and emotional truth. Set along the elusive Mexican-American border, his poems trace the lives and loves of an elderly couple, Clemente and Ventura, through their childhood and courtship to marriage, maturity, old age, and death.

From *The Chair She Sits In*

*I’ve heard this thing where, when someone dies,
People close up all the holes around the house—
The keyholes, the chimney, the windows,
Even the mouths of the animals, the dogs and the pigs.
It’s so the soul won’t be confused, or tempted.
It’s so when the soul comes out of the body it’s been in,
But which doesn’t work anymore,
It won’t simply go into another one
And try to make itself at home,
Pretending as if nothing happened . . .*

Ríos’ narratives are both surreal and hyper-real, creating the hard, sweet weave of two lives becoming one. The National Book Award judges noted that Ríos is a “poet of reverie,” and like the best of storytellers he *charms* his readers, making us care deeply for—even love—these people we read.

Alberto Ríos is the poet laureate of Arizona and teaches at Arizona State University. He is the author of eight books of poetry, three collections of short stories, and a memoir. Ríos is the recipient of numerous awards, and his work is included in over 175 national and international literary anthologies. His work is regularly taught and translated and has been adapted to dance and both classical and popular music.

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