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Traveling Man

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TRAVELING MAN

We are going to talk about the wanderer who carried a winged surprise on his back. He had wrung out his days in foreign parts, faced burning seasons shaded by the invisible cloth of his memories. For years his figure silhouetted on the horizon grew larger, or became an unrecognizable dot on the landscape. One day a sandstorm awakened him on the outskirts of Copiapó; another time a flock of parrots, green on the Black River, surprised him. And if death was waiting for him around one corner, he would turn another. He had collected so many steps that they used him to frighten children, who tried to throw stones at him on his never-ending wandering through the streets. The men from my village remember him as an old man already, shooing flies away with his hat, drinking double shots of firewater. He hardly ever got off his horse then, they say. When she was young, my grandmother was in love with him and spent moments in ecstasy in spite of her father's shouting that he would whip her. Perhaps we inherit our restlessness from him, and desire alone fashioned our features and linked our souls to his bird-like fate.

Translated from the Spanish by **Alita Kelley**