

Take Flight

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Take Flight

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Michigan winters. Ice and snow. And cold. There was never ice and snow back home in Mexico. Miguel hates it here. He hates the cold and the unforgiving icy light. He hates the mean kids in his first-grade class. He hates being away from his friends. He is alone here. Except for Papi. Papi says to wait. Friends will come. But Miguel doesn't want these friends. Miguel wants his old friends.

Miguel walks home from school. Hated school. He walks on ice-crusts drifted snow. He plays a game... How Far Can You Walk on the Icy Crust Before You Break Through?... He does some kind of internal "clench" when he slides across the drift. He pretends a rope is attached to his sternum, a rope that rises to the sky; a rope he draws taut; a rope that, as he tightens, lifts him up just a bit. Lifts him off the snow and ice, keeps him from breaking through. He is met with mixed success as he crosses the drifts. His too-short boots fill with snow and then frigid water.

That night, he dreams. He's in this Michigan backyard standing on the white icy crust. A star-dusted blue-black sky arcs above. A crescent moon shines with pale silver-and-aquamarine light. In his dream, he takes a breath and closes his eyes. He turns his head up, and spreads his arms wide as if to capture and hold to his chest the argent moonlight. He does the "clench" and tightens the rope. He adds a stance, a graceful stance: he gathers himself up, puts all his weight on the ball of his left foot and extends his right leg back; the tip of his right shoe just touches the ground. He clenches again slowly, slowly. He feels the pressure on the sole of his left foot lessen and lessen. He gently lifts off the ground. And it's a lift, not a flight. He is not flung from the ground, but gently rises. One foot. Two feet. Four feet. Ten feet. When it feels right, he tries something. He wants to over there. Across the fence. South. He wills it, and moves forward. It is that simple. In his dream, he lifts up over the fence in his backyard. It's sluggish, but he floats/flies... South.

He wakes and thinks.

He gets on the scale in the bathroom. He waits for the needle on the scale to settle. It swings left, then right, then left...slower, slower. At last it stops: 93 pounds. He closes his eyes and clinches, he thinks of the rope, he takes the stance, foot barely off the scales...and watches the needle on the scale, maybe there's a quiver.

It's another night. Miguel dreams. He's flying over a city of clean, white, featureless buildings. He fly/floats up and down outside the tall, tall buildings... sleek rectangles of bright pearly white. It's a vast city that seems empty. There's a sense that there's activity inside the buildings, under the surface, a feeling of being observed. It's not malevolent, nor is it welcoming. It's a feeling of indifference.

Another night in a long series of nights finds Miguel back on the scale. He watches the stilled needle on the face of the dial. Ninety-three. He clenches and rises onto on foot. He tightens the rope... Ninety-three...Tighten... ninety-three... ninety—... ninety-three. Tighter. Lift... Ninety—two... ninety...
He feels the pressure on the sole of his left foot lessen and lessen.