

To the Desert

By Benjamin Alire Sáenz

I came to you one rainless August night.
You taught me how to live without the rain.
You are thirst and thirst is all I know.
You are sand, wind, sun, and burning sky,
The hottest blue. You blow a breeze and brand
Your breath into my mouth. You reach—then *bend*
Your force, to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
You wrap your name tight around my ribs
And keep me warm. I was born for you.
Above, below, by you, by you surrounded.
I wake to you at dawn. Never break your
Knot. Reach, rise, blow, *Sálvame, mi dios,*
Trágame, mi tierra. Salva, traga, Break me,
I am bread. I will be the water for your thirst.

Benjamin Alire Sáenz, "To the Desert" from *Dark and Perfect* (El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press, 1995).
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Source: *Dark and Perfect* (1995)



Poet, novelist, essayist, and children's book author, Benjamin Alire Sáenz grew up on a cotton farm in New Mexico speaking only Spanish until he started elementary school. Although his education eventually took him to Denver, Belgium, Iowa, and California, Sáenz settled in the border region between Texas and New Mexico — an area that remains central to his writing.

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