Now I Lay Me

Donald L. Parker
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Down to sleep. Words from childhood
Boring their way through all the years as
I lay awake in this dark apartment on W. 21st.
Sleeping not as a winter rain begins
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.

I see you now as I saw you that day
So many days that summer
By the side of the dirt road picking
Monardas: fuchsia, lavender colors
Against your white blouse. Smell of mint.

Now I lay me down to sleep staring
Twilight sidewalk games before dinner
More sounds than sight, rhythms
From childhood’s comfort
If I should die before I wake

I get up and go to the window sleep
Lost. More images. 21st street is oddly
Quiet at this hour rain creating a scrim
The Tuscan countryside undulating behind
Like the sound of your name—Mariola.

I hear my neighbor’s steps. Key in the locks
Door opening, closing. A cough then quiet sounds
Drifting in, Wynton Marsalis. The bed is more
Welcoming. Mariola. Now I lay me

-Donald L. Parker
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