

# ARIANA

*A Novella*

Ken Taub

*Debussy's Iberia is floating in the air as she dances her fingertips across my back and speaks to me in Swedish in the dark. I have no idea if she is telling me Scandinavian fairy tales or secrets about her own past or what a little shit she thinks I am when I'm not rubbing her shoulders or between her thighs. It doesn't matter, really, because her voice is a fresh pitcher of various lilt, and I just like hearing her speak in the pink music of her native tongue. All of this music is in turn connected by a gracefully long neck to a heart of unreciprocated kindnesses. You could, quite suddenly, turn on the light and look into her green eyes at this very moment and see genuine caring, an entire world of great organic affections, and never once suspect that sixteen years ago, when she was only twenty two, she took the life of a horrid little man in the mountains of La Paz, Bolivia.*

IT WAS 2:42 ANTE MERIDIAN, which is the only way to say it, because it was too far from dawn's light to be morning and not the middle of the night if one tended to arise at 3:45 or 4. The habits of a one-time Zen monk die hard.

He looked out the window of his study and saw more stars than one usually does in a big city, and if it too was not so tired, his heart might have leapt. At 2:44, in the pitch, on the cusp of a Wednesday and a Thursday, his heart merely turned in on itself, not unlike the crooked tumblesault of a chubby young boy.

The lights of the night began to shimmy. All at once the dancing flashes of the farthest stars became a bridge of something electric between the black ocean outside and the other ocean within. This pulsing light-energy seemed to be moving in two directions at once, and who could even begin to figure at that speed which was interior and which was outside. Like the dance of wind and sand, one kind of wave acted upon another, merging in a new chorus of harmony, but without voice. Wave upon wave, cascading particles of nearly nothing moved in the night – and whether they moved by accident or design was anyone's guess, not to mention the longest running debate in the history of the only species that had concocted astronomy, physics, sky high cathedrals, the Great Wall, and The Gong Show.

He stopped thinking about traces of light and started ruminating about food. He had a picture in his mind of what he intended to eat -- buckwheat pancakes

and real maple syrup, warm and thick -- despite the fact that there was no pancake batter in his cupboards, nor any syrup, and that no food would touch his lips for hours.

But after this new wave broke and receded, he refocused on the sky. Then he cocked his head.

There was a kind of music within the moving black, and in this darkness he made out strands that vibrated like the vast wires of an endless violin. These gossamer shafts of ghost light were extremely faint, but no matter. He swore that he was witnessing these deep vibrations not by their light but by their sound, a great noise that bordered between a bass hum and the beginning of a bronchial cough.

“What do you make of this?” he asked himself.

No answer. As was his way, he posed short questions that he left hanging in the air. You could not say the man talked to himself; more often than not, he never answered.

Moving closer to the glass that framed the night sky he scratched himself by the big window on the eighth floor of a midtown Manhattan dwelling, under the twenty-plus stars of night he had been able to see, these far suns, which were all to the left of a lonely half moon.