



# **THE STRANGERS' CASE**

**SONGS & CHRONICLES  
OF THE  
IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE**

**FOR TENOR & STRING ORCHESTRA  
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(2024)**

# THE STRANGERS' CASE

## TEXT

### 1. The Lady in the Harbor

We came by steerage on a steamship  
in a very dark place that smelt dreadfully.  
There were hundreds of other people packed in:  
men, women, children, almost all of them sick.  
Twelve days to cross the sea.  
We thought we should die, but at last the voyage was over,  
and we came up and saw the beautiful bay  
and the big woman with the spikes on her head  
and the lamp that is lighted at night in her hand.

We passed close by the grand Statue of Liberty.  
Big buildings towering up, like our own mountain peaks—  
I was almost prepared to see snow on their tops,  
though it was summer time—  
outlined in the darkness,  
in chains and rows, and circles and ropes of various colored lights:  
diamonds and rubies, emeralds, pearls, topazes and all other gems.  
Never was there such an illumination!  
When we first came we expected to return to Syria.  
But we have stayed until we have put out roots.

**Lady of the Harbor**  
**The Life Stories of Undistinguished Americans**  
**as Told by Themselves, "A Polish Sweatshop Girl"**  
*Sadie Frowne (1906)*

**Such an Illumination**  
**The Life Stories of Undistinguished Americans**  
**as Told by Themselves "A Syrian"**  
*(Anonymous?) (1906)*

### 2. Who Can Pity My Loneliness?

Imprisoned in the wooden building day after day,  
My freedom withheld; how can I bear to talk about it?  
Nights are long and the pillow cold;  
who can pity my loneliness?  
I came to the United States because I was poor.  
How was I to know fate would be so perverse as to imprison me?  
The insects chirp outside the four walls.  
The inmates often sigh.  
Thinking of affairs back home,  
Unconscious tears wet my lapel.

**Island of Angels**  
*Anonymous, translated from Chinese*  
**Angel Island Detention Center Walls (1920?)**

### 3. Whither Would You Go?

Imagine that you see the wretched strangers,  
Their babies at their backs and their poor luggage,  
Plodding to the ports and coasts for transportation.  
Whither would you go?  
You must needs be strangers.  
Would you be pleased to find a nation of such barbarous temper,  
That would not afford you an abode on earth?  
This is the strangers' case.  
[And this your mountainish unhumanity.]

**from Sir Thomas More**  
**William Shakespeare (1601)**

#### 4. The Stranger Within My Gate

The stranger within my gate,  
He may be true or kind,  
But he does not talk my talk—  
I cannot feel his mind.  
I see the face and the eyes and the mouth,  
But not the soul behind.  
Wide open and unguarded stand our gates,  
And through them a wild throng presses—  
Bringing unknown gods and rites,  
In street and alley: what loud, accents of menace.  
O Liberty, white Goddess! is it well  
to leave the gates unguarded?  
With hand of steel stay those who pass the sacred portal  
to waste the gifts of freedom.

**The Stranger**  
*Rudyard Kipling (1912)*

**Unguarded Gates**  
*Thomas Bailey Aldrich (1895)*

#### 5. They Came from Terror and Tumult

They came from terror and tumult  
fleeing the bombed provinces where only  
the death knell tolls—  
They came from the confines of a world  
lost forever...and lost for nothing!  
They carried on horses, on foot,  
in carriages of funeral splendor,  
or on old fire engines,  
everything that is saved  
—in that blind moment of anguish—  
what was a home, a custom,  
a landscape, a time of the soul:  
a portrait of a boy dressed as an admiral,  
a magic lantern projector.

**Éxodo**  
*Jaime Torres Bodet (1950)*

#### 6. Exile

My hands have not touched pleasure since your hands,—  
No,—nor my lips freed laughter since 'farewell',  
And with the day, distance again expands  
Voiceless between us, as an uncoiled shell.

Yet, love endures, though starving and alone.  
A dove's wings clung about my heart each night  
With surging gentleness, and the blue stone  
Set in the tryst-ring has but worn more bright.

**Exile**  
*Harold Hart Crane (1926)*

## 7. When Dawn Comes to the City

The tired cars go grumbling by,  
The moaning, groaning cars,  
And the old milk carts go rumbling by  
Under the same dull stars.  
Out of the tenements, cold as stone,  
Dark figures start for work;  
I watch them sadly shuffle on,  
'Tis dawn, dawn in New York.

But I would be on the island of the sea,  
In the heart of the island of the sea,  
Where the cocks are crowing, crowing, crowing,  
And the hens are cackling in the rose-apple tree,  
Where the old draft-horse is neighing, neighing, neighing,  
Out on the brown dew-silvered lawn,  
And the tethered cow is lowing, lowing, lowing,  
And dear old Ned is braying, braying, braying,  
And the shaggy Nannie goat is calling, calling, calling  
From her little trampled corner of the long wide lea  
That stretches to the waters of the hill-stream falling  
Sheer upon the flat rocks joyously!  
There, oh, there! on the island of the sea,  
There I would be at dawn.

## 8. The Statue of Liberty, New York Harbor, AD 2900

Here once, the records show, a land with pride  
in freedom's watchword! And once here  
The port of traffic for a hemisphere,  
With great gold-piling cities at her side,  
A sculptured goddess with hospitable smile  
And clear torch scanned the isle  
For all wild hordes that sought her.  
'Twas centuries ago. But this is true:  
The tyrant who misrules our land now trembles,  
His serfs digging deep in marshes,  
Drawing from this swampy bed of ancient sand  
A shattered torch in a mighty hand.

## 9. These Strangers

These strangers, in a foreign world,  
Protection asked of me—  
Befriend them, lest yourself in heaven  
Be found a refugee—

**When Dawn Comes to the City**  
*Claude McKay (1920)*

**The Statue of Liberty:**  
**New York Harbor, A.D. 2900**  
*Arthur Wheelock Upson (1908)*

**These Strangers in a Foreign World**  
*Emily Dickinson (1890)*