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DREAMS LOST IN TIME

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INTRODUCTION

It was one of those summer nights where the heat of the day had accumulated inside the house. Miguel prepared the covers of the bed and put them on the couch where he slept every night, the same place where his late wife had fallen asleep in his arms. The music continued to play to complete the day and to fill the void of the silence that reigned in his life. He wanted to reach the end of each day and feel tired enough not to think too much, to avoid reliving in his mind the images of that final goodbye.

This new context in his life had led him to interpret his existence and one of the others in a different way. Miguel had always been naughty and stubborn about everything that he could not understand or accept as if it was fair, while in reality, it was not. Such a trend had led him to a chronic condition of contradicting everything he had considered as irrational regarding human behaviours and relationships, even to the point of trying to oppose life itself. It was this moment, when he lost half of his life, the other half of his soul, that forced him to accept the reality of facts as it is present to our eyes, how much it hurts our feelings with its contradictions and injustices of which we are completely powerless. Then, we finally realize that we are nothing although we represent a crucial piece of Creation itself.

Miguel was living the third phase of the natural cycle of life, the third Season that predated the Winter of his Existence. He had won multiple battles and experiences that had made of him an impenetrable barrier, where only people elected by his own heart could enter this world of his as so personal and private it was. The only moment that he felt weak and helpless was when he lost the greatest passion of his life, although he witnessed the final moments of several members of his family when still a child, yet differently they were. At that hard and cruel moment, Miguel lost the will to live, the will to win this one more battle that life put in front of him. It was as if the Creator imposed him to live a final challenge to his resistance. Nothing had meant to him anymore, preventing him to survive, beating the last period of his existence, the Autumn of his life.

When he lied on the couch, there was in front of him what it had always been his secondary passion. Hundreds of vinyl records were arranged in alphabetical order and by genre, stood in a bookcase that stayed at the bottom of the couch. The old analog sound stereo system with the traditional turntable, amplifier and reel-to-reel recorder, gave an image of its real authenticity, the one that matched this little space of his.

Miguel had always associated his life with music; such was the intensity of this passion of his. The best and worst moments of his life were linked to sounds as through them he could relive all those memories, good and bad, a personal way to exist and correlate events and moments. Every time his friends asked him about his love for music, he answered that Life in nothing but a symphony to which he called "The Symphony of Life", and that absolute silence doesn't exist because even silence has its sound. Around him, all his friends and family shared this world that was so individual and his particular form of living that was associated with a way to experience life, nature and people in a very unusual way. This spirit of his attracted the people who wanted to share this spiritual dimension that was so personal and unique, many of them trying to understand that particular state of mind.

The small apartment where he lived for about five years was decorated in Canadian style, with wood-panelled walls, providing the natural environment of the fields and country life, creating an integration with the forests that surrounded him. Oddly enough, Miguel had always mentioned his desire to live in a small wooden hut where only his music, his books and the company of the one who loved him would be sufficient to fulfill his life. Unfortunately, his professional career dragged him into a different world which didn't correspond to his simplicity of spirit. For him, it was as if life had listened to him and had provided this environment so long desired at this late stage of his existence.

On this wooden wall, behind the recorder, there was the picture of his daughter in his company. In this photograph dated from nearly forty years, father and daughter shared this world of music and literature that was so beautiful and precious. An identical model of that same tape recorder was also part of this picture. In fact, Miguel had bought a similar unit just to relive this ancient environment and all that it represented to his life, the period in which he had been happier than ever, the time when one thinks that we're invincible and eternal, and everything and everyone are beautiful.

On the opposite side of this same wooden wall, a dozen photographs of his deceased wife were arranged. Therefore, mother and daughter were present in his daily life, despite the distance brought by death and different destinies that he had to accept. Given his freedom of spirit, Miguel did educate his daughter in an atmosphere of total freedom; he let her decide for herself about her destiny, even from a young age. For him, our children could not be created for ourselves but for the world, which implied an extreme freedom of thought along with the due respect for the personality of each one of us. In that same context, Miguel had to accept

the decisions of his daughter that later on contributed to a fend between them.

Given the injustices of life and that respect for the self-determination of his loved ones, Miguel found himself completely alone in this Autumn of his existence. What was left to him was to live the memories and occupy his time in the most constructive way he could, fighting the shifting moods that brought him grief and unwillingness to continue living.

Miguel used to fall asleep every night taking with him the memories of all these fragments of time that dominated his mind, his soul. These images would never leave him as they were an intrinsic part of his existence. Also, Miguel possessed a very consistent memory, at the point to remember almost every detail of his life, even those that were reported to periods of an early age. Miguel was a "dreamer", as everyone called him. In fact, he lived a very personal world, as if lost in a dimension outside time, far away from the reality that we have to face every day and that sometimes make us perish.

Time and space had a different meaning to him and for that same reason, Miguel contradicted his existence regarding its natural cycle. This fact helped him to overcome situations that usually entailed behaviours adapted to our age, acting as a youngster while being an adult, or as a "young adult" at a time when usually there is no further motivation than the expectation to reach the end of our lives. This inner strength, the energy that lived within him, was the only flame that fuelled his desire to continue to build for him and for others, the ones he elected to make part of his life.

When he fell asleep, he immersed in dreams which were remembered in its entirety while waking up. It was like going in and out of different worlds, of separate dimensions, nevertheless making part of a "whole" that we ignore and at the same time reaffirms the existence of an existential continuity that we all wish it would exist.

That summer evening, Miguel fell asleep thinking about his days of childhood and dating from more than half a century. Before falling asleep, when he closed his eyes, images of his past and his present run into his mind in a random order as it happens in those final moments of our lives where some claim to have relived scenes of their most distant past until the present day in a few seconds or minutes.

Perhaps because it was an exceptionally warm night, it made him remember his moments of childhood where after dinner he went to the backyard trying to catch fireflies, put them in a jar, take them home and later on, stay awake and watch them during the night. It was like a

chandelier where they were present to his eyes as multiple and tiny lights, like stars in a clear sky that filled the top of that jar, the world in miniature that made him dream while still awake.

Later and still in his infancy, he remembered falling asleep with a small pocket radio that his grandfather had given him and which he used to put under his pillow. That way, the sound was better quality than coming directly from that little radio. The sound seemed amplified, and he felt as if he was immersed in that musical world that was transmitted via radio waves. He used to tune into Radio Caroline and so he knew all the musical hits of that time. Those were small moments of happiness that Miguel could never forget.

At that time, the summer nights were warmer and apparently longer, mostly in a child's world. As children, our eyes and perceptions capture everything in a different way and in proportion to our height and the way we adapt to the environment that surrounds us. Everything looks big and infinite and therefore everything has a different meaning. Later, this scale of assignment of values and meanings will be changing according to our age and the circumstances around us, though contributing to the progress or decline of our ideals and values, finally, of our "children's dreams". He used to call it "dreams lost in time".

It was with these images of his childhood that Miguel fell asleep again while reliving a few moments spent in the company of his dearest relatives. At that time, Miguel was entrusted to the care of his surrogate mother and his paternal grandparents. Alexandra was his second mother, the one who spent time with him and had to put up with all his whims and impertinence. In fact, Miguel had always considered Alexandra as his real mother, until the moment when at an early age, he witnessed her death. At that time the doctors came to the house of their patients and hospital resources were usually seen as the last choice. This context has contributed to the demise of the most beloved being of Miguel's first nine years of existence.

When he woke up the next morning, he recalled those images, those memories where were present his surrogate mother and his paternal grandfather Rudolfo, who was his mentor and that also replaced his father in a certain way. In his first years, Miguel had been raised and educated away from the care and nurturing of his parents, which did not prevent that his training was directed to all that was positive and constructive. Since that age and as a compensation, he was fortunate for the presence and support of others who brought him the needed love and care to overcome this major shortcoming of his life. Miguel found himself sharing the lives of his grandparents, dwelling on the property of the

German Consul in Portugal and it was under the influence of this environment that the first years of his life passed and shaped his future.

He got up slowly leaving behind the "dream world" that had been part of that summer evening and went straight to the room where there was an old photo album. Its pages were about to come away with age and moreover were quite heavy because they were made on a thick card. This picture album whose cover was a dark green, dated back more than sixty years and contained photographs that represented a whole period of family history, images of his past life in the company of their loved ones.

Upon his departure back to Portugal, his mother had left this album he had saved together with other collections of photos he owned. This album brought him the memories of an ancient and recent past. It was through this picture album that Miguel began to relive and write about events related to his life, the return to the roots that translated everything he could represent as a person nowadays.

I. RUDOLFO'S MEMORIES - 1956

Rudolfo was the private driver and bodyguard of the German Consul, and his wife Dolores was the governess of the huge property that belonged to the Consul. Life made it possible for Rudolfo that he served this German diplomat and through the close relationship between them, he consolidated his employment and family situation to a point where his son Ricardo, Miguel's father, became the politician's godson. Later on, this situation of stability would be completely altered by the disappearance of this diplomat.

It was in this context of memories coming from dreams and from that photo album that Miguel concentrated his thoughts. This reaction led him to transport himself mentally to the times in which Rudolfo told him stories, little episodes of his childhood as a teenager and adult. This dialogue that existed between grandfather and grandson contributed to the formation and enrichment of Miguel's education since the content of these conversations was incredibly evolved in cultural and creative terms.

Rudolfo was an autodidact who expressed all his thoughts in an extremely wealthy way regarding expression as he applied a touch of poetry to his words without being a poet. This form of speaking made Miguel think that there are writers who don't notice that they are poets and in fact, the lyrical content of a text can contain more poetry than a simple poem written by an assumed poet.

Miguel still remembered when he used to read some letters in a loud voice and addressed to friends and family. For Miguel, it was like hearing a new story when in reality it was simply his way of expressing himself, without artifice or pretensions but merely his natural form to analyze daily events and behaviours. It was due to those moments that Miguel was able to capture the essence, the soul of the act of writing, everything that can motivate a person to express his ideas in an extremely constructive and beautiful manner.

What impressed Miguel the most was the contrast between the apparent coldness of his grandfather and the beauty manifested in the content of his words. To whom Rudolfo's past was not knowledgeable it would be impossible to identify this contradiction, but this attitude of his was entirely understood by Miguel because he was his small confidant. This behaviour contributed to Miguel's understanding about his messages, those that would usually be addressed and interpreted by adults, which

led Miguel to evolve in a premature way in his thoughts and moments of introspection while a child and later as a teenager.

Miguel clearly remembered the rides that he used to take in the company of his grandfather. Two or three days a week after the day's work, Rudolfo invited his grandson to a walk in the middle of the eucalyptuses and told him about several episodes of his past.

"You know my dear Miguel, when I was a little older than you, I experienced moments of great suffering and deprivation. Those were tough times where most of the population could not afford to have a decent and comfortable life. We all had to improvise to have some moments of joy and happiness" - Rudolfo said to his grandson.

"Is it true grandfather? And what did you do if you had no toys?" exclaimed little Miguel.

"We had to use our imagination to make and play kid's games. We played with stones of various sizes for example, which we painted in different colours and each one of us had to throw his stone as far as possible. The next player had to break our stone with his own and at the end of the game the winner was the one that managed to keep his rock in good shape." - Rudolfo laughed while describing this to Miguel.

Rudolfo had been born in the late 1880's, a time in history when only the monarchics possessed the necessary means to live a dignified life. Most of the people had to work the fields or execute trades that were paid minimally or were subject to exchange of goods or services. In addition to this socio-economic status, Rudolfo did not have much luck with his parents. His mother had died when he was a few years old, and he stayed in charge of his father who had a precarious education combined with a character of physical and verbal aggression, mostly physical violence. It was in this context that Rudolfo had been physically and emotionally abused in the most crucial years of his education as a child.

"Grandfather was not raised like you, with all these luxuries that surround you. The affection that I, your second mother Alexandra and your parents give you, are a small fortune that many children wish they had but unfortunately is not the case. You are lucky, and I'm very happy about it." - Rudolfo explained.

In fact, even nowadays Miguel still repeated many sentences of his grandfather which he had kept in his memory. One of them was "in life; we have to be lucky". We can be the most intelligent and the most honest workers, yet without luck we do nothing.

“It is crucial to have luck with our parents, with the rest of our family, brothers, and sisters. Later, we have to get lucky with those we choose as our friends and then those with whom we’ll make a family. Without luck, we do nothing, my little man!” - said Rudolfo while hugging his grandson.

Miguel always looked at his grandfather with the greatest attention because he expressed himself in such a way that sounded like a fairytale, even taking into account the challenging and painful contexts surrounding the events he used to describe. Also, Miguel felt in Rudolfo's eyes the admiration and love he had for him while narrating all those stories. It was as if by telling all those events he would avoid that it would happen the same to his grandson.

“When I was fourteen years old, my father woke me up in one of those winter mornings when it rained cats and dogs, and there was a damp cold brought by the early morning fog. I still remember his expression and verbal aggression when he woke me up, ordering me to get dressed as quickly as possible because we were late to take the train. I didn't even know we had a train to catch, and I was very surprised, which led me to pose him the question about our destination. This issue was answered immediately by a big slap in the face!” - Rudolfo narrated to his grandson.

Anyone had never mistreated Miguel but several times he had watched some episodes between parents and children where these last ones were punished with mistreatment. The property of the German Consul was populated by staff who assured the maintenance of the domain, and some of them lived over there with their families as so vast it was.

“Well, my little man. My father was not like yours, loving and affectionate although distant in his thoughts. Unlike yours, my dad did not think because he probably had anything on his head except violence and destruction. Some people become parents by accident and then they simply ignore how to treat their children in a proper way, mostly with love. They probably were also created and equally treated without tenderness and affection and with a total lack of feelings, not knowing how to act differently, though.” - Rudolfo continued.

“And after all, where did your father take you, grandfather?” - Miguel asked.

“What happened was a very cruel thing that I would not wish to anyone, not even my worst enemy if I have any. My father dragged me by the arm to the railway station and went to the counter to buy the tickets. It

was at that moment that I heard about our final destination, the city of Lisboa which surprised me even more.” - Rudolfo replied.

Rudolfo was born and always lived in Leiria, a city that is located in the middle north of Portugal. For him, the journey to Lisbon represented an extraordinary event, especially considering it was the capital of the country. What he ignored was the reason that led his father to bring him so far from his birthplace and home.

“Some things happen to us that mark us for life, Miguel. In most cases, these are events that bring us suffering which we will never be able to put behind our backs and just forget about them. Good times, those yes, they pass quickly and are also easily forgotten.” - Rudolfo continued.

Miguel was completely puzzled about what had happened to his grandfather and far from imagining what had taken place.

“For me, this trip was exciting because I had never left my small native city before. When we arrived in Lisbon, my father took me to streets that seemed endless in my eyes. We walked enough time to the point where I got tired and during the way; I thought several times about the reason that had brought me to the big capital. It was then that we came across a great river, the Tejo, (Tagus). To me, it seemed the sea and not a river. In Leiria existed the Lis river, but compared to this one it was just a small drop of water in the ocean.” - Rudolfo spoke, and Miguel felt that he was reliving these events. It was like reading or listening to a novel narrated to a child and that we will never forget.

“We continued our walk along the river towards Belém and at one point we took direction north of the city, away from the Tagus river. Shortly after that, we arrived at a street where the buildings were old and lugubrious. Halfway down the street, we entered this stairwell, and my father put a suitcase that he held all the way at my feet. It was at that moment that I realized that I would get dropped and forgotten over there by my father, and it was what happened” - said Rudolfo with a look that indicated a very deep inner rebellion and anger.

To Miguel, this situation was not conceivable but hearing it from the mouth of his grandfather and looking into his eyes, the way he expressed himself, quickly led him to the conclusion that this wasn't a children's story but the narration of real facts that caused enormous suffering to his grandfather. It was at that moment when Miguel hugged him and began to cry.

After some seconds, adult and child were hugging and kissing with tears in their eyes.

II. EVERYDAY ROUTINES - 2014

Miguel left his house, and he executed the usual routine that translated this actual path of his life. In the end, we all have to surrender to the evidence that everything implicates a particular routine, even to those who dislike this word. It was the case of Miguel who hated the constant repetition of procedures, day after day. It was like as if he felt like a machine, a robot in a production chain that implied billions of human beings. Sometimes he chose a different road to go for the morning coffee, only to contradict that routine of his life. At least that gave him another sensation, in spite of the final result that would be the same. New landscapes can change the spirit of human beings. For him, it was like living different virtual realities to find motivation to complete the same routine.

On that morning he took his small laptop to entertain him during the trip. That way, the routine of the road became absent from his perception. The moment he would finish playing cards on the computer, he would have already arrived at his destination. He wouldn't have to attend to the same succession of images that seemed like a film that he had to watch every day.

In the same perspective, he avoided staying very long in the same place where he used to drink his morning coffee and read the newspaper. It would prevent from human contexts that were able to affect his privacy. Miguel was a loner. Somehow, aged more than sixty years and having assisted to several political changes, the newspapers no longer told him a thing. He thought that it was not worth to continue to collaborate with a system that manipulated the population, not only with lies and by a policy of fear but equally for the fact that most of the daily news were just depressing. In their largest part, they were news about catastrophes, political corruption or then, terror campaigns intentionally created to produce a feeling of dependence in the population towards the instituted power.

Above all, they were like memories of the old habits and practice of the fascist regime that came into his mind. Miguel had lived and made the military service during the fascist regime that reigned in Portugal. It was of his knowledge the policy of fear that was infused with the spirit of the population and that translated the manipulation of the Portuguese society. For him, the label had changed, but the mode was the same, which meant that there was not a great difference between certain dictatorial methods and the practice of some democratic institutions that

nowadays were at the place. Yes, for him, politics was like fashion that changes each generation, and it finishes in an eternal repetition of its application methods.

The only difference between the two regimes was that one was openly imposed, and the other was camouflaged on its imposition methods, a more intelligent way to deceive the population. The world economic contexts were different from nowadays, which avoids the repetition of a world war. This fact is due to the existing interdependence of the economic groups, but that doesn't suppress the practice of social manipulation by the so-called democratic institutions.

For him, what we were living was an attempt against human intelligence. Yes, human because even animals possess an intrinsic and much purer intelligence than human beings. In their world, animals don't live in a lie, but they just utter their instincts and even feelings in a very pure way.

It was not because of his sixty-three years of age that he thought like this. It was only the product of the realities that surrounded him and due to his different perception to analyze those same facts. They were also equally brought by his experiences that were lived during more than half century of his life. The ups and downs that the highway of the life had forced him to surmount brought him a better vision about concepts and events, behaviours, even in existential terms.

This way to think and to analyze was one of his grandfather Rudolfo's inheritance along with his socialist, even communist ideas, but these designations meant nothing for him. Miguel always had a total independence in political and religious terms, but it was sure that this influence of his paternal grandfather was very present in his spirit.

When he arrived at the coffee shop, he found the same people. Finally, it was a cafeteria like other ones but at the same time, each one of them had its characteristic that was manifested by the personalities of their visitors. It was as entering in different worlds where the conversations vary in agreement with the atmosphere generated by the intervening, where the discussions were different and adapted to each context. They were as paintings that translated different "states of mind" as if we were able to see and to observe a great painted picture on a canvas where there are several pigmented sceneries.

The thing that Miguel didn't stand was when they used to come to him and imposed their presence on his table, but once again his education didn't allow him to reject them. Later on, he would begin to hear about all their misfortunes. In the past, Miguel helped countless people and

inclusively got too much involved in personal situations and that had not been very beneficial as experience. Today, he was almost entirely vaccinated against that, and when he frequented a coffee shop, he didn't simply wrap himself in conversations but the ones that could lead nothing more than to a simple "good morning".

His refuge was his small apartment where he could listen to his music, read his books and watch his favourite films. He didn't have television at home because he didn't like to be manipulated by the media that made part of the television networks. On the Internet, he could choose what he wanted, and that fact made him feel completely free and independent. It was the same thing as to go out in the streets and have the freedom of choosing the place the most adapted to our way of being in life, a place where there is an identification of values and behaviours that bring us a feeling of well-being, some harmony, though.

That day he sat down at another table than the usual one. He used to arrive at hours of the day when there were not too many people around. The thoughts brought by his dreams and that photo album pursued his spirit. On that moment he lived a different dream, adapted to another dimension, but that didn't avoid him to live and to relive parallel realities.

Images of his late companion constantly invaded his spirit and with them all of the memories that were linked to a past of almost fifty years of life in common. For Miguel, it wasn't an easy situation to handle. Three years had gone but some days were almost as the first one, the same pain, the same sadness. The first year had nearly destroyed him; sent him close to his late companion. Miguel almost perished physically and emotionally, and it was with the help of a few friends that he managed to overcome this tragic event of his life.

He placed the small computer on the table, and he put the headphones to create a little distance from the conversations of those who were present. That would allow him to live his private world. He checked his electronic mail, and later he consulted the pages in the social network where he belonged. This new fashion of social networks had become a habit, and it was true that in the middle of its diversity, one could find certain people that could bring us knowledge, to consolidate our culture and even create new friendships, even if virtual they could be.

Miguel knew that he could not stay a long time in that place. Sooner or later somebody would come and try to begin an endless conversation with no content at all that would distract him in his thoughts. His past had demonstrated that almost every moment passed in a bar had been a pure waste of time and energy. Today, he recriminated himself for not

having spent more time with his late wife. If at least he could make the time turn back and fix everything, fix the events that today had no possible solution except to live the memories and to dream of the past.

Miguel had the conscience that he had never been perfect before, and certainly, in the present, there would also be many things and behaviours to criticize. However, the ups and downs and the tragic events that occurred in his life had him framed, even broken his liveliness, his energy, everything that used to make him think that he was invincible.

However, he felt that life had always brought him compensations for his most challenging and painful moments. It was like opening doors on an infinite hallway that one has to go. While going through profound moments of loneliness, there was always someone who crossed his path, approaching him and who ended up being part of his life.

Miguel was a well-intentioned person, very open to understanding, but this also made him very vulnerable, to a point that he was no longer surprised when there was someone who ended up as a big disappointment. His deceased wife used to say that he believed in society, in people, but the reality was hideous as people were not what they seemed to be. Despite such advice, Miguel obeyed to his basic instincts and always ended up by being disappointed with most of his friendships.

After writing a few pages on the computer, he used to go out shopping at the supermarket. Afterward, he often passed by at the church and then go straight home and put his literary work in another computer, the one that focused his attention and daily time almost in its entirety. That way, the hours passed quickly; time seemed to fly.

For him, there were no schedules to meet. Time was not important because he could dispose of it as he wanted and this fact brought him a sense of freedom. However, Miguel was very disciplined, and this helped him to control and to contradict this existential anarchy in which he lived.

Sometimes he felt old while having to accomplish with all those routines that he hated so much. The fact to think that he would have to repeat these actions until the end of his life was not very pleasant to look. It was as burning time in a mathematical rhythm, even mechanical. Being able to dispose of his time, his freedom, compensated a little bit this feeling of his. It would be so nice to be able to live without the need to eat to survive, being able to live and be spiritually nourished by logic, energy and the feelings that surround us.

Patrick was a distinctive character in that coffee shop. He was present every day, and he was constantly laughing as the result of having a

sharp mental disability, yet not of an aggressive kind. The content of his conversations was brilliant which made Miguel think that there would be lots of ignorant people around him who would never be able to understand him. Some way, Patrick's presence also brought him some inspiration. It was like having an element out of the ordinary regarding behaviour and that made the difference between this particular place and others where we have to submit to standardized approaches and obey the social rules.

While hearing to his comments, Miguel laughed sometimes, and others made him think, reflect on the consistency of reasoning coming from a pretend disturbed mind. In the end, Patrick was happier than all of us. His inner world was beautiful and pure, and everything was wonderful to him, people and things.

As ridiculous as it sounds, for Miguel, Patrick was the only character who focused his attention and with whom he learned so much due to the content of his conversations. They were unusual, yet substantially logical despite its apparent simplicity. Most of the remaining characters were sometimes drunk people and some of them expressed in a loud way to assert themselves, but they used to say nothing but nonsense and obscenities. Retirees used to have a "D  j   Vu" about their existence and used to tell stories about all those episodes.

Miguel absorbed the entire content of this anthology of mentalities, of backgrounds and cultures and this also helped him not only to understand the diversity of the human spirit but also to figure out about himself, his imperfections, even his qualities that he had never identified before. It also helped him to be able to write about all those elements, even personal and existential conclusions that were the result of all those social experiences.

Miguel was not practicing any religion. He could go into all churches that he wished since for him their meaning was the same. He thought that every religion was similar and finally nothing but a matter of personal Faith, going through an individual perception that was brought naturally by the Creator at some point in our lives.

This habit of passing at the church almost every day started the moment of the death of his beloved late wife, Em  lia. It was a way to get close to her every day. For him, it was like a feeling of keeping a flame lit for a future meeting, under another existential form. If one day Miguel had to decide on religion, it would be Buddhist, due to its neutrality and message which identified themselves with his way of being in life, especially with his state of mind, with his convictions and personal beliefs.

Probably by a matter of fate, when Miguel had emigrated to that country and during the first year, he had to find a large house that should gather a team of salespersons. It turns out that house was the former headquarters for a religious group called the "Bahais", a group with Buddhist origins. It was in this residence that Miguel spent the first year of his stay, completely alone and isolated from the rest of the society. This experience helped him to gain a level of interiorization that he did not know it could exist.

This gathering led him for the first time to a Cathedral. There, Miguel chose a place that he called "the small corner" and it was there that he found his Faith, in a moment that had not been imposed by existing religious doctrines in society, but that had just been born naturally within his heart. It was at this place that he wrote his personal prayer and where he could plunge into periods of meditation that made him forget about time and space, finally about his existence in this dimension.

In the course of his professional career, Miguel traveled to several countries in Europe, mostly driving his car. At this stage of his life, he had no patience to drive. His primary activity was writing his memories and the ones of his family and also about all his ideas, beliefs, values and principles, the ones that animated all his life and still gave a reason to be to his existence.

He caught the bus back home and began to write. The day was ending and would dive into the night, the period that brought him the greatest inspiration. Miguel's routines were random, covering both day and night, as a merger between white, the light, and the dark black. In the end, both elements made a whole and fulfilled the two existential poles that are part of us all, that are part of the entire existence.

III. CONFLICTS OF POLITICAL AWARENESS - 1974

Miguel went down the stairs leading to the basement of the central building of the barracks. Along the corridor there were the cells where people were arrested for desertion cases, being refractory or "conscientious objector", even political opponents. Conscientious objector was the designation for those who refused to join the Army due to their religious beliefs or freedom of thought. However, being the most part Jehovah's Witnesses.

Miguel's mission was not easy to accomplish, especially considering his political awareness, all that he had inherited from his paternal grandfather. Now, he had found himself in a dead end situation where he had a painful mission to carry on.

Miguel had been ranked first in his military specialty which included deciphering military messages. This service was indirectly linked to other activities related to military intelligence, which was also unofficially attached to the secret police that made part of the fascist regime named as PIDE, (International and State Defence Police).

During the military service, Miguel had been the target of some proposals to join the political police, but he never accepted. It was already enough for him to be forced to accomplish with the military time that was imposed by the dictatorial regime.

That day they had given him instructions to interrogate a detainee, which was not part of his duties. Miguel knew that the future that was reserved to this prisoner depended on his information about it, all that he could write in his report. The feeling of being able to decide on a person's life it was not pleasant, but what affected him the most was the fact of being forced to do so.

He entered the cell accompanied by an escort, like the military rules asked for. Fernando was lying on his bed that reeked from a distance. These conditions were created intentionally to affect the emotional state of the detainees. The prisoner got up immediately and stood in a corner while adopting an attitude of doubt and fear. Miguel gave instructions to the escort to leave them alone. Thus, it could eventually create an environment of a certain trust with Fernando.

"But finally, what they want from me? I've said all I have to say. I have nothing to hide. What is all this?" - asked Fernando.

“Listen! Can I call you Fernando? We're the same age, and we're both victims of circumstances that express the political context of this country. I'm accomplishing with my military service which is mandatory, and you assumed a position that matches your values and beliefs, finally, your options. Allegedly, we are on opposite sides, that's all, but that does not mean we can't find a solution to this situation.” - Miguel answered.

“That's merely a type of conversation to entertain me. It's all lies to drive people to answers and statements that do not correspond to reality. Yes, they only correspond to your reality, the one that is not absolute despite being totalitarian.” - Fernando said with his eyes filled with anger.

“Listen, Fernando. My name is Miguel, and they gave me the mission to make a report about your moral and religious options as well as your eventual political activities. Although you have stated that you are a "conscientious objector", it's my superior's opinion that you exercise political activities that put the regime at risk, probably connected to subversive acts to be more precise.” - Miguel exclaimed.

“You guys are all the same, full of poison, cynicism, and hypocrisy. It's a real sadness to all the people to watch their compatriots practice denunciation and persecution, even in the bosom of our families.”

“Please don't make that type of accusations because you don't even know me! It's not that I have to justify myself to you, but your words are extremely unjust, not to mention the aggressiveness of your attitude. Taking into consideration your situation as a detainee, I'm going to ignore what you said, probably the result of being emotionally and psychologically affected by these circumstances.

For Miguel, this situation was becoming difficult to handle from the beginning. It was true that he couldn't consider the prisoner's words as personal, but they surely had an impact on his mind. He had never denounced anyone and inclusively had assumed some attitudes that were far away from the politics of the fascist regime, but he couldn't reveal this to the detainee. He had to play his role and try to understand his reaction as a prisoner and victim of the fascist system.

He recalled once again those memories of Rudolfo's political past, and it made him look at Fernando and see in him the mirror of the political situation that had been practiced with his grandfather. This conflict of conscience was already affecting him in an involuntary way and was hurting his mission. He doubted if he could be frank and honest with Fernando or not, if he could express his political ideas. He had to be prudent as it also could be used as a weapon of retaliation that could harm him later on.

Miguel was in the same situation as hundreds or thousands of citizens who were obliged to perform military service in a dictatorial regime. There wasn't plenty of choice although there were individual options involving the risk of never being able to return to the home land again, as emigrate clandestinely for example.

Miguel had a lovely two-year-old daughter called Patrícia and a dream wife named Emília. That was the fortune of his life that he had to protect and to ensure stability. Nevertheless, had personal boundaries that he also had to respect, such as his spiritual integrity, dignity, and personal pride. It was this consistency that he had to keep, which was tough. In the end, it was enough to be a diplomat, which was quite difficult for him given his character, the one that had been inherited from his paternal grandfather. He preferred to be undecipherable in his ideas while living under the military roof.

“You have no obligation to know me. I fully understand that if I were at your place, I would have the same reaction of distrust. I can only tell you that sometimes the things and situations are not what they seem to be. Sometimes, many of us have to be part of a military and political theatrical drama to ensure the stability of our families, but it doesn't mean that our political options are identical to those of the system in place.” - Miguel was justifying himself.

“Do not come in here telling me stories to explain your political choices. Everyone can choose between good and bad, honest and dishonest. Nothing justifies the practice of dictatorial methods from which we are all victims. You are telling me these stories just to create in me a false sense of confidence.” - said Fernando.

“Fernando, that is not true; do not even think about it. Can I sit down?”

In Miguel's mind, it reigned the doubt if he could be honest or not with this character that was oppressed and persecuted. Also, he had to take into consideration that he could not create a climate of intimacy that could give origin to a protectionism that would be noticed by his senior Officers and that could expose his ideas or political trends.

“Listen to what I have to tell you, Fernando, please. I don't want to stay with problems on my conscience for having to fulfill a report on your disadvantage. Do not make me do that please.”

“What? Problems of consciousness? But do you guys have a conscience after all? I would never be able to be at your place.”

“Yes, I fully understand your position, but I also think that every unjust and totalitarian regimes ended not only due to a military confrontation

but also due to the passive resistance at the core of their military armies. They are interdependent, those two situations. Do you know what it might represent regarding change?" - Miguel replied hoping that he would capture this message.

"Diplomats make me sick, Miguel. Words do not help much."

"And what's the point for your current situation, Fernando? How can you contribute to change whatever it is in a prison? Please tell me!"

"I serve as an example of courage that others will follow. Do not tell me that it serves no purpose. But after all, what do you want to say to me? Don't say you are a communist or socialist in disguise." - Fernando was a little skeptical.

At this point and given his question, Miguel was unsure if he could proceed with some admissions that could reveal his political beliefs although that for him it did not mean exactly that. Miguel had always been against everything that could manipulate him, either in a political or religious level. In fact, he considered these two elements as the most dangerous in society because they were corrupt and manipulative in origin. In the end, he decided to take a risk but keeping a certain discretion about the events that he exposed.

"You know, Fernando? I also tried to avoid the military service because I never agreed with the war in Africa. In 1968 I emigrated to France, precisely to avoid everything that could affect me politically. I'm not much different from you regarding having different political choices and especially social options, but the truth of facts force us all to adapt."

"Adapt? It's because of people like you that we find ourselves in this situation. You guys should form a new political party called "The Conformist Party". How sad this is!" - Fernando said in a harsh and recriminative tone.

Miguel's patience was reaching the limits. He was very tolerant, but there had to be an understanding across the line allowing a dialogue and trying to find solutions. This guy had no idea that the future of his life was in Miguel's hands, or then he was a suicidal case or a religious fanatic.

"Well, let's see if we understand each other, Fernando. I'm here to try to identify the cause of you being in this situation; if it has a political or religious origin. You know that many individuals refuse to do military service on grounds of "conscientious objector", but they are nothing more than a sham to conceal the real reasons that are merely political. Ultimately you may also be doing the same thing that you are accusing

me. You also don't fully assume your responsibility and your role as a revolutionary.”

“What? I'm the one stuck here and not you.” - Fernando retorted.

“They are investigating your family and friendly relationships, Fernando. Apparently, you got involved with people who have a history of political activity that is contrary to the current regime we are living. This involvement is one more reason to retain you here until they reach a conclusion. I'm here to decide if your life can become like before or not. Do you want to help me on this or not?”

“But how do you want to do such a thing? I'm not here to play the clown and be fooled by all of you. I'm not as stupid as that.”

“Listen. I have until the weekend to find out what is happening in your life. Depending on the results, you can go home or get stuck over here and then be transferred to another location where I do not have jurisdiction or power of decision to minimize your situation as a prisoner. At that moment, you will be considered as a political prisoner and the actual conditions, even painful they could be will be nothing compared to what you will have to face. Are you prepared for it?”

Miguel felt that something had broken on the apparent toughness of Fernando. That was his only chance of being able to identify minimally the political reality that he was apparently hiding. Intimately, Miguel looked for a state of mind that would take place in his soul to find a possible justification to help this person. After all, it was him that had to fulfill that filthy report that they imposed him on writing, and it was him who was being judged by the detainee.

“That means nothing more than to have to hear from you for five more days. Do not think I'll change my statement because of that. I'm sure that my past is not like yours. I can see in your behaviour that you come from aristocrat families. You can feel it from a distance but for me, it has no significance, on the contrary. I hate aristocrats.”

“You can hate whoever you want, Fernando. That does not affect my principles and my posture in life. You know why? Because, despite my apparent aristocracy, I never established social differences between people, being a social, political or religious kind and since they do not interfere with my personal life. Do you think it is so wrong as that?”

“I believe we all have to assume our ideals and our values completely. This honesty requires courage that is something that many of us do not have. As an aristocrat, you know nothing about life. You did not pay the

price of poverty. You can't give the right value to the sufferance of the people.”

“Don't you think that you have a demagogic discussion, Fernando? What I can tell you about it is that I was raised and educated by a family of aristocrats, but finally always found myself sharing my happiest moments with the people the most humble and even poor that knew, and I still do. Don't make judgments like that one because eventually, you'll be the first victim of them.”

Fernando remained in silence. It seemed that Miguel's words had made him think deeply about what was said during that conversation. This attitude brought Miguel one light hope to approach him a little bit and try to make things easier for both of them. After all, it was this possible link that could save Fernando, that could give him the reasons to write something on a report that could set him free from all suspicion he had on his shoulders. Even for Miguel, this was a big weight to carry around until the last day of his life if his final decision wouldn't be the right one.

It was true that Miguel's education did not allow him to hide his past. Part of his childhood in the property of the German Consul had molded his character in a very particular way that was hard to be understood by others. The counterpart of this situation was that Miguel, like his father, had always preferred to share their existence with simple and humble people.

While Miguel heard Fernando's recriminations about being an aristocrat, it came to his memory the moments he had in the company of gypsy children who temporarily lived in the outskirts of his home. He remembered the reprimands he had to listen for escaping from home and spend whole afternoons playing with those children. He missed those moments of brotherhood where there were no ideological barriers, where everyone was happy while sharing moments of pleasure. There were no social differences nor any other kind, but merely the happiness brought by the moments that they lived in common.

“Okay! I'm sorry, but please understand my situation and my emotional state. I can't avoid this anger and revolt against this situation, despite it's my choice and matches my beliefs. But do not think that you will break me because you won't.”

“I do not want to break anyone, Fernando. I just want to find some answers to issues that are not even coming from me. Listen! I think we better stop this conversation for the moment, but just to give you an idea of what is happening in this country, I can tell you that some events

occurred involving military operations in Caldas da Rainha, allegedly against the political regime in power.”

“What do you mean by that? Talking about a possible "coup d'État"?”

“What I can tell you is that there are rumours about the existence of other political trends within the Army, which means that anything can happen. This military movement was apparently aborted due to lack of synchronization between military forces that were present in the Center North part of the country and Lisbon. If that occurred, there is no doubt about it, believe me. As you will see, not everyone who is part of the fascist military regime agrees with the dictatorial practices, much less the soldiers and Officers who were forced to join the military service. Think about it and be careful while making judgments about other people. Without military dissidents, it wouldn't be possible the existence of "coups d'État" and the end of certain regimes but for that, you would have to join the Army in the first place, wouldn't you? See you tomorrow, Fernando!”

Fernando did not manifest. He got up and opened the cell door for Miguel with a suspicious look as if not believing the last words he had heard from him. However, they were real. The door closed behind Miguel, and he didn't look back.

Miguel felt relieved. The fact that he had this outburst with Fernando was for him as to redeem himself of the feeling of guiltiness brought by those functions they gave him. He walked to the main door of the headquarters, made a military salute and headed home to rediscover those who represented his only fortune, his beautiful family.

On the way, he wrestled with inner conflicts of political consciousness, though he always had maintained a neutral position. It came into his mind some conflicts that sometimes he had with his father. Ricardo was a technocrat who had made a career in the insurance business. Given his ability and seniority, he finally reached a professional position and asserted himself in that huge pyramid.

Ricardo was an intrinsic part of the capitalist machine and worked for one of the most famous names in the field of the insurance industry. The capitalist system was the one that provided him with a life without significant difficulties. The stability and comfort of his family life were based on this system that worked hand in hand with the fascist regime.

What shocked Miguel the most, was the fact that his father challenged capitalism being himself a privileged person in social terms at the expense of that same system. Miguel thought that when we do not agree with something, we simply don't make part of it, that's all. However, he

found himself in the same situation, with the only difference that the military context was imposed while his father's was strictly professional, submitted to personal choice, though. For him, this expressed a justification for his conduct before Fernando and his role within the Army.

While analyzing these facts, he also got to the conclusion that every one of us has our political incoherency as a result of everything that conditions our lives, our survival and our family's. To tell the truth and despite his admiration for his grandfather, Rudolfo, he had never understood how a communist could relate so well with a fascist. However, this was the proof that everyone could live together if we would put aside all political and religious conditionalism of which we are victims.

Once again, Miguel acted under the influence of the words of his grandfather. His past as anarchist and later on as a communist had always led him to adopt extreme attitudes. To tell the truth, Miguel had extremist tendencies. The events of May 1968 in Paris also had a role to play in this whole context. The revolutionary ideas of the time were proliferating in Europe and undermining the dictatorial regimes.

Shortly after that, Miguel would find himself in a situation of political and ideological conflict with his father. For him, this was one of the examples about the extent to which politics and religion can manipulate some spirits, damaging existing relationships within the family, provoking a deep disunion between our most beloved ones.

At one point he tried to forget everything that had happened that day. He accelerated the car and entered his private world, the one that carried no doubts or questions, where he could feel happy and free. What better compensation could he have than having his wife and his daughter waiting for him?

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Carlos Pacheco was born on the outskirts of Lisbon, Portugal, EU, in a town called Queluz. Son of Rui de Sousa Pacheco and Isabel Maria Pacheco, he reached Secondary School and stopped his studies to follow a professional career related to "Organization and Methods", along with Accounting. He married his late wife Maria Eduarda Pacheco on the 3rd July 1971.

He joined the Army from October 1972 until April 1975, and he was classified first on Military Messaging Services. At the age of 38, he immigrated to Luxembourg as a result of a Contractual Agreement, after he accomplished professional missions in Switzerland and France.

At sixty years old, he decided to put in writing all his thoughts, expressing, the best way he could all his inner values, beliefs & convictions, hoping that they would be captured and understood by some people as a message of spirituality along with notions about love and friendship.

Mary Anne Finnemore is a dear friend, a Tutor of English, Music, and Respite Care, who puts all her passion into her work. She collaborates on this project by giving her precious contribution in the area of text reviewing.

About Mary Anne: ECLECTIC: perpetual student of life, humanist by nature with a passion for music, avid outdoors woman, art, and life. MUSIC: piano my key instrument is a wonderful resource and teaching tool providing respite care for persons of all ages and abilities. Mostly self-taught it is my greatest joy. COOK: professionally for over 30 years in every aspect of the business applying my skills to respite care both teaching and specialized diets. TUTORING: English: Reading, Writing, and Comprehension are both a personal and professional mission of mine to help others succeed in their life which I have been doing most of my life paid but mostly volunteer. No subject is taboo, and no question goes without an answer, to the best of my ability. My purpose here is to see you reach your dreams refining your expressions to print.

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