

# **Dream**

**Carlos Alberto M.G. Mota.**

**(English translation by Alison Barbara Burrows)**

**“Dream” occurs sometime in the near future. It may be considered science fiction writing. It is possible that some informed people will consider what is said here to be outdated. Behavior can be controlled, and this is mentioned in this text. Maybe the methods here described won’t be used. We will see?**

**“Hu said nothing, yet again. He was almost a professional mute, because he wasn’t mute, he just assumed a lack of voice, just as he had assumed a lack of own ideas. Gustavo and Booze-Bottle also belonged to an immense legion of people who only had a voice amongst their peers, they were “mutes” to everyone else. Gustavo thought about the silliness of this situation. How many “mutes” were there in this world?”**

**To all my readers, my Thanks.**

**Carlos Mota.**

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## 1-Walls

Gustavo looked at the walls as he always did, or rather, as he used to do. He looked at them and wondered whether they had been built from the top to the bottom or from the bottom to the top and then thought about how silly his ideas were. In fact, none of it mattered. It would actually be interesting if the walls were built from the top to the bottom, though it didn't seem likely. Nor did that "Freedom" exist, Gustavo thought! What Freedom existed? As a young boy he had moved to that neighbourhood, that area, that place, that home.

- I remember Banana, Windy-Bag, Booze-Bottle, grunted Gustavo in the general direction of his friend Emílio. Remember them? No, and I don't care to. What is the point of remembering what doesn't exist anymore? You're right, Emílio, it doesn't exist anymore. But it does exist, deep down it exists because it is what made what exists now exist, it exists because it exists in us, it still exists... Stop with the old man's stuff, Gustavo! Not even you exist, have you thought about that?

Gustavo became slightly annoyed and continued talking to himself. Emílio was too much of a realist for his taste. Deep down he considered himself a "great demystifier", as Gustavo would tell him. But he wasn't. Neither him nor anyone else, actually.

He had spent many years there, in the Bairro de Santa Clara, between Víboras and Camelo, number 31, as it appeared on his postal address. Had he seen the World or had he seen nothing? He had been travelling for a few years, today he didn't know if it had done him any good, if it had harmed him, if it had done anything to him at all! He had recently met a young man. He would be around twenty-seven years old, a kid, he was a doctor, who knew a lot more about life than he did! At least he, Gustavo, thought that. His travels hadn't given him any special knowledge, maybe they had even made him a more confused person, kind of mystical,

without a sense of objectivity, without any real knowledge of anything necessary. After all, any doctor knew more than he did and was much more useful than he could ever be! He had heard of a powerful man of Good, an Indian, who cured from a distance. He had been there, in India and hadn't learnt anything, he now thought. Can you learn something amidst the deepest misery? Maybe you can learn resignation. Is resignation a gift? An art? A wisdom? He looked at his hands. The palms of his hands. There were people who mixed scientific knowledge with the reading of palms, with a search for signs. None of this made sense, he thought. Hands were like walls. They told stories. But they told them with little accuracy: they could easily mislead. The lines on hands were like rock paintings. What would his hands tell a stranger? Nothing. That was most likely.

- Stop being silly and come eat. I'm coming, Emílio. They set out. The Sun was getting stronger. It fried, it didn't burn. Before, a long time ago, it had burned; for some years now the Sun fried, it became increasingly harder to bear.

- Do you know anything about the Shelter? We will be going past the door... Yes, you can hear noises over there, replied Emílio. The new legislation which was published is more restrictive, you know? No, what's up? Well, it was on television. From the age of sixty-five confinement in the Shelter is mandatory.

- Hum, with the confusion that's going on, I don't know if they can implement that!

- They can! There is confusion, everything is in a bad state, you can see that, but it's easy to put that step into practice. And, furthermore, who would want to avoid such a thing? Old people get in the way, they occupy spaces, they complain, they eat. At the Shelter they are taken care of, nothing more happens, I think it's good. In fact, if it weren't for you I would have nobody to talk to. At the Shelter I will always have somebody, it's fatal! The number of people there are there! It's only natural that amongst all those people I will find somebody to talk to. Out here it is harder. You were talking about people I hardly remember, but they existed, I know; so what? Where are they?

- We are here. The smell is weak today! It smells of the same old meat Gustavo! You are very demanding! No, Emílio, you are very

**patient! It doesn't matter, eat!**

**They ate in silence. Silence was compulsory, after they had sat down. Some two thousand people filled the huge, long tables, full of "meat", something like a sausage with rice from times past. All mixed up, it was eatable. You didn't pay, you drank beautiful liquid. It was like perfume, that liquid. It was said that it had vitamin supplements. Kind of greenish, it would slide down the throat in a viscous flow, thought Gustavo.**

**- Viscous! He suddenly remembered hearing a woman scream that several years ago. He was on the street, he had just arrived. It was another time. She sold glue for shoes. It was a sunny day, a warm wind blew from the harbour, the huge rusty ships sailed in lazily. Gustavo stepped back, he heard a woman cry "Viscous!". He approached her. They loved each other and how! He never thought you could love someone like that, just like that! But every time he mentioned it, Dayna replied.**

**- And how do you love someone? Isn't it always just like that? Do you want to explain everything? What for? What do you get out of that?**

**They hadn't had children nor had they felt the need to. By that time the so-called "pill" had already killed the white man.**

**- The dick is counteracted by the effect of the pill, Banana would say, one of the first friends Gustavo had made when he arrived there. And it will be the end of the white man, Banana would also say, laughing.**

**In that time he had worked a bit as everything. He had painted walls, fixed pipes, studied at night, became a teacher. In between times he was with Dayna. They would escape to the most unlikely places and devour each other. There really wasn't any explanation for the desire they felt for one another or for the empathy which also united them in the most absurd details. They spent many years like that, aging at a snails pace. Slowly, they became older. When he had nothing to do, Gustavo stayed at home. Dayna had a large circle of friends she went out with, sometimes for days and days, until she returned again and always to the company of Gustavo. She liked going out, not actually to see anything new, but just to get out. He stayed. He thought there was nothing new, he used to say that everything would become more alike, in the future,**

just as it was becoming then.

- What was the point of travelling the world? The whole Earth is a grain of sand, in the Universe! Yes, Gustavo, but we are a grain of sand in relation to the Earth! So it is important to travel.

Dayna was right, Gustavo pondered, but only in part. He had travelled and he didn't feel like travelling any more. It wouldn't make a difference to him to see any more. That way he stayed at home, he looked after Dayna's rooster. She held that rooster in high regard! She called him little one, fed him, the creature was very tame with her. Gustavo suffered some rooster pecks. He got irritated but then it would pass. Humans need pets so they don't feel their loneliness!

- Yes, Gustavo, I agree! We have telephones in one pocket, we talk to people all over the planet, but we are lonely! It is the great theme of our days. And we are also lonely because we want to be. We are not made to be...

- We are, Dayna! We choose a lifestyle which leads to loneliness! We don't want the company of friends, or acquaintances, or of our old folks, we don't have children, we don't want them, we need pets. Without them we would die even more alone!

- I don't need all that. It is important to know how to live with yourself. We have to get used to living with ourselves, to like ourselves. If we can do that then we are fine when we are alone.

- But you like your group of friends, Dayna!

- I also like you, silly, but I can easily handle what you call loneliness. I truly think that is the way: finding a way to be alone, to enjoy being alone, so we will never be in a bad way. When we are old, if we are experiencing unbearable physical suffering, I am not against ending our lives; it is better to die than to live in immense physical pain.

- Yes, it probably is. Living for living's sake is absurd.

- It's not, no! You're wrong, Gustavo! It has long been known that life wants to live! It seems odd, but it is just that: living beings want to continue living!

He spent a lot of time that afternoon scraping a wall at Mister Bien-Li's house, a very wealthy Chinese man with a lousy temper. It was said that Bien-Li was even aggressive and dangerous. He paid badly, but at that time Gustavo was in need of money and

after scraping the wall at Bien-Li's house, he started to paint it. He wanted a dark red, he Bien-Li, the connoisseur, Gustavo thought that colour was horrible for an outside wall, but the client had the last word. The client, that client had the last word increasingly more often, not only the colour of the walls of his house but in many other things, he had the last word in the town's commerce, he had the last word in goods and in their distribution, he lent money with interest, he controlled prostitution. He was a powerful man, an ugly mug, kept his distance, he spoke very little and in a fierce voice. He gave orders, he didn't talk.

Gustavo thought a little, he thought out loud, while he scraped the wall, what led powerful men throughout History to look so alike (as they seemed to)?

As far as he knew, powerful men had always been like that, like Bien-Li! Not given to trusting, not generous, often having bad taste, involved in businesses which he, Gustavo, found repugnant, but they were and had so they became powerful men.

- Maybe that's why they are powerful and you are not! Windy-Bag stepped away from him, huge and fat, abusing his famous flatulence which had earned him his nickname.

- You are an idiot, Windy-Bag! Make sure you show up, later. The fat man walked off and didn't answer. Gustavo liked him but he had to carry on with the work for Bien-Li.

That evening he told Dayna that thought he had had about powerful men.

- Well, we are all predators! Just that. Some more than others, a little more, not much more. That guy is not even powerful. Nothing is powerful, on this small planet!

- But you said that we are small in relation to the planet, therefore it is big and there are people who are powerful in relation to others!

- Look, I don't feel like arguing with you today. I'm going to be stupefied. Gustavo knew she was going to watch television. He would spend a while on the phone, then read something, he didn't even know what, and go to sleep. They said it was going to rain the following day and he had to continue the work for Bien-Li. Better still he should finish the work. The guy could get fed up and decide not to pay. He was well-known for doing that kind of thing.

Thankfully he now had his small wage as a teacher. He remembered the time when Bien-Li, or rather his father had arrived. But even that had always been like that! There are people who arrive, very careful at first, then they settle in, later on, when they are properly settled in, they start to become important, telling people what to do and even becoming dangerous! And there are others, those who witness their own decadence and don't realize it or don't want to see it and do nothing about it.

- Decadence, progress, white man, black man, all that is anthropocentric talk, Dayna interrupted.

- What do those ideas matter? What really matters is the species, maybe it will survive, but not in its current form, some will still exist, but only after the necessary evolution. That's what I think.

- Yes, Dayna, you can always see a great deal of foolishness in everything I say, haven't you noticed?

- No, I haven't noticed; it's not true. You do say lots of foolish things, but you can improve; you just have to want to improve, learn, be humble, instead of expressing your opinions that way, just like that, random things.

- All right, I will shut up. I'm going to see if I can finish the wall job today, Booze-Bottle is going to help me.

- Make sure he doesn't take that awful wine; you've had too much of it three times already!

- Come on, Dayna, I don't even drink, I can't drink, I don't like drinks!

- Shut up, I know what I'm saying, you've been drinking too much!

The afternoon went by with Booze-bottle helping. They painted the whole wall, it seemed to them like a job well done. In the end they spoke to Hu, one of Bien-Li's servants. Hu looked at the work, he made an indifferent, undecipherable face, he didn't say anything.

- So, Gustavo asked, knowing that Hu wouldn't answer, he would say nothing before he knew what his boss would say.

After a while Chang appeared, one of Bien-Li's many children. He looked at the wall, made a few odd sounds. He seemed to be talking like that on purpose. Hu said nothing, yet again. He was almost a professional mute, because he wasn't mute, he just assumed a lack of voice, just as he had assumed a lack of own ideas. Gustavo and



Booze-Bottle also belonged to an immense legion of people who only had a voice amongst their peers, they were “mutes” to everyone else. Gustavo thought about the silliness of this situation. How many “mutes” were there in this world?

- Mute in the World, Gustavo remembered: that is what a guy once said we were! I remember hearing that, he didn't even know how accurate what he said was! Gustavo felt a sudden pang of excitement and exclaimed:

- Mutes!

Giving a voice to the mutes was a teacher's job. (In fact, it was just another task).

You can only talk when you know how to talk; some people write without knowing how to write, but that's another story! Not everybody can be "geniuses", many have to work on building sites. Not everybody can be singers, heroes, punishers of the "badly-behaved".

How many people go through their lives without having been able to say a thing; and yet a lot of those people had something to say. So many people had something to tell and they hadn't even learnt to read...

There are also the mutes through choice. It is a matter of where you are in this world. Mute in the World! – What a great chorus! It is not "Changing the World" – changes aren't wanted, silences are wanted, so that there is calm. I know people who support such a wise attitude: "enter mute and exit quiet". For very different reasons, I think that is how most of mankind passes over the crust of this planet: they are the thousands of millions of mutes, silenced for the most varied reasons. He was quiet. Hu returned. He turned to them.

- Boss says job is bad! All wrong, all wrong! Boss didn't like, Estavo!

- Yes, he never likes, and the payment?

- Here. Take these cents. Boss won't give more. You work bad. He bring in more people to do these jobs. You do it all wrong. Don't work well.

Gustavo left, he and Booze-Bottle, with the sad payment. But it was better than nothing.

Dayna lived from her job, like everyone. She was a piano teacher.

It seemed strange, in times like these, but many people wanted to learn how to play the piano. Maybe it wasn't strange, maybe that too was down to loneliness. The piano or some other musical instrument helps conquer loneliness, or to cope with it. Dayna's students were mostly people between fifty and sixty years old. Young people and children almost didn't exist. Even so some children also learnt music. Huddled at home, at night, they heard the echoes of the night. Sometimes it would rain. On the whole it was hot, insects could be heard. Insects which took over the space. Gustavo often retreated to his home, whenever he didn't have jobs to do and whenever he didn't have classes to teach. He had studied at night, learnt a mixture of things. He taught subjects similar to general studies in a kind of "Senior University", or rather a University for the Third Age. Education had achieved a curious goal. It had become something which accompanied people "from cradle to grave", although not so much "from cradle", in numerical terms. Just as there are those eternal courtships, sometimes called "twilight engagements", so did education seem to want to cling to its students like someone would cling to a precious prey, without letting it go, to the grave. It was possible to say that whoever fell into the clutches of education would never leave.

## 2-Streets

It might not have seemed like it, because it was lethargic, but the city which Gustavo went to live in was big. It wasn't huge, like many that can be found on the planet. He had been to some of those urban monsters. That wasn't the case with his city. But it was a lot bigger than it seemed. A calm, hot city, where four or five people knew each other, was big. Gustavo used public transport with Emílio, to hear what he had to say. He thought Emílio's comments were funny. Not because they were funny, in truth they were not funny at all, but because they were pertinent.

- Notice the silence; people are incapable of talking to one another. They look at their own shoes, it is the best way they find to avoid having to look at other people's faces. Let's get off and get inside a building. So they did.

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