

# Presentation

Life is as cyclic as an ouroboros - the symbol of the snake which bites its own tail.

These cycles can be observed in our lives, in society, in the civilizations, on the continent coast and, who knew, even in the Big Bang and the big crunch of our universe.

The Hindus and spiritists believe in reincarnation. Isn't it an ouroboros itself?

The ancients seemed to know things that nowadays we try to rediscover. Science has illuminated our path, but unfortunately it can't explain all that happens around us.

In the stories that come next I face human dilemmas. People are put in extreme situations and they seem not to be able to get rid of them. In moments like these people get rid of their look and have to run over these cyclic realities.

That's when fear, desamparo, solitude, hold us and oppress us. That's when our dreams are involved into nightmares and our lives seem not to be real.

Maybe you have already been in a situation similar to the character's in these stories. Not in the same scene, but with the same feelings of desolation and despair, facing cycles which you can't get rid of because they are part of your life.

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Cover:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of the letters 'W', 'E', and 'M' in a stylized, cursive font.

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# Mining

I have already had fear of the dark.

When I was younger, it was pure horror.

Teenager, I tried to convince myself saying: "C'mon! I am a man, there's nothing out there to be afraid" – but to be true, I was just too scared in those situations.

One thousand bad thoughts came up to my mind every time the lights in the cinema were turned off. Candles or any other luminous object could solve anything when there was lack of energy in the barrio I live.

So, when I was twenty-five, the fears disappeared as they had never existed. And I could start working in the asteroids mining with my brothers fearlessly.

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- Companion number three doesn't work, Ton. Do you want to check it out or do I do it?

Ilia, my Ukrainian fellowship, always complained about moving his own 1,98m height through the narrow corridors of burden transportation. So I didn't even answer his questions: I got my tool case and went to the indicated place.

Mining carbon in asteroids to martians communities wasn't exactly what my mother wanted her younger son to do, but for an unemployed geologist and recently space lover, that was the best thing that could ever had happened. So, I followed my

brothers in their careers without making any questions about my decision.

My name is Antony, I am 42 years old and I come from a Spanish family of immigrants that went to the extinguished Federative Republic of Brazil in the early 20th century. I'm descendent of one of the few families that survived with no wounds, no genetic failures, after the explosion of the nuclear power stations in Angra dos Reis, in the extinguished State of Rio de Janeiro in 2015, which, according to the legends, was one of the most beautiful places in the world.

Our spaceship was called UNE<sup>1</sup> Rarus, mining and containers of eighty meters long equiped with a first generation plasmatic propulsor which almost always works and twenty mining serve-robots, commanded by Asimov XXV, our foreman robot.

Ilia is the human pilot, mine engineering and commandant in the free time. I work as a chief officer and we are the unique live beings abroad, but our ants colony.

The official commandant, with no good humor of any kind, is a STAR VII navigator computer, to which a mechatronic engineer friend of mine installed a coffee machine eight years ago.

Comfort is a banned word in our diccionary. We have exact 1m<sup>2</sup> to each other to take a rest ventically, what means nothing at all in no gravity and doesn't bother us that much in our three-

months trips, with 2 months of vacation in colonies and 20.000 sunnees per month. UNE is a good boss, though.

- Damned companion! – I screamed inside my helmet for myself to listen alone. It was the third time that the companion was working wrong in the month and I was afraid that I couldn't close it someday and all our abundance could escape from it, which was the greatest companion among the five ones for burden.

Half an hour later it seemed it was working well, but this strange feeling of lie I had already felt other times.

- OK, Ilia. – I talked through the radio in the helmet. – You can allow the robots to leave now, but I don't guarantee the repair.

Twenty mechanic monsters in drum shapes, with five arms each, left pulling the feet out of the spaceship, me leading, in direction of an elevation in the south in the small asteroid in which we had landed in some hours before.

- Asi – I talked to the robot-master – this great one seems to have much carbon. It's largest then Mars 12 the double, yet we have extracted two tons of carbon from it!

- I think you are right, doctor. My sensors can identify good concentration of carbon. We didn't waste plasma uselessly.

I liked Asimov. He had some sense of humor, and this I have to admit: scientists in 21st century did a great job with AI – but, sometimes, I was scared being with the serve-robots. They could make come to an end any first good impression of them with their 2,5m height and eternal muteness, though they were only some longer sensory parts of Asimov in fact.

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The drills bellowed in silence, I could feel them by the vibration they caused in my feet, and pieces of rocks were catapulted to the space due to the very low gravity in there.

- Asi, this carbon is really deep. We've been digging for eight hours and there's not a single signal of it. Are you sure in this area we are going to find something?

- Doctor, my sensors indicate carbon forty meters far, approximately, in the deep. For we have already digged 34,12m, I calculate that in nine minutes we should obtain some results.

This delay was killing me. I thought that burden was enough for us to go back to Mars. Our three-month working period was almost ending, just like our

fouel, air and food, besides our nerves put daily in stress after twelve land-ins and land-offs.

- Doctor, we are almost getting there. – was it my impression or was there some relief in Asi’s tone of voice? Was the delay also affecting him?

In that exact moment, a deafening noise fulfilled my helmet making me lose the equilibrium and go to the floor.

- What the hell was that, Asi? Are you trying to make me go mad? – I screamed at the robot as soon as I could stand.

He promptly answered: - I’m sorry, Doctor. The comunication channel was open and the noise coming from the break of the drill from serve-robot 9 was transmitted.

- But how come did it happen? – I screamed. – Those drills are made from the purest titanium! – in that moment I had no idea of what was going on.

- I’m afraid to inform – the machine kept on saying – that other three drills were lost. So I interrupted the operation until more data of the digging are obtained. If you want to return to your lodges, I’ll get in touch as soon as I have news about it.

What could I do in a situation like this? After all, the robot-master had authonomy to act like this and he knew exactly what he should do. This way, I didn’t make me a fool and returned to the spaceship. I

really needed a rest and couldn't wait to take that damned spacial doth.

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I woke up three hours later with a noise bipping on my ear and a terrible taste in my mouth.

- Say it. - I grumbled at the microphone.

- Doctor, I already have the results of the completed mediation. - Asi informed with impartial tone of voice.

"The drills were damaged when they were put in contact with an extremely hard material."

"In this asteroid of approximately four kilometers long, there are about three tons and a half of carbon, what is more than enough to fulfill the space of burden, which is missing, and return to Mars."

"Nevertheless, we cannot mine this material. Transformations occurred in the center of a star, which occurred before the transformation of the asteroid, affected the carbon."

"My afraid is that someday we find other asteroid with irrecoverably altered carbon, too."

"You understand that this will cause unimaginable disturbs, besides of extreme wastes, during land-in and land-off." (I could see from far my license fading away...)

"This way, the conclusion is that we cannot, in any way, use the carbon that there is in here due to the

fact that it had been completely transformed into diamond.”

I just couldn't believe my ears! What a misfortune! Despite of I knew Asi almost never failed his analysis.

Three tons and a half of precious carbon, which didn't exist in quantity enough in Mars and that was our only one raw material (even to food sintetization), was simply transformed into this scoria called diamond that, in spite of serving to the industry as the hardest material known, couldn't battle the versatility of its raw material.

In Earth, diamonds were produced in a giant scale, with quality much superior than the natural ones and a very cheap price. It couldn't have happened worse thing to us!

- Thank you, Asi. - extremely disappointed, I answered to the robot. - You can enter with the serve-robots now.

Next, I called Ilia. - Did you hear Asi's report? We can say good-bye to our vacation plans, the girls will have to wait other three months to know Luna's aquarium. We can't even imagine returning Mars without the burden, UNE doesn't forgive failures.

- What a hell! - the ucranian yelled. - This just could've happen to us! All we can do now is to look for anothe asteroid and pray everything is normal in there. - he hept on talking right after, but on a

calmer tone of voice. – By the way, companion three doesn't close, Tony. Do you want to check it out or do I do it?

<sup>1</sup> UNE – United Nations of Earth

# Darkness

I open my eyes.

At least, I think I did it, but I can't feel them.

Everything is darkness around me.

I've never seen such a deep darkness. There's no single clarity! Nothing!

Oh, God... I'm blind!

I try to take my hands to the eyes. I can't!

I try to feel my arm. Where is it?

I can't feel my legs, I can't feel my body...

Am I dead?

If this is death... oh, my God! WHERE AM I?

Jesus!

I try to remember who I am, but I can't.

Nevertheless I am a human being (or, at least, I have already been one...)

Am I dead??? MY GOD, ANSWER!!!

MYGODMYGODMYGODMYGOD!!!

I can't stand not knowing what I am. This sensation is horrible.

I close my eyes (I think I did; I don't know...).

Sleep.

I'm awake again.

Nothing changed. Darkness is still there.

(Did I have any accident and am still in a coma on a hospital's bed?)

How much time has passed? One second? One millennium? Whatever. I've no idea.

I am calmer... nothing else is hurting, so it's all right.

I have just noticed I can't feel my breath.

SHITSHITSHITSHIT!

I'm really dead! It's not possible!

I don't remember when I died (if I died)... do I exist?

Someone, someday, said "I think, therefore I am" (how come did I remember this?). So, I shall exist. I don't know either where or when or what or how... but I do.

(I must be in hell. There is no other explanation. This is not from God.)

The things which pass through my head...

How can I remember them all if I don't even know who I am?

I don't ever remember if I am a man or a woman!

WHY?WHY?WHY?WHY?

Why did it happen to me?

Am I a Fallen Angel? Am I quitting any debit that I have made against any merciless God?

Not even Satan deserves something like this.

I count sheep (what a joke! I don't know what I am, but I know what sheeps are...).

Nothing happens.

I can't sleep.

(Am I sleeping and going through an eternal nightmare in some stopped second in a dream?)

I'LLGOMADI'LLGOMADI'LLGOMAD!!!

DON'T WANNA FEEL THIS ANYMORE! GOD!!!

SET ME FREE FROM THIS SENSATION! I WANNA DIE NORMALLY!

(Maybe this is normal death, and everybody goes through it...)

That's not possible.

What's worth thinking if I can't do anything with my thoughts?

I can't move.... I can't breathe... I can't see... I DON'T KNOW WHO (OR WHAT) I AM!

If I am dead... I WANNA BE DEAD AT ALL!!!

FUCKFUCKFUCKFUCK!!!

I try not to think about it. It is hard.

My last mental explosion just didn't work.

I'm still awake (sleeping?), thinking (dreaming?), surrounded by the most eternal darkness (dead?).

(Not even a blind person should be drawn in such a deep darkness! He must feel any light, any bright [or the heat on his face]).

I don't feel anything.

Neither heat nor cold. Neither hungry nor thirsty.

I don't know if I'm lying on the floor or floating in a vacuum in the space...

I don't know how much time has passed since the last time I woke up for the first time.

(Time doesn't have a meaning anymore...)

I started feeling something...

Lightly, starting somewhere (where I think my stomach is, as if I still had one).

This feeling is unexplainable. It's like it wasn't there. But somehow it is.

Little by little it starts overwhelming me, insidiously...

It's difficult to describe it... (hungry? sleep? Pain? Pleasure? – what is it, then?)

It's each time stronger.

I'd like to know what it is.

I close my eyes.

I open my eyes.

At least, I think I did it, but I can't feel them.

Everything is darkness around me.

I've never seen such a deep darkness. There's no  
single clarity! Nothing!

Oh, God... I'm blind!!!

# The Last Astronaut

He was traveling on a light thunder since the beginning of the times. He crossed-over the miles one after another during billions of years without noticing time because time didn't exist for him.

He saw when uncountable stars were born and died without alleyming older; without one unique electron, among the ones which maintained his body, could move his orbit; and, after all, without noticing his inert situation.

He could only notice some very light colors nuances which floated around him during his eternal fall, standing in between a millisecond and another, and, surely, these differences had nothing to do with that thing that was surrounding him.

His transparent coffin with three meters long couldn't be seen by any external viewer for it could travel on the exact speed of light in vacuum, not even one part of second above or below, so it would look like a thunder only.

No solid body has ever traveled this fast in space. Time expansion had disappeared, there was only the eternal immobility that left.

His cryogenic pot, which had never been opened, was then converted into a real coffin, though its occupant wasn't dead or even alive, as they wanted.

The quartz which it was made of wasn't affected by its atypical situation. It was as lifeless as its content.

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The last astronaut didn't want to say good-bye to his fellows, last alive beings on the Universe who would die. They had been on many things together, but now, not even their very sophisticated technology could avoid what was about to happen.

The Universe had finally alleyme shorter again, compressing even more the space-time and, in consequence, the body in it.

Only one space station, with hundreds of kilometers long and millions of inhabitants, had survived to the natural disaster, and this was only due to the N-M fantastic camp which could equilibrar the fantastic energies of them, creating, with this, a large inert energy space which includes all the structure of the station. This action took more than five hundred million years, allowing more and more generations of alive beings keep alive besides of the space-time colapse of the Universe.

Nevertheless, scientists knew a long time ago that one day the equilibrium would be shattered and, at last, everything would be smashed and joined the group that could no more be called Universe.

The last astronaut would be the only one who would try escape the holocaust on a despairingly technical handle and could, who knew one day, see the new Universe coming from the old one.

He went towards the cryogenical pot in the reception room and stood there looking at it during a long time. His mind went through all his life in that time lapse, concluding its uselessness just like all the efforts's uselessness realized until then to save something from this moribund universe. He felt he was too old in spite of his thirty-two normal years. But, besides it all, he walked towards the place by which the pot could be opened.

He could list all recommendations from the scientists, so he did everything automatically. The cryogenic system would be activated by a mental order when it was time to do so (if there existed any mind to do it).

Scientists from that race had created an unfailable plan to send the astronaut safe and sound to the future with millions of trillions of information bytes about the most diverse kinds of science, history, arts besides DNA banks from uncountable organisms, compiled by them.

At zero time, when the protection camp around the spacial station had ruined on itself due to the space-time collapse, the station, with its millions of beings started splitting while strong generators from N-M camp catapulted the quartz esquife on speed of light – it means, in a non-detectable by the mensuration

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