

## Yellow Shadows

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Stepping on yellow noisy shadows you arrive at home. Some years ago, in another place far from here, you used to arrive at home stepping on yellow shadows as well, but those ones were not noisy at all. The smell was also very different. This yellow smells wet land, died maple leaves rotting in the grass under the trees in the alley behind your building; the other one had a flower scent, and pollen, too much pollen to your allergic nose.

You walk over these fall leaves lying on the ground and in your mind it is as you were stepping those yellow ipê flowers on the sidewalk, in front of the building where you used to live five years ago, when you were taking that fall semester abroad in Porto Alegre, south of Brazil. 2007 had been a year with two springs and without fall to you, and you had never lived so intensely in your entire life.

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When you left to go to Brazil you thought you would miss the colorful Minnesotan fall, but you were wrong. You were living a different but also colorful season, and, better than this, in a warm and inviting weather. In spite of the pollen allergy you discovered you had, you were living a really great time. You did not know if it was for the warm weather, for the different and also warm people, for being living a so different life experience, or if it was everything together, but what you knew was that that entire environment was inspiring you to do something you had never dreamed about before.

You were coming from your classes walking through the Redenção Park, when you decided stop for a while to rest sitting on the grass, as you saw many people doing, as you used

to do back in Minnesota, but you had never dared do the same there. You took your notebook just to review the class' topics of that day, but suddenly you started writing. For no apparent reason, you turned to a blank page and just began writing. Firstly you were writing just some silly lines trying to be poetic, talking about the beauty of the trees, the fountain, and the lake in front of you. After a while, the words were flowing from you, through your pen, just as you were breathing, as they came directly and spontaneously from your heart, as if each heartbeat brought a brand new word, a new phrase, a surprising story to your blank papers.

After the sunset, the lack of light made you move, but not too far from there. You just crossed the street and went to the *Lancheria do Parque*, a simple and popular restaurant you had never dared step inside for the dirty impression you had. However, in that moment, that place seemed to be the perfect one to you and to your new duty. Yes, you were feeling like it was a duty to you. In spite of the pleasure you were feeling, there was a sense of obligation and urgency in that activity that did not allow you do otherwise, but just sitting and writing whatever came to your mind, to your paper.

You ordered a cold beer and a chicken risotto you saw some guys eating in a table close to you, but you did not pay attention if the aluminum dish where your food was served was clean or not. It was not. Your focus was neither the food nor the cold bottle of beer sweating in front of you. You were sweating words; some of the words were equally dirty and messed up as the dish in front of you; some of them were cold as your beer; all of them were tasteful and they were finishing with the hunger you had never realized you were feeling. You had been starving for years probably, but just realized that in that very moment, a chicken risotto at your

right, a stupidly cold beer at your left, and your notebook just in front of you receiving the words that were feeding you as they left you.

For each bite, you wrote one phrase. While you read the paragraphs, you drank some gulps of your beer with your eyes fixed in the paper. After one hour your risotto was not warm neither your beer was that cold anymore. However the words did not stop to flow and you were immersed in that world you did not know that existed.

The restaurant got crowded, but you kept writing without looking at the people around you. Most of the people left after a while and the restaurant was almost empty. Then, you realized that it was almost midnight and you were there in that almost unknown place, at that time, and you had to walk for at least 20 minutes to arrive at your place. You knew that was dangerous walking for those dark streets, so you decided to take a bus. The bus stop was just in front of the restaurant, but the bus took longer than you had supposed it would take to arrive and you stayed there, in front of the restaurant, in that dark and empty bus stop for almost 30 minutes. During the whole time, thoughts did not stop to come to your mind, and you there, standing alone, distressed for do not having taking notes of those ideas that were coming to you in that wasted minutes.

At the next morning you woke up one hour earlier than usual. The feelings of the last night were present in your body as the memories of many hours of work out remain in your legs and arms during the next day when you go to the gym for the first time after a long time. You felt as your brain had worked more than usual, as your hands had done excessive work, but you were feeling good, as your body was saying that this was the way as it should be; it was a

type of good sore to your soul. So you decided to use that extra hour of the morning to write more.

Sitting at your desk, a fresh coffee by your side while you were still wearing your pajamas, you tried, but nothing came to you. You were there stuck with no new thoughts, no ideas, but no new words were coming from you. The new white paper in front of you seemed to be an ocean to be crossed. There was no way to start; there was no hope to reach the other side safely. You took a shower, and you left the hot water falling in your head, trying to melt the frozen ideas inside of your brain. Nothing worked and you left to your class feeling half excited for the last night and half disappointed for your incapacity of keeping writing. In the next days, the excitement was getting smaller, giving space to the disappointment that was bigger day after day.

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Now, inside of your apartment, looking at the outside trees, the memories of this very first day of inspiration, almost trance, comes vivid to you. You can almost smell those flowers, feel again the taste of that risotto and that beer, and remember the happiness, the anxiety, and the disappointment of those days. You take your laptop and leave. You decide to sit in some coffee with tables outside, so you can enjoy the nice weather of the beginning of the spring, probably the same temperature, the same seventy degrees that made everyone stay protected inside of the hotel for being too cold, a cold front as they said, in that weekend of August, when you and your classmates travelled to Gramado, the coziest place you had ever known.

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It was maybe a little colder in that weekend, but it was nothing even comparable with the Minnesotan cold. It was maybe in the sixties degrees, a common temperature that would never keep you at home if you were in St. Paul. However, being there, for some reason, for the company, for knowing that you were in a tropical place where was supposed to be much warmer, you were truly engaged in that collective behavior and, as so, you were also protecting yourself against that supposed coldness from the outside. With your friends, in front of the fireplace at the lounge of the hotel, you were savoring that chocolate fondue with red wine. It was just 6pm, maybe a little bit later, but it was looking as it was already night. It was dark, misty and windy outside. The temperature was falling when you and Rebecca decided to leave the hotel for a walk, just to feel in your skin a little bit of cold, which somehow gave to you some comfort, a sensation of being at home.

You went inside of a clock store just at the corner behind of the hotel. It looked like a German store, full of cuckoo clocks and other old style ones. One specific cuckoo clock called your attention and you got absorbed looking at each detail of it and got scared when the cuckoo jumped outside for the first time, 7pm. Once a hour that wooden bird was allowed to come outside, see the world, scream for freedom, and come back home; just a glimpse of the real world, just a moment of apparent liberty, and then one whole hour of silence. The music that was played each fifteen minutes didn't bring any comfort to that wooden soul.

You saw yourself inside of that small box above the clock, controlled by it, "it's your time, Ted, go, sing your song, say the hour you have to say, do your duty, and then come back to your silent and dark box where you belong to."

Back to the hotel you went to your bedroom, turned on your macBook, and found the file where you had saved your writings from that first night in Porto Alegre. When Thomas, your roommate, came to ask you what was going on, why you had left the group to be alone, you barely answered him, "I have to finish something here. Soon I'll be there at the lounge." But you didn't. It was 3am when Thom came back to sleep and found you still sitting at the desk, writing convulsively.

"Are you doing homework at this time, man?"

"No, it is my cuckoo time."

"What?"

"Forget about, I'm just kidding. You can turn off the other lights, I just need this one of the desk. I'm almost done with this."

"Okay, good night."

You knew you were not almost done as you had said. You could stop anytime, but you didn't want to. You were afraid to come back to your dark box and see yourself as a jailbird for the next endless hour. You should make that instant as longer as you could. It was almost dawn when you fell asleep.

In the next day, a sunny Sunday, while you were coming back to Porto Alegre, you sat in the back of the van, quiet, your thoughts were lost in the stories and poems you had written during the previous day and in that first day in that restaurant. Sensual poems that came from you didn't know where and then other so childish ones that seemed to be impossible come from the same source. Stories about killers were sharing your folder and your disk with stories about fathers and sons, about fairies and angels sometimes. Hopeless nightmares and beautiful

dreams were side by side. Disgusting stories and dirty poems that seemed to have been written with pus and sperm were there occupying the same space of pure and neat characters, inspiring words, colorful images.

You could not recognize yourself in all those words. Maybe you were possessed by some spirits, by some unknown force that was driven you to write what you didn't have any idea about. There was a woman who felt pleasure seeing her husband having sex with other women and there was a naïve girl who was travelling by plane for the very first time creating a thousand fantasies in her innocent mind.

Back to your place you spent a sleepless night reading all your writing trying to find yourself in them, perhaps some connection that would see yourself, or what you believed you were. You could not find meaning or reason for many of those writings, and you were perplexed in front of that creation that you knew that was yours but you knew that it was not only yours. You felt that someone or something was blowing those words in your ears, moving your hands and your fingers, to leave them tattooed in the paper, recorded in the memory of your computer, in the memory of yourself.

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Sitting in the back of your building, yellow shadows on the floor, a calm and nice wind starts blowing, and you remember vividly that first astonishment you had, and you relive that perplexity and puzzlement you felt that day for something that nowadays is so usual, almost unnoticed to you. You realize you have lost the beauty of the awe, and you decide to bring it back to your heart.

You wear that old pair of tennis shoes, that one you bought five years ago when you were preparing to your trip; you wear your usual blue shorts and the yellow jersey that brings many good memories to you, and you leave to run on the banks of the Mississippi. Today you are not carrying your iPod neither wearing your sunglasses. Today you run slower than usual, aware of every sound, of every color you meet in your path, looking for that innocent amazement you have lost in some place of the past.