

# DIARIES OF THE LAST DREAMER

*written post-somnium*

d o . t l d



2007



## *Acknowledgments*

Not everything that you are about to read is true. Part of it is sheer invention. Most of it has been altered to protect the innocent. And the guilty.

All coincidences of names, places, numbers, colors and emotions are the work of chance and chance alone. Though you may accuse me of plagiarism.

I will not force upon you an oath of secrecy, but be warned that entering a human mind is far easier than getting out of one. I am not to be held responsible for any broken hearts, suicides or any other damage happening as a result of reading this material. Shift+Del is within your reach at any time.

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I dedicate this to Life, to whom I owe everything. To Chaos, which brought about the decision to start writing this. To all the real and imaginary people who have inspired me. To the artists whose works I admire, Rowling, Carlin, Coelho, Orwell, amongst many others. And to the OpenOffice.org hackers, who so brilliantly enabled me to exercise my disdain for paper<sup>1</sup>.

One day I will look down at this and laugh. And that will be proof that I've changed. Evolved. But until then, laugh with me because you're just like me. Or because you're different.

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1 and Microsoft products.

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*Prologue*

I was sitting alone in the train station. Watching people surreptitiously. I enjoy doing that. Gives me a sense of freedom. And whenever my eyes met with someone else's, I instantly blushed and looked away. I blush easily. And forget to smile.

My attention was caught by a man walking out of the train that has just arrived from I-don't-know-where. He seemed to radiate with a weird sort of calmness. He looked around with disgust, taking notice of every speck of spit on the dirty platform; inhaling the everlasting stench of sweat so typical of our city. When he shot me a fleeting glance, I pretended to gaze at something else, as I always do. *Have I been staring too insistently?* He started walking, and since it was the direction I needed to take myself, I quietly followed him at a distance.

I've never chased anyone before, so I guess I wasn't as discreet as I thought I was, because sure enough, after a few blocks he turned around and waited for me to approach.

– *Have you been following me, young man?*

– *No... I don't think we've met.*

I was doing my best to sound confused.

– *I've been walking in circles for a while now, and so were you. Now stop pretending and tell me what's on your mind, dreamer.*

*Have we been walking around in circles?* I had no idea. *Dammit, what a situation.* I could have walked away right there, but then I thought, there was no derision in his tone. No anger, not even impatience. And why did he call me a “dreamer”?

– *Because that's what you are.*

– *What?* I stammered.

– *A dreamer.*

I was positively sure I didn't formulate the question aloud. How did he know?

– *The question was clouding your forehead without you realizing it. Listen; I live right across the street from your place. Come for a tea whenever you want some more **bits of Truth.***

He spoke the last three words slower, with emphasis. Then he walked away, leaving me stranded in the street, confused as ever. His clear voice was still ringing in my ears, “*A dreamer.*” I watched him disappear round a corner; and then retraced my way home.

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# 1

*To turn a moment into an  
eternity takes only two people.*

The bizarre encounter never crossed my mind since that day. *He was either crazy or making fun of me*, I thought. I saw no reason for our paths to cross again.

A few weeks have passed on the whim of a careless summer. Now I was stuck in an Internet-less prison with another 256+ people, including my family. "*Vacation*," they called it. Since I am (by definition) not a very sociable person, I dived into my audio-books, devouring them one by one, oblivious to what was happening around me.

Halfway through my time there, **she** caught my attention. While not particularly beautiful<sup>2</sup> according to my non-existent standard thereof, something in her manner of being made me desperately want to talk with her<sup>3</sup>. At first I was in denial, naturally. *How can one fall in love at a distance?* I would ask myself. But seeing her again and again made me feel guilty in the "*loser*" kind of way.

It took me two painfully long days to gather up my courage<sup>4</sup>. I never told her about the time I spent thinking of the best way to fire up a conversation. Perhaps I should have. At any rate, my final solution was ludicrously simple. *They say all good solutions are simple*. I approached her and said that I couldn't let that day pass without asking for her name. I didn't get yelled at, as I was half-expecting<sup>5</sup>. Perhaps the Universe did conspire to help me after all. Her name was Qina. And in the mirror...

As questions and answers continued pouring out of us, I was amazed at how simple things seemed now that the first step was taken. The hardest part was left behind. The doubts. *What if she only speaks Russian? What if she's got*

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2 Well, not like those spoiled dolls one observes in the city, only to find out that they smoke, drink, swear like sailors, and use more make-up than an Egyptian mummy can handle. Some of them *do* catch one's eye at first, though.

3 You talk **to** a dog. You talk **with** a person. Call me grammar Nazi.

4 Laugh at me, yeah!

5 Stupid, I know.



*someone already and is not willing to even speak to anybody else?* I suppose all things are difficult and feel silly the first time.

Another thing that struck me as odd was that apparently it didn't matter *what* you said the first time you met someone. Until then I thought the “*first impression*” counted. To this day I am not sure which school of thought has the right answer, but I will figure it out eventually.

The blows, however, did not wait for too long. I soon found out she was 3 years older than me<sup>6</sup> and that she enjoyed the one kind of music I absolutely hated<sup>7</sup>. Bummer.

I never figured out what she felt. I'm not the kind of person who can look you in the eye and read you like a book. They say only age can bring this kind of “inside information.” I have yet to {ap,dis}prove this. *Does **she** know what I feel? Can **she** read me? Can I trust her at all? Does **she** wonder whether to trust me?*

Soon we ran out of things to talk about. Of course that wouldn't happen to me in “normal” circumstances, i.e. when I'm not implied emotionally. Painful seconds of silence crept between us until someone (usually her) broke the ice with a phrase like “*I like this warm wind so much.*” We would then cling desperately to this new subject just to avoid the embarrassing silence for another while. It's amazing what small-talk can do.

Noticing that most of the time I asked the questions and she answered, I attempted to step out of the habit. It didn't work (more silence). Then I tried to come up with better questions, the ones that itch you to ask “*What about you?*” That worked better, but by that time I was convinced that she was of the submissive kind who prefer to “play it safe.” *Perhaps that's why she didn't reject me in the first*

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<sup>6</sup> It seems that age counts on a logarithmic scale. The younger one is, the higher the chance that even a small difference is a show-stopper.

<sup>7</sup> Hint: “De ce mă minți?”

*place? She was not the kind of person to say “go to hell.”*

*But all is not in vain, I consoled myself. My fear of the unknown has just lost a major battle.*

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# 2

*Lies are swords with two blades. Either they float up and you have to live with others calling you a liar, or they sink down and you have to live with yourself being a liar.*

Just me, myself and I again, I thought about all that was said, and all that wasn't said. All rights and wrongs that I put into words. Mostly the wrongs. I guess everybody regrets something. Only the dead have no regrets.

I had a sudden urge to talk to someone about it. But to whom? Family? Nope, too “old-school” and too unlike me. Friends? They would probably just laugh at me. Priest? Ooh, forget the church. I've never been to a sacrament and never will be. Period.

Diary? Now that's an easy solution. Just write it on paper. No, someone might read it. Write it on PC. With encryption and all that jazz. Spill your thoughts onto the keyboard and rummage them afterwards, looking for less obvious bits of truth. The only problem is, the diary cannot talk back to you. No matter how nice you ask of it.

*Bits of truth...* For some reason the phrase was looping endlessly in my head. Like a broken record. And then, with a slap across my forehead, I remembered. *That's what that weirdo spoke about! He told me to visit him whenever I wanted some bits of Truth...* But he was back in the city. I would need two hours to get there and two hours back. Not to mention the cost and the nausea-provoking gasoline smell. Besides, why would I tell that man anything? Why would I open a window into my soul through which he might do... who-knows-what? *He called me a “dreamer.”* I've been called many things before, some of which were not even listed in the dictionary, but I have never been called a “dreamer”. I had a creepy feeling that he knew something about me that was unknown even to myself!

But then I thought, *What if I do talk to him? We don't know each other, so what harm could it do? He can't use the information against me, right? And I might learn something from him. I'm bored here anyway; let's hit the road!* Now that I think of it, the decision seems to go against my usual behavior, but at that time it came nothing short of natural.

About midway through my ride the doubts started flooding me again. *What if he no longer lives there? What if he doesn't want to see me?* But what was I supposed to do? Jump out of the bus? I pressed the Play button on my audio player. *The hell with the doubts.*

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I knocked at his door as soon as I got there, afraid that if uncertainties clouded my mind again, I would walk away.

– *Come in. The door's not locked.*

*That's strange,* I thought. *No one keeps their door open in **our** town!* I slowly opened the screeching door and stepped inside, careful, out of politeness.

– *Oh, it's you. I didn't expect you that soon... Then after a short pause, I was just preparing some tea. Sit down, dreamer.*

For once I decided to ask what was on my mind and stop pretending I was omniscient.

– *Are you telling me you knew I would come?*

– *But surely. You came for a bit of truth. Patience, dreamer. I have a feeling that you will really like my tea.*

I did not insist, resigning instead to quietly studying the room we were in<sup>8</sup>. It was nothing fancy. One door, one window with white curtains, a shabby low bed, a candle and a pile of books. Next to the bed, a huge chest, which looked centuries-old. The man was sitting on it, next to a small hexagonal table with one foot, on which tea was steaming. There was only one chair in the room, and I was occupying it.

He beckoned me to take one of two teacups now resting on the table. I took a sip and was surprised to find

<sup>8</sup> I get bored of books with long descriptions, so I'll try to keep mine short.

the drink pleasantly warm, despite the hot steam escaping the cup's depths.

– *So... to what do I owe the pleasure?* Said he, obviously mocking me.

Then, unexpectedly, inexplicably, torrents of words were belching out of me. Before I could stop myself I wandered aloud about Qina and what I felt for her; how I didn't tell her that I hated that music, and that I did not believe in a Christian god... *Holy crap, what have I done?! I just spilled my guts to this guy for no reason! He must have put something in my tea. A drug, a truth potion or something.* He saw me glancing suspiciously at my mug and said,

– *I can see that you've been longing to speak to someone for quite some time now. Don't worry, there's nothing wrong with your drink. It's the faith in yourself and the trust in others that you have trouble with.*

He gulped some tea.

– *I realize I didn't give you any reason to trust **me**,* said he, catching the “*Why would I trust **you**?!*” before it left my lips, *but please just listen to what I have to say, with your mind's ears and eyes open.*

How would you reply to that? I kept my tongue, trying to calm myself and assess the situation.

– *Call me Monk.*

Startled, I began scanning the walls of the room. There was no crucifix anywhere to be seen. But before the question was fully formed in my head, he said,

– *I am not a... regular monk, of the sort that live in a monastery and pray to some guy... in the sky.* He pointed his thumb abstractedly to the ceiling. *I am simply a free man.*

I waited for him to elaborate, but he laid the matter to rest. This mysterious nature of his words started to annoy me. It was like subjecting me to a puzzle, or some kind of test.

– *Are you ready to hear what really happened?*

– *Yeah, sure. And in my own head: It's about time you start saying something useful!*

– *You were trying to control her. Her reactions. Your fear of losing her in one moment had such a strong grip on you that you decided losing her in a longer time was not as painful. Let me ask you something: would you prefer to die fast or slow?*

– *Fast... I guess.*

– *Right. In those kinds of situations there are generally two routes for people to take. One of them involves lying and hoping that she wouldn't find out. The other one is simply telling the truth and seeing what happens. If she's fine with it, she'll accept it. Otherwise, that will be the end of it. But think about it: would you rather live with a person who accepts you as someone not truly yourself, or break up with such a person and find another who **does** accept you for what you are?*

He did not seem to expect an answer this time. Slowly standing up, he opened the door. Without another word, I was out of there. The noise of the street hit me like cold water. It was unusually quiet inside that room...

Walking back to the place where I'd catch the bus, I concluded that the monk must be right. It was a mistake being untruthful to Qina; and it was eating me alive. Slowly. Excruciatingly.

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# 3

*Life is like the open sea. One must always know which way is up and one must never stop swimming.*



Is that how love feels? Waking up one hour before the sun rises with your stomach churning and unable to go back to sleep? Lack of appetite, not because of anorexia but because suddenly no food is good enough? Constant anxiety with a tinge of guilt?

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– *Do you think a boy and a girl can be friends?*

Is one a major screw-up if one hears that from a girl? *Then again, what was I expecting?...* A queer sense of relief flowed within me. I did not have much to lose anymore.

The next day I didn't seek her until dusk. Then I told her that I would be leaving the next morning. I mentioned that before, if only she had paid attention. She wished me a safe journey home and I didn't even have the presence of mind to thank her. That kind of thing happens to me pretty often – I'm out of words when I need them, but they come back to me in heaps once the conversation is over.

It was a lousy good-bye. But then, I guess, even a lousy good-bye is better than no good-bye... She had green eyes... I couldn't believe I noticed it that late. The setting sun was reflected in them in such beautiful a pattern...

All the time I was with her, my usual<sup>9</sup> fears went away. I no longer cared what other people were looking at, laughing about, thinking of. It made no difference. But the minute I was alone again the insecurities came back with a vengeance. I was feeling naked again.

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9 and idiotic

# 4

*It's all about fears and what you do with them. Either you screw them, or they screw you.*

The decision to visit the monk again wasn't so tricky. Once my curiosity for learning has been ignited, not an Ocean could quench it. The monk seemed to know a lot of stuff I didn't, and not many people were willing to teach in our age, much less without pay.

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In close detail, I told him what happened. Without introduction, he said,

– *Let's go to the park. I want to show you something.*

I have witnessed his impulsive behavior before, so it didn't shock me. Luckily the distance to the park didn't call for public transportation on such a torrid midday. We sat down on a bench, shielded from the sun, and he told me to observe the people around us.

– *What do you see?* he asked after a minute or two.

– *Just... regular people.*

*What did he expect me to say?*

– *Look at that youth, said the monk. Do you see how he puts his hands into his pockets from time to time, just to retract them immediately? Why do you think he does that?*

– *Perhaps he has some money and wants to make sure it's still there.*

– *Possibly. But I think he does that because he's anxious about what others may think about him. His hands are empty, and moving them is an unconscious attempt to alleviate that anxiety. He should realize that he is a slave to others so long as he worries about what they think of him. Strangers' thoughts are outside one's circle of influence, so trying to meet their unknown expectations is pointless. Why not be oneself and focus on something*

*useful instead?*

Minutes crawled. The heat was becoming uncomfortable.

– *Look at that old gentleman. He is barely holding his crutch, each step more painful than the last one. Yet he passed the bench where that young lady is sitting, heading for the next, empty one. Why did he do that? Because he fears what society might think of him, sitting next to a young girl. Would you deem him a pervert if you saw them resting on the same bench?*

– *No... I guess not; he looks respectable.*

– *Still his fears prevail... Now look at that bloke over there; he's only slightly older than you are. Why is he doing his best to hide the cover of the technical book he's reading? He has been called a nerd once, and he doesn't wish it to happen again.*

– *But reading a book doesn't make you a nerd! That sounded like a personal offence to me.*

– *Precisely! Just like reading **Lolita** doesn't make you a pedophile, and reading **Das Kapital** does not make you rich. People who criticize others for the books they read betray their own narrow-mindedness. Why bother about them?*

I was beginning to see the pattern. The monk was debunking people's fears as he looked at them. He saw the world as an immense circus of ridiculousness.

– *And that couple over at the fountain. He is obviously in love with her. She is not indifferent either, but conceals her feelings better. So why are they not holding hands?*

– *Because... he's afraid to ask? I speculated uncertainly.*

*– And that's what happened to you and Qina, didn't it?*

He was right, although I would never admit it.

*– We were taught in school that making mistakes is bad. Such a habit from childhood is difficult to unlearn. But in truth, life is all about making mistakes, learning from them, and moving on!*

With this, the monk stood up and left. I was already aware of the eccentricities of his character, of his non-conformism, so it was as good as good-bye.

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# 5

*Forsaken is he, who does not  
dream.*

There she was, running through the field with the innocence of a child. Laughing. Discovering light for the first time. Closing her eyes while she breathed in life. The soft touch of grass under our bare feet was still so vivid.

She was the embodiment of beauty. Though now that I think of it, I can't remember any detail of her looks. The color of her hair, her eyes, the expression of her face, her gestures – all of these were gone now, but the magic they cast about was still there.

No association with Qina popped up in my head. If it was her, I would have known it.

Perhaps we people don't dream in images. That would explain the lack of any visual details. Perhaps we dream in emotions. And sounds.

*Yes, sounds.* Music was playing. From the sky; from all around us. Dido. In my dream, I was surprised at how well I knew the lyrics. Words which I can't recall consciously awake, anyhow.

Then the dream morphed. Two planes of reality clashed against one another, shattering the beauty into a thousand shards of mediocrity.

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It's amazing how the sun isn't hard to look at anymore. Pain doesn't exist at all, in dreams<sup>10</sup>. Things that would normally be unthinkable appear natural.

A deep voice I couldn't quite place reverberated in my head, *"Dream on, for 't is through dream yourself you know."*

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10 One age-old trick to knowing whether you're awake is to bite your tongue.

# 6

*Fancy mixed with idleness is death. Activity is survival. Dreaming mixed with action is life and nourishment.*



The next day I told the monk about the dream I had. He listened closely as usual, but made no comment.

– *So, what do you reckon it means?*

– *Dreams show but your innermost desires, he said, meditatively.*

– *You say dreams are merely the work of the brain...*

– *Not necessarily, he cut across what I was saying. Close your eyes and imagine birds flying<sup>11</sup>. He waited a few more seconds and said, you can open them now. How many birds did you think of?*

– *I'm not sure, I replied, confused.*

– *Exactly! So if the number of birds was not defined by your brain, someone or something must have planted the thought into you.*

He paused, scanning my face for signs of understanding, and not seeing them appear, he continued,

– *People are all connected with each other and the Universe. Their thoughts are intertwined. All living things are one. Call it God, or Mother Earth, or whatever, but be aware of it. All is one!*

We stood in silence for a while, both musing.

– *On a more practical note, you must be conscious of the potential perils of dreaming. I could see this tendency in your eyes the moment I saw you at the station. That's why I called you a dreamer.*

He winked at me. “Perils of dreaming,” what was he talking about?

– *I'm not sure what you mean...*

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<sup>11</sup> Thanks, Paulo.

*– It does not do to dwell on dreams and forget to live<sup>12</sup>. You ought not to waste your life, waiting for her. You must go find her yourself!*

Finally getting the point, I was on the brink of asking him why he had to put everything in such complicated terms. But then I figured, it wouldn't sound nearly as convincing otherwise. I said good bye and left. Rapt in thought, he seemed not to notice me.

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12 Joanne, I hope you don't mind.

# 7

*It is welcomed by the desperate;  
feared by the masses; esteemed  
by the wise.*

The monk died that night. When I turned up in his apartment the morning after, three uniformed men were present.

– *He left his last will to “the dreamer,” one of them said. Do you happen to know who that might be?*

– *That would be me, I said, somewhere between embarrassment and shock.*

With a skeptical look, he measured me from head to foot. I was obviously too young to be trusted. But after exchanging nods with the other two, he gave me the folded paper, saying,

– *He didn't have much to leave behind, you see. I read the thing. The guy must have been a lunatic. No names at all in there; no family, no friends. He called the police near midnight last night, saying that he's dying. Natural death, our doctors say. He's been suffering, quietly, for years. The procession will take place tomorrow afternoon... to whom it may concern.*

The men turned to leave. I opened the paper and proceeded to decipher the minuscule, slanted writing.

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*I have lived my share of this life. I have seen mankind go down, and rise up again. I have witnessed our horizons become wider and wider; while the alleys of our dreams shrank more narrow with each day. Yet my faith in the human race never quivered.*

***Domine Dirige Nos.*** *Why? Why some god guide us? Why not people guide us? Why not we guide ourselves? The people who invented religion were brilliant. In their frenzy to stop men from seizing their power, they projected it into the sky. Abusing their knowledge of the laws of nature, they*

*not only arose faith in people, but also lured them into indoctrinating their offspring from infancy; threatening them with eternal damnation if they begged to differ. Much more subtle than Big Brother's, their system has held for millenia. They took the power away, offering slavery instead.*

*The past and the future, two exponential spaces of events and decisions, intersect in a tiny spark called "now." There is nothing after death. No punishment. No redemption. Only the living memory I leave behind.*

*I shall be cremated. I do not wish to bear the cross for eternity. I do not want my bones to rot in a forgotten place. I want my ashes to fly with the wind. Thou shalt keep thy religion to thyself<sup>f13</sup>.*

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13 George, you're a genius.



## *Afterword*

*(Now breaking out of the dreamer's skin; back into my own, sweet, self.)*

That's it! I'm done! Stop reading! Close the book<sup>14</sup>!

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This is the first moderate-length piece of prose I've written since 2002, when I made a short science-fiction story, which I can't read today without laughing. Creating this booklet has been a unique experience, at times inducing headache, at times euphoria.

I did my best to resist the temptation of including regular expressions, smileys, <sup>TM</sup>s and mathematical truths in this work; but I will not give \$2.56 for any geeky reference you may find.

Taking a snapshot<sup>15</sup> of my existence at a point in time, I washed it till the pain was gone, put it next to a block of sweet golden lies, and melted the two together until they became one. Then smoothing the rough edges, I came up with this book.

No animals were hurt in the making thereof (except some mosquitoes obscuring my monitor). No veins were cut and no drugs were used (except Nightwish, Angtoria and the like). No human brains were washed and no STDs were proliferated. No.

Finally, allow me to thank you for reading thus far. A 32-page document, albeit with huge fonts, would frighten me, too. I hope I have not bored you completely, and that you have learnt something in the process. *Anything can teach you something.*

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14 oh well, the PDF.

15 And talking about backups which I never do, how many times have you dreamt that your ext3 file system on /home went FUBAR? I can recall at least two such dreams (that should give you a fair idea on my sanity).

<http://ascending.wordpress.com/>



**ap**  
**db**