

Brazilian Dream

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Preface

I'd love to be a writer, like those who write immigrant literature in the United States. But the problem is: I don't have a porch; "a covered shelter projecting in front of the entrance of a building" is not common here in my hometown. So, what should I do?

I was thinking about moving to Detroit. I've heard they have lots of houses (with big porches) at a bargain price being sold there. But I should not forget: a chandelier is also needed.

I have to talk about food, Immigrant Literature is all about food, you know. I want to be a writer like those ones: *Pão de queijo*, it is not cheese bread, as its literal translation suggests, this is untranslatable. As the word *saudade*, you always lose a bit of its meaning if you try so.

Do I need to talk about the melting pot? Oh, do me a favor! I'm not a white European. I cannot blend into the crowd. Whether I like it or not, there will be a hyphen in my Nationality till the last day of my life. There is no such a thing as assimilation to me. I'll remain hybrid.

My father moved to the former Motown when it was still shining in the 70's. The Brazilian team had just won the third title of the World Cup, but everything that he talked at that time was about the kidnapping of the Germany and Switzerland's ambassadors, as if those events were more important than football. For more than once, I listened to my mother asking him if he was not Brazilian, due to his odd behavior in relation to their homeland, the Soccer's Nation.

I don't know how to play soccer. *Meu pai* never taught me. He said he would like to forget that once he had lived in that huge jungle that is Brazil, where children have snakes instead of puppies, and everyone lives in the Amazon jungle. *Minha mãe* used to say that things are not like that, but everything my father says makes more sense, it is always in consonance with what I've heard from everybody else.

When I tell people I'm a Brazilian born in the US, they start talking to me in Spanish trying to be friendly, asking about Buenos Aires and the beautiful *mulatas*. My father used to laugh about it, my mom used to cry instead. Brazilians are Brazilians, my father sometimes declare himself Latino. He does everything to hide the shame that is to belong to a country sunk in corruption, Funk Carioca and *carnaval*.

Pablo! In my office, right now! You know what that fucking Asians did to The Big Three, don't you? Before that it was time for the Europeans to do the same, and now you want to be the flavor of the month? You are lucky enough to have a job, but all you

do is planting bullshit in the head of my men. *Cidade Maravilhosa*? If I get informed that you're bothering people with your mother's stories again, I'll give you a one-way ticket to hell, got it?

We live in a ghost city haunted by seventy-eight thousand abandoned constructions. The cradle of the automobile industrial revolution now has less than seven hundred thousand people, almost 60 percent dropped down from a peak population of over 1.8 million at the bright times. After the bankruptcy, things got even more difficult. It's time to go back, we must go back. The smart ones moved to Rio, where, according to the UN, it's a safer place than here.

It was nearly seven and thirty when a strong thunderstorm woke me up, I almost couldn't contain my delight, because it meant that nobody could get out to buy French bread, part of our daily breakfast, and that is the perfect excuse for my mother to make *bolinho de chuva*. We all love it! Even my father, who pretends not to care much about our typical dishes, cannot hide the glee in his eyes.

Today, I'm leaving. My father can't help it. For the very first time my mom didn't have much to say, she knows I have the guts to go, she wonders she could do the same, but it is too late to her. She is pragmatic enough to stay, I'm curious enough to go. Dad starts to dictate a list of "not to do things". He thinks it can save my life:

- Don't mess with *mulher de malandro*;
- Don't learn the *jeitinho brasileiro*;
- Don't go to Funk gigs...

"Leave him alone! Alone, you hear me?!" My mother crying, and punching my father's chest, she continued... "He's a man now. He deserves to be happy, to live what I have not lived! You are not American, You're not even Latino. No better than any Brazilian or anyone else".

I hate the *tupiniquim* stereotype that we are associated with. You know why? Because it is all true! Where there is smoke, there is fire! I dare you to go to Brazil and not find scantily clad women, pickpockets by all sides and corrupt politicians on TV, like in a horror show. I challenge you! Still going? *Vá com Deus!* And those were the last words I heard from my father before leaving his falling apart city. Or, at least, should be!

Here, I'm like the crowd. There are no Afro-Americans, WASPs or whatever. Black people are Brazilians, white people are Brazilians. Even the next door *japonezinha* is Brazilian, no less beautiful than a blonde or a *morena* girl. People refer more to physical appearances than ethnicity. What labels your nationality is where you were born, and that's how my problems began.

Hey, *Americano*, my friend wants to meet you. She said she never kissed a gringo before. But I'm not gringo, my parents are Brazilians, I just was born there. So, stop silly excuses, don't you like the *novinha*? A pretty young girl, wearing a tiny short, almost shirtless. How could I refuse? In less than two minutes, we were kissing like long time lovers. She invited me to the *baile* tonight. I would follow her to hell if she asked to, and so I did.

The typical forty degree day was ending giving way to a night that promised to be even hotter. My princess was waiting for me in her stone castle, in *Jacarepaguá*. What I did not know was that the king (of drug traffic, of course) would not like my visit at all. She starts to dance a dirty song that would leave even Nicki Minaj and her Anaconda seriously envious. I was involved by her, like a prey, helpless.

Are you nuts? You are brushing the *Patrão's* woman, *alemão*? No, man! She said that's how funk must be danced. Really? Why don't you dance with your mother, then? Four men armed with assault rifles started beating me, I collapsed after the third gun butt, though it didn't stop them. This *talarico* leaves the States to come here and faint like a pussy? Everyone laughed. After another couple of hits, I was taken away.

Wake up, Pablo! Stop screaming... You are scaring me, please! - Mom? What are you doing here? Yesterday, after our tough conversation you locked yourself in your room and felt asleep. You were so upset that when I start listening to this noise coming from your bedroom, I thought you were killing yourself. - Well, maybe, just maybe, I was close to do so moving to Brazil. My father could have a point, who knows.