



FRANCISCO X. STORK

MARCELO IN THE REAL WORLD

"Marcelo, are you ready? " Thumbs up. Meaning I'm ready.

"Alright, I'll get you in."

At that moment, the machines' tunnel pulls me in. I like the feeling when I am closed inside. The lights are not as bright for my eyes, but yet, I keep them closed.

"Don't forget to lift your thumb when you hear mental music." The tunnel has a loudspeaker, where Dr. Malone's voice is heard from. I wait for the music, the music always comes. The hardest part is to remember that I need to lift my thumb. There is a small camera inside which helps Doctor Malone and Toby see me from the control cabin up above.

"Marcelo, Marcelo! " I hear Toby's voice from the distance. I love Toby. He's a medical practitioner just like Dr. Malone; however he doesn't allow me to address him as doctor. Once I addressed him by doctor and he corrected me and said "Toby, please." His face is full of freckles.

"Are you ready for the so called real thing? " He asks me when he pulled me out.

"Yes", I tell him. "The real thing" refers to the music they play on the loudspeakers. The music which comes from my head is not considered real. Toby holds a piece of paper on which there is a list of real music. Why don't you choose from the other side this time? "

"Sure", I say. The music listed on the back side of the paper are all rock songs, Toby's favorite genre. I don't recognize any song or composer. Finally I chose a song, whose composer's name is Santana, which reminds me of Sandoval, my name. I also like the songs name 'The calling', "Charming", he says. The smile on his face shows me I chose well. "Santana and Clapton together, charming".

Charming I tell myself. I make a reminder in my head to use that word every-time I like something. A few minutes later, Toby returns with the list. He's frowning. You need to choose something from this side of the list. The old guy thinks that rock will stimulate the grey substance too much. Toby rolls his eyes looking towards Dr. Malone, who is in the cabin above and is fiddling with the control panel. I don't really understand the meaning of Toby's facial expression. Quickly I chose Beethoven's *Largo* from the third piano concert. I like the simple melody; also I know it only lasts ten minutes. Toby pulls me back into the machines tunnel.

"How's the mental music? " asks Dr. Malone the moment I came out of the tunnel. I stop tying my shoes so I can think about his question, but it's impossible to describe the inner

music. (I prefer the word 'inner' rather than 'mental' when describing this type of music. As I call IM for short, in my mind, it does not necessarily mean that my mind produces it.) How's IM? Dr. Malone asked me that question so many times, and I didn't know how to reply.

"Charming", I say. "It's Charming." I look around for Toby, but he's up in the control cabin.

"Are you saying it sounds comfortable? The sounds are pleasant to your ear?"

"I cannot hear that music from my ears." Then I realize that 'charming' wasn't the right word to use. The music is pleasant but it is much more than that too.

"So, you don't hear it then? "

How do I describe it? It is like listening to very loud music on your earphones. However it feels like the music is coming from the inner part of your brain. Actually it is a very nice feeling. "It's just simply here", I tell Dr. Melon. Then a picture comes to my mind. "It's a big watermelon."

"What, excuse me? " I love to work with Dr. Malone because his facial expressions are very clear and easy to understand. The one he just made is a textbook example of confusion. I'm expanding the picture that came to mind. I linked this two for the first time, so I am not quite sure where it will lead me. "When I hear inner music, Marcelo is just a seed, and the music is the rest of the watermelon." Dr. Melon frowns. Actually it's kind of a frown, its half smiling and half frowning, it's like he's trying to stay serious. "You do realize you just stressed the right word? This is good; a year ago you were not able to do even that. Paterson does you well."

Paterson. I take a look at the clock. After the meeting with Dr. Malone, Aurora drives me to Paterson to see the newborn foal which was born last night. I remind myself that I have another half hour with Dr. Malone. This time I need to make sure the meeting does not prolong, as it happened a few times. Dr. Malone speaks again. "Let's return to music, what does mental music consists of? Does it sound like normal music? Does it have a melody?"

"It does and it doesn't." I hate it when I sound so undefined, but undefined, in this case is the best way to express myself

"Okaaaay." Dr. Malone laughs sourly. "Which part sounds like normal music? "

I close my eyes and imagine a cello as big as the earth and a bow long as the Milky Way, which moves slowly for a second and fast on the cellos' strings. In the distance I hear Dr. Malone. "The music has melody, rhythm and tempo. Does mental music have either of the components? "



I'm thinking about my summer job and how I can be with ponies the whole day. I return to Dr. Malone and his questions. I am paid for this, I tell myself. I need to contribute to his process as much as possible. Besides that, I like Dr. Malone and I like Toby. 'Not really.'

"Can you hum it? "

"No."

"Then it's not music. "

"Those are the feelings of music, just without sound." There, I can't be more concrete with the language Dr. Malone is asking for.

"What kind of feelings?"

I have no clue how to call these feelings. Sometimes the music is live and fast, so I call it 'happy music.' Sometimes it's slower and in lower tones, so I call it 'sad music.' Music is generally incredibly peaceful, *charming*, I like that word.

"Marcelo! Come back. We are almost done. Are the feelings of soundless music always present? "

"Yes, when I look for them. When Marcelo looks for them, he always finds them."

"Where does Marcelo look? "

"Here." I touch the occiput, just above the neck.

"Do sounds ever come and you do not want them to come, or even stay and you don't want them to stay? "

I stop to think about it. It is true that this music always attracts me. A while ago, when I was trying to describe it to Dr. Malone, I wanted to slip back into music again. It's hard to get out of it when I'm in it, but I don't tell that to Dr. Malone. I am not sure I would find the right words to describe those thoughts. Instead, I tell him "If that would happen, it means that Marcelo is crazy, right?"

Dr. Malone laughs and simultaneously nods. He constantly does tests, conducts research, but is also mindful about my mental health. Despite the unanswered questions and his silly sense of humor, it's not hard for me to visit Dr. Malone. I have been coming every six months since the age of five, which means, since I am seventeen, I visited Dr. Malone twenty five times. The visits last two hours and consist of three functions: first, checking if everything is fine with my brain physically. Second, the data they collect helps other people who really need help. Third, from last year, they pay me three hundred dollars per visit according to the rules of the scholarship received by Dr. Malone.

He starts walking towards the control room and I go after him. "This is fantastic!" After analyzing two computer screens. "Come I want to show you something! "

I walk over to where Dr. Melone and Toby are standing. Dr. Melone says "this is a picture of your brain. Each picture has red and blue spots on different places. When you listen to real music, both sides of the temporal lobe are active." Dr. Malone points at a bright red spot on the front side of my brain that is seen on one of the pictures. "However, when you listen to mental music, something is happening in the hypothalamus, the oldest part of the human brain. You know the part of the brain which told our cave ancestors to fight or back down."

"The whole lymphatic system flared like fireworks", says Toby, showing the picture of my brain while listening to IM. Unintentionally I laugh to myself. Aurora is waiting for me in the lobby. I pass by her in hopes that she won't question Dr. Malone about the meeting as usual. I want to arrive to Paterson as soon as possible. Harry promised me a horseman summer job when he saw how well I was with the ponies after school. There were also other children in Paterson who wanted the job because it's great, a great summer job, and I'm scared I will be late.

But it did not help that I passed her. Aurora waited for Dr. Malone, who was close to me. "Then," says Dr. Malone, "did you find anything in there?"

"Empty, completely empty." Dr. Malone came to touch the tip of my head, but withdrew her hand, as if suddenly she discovered that I was now taller than him.

"His father wants to send him to a high school next year," Aurora says.

I went to where Dr. Malone and Aurora talked. "No," I say instantly.

"I know what think about it, Sir," Aurora says. "I would like to hear my doctor's opinion."

I see Dr. Malone hesitates. She knows what I think about leaving Paterson and attending a regular school. "Clearly he is ready. He could have gone to a regular school since his kindergarten. Clearly he can do it. "Then he looked at me and said," Sorry, my old man. "

I am looking towards the floor as I struggle to find words to explain why a regular high school would not be good for me. Then I hear Aurora saying, trying to comfort me: "It does not necessarily mean that you will go. It does not mean that we will send you to school only because you are ready. We'll talk. "

"I'm seventeen," I shout

"What should I say?" Aurora is interested.

"That should be Marcelo's decision." I gather the strength and look first to Aurora, then to Dr. Malone. "You should let me finish the last grade of high school in Paterson, where I've always been."

"Uh, I'd rather not get into this," says Dr. Malone.

"Is Marcel's youth age the same as in other seventeen-year-olds? I look at Dr. Malone.

Dr. Malone nodded. That means you understand the nature of my question "development age? What does that mean at all? Everyone is different. In some cases fifty years ahead of other children of your age. "

Aurora smiled. Doctor Malone never likes to give simple answers to difficult questions just to make people feel more comfortable. I actually just wanted him to say that I'm good at Paterson being the way I am.

"Perhaps it would be good to experience something different," says Aurora.



"You know what I think about it," says Dr. Malone to Aurora. "I am not a supporter of suffering. If a child is happy, if he understands and appreciates it, he will bloom when clock hits. Marcelo enjoys being at Paterson. Look at the results. "

Yes! Thank you, Dr. Malone, I say to myself.

"Hm", the sound comes from Aurora.

"What does" hm "mean? I first ask Aurora, then Dr. Malone.

Dr. Malone decides to answer the question. "You certainly asked the right person. We, in the medical profession, know all about the "hymns". I think in this case your mum's "hm" means that you think that you still have to learn some things and maybe you just do not want to learn these things. Was I able to explain it? "

"You did," Aurora answered.

"Hm." This time the sound comes from me. I'm not trying to be funny.

## 1. ADDITIONAL paragraphs that concern the 2nd activity - READING EPISODE WITH DAD

"Marcelo," I hear her calling. Keep the cup half-filled with ruby-colored wine. I know Artur does not like going to Doctor Malone's office. He thinks that tests simply show that something is wrong with me and he thinks he is not. "So what did your good doctor do this time?"

"They scanned the brain while Marcelo listened to music."

"Try to say that again."

"They scanned my brain as I listened to music." I remind myself not to speak of myself in third person. Also, I must remember that I do not call him Arturo. The talk about NG with Arturo creates nervousness. I'm trying to change the subject. (...) Arturo's face is more serious. I'm getting ready. I know how Arturo can turn from father to lawyer in a minute. The face of Father Arturo does not appear to me as often as it does for my sister Yolanda. I see the more lawyer Arthur face: his eyes do not blink, his voice modulates for total control. He becomes the person who will lose temper only if he wants to.

"Here's what I want to suggest." I expect him to make a break because he started to speak faster than usual. But he continues, speaking as quickly as he talks to Yolanda. "I want you to do work at the law office this summer."

This came as a complete surprise. I needed some time to find words, any words. When I succeeded, I said, "I have a summer job in Paterson."

"You're going to help out at the office." He didn't hear or didn't want to hear what I said.

"I already have a job," I repeated.

"Please sit down." She pointed to her chair. Sit. She moves forward in her chair so that our knees are almost touching. He lowered his voice. Now he's a father. "Son, I want you to have a job somewhere where you're communicating with people, where you need to get new insights. What are they teaching you doing in Paterson that you do not know already?

## 2. EPISODE WITH WENDELL

"I look forward to the women, trying not to stare at them, to see if I can determine if they are attractive. This is probably the result of conversations Wendell and I have together. In fact, they aren't conversations. Wendell holds a lecture, and I listen. Almost every day, Wendell shares with me his rich knowledge of the female gender. After lunch, I walk to the department when Wendell hugs me. "Just a few minutes, Marcelo, please. I'm sorry but I'm going crazy reading all this. "

"Jasmine is waiting for me to go to Scripture," I say.

"Do a good deed and talk with me," I Sit. "Do you know how I spend time?"

"You're reading crap."

"That's right. I need to go through thirty-five boxes in search of letters and reports, some of them in Spanish. "

"Do you know Spanish?"

"So so. I was learning Spanish for three years at school. "

"I was praying in Spanish with my grandmother while she was living with us."

"Seriously. Now that we are talking about prayers, I pray that Jasmine agrees to go out with me. I do not understand why she won't. Do you ever talk about me? "(...)

"You have three types of women beauty," says Wendell. Sounds like Mr Rafferty, my professor of social sciences in Paterson. "Healthy, Elegant and Elemental."

"Can you please give me examples?" I'm sorry to ask this question immediately. By my schedule I am ten minutes late and Jasmine is waiting for me to go to the Scripture together.

"Surely. Let's take three beautiful women here, in the office. Each of them represents one of the three categories of beauty I have just mentioned. First, there is Healthy Martha. Healthy women are richly gifted in maternal, breastfeeding terms. They have sexy because they are lush, simple, natural and easy to give. Sex is a part of their guardian nature. The source of the attraction of the Healthy Women for Men is in the desire to possess them, causing a protective impulse with women. As for other categories, our Juliet across the corridor is the representative of the Elegant Women. Elegant women are usually a bit slimmer. They keep cold and repulsive because they are extremely aware of the influences they have on males and they will use for their benefit. A male is with a competitive mind. Their attraction is based on the man's need to conquer and steal, but also to shred and cut of the prey for others. Elegant Women are trophies and thrilling. Just appearing with them provokes envy in others. That's why my father hired Juliet. " Wendell suddenly goes quiet. .

"Jasmine is a sure an example of Elemental Beauty," I say.

Wendell hits me on the knee. "You're right. You learn fast."Wendell leaned in his chair. His tone went different from describing the previous categories of beauty. It sounds serious. "Elemental beauty does not depend so much on body attributes as other types of beauty. In theory, it is probably possible for a woman to become Elementary and not be physically attractive. Did you hear about the periodic system of elements? "

## 2. EPISODE WITH JASMINE





"I wipe my arms for as long as I can. Now it seems funny to feel nervous of the thought of sleeping next to Jasmine. What is happening? Yesterday Jonah asked me if Jasmine was attracted to me sexually and that idea was shocking to me, and now this. I touch my stomach where I feel tingling, this such feeling is when you have "butterflies". What gave them the freedom to fly? They first appeared when Jasmine talked about the NG and how I could be of blood and flesh just like her, and then thousands more flew when she showed where we would sleep together.

It's not uncomfortable; their appearance just pinches and tickles me thinking about how I need to lie down by Jasmine. I take my boots off and fully climb into my sleeping bag, I look up at the night sky. The stars look like tiny holes in a dark ceiling, where light passes through from the other side. I lay with my eyes open, listening to Jasmine's proper breathing. Then I heard her voice.

"Yesterday when you talked to Jon, you said that you opened your hearts. What did you mean by that? You do not have to tell me if you do not want to. "

"We talked about love."

" Oh God."

"He loves you."

"I'll kill him."

"But he thinks you will never love him back."

"I love him. Just not that way. He is like an older brother. "

"What does that mean? It's not clear to Marcelo"

"Love is hard to grasp, right? You're not the only one with that problem."

"And does Jasmine have that problem?"

"Sometimes ..." she says hesitantly, "sometimes people are afflicting each other or wondering what they consider to be love. They use all the power for error