

EDITION N.

000

DECEMBER/2020

EITAMAGAZINE.COM

EITA!

MAGAZINE

FANTASTICAL
BRAZILIAN
TALES COMPENDIUM

DIAS / DRACUL
LAGE / QUINTIERE
& MACHADO DE ASSIS
AUTHORS



Table of Contents

[Editor's Note](#)

[Foreword](#)

[The Prokaryotes' Serenade, by Isabor Quintiere](#)

[Arrows in the Air, by Miguel Dracul](#)

[BURN.IN, by Lais Dias de Sousa](#)

[The Witch Dances, by Thiago Ambrósio Lage](#)

[The Land of Chimeras, by Machado de Assis](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

Eita! is a magazine created to promote Brazilian science fiction and fantasy to a foreign audience, revealing the tendencies of our national SFF works and to insert Brazilian production in the worldwide cultural discussion.

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This eBook was composed using the software Sigil and the fonts Alfa Slab One and Brasilêro.

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Editor's note

December, 2020

Despite all odds, Brazil is going through its most prolific moment for SFF stories. There are many publishing houses and online zines popping up everywhere and releasing amazing new stories every day. At the same time, our writers' attention to the international market is increasing, and the interest for SFF in translation as well. We can see it in some other initiatives such as [Samovar](#) and the new [Constelación Magazine](#). With that in mind, we want to give our writers a first shot of having their work published in English, and to showcase to the world the talents and creativity that are bursting throughout our multicultural and multifaceted country.

The special Brazilian Issue of Strange Horizons, released in September 2019, was the igniter to conceive Eita! Magazine. The article [“The State of Play of Brazilian SFF”](#), written by Jana Bianchi, explores and details this flourishing market in Brazil. At the same time, the [foreword to the same edition](#) written by Dante Luiz showed that only four Brazilians were published in the anglophone zines that year. Now, putting this together with the hundreds of submissions received by Strange Horizons for the Brazilian issue, there is a clear imbalance.

And so this zine blossomed into existence, crowned by the name Eita, which is an interjection spoken (or, more commonly, shouted) from all

corners of Brazil. It's an extremely versatile word that can express surprise, pity, confusion, dismay or joy.

A diverse and multi-talented team was put together, composed of people who have been writing and actively participating in the Brazilian SFF community for many years: editors who have been involved with zines and anthologies, skilled translators, social media professionals and talented artists. All working alongside each other and voluntarily, to better showcase the phenomenal works of science fiction and fantasy Brazil has to offer.

For the first issue, we received 230 valid submissions. It presented us the hard task of selecting only 4 stories among many truly incredible ones. We feel that the stories we chose represent what we want to publish. It resulted in a nice mix of different styles and characters. Our authors, Isabor Quintiere, Miguel Dracul, Lais Dias and Thiago Ambrósio, were joined by the legendary Brazilian author Machado de Assis, from whom we present a short story never before published in English.

For our next editions, we plan to publish longer stories. We also have tons of new amazing ideas for this project, like publishing more frequently, creating fun and exclusive content for our newsletter and maybe even getting into comics! If you enjoy this issue, help us pay our authors and dream of new amazing plans by [supporting us on Patreon](#).

The Eita! Magazine's Team

Foreword for Eita! Magazine

WRITTEN BY
Rachel Cordasco

November, 2020

The last couple of years have brought Anglophone readers several new publications that feature speculative fiction in translation (SFT) — a trend we hope continues. In *Future Science Fiction Digest*, *Samovar*, *Constelación*, and now *Eita!*, we can read science fiction, fantasy, horror, magical realism, weird, and more from cultures and language traditions not our own, which in turn expands our imaginative horizons and enriches the genre.

Eita!, in particular, offers us something we've had too little of for too long: SF in translation from Brazil. Launched during the recent inaugural FutureCon, this magazine aims, in its own words, "to become a bridge to release national authors to the international literary market, encouraging consumption of Brazilian genre literature by an overseas audience." According to the website's submissions data (beautifully illustrated by artist Raphael Andrade), the magazine has already received stories from a variety of subgenres: alternate history, weird, horror, fantasy, and science fiction, sent from all over Brazil.

According to one feature on Brazilian science fiction and fantasy published on Tor.com this year, the genre has faced a hard road in Brazil, with only a few publishers specializing in these kinds of stories and larger pub-

lishers promoting mostly foreign fiction.^[1] Furthermore, speculative fiction is still seen as a lesser genre by many publishers, regardless of the fact that more and more authors are writing and winning awards for it.

Despite these pitfalls, a good amount of Brazilian speculative fiction has traveled beyond the nation's borders, reaching the Anglophone world and opening up readers' eyes to a rich tradition of which they weren't previously aware.

Several works of Brazilian SF appeared in English in the 1980s, namely Stella Carr Riberio's prehistory narrative *Sanbaqui* and Moacyr Scliar's novels *The Centaur in the Garden* (translated by Neves), *The One-Man Army*, *The Gods of Raquel*, *The Strange Nation of Rafael Mendes*, and the collection *The Ballad of the False Messiah* (all tr. Giacomelli). Focusing on the reality of the Jewish diaspora in Brazil, Scliar's books and stories reflect, through a unique blend of magical realism and Jewish humor, the double-identity of Jews maintaining religious traditions in their homes and participating in the wider Brazilian culture. *The Centaur in the Garden*, in particular, features a centaur born to Russian parents and raised Jewish in Brazil who must find his identity among the multiple paths available to him.

Also translated in the 1980s was Ignácio de Loyola Brandão's *Zero* and *And Still the Earth* (both tr. Watson), both dystopian novels featuring protagonists who must navigate life under the thumbs of oppressive regimes and widespread corruption. Brazilian SF author Andre Carneiro's "A Perfect Marriage" (tr. Randolph) about a doomed computer-arranged marriage, was included in *The Penguin World Omnibus of Science Fiction* in 1986.

But what have Anglophone readers had access to from Brazil recently? Just two years ago, Gerson Lodi-Ribeiro edited and Fabio Fernandes translated the stories in *Solarpunk: Ecological and Fantastical Stories in a Sustainable World* (World Weaver Press). A mix of speculative fiction from

Brazil and Portugal, this anthology explored what it might mean for humans to live truly sustainable lives. Celebrating the benefits and unflinchingly detailing the downsides of this scenario — authors such as Antonio Luiz M. C. Costa, Lodi-Ribeiro, Roberta Spindler, and others — imagine, among other things, humans using the sun as a form of photonutrition, corporations exploiting the public with the promise of sustainable technologies, and the synthesis of humans and plants.

Fernandes (author, editor, and Portuguese-to-English translator) and Lodi-Ribeiro (author and anthologist) have themselves found audiences in the Anglophone world, with Fernandes's *Love: An Archaeology* coming out next year from Luna Press Publishing and Lodi-Ribeiro placing stories in *Inter Nova* and *Words Without Borders*. *Love: An Archaeology*, Fernandes's first collection in English, features stories that range the gamut of speculative fiction, but all focus on "love and its malcontents." This anthology promises to be an exciting addition to SFT from Brazil.

Other recent short works of SFT from Brazil come to us thanks to author and translator Christopher Kastensmidt. His translations of Brontops Baruq Brontops, Camila Fernandes, and Flavio Medeiros have appeared in *Intergalactic Medicine Show*, while his translation of Cirilo Lemos's "Act of Extermination" (a mix of assassins, telepathy, diesel mechs, and more set in an alternate early-20th-century Brazil), appeared in *The Mammoth Book of Dieselpunk* (2015).

Most recently, *Words Without Borders* and *Samovar Magazine* have featured Brazilian SFT by Luiz Carlos Lisboa, Mario Sabino, and H. Pueyo. Both Lisboa and Sabino, translated by Clifford E. Landers, explore death and the uncanny, while in "Saligia," Pueyo imagines the generational fallout from the transgressions of an upper-class family (plus werewolves!).

These texts have given us just a taste of what to look forward to when it comes to Brazilian SFT, and *Eita!* will bring us a wealth of new, imaginative material. So let's celebrate the birth of this new magazine and support it in its truly laudable endeavor.

Rachel Cordasco
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The Prokaryotes' Serenate

WRITTEN BY
Isabor Quintiere

EDITED BY
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In an unknown date, an object pierced through the atmosphere of an unclassified exoplanet and fell with a thud on something we would perhaps call a beach, but which had no name there, much like all other things also had no names. The object sank into the soft sand and spent some long days and long nights alone in that wordless land. That was not hard; it was already used to solitude. There, at least, it could rest in the company of the sound of waves crashing. It had spent the last thousands of years surrounded by silence, except for the songs it repeated infinitely to itself and to whomever, in that infinite black ocean, could listen.

After watching its share of sunsets, the object was finally found. Natives rapidly began to investigate it with their multiple scanty membranes. The small transparent beings were starving and soon found themselves frus-

trated by the solidity of the material they were rummaging through. The object had forgotten what it felt like to be touched by anything. Its singing went on, uninterrupted, while it was under the severe scrutiny of the planet's landlords. The golden disk, which the object carried inside, skipped from one track to another, initiating a new song with faster vibrations that promptly scared the natives, making them run away. It was the mariachi group El Cascabel playing, but they couldn't know such a thing – whatever was a mariachi, a Cascabel, or a song. From a safe distance, they swayed their antennae towards the object, which now, finally, had spectators.

Despite not being able to understand the complicated concept of bravery inside their still unsophisticated organisms, the natives needed that to re-approach. While the sounds kept on playing, they gathered once again all over around the object. There was something comforting in that noise; perhaps the way it made their impossibly tiny bodies vibrate for the first time, in an entirely new and almost microscopic dance. Did such creatures already know what pleasure was? Evolution would take care of that eventually if they were lucky, but they were still far from that. The natives were not capable of feeling joy when faced with the cosmic rhythms that had once awakened something in humans' feet and hands. These creatures could not conceive what feet or hands were, let alone humans. They could only keep themselves alive. And that is how all the most ingenious things usually begin: by keeping themselves alive.

From time to time, the sounds changed. That was easy to notice even for the smallest living creatures in the universe. There was something interesting about change. So interesting that the natives did not want to abandon the object nor its vibrations: they made it their home and, on top of it, they reproduced, cradled by the love songs of a distant planet. Who could have convinced Bach, a man already decomposed several times over in earthly

soil, that his most enthusiastic listeners would be the members of a lifeform that still had no heart whatsoever? Listeners that could fit comfortably inside his wig, unnoticed, while he went on composing?

The natives' life expectancy was forty repetitions of the object's golden disk: enough time to calmly experiment the various vibrations it had to offer. And then, be greeted by eternal sleep in a bed of melodies. Evolution and extinction also came together in that valse. Thanks to their influence, natives died and natives lived in balanced quantities, and their descendants were rewarded with the chance to grow and develop, to become builders, to become more complex organisms. In their bodies, several entries started to appear over the generations, like multiple ears designed to help them listen more, and better, their singing home. Around the object, they developed a structure similar to a vast coral reef, for they instinctively felt their duty to protect it from the passing years and the shifting tides. That was special, something to keep safe.

Nowadays, it is still not possible to claim that some advanced life forms inhabit that planet of micro beings. However, an unlikely space traveler who stops by might be received by the pleasant night singing of Earth's long-gone aboriginal groups, coming from an object which the ages have already silenced, but which is still home to thousands of loud native creatures, who continue to reproduce their beloved sounds and to feel deep in their humble cells, the closest they will ever get to what true human happiness sounds like.



Isabor Quintiere (1994) was born in João Pessoa, Paraíba, where she now lives. She has an undergrad degree in Literature – English and is, at the moment, studying in a Master's degree program in Literature at UFPB. She is an English language teacher and author of the short story book *A cor humano* [The Human Color] (2018, Ed. Escaleras), which is also available in English in a version created in partnership with the Universidade Federal da Paraíba (UFPB). She finds inspiration for her writing mainly in Latin American fantastic literature and science fiction.

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Arrows in the Air

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I'm afraid to live my whole life and realize that in the end, nobody ever felt that having me around made any difference.”

The sincerity in Gael's confession was scathing. He was swaying the bottle of some sweet alcoholic beverage, which he did not bother to read the label when someone offered it to him. He took a sip and stared at Cairo in silence.

The way Gael acted made it clear that he wished to carve in his memory everything about that night. At that moment, he was memorizing the man in front of him, his braids done close to his head, eyes slightly angular, dark pupils, long eyelashes, thick lips, and black skin. His style was aggressive: combat boots, black t-shirts, and flannel shirts bought from thrift stores where grunge still resided. He smelled of woody perfume and books. That was how he would like to remember Cairo.

In turn, Cairo matched his friend's earnest gaze. He was analyzing Gael, not because he wished to memorize more than he already had in his mind, but because the contrast between how he was perceived in school and how he behaved himself next to Cairo in informal moments was astonishing. Gael had dark hair and light eyes, the tanned skin of someone who liked to spend time in the sun. One of the best students in his class; it was easy to find him in the library sitting on the floor amidst broad bookshelves. Quiet, Gael usually didn't mingle, but Cairo had never crossed paths with someone as sensitive as him. When they became friends, he found out, for example, that Gael spent so much time in the library because it was much like the one in his hometown. He sat among books to feel closer to home.

They were at their college friends' place, celebrating the end of one of the hardest subjects: Statistics. Despite being in different years and undergrad courses, both of them had that class in common. About twenty people got together to drink, dance, and make small talk. However, at some point a game of truth or dare had begun, bringing laughter and revelations about everyone present.

By that time in the earliest hours of the morning, the other guests had already left – intoxicated and, who knows, happy with their night out. Cairo, however, chose to extend his stay. He always had a captive room in the Green Lemon Student Residence for Girls – the women there were all friends with him. Perhaps one or two aspired to be even more than that. Among empty bottles, forgotten clothes, and the organic mess after a good party, Cairo and Gael were left by themselves. The game was over and had turned into an intimate conversation, where they both revealed things about themselves without the need for any dare.

Gael had already said some nonsense about being late and that he should leave soon, but a good conversation, deep and substantial like that

one, did not happen very often. Anyone who had any experience with human relationships and watched them closely could tell that this was a life-changing moment for both of them. Gael was the one who broke the silence. “What about you? What are you afraid of?”

“I’m not afraid of anything,” Cairo replied. “There was nothing monstrous, scary, or violent that happened to me and that I didn’t survive. Knowing that you can keep going after the disasters makes fear smaller. At least in my case, that’s how I felt.”

“I admire that in you.”

The blue-eyed Gael said without looking at Cairo, and ended up not seeing the smile in Cairo’s face when he heard the compliment. There was a touch of shyness in the reaction that rarely came to the surface. Gael finished his drink with a long sip, got up, and threw the empty bottle into a trash can before saying:

“I think I’m going to drink some water to sober up and go home. It’s late.”

Late... Or maybe he was just uncomfortable with how much of himself he had revealed to a man who just told him that he wasn’t afraid of anything. Love is a game of chance and both of them were competitive. Such a position was like being at a disadvantage: Gael feared that his feelings would become too apparent.

Cairo shrugged. “I can still talk for hours.”

“You are tougher than I am,” he admitted, grudgingly. “I’ll just go to the bathroom first.”

“I’ll bring you the water, so I get a glass for myself too.”

It was a polite gesture, but usual for Cairo. Although his clothes exuded an attitude, he liked to take care of those around him. Like a prism, he re-

quired the right light to reveal his colors. He got up and went towards the kitchen.

Cairo put his hands on the kitchen counter and laughed out loud, possibly satisfied with the night he had so far. He opened the fridge and took a soda bottle filled with water and poured two plastic cups.

That was the moment. He would leave the kitchen with the one cup in each hand, return to the living room, and he and Gael would face each other; finally, they would stop dodging one another in that dance without touch. Their eyes would meet, and these young college kids would kiss with the passion and the connection that only the intimacy they slowly built could create. "It would be perfect," I thought to myself, as I pulled my arrow and targeted Cairo's back, anticipating the love I was about to see the couple consummate.

"I think I'm pretty drunk..." Cairo admitted to himself out loud. He was all smiles; he probably pictured the same scene as I did. I released my arrow. The plastic cups fell, spilling the water onto the red tiled kitchen floor. Cairo let them go without hesitation. In a supernatural reflex, he had turned around and now held my arrow in his right hand, just centimeters away from his chest. "Drunk, not stupid!" he said, looking at me with irritation.

"You can see me? But how?" I asked in shock. Even if he could see me, catching one of my arrows in mid-air was an impressive feat.

"Family of witches. It's in my blood" he said, nonchalant. "Look at the mess you made me do..." he complained, retrieving the cups from the floor to refill them again.

"Wow! Even for a witch what you did was..."

Cairo interrupted me. "What anyone with an ounce of common sense would do. Why are you here?"

“My mother sent me. She just didn't warn me that you would be so stubborn.”

“Your mother... like... The goddess of love? Aphrodite?” He asked, still holding the arrow, and pointing it at me as he spoke.

“The one and only. She likes you, says you are very loving, but you were in need of a little push to live the next stage of your romantic life.”

“*She likes me?* Does she remember my ex? What does she put in the way of the people she hates, just so I know?” he said.

“She usually curses them... Mom is creative but quite temperamental, I must admit. The point is: this is a gift” I say, pointing at the arrow. “Let me do my job and give it to you,” I ask, displaying my most captivating smile.

Cairo took a deep breath and cleared his throat. I knew he was attracted to me. Everyone is attracted to Passion, no matter how much some people may resist. His heart was already pounding when he said:

“If this is your gift...” he hesitated, probably trying to catch his breath before my figure; me, a naked Greek god. He was staring at me, unblinking. “I want the receipt. I want to be able to exchange it for a new jacket”.

“Wait. What?”

I frowned trying to recall some precedent for such a situation. Mortals didn't behave this way, what was the matter with this boy?

“Do you know why I caught your arrow in the air as if I'm Xena, The Warrior Princess? Because I knew it was coming. I can see the future, Cupid, and let's say that falling in love is not an attractive option for someone with that kind of skill. I've seen enough people yearning for things that I knew would not work out in the end. Myself included.”

“It's not just your clothes that come from the nineties. Your references too...” I tried to soften the tension with a joke. Although Cairo could pre-

tend it didn't work, the little smile I saw told me otherwise. "I understand. You are afraid of falling in love again because you've been hurt before."

"I'm not afraid of anything," he said, nonchalantly.

"Psychics mustn't tell lies, don't you know? It affects their powers." I warned him.

"It's not a lie," Cairo grated.

"You certainly don't think it is," I shrugged. "But what if I assure you that this time it's going to be different?"

"You can't give me that guarantee, Cupid."

"Ah, okay then! The god of love cannot guarantee anything, but your certainties of which the sources are 'The Voices Inside My Head' and 'It was revealed to me in a dream', are unquestionable, aren't they?" Cairo couldn't resist anymore and laughed. "See? That's what love can do for you. Give me one more chance and you will still laugh a lot, next to someone who admires you, who respects you, and who thinks you're a stud. Trust me; I'm very close to the gods in charge of dreams and what they showed me about Gael's would make even my mother blush."

Although he still laughed, Cairo was adamant. "It doesn't work like that. I've seen dozens of people swearing eternal love and cheating on one another. I've seen my best friends crying while drinking liters of coke and eating buckets and more buckets of ice cream because someone broke a promise and hurt them. I don't have time for this. I will not fall in love. Never again."

I snorted at the young witch's petulance. The truth is, however powerful he was, his choice was limited to how he would act in the face of his feelings. Cairo could even foresee the possible futures born from such a link. Still, no mortal could choose not to fall in love. Nobody could.

Ending the discussion, he picked up the cups and headed for the living room. Gael had just left the bathroom and took the cup offered by his friend. Curious about the changed expression in Cairo's face, he asked: "Is everything ok?"

"Yeah."

Indeed, things were not bad. They were just confusing. Sudden and fleeting was the moment when mortals realized that they had been overcome by passion. They could deny it, try to bury it, run away until it was gone. They could choose to not live according to the cravings that burned like flames within themselves, but not to feel it was beyond their power. Touched by everything they had shared that night, Gael thanked him, already preparing to leave. "Time to go home. Thanks for the talk and the company."

"You don't have to go. It's dangerous to walk home alone so late. And besides, if you don't mind sharing a mattress, I've got a room here. Or the sofa, if you'd like. The girls wouldn't mind."

Cairo looked at him intently. Almost too close. Gael shook his head, closing his eyes for a moment.

"I have to go."

"Why do you *have to*?"

Silence, and then:

"Because if I stay here for another second..."

"What happens?"

Gael hugged Cairo for a moment and as he stepped back, he kissed Cairo goodbye on the cheek. However, neither of them broke the hug. Cairo kissed him back on the cheek.

The third kiss they shared was on the lips, intense and sweet.

"*This happens...*" he sighed. "Good night, Cairo."

Before he could walk away completely, Gael felt his friend holding his arm.

“You still don’t have to leave. Unless you want to. I for one want you to stay... having you around would make all the difference” he admitted, pulling the other one back for another kiss, and then leading him to his room. Gael was wrong in assuming that Cairo was the fearless one.

That night, when they kissed for the first time, Cairo was not concerned with the future, with predictions or whatever. He was completely in the present moment and that was when my arrow struck him by surprise, without him being able to anticipate it. I had witnessed enough couples coming together to guarantee something: no matter how many arrows were caught in the air, when the time was right, one would hit your heart.



Miguel Dracul is 27 years old and is a fan of 90s series, RPG, and videogames. He was born in Campo Grande/MS, but grew up in the countryside of São Paulo, in the city of Presidente Prudente. He has an undergrad degree in Psychology at UNESP de Assis. During his undergraduate course, he created the blog, Obscuridade e Claridade [Obscurity and Clarity] in 2013.

He participated in the anthologies Além do Arco-Íris [Beyond the Rainbow] (Rouxinol), Decididos - Uma Celebração Bissexual [Minds made up - a celebration of bisexuality] (Margem), Entre Portas e Histórias [Between Doors and Stories] (Bilbbo), Histórias do Cotidiano [A Daily Story] (Verlidelas), Taverna Bode Mágico [The Magic Goat Tavern], and Além do Sangue [Beyond Blood] (Sem Tinta), among others. Miguel is also a contributor to the Seleções Literárias website and an editorial producer for Razzah Publishers.

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BURN.IN

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It was funny how nothing and everything burned in those days.

Our skin under the sun blazed unbearably but without really getting warm, and would be left with red scorch marks even before the body had time to grow hot if we didn't take care. The heat reached much farther in, through dermis, through epidermis, through... whatever other layers there are. It was as if something was burning inside us.

And yet, we spent all our days under the sun, living a slow death.

The coffee also burned.

There was a time in which I would wait for it to cool. I'd blow at the hot liquid and still burn my tongue when I tried to drink it, and I'd regret that for a day or two. Nowadays there's no difference, and there's smoke still spiraling up from the watery coffee in my cup as I bring it to my mouth.

There are things that burn much harder, and those are the ones that frighten me.

Ari plays an old song in the ancient radio — someone singing about feeling his bones on mine — and then he sits by my side, serving coffee in his calm, quiet way, as he repeats the chorus in an English we never managed to learn.

It's not too difficult to feel his bones on mine these days.

All that despair for containing the war, for hiding and escaping the explosion of the nuclear power plants and the contamination. For staying alive. That worn us down. I know that because I see my own meager arms, and my skin full of burn marks that Ari circles, distractedly, with his finger's stump.

It's a bit too late for regrets, anyway. We can only look forward.

I drop the empty cup and close the belt on my faded beige overalls that protect me a little from the scalding sun. I fit the cap over my shaved hair, hiding the visible scars where my curls haven't grown in the five years since 2047. I unsettle Ari's hair as I rehearse some dance moves with him, messing around more than anything else. I wish I could laugh like him, showing all the teeth as if we didn't live in that dump of a house, in that dump of a life. But I can't, not always; not today.

It's my turn to work.

I get on the rusty bicycle and pedal around the dangerous car graveyard, where we gather old vehicles. They were abandoned on the streets when the Radioactive War brought an end to fuel as it did to everything else. I pass by the garage and wait for Juca to put a retreaded tire on the bike. We've got an arrangement, and I'll get him something in exchange. Then, I hurry to the beach with the empty gallon tied behind the bicycle.

It's empty because no one risks going there without reason. Even at night, the sand burns with the remainder of the sun's heat, and it's stained with black, viscous oil. The water is poisonous to us as well, and swimming is impossible. The contamination is so great that after three breaststrokes your skin would start to slough off. In fact, there's barely enough clean water for bathing these days. But I know what to do with this seawater.

I fill the gallon without stepping into the water, using a lever attached to its mouth, and I pull it back to the sand with some difficulty. I close it tight before I risk carrying its weight to the bicycle.

I have to make sure the water is secured firmly, so it won't spill. I pedal more carefully now. We used to have a cart that we'd attach to the bike, but it was stolen by the arsonist gangs and we couldn't get hold of another. Now the way is to do everything slowly, by hand.

I stop by the shop before I go back, to get a package for the garage owner, a heavy bundle of something dark. I don't know what it is. The dense smell of gunpowder suggests some things, but I'd rather not know. Knowing too much is dangerous. Not everyone is happy about what happened, and it's better to have those people as friends rather than enemies.

Juca receives his package quietly, with wary eyes, but I say nothing. I go back home in silence.

Ari is waiting for me by the filter, ready for me to pour the water as soon as I arrive. I dump the gallon and let it work. I need to go back for more. Each one of us makes that trip at least three times a day. It's ridiculous work, with all the obstacles we need to get past, but that way we can make almost thirty liters a day. We put apart a liter per day for each of us after filtering, which is enough to go on living, and we sell the rest.

The water's not quite top quality, but it's cheap, at least. Our buyers know very well where we get it from, they know there's still some radiation in there.

But it's a choice, like everything in life; die of thirst now, or die slowly of cancer. We just choose the slow way.

No one here has given up on life yet, not really.

We also sell the salt that comes off during filtering, since iodine protects a little against radiation. It fetches a high price, and we can make ends meet like that. We can pay for food and help our family, what's left of them anyway. I have an older brother, who lives with his wife and daughter, my niece, and Ari has a young cousin living with his aunt. He was born with a deformity because of the radiation. We all need help every once in a while, especially the children, so we help. But we couldn't bear to live with them anymore. Not with the daily arguing, impossible to avoid when we were all squeezed together in such a small space and in such precarious conditions; and not watching the children go through so much suffering, having to pretend it was all right.

That situation made everyone angry all the time, and we wanted some peace. It's worth the price of sharing this small place between the two of us, a place I couldn't wait to be able to come in and not need to leave any more for the day. But, when I'm coming back from the third trip, that's when things go wrong.

The night is falling and I am more alert, even though there's still some light on the horizon, marking the way sharply. But I still fail to see the arsonist gang that moves out of the cars when I pass by the graveyard for the last time.

The arsonists are our private nightmares, in a world in which the flames of chemical fires still haven't died down. We are all fighting, all of us, to

keep ourselves alive, to survive, to help ours. In a way, they're doing the same things, but they don't mind burning some of us to get what they want.

I can't see them, but I can hear their laughter. I hear the wheels behind me, and voices calling me out.

I don't even look back, I just speed up.

The wheels behind me speed up as well, and the crazed laughter is now awfully close.

"Wait up, sea princess! We just wanna chat!" some guy calls out, without even needing to shout, and I know I'm screwed.

They'll catch up to me, I'm too slow carrying the gallon, and it's many against one. Even if I made it home in time, I and Ari alone wouldn't be able to handle a bunch of arsonists.

When we come to an uphill road, I make my decision.

I pull off the gallon's lid, and I take out the small knife I leave fastened to my pants for emergencies. As I manage to cut off the rope holding the gallon, I fall over with the bicycle. While I try to control my fall, I see the tainted water flying towards them. My plan worked.

They are startled and they also fall, blinded by the water for a few seconds, and I can't stop myself from getting wet in the puddle I've created, but I don't stop to think before I climb my bike again and run home.

I run in and lock the door, and Ari rushes to me.

"Dammit, Çu!^[1]" he shouts, amidst curse words, and helps me out of my drenched overalls.

He has me enter the small bathroom and runs to the kitchen while I strip. The water he brings me is expensive and costs our livelihood, but I don't complain as he pours nearly two liters on me, letting me rub the rest of the coconut soap in my body before pouring two more liters, cleaning me. The cold water doesn't even make me shake.

When I'm done, he hands me the towel and leaves me alone while he runs to reinforce the entrance. I already see some wounds crawling up my legs, burning without pain, but we've done all we could. I quickly put on some dry clothes that let my skin breathe, and run to the door, ready to help defend our home.

"Did they see you come here?"

I think about it, retracing my path.

"I don't know. I think I lost them shortly after the graveyard, but we were pretty close to here already."

He nods and doesn't answer, and I see the wrinkles in his forehead deepen.

When night falls, our house stays dark, like another abandoned house in the neighborhood. Not even the moon shows up, hidden behind the dense layer of pollution caused by the factories' explosions and the fires.

The only visible light is a distant flame, prowling. Approaching.

I hold my metal stick in my hands, as firmly as I can, and I know Ari is as ready as I am.

He holds my hands in his, so warm, in the dark, and I hold them firmly too, feeling his bones against mine. It's his warmth that spreads through me, to a place far beyond my skin, that gives me a last grain of peace.

"We'll fight to the end, Açucena. Today and always."

"Every day, Ariano" I answer, knowing no one can hear our vows.

Hand in hand, the end is not that terrifying.



Lais is a lawyer, born and raised in the city of Aracaju, capital of the small state of Sergipe, but she has always lived more in books than anywhere else. It is in writing that she finds who she really is on a daily basis, and it could not be otherwise, as she always dreamed of telling the stories that populate her head and increasingly overflow through the blank pages.

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The Witch Dances

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Five, six, seven, eight.

One leg right.

One leg left.

Raise arms, half a pirouette.

Kick the air with the left leg.

In the distance, I see the end of the deserted street. I feel their eyes on me. Through the cracks and slits of the houses, they watch me. Fear, curiosity, fascination. A witch dances. The Witch dances. In a village such as this one, we need no names. The Witch, the Priest. I don't see him, but I know he's there, high up on the bell tower, watching me. We thought about using the bell to set my pace but decided against it. It could disturb the rhythm of the fae. The pace of the Priest was the repose. Exit the scene and let the others dance.

Slap the right thigh.

One more step, one more pirouette.

Turn. Sigh.

Bang the staff thrice on the ground.

I conquer the distance of a few more houses. In between strides I can hear whispers behind closed doors, their small cries. I feel their bewilderment. “Where is the Priest? How can he let her do this?” I am but a witch, but to them, I am the Witch who crossed a line today. I have always had my duties, and the Priest had his. He had the answers for the maladies of the soul; I had the cures for the maladies of the body. Everyone sought my hut just outside the village. They paid upfront. It was best to already leave a chicken, some eggs, a few yards of fabric or even some coins than having to return to the Witch’s house. In exchange, they were cleansed, and took home herbs, teas, concoctions, charms.

Repeat from the top, thrice.

Change the pace. Arm, arm.

Aim with the staff, recite the rite.

A wide step forward, a short step back.

I could have chosen a simpler dance, but it wouldn’t have been as effective. We had to defeat the Violet Vesicle. My medicines weren’t enough, and I could tell by the fresh graves on the tiny cemetery behind the church that many villagers had already been taken. It was impossible to dispel the disease with the incantations and dances of a Witch, so I was left with the duty of frightening the villagers into their homes, where they’d watch me from a distance. This was the only way to make sure that the fae, at their own pace, would visit them all.

Wiggle, turn, repeat, repeat.

More houses conquered. Now only halfway to go.

Left leg.

Right leg.

Cross and uncross the arms. Squat.

Each faery carried two things: a vial and an imp. It was the little devils' duty to stab the villagers with a needle. To singe the needle, dip on the vial and stab. Singe, dip, stab. The villagers would only feel a sting, and upon not being able to see the imp—made invisible by the craft of the fae—they would assume it was just a mosquito. It had been hard to convince the Priest of the need for imps, but even if the fae could touch the iron needle, they lacked the fire to perform the delicate procedure. Hence, the tiny creatures were left with the mission of disguising the imps and carrying the vial with the golden liquid. Those were their steps in our choreography.

Burst with a scream.

Slap the left thigh.

One more step, a backwards pirouette.

Turn. Sigh.

The Scientist was the newest resident of the village: he had come from the city, from the university, claiming the air here would do him good. He had a small garden but he did not work the land like the Gardener. He was skilled with glass, metals, and wood but not like masters Glassmaker, Smith and Carpenter. He was wise but unlike the Priest, he did not have all the answers. To tell the truth, he had more questions than answers. Many of those questions were directed at me, and he was the only villager who wasn't afraid. He came by my hut frequently, only to drink tea and talk. In one of those visits, when the disease had already taken men, women, children, and elders without distinction, he brought to me the golden vial. My herbs and ointments appeased the fever and the pain, but I had already lost all hope of saving the sick from the fate awaiting them behind the church. The golden

medicine filled me with hope, but we had two problems: it had to be applied *before* the person fell ill, and it had to be done through the pinch of a needle. “It’ll be impossible to convince people of this madness”, I had said. He laughed and pointed at my hut and my glasses of dried herbs, saying that “impossible” was the very thing I did every day.

That night, we made our plan.

Turn the staff thrice. Repeat.

Repeat everything three more times.

I spoke with a Fae princess who thought the idea was delightful. Besides, with so many deaths, the little offerings her people received were now bathed in tears, and everybody knows that fairies prefer sweetness over savory. The Scientist spoke with the Priest, whose prayers and miracles, he was reluctant to admit, were powerless against the disease. A day and a night with no church bells and no mass: it was all we needed to open up the village to the forest people, the people of the depths, and I. The Scientist and I had to work together to get the help from the people of the depths. It took at least four hands in a ritual to summon a prince of Hell to make such a request. The Scientist, that fool, happily paid the price, giving away something he thought he didn’t have. Done deals, I now only needed to finish my dance and trust my partners. Those of us who cared were in their place, performing their duties. Even the villagers, just by staying at home. Soon the village would be rid of the disease.

What about the Alcaide? Well... he is a moron who insists on smearing urine and manure on the wounds, and other things that only get in the way.

Everyone had their part and helped. Not him.



Thiago Ambrósio Lage is a professor and scientist from Minas Gerais based in Tocantins, with a long stint in Pernambuco. His star sign is Hard Sciences, with Humanities rising and Moon in Biology, he has a diverse range of interests: from biotechnology to fairy tales, through linguistics, and astronomy. In fantasy and science fiction, he found the freedom to explore this diversity of themes. He has already published a flash story in Faísca Mafagafo, a horror story in the Casa Fantástica Collection, and a short story in the science fiction collection of LGBTQIA+ authors titled Violetas, Unicórnios e Rinocerontes [Violets, Unicorns, and Rhinoceroses], by Patuá publisher, in addition to other publications available online.

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The Land of Chimeras

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Cato regretted going by sea a couple of times when he could have gone by land. The virtuous Roman was right. Amphitrite's affections are violent, sometimes even dreadful. The deeds on the sea doubled in value because of this circumstance. And it is also because of it that placid souls avoid sailing or, to speak more adequately, those of prudent and safe spirits.

But to explain the proverb that says: the work rises underneath the feet — going by land is not absolutely safer than by sea, and the story of the iron tracks, however small, tells more than a few sad episodes.

Absorbed in these and other reflections was my friend Titus, poet at twenty, no money and no moustache, seated at the rotten work desk where a candle glowed silently.

I must move forward to the physical and moral portrait of my friend Titus.

Titus is not tall or short, which means that he is of medium height. Frankly, such height could be called elegant in my opinion. Having an an-

gelic face, sweet and deep eyes, his nose a direct and legit descendant of Alcibiades, a gracious mouth, and wide forehead as the lair of thoughts, Titus could serve as a model to the arts and as a beloved object to the fifteen or even twenty-year-old sweethearts.

Like medals, and like all things in this world of balance, Titus has another side. Oh! Such a sad thing is the other side of the medals! Being a model to the arts from the waist up, Titus is a pitiful person when it comes to the rest. Wonderfully crooked feet, bowlegged, such are the cons that my friend's person offers to those who are thrilled by the magnificent pros of the face and the head. It seems that nature had divided itself to give Titus the best and the worst of it and put him in the miserable and disconsolate plight of the peacock, who adorns itself and contemplates radiantly, but whose pride is knocked down and fades away when it looks at its legs and feet.

In his morals, Titus presents the same doubled aspect from the physical. He has no addictions but possesses weaknesses of character which somewhat break the virtues that otherwise dignified him. He is good and has the evangelical virtue of charity; he knows, like the divine Master, to break the bread of subsistence and feed the hungry with the true joy of conscience and heart. Moreover, it is not reported that he would ever harm the most impertinent animal, or the most insolent man, two identical things, in the short days of his life. On the contrary, it is said that his pity and good instincts once led him to be almost crushed while trying to save a mongrel who was sleeping in the street and almost got run over by a car. The mongrel saved by Titus became so fond of him that she never left his side. At the moment we are seeing him absorbed in vague thoughts, she is lying on the table, serious and severe, contemplating him.

In Titus, we must only reproach the weaknesses of character, and we must believe that they really are the children of his virtues. Titus used to sell the productions of his muse, not by a legitimate exchange of books and money, but by dishonorable means, unworthy of a son of Apollo. His sales were absolute, that is to say that by exchanging his verses for money, the poet lost the right of paternity over the productions. He had only one customer: a rich fellow, obsessed with becoming famous as a poet, and knowing how easy it was for Titus to rhyme, introduced himself one day at the poet's modest inn and began to negotiate on these terms:

“My dear, I come to offer you a bargain...”

“Tell me,” Titus answered.

“I have heard that you write poetry... is it true?”

Titus held back with some effort after the homely approach but answered. “It is true.”

“Very well. I offer you the following: I shall buy all your verses for a good price. Not the ones already written, but the ones you will write from now on, under the condition that I shall print them as a product of my own work. I impose no other conditions to the business: I warn you, however, that I prefer odes and poems about feelings. Deal?”

When the man finished, Titus stood up and waved him out. The man sensed that if he did not leave soon, things might end badly. He left, grating his teeth. “You’ll still look for me, let it be!”

On the day after, my poet had already forgotten the adventure of the previous day, but the days passed by and the urgent needs presented themselves at the door with a begging look and threatening hands. He had no resources and after a troubled night, he remembered the gentleman and tried to find him. He told the man who he was and that he was willing to accept the deal. The man, laughing diabolically, made the first payment in ad-

vance, on the condition that on the next day the poet would give him an ode to the Polish. Titus spent the night enlisting words with no idea, such was his condition, and the next day he brought the work to his customer, who thought it was good and had the courtesy to shake his hand.

Such is the moral side of Titus. The virtue of being a good payer led him to sell the gifts of God, and yet we see that he resisted, and was only overcome when he found himself with the rope around his neck.

The table where Titus was leaning on was an aged thing, old-fashioned, and handmade. He had inherited it from an aunt who had died ten years ago. An inkwell made of bone, a bird feather, some paper, those are Titus' working tools. Two chairs and a bed completed his furniture set. I've already mentioned the candle and the mongrel.

The time that Titus engulfed himself in reflections and fantasies was late at night. The rain fell violently, and the lightning that broke the sky from instant to instant let us see the horizon filled with swollen black clouds. Titus saw nothing at all, because his head rested on his arms, and they were on the table; and he probably wasn't even listening, because he was entertained by the dangers offered by the different means of travel.

But what was the reason for these thoughts in which the poet was engulfed in? That is what I will explain to the legitimate curiosity of the readers. Titus, like all men in their twenties, poets and not poets alike, felt ill by the disease of love. A pair of black eyes, an elegant gait, a sight, a heavenly creature, anything of the sort, had influenced Titus' heart in such a way that it had placed him, one might say, with one foot in the grave. Titus' love began with a fever. He was bedridden for three days and was cured (of the fever, not the love) by an old lady in the neighborhood, who knew the secret of virtuous plants, and who put my poet on his feet, which made her acquire

one more title to the reputation of a sorceress, of which her miraculous concoctions had earned her.

After the acute period of the disease, it remained inside him this residue of love which, despite its calm and gentle nature, loses nothing of its intensity. Titus was ardently in love, and since then he began to defraud some of his customer's odes, subtracting some inflamed stanzas, which he dedicated to the object of his innermost thoughts, just like that sieur d'Ofayel, of loyal and coy love, with whom he resembled, not in the sensation of verses, but in romantic misfortune.

The frustrated love, when it doesn't lead to sublime disdain from the heart, leads to tragedy or foolishness. It was in the latter alternative that the spirit of my poet floundered. After spending the muses' Latin in vain, he ventured an oral statement to the lady of his thoughts. She listened to him with a harsh soul, and when he had just spoken, she told him that it was better to return to real life, leave muses and loves, and care for his own grooming. Do not assume, reader, that the lady of whom I speak of had a life as casual as her language. On the contrary, she was a model of the most seraphic purity and of the most perfect modesty of customs. She had received the austere education of her father, an old military captain, a man of incredible good faith, who still believed in two things in this misplaced century: the political programs and the onions of Egypt.

Disillusioned at once of his pretensions, Titus did not have the strength to wipe the army man's daughter away from his memory; and the girl's raw and merciless response was stuck in his heart like a penetrating cold dagger. He tried to tear it out, but the memory was always alive, like the altar of Vesta, brought him the fatal words in the middle of the happiest or less sad hours of his life, as a warning that his satisfaction couldn't last, and that sadness was the real background of his days. That was why the ancient

Egyptians ordered to have a sarcophagus in the middle of a feast, as a reminder that life is transitory, and that only in the grave one can find the great and eternal truth.

After coming to his senses, when Titus succeeded in combining two ideas together and drawing a consequence from them, two projects were presented to him, which was more appropriate to win the fainthearted villainy. One, concluded by tragedy, the other, by foolishness, which is a sad alternative for the misunderstood of the heart! The first of these projects was simply to leave this world; the other was limited to a journey that the poet would make by sea or land in order to leave the capital for a while. The poet was already abandoning the first for finding it too bloody and too permanent. The second seemed better to him, more in keeping with his dignity and, above all, with his instincts of self-preservation. But what is the way to relocate? Would he go by land? By sea? Each option had its drawbacks. The poet was immersed in these inquiries when he heard three knocks on the door. Who would it be? Who would go looking for the poet at that late hour? He remembered he had some deliveries for the man of the odes and went to open the door, willing to listen in resignation to the very plausible sermon that he would naturally preach. But, oh awe! As soon as the poet opened the door, behold! A sylph, a celestial creature, diaphanous, fantastic, dressed in ivory robes, neither cloth nor mist, something in-between, of swift feet, with a serene and insinuating face, black and sparkling eyes, blond curls of the lightest and most delicate hair which fell gracefully on bare shoulders, divine shoulders, like yours, oh Aphrodite! Behold, such a creature! She invades the poet's chamber and, offering her hand, commands him to close the door and take a seat at the table.

Titus was scared. He mechanically returned to his place without taking his eyes off of her. She sat in front of him and began to play with the dog,

who showed rare contentment. Ten minutes passed like this; then, the singular pilgrim, setting her eyes on the poet's, asked him with a sweet voice, never heard before:

“What are you thinking of, poet? Are you mourning some ill-fated love? Do you suffer from the injustice of men? Does the misfortune of others hurt you, or is it your own which shadows your face?”

This inquiry was made so insinuatingly that Titus answered immediately, without questioning the reason for her curiosity:

“I think of God's injustice.”

“The expression is contradictory; God is justice.”

“No, He is not. If He were, He would have equally shared tenderness among the hearts and would not allow one to burn uselessly for another. The phenomenon of sympathy should always be reciprocal so that one could not look coldly at another when the other raised loving eyes towards her.”

“It is not you who speaks, poet. It is your self-love, wounded by the bad payoff of your affections. But do the muses serve you well? Enter the sanctuary of poetry, engulf yourself in the bosom of inspiration. There you will forget the painful wound that the world has opened in you.”

“Poor me,” replied the poet, “who has such cold poetry, and erased inspiration!”

“What do you need for bringing poetry and inspiration to life?”

“I need what I lack... and I lack everything.”

“Everything? You're overreacting. You have God's seal that has distinguished you from other men, and that is enough for you. Were you contemplating leaving this earth?”

“It is true.”

“Well, I come for this purpose. Do you want to go with me?”

“Where?”

“Who cares? Do you want to come?”

“Yes, I do. Then I’ll be distracted. We’ll leave tomorrow. Is it by sea, or by land?”

“Not tomorrow, nor by sea or land; but today, and by air.”

Titus stood up and took a step back. The sight that was the sylph stood up too. “Are you afraid?”, she asked.

“Afraid, no, but...”

“Let us go. We’ll make a delightful trip.”

“Let’s go.”

I do not know if Titus was expecting a hot air balloon for the air trip that the unexpected visit invited him to; but what is certain is that his eyes widened prodigiously when he saw two long, white wings opening from her shoulder blades which she began to stir while golden dust fell from it.

“Come on,” said the vision.

“Come on!” Titus repeated, mechanically.

She took him in her arms and went up with him to the ceiling, which ripped open, and they both went through it, vision and poet. The storm had ceased as if by magic. The sky was clean, transparent, bright, truly heavenly, at last. The stars were shining their best light, and a poetic white moonlight fell over the rooftops and on the wildflowers and grass of the fields.

The two went up.

The ascension lasted some time. Titus could not think; he was stunned and going up without knowing where, nor the reason why. He felt that the wind was stirring the blond hair of the sylph and that they were beating him sweetly in the face, resulting in a celestial exhalation that inebriated him and made him numb. The air was pure and fresh. Titus, who had been dis-

tracted for some time from the occupation of the muses in the study of physical laws, said that in that continuous uprise they would soon feel the effects of the atmosphere's rarefaction. He was mistaken! They always went up, and a lot, but the atmosphere was always the same, and the more he ascended the better he could breathe.

This went quickly through the poet's mind. As I said, he did not think; he went up without looking at the earth. And what would he look down for? The vision could only lead him to the heavens.

Soon Titus began to see the planets one by one. It was about dawn. Venus, paler and blonder than usual, overshadowed the stars with its brightness and beauty. Titus looked in wonder at the morning goddess. But they went up, they always went up. The planets passed by the poet's sides as if they were rampant steeds. Eventually, they were in a region entirely different from the ones they had crossed on that astonishing journey. Titus felt his soul expanding in the new atmosphere. Was that heaven? The poet did not dare ask and kept silent, waiting for the end of the journey. As they penetrated that region, the poet's soul burst into joy. Then, they entered a planet; the fairy deposited the poet on the ground and they kept going by foot.

While walking, the objects started taking the form of real things. Until then, they had been visible only through a fog. Titus could then see that he was in a new land that, in all respects, was odd: the first aspect won over what the poetic Istanbul or poetic Naples offer. However, the more they got in, the more the objects took a real aspect. Thus, they arrived at the great square where the palaces were built. The royal house was, so to speak, a compilation of all the architectural orders, including the Chinese, and it should be noted that this one made a great expense in the structure of the palace.

Titus wanted to free himself from the eagerness he felt to find out in what country he had just entered, and so he posed the question to his partner.

“We are in the land of Chimeras,” she answered.

“In the land of Chimeras?”

“The Chimeras. A country where three-quarters of humanity travels to, but which is not enshrined in the boards of science.”

Titus settled with the explanation. But he wondered about the case. Why would he had gone there? To where was he being taken to? He thought of that when the fairy let him know that they were getting to the palace door. In the vestibule there were about twenty or thirty soldiers who smoked thick sea foam pipes, and who got drunk with so many other padishahs, contemplating the blue and white smoke balls that came out of their mouths. A military salute happened upon the entrance of the two visitors. They climbed the great staircase and went to the upper floors.

“Let’s talk to the monarchs,” said the poet’s companion. They crossed many rooms and galleries. All the walls, as in Dinis’ poem, were lined with silver wallpaper and sequins.

They entered the great room. The genius of trifles, the one that Elpino talks about, was seated on a throne made of laminated silver foil, having as ornament two peacocks, one on each side. The monarch himself had a living peacock as a hat, tied by the feet to a kind of zucchetto, larger than those of our priests, which stood tied to the head by two wide yellow ribbons, tied under the royal jaw. An identical hat adorned the head of the geniuses of the court, who corresponded to the viscounts of this world and who surrounded the throne of the brilliant king. All those peacocks, from minute to minute, opened themselves wide and gave the usual screams.

When Titus entered the great room by the hand of the sylph, there was a murmur among the Chimerical noblemen. The vision declared that she was going to present a son of the earth. The ceremony of introductions followed, which was a thread of courtesies, passages, and other Chimerical things, without excluding the formality of hand-kissing. Do not think that Titus was the only one to kiss the hand of the monarch genius; all those present did the same, because according to what Titus later heard, the most insignificant act does not take place in that country without this formality being fulfilled.

After the introductions ceremony, the monarch asked the poet what role he had on earth, to give him the corresponding cicerone.

“I have, if as much, a sad due,” said Titus.

“Is that all? If so, you will have the displeasure of being accompanied by the common cicerone. We have here the Nobility, the Excellency, the Greatness, and some more. But, as for Due, having inhabited this country for some time, it has become so unhelpful that I thought it better to fire them.”

At this time, Nobility and Excellency, two prissy creatures who had approached the poet, turned their backs on him, shrugging their shoulders and laying the greatest disdainful look on him.

Titus wanted to ask his companion the reason for this; but the vision pulled him by the arm, and, with a gesture, made him pay attention to the Genius of Trifles, whose eyebrows contracted like the ancient poets said that those of Jupiter Tonans contracted.

At this moment, a flock of fresh, happy, beautiful, blond young girls came in... oh! but a blondness that is unknown by us, the children of the earth! They came running in, with the agility of flying swallows; and after

shaking hands with the court geniuses, they went to the monarch Genius, in front of whom they did ten or twelve curtsies.

Who were those girls? My poet was open-mouthed. He asked his guide and learned. They were the Utopias and the Chimeras who came from the earth, where they had spent the night in the company of some men and women of all ages and conditions.

The Utopias and Chimeras were celebrated by the monarch, who deigned to smile at them and touch them in their faces. Cheerful and laughing, they received the royal affection as something that was owed to them. After ten or twelve curtsies — a repetition of the previous ones — they left the room, but not without hugging or pinching my poet, who looked at them in amazement without knowing why he had become the object of such joviality. His amazement grew when he heard from each one of them an expression very often used in masquerade dances: I know you!

After they all left, the Genius made a sign, and all his attention was focused on the monarch, watchful of what was about to come out of his lips. The expectation was cut short, because the gracious monarch, with only one gesture, indicated to the common cicerone the miserable guest. The outro ceremony continued, which lasted long minutes because of the curtsies, galantries, and hand-kissings.

The three of them, the poet, the leading fairy, and the cicerone, passed to the queen's room. The royal lady was a person worthy of attention in all respects; she was imposing and graceful; she wore a gauzy dress and clothes from the same fabric, laced-up shoes with ivory satin, fine stones of all kinds and colors on her arms, neck, and head; her delicate face was of such art that she seemed to have been colored by nature's brush. From her hair, one could smell fragrant cosmetic actives and delicate oils.

Titus did not hide the strong impression that she provoked in him. He turned to his travel companion and asked what her name was.

“Don't you see?” the fairy answered. “Don't you see the three hundred damsels who work around her? Well then? She's Fashion, surrounded by her three hundred beautiful, capricious daughters.”

From these words, Titus remembered the *Hissope*. He had no doubts that he was in the land of the Chimeras; but, he reasoned, for Dinis to have talked about some of these things, he must have come here and gone back, as it is ascertained. So, he shouldn't be afraid of living here forever. Calmed by this thought, he began to pay attention to the works of the queen's companions; they were new fashions that were being developed, to come to this world and replace the old ones.

The introduction ceremony happened in style. Titus trembled when resting his lips on the soft, thin hand of the sovereign. She did not seem to notice this, because on the other hand she had a mirror, upon which she looked at herself constantly.

The three of them were allowed to continue the visit of the palace and proceeded through the galleries and rooms. Each room was filled with people, men or women, sometimes both, who were busy with different duties they were in charge of by the law of the country, or by arbitrary order of the monarch. Titus walked through these different rooms in astonishment, marvelling at what he saw, those occupations, those habits, those characters. In one of the rooms, a group of one hundred people was busy kneading a light bloated white dough. Naturally, this place must be the pantry, thought Titus, they are preparing some singular delicacy for the king's lunch. He asked the cicerone if he was right, and the cicerone answered:

“No, sir. These men are busy preparing brain dough for a certain number of men of all classes: statesmen, poets, lovers, etc; it also serves women.

This dough is especially for those who, on your planet, live with the true dispositions of our country, to whom we present this constitutive element.”

“Is it a Chimerical mass?”

“From the best that has ever been made.”

“Can I see it?”

The cicerone smiled, called the chief of the room, to whom he asked for some dough. He went to the warehouse and took a portion and handed it to Titus. As soon as the poet took it from the chief’s hands, the dough came apart, as if it had been made of smoke. Titus was confused, but the chief tapped him on the shoulder. “Relax,” he said. “We have raw material at hand; it is from our own atmosphere, and our atmosphere doesn’t end.”

This chief had an insinuating face, but, like all Chimericals, he was bound to abstractions, so Titus couldn’t get one more word out of him, because after saying his last words, he started looking at the air, contemplating an insect in its flight.

This case attracted his colleagues, who came to him and immersed themselves in the contemplation of the winged insect.

The three continued on their way.

Further on, there was a room where many Chimericals were around tables discussing the different ways to inspire the diplomats and directors of our world, the pretexts to fill the time and terrify the spirits with futilities and straw men. These men looked refined and smart. There was an order from the monarch forbidding the entrance into that room in working hours and a guard was at the door. The shortest distraction in that congress would be considered a public calamity.

My poet walked from room to room, from gallery to gallery. Here, visiting a museum; there, analysing a work or a game; he had time to see everything, to examine everything with attention and detail. As he passed

by the large gallery that ended in the square, he saw that people, gathered under the windows, were surrounding the gallows. An execution was about to happen. “A capital crime?” asked Titus, who had our legislation in mind.

“No,” they answered him, “a crime of *lèse-courtoisie*.” The convicted was a Chimerical that had committed the crime of not curtsying in time and in a gracious manner. This crime is considered the greatest possible and imaginable audacity in that country. The Chimerical people contemplated the execution as if they were watching a thespian spectacle, amid applause and joyful shouts.

However, it was time for the royal lunch. At the table of the monarch Genius sat only the king, the queen, two ministers, a doctor, and the charming fairy who had taken my poet to those heights. The fairy, before sitting at the table, begged the king to admit Titus to the lunch. The answer was affirmative and Titus took his seat. Lunch was much more brief and faster than one can imagine. It lasted but a few seconds, after which everyone got up, and a table was opened for the royals’ game. Titus watched it: there were chairs around the room where Utopias and Chimeras were seated; on the backs of these chairs were Chimerical noblemen, with their peacocks and their scarlet clothes. Titus took the opportunity to know how those care-free girls knew him. He leaned against a chair and asked the Utopia there. She asked for permission and after the usual formalities, she retired to one of the rooms with the poet, and there she asked him:

“Do you really not know who we are? Don’t you know us?”

“I don’t know you. That is, I know you all now, and that makes me really regretful because I wish I had known you longer.”

“Oh! Always a poet!”

“You all truly are of unrivalled kindness. But where did you see me?”

“In your own home.”

“Oh!”

“Don’t you remember? At night, tired of the daily struggles, you retire to your room, and there, opening sails to the mind, you let yourself go by a serene and calm sea. On that journey some maidens accompany you... it’s us, the Utopias; us, the Chimeras.”

Titus understood something that had been said to him a long time ago. He smiled, and laying his beautiful and loving eyes on the Utopia before him, said: “Ah! It’s you, it’s true! A comforting company that distracts me from all the miseries and sorrows. It is in your bosom that I wipe my tears. Thankfully! It comforts me to see you all in person and in a palpable way. ”

“And do you want to know,” asked Utopia, “who takes us all to your company? Look, see.”

The poet turned his head and saw the traveling vision, his travel companion.

“Ah! it’s her!” said the poet.

“It’s true. It’s the blonde Fantasy, the unveiled companion of those who think and those who feel.”

The Fantasy and the Utopia interweaved their hands and looked at Titus. He looked at them both, as if elated. This lasted a few seconds; the poet wanted to ask some questions, but when he was about to speak, he noticed that the two had become thinner and steamier. He articulated something, but seeing that they were becoming more and more transparent, and distinguishing their features only a little, he let out these words:

“So! What is this? Why do you fade away like this? ” More and more shadows disappeared and the poet ran to the game room. There, an identical spectacle awaited him; it was terrifying. All the figures were fading away as if they were made of mist. Stunned and throbbing, Titus walked through some galleries and finally came upon the square. All the objects were un-

dergoing the same transformation. Soon, Titus felt that he lacked foot support and saw that he was loose in space.

In this situation, he broke out in a painful cry. He closed his eyes and let himself go as if he had to find death as his journey's end.

It was actually very likely. After a few seconds, Titus opened his eyes and saw that he was falling perpendicularly over a black spot that looked like the size of an egg. His body tore through space like lightning. The black spot grew bigger and bigger until it became the size of a sphere. The poet's fall had something diabolical about it; once in a while he would let out a groan. The air against his eyes forced him to close them from time to time. Eventually, the black spot that grew kept growing, until it looked like the Earth.

"It's the Earth!" said Titus.

I believe there will be no human words to express the joy that that soul, lost in space, felt when it recognized that it was approaching its home planet. The joy was cut short. Titus thought, and thought well, that at that speed when he touched the ground he would never get up again. He got the creeps: he saw death before him and surrendered his soul to God. And so he went, or rather, he came and came, until — miracle of miracles! — he fell on a beach, standing, firm as if he had not gone through that infernal leap.

When he saw himself on land his first impression was of satisfaction. Then, he tried to see in what region of the planet he was in; he could have fallen in Siberia or China, but he found himself two steps from his place. The poet hurried back to his peaceful home.

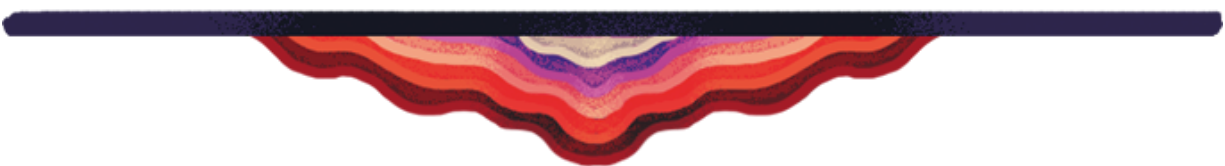
The candle had burned out; the mongrel, lying under the table, had her eyes fixed on the door. Titus entered and threw himself on the bed, where he fell asleep, reflecting on what had just happened.

Since then, Titus has a very sharp look, and can tell at first sight if a man has brains or Chimerical dough in his head. I must declare that he finds only a few that do not match the latter species. He says, and I have reason to believe, that I am among the very few exceptions. In spite of the contemptuous ones against me, I cannot withdraw my trust from a man who has just made such a wonderful trip, and who was able to look directly at the shining throne of the king of Trifles.



Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis, born on 21 July 1839, is arguably the most important Brazilian author of all times. He is considered by North-American critic Harold Bloom as the most important black author of all times. He penned the romances *The Posthumous Memoirs of Brás Cubas* and *Dom Casmurro*, works that figure amongst the most important and influential of Brazilian literature. During his career, Machado wrote several short stories, and in many of them he flirted with fantastic elements, being one of the earliest Brazilian authors to explore the genre.

The Land of Chimeras is one of such stories, full of magic and fantastic beings. It was first released on November 1st, 1862 and Eita! is proud to present its first version in English.



Acknow- ledgments

Acknowledgments

We'd like to thank Diogo Ramos and Marina Ferreira, who volunteered to help us by copyediting two stories for this issue.

Many thanks also to Rachel Cordasco, PhD in Literary Studies and writer on the website [Speculative Fiction in Translation](#), who kindly agreed to write the foreword to this edition.

Lastly, a big and warm thank you to our beloved patrons.

Obrigada, lindos!

Meu chapa! / My buddy!

Diego Guerra, Jamie Ditaranto, Cirilo Lemos

Gente Boa! / Good Person!

Amanda Pavani, Michel Peres

Camarada! / Comrade!

Nicholas Davies, Thiago Ambrósio Lage, Giu Domingues, Gabriela Colicigno, Jonas Dias, Pablo Oliveira Souza, Janayna Pin, Eliana M. Ugarte, May Barros

Beloved!

Illimani Ferreira

Consagrated!

Caesar Ralf Franz Hoppen, Milena Sales Araujo



[1] “Must Read Horror, Sci-Fi and Fantasy Books From Brazil” by Raphael Tsavkko Garcia, Tor.com, May 1, 2020: <https://www.tor.com/2020/05/01/must-read-horror-sci-fi-and-fantasy-books-from-brazil/>.

[1] Çu: [su] – an abbreviation of a bigger name, Açucena ([asus'ena]), a common and meaningful name in Brazil.