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Andre Bowser

Remuncio's Dream

Remuncio could fly in his dream. His eyes rolled behind their lids in real life from the heights he attained, passing far above the tiny house at the foot his family's property where Misikala and Arthur lived. He banked right and soared high above the road that led to Durban, which he could see far off in the distance of many miles, with his bird's eye perspective affording him a panorama not enjoyed by mortal men. The grounders could not see what he could see. The lights far off were a notion to them, but they were a reality to him. His uncle had told him, long ago, many years before he died, in fact, back when Remuncio would still sit on his lap from time to time, that South Africa would change. He did not know at the time what his uncle had meant, but in his sleep, safe in his bed, a smile stretched across his face in the real world, just as one appeared on his lips in his dream. He could see past the rolling hills, to the dark outline of mountains larger than the city of Durban, and as unimaginable as it was, he could see the shimmering waters beyond the city, refracting a million diamonds of light — dark and light shimmering.

He noticed a pattern. As he soared over the land, the houses, some big, some larger, he recalled the houses where he had delivered the newspapers. They were all large houses. Many of them had fences, some even gates, the difference of which was simple: money. The rich subscribed to the notion that South Africa was changing. He had never read a headline before, and just tonight he had found a mistake on the front page, and for it he was being rewarded. But looking past the mistake, he recalled that the story mentioned "Black Minors" intending to say "Miners," and that word alone confirmed Arthur's earlier assertion that the newspaper was anti-Apartheid. As he flew over the medium-sized homes on fenced-in properties, Remuncio recognized some of those homes as friends of his family, many of whom were fellow Portuguese who were chased out of Angola and welcomed with, more or less, open arms in South Africa. They were given land, in many cases, and trained to work the land. The shacks where the blacks had lived before they were moved were bulldozed over. Remuncio had seen it happen with his own eyes on his family's land, although he was too young to remember it until he was afforded the perspective that is seldom afforded to men. He saw it in his dream. And the keen observation skills he had almost innately, as easy as they had made him notice the error on the front page of the newspaper he delivered, for which he was being rewarded by the editor for reporting the error before the newspaper's press run was complete, were only bolstered by his sleep state, like tapping into a subconscious brilliance that lay beneath the surface and always out of reach when he was awake. Like a bird, in his dream, he could see past and future astride the present. His ability to see extreme distances was so keenly enhanced that it impacted his intelligence, synthesizing it in his sleep, and if he squinted he could discern the past, as well as the future, filtering out the present, all at the same time. Almost with the multi-compartmentalized vision of an insect, too small to change anything, but a witness to almost everything, he could see distance as time, as well as the various spectrums beyond the black and white of what he was seeing.

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Steering to the left of the city, and away from its lights, which somewhat blinded his ability to discern time, Remuncio flew over his school. He had passed the place of learning many times during the summer, but never looked at. Now he studied it, he saw the multiple structures, including buildings, courtyards, a swimming pool and athletic fields, and flying further he saw Hanna's house, but he did not fly down toward it. Instead, he flew higher, past it, and he didn't look back; it pained his heart to look at it and so he flew higher and higher until the black sky changed to blue black amid the dusting of clouds he encountered and then a startling royal blue sea full of stars and a pregnant moon. Fearing that he would lose his way, he flew downward, willing his mind toward home, but instead of the city of Durban or its surrounding suburbs and urban areas, Remuncio found himself lost. He had flown too high, traveled too far. *In time?* Something seemed off — he could sense it. He then worried that perhaps he had not just traveled a great distance, or even in time, but in reality, such that if he didn't return to his own time he would disappear, having never been born to have existed in that reality; the fear made him study his surroundings for any trace of home. Doubt crept up like the windless distance of the past. He saw what looked like round compounds with small, round dwellings inside. He imagined there were people in those dwellings, but he could not see them.

Far ahead of him, rolling hills gave way to rock formations that were in the shape of great beasts, like herds of animals domesticated by men for their meat. Beyond that, he recognized shanty towns, stacked on top of each other, with sparse lighting here and there exposing the walls of the homes made out of anything the inhabitants could find, such as signage from commercial products, including scraps of billboards and soda beverage advertisements. Despite the lateness, he heard music emanating from quadrants of the shanty town and he flew toward the sound. The music reminded him of a fast *fado*, the *baaaarrrrrruuuuuummmppppaaaa bbuuuurrrrrraaaaammmmmppppaaaa bump bump*, but everything reminded him of a *fado*. He danced to the music in the air and felt better, like he was getting closer to home, closer to existing in his reality.

Just below him, with the shanty town behind him, he saw what looked to be a school. He recognized a playground and a small, dusty athletic field, as well as a few dilapidated buildings where, perhaps, classes had once been held, but surely now no one learned there, and besides, there was no pool to cool the effects of the brutal day's South African sun.

Remuncio flew farther, faster, straight ahead with his eyes closed; willing himself to his home, to his time, to when he was alive and very much existed, and then he saw it: the Clock Tower. He was over Durban. He had flown too far, too fast, and he turned to his left, banking as quickly as he could and feeling the wind of the present whip at his face now from turning so suddenly; it whistled in his ear making him feel awakened as if by an internal alarm set off with the sharpness of his change in direction. He could see over his right shoulder the sea change from black and white diamonds to a steady swath devoid of light. He sensed the future was in that direction. Back the way he came, but slower, he was flying over the newspaper, now, with the depot at the very back of the large property, where trucks still moved up and down the loading area, turning left and right on the road that led to their destinations where the truth about "Black Mi-

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nors" and "Black Miners" would be spread, about how they were striking for the same rights as everyone else, even as they dug up diamonds that would make others rich, living and learning in ramshackle ruins that others did not want; how they would not extract another precious resource from the land until some positive changes were made; Remuncio agreed with them and he would herald the change in any way he could, even if he had to stake the so-called white privileges he had on it. He so believed in what his uncle had said. He could see it, too. The year 1977 would be over soon enough, and like the years that rolled before it and would roll on after it, somewhere in them the very seeds of that change were planted in him and so many others like him — he was sure of it, despite the subterfuge of his society that had doped him while growing up white — as sure as they had eyes to see with. They did not even care for total recompense, those minors or miners — just fair compensation moving forward and nothing more. Remuncio recalled Arturo's words, again, realizing his uncle was right and he knew for himself now that change would come from the truth, there was never any other way. Reconciliation would come if that truth came from peace, words instead of weapons, or more accurately: words as weapons. Even Paulo had professed it and his older brother was still doped up among the grounders who could not see the sea change from the blinding light of the present to the unknowing blackness of the future. From that darkness would come the might of change that boys like his Arthur, his surrogate black brother, demonstrated; it would be the truth that he'd yield, spelled in ink or blood, and no one could conceal it.

Remuncio knew this now. He felt it deep within himself. He did not have to hide in blissful ignorance because like a drug it would either kill him or force him to wake up to life either way. His father held no sway over that truth, and his hiding behind the appearance of not being political did not make him less culpable for supporting a lie. But then Remuncio remembered the stories of how his father fought for and won the right to allow Misikala and her young son at the time, Arthur, to stay on his land, which had once been her land. In spite of the rule exiling blacks to "homelands," or pauper quadrants of displaced blacks, *da* had did it. And with that realization, he could see Misikala as a young woman, clutching her skinny son, and screaming at the men who forced her from her home before they tore it down. As he flew high over the field surrounding his father's land, he could see into the past. The home had been there. Right where her current house stood in the present, it was there — there where her old home had been in the past. There wasn't a road there. There was one there in the present. Not now. *Da* had not yet plowed it or built the house they lived in. The fields were a forest of trees back now, and the farm had other families living where workers now willingly toiled, their hands dirty with the soil that sprouted the produce for *da* back in the present.

Remuncio remembered his mother holding him the same way Misikala had held Arthur, both women crying as the government men tore down the black woman's house. *Da* walking over to Misikala and softly speaking to her. Consoling her? Holding her, stiffly and loosely as she weakly beat upon his chest with one hand and clutching Arthur with the other.

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Remuncio could see his father on that day, pointing to where her house had stood and where her house stands now. His *da* had promised to rebuild it then, as sure as it stood now. He was so certain of it in his dream — his smile stretched across the ages — that it had always been her land and that time would tell the truth.