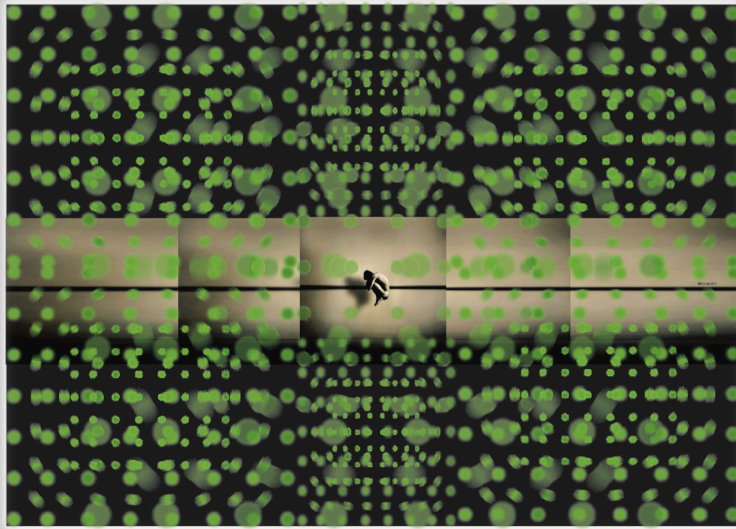


AN XMAS TALE TO TELL

Christmas is beautiful because people get happy. Surely it has to do with the hope of receiving a gift, but I think that is the least important thing. Although, of course, it makes people happy.



I remember that every Xmas eve I was going to bed after midnight, hoping to find the gift of that year under the pillow. Surely it would be another collection of aborigines and cowboys with whom I would play fights and killings –I don't think it's the best game for children, but since plastic doesn't shed blood, I knew it would be fun.

What worried me every Good Night was that there was no fireplace in my grandmother's house, and once, that I was able to climb the wooden wall that divided my aunt's side and ours, to watch The Grinch from afar, I noticed that Santa Claus -who now I know does not exist, went through the chimney to leave the presents under the Xmas tree.

But there was no fireplace in my grandmother's house, and the roof was very brittle, and Santa looked fat and old, and he would surely break the shingles and fall on the floor or on the sleepers, causing rather than a happy moment, one of death or injury.

In the garden were the lemon tree and my grandmother's rosaries, which had many thorns. Surely Santa would hurt his butt with the branches and thorns, and I don't know, in those years, I didn't think of myself to be so important that Santa would risk it just to deposit a bag of aborigines and cowboys for a child to play at killing the next day.

In addition, there was also my female parakeet, which was my company as a child until I killed her when I stepped on her in one of those races children take when playing at the flying superhero. Her death was very painful for me. She would bite any intruder, except me, and if she saw that fat bearded man, he would surely bite him, I thought.

So every good night, I was going to sleep worried that there would be no gift under the pillow.

At my grandmother's house, only empty boxes wrapped in colored paper were under the tree of synthetic material were. The real gifts, would be under the pillow, and thanks to my mother's supreme efforts, there was a gift to open, and cowboys to kill every December twenty-fifth.

But as I said, Christmas is nice because people are happy, I am also happy, but I do not want material gifts anymore, they bore me, and I think about the paper that tomorrow will be garbage. I like more the company of friends and family and that is all I want for Xmas. Ah, yes! and food and drinks, and music too.

But this year is special for me, a mixture of sadness and joy. And this is because early in 2019, I spent a few months at my sister's house, which, as I have already said, seems to be the safest place in the world because apparently, God lives there, or at least the faith that God exists is real.

In that short time, I got used to the freedom and kindness and love that is received at my sister's house, and I will not have that today that is Christmas Eve in Shanghai. Here I will have the company of my friends whom I love very much, of course, but my sister will not be here, nor my brother-in-law, nor my mother, nor my brother, nor my nephews and nieces, nor their spouses nor their offspring, nor my friends of the childhood.

So I know that although some human being will hug me with love, I will be between happiness and sadness, especially sadness when in the silence of midnight, I would hear within me, the loving voices of my family that surely today, will seem more distant than ever.

Merry Christmas to all!