

1/4 of Memory

by
Ubi Raymond

Note about the author

Ubi Raymond (pseudonym of Ubirajara Ramos) was born in 1963, in Brazil. At the age of four he began his literacy with a retired teacher, who lived across the street from his home. One year later he was already able to read and write full sentences. At that time, the true carioca (how people born in Rio de Janeiro are known) culture began to gain an original format, although it still imported the foreign rhythms. At the height of the Beatles, Elvis and others most radio networks of Rio de Janeiro played their hits, making it clear that the cariocas lacked an identity of their own, which its basis was on samba and football only. Such foreign influence on radio explains the author's fascination for the English language in the early 1970s. Although his parents had attended the old primary school, he was able to absorb from his father the knowledge of the English

language, and his mother, born in the state of Paraíba, to inherit the rich regional vocabulary. Greater than this legacy was the efforts of his parents to give him the books he needed, because they believed in their son's potential. He ceased his studies after completing the technical administration course with the efforts from his father, who used to bring home extra books from which he extracted valuable knowledge.

Only in 2006 is he absorbed by the desire to write to the world, perhaps to protect himself from bitter thoughts about an uncertain and bleak future.

It is this year that the first pages of *Heart of Ice*, an easy-to-read tale, where the author himself is seen in a surreal adventure that takes him to the north-east of England. This time, in *1/4 of Memory*, the author narrates his moments of prose with his grandmother and mother, both presented as witnesses of a time of great transformations. It simply chronicles the trajectory of a family, from the beginning of the twentieth century to the turn of the millennium, the most significant period in history.

Have fun with the cases and cases told by Dona Elvira and her children in *1/4 of Memory*, which content brings a mixed bibliographic of a northeastern retirees' family. The story does also aggregate fictional characters, created exclusively to better illustrate the narrated facts.

Any similarity with names mentioned in this work, in addition to Elvira's relatives, would have been a mere coincidence.

Foreword

Since the beginning of the world, when the world became world, when the first humans settled a widening look over the horizon, time has conspired against us all. Since we will never be able to control time, at least we have learned to count the days, and there is only in our imagination the remote hypothesis that one day we can make it move forward or backward, and who knows, sideways. This terrible fascination that time exerts on me is something as magical as the waves of the sea. Guardian of secrets, time is a book waiting for a reader with a child's gaze, subjecting himself willingly to children's whys. For this reason, this book is intended for the reader, whose will to live is projected beyond the boundaries of the magic of the time of our ancestors, who knew with simplicity to perpetuate their stories.

Dedicated to Elvira and her descendants
Ubi Raymond
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"Elvira, your time was just, your seeds have born good fruit, and the earth is pleased with them to this day."

"What's better, leaving or arriving?" —her grandson asked.

"Better than leaving is arriving. We're always going to some place, but you never know if you'll get there, do you?" —his grandmother answered with wisdom in her speech. "Death is blind, it passes close, but it doesn't see me."

"It only takes those who have already bought the ticket" —her grandson smiled.

"I've already bought it and got it paid in cash, now I am just waiting to go on board the train when it comes." Dona Elvira had turned 86 on that day. She would live another decade in full lucidity.

CHAPTER I

GOVERNMENT LEG

“Is Doctor Lima home?” This expression fell into the daily enjoyment of three generations who inhabited a humble house, in the northern part of the capital of Rio de Janeiro. And it should be no different, for every day, whether morning, afternoon or night, three hearts shared a common passion in the room. The house had only three rooms: kitchen, bathroom and bedroom, which although small, well held a wardrobe and two single beds. An Elvis poster pinned above the bed kept alive the memory of the king of rock, of whom Mary was a fan. In another corner of the room was the bed of her mother, Dona Elvira, with a poster of Friar Damian on the bedside. Mother and daughter, when they were not sleeping, spent hours talking, making the house sound the genuine northeastern accent, which not even time could erase.

The trio was joint every day. The youngest grandson, his mother and his granny, raising with passion the memories of a life fully suffered, dating back to the end of the 19th century.

This is the story of Elvira, born in September 1909, in the interior state of Paraíba, in the northeastern Brazil. She was raised by her older Brother Zao, baptized as Augustinho, and her sister, whose skin plus crystalline blue eyes, took her by name the nickname Blanca. Ms. Lucinda was their mother, but destiny stole her the right to live a long and joyful life on the day she was bitten by a snake. She fought the lethal poison bravely for three days, when already knowing she could not resist, recommended her husband never neglect her children. Elvira, the youngest, witnessed her mother's tragic death at the age of two and kept somehow in memory the scene of the bitter farewell, marked by a funeral singing that she never dared sing. She resisted childhood illnesses, almost succumbed to malaria and then, tetanus; after injuring the sole of her foot on a pointed dry stump, during the absence of her father, who went out to take care of the swidden. Days later, it was up to Zao to make the difficult decision that would save his sister. He used with surgical precision a razor properly sterilized on the ember of the stove, soaked with brandy the wound that already smelled bad and purplish to the knee. He drunk his sister to relieve her the terrible pain that awaited her. Without shaking, his right-hand slid the knife around the necrotic tissue and removed it at the cost of too much blood. High fever and delusions visited Elvira in bed in the days that followed. It looked more like a deathbed because of the smell of urine however, she was destined to live a long healthy life.

Zao, at the age of eighteen, six months after saving his sister's life, had been unexpectedly stabbed by such betrayal of the bride on the eve of the wedding. On that same day, his fiancé returned the wedding ring and fled with a concertina player. The young man did not weep for this loss, for his greatest loss was still his beloved mother, whom he would never forget. The wound of betrayal never healed in his heart and because of it he never married, however, he knew how to help many people to be happy in his long life. He used to lend the white suit he never wore to the young men who engaged in marriage, cut their hair and beard, completed their clothes with his dark blue blanket and white hat. He never asked for anything in return for his favors of good pleasure, and never insulted with refusals the gifts they gave him as a form of gratitude, usually small animals, and at most, a goat.

Without ever having set foot on their own land, because at that time only the "Landlords" had land beyond sight, and some farm-workers had to pay the Landlord five workdays as rent for just one acre of land.

I should now introduce the owner of the land, the illustrious Doctor Lima, for whom Dona Elvira's father worked as a foreman on the farm, which granted him the right to dwell in a small house on the land of his employer. The title of doctor was very common, usually attributed to large landowners, who in some cases could barely read. Unlike these, Doctor Lima was a

strong lawyer, a government leg, a hard match in the judges' rooms.

"Is Doctor Lima home?", that's how people would say when they wanted to talk to him." —said Dona Elvira, clearly illustrating the figure of a cunning short man.

"He was very helpful, well-advocated, there was no lost case. He put his hands behind his back, a black book under his arm, walked in the hall from one end to the other without giving a word, almost snaking. Yes, when he opened his mouth, the case was won, everyone would clap. Once on a rainy day, a widow's employee showed up at the farm carrying a message. She needed the Doctor's assistance, for she was arrested for cheating on her dead husband."

"Grandma! The widow was arrested because she cheated on her dead husband?" interpolated the grandson, astonishingly admired by the issue.

"Yes, my dear. At that time, the dead had to be respected for a certain time, but I think she couldn't wait that long. I think she was the kind that carries fire under her skirt, you know."

"What a crazy time this, Grandma! Have you ever wondered if it was like this today? There'd be a lot of widows trapped out there. There are women who don't respect their living husbands."

"Man too, it's not just woman." —said the boy's grandmother in defense of women, followed by laughter in the room where

the three generations often talked about subjects of the past century. Isn't it all true, Maria? You saw a lot too!"

"Everything mom's talking about really happened. A lot of things I know because she's always telling, but I also remember things from when I was five years old. There are things that if you count on the street no one believes you. My godfather Zao, for example, we called him godfather, but actually, Zao was Mom's older brother."

"What about Zao, Mom?" –asked the boy, wishing to know more. The interest in the stories of their ancestors is unusual in today's boys, who talk little to their parents, and when they do, it is usually to ask for something.

"Well, my uncle had some weird quirks, one of which was to treat any wound with a red-hot knife. Oh, yes! Once I saw him stick the tip of the red-hot knife into his mouth to stop the bleeding after he pulled out a tooth. He tied the tooth with a fishing line, climbed on a stool and tied the other end to the ridge of the house, then jumped off the stool. At the same time the blood came down his mouth and soiled his shirt, so he took the red-hot knife and did the job. I was five years old when this happened, he gave a loud scream that to this day I remember how it was. His was the ugliest face I've ever seen in my entire life!" –a session of laughter broke in the bedroom, the grandson tearing his belly laughing so much, to the point of tears coming down his face.