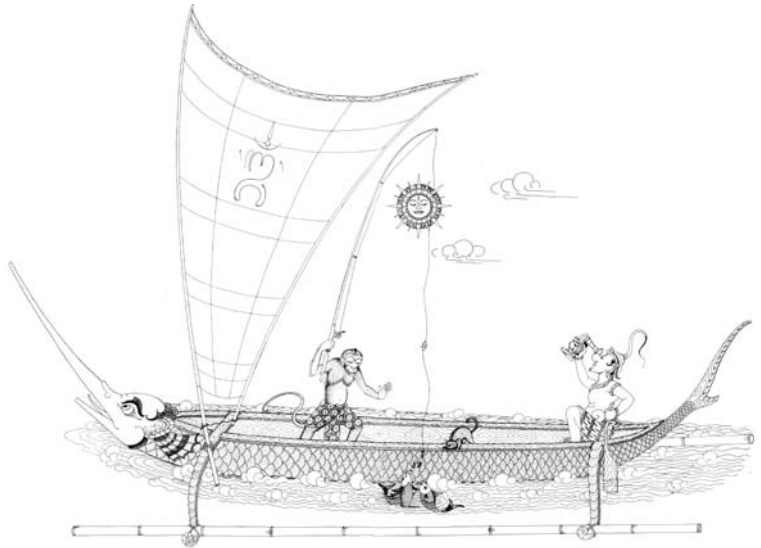


# THE DREAMER (Spain)

“Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined. . . As you simplify your life, the laws of the universe will be simpler.”

Henry David Thoreau.



The dreamer is a Warrior of actuality who, driven on the powerful wings of his imagination, soars like a condor above the summits of unreality. No mountains, forests or seas can prevent the dreamer from being captivated by some utopian chimera, some wild, hazardous adventure that would send a shiver of horror through those who live anaesthetised by the humdrum of dull, sluggish security.

The infinite pleasure of dreaming is a rare jewel we guard in a golden casket—on a silver tray lined with black velvet, in the darkest corners of our mind—which no one can pillage, not even the most cunning of rascals.

Dreaming is a right, a prerogative which by the law of our temperament belongs to us and fills our heart with hope and joy. As the great 2nd-century navigator, Artemidorus of Ephesus, said, dreams, visions and coincidences appear in people's lives for their benefit and instruction.

What majesty to be carried away on the wings of fantasy, soaring like some snow-white eagle above the endless oneiric fields of the imagination, where nothing is impossible. How wonderful to marvel like a child, but fully aware of one's acts, at one's plans and projects, like some wind fanning the flames of one's optimism and lust for life. Fabian's life was just like that—an irresistible fancy, a mild dream, a fragile soap bubble.



What kept our dreamer alive and alert was his desire to sail single-handed around the world in a small sailing boat named Yemaya, like the Afro-Cuban goddess of the sea. Each morning, when he woke up, Fabian repeated this heart-felt prayer: “I came into this world and I cannot leave it without seeing it”.

Fabian had all the nautical charts and had carefully plotted the route of his grand adventure. The Yemaya was fitted with radar and depth-sounding sonar and all the most up-to-date navigational instruments. He lived modestly, keeping all his savings to one day make his dream come true.

Our navigator studied the winds and currents, and knew which seasons to cross the sea in to avoid cyclones and other storms. He had books on all the countries he would visit and devoured them passionately like a starving child. To revel in the delightful pleasure of dreaming about and



living more intensely that castle in the air that he had built, Fabian slept in his boat. Each night he had the most wonderful dreams about his trip around the world. When he awoke, he did not feel uneasy or despondent about the stark reality of it all having been a dream. On the contrary, he was encouraged by the idea that he would one day sail the Pacific Ocean, the Arabian Sea, and visit tropical islands where he could swoon in the arms of beautiful women and the sweet contours of their sensual, cinnamon-coloured bodies. He would cross the Drake Passage separating South America from Antarctica and at last see the constellations of the Southern Hemisphere.

The villagers started to give him sidelong glances, aloof and reticent, as one would stare at a madman. Wryly they would ask: “When do you intend to set sail on your round-the-world adventure?” Fabian was too artless of soul to see the cruel sarcasm in their gaze, and replied with the candid enthusiasm of a child:

“I’ve got everything ready—money, passport, visas.” The mediocre villagers, hardened in their sarcasm, responded with incredulous silence.

Months and long years passed and the Yemaya remained moored in the harbour. The bows to port and starboard were studded with shellfish and the rope that kept it moored was covered in seaweed. At full moon, the Yemaya gleamed like an ominous coffin floating in the graveyard of a silvery sea. Local gossip had it that being cloistered in his boat for so many years had brought him to the brink of insanity. Some held that the vessel was too small to be worth setting sail in, because it would never make the journey home. An eminent village psychiatrist claimed that Fabian suffered from anxiety over his self-esteem, and pathological mythomania owing to an obsessive neurosis about becoming a hero.

By some paradoxical metamorphosis, his vehicle to freedom had turned into a dungeon. His imagination had trapped him in a snare from which there was no escape. His mind, like some great furnace, was slowly burning in the fire of his chimera. His ever-wizened face took on a deathly pallor; he began to stutter and developed arrhythmia, a telltale sign of alarming mental debility.

His best friend realized that, if he did not come to some firm decision soon, Fabian would end up dreaming in a mental asylum, wrapped in a straitjacket. “In extreme situations”, he said to himself, “one must take drastic action”.

One moonless night, he took a kayak and, as stealthily as a cat, concealed in the shadows of night, paddled out to the Yemaya. With not the slightest doubt about the consequences of such a blunt action, he put out to sea. It was the first day of spring—with a strong breeze blowing from the land, the Yemaya crossed the dark veil of night and vanished into the immensity of the sea.

Fabian was wakened before dawn by the sound of water lapping the bows of the boat. Like a sleep-walker waking up to a new reality, he climbed onto the deck and, beholding the sea like an endless blue desert, thought that it was all just a dream. To make sure that he was not dreaming, he rubbed his eyes vigorously, pinched his cheeks and splashed water on his face. When he realized that he had indeed sailed out to sea, he was seized by a terrible panic. He began to tremble like an autumn leaf and wept like a child. Like some merciless blow of fate, harsh reality had come to shake him from his slumber forever. The transition from dream to reality, from claustrophobia to aerophobia, was too jarring for that fragile mind. He considered a final option—to cut himself while shaving. The flight of a lone seagull, like a mirror in the heavens which reflected his seafaring, nomadic spirit, prompted



him to rule out such an ignominious farewell to the world. He was shamefully tempted to head back to port but, it was too late—for the first time he had tasted the indescribable pleasure of freedom and had savoured the delicious fruit of adventure. A grain of sand in the vast desert of his imaginings had become real. He took a deep breath of pure sea air, checked his navigational instruments and, once he had pinpointed his position on the map, felt his heart flooding with confidence. He hoisted the sails and sung this poem by Leon Felipe:

*Sailor, sailor  
Fear not that you may sink  
For the treasure lies not  
In the shelter of the port  
But at the bottom of the sea*

Thus began his successful circumnavigation of the globe, which lasted ten intense, unforgettable months. His friends received postcards from Casablanca, Cape Town, Bali, Sydney, Punta Arenas, Rio de Janeiro... When Fabian returned to the port from where he had originally set sail in such a striking fashion, he had become a different person; in the alchemy of life he had undergone a strange metamorphosis. No longer was he a starving dreamer, a blunderer with words who inspired more pity than respect. Fabian had become a warrior of the seas. His swarthy face, tanned by the wind and sun, bore the seal of a master seaman. His left ear was adorned with a ring from the island of Sumba, Indonesia, and his dark blue eyes had a glint of the deep seas he had sailed. His gaze revealed the confidence of a man who had fought a duel with his fears and eventually overcome them.

The village mayor invited Fabian to give a talk, illustrated with slides, on his journey around the world. It was a resounding success. It filled the town hall—not a mosquito could have edged its way in. The psychiatrist who had diagnosed him

to be severely mentally disturbed approached him at the end of his talk and asked: “What have you learned from your round-the-world trip?” Fabian remained pensive for a few moments, his gaze seemingly flying above the minds of the audience. Then he replied, measuring his words:

“When our dreams come true, we gradually overcome our fear of death, which is actually a fear of dying without first having lived.”

After such an eloquent finale, the mayor, on behalf of the Ministry of the Navy, presented him with the medal of naval merit for having being the first seaman to circumnavigate the globe in a 10-metre-long boat.

Before the audience filed out of the hall, Fabian asked his best friend: “Was it you who cast off the rope?” His friend nodded, with not the slightest hint of guilt in his gaze. Fabian continued: “*The highest achievement is not to act, but to spur others into action<sup>(1)</sup>*”. With great composure he took off his medal and placed it on his friend. The hall resounded with applause. Fighting to hold back his tears, Fabian bade farewell to the audience.

That night, Fabian slept in the arms of a beautiful woman, for nothing is more irresistible in the eyes of a woman than a man who has realised his dreams. ■



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(1). I-Ching.