

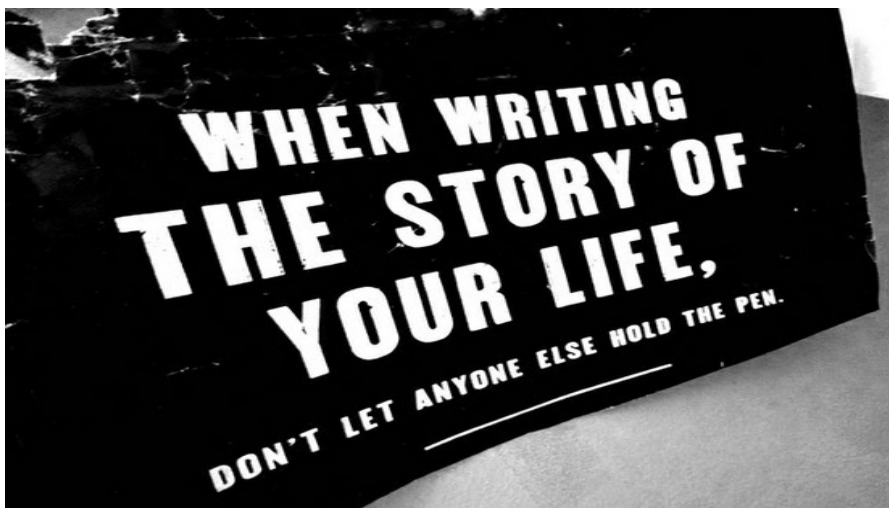
## Hey, you're a dreamer?

**Man on the Train:** Hey, are you a dreamer?

**Wiley:** Yeah.

**Man on the Train:** I haven't seen too many around lately. Things have been tough lately for dreamers. They say dreaming is dead, no one does it anymore. It's not dead it's just that it's been forgotten, removed from our language. Nobody teaches it so nobody knows it exists. The dreamer is banished to obscurity. Well, I'm trying to change all that, and I hope you are too. By dreaming, every day. Dreaming with our hands and dreaming with our minds. Our planet is facing the greatest problems it's ever faced, ever. So whatever you do, don't be bored, this is absolutely the most exciting time we could have possibly hoped to be alive. And things are just starting.

(Waking Life, 2001)



### **Year 2010. Autumn. Somewhere in October.**

Three years after the big fall. My fall. Wrong moment, wrong people, wrong place. A perfect imperfection in the mechanism of the universe. Or just another blind choice. Or the world's fall.

I walk in circles. Smaller and smaller circles. This is how identical thousands of days feel like. I am trapped between my past and future choices, between selves, worlds and times. It's absolutely terrifying, but at the same time, I realize it is a unique opportunity. I can choose from endless possible scenarios. This time the whole design is in my hands.

Am I smart enough to be lucky? To pick the best possible story for the rest of my life? Once I do, how can I be sure and how do I get there in due time?

Endless walking around the neighbourhood and back again for the cheapest coffee in the park. I know all the leaves, birds and people in this park, no matter the season. Back and forth to St. Mary church across the street, on Sundays. I know every inch of this road and the story of every brick from this building. More litigations in the company. The law around here is a big question mark. Endless days spent in court just to learn the judge mindset and to inspire from thousands of trials. Now I lost. Now I win. Now it's even. It never gets anywhere better. The more I do the right thing, the less I am and the less I have. *Why am I fighting and what am I fighting for?* Values and principles. Peace of heart. Damn, this is such an expensive approach of life! Everyone says to give up and to move forward. I say, you don't understand, there is no forward here and no

shortcuts. One apartment evacuation order. The other apartment evacuation order. Countless trips to my parents house in the country to deposit all things from the office and from the lost homes. One car gone. My loyal blue Ranger. My father is not so well. The heart, of course. No way to reach him. We are like in prison here, a prison where we need to provide our own food and roof while at the same time we have to fight with countless villains. As we are the protagonists, the others must be the villains. That's how we were taught, right? Now he is here. Now he isn't anymore.

I am falling deeper and deeper into the spirals of a life that I don't recognize and that I don't validate as being mine. There is no light in here. On the margins of life there is another life, different breeds of humans, new kind of stories and other rules. Here all people turned into words. Though, it is the best place to live up to your values. That is a luxury you seldom see inside the circles of the ordinary world. I never imagined that words hold so much power.

I remember I judged the people who crowd and push each other in church to take away as many pieces of wafer as possible. A Black Friday kind of scene. Then I abruptly changed my mind.

It happened that Sunday morning when I heard the bells, I woke up and I was hungry as I have never been before. I was raised in poverty, but it was my mother's poverty. She raised us alone and she learned how to make us forget about it. I never tasted my own. That day I rushed to the church, waited restless for the priest to put an end to his preaching, pushed myself in front of everyone and grabbed the wafers. And then I stopped. What am I doing?

I looked around. Fallen and broken people everywhere. Different clothes, the same face. The face of poverty. Poor people look alike, if you noticed. I tried so much to escape it and here I am. Thinking to steal the wafers in the church. How low can I get?

*How low are you willing to get?* My mind replied.

I turned to myself and started to count my blessings.

I still have some clothes left. My mother and sister are still alive and well. I still have friends. I still have a few time left in this house. I still have my brains. Or at least, I think so. You never hear that click inside your mind. It just happens and that's it. You are clueless.

What else?

I still have my laptop. Ok, its display is cracked and dieing, but still working. The utilities are off, they turned them off, but there is still the light of the day and old fashioned ways of dealing with this situation.

What can I do with these blessings?

Wrong question.

How can create a new life from the scratch having nothing but myself in the most challenging times of all?

I don't know. I don't know.

*Yet.* My mind replied.

I want to pray and to light a candle. I search myself for some change. No change. No candle. I look around and I see the rest of one down on the floor. I hesitate for a moment and I take it. Who knows who was it lighted for? Was it a living or a dead one? I wondered. I light it anyway for

both me and the unseen stranger from this world or from the other.

In those times, all that was open for people like me was the church and the internet.

Think!

Crisis just hit. Historic giants went bankrupt. Most of us went bankrupt. High skilled unemployment erupted like a volcano. It's bad.

Wait!

This means that there is a probability that somewhere, somebody could have thought to build a bridge between problems and solutions. A scalable bridge.

Who can that be?

Americans, most probably.

If such bridge exists, I must find it. And really fast.

I started to visit some of my closest friends because they had internet at home. It didn't take me long to find the bridge. It existed. It was there. They were pioneers at the time in open innovation market. I scroll inside the challenge center and damn! They are all about Chemistry, Math, Biology and loads of technical stuff. Too specific. Too far from my big picture kind of brains.

Good enough awards, fast deadlines. If I only could solve one problem! Only one. I could get some cash, I could push forward and with a little bit of luck, my life will change.

If I only could!

Now what?

*Wait. Wait. Be patient. It's on its way.* My mind replied.

For a few weeks I kept visiting my friends and while we talked about life and other things, I scrolled that website from time to time.

No. Nothing for me.

I was just like someone waiting for that life changing letter to come and who jumps at the window each time the postman pops up in the street.

I started to doubt myself, the way my mind is wired.

What am I doing?

And one day, here it was. ***Models for Sourcing Regional Food Databases***. Anonymous seeker. Healthcare industry. Connecting worldwide diabetes patients' medications with the right food products for their special diet. A tech application, a virtual scalable platform, a strategy and the operational plans. That what was they wanted. 10.000\$, one week left till deadline, over 400 worldwide solvers engaged.

This is wild. Just the thought of it makes me want to quit. And the award, come on! On the consulting market that's at its best 10% of the value.

*Don't think about that.* My mind whispered.

The challenge itself didn't make me click from my creative perspective, though the idea of creating something with the potential to uplift the lives of countless patients around the globe challenged me enough overall. What really did make me click, was the incomplete hypothesis of the problem.

I decided to rephrase the premise, to not solve the entire problem and to send them just that paragraph.

When I rephrased it, the solution opened itself to me and dragged me further. Just like a whole new universe. I wrote it as fast as I could. Its title was "**Broadening Opportunities Towards Global Health**"

When I finished it, I realized it's late after midnight and I don't have internet. No. This cannot happen!

I jumped out of the house and started to walk around randomly. Then it hit me: *the gas station down the street.* They have free Wi-Fi.

I looked at the time. Few minutes left till deadline. I switched myself to turbo mode.

Here I am. Standing in front of the gas station, trying to figure out between the display cracks where on the desktop I saved it. The wi-fi connection works. I am on.

Open the browser. Enter the site address. Go to the problem. Upload solution. Submit. That's it! Done!

That was the most imperfect of my writings.

After a few days I totally forgot about it and I fell back into the spiral. I was sure they won't award someone who starts by saying: look, your premise is incomplete!

After about two months, long after midnight, I received this email:

*"Dear Georgia,*

*It gives me great pleasure to let you know that the Seeker's review of your submission to Models for Sourcing Regional Food Databases led to you being chosen as one of the two winners for this Challenge."*

At first I thought it's a scam or something. It took some correspondence with their team to realize it is not. Anyway, I couldn't believe it until I cashed the prize. I had to borrow 50\$ to legalize the Affidavit at the US Embassy, the Intellectual Property transfer agreement.

The other winner was a 40+ guy, president at some banking institution in USA. That seemed to me more fascinating than the news itself. Two brains at two ends of the spectrum, one bigger mind, one solution, a match with the seeker. What a beautiful ricochet!

My life didn't change much after this boost of adrenaline. It was me who started to change once again. And maybe a little piece of the world or of that seeker. I don't know I'll ever know. I have no clue what happened further. I am bound of the IP contract, so I cannot reveal neither the problem or the solution.

After a while, this bridge leaders decided to make a video called "[I'm a solver](#)" by putting

together some of our video recordings to their questions. Nothing fancy, but relevant. The Economist, one of their big partners at the time held its summit serials Ideas Economy on New York and the theme that year was "**Human Potential: The next level of competition**". Their CEO at the time was about to introduce our breed and this new challenge based system to countless influencers. He said it was game changing. And it was. More than he will ever know.

Four years later in 2014 I won my next incentive innovation challenge. **Humanizing the Customer Digital Experience**. On short, humanizing technology. A tech and strategic application for a US banking group. Anonymous, of course, for obvious reasons. Over 400 solvers engaged. Relevant title for my life in between the worlds and times. I entitled my proposal "**Your Private Banking Coach – a very personal experience**" and it was a one of a hell concept for emotionally connecting users with the machines and get in return unique kind of processed data in order to uplift users life. An artificial intelligence based application for their mobile terminals like PoS, internet banking, ATMs, and so on.

I used the monetary award to leave the country and so I became an emigrant. I took myself by surprize as I never believed I would ever leave the country. I was about to find out that once you leave and live enough time somewhere else, it's hard to fit the same picture again. Emigration is a totally self-changing experience. That was one of my best decisions ever. I was too far in the future already for my home country's culture, politics and economic environment.

This new discontinous life path became a sort of "follow the signs" kind of experience. Playing this game kept me busy, focused and connected, but mostly tought me lot of new things about the world and about myself. In parallel, I started to accept working opportunities in film production, my oldest passion.

While walking on the innovation road, I developed a portfolio of about 30 solutions to various profit and common good problems and I became one of the voices in our community group of winning solvers who constantly fought for improving the system and the solvers policies.

In 2011, together with winning solvers I never met in real life, we built a collaboration platform to "recycle" our non-awarded ideas, to get them out of the black box and to push them further into the market. Moneyless as we were at the time, but better equipped than ever. We still believe there is a huge opportunity here.

At the end of 2015, I decided to make a step forward and to do something I wanted to do from day 1 as it simply fascinated me: to bring more light upon our winning solvers community, to this new breed of talents and to the positive and unpredictable side effects of open innovation realm. So I started to produce an online video serial called **We Are Solvers**. It's more like a video document featuring ones of the most prolific solvers, their motivations, they predictions and their messages to worldwide influencers.

The purpose of this production is to bring to the market insights from its champions, the winning solvers, the players in the fire line, a missing piece of information, and to promote ourselves and the potential that lies for the organizations to team-up with people like us for their most challenging projects.

Some of my peers thoughts:

"Give me the extraordinary job! Put me in the direction of an extraordinary job! I want flexibility, creativity, novelty, and I want profit share. You know, if you cannot find me a company with some form of a profit sharing, it's like ... I can get a job on my own."

- **Michael Ricciardi** - Seattle, USA. Science & Technology Writer, Researcher, Tech & Concept Designer. Awarded for 7 winning solutions and shortlisted for another 4 -

"In human resources, I think you should think about solving a problem and not about getting people in there. Human resources isn't only about resources within your company, it's about total human resources, so your total network around your company."

- **Bas van de Haterd** - Netherlands, Europe. Entrepreneur, consultant, writer, speaker. Awarded for 4 winning solutions -

"I would like to advise headhunters not to put people into boxes. Brilliant people are here to help."

- **Mario Rosato** - Spain, Europe. CEO / R&D at Sustainable Technologies SL. Professor of biogas technology. Awarded for 6 winning solutions. 4th place in the worldwide ranking of Top Solvers in 2011-

"When it comes to human resources, I think they spend a lot of time, energy and money on recruitment, on recruiting people, but not the same effort is spent on employment retention. There is always a good reason on why people leave companies."

- **Abshar Rashid** - Dubai, UAE. Senior Software Engineering Professional and Private Computer Science Researcher. Awarded for 1 winning solution -

"I'd say there are a lot of creative people out there and you should explore all possible ways to efficiently find them and use them. It is possible to assemble units, companies or universities which have a high concentration of creative people ...and when that happens, the synergy between creative people improves the environment and provides a tremendous resource."

- **David Galbraith** - Arizona, USA. PhD Professor at University of Arizona. Awarded for 1 solution, one he developed 20 years ago and found its seeker now -

"I would say don't be afraid of broad experience or experience that doesn't fall into a conventional model of professional work."

- **Jacqueline Eenkooren** - Calgary, Canada. Assistant-Researcher at University of Calgary. Awarded for 2 winning solutions -

"For headhunters my message is: start hunting. Broaden your field. And for the human resource professionals: maybe it's time to innovate."

- **Georgia Mihalcea** - Bucharest, Romania. Entrepreneur, Writer, Creative Strategist and Innovation Catalyst. Awarded for 4 winning solutions -

We never met each other in real life. But we were all in time for doing this. I convinced two sponsors to support the production of the debut series. My next goal is to gather the resources needed to implement the format I initially designed for this production and to meet and highlight as many solvers as possible, to reveal as many stories as possible.

In 2016 I won another two incentive challenges. One was "**Innovative Approaches to Proliferation Prevention: An Industry-Government Information Sharing Platform**" launched by a coalition between six of the largest peace and security funders in the United States: Stimson Center and N Square. N Square is a collaborative effort between five of the largest peace and security funders in the United States: The Carnegie Corporation of New York, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Ploughshares Fund, and the Skoll Global Threats Fund.

I entitled my solution "**Source-to-Share Platform**" and besides the platform model, it contained also the implementation and development strategy for 2 years. The purpose of this challenge was to prevent dual use technologies to end up in the wrong hands and to ensure a better collaboration between private producers and US government.

The second one was a HeroX challenge called "**Patterns for Success**" sponsored by Berenyi Incorporated, USA. It is a management and leadership program designed for small business owners that is supposed to be turned into a book in 2017 by the challenge sponsor.

This particular achievement was a beautiful way to mark the end of an era. It was a success very close to my heart as it was the corollary of my over 10 years life experience as an entrepreneur in my home country, a very challenging time of my life.

Eventually, I ended up leading and co-founding a research and innovation cluster in my home country, Romania (Europe), a place where I lived permanently until 2013.

From that year forward I transferred myself into an African-European paradise, the Canary Islands, Spain in order to catch my soul, reconsider my path, remind myself about the beauty and joy of life and to create new premises to start over in ways better aligned with my values, dreams and nature.

As it is quite a challenge to convert a former lifetime entrepreneur and creative and diverse individual like myself into a conventional performer in a typical organization, in present I navigate between the two countries depending on my working independent projects and I spend a lot of time in the *cloud* solving incentive innovation challenges and writing films.

Looking back, I don't know when I crossed the line. The years from the beginning of this story faded away.

I am not an entrepreneur anymore. I changed too much and turned into something else, maybe something closer to who I am and to my purpose and meaning in this life. Today, I am just a free person exploring the world's corners, edges and borderlines doing what she can with whatever has at hand in order to add more value to the world and to her life, but mostly to find her place in the world.

I walk in circles. Wider and wider circles.

Life remained hard, but it became kinder in return.

Hey, are you a dreamer?

Yeah.

Things have been tough lately for dreamers.

Yeah, tougher than you think. But it's ok. Life is good and the game is changing.

And things are just starting.

Keep on dreaming, my friend!