

pe'epe'e maka'ole
(*The No-Eyed Big-Eyed Wolf Spider*)

Hello, My name is Juan

What's your name?

That's a great name, I hope that your living situation is safe and comfortable at this moment, and that you are able take care of yourself and/or others that live with you.

How do you manage to pass the time these days? I want to tell you some of the things that have been keeping my mind busy during the quarantine times.

This week I was cleaning and arranging my library and discovered a lot of treasures hiding behind dust. One of them was a second hand book that I bought in Mexico in 2015, written by a man named Javier. I opened it in the page that the previous owner marked with a card and I felt that it was my duty to finish what that person began without reading what was before.

The story was about a man named Javier who meets another one named Xavier and both realised that they don't only look exactly the same but also move and do the same things in a mirrored way. The fact that they both were living the exact same life creates an identity crisis that even looks exactly the same for both of them.

Pretty scary ah?

I guess the bright side of this story is that coincidences like having the same name as someone, or the same style of dressing, opens a door to wonder what would it be like to be that person.

Don't you ever looked at yourself in the mirror and imagined what it would be like to go through it into the other side?

What I'm suggesting is that having something in common by coincidence with someone else, like shoe size for example, could be the perfect chance to try to literally put on their shoes and imagine how is their life like.

Isn't this what empathy is all about?

Sofia said that these days that we need to be in quarantine there is a chance that we become completely different versions of ourselves.

Would you be ready to accept this new version of you?

Would you give up entirely your old self to welcome the new one?

Would you maybe get the chance to keep both personalities as if you lived with someone who looks like you but whose personality is quite different?

I spoke to Bas about it and he told me how the Dutch football team had in different occasions twins playing in the field at the same time: Rene and Willy Van Der Kerkhof and Frank and Ronald de Boer. Did you know that Frank and Ronald were also mirrored when it came to their football skills? Frank was left-right and Ronald right-sided. Frank was the one that shot that great pass that took The Netherlands to the semi-finals in the World Cup of 98.

These thoughts came to me after a brief chat with Pierre-Pol and Xavier, where Xavier introduced me to another Xavier who wrote a book about traveling in his own room. Since we cannot go out of our homes during holidays, and we cannot do much in our homes I thought: "why not following the example of Xavier and discover our own rooms?" As he once said, travelling this way will cost you nothing and you can try different ways of doing it: walking in zig zag, circles, backwards, you name it. It took a long time for Xavier to arrive to his library in chapter 36 but it was totally worth it. Unlike me who just went for it on the first line.

How do you cope with worrying feelings?

I guess that I clean as a way of claiming territory, like dogs do but with soap instead of pee.

It brings me closer to this place I call my home, it makes me get to know it better. Also I got to know the small spiders that live in my living room, the medium-sized ones in the kitchen, and the biggest ones that prefer the toilet. Unlike me, they seem happy to not have to leave our home; I wonder if they will live here longer than I do.

Did you know there are spiders in Hawaii that have no eyes? I didn't, they are called Kaua'i Cave Wolf Spider in English but in Hawaii they are called *pe'epe'e maka'ole* or *The No-Eyed Big-Eyed Wolf Spider*. They owe their name to the fact that their closest relatives have really big eyes. When the Eyeful spiders decided to move to the dark volcanic caves in search of a better life, they left their eyes behind because in total darkness eyes seemed useless. These unique spiders live only in five caves in the Koloa-Po'ipu region of the Kauai Island. Some people confuse the word Koloa with Koloa which means "native duck", but ducks have nothing to do with this story. According to the internet, the "Kaua'i is known as the garden isle and home of some Hollywood blockbusters, including the remake of King Kong". It is where the first mayor sugarcane plantation in the whole Hawaiian islands started in 1835 too. The science world only learned about the No-Eyed Big-Eyed Wolf Spider in 1971, and they say that currently there are known to exist only 30 adult spiders of this kind. Kind of like the number of living adults in my family overseas right now.

Personally I have never been to Hawaii, and I have never wished so much to go on a holiday to a sunny beach like now. My cousin Sandra Juliana used to live in Hawaii for a while, but she never went to the Kauai Island because it was too expensive to fly there. But she has a friend who went there with her husband. Her first name is Celeste, which in Spanish means coming from the sky, her last name is Reyes, which means kings. Celeste told us that Kauai was the perfect island for her: she had enough activities to do and not so many tourists around. They Kayaked along the Wailua River until the waterfalls, then they "ziplined" across the mountains where Jurassic Park was filmed. "We felt like birds", she said. Afterwards, they visited the Salt Pond Beach Park, where locals harvest salt in big ponds made in the ground. I was really impressed by the pictures

she showed us of this place. What she remembers the most was the abundant wildlife they saw while scuba-diving in the sea. I was very thankful to live this holiday experience through her story. She never saw the No-Eyed Big-Eyed spider though, because you need special scientific equipment to reach their homes.

When I told Natasja about the No-Eyed Big-Eyed cave spider she asked me if I have ever seen it, because she is really into animal spotting, an activity that I didn't know about. I also didn't know about her work and saw today for the first time great paintings of her, I definitely recommend you to check them out. She did once an exhibition with Pieter inspired on a time that she went to Spain to spot a Lynx. "The biggest chances to see a Lynx are either early in the moment or when the sun goes down" she said, although this makes it all quite tricky because that's the moment where you're eyes are more tired and the light plays tricks with shadows on you. After looking for the Lynx for days, she finally saw it and was she convinced that her life have changed. The Lynx was walking on a fire road and rested on a rock for a short time before leaving again. Her twin sister Melissa is also a really cool artist, she has an performance duo with Oshin.

I caught myself daydreaming this morning about being on a breezy sunny beach surrounded by flowers, palm trees and strong cocktails. I discovered too that Xavier is really into Hawaii and the whole aesthetics and architecture of the "Tiki culture". Tiki is mainly everything that looks like the Polynesian spirit of holidays that haunted people in the United States during a large part of the 20th century. People spent their working days daydreaming about the paradise where they could be finally liberated from all worries and be a better version of themselves. Xavier even went to Hawaii in 2017 in search of a pleasant time and to look for vestiges of architecture of the fake paradise: big tent-like shapes made of straw, fake tribal masks, rattan furniture and lots of colourful flowers. He found only a postcard of the magnificent Waikikian Hotel, now destroyed by real state developers that were into some new fashion. He sent me a picture of how new spaces in Hawaii look like.

But let's leave the holiday feeling for a moment. Now I need to disclose some bad news to you: The amazingly particular eyeless spiders have been listed as in danger of extinction since the year 2000. They are in danger due to chemicals of intensive agriculture that destroys the fauna that they depend on for eating. Also global warming is drying out the humidity that keeps these animals and others alive. This fact made me really sad, as the exact same moment I came to know about this animals I learned that they were disappearing. I decided then to write a poem dedicated to them, to at least feel that I'm doing something about their disappearance, it goes like this:

In a room
no windows
no wind

no light
only spiders
can be found

I wrote this poem in my window as a reminder that somewhere out there this creatures exist and they know that I'm thinking about them.

Perhaps you also might want to help the No-Eyed Big-Eyed spider, but since you cannot get out of your home you can start by practicing some empathy towards them. Maybe you want to try to feel the way they perceive their caves and be closer to how they exist in the world.

Suspend what you are doing right now, refuse to do anything for a moment and just float. Did you know that in Spanish the word "suspensión" means to stop, but also to hang, to stand by and also describes the system that allows a car to go on a bumpy road without breaking down?

So I ask you to please do this, get into "suspensión" mode. I know it's difficult, in these anxious times, but maybe you can trap the elements that allow you to do this activity. A man named Enrique from Spain wrote a a book compiling short stories of very famous writers who decided just to stop writing: they refused writing as the ultimate literary gesture. As much as I would like to stop writing I can't, now that I have your attention up until this point.

If you're busy cleaning like me, then tie up your broom to your radiator to stop doing it. If you have a radiator with holes just stick it through and—using a string or zip-ties—tie it up to the upper part of the hole of the radiator. If you tied it up hard enough you will see that the broom will look like floating over the floor—like time stretches in the space between the floor and the broom. Please, if you try this out, send me a picture of it. The spiders in your house will be very happy that your broom is away, as it's one of their deadliest enemies.

If you are tempted to mop the floor, the solution would be to hang the bucket from it's handle to the wall with a nail and a string or a zip-tie. Once the bottom of the bucket is facing towards you, you can aesthetically admire the residues of the activities that you were doing before. I asked Pierre-Pol do do this and he showed me the beautiful residues of vinegar, lead and cleaning cream for metals that resulted from an atelier experiment. He left his bucket around until what was inside evaporated; how long did it take for all the water to evaporate?

He was not sure.

All I know is that he can stop cleaning now and admire the rests of his past hard labour. This image reminded me of the beautiful salt ponds that Celeste remembered from her trip to the Kauai Island.

Now that you are finally left without anything to do, you are closer to become a No-Eyed Bigeyed Cave Wolf Spider. There is just a big difference between your room and the cave of the spider; you might be lucky enough for a human to have a window. Although, even if eyeless spiders had some

kind of window in their cave, they wouldn't notice because they don't relate to transparencies; they would be just very bothered with the light. For them, a window is just a glass wall, and a door a wooden one. If you want to experiment this feeling, try this:

Go to the door of your room
Stand in front of it
See what time it is
Close your eyes
Keep the number of the hour in mind
Knock on the door as many times as the hour in your mind
For example: if it's 6:15 p.m. knock on the door 6 times.

Go to the wall of your room
Stand in front of it
Close your eyes
Knock on the wall as many times as the hour in your mind

Go to the window of your room
Stand in front of it
Close your eyes
Knock on the window as many times as the hour in your mind

See? the difference between the three elements in your room is the way they sound. How do you think that the No-Eyed Big-Eyed Cave Wolf Spider knows what time it is? do you think they count their steps during the day? Or maybe they don't need to keep track of time anyway. Why do humans need to count time so desperately?
If you can, also please send me a video of your hand knocking on the different surfaces of your room. I'll be very thankful. Thanks anyway for trying out this experiment of

becoming a No-Eyed Big-Eyed Cave Wolf Spider, I'm sure it has been as fun for you as it was for me. Right now me and Bernice are working on a musical version of the spiders poem, we hope it would be ready by the time this project is available to you online. Bernice is a great artist that's always busy reading and investigating about tricksters in different cultures and traditions. When I met her she was working on a trickster figure called Schelm that is in the constant quest of looking for himself. For this project she told me about the The Eye Juggler, my favourite part of this story is that the Coyote ends up having one eye from a mouse and one from a buffalo after having lost both of his eyes. I think this brought to the Coyote a lot of trouble but also gave him two different perspectives at once while we all have just one perspective through both eyes. I also prepared a photo album of my trip to my living room, that idea came out after a nice chat with Aline. Before I forget, here is also a picture of the poem in my window at night, pretty neat right?

Have a good night,

Juan Pablo Plazas.

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