

Report in relation to my experience with Mr. ANIBAL JOSE GASPAR DAMIAO, of Portuguese nationality, owner of DOWN SOUTH VENTURE APS, registered with Company number 32330851 and commercial name NAERGÅRD ([www.naergaard.com](http://www.naergaard.com)), as a regenerative vegetable farm in NY Hammersholt, Hillerød, Denmark.

My name is Michael Gomes, of Brazilian nationality, I am 38 years old and I am currently living in Peru with my Peruvian wife, where I set up a woodwork business and dedicate fully to it.

On July 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021, Anibal posted a job offering on the Facebook page “Carpinteiros de Portugal”, a community of people that work with or are related to woodwork and art in wood. The job consisted of going to Denmark to do some woodwork for the construction of several items for his regenerative vegetable farm project. These items included a chicken house, a farm shop, some billboards, a tool shed, some picnic benches, and if time allowed it, also the construction of a tiny house. The opportunity interested me as I felt qualified for it and I believed it would be a positive influence on my work and portfolio as a woodworker, given that Denmark is a country well known for its quality carpentry, so I applied for the job.

Once Anibal and I got in contact, on August 9<sup>th</sup> I formally accepted the job and all the terms discussed. He agreed to pay all my living costs during my stay in Denmark, including transport, food and lodging, as well as my airplane ticket. We agreed on the salary for my work and the specific things that were to be done by me. We discussed everything over the following days, including a long video conference in which we got to know each other better. I sent him all the information he requested. Due to the Covid pandemic, the Danish borders were closed for tourism but open for business travel, information that I checked on the Danish government site he sent me to reassure me that I could enter for business reasons. To prove this, he provided me with an invitation letter to show that I was going under the recommendation of his company and fully endorsed by him. In the next couple of days, he confirmed that everything was set and that my lodging was arranged, along with the wood, tools and machinery ready for me to arrive and start working.

I arrived in Denmark on August 14<sup>th</sup>. Anibal picked me up from the airport and took me to a temporary hotel nearby to spend the night because it was very late. The next morning, we drove to the vegetable farm so that I could see the place and see what was to be done. When we got there, he asked for my help in washing some vegetables and installing a stand to sell the products. This took us more than 10 hours, until 8 PM. On the next day, I arrived meaning to start with my wood projects and I realized the materials and tools were nowhere to be seen. At that moment, Anibal told me he was waiting for me to get there in order to buy everything.

For the first three days I had no confirmed lodging and I had to work every day with my luggage in the car, waiting for him to send me a new hotel address every night. I worked these days for 11-12 hours waiting for his message to arrive, which sometimes was at 11 PM – 12 AM, and I still had to drive all the way there. I just thought it was just the beginning and things were going to get more organized when he found a permanent place. On one of those days, he told me to drive all the way to Copenhagen to a new hotel, and when I arrived there I found out the stay wasn't paid for so I had to use my credit card, even though he was supposed to have all this covered. I stayed there for two nights until Anibal found an Airbnb for 5 days, after which I was supposed to move to another one for the rest of the month.

The days passed and the wood, materials and tools I needed still hadn't arrived. I kept asking Anibal insistently about it, as I was desperate to start working on what I was hired and qualified to do, but he simply answered that the delivery was on the way and that I should work on other things while I was there because he had already committed to pay me a month of work. I spent every day since I arrived working for 11-12 hours on all sorts of tasks he sent me. When I realized the wood was really delayed and he only gave me excuses about it, I sent Anibal a message explaining that I had gone all the way to Denmark to work on the discussed carpentry projects, and that the kind of jobs that he was having me do weren't part of the arrangement. We got together to talk and we agreed that due to the tasks being different and additional to what was agreed upon, he would have to increase my salary. We also agreed that he would pay me the extra hours I was working every day. This was all clearly discussed.

Even though I went there to work with wood, which is my specialty and what I'm qualified to do, I still trusted him and figured that while I waited for the materials to arrive, I could support him with whatever task he needed me to do as I was already there and I was willing to work. I devoted myself to everything he asked over the next weeks, and did all kinds of jobs for him including digging and preparing the field for sowing, removing weeds, harvesting and planting vegetables, watering the plants, washing and putting together the vegetable boxes to sell, building show tables for selling vegetables, helping in the construction of two greenhouses, receiving the clients that arrived to buy the products, taking pictures for marketing purposes, etc. Every day was a challenge and with time the tasks kept increasing, I was practically alone keeping the farm afloat. I knew this was not the type of work that I applied for, but as I said, we had agreed that my salary was going to be paid whatever the tasks and I was willing to make my time there worthwhile.

Even though it was originally agreed that Anibal would provide the food I needed during my stay, the days passed and he didn't, so I had to buy it myself in order to sustain myself. When I talked to him about it, he said it was alright and that I should keep all the food buying receipts and he would refund me the money in the end, along with the money I had spent on lodging.

After my stay in the initial Airbnb finished, I was sent to a new one, a dirty and really unpleasant place. I spent a few days there until I found it unbearable and I talked about it with Anibal. We agreed I needed to move, so after a week I left again without a place to stay and my luggage in the car. I stayed for two more nights in a hotel that I had to pay myself again, always with Anibal's word that he would refund me the money afterwards. After that, I found myself a good Airbnb room, a place in which I could stay permanently for the rest of the month, and Anibal again asked me to pay fully for it and to save all the receipts so he could give me the money all together at the end of the month.

On September 2<sup>nd</sup>, Anibal hired a Danish woman to be the farm's driver and take care of the vegetable deliveries, and he told me he was going away for some time for a trip. He asked me to take care of the correct functioning of the farm and to keep on doing all the tasks I was doing. I spent days these days alone, harvesting over 700 vegetables and preparing all the product boxes that the clients bought. I worked approximately 10 hours every day over these days, receiving Anibal's instructions on how many boxes were needed and preparing them for the driver to go out to deliver them.

When my first work month was about to end, I got together all the receipts I had from the grocery store, hotels and Airbnb expenses and I sent them over to him. He told me everything

was ok, and he would transfer me the money. I waited for one more week and he repeated that he would make the deposit. When the month was over, I asked again for the money he should refund me for my living expenses, and I also asked him for my agreed salary. He kept giving me uncertain answers, including saying he had to sell some pieces of his tractor in order to pay me. I wasn't getting an answer, so I wrote him a serious message via Whatsapp explaining that I really needed my money refunded and my salary paid, as I had left my business frozen in Peru to be able to travel to Denmark, and I had bills to pay, I had obligations to fulfill with the money he was supposed to pay me.

Immediately after receiving my message, he called me by phone, out of himself, clearly disturbed, implying that I had written that message to try to frame him and make him look bad on writing. He completely changed his way of speaking from that point on, and told me he would only write in English now (we commonly spoken in Portuguese between us), to leave everything clear in writing for the authorities, and that he would send me a message saying that "since he knew I was an illegal immigrant he started to pressure me to straighten up my documentation and I didn't collaborate". I was never in an illegal situation as I am a Brazilian citizen and I do not need a visa to enter Denmark, and Anibal himself organized my trip there, setting all the conditions and preparing everything for my arrival. He started building a story via Whatsapp trying to set in writing that he had been telling me all the time that I was illegal and was damaging him and his company, and he wrote that I had to leave the country because he had vowed for me to enter and I had "lied" to him. It was as if my message triggered his escape plan to get rid of me without paying me. I simply wanted the money I deserved for my hard work and to go home in peace.

After that, the conversation escalated. He started threatening me, saying that if I didn't leave the country immediately and gave him back the car I was using, he would report the car as stolen, that he would call the police and tell them what he wanted. He told me to drive the car to him, but I was honestly scared to drive a car that might be reported as stolen, and I didn't know what he could do to me if I saw him due to how disturbed he sounded, so I said I would leave it with the key in the parking lot he knew and he could pick it up.

Since that moment, I started being truly afraid. I had already confided with my coworker, the driver, that I was having problems receiving my payment, so when I didn't arrive at work that day, she called me and we met to talk. She told me she was also dissatisfied with a lot of issues about him, and that she had had to use her own money for the gas of the car, for example. I asked her what she thought I should do, and she told me to go to the police. I did this but they told me it was not their place to solve these issues. I kept telling Anibal that I didn't want a conflict and that I just wanted my payment so I could go home, but he kept saying he would call the authorities on me and that I had to disappear from the country. He even blocked me from every social media we were connected in.

When I told my family about the status of my situation, everyone, worried, told me to get out of there and get to a safe place as soon as possible, given that this person had changed radically and we didn't know if he was a dangerous person, capable of doing other kinds of things, or part of a scam scheme in which he had everything planned from the start and I just fell in it naively. If this was the case, I feared he could keep lying and creating a false story, and get me in trouble with the authorities. After all, I was vulnerable in a foreign country.

Once I was safe at home in Peru, my coworker told me she wasn't paid by Anibal either, and that she discovered he is liquidating his business. A union has now decided that they will take on the case to try to get the pay that Anibal owes her.

All this really hit me hard. I felt used, ashamed, and robbed by this person that at the start acted like a friend and shows himself as a successful businessman, owner of a lot of properties in Denmark. This person that made me leave my country and my pregnant wife to go to the other side of the world, work hard and overtime for 30 days, and didn't pay me a cent. I know I probably shouldn't have been as naïve, and I should have been more alert from the start, but I try to live life trusting people, which is why I am writing this. I want to help people see the type of person that Anibal Damiao is, so that they think twice before starting any kind of business or working with him. If I can help a single person avoid what I went through, it will have been worth it.

Sincerely,

Michael Gomes