

A full-page background image showing a diver in a blue wetsuit and mask, surrounded by a massive, dense school of small, translucent, yellowish-orange fish. The fish are swimming in all directions, creating a shimmering effect. The diver is positioned in the center, looking towards the camera. The water is dark blue, and the overall scene is underwater.

Igor Bondar

Anthony

Story

Meaning of life. Who will not seek it? Protagonist of this story is not an exception.

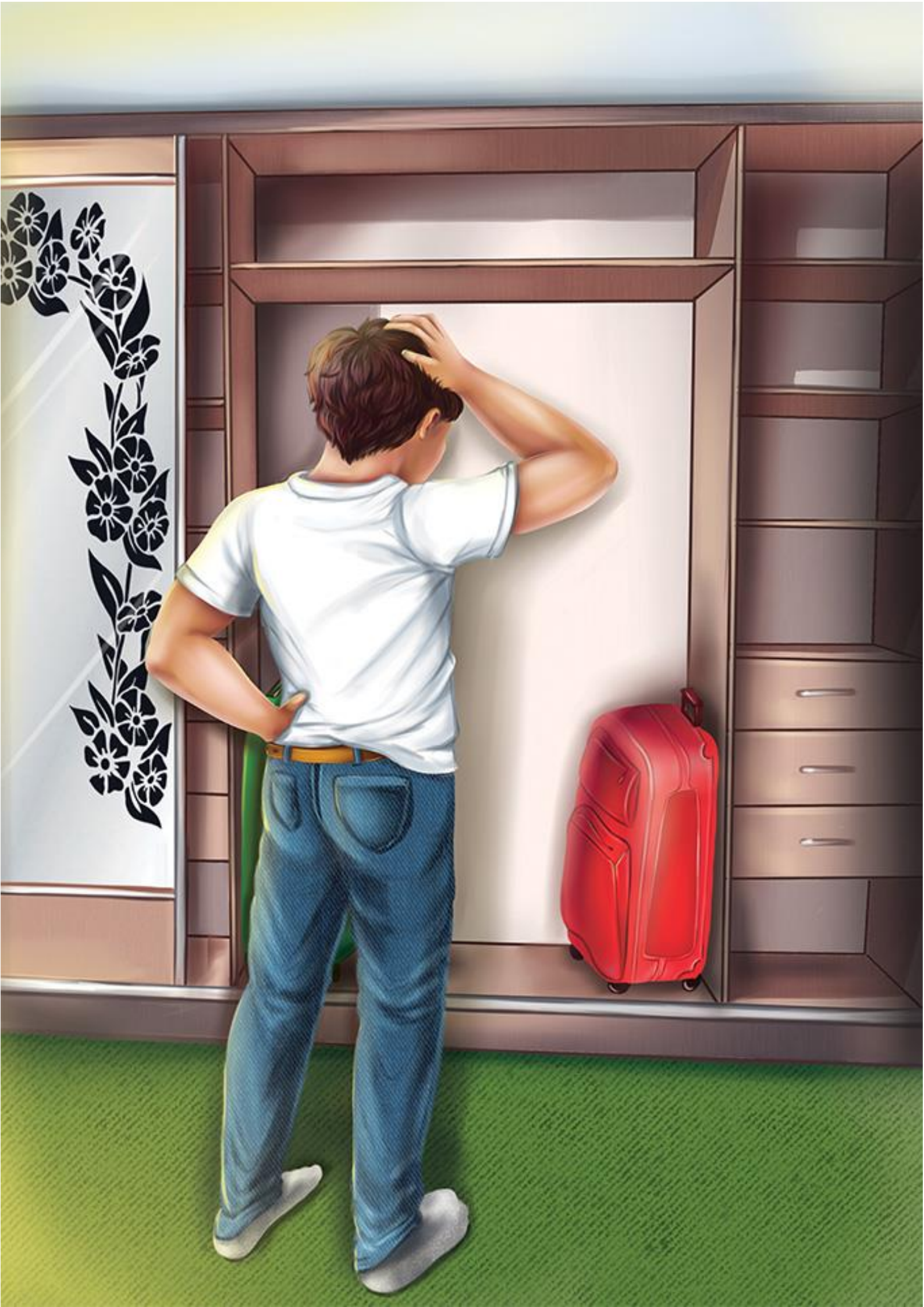
On suitcases

Tony turned the key unlocking the door of his house and went in. He took a few steps, then stopped. One look was enough to understand that some things had changed in his life. He looked around. That was it, a picture with two horrible green-coloured cats had disappeared from the wall, and the magazine table no longer had on it a statuette, the sense of which he could not have managed to understand. Then, he understood: Clare had left.

Tony sighed and went to the kitchen table, on which there lay a sheet of paper with some writing. Not looking at it, he threw it into a dustbin. He was not that perverse to read what he had been hearing every evening for a few months already!

Tony thought for a moment, as if he were remembering something. Suddenly, he rushed to the door of a wardrobe, following his new thought. Having opened it, he nodded his head with satisfaction: right! His favourite blue suitcase was missing. Left there were two more that were more expensive and newer.

Tony started scratching his head thoughtfully. Why did they always take his favourite suitcase? A minute later, he sighed, having understood that he had a zero chance of solving this puzzle.



Having closed the wardrobe's door, Tony came to his fridge, took a bottle of cold beer and went out on the veranda. It was a good time to think everything over.

“So. I'm thirty three years old and Clare was the third woman, who left me. On average, it comes out to be three years, four months and two weeks for each of them. Though, we should not generalize them.”

Anthony did not much like analysing, but this time he had no choice. And he continued his thinking tormentingly.

“So, why at the start of each my new romance, am I glad to see my girlfriend twenty four hours a day? Then, these twenty four hours gradually go down to twenty three, then to twenty two. In about three years, the quantity of pleasing time reduces to a couple of hours. And, then... a note on the table again and I'm missing my favourite suitcase.”

Tony was content with his new thinking logic and went for a second bottle of beer. Having come to the table again, he continued.

“I'm not rich, but I earn quite enough. At least, no one has complained yet. It looks like, apparently, money isn't the thing. Then, what's the matter?”

Tony devoted the rest of the evening and the whole night to honest thinking. Some of his thoughts he would put down in a small red notebook. They all were about what he should do in the future, so as not to lose his new love. By the time the sun began rising slowly about the horizon, he had already written down several pages.

Tony sighed and put his pen on the notebook. Then, he picked it up again and wrote on its cover “How to save a love.”

Then, he was completely ready, theoretically that his next romantic relationship would last for the rest of his life.

* * *

“Dear Anthony, couldn't you fasten all those loose buckles?” even through the lens of his diving mask he could see that Samantha was laughing with her eyes.

Tony, being much embarrassed, started dragging belts out of his companion's gear and tightening their buckles on her prominent front side.

“Oh, thank you very much,” the girl said playfully at the end of this procedure and breathed out.

As a result, her “relief” became smaller by a size.

“That means, she did it deliberately...,” Tony guessed, although, he was not upset.

All those events happened at a diver's ship, which was anchored in the northern part of the Great Barrier Reef. Tony set off on this trip a couple of months after Clare had left him. He wanted much to switch to something positive and new.

It must be said that Samantha helped him a lot with this. Her buckles were the most difficult he had ever seen and it seems that it pleased them both. The girl was twenty seven , and she looked stunning even underwater, and on dryland, even moreso.

“Well, shall we go?” Samantha’s tender voice led Tony out of his thinking.

Tony nodded cheerfully, and having grabbed his flippers, he followed her to the edge of the ship’s rear platform. A minute later, they both cheerily plumped into the Coral Sea’s warm water.

* * *

Late at night, a starry sky began shining with all its beauty above their ship. Tony and Samantha settled themselves comfortably at the ship’s upper deck, prepared themselves a thermos with a fruit tea and biscuits, and started marvelling at the sparkling abyss.

“It is never possible to get used to this splendid spectacle,” the girl spoke out thoughtfully. A starry sky makes me think of something great and important.”

Tony looked at his “underwater companion” girl and smiled. Why interrupt the girl, who suddenly wants to think of something big and important?

“What are you thinking of, when you look at the stars?” Samantha asked him.

“It depends on what star I look at exactly. There are several of them here,” Tony smiled, looking at the companion girl meaningfully, which made the girl laugh. “Frankly, the same thing as you do, probably. Looking at the stars it is impossible to think of something boring and ordinary.”

“Exactly,” Samantha nodded and suddenly she switched the topic. “Anthony, what do you like in life most of all?”

“Living,” Tony replied without thinking.

“Simply living?” Samantha wondered.

“Not simply living,” Tony smiled. “For me, living means always being free, breathing full air in, loving and being happy. Anything less I call only – “existing”.”

“That’s interesting,” the girl spoke out after a short pause, “and beautiful. Do you always manage to live so?”

“Well, of course not!” Tony smiled. “But, I try not to forget the most important things and strive for them.”

“How do you do that?” Samantha asked him with interest.

“I don’t know that all comes somehow intuitively,” Tony spoke thoughtfully. “Well, I take out dull colours and triviality from my life. I never compromise with my conscience. Sometimes, I think of where I wasn't right and what I must do...”

Telling this, Tony thought of the red notebook, which lay in his cabin.

“A boring self-analysis?” Samantha looked at him with an ironic smile.

“Well something like that,” he laughed and shrugged his shoulders. “Well, not noticing our mistakes in the past, we will always repeat them consistently. I know this for sure.”

“Hum,” the girl winced, “perhaps, there’s something in that.”

After that, they each took a biscuit and poured tea in their cups.

“I too like thinking and especially, dreaming,” Samantha spoke some time later. “While doing that, I like living in another world. Only where my thoughts and dreams are.”

“Is that so?” Tony smiled. “And how are things, in that world?”

“Beautiful!” the girl smiled. “I always feel happy and festive there. And...,”

At that moment, Samantha stumbled for a second, but then, she continued.

“And, I have a true friend there...”

“Is that so? What’s the name of your friend from the other world?”

The girl suddenly blushed, which was noticeable even in the moonlight.

“You’ll laugh at me.”

“Me? How could I!” Tony wondered. “For what reason?”

The girl raised her look and glanced at Tony.

“My friend’s name is Antonio. I named him seven years ago, when I was twenty. Sounds a little Italian, right?”

Tony unexpectedly coughed from the surprise.

“Hmm, he is my namesake,” he managed to say after a minute. “I have Italian origins and there, my name sounds like that.”

“Unbelievable!” Samantha said quietly, not lowering her look. “Frankly, you resemble him not only in name...”

Anthony suddenly felt that something long forgotten started awakening in him.

Seven months later

“Is there any fish here?” Tony sipped some coffee and then, he stretched his hand to fork a slice of a magnificent cheese – Mozzarella which is produced from buffalo milk.

“Do you really need it?” his father Marco shrugged his shoulders and sipped his coffee. “If we catch something tiny, then we’ll have to scratch our heads thinking what to do with it. This way is good enough, with the table set, and, generally, you should know that the men don’t go fishing for the fish only.”

“Not for fish? Then, what for?” his son asked him surprised.

“An incorrect question. The right one is not “for”, but “from whom”, Marco smiled. “Certainly, they go fishing to get away from their wives. This man's trick is several thousand years old. It works perfectly!”

Tony smiled broadly and ate the next slice of cheese. This morning, they both were sitting aboard on his father’s cutter in the centre of a large lake in Italy. On both sides, there lay two floats on the waters surface.



A week before, Tony flew there with Samantha to present his future wife to his parents. And, this morning, as the women were asleep, they both quietly escaped from the house and went fishing.

“Pa, it seems, something bit there!” the son spoke quietly.

“No matter it bit or not,” his father replied to him slowly, “eat the Mozzarella, son. Look, what a beautiful sunrise! Puts you in a good mood for the whole day.”

“You want to catch nothing at all?”

“Well, no. Why? If some big fish will hook itself, I’ll surely drag it...,” his father started speaking judiciously, but the end of his speech was interrupted by a loud laugh of his son.

“That's the thing!” Tony said having caught his breath and looked at his father seriously. “Pa, why do men need to go away from their wives at times?”

“For the sake of them both,” Marco replied calmly.

“Is that so? Could I know the details? As I've just started putting down my thoughts regarding this.”

“You’re growing, son! I wonder if I could have a look,” his father nodded his head with satisfaction. And, as for the fishing... Well, first, it's important that the main principle of this ancient family arrangement is preserved. A man-hunter goes for food and his faithful wife waits for him at home. This tradition is several thousand years old. What he brings home: fish or mozzarella from the nearest shop, it doesn’t matter. The main thing is to follow the tradition.”

Tony sipped his coffee smiling cheerily.

“Second, the wife should be missing her husband. And, if two people spend all their time together from morning till night, how do they know that they will miss each other when apart?”

“Hum, makes sense. What else?”

“Third son, our world doesn’t just consist of our wives only. There are also sons, sunsets, boats and, even fish that may be caught at times,” Marco smiled. “The women will always want that we were by them only. And, it’s not their fault, it’s just their nature. In this thing, we’re slightly different from them. You, for instance, in Australia, what do you like more: the kangaroos or the koalas?”

“Hum, I like both of them.”

“Well, that’s it. They’re very different. One of them will sit in the tree for eternity, the second will leap around. We men are the same. Besides, if we improve our mood, then we bring it home and share with our wives.”

“You put it so well,” Tony said and scratched the back of his head. “I need to think on it and put it down in my notebook, perhaps. It turns out, pa, that the more often we go fishing, the better our family life becomes?”

“No, no way! Everyone needs moderation, son, and overkill is no good. Seek for harmony in your family. And, it will prompt you, when to watch television with your wife, when to go for a sunset walk together and when to flee away with a fishing rod to the nearest lake in the morning.”

The men burst with laughter and took out a tasty smelling pizza from another bag.

“And, so you know son mother and me are very glad that you’ve finally found a woman, who you’re ready to live with all your life,” Marco said. “We like Samantha very much too.”

* * *

“Well, how do you like me in this mottled dress with my hair down?” Samantha came out to the veranda gracefully and turned around swiftly in front of Tony.

“I like it very much,” Tony replied honestly. “You look great!”

“Really?” the girl asked cheerily and ran back inside the house.

In five minutes, she appeared at the door and again walked in front of her husband, but wearing a different garment.

“How d’you like me in this white suit and with a tail on my head?”

“To me, it’s very good too,” Tony reacted sincerely once more. “It suits you.”

“Really?” the girl asked again and ran back inside the house.

Some time later, she slowly came out to the veranda in a long black dress with a décolleté.



“And, how do you like me in this?” she asked in a deep voice, doing her best to seem like a languid beauty.

“Wow! That’s just incredible, dear!” Tony replied.

“You like it?” she asked cheerily again. “So, what’s the best for my going out tonight?”

“Hum. I don’t know....,” Tony thought. “It seems that everything looks great!”

Samantha pursed her lips with a light resentment.

“Maybe, you don’t want to help me choose, Tony? It’s very important to me! Today, we’re having a dinner with my parents and friends, who’ll be coming to our wedding.”

“Why do you say that I don’t want to help?” Tony started resenting, but, suddenly, he stopped.

For some reason, he immediately recollected one of the entries from his notebook. After that, Anthony took a full breath and then breathed out slowly. A few moments later, he sipped his coffee and looked at his future wife with a cheery smile.

“Dear, it’s hard for me to choose! It’s not my fault that you look beautiful in everything,” Tony stood up from the table and hugged Samantha tenderly. “I don’t doubt that you’ll make the best choice, as always! And, I will just love you.”

“And, I love you, dear!” the girl replied tenderly and pulled away from his embrace immediately. “Okay, then I’ll wear my favourite jeans costume and go to Louisa to do my hair.”

Tony sat contentedly at the table and began smiling to himself. He already started getting some pleasure from the unusual logic of a woman. “They’re amusing, finally...”

* * *

In several days, Tony and Samantha had their wedding ceremony. It took place in a wonderful place and they were joined by the people closest to them. A couple of days later, Tony went for a stroll by the bay together with his father. Soon, Tony’s father and mother had to go back to Italy.

“Everything was great, son. I congratulate you! Samantha’s relatives proved to be good and kind people. We got along with them wonderfully.”

“Right, pa, I liked her parents too. Samantha inherited a good character from her parents.”

They walked slowly on the sand of the seashore along the edge of the water, carrying their shoes in their hands.

“Son, I read your notebook yesterday, which you had given me. Many of your thoughts in it reminded me of myself, only it was many years ago. That’s great, that you try to figure everything out honestly.”

“Don’t you want to add something there for me?” the son looked at his father.

“With time and your persistence, that will make it better than anything I could write. Besides, in order to get the answers, the questions should arise first.”

Tony thought for a minute.

“You said that well, father. May I ask one question?”

Marco nodded his head smiling.

“What is jealousy, pa? I sometimes feel that Samantha feels slightly jealous at me and other girls, and sometimes, I catch myself thinking that I feel slightly jealous at her, when she chatters cheerily with other guys. Is such jealousy normal or not?”

“No, of course not, son,” the father shrugged his shoulders, “jealousy is not a normal thing. Hearts of lovers are tied together only by the ties of love, honesty and trust. But, jealousy is a poison, which dissolves those ties. Basically, the jealousy – is people’s attempt to put a beautiful love-bird into a cage. But, love caged inevitably starts dying.”

“So, what makes the tie between the lovers’ hearts stronger?”

“Love, forgiveness and trust, son, nothing more. And, any attempt to question the honesty of your lover will only close your heart off from hers. With such an approach to love, nothing will keep it. As nothing will stop the sun, which is now going down to the horizon.”

Tony looked at the sunset and thought for a while.

“Thank you, father. I will watch my thoughts now.”

“I’m always glad to help son,” Marco smiled.

After that, they walked on the sand quietly for some time.

“Pa, even with such trust, could a person fall in love with someone else and leave you anyway?” Tony asked suddenly.

Marco smiled.

“Son, do you really need a “love” that leaves you?” he answered with another question. “Don’t bother, a real love will never leave you when you give your trust to somebody. But, people with completely different feelings may leave.”

* * *

“Dear, dear, today is our first day of family freedom!” Tony felt, while being asleep that someones fingers were tenderly stroking his hair.

Having opened his eyes, he saw the smiling face of Samantha above him.

“Hello, my princess!”

“Hello, drowsy head! So, we’ve been left alone finally.”

“That’s good news,” he said, recovering gradually from sleeping. “Well, what shall we do today?”

“Whatever we want!” Samantha replied cheerfully and jumped a couple of times on him happily.

From that, the remains of Tony’s sleepiness cleared away completely.

“Hey, wake-up clock! Don’t break your husband on our first day of family life.”

“Husband... what a pleasing word!” the beauty cooed and kissed him softly.

Consequently, they got up from bed some time later. When Tony finally got to his coffee on the table, the sun was already shining through the window.

“And what plans do we have for today?” he asked his wife.

“What d’you mean?” the girl wondered. “The wedding trip, of course! We agreed that after the guests left, we will catch the first flight and fly away to some beautiful corner for a couple of weeks.

“That’s it, I remember,” Tony replied with a smile and opened his laptop, which lay on the table. “So, where do the first flights go to?”

Samantha made herself comfortable by him.

“Look, dear, there’s Fiji, not expensive, departure is tomorrow.”

“Oh, no, not Fiji,” Tony protested.

“Why?” Samantha wondered.

“All the women there weigh eighty kilograms and more. You will look like an alien creature there.”

The girl burst into a cheery laughter.

“Are you serious?”

“Of course!” Tony smiled. “I’ve been there. And, I’ve even got a theory that sometimes, very strong winds blow on Fiji and carry all the light women with them.”

Samantha laughed out loud.

“Okay, let’s look further.”

Tony shifted his gaze at the display.

“Thailand?” he suggested.

“Not quite,” Samantha screwed up her face. “It’s too noisy for a honeymoon. I want to stay together in some quiet spot.”

“Then,” Tony looked at the display again, “Maldives!” Time, being blinded by the beauty, stopped there several thousand years ago. Look, a cozy hotel, turquoise waters and the price for tomorrow’s flight is just right.”

“Mmm, it’s beautiful there,” the girl purred and, took the computer mouse from her husband’s hand, she started scrolling through photos on the display. “Charming! I want to go there, dear!”

“There’s fine diving also, and the water temperature is plus twenty nine,” Tony continued praising the place, looking at the display.

Samantha jumped from her chair, then she rushed to the table and, in a moment, she stretched out her hand with the phone.

“Call them!”

Six years later

“Many things of this world are not very difficult for understanding,” Andrey smiled. “As, our world is like a huge mirror in its essence.”

“How’s that?” Samantha smiled.

Tony sat closer interested, looking at their common acquaintance. This talk took place on a diver’s boat, which was then going back to an isle after a series of dives. Anthony and his wife had a rest on the Philippines, having dived several times at a local dive centre. Their son Mike, who was five years old, stayed with Samantha’s parents.

The young couple managed to get acquainted with people from many countries there. Andrey, their speaker was a diver from Russia. He was a doctor by profession and had very interesting viewpoints on different things. Therefore, Tony and Samantha liked to have chats with him at times.

“The mirror of our world works like any other mirror,” Andrey answered the girl. “Only, it reflects not outer looks to us. But, all our deeds and thoughts.”

“Really?” Anthony amazed this time. “And what are these reflections expressed in?”

“In events,” Andrey smiled, “in what occurs in our lives. Sometimes, these reflections appear quite quickly, and sometimes, with a delay. This mirror is quite clever: it will choose by itself, where to show us a reflection.”

“I don’t quite understand,” the girl shook her head. “Could I know some details that even a blonde could understand?”

“Of course, you can,” the Russian diver laughed. “Any man in this world does or thinks something. These deeds and thoughts may be good or they may be bad. Is that clear?”

Samantha and Tony nodded their heads together.

“Then, let’s go further. So, our everyday conduct is the image that we send into this mirror. And events, which will happen with us tomorrow, in a month, in a year are the reflections,” Andrey said, then unscrewed the bottle and sipped some water. “If the deeds of our life were good and kind, then our tomorrow’s will be good and kind, they are guaranteed to.”

“And, if they were bad?” Tony asked.

“Then, the reflections will be the same. The problem is that people rarely see this interrelation,” Andrey smiled. “Somebody might throw an empty bottle out of a car window and after, he will wonder why there appeared a pile of trash by his home. However, this is just a reflection of that bottle.”

“Are you serious?” Anthony wondered. “You really think that all our troubles are reflections of our bad deeds?”

“Undoubtedly!” the Russian diver nodded his head. “Besides, it can be checked easily.”

“Unbelievable!” Samantha’s eyes became round. “This can be checked?”

“I told you that this mirror is clever. Very clever!” Andrey smiled mysteriously. “It may prompt us for reasons of these or

those reflections. For this, it is enough to ask yourself: “Why something happened in my life?” And soon, an answer will arise in your memory.”

“Well, don’t exaggerate!” Tony shook his head in doubt.

“Try it,” the Russian diver shrugged his shoulders. “Perhaps, you’ll agree some time later.”

“It all looks too simple,” Samantha pronounced thoughtfully.

“Should it be difficult?”

“I don’t know, but I heard it was,” the girl shrugged her shoulders. “And people are taught for a long time many complicated laws and rules.”

The Russian diver laughed cheerily.

“And those, who tell you these things or teaches are they easy and cheerful people, who have fewer problems?”

Samantha thought, wrinkling her forehead. Anthony started recalling those, who suited this description. Some time later, they shook their heads simultaneously.

“Well, no. They don’t look very happy,” Tony said for them both.

“So, there’s the answer,” Andrey smiled again.

The boat started mooring to the shore.

“Alright, guys, enough about it for today,” the Russian diver spoke again. “Lets go play table tennis in pairs. My wife Maria's been sitting on the shore awaiting us.”

“Let’s go, of course!” Samantha smiled. “And we’ll surely win today.”

“No, no. Let them win again,” Tony spoke, smiling mysteriously.

“Dear, have you fallen off a eucalyptus tree?” his wife wondered. “They’ve been winning for three days already.”

“Be silent, short-sighted blondie,” her husband replied cheerily. “It’s simply I try putting a right image into the mirror of the world, that you and I could get a good reflection.”

Samantha and Andrey shook with laughter. Although, the Australians managed to win this day.

* * *

A month later, Tony took his wife fishing for the first time.

Samantha begged him so much, that he finally surrendered. Of course, Anthony, understood, that he was the first man from his ancient Italian family, who dared to commit such a folly. But, he loved his wife and he wanted to give her a chance.

So, there they stood at anchor for an hour in a beautiful channel marvelling at a wonderful sunrise, birds singing and two pelicans swimming around their boat. These large birds were anxiously waiting for these fishermen to start throwing tiny fish in the water.

Samantha made a coffee for her husband a couple of times, served him a tasty bread snack and Tony was pleased.

“Tony!” Samantha spoke quietly, looking at her husband cautiously. I’ve seen it on TV that a bait should be put on fishing hooks. However, there’s nothing on our hooks now. That TV programme was about some other fishing, right?”

After that, Samantha looked at their fishing rod floats drifting motionlessly on the waters surface.

Anthony smiled broadly at his wife.

“No, dear, it was a TV programme about a different kind of fishing,” he said and shrugged his shoulders. “But people go fishing for different reasons. Some need a fish, but some need a nice morning and a good mood. My father has always taught me to seek the latter.

Samantha smiled, sat by her husband and put her head on his shoulder.

“I agree, dear. Your father is a very wise man.

“And not a bad fisherman, I think!” Tony laughed, and hugged his wife and had wonderful thoughts about her.

“Probably, I’ll take her with me at times,” he decided.

Ten years later

Anthony came out to the yard and saw Mike, his fifteen-year old son. He was sitting on the grass, holding a bottle of Coca-

Cola in his hand. One look at him was enough to understand that his son's mood was not the best today.

“Hello, Mikey!” his father said. “You resemble a thunder cloud to me. Has something happened?”

“Good morning, pa!” his son smiled and nodded after that. “There has. I had a quarrel with Louisa yesterday.”

“It happens sometimes,” Tony commented and sat at the table not far from him.

For some time he listened cheerily to birds’ singing from the nearest trees. However, his son’s voice interfered with the harmony.

“Pa, why do people act wrong at times?”

Tony smiled.

“You’re greatly mistaken here son. People always act in a right way.

“How’s that?” the son stood up surprised.

“No human will ever live calmly, if he or she will be confident of having acted wrong,” his father replied. “Another thing is that understanding what is right and what is wrong is very different among people!”

The son looked at his father attentively, trying to understand.

“Can you make it simpler, pa?”

Tony laughed out.

“I can. So, Mikey, you’ve grown up in our family, so me and your mother implanted to you our views of life,” Tony said and

sipped some coffee. “While, Louisa or another person grew up in a different family with different views. And, there’s also different TV programmes and different books. They too can create differences in people’s views. But, the different views don’t mean that someone is good and someone is bad.”

The birds’ twitter from the trees supported this idea.

“Thus, proper unique views of life are formed in people. This is like lenses, through which they look at the world.”

Mike rose to his feet from the grass and sat at the table.

“And, what’s the practical conclusion from this all for me?”

“Just understand that people may be very different,” his father smiled. “We sometimes expect some certain actions or feeling from them in proportion to our convictions. But, they think completely differently. And, this mismatch will often upset us a lot. But it shouldn’t...”

The son listened attentively to what his father was telling him.

“For instance, a human wants one thing and we think he wants the same as we do.”

“Hum. It's becoming clear gradually. What should I do to understand people better?”

“Ask them more often, son and find out what they really need,” Tony smiled. “Or we sometimes manage to think such thoughts for them, which they did not have at all.”

Anthony sipped his coffee again.

“Pa, but I want to meet people like me who are close to me in their views.”

“Therefore, ask them more often and choose those, who are closer to you. And, enjoy everything else in your free time. Just because people are different, it doesn’t mean they are bad. There, look, a white bird’s sitting on the fence. And a grey one’s on a branch above it. Which of them is better?”

“It seems, I got it, pa,” the son replied seriously. “Thank you. Now, I’ve got to think it over.”

“Do it, son!” Tony said and drank his coffee. “And remember that there’s enough of everything in this world for a human to be happy in it. The main thing is to not stuff your head with unnecessary expectations.”

The birds on the trees immediately produced a loud warble, as a confirmation of his words.”

Many years later

A seventy year old Tony was sitting by the fireplace looking at the tongues of fire. His wife Samantha, now was staying with their grandchildren and he was sitting and thinking things over. The fire at which Tony was looking every moment seemed to be the same, but at the same time being completely different.

Suddenly, a thought came to his head, from which he smiled immediately. He suddenly remembered, that he had not taken his red notebook out for many years. It had been some time since he had written down his most important thoughts.

Tony stood up, went to his studyroom and after a long search, he finally found it in one of the far drawers. Having wiped the dust from its cover, Tony smiled seeing it as an old friend. After that, he went back to his armchair and started turning the pages of his notebook.

The expression on his face changed much, while he was doing this. Sometimes he smiled, at times he laughed cheerily, and sometimes he wrinkled, as if from an untasty food. Finally, Tony closed the notebook and began watching the tongues of the fire again. He understood so well now, what his father had told him many year ago.

In about five minutes, a thought came to his mind, which he immediately decided to implement. He opened the notebook and tore out the first sheet. He quickly made a paper plane out of it on the magazine table. Surprisingly, his hands remembered well this uncomplicated process since his school days. Having spread its wings, Tony aimed and launched the plane toward the fireplace. It obediently flew into the opening and, having fallen on the firewood, it immediately caught on fire.

Tony smiled and, in a second, he started tearing the next sheet. Today, he was lucky with his plane flying: all the pages flew to the fireplace obediently.



Finally, all that was left was the last clean page of the notebook. Tony looked at the fire and watched the flame tongues for a long time. After that, he took a pen, which lay on the table and wrote several lines on the sheet. Having read them he smiled. Then he took the red notebook, which had become much thinner back to the table drawer.

Epilogue

Samantha cautiously opened the door of her husband's study room and looked around. Two months passed since her love Tony had left. But, for some reason she did not dare to come in there.

She came to the table slowly and sat down in a chair. Somehow tears immediately appeared in her eyes. Samantha felt with all her heart that she had touched something very close to her. Here it was, the world of her love.

After some time, she remembered why she came here and opened a near drawer of the table. A red notebook lay on the top there. Samantha smiled. How many times she had asked her husband to show what was in it, but he would would just turn that into a joke and not show her.

The elderly woman took it wondering at how thin it was. She put the notebook on the table with care. "How to save love" its front page said. Samantha looked inside it with interest.

The book had only one sheet, which contained a couple of lines. The elderly woman began reading what was written by hand, painfully familiar to her.

“Always to love. Always to forgive. Always to be honest.”

There was nothing else in it. Samantha stroked the letters tenderly. Her beloved Anthony was here.

Though, why was that? Her heart screamed loudly, otherwise this story would have a completely different ending.

She and Tony had always trusted what their hearts said. Always...

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