

A diver in a blue wetsuit and mask is surrounded by a massive school of small, translucent fish underwater. The fish are densely packed around the diver, creating a shimmering, ethereal effect. The background is a deep blue, suggesting an underwater environment. The diver's gear, including a tank and regulator, is visible. The overall scene is vibrant and captures a unique moment in marine life.

Igor Bondar

Anthony

Story

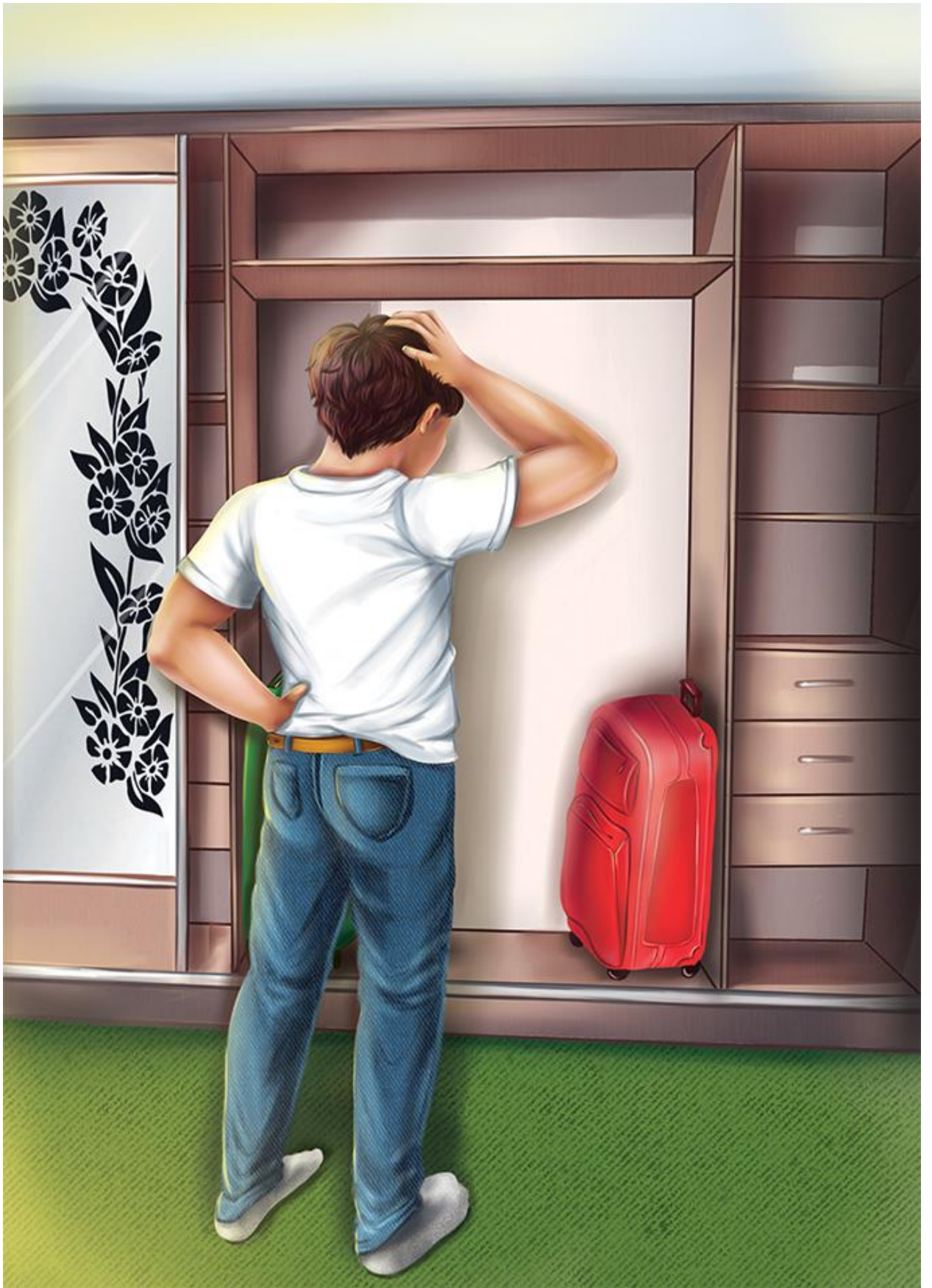
On suitcases

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

Tony sighed and went to the kitchen table, on which laid a sheet of paper with some writings. Without looking at it, he threw it into a bin. He was not that perverse to read what he had already been hearing every evening for a few months!

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

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



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

“Well, I'm thirty three years old and Clare was the third woman, who left me. So, on average, each of them took three years, four months and two weeks. Although, I will not generalize them.”

Anthony did not like to analyze much, but this time he had no choice. And he continued to think painfully.

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

Tony was satisfied with the logic of his thinking and deservedly went for a second bottle of beer. Having come back to the table, he continued.

“I'm not rich, but I earn quite enough. At least, no one has complained yet. It looks like, the reason is not money. Then, what is it?”

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

After that, he was fully prepared, theoretically, for the fact that his next romantic relationship would last for the rest of his life.

* * *

“Dear Anthony, could you help me fasten all those naughty buckles again?” even through the glasses of the diver's mask, it was clear that Samantha's eyes were laughing.

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

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

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

“That means, she did it deliberately...,” Tony guessed, however, 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 really wanted to switch to something positive and new.

And it's fair to say, that Samantha helped him a lot with this. Her buckles were the most naughty he had ever seen and it seems that it pleased them both. The girl was twenty seven years

old, and she looked stunning even underwater, and even more so on a boat.

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

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 dived 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 of 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 silently smiled. Why interrupt a girl, who suddenly wants to think of something great and important?

“What do you think about, when you look at the stars?” Samantha asked him.

“It depends on the star I look at, specifically. There are several of them here now,” Tony smiled, looking at the girl companion meaningfully and that made her laugh. “Frankly, the

same thing as you do, probably. By 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 most of all in life?”

“To live,” Tony replied without thinking.

“Simply live?” Samantha wondered.

“Not simply,” Tony smiled. “For me, living means to always be free, to live life to the fullest, to love and to be happy. Anything less, I call another word – “existence”.

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

“Well, of course not!” Tony smiled. “But, I try not to forget about it and return to the main thing.”

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

“I don’t know, it all comes somehow intuitively,” Tony spoke thoughtfully. “Well, I remove the dull colors and triviality from my life. I never compromise on my conscience. Sometimes, I think about what I did wrong and what I should have done...”

By telling this, Tony thought about the red notebook which was 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 in the future. I know this for sure.”

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

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

“I like thinking as well and especially dreaming,” Samantha said some time later. “During this time, I seem to live in another world. Only where my thoughts and dreams are.”

“Really?” Tony smiled. “And how is it 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, that was visible even in the moonlight.

“You’ll laugh at me.”

“Never! - Tony promised and then asked. “And why?”

The girl raised her look and glanced at Tony.

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

Tony unexpectedly coughed from the surprise.

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

“Unbelievable!” Samantha said quietly, without lowering her look. “Frankly, you resemble him, and not just in the name...”

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

Seven months later

“Is there any fish here?” Tony sipped some coffee and then reached with his fork for a slice of magnificent cheese – buffalo 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 small, then we’ll have to scratch our heads on what to do with it. We have so much food on the table, why do we need extra trouble? And in general, you should know that men go fishing usually not for fish.”

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

“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. That morning, they both were sitting aboard his father’s cutter in the middle of a large lake, in Italy. On both sides, two floats laid on the water surface.



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

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

“No matter it bites or not,” his father replied to him slowly, “eat the mozzarella, son. Look, what a beautiful sunrise! Collect a good mood for the whole day.”

“You want to catch nothing at all?”

“Well, no. Why? If some big fish gets hooked by itself, I will definitely pull it out...,” his father started speaking judiciously, but the end of his speech was interrupted by a loud laugh of his son.

“Funny!” Tony said, while catching his breath and looking at his father seriously. “Pa, why do men need to escape from their wives at times?”

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

“Interesting approach! Could you tell me the details? As I've started writing down my thoughts in this regards.”

“You're growing, son! It would be interesting to take a look,” father nodded his head with satisfaction. “As for fishing... Well, firstly, the basic principle of the ancient family structure is preserved here. A male hunter goes to get food and his faithful wife waits for him at home. This tradition is several thousand years old. But what he brings home: fish or mozzarella from the nearest shop, it is not so important. The main thing - is to keep the tradition.”

Tony sipped his coffee, smiling cheerily.

“Second, the wife should sometimes miss her husband. But, if two people spend all their time together from dusk till dawn, how will they know that they miss each other, when they are apart?”

“Hum, makes sense. Anything else?”

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

“Hum, I like both of them.”

“Of course, so am I. However, they’re very different. One will always sit on the tree, the other will jump around. Men and women are somewhat similar to them. Besides, if we improve our mood, then we will bring it home and share it with our wives.”

“You put it very logically,” Tony said and scratched the back of his head. “I need to think about it and put it down in my notebook, perhaps. So, pa, the more often we go fishing, the better our family life becomes?”

“No, of course not! Everything needs moderation, son, and overkilling is also not good. Seek harmony in your family. And, it will tell you, when to watch television with your wife, when to go for a sunset walk together and when to flee 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 you know, son, mother and I are very glad that you’ve finally found a woman with whom you’re ready to spend all your life with,” Marco said. “We like Samantha very much.”

* * *

“Well, how do you like me in this motley dress with my hair down?” Samantha gracefully came out to the veranda 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 do you like me in this white suit and with a hair tail?”

“To me, it looks very good as well,” 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, while doing her best to seem like a languorous beauty.

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

“You like it?” she asked cheerily again. “So what should I wear 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! Tonight, we’re having dinner with my parents and friends, who’ll be coming to our wedding.”

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

For some reason, he immediately remembered one of the entries from his notebook. After that, Anthony took a full breath in and then slowly out. 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 have no doubt that you’ll make the best choice, as always! And, I will just love you.”

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

Tony happily sat at the table and smiled. He was already getting some pleasure from the unusual logic of women. “They’re amusing ...”

* * *

In several days, Tony and Samantha had their wedding ceremony. It happened 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 with his father. Soon, Tony's father and mother were to return 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.

“Time and your persistence will do it better. Besides, in order to get the answers, questions must arise first.”

Tony thought for a minute.

“I agree, father. Then can I ask one question, that has already arisen in my mind?”

Marco nodded his head smiling.

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

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

“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. Just like nothing will stop the sun, which is now going down the horizon.”

Tony looked at the sunset thinking.

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

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

After that, they quietly walked on the sand 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 can leave you?” he answered with another question. “Don’t bother, real love will never leave you, if you trust it. But people with completely different feelings may leave.”

* * *

“Dear! Dear! Today is our first day of family freedom!” Tony felt someone's fingers were tenderly stroking his hair, chasing away his sleep.

He opened his eyes and saw Samantha’s smiling face above him.

“Hello, my princess!”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Samantha made herself comfortable by his side.

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

“Oh no, not Fiji,” Tony protested.

“Why?” Samantha wondered.

“Here is one of the best shark feeding in the world. What’s more, bull sharks feeding.” Tony smiled. “But for a honeymoon it's too cool. I want calm and beautiful diving.”

The girl looked at her husband in surprise.

“Are you serious?”

“Of course!” Tony nodded. “I’ve been there.”

Samantha smiled and turned to laptop screen.

“Okay, let’s look further.”

Tony shifted his gaze at the display too.

“Thailand?” he suggested.

“Nooo,” Samantha soured 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 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!”

“The diving here is calm and beautiful, and the water temperature is plus twenty-nine,” Tony continued praising the place, looking at the display.

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

“Call them!”

Six years later

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

“How’s that?” Samantha smiled.

Tony sat down closer with interest, while looking at their common acquaintance. This talk took place on a diver's boat which was going back to an island after a series of dives. Anthony and his wife had a vacation in the Philippines and dived there several times at a local dive centre. Their son Mike who was five years old was staying with Samantha's parents.

Young couple got acquainted with people from many countries there. Andrey, their interlocutor, was a diver from Russia. He was a doctor by occupation and had very interesting viewpoints on different things. Therefore, Tony and Samantha liked to have chats with him at times.

"The mirror of world works like any other mirror," Andrey answered the girl. "Only, it does not reflect any external images. It reflects all our deeds and thoughts."

"Really?" Anthony was interested. "And what are these reflections manifested 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 and when to show us a reflection."

"I don't quite understand," the girl shook her head. "Could you tell me the details in a way that any blonde can understand them?"

"Of course, I can," the Russian diver smiled. "Any human 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 behavior is the image that we send into this mirror. And the events which will happen to us tomorrow, in a month, in a year are the reflections,” Andrey said, then unscrewed a bottle and sipped some water. “If the deeds in our life were good and kind, then the day of tomorrow will be good and kind, it is guaranteed to.”

“What 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 a pile of trash appeared 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 easily checked.”

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

“I told you that this mirror of world is clever. Very clever!” Andrey smiled mysteriously. “It may give us a hint for all the reasons or reflections. So, it is enough to ask yourself: “Why did that happen in my life?” And soon, an answer will come up in your head. The main thing here is to be honest and attentive.”

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

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

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

“Should it be difficult?”

“I don’t know, but that’s what they say,” the girl shrugged her shoulders. “And people are taught many complicated laws and rules for a happy life.”

The Russian diver laughed cheerily.

“And those who tell or teach you these things, are they happy and cheerful people with fewer problems?”

Samantha was thinking and wrinkling her forehead. Anthony started recalling those who suited this description as well. Some time later, they shook their heads simultaneously.

“Well, no. They don’t look too 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. “Let’s go play table tennis in pairs. My wife Maria has been sitting on the shore, waiting for 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 an eucalyptus tree?” his wife wondered. “They’ve already been winning for three days.”

“Shush, short-sighted blondie,” her husband replied cheerily. “It’s me simply trying to put a right image into the mirror of the world so that you and I could get a good reflection.”

Samantha and Andrey shook with laughter. However, on this day, the Australians really managed to win.

* * *

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, they stood at anchor for an hour in a beautiful channel while marveling 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 on TV that 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 floats drifting motionlessly on the water's surface.

Anthony smiled broadly at his wife.

“Yes dear, it was a TV programme about a different kind of fishing,” he said and shrugged his shoulders. “People go fishing for different reasons. Some need fish, but others need a nice morning and a good mood. My father 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, while having wonderful thoughts about her.

“Probably, I’ll take her with me sometimes,” 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, while holding a bottle of Coca-Cola in his hand. One look at him was enough to understand that his son's mood that day was not the best.

“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. “It 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, the son's voice suddenly intervened in this harmony.

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

Tony smiled.

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

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

“No human will ever live calmly, if he or she is confident that they acted wrong,” his father replied. “Another thing is, understanding of 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 been growing up in our family, so me and your mother implanted in you our views of life,” Tony said and sipped some coffee. “Meanwhile, Louisa or another person has been growing up in a different family with different views. And, there are also different TV programmes and different books. They too can create differences in people’s views. But, having different views doesn't mean that someone is good and another is bad.”

The birds’ twitter from the trees supported this idea.

“Thus, people gradually form their own unique views of life. This is like the stencils 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 certain actions or feelings from them in proportion to our convictions. But, they think completely different. This mismatch will often upset us a lot, but in vain...”

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

“For instance, a person wants one thing but we think he wants the same as us.”

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

“Ask them questions more often, son, and find out what they really need,” Tony smiled. “Otherwise, we sometimes think instead of them such thoughts, 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 questions 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 is sitting on the fence. And a grey one is 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, not stuff your head with unnecessary expectations.”

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

Many years later

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

Suddenly, a thought came to his head from which he immediately smiled. For some reason, he remembered that for many years he had not taken out his red notebook. It has been a long time since he wrote down his last thoughts.

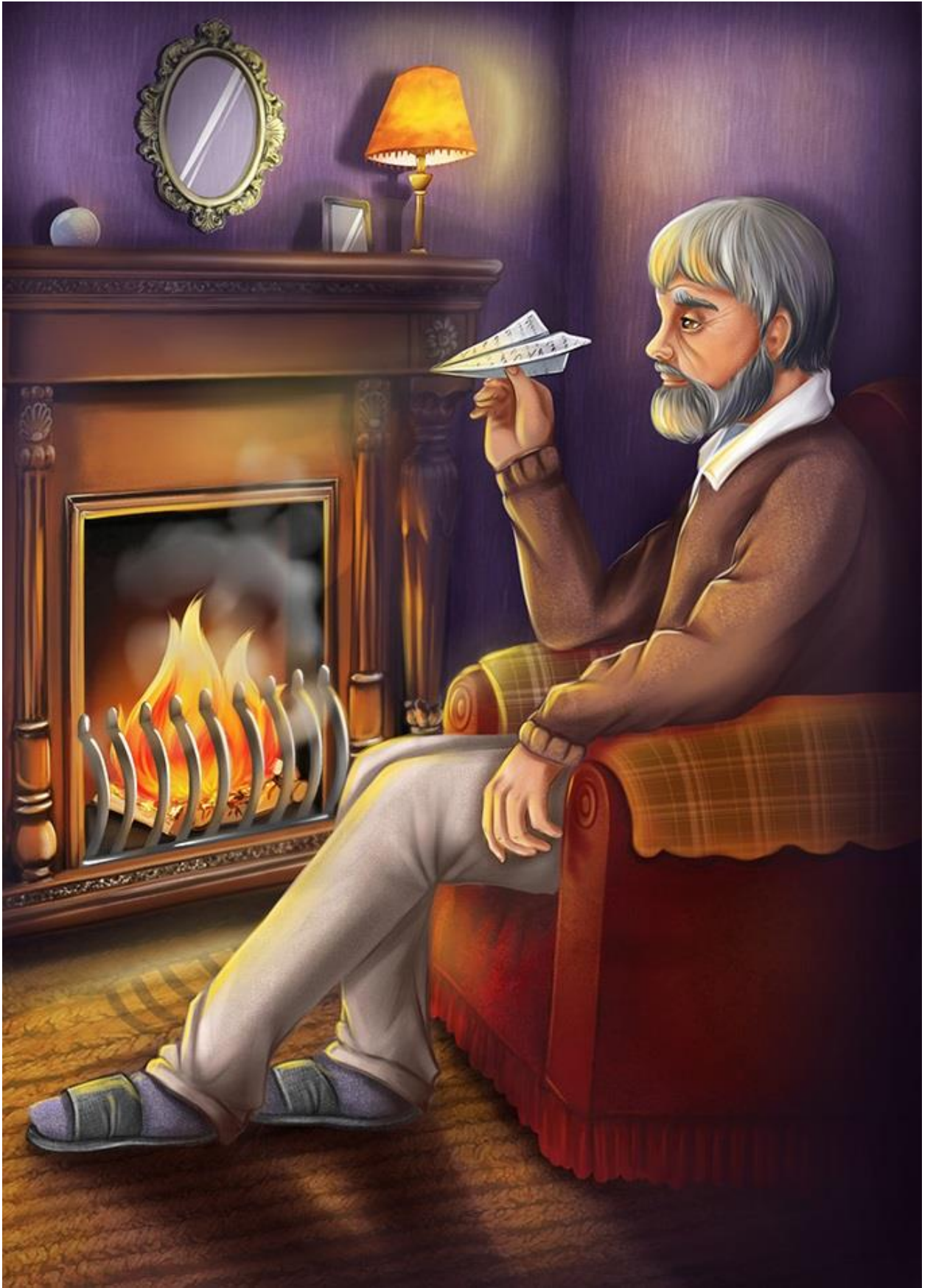
Tony stood up, went to his studyroom and after a long search he finally found it in one of the far drawers. Having wiped the dust from its cover, Tony smiled at it as if he saw an old friend. After that, he went back to his armchair and started turning the pages of his notebook.

The expression on his face changed a lot, while he was doing it. 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 flames again. He understood so well now what his father had told him many years ago.

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

Tony smiled and in a second, he started tearing out the next sheet. That day, he was lucky with the creation of quality aircrafts: all the pages obediently flew into the fireplace.

Finally, there was only one blank page left in the notebook. Tony turned to the fireplace and stared at the flames for a long time. After that, he took a pen, which was laying on the table and wrote several lines on the sheet. Then he got up and took the red notebook, which had become much thinner, back to his desk drawer.



Epilogue

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

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

After some time, she remembered why she came here and opened a near drawer of the table. A red notebook was laying on the top. Samantha smiled. How many times she had asked her husband to show what was inside, but he always just turn that into a joke and did 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" was written on the cover. Samantha looked inside it with interest.

The book had only one sheet, which contained a couple of lines. The elderly woman began reading a painfully familiar handwriting.

"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.

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

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

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Meaning of life. Who will not seek it?

Protagonist of this story

is not an exception.