

Group 1: L.Dri, E. Savorgnan, J. Schiff, A.Tonelli

MAD LOVE by Can Divit

I'll never forget that day: a cloudy day in April. On board of my yacht a soft breeze was blowing my hair, the waves were crashing to the hull and the wind started rising.

I decided to dock my boat, fearing a storm. At the pier I met a seaman. He advised me not to leave since it was going to rain and showed me how to get to the centre of the village. While walking, I went past a library and saw a crowd standing up after a meeting. I went on following my way.

Suddenly a thunder broke the stillness around and everybody moved quicker and quicker. It had started to rain. I had nothing to put on except for my hood. I was deciding to take refuge somewhere when I saw a cinema. *Bad King* was on. I went in and moved straight to the ticket office.

There was no long queue before me: just a young girl wearing a long, ochre overcoat with brown and golden embroidery. She wore rings and bracelets and dressed in an ethnic style, very similar to mine. There was something familiar about her. I could not say what but I thought she was not new to me. I felt confused. She fixed up her hair wet with rain. As she was arranging it, an exciting and unforgettable scent overwhelmed me. It was strong, intense, but pleasant and sweet. It immediately reminded me of the magic moments I had spent with my lost love. My instinctive feeling was it was her. My Sanem.

Was that possible? She was standing there behind. I could only see her long hair not all her face. However the memory of our time together did not betray me as did not her intoxicating fragrance. It used to send me out of thought and it still did. It was when I realised it that I felt lost and afraid. I paid for the ticket and quickly reached the cinema hall. She was sitting in one of the first rows. I sat some rows behind her. I did not want her to see me. I could not stand the emotion and could not even stare back at her. I was not ready. I felt sort of panick.

Darkness was surrounding us and my thoughts plunged into darkness as well. I tried to concentrate on the film, but I could not manage. My eyes kept falling on her. She was the real movie: when I saw her laughing, the smiles we used to share came back to my mind and I felt relieved. But soon *The Bad King* made her cry and I felt guilty. I had been her bad king, too. Overcome with emotions, I was compelled to leave the cinema all of a sudden. I had left her alone once and again! I did my best to reach my boat and I strode there.

The next day I was ready to set sails. I was lifting the ladder when someone knocked on the boat with a walking stick. It was Aunt Remide. I was surprised to find her there. How could she know I was back? She asked me about my next destination and said we had to talk. I invited her on the yacht for a cup of Turkish tea. She told me what had happened since my departure and we shared a conversation about me, my family, my friends and finally she spoke about Sanem. I perceived she was sure the girl had meant a lot to me. I later learned that she had been hospitalized in a psychiatric clinic. My departure and the missing information about me had shocked her. She had fallen into serious depression. When I found out I was speechless and could not believe my ears.

Sanem was now living in a nearby village, in the country side. She shared a house with a friend who was taking care of her and tried to help her forget her traumatic memories. Aunt Remide told me Sanem had published a novel. It was translated into many languages and, before saying goodbye left me a present, wrapped up into an elegant purple paper. She hugged me and left. Now, I was all alone with the burden of heavy thoughts and a sense of guilt. Nostalgia was overwhelming me and what I wanted most was to find a way to get rid of my sins.

I did not leave immediately. I did not know why. I was ashamed and unable to recognise it to myself I did not want Sanem to feel abandoned again. Besides I had to find a place to buy something to eat and drink. My resources were over. I went off the boat. I was strolling through the streets of the village, when I met a girl. She recognised me, but I did not. She introduced herself: her name was Nazli. She was a Sanem's friend. She said she had recognised me from the photos Sanem had showed her. The girl was slim, short with long, red, straight hair that stood out her pale face. She was wearing a purple, decorated, stylish dress (different from Sanem's style). Nazli asked me to talk for a while and I nodded.

We went for a cup of tea and she told me Sanem had phoned her that very morning, because she thought she had seen me at the cinema. Nazli did not hide Sanem had suffered a lot and advised me to forget her and go away for her sake. She said my presence would mean a new and terrible breakdown for her. I felt powerless and annoyed. I knew I had made so many mistakes, but now I was there and I wanted to meet Sanem and make amends.

When I was back to the jetty, I saw Aunt Remide's present on the seat. It was still there, exactly where I had left it. I spent the whole all night on my yacht, lulled by the waves. I felt almost swallowed by the dark-blue of

the sea. I knew what made me feel uneasy. I looked at the parcel doubtful whether to unwrap it or not. I felt exhausted and with a great unbearable burden inside. My heart was screaming. It shouted to open the parcel, but I still did not know if I was ready to do it. I knew what had kept me from opening the gift. I was afraid of Sanem's novel was the mirror to look at myself in.

In the end I strengthened myself and unwrapped the parcel. It was exactly as I had expected. The cover was blue with two birds. I read the title together with the writer's name. The Phoenix and the Albatross by Sanem Aydin. I was right it would tell about me. She used to call me the Albatross and so I supposed she was the Phoenix. But, differently from our dramatic story, the cover showed two birds coming out of a big sun.

Albatrosses are white, large seabirds. They are among the most spectacular gliders of all birds, able to stay aloft in windy weather for hours without ever flapping their extremely long, narrow wings. According to the myth, instead, the Phoenix is a fabulous bird associated with the worship of the sun, as large as an eagle, with brilliant scarlet and gold plumage. Ancient folks used to associate the Phoenix with immortality, resurrection and life after death.

I was afraid and curious at the same time. I checked the back of the novel to read about the plot. I turned the book upside down, skipped the introduction and I read the epigraph; "...he left me burned pages with broken dreams ...". I would have liked keeping the read, but I couldn't stand the heartache the words had caused me. My eyes glistened. At once all my mistakes, wrong decisions, words, and unlucky actions together with my guilt and memories came to surface and I felt the worst pain I had ever experienced. I put the novel on the seat and moved away from it. But, the distance between the object and me unfortunately could not erase all that was haunting me. The wind blew the wrapping paper away but I was too absent minded to worry about it. I remained still, looking at the sky and the sea, the sea and the sky. They were both dark as were my mind and my heart. I desperately tried to keep out the memory of that night.

The next morning, while I was docking the yacht at the pier, I saw something strange in the seawater. I checked and I found a little plastic bottle with a note. Curiously I opened it and read the note. The same words I had read the night before appeared to my eyes: "... *he left me burned pages with broken dreams ...*". I could no longer cope with the situation and almost instinctively I decided I would go to the nearby village to look for Sanem.

While going back to the yacht, I saw a girl, sitting on the pier. She was alone and looked powerless even in the distance. I perceived a sense of solitude, melancholy and sadness as I looked at her. Everything was still around. There was no noise, but for the sound of the waves. I moved forward and I recognised her: Sanem. She was wearing a long, red skirt, a black top and the ethnical jewellery I was now familiar with. I slowed down my pace and stopped. I was really worried. She looked motionless, unmoved, and defenceless before the surrounding open sea. Her looks showed loss and an infinite void. I saw her in the distance. She was quivering like a mentally ill girl. Immediately after she turned towards me. Our gazes crossed for a while. I tried to collect my courage and moved closer. She stood up quickly and as if she were a robot she ran away with a mechnic stroll.

I was not surprised, I expected Sanem would escape, but not that way. I felt as if I were her worst enemy. She did not even look at my face. She was totally avoiding me as if she did not want to listen to me. All the same, I called her name loudly again and again. At last, she turned towards me with two wide open scared eyes. She was glancing at me as if I were a danger, something menacing. Suddenly, her expression changed: she looked confused and perplexed. We exchanged inquisitive looks, but none of us were able to speak. I lent my hand to her and touched her wrist. I could feel her heart was beating loudly. She hesitated and moved back. On a second moment she asked me why I had gone there and insisted questioning. I did not know how to answer and I kept silent. She got annoyed and straightforward went away. I wondered whether to talk to her, but I was confused. I did not know what to do. I felt guilty and unable of any reaction while a lump in the throat forbode me from speaking.

In the evening I thought long and hard about how to behave and I finally decided to visit Sanem. I was resolute and wanted to talk to her. I wanted to tell her of my mistakes. After all I thought we would be able to get on well together, as had happened in the past. When I reached Sanem's home that night she was outdoors, in the garden, preparing her fragrance and crushing some flowers in a pestle. She was wearing a white dress. It stood out against the sunset colours around her. All her working table was scattered with flowers and scented candles. I appeared behind her and called her name. She immediately froze. I was surprised by her stillness, and all of my self-assurance disappeared. Why did she not react? Why was speaking together so difficult for us? She went on with her working, as if she did not mind my presence and put even more strength in her pestle.

I moved closer and asked her if I could take her perfume sample. After a while, she nodded. I took it slowly since I was looking forward to her reaction. I focussed my attention on her and I noticed some birds were embroidered on her dress. They reminded me of Albatrosses. They have only one partner during all their life. On that moment, I understood she was my "one" and I asked her shyly: "But, how did we get so far?"

She started crushing flowers with more energy and rather irritated answered: "I don't know... but it was all on you!" I realized she did not feel my same emotions. The atmosphere became tense and unpleasant. I said goodbye and went away regretful.

I got onto my yacht, started the engine and weighed anchor. I was desolate. I knew what I was doing. I knew leaving the village meant I would lose Sanem once and forever. But I didn't want to stop. I acted as I usually did. I lent my mind free control over my choices, so that no irrational thought could have stopped me from doing what was right. Right, I did not think going away from that place was a mistake. It sounded as if both did not take care about each other. The words we had not been able to share a few minutes earlier confirmed it. The best thing for both of us was to part.

I put a hand into my pocket and I found her kerchief. Once and again I could smell her perfume. The scent reminded me of all our happiest and dramatic moments and all the time I had spent with her. The smiles and tears we shared came to mind. They were all the memories and the most important emotions I had experienced so far. I took a deep breath. I wanted to remember all that but at the same time I felt the need to leave behind all that Sanem had meant and still meant to me.

I was still sitting and I saw her novel before me. It was under the yacht's wheel. It sounded as if it were waiting for me and trying to hold me back from my choice. I finally opened it. I was going to read something and to let all the past inside those pages go. I opened a page at random, but as soon as I started reading, I heard Sanem's voice. It was as if she were there with me, reading and repeating the same words she used to say when we were together. They echoed loudly in my heart.

It was then, I understood I did not want to run away from my past. I did not want to escape my problems, but most of all I did not want to go away from Sanem again. She was too important, maybe the most important one. I could have never left her, not now when I had just met her again. For the very first time in my life, I let my feelings take control of my body and I made a crazy choice. I went below deck and took a fuse off the engine and threw it into the sea. The yacht was now stuck. I still do not know why I made that choice. I was not at all sure about my future.

But now, I am here, in the middle of the sea, undecided between love and freedom. The crashing waves, that subtle and fascinating feeling of danger, of being ready to be dragged away at any moment still makes me think ...