

IN MY WIFE'S SHOES book-trailer

From a novel by Andrea Saviano

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01 – In the Mac Koonbaa's office

It was for weeks, not to mention it was for months, that things with my wife weren't going as well as normal. Drying up the early years of wedding high spirits, our relationship was gradually going wrong.

For this reason I was gone in search of a professional man, a marriage guidance consultant that cold help us in undertaking the enterprise to put our marriage back on its feet.

In fact, looking over, there was no reason why, day by day, I had started to "loathe" my wife's company. Rather, at this point there were a lot of things that, all together, really bothered me. In other words, it was the same way that one does when his or her car became old and one drive it to the body-shop to mend the various snags in the bodyworks or in the inner side. Not big snags, but a series of light abrasions piled up with the passing time. At the end all that by somehow or other make the car unpleasant, depreciating its value.

To be honest I was still in love (no, *full of love*) with my wife, otherwise I had left her and that's that. On the contrary, I was looking for an external help, really because I was aware that, on my part in any case, was still strong and true the feeling I experienced with her (or so I believe at least). In other words, coming back to the comparison between my marriage and the car: the electrical system was like new and the engine ran like a Swiss watch.

So, after much humming and hawing, a lot of "by yourself" and long discussions, here we were in the waiting room of someone that was suggested by a lot of people, speaking about him very well.

She, my better (and lightly worse) half, was now sit near me, gripping her bug nervously in her hands and I, puzzled and hopeful, was staring at her in a similar way.

« I'd like to know what we are come to do here, you and your absurd ideas. I don't like to speak about *my own* business to a foreigner. » Those were her "loving" words.

« Just put your trust in me, everyone assured me that he is a real *wizard* for what that concerns couple problems. He seems to be the greatest authority on the subject... not only in Europe, bat also worldwide. »

« It may even be true, but I don't believe that it will be useful. The real problem is that you don't want to understand. You cling to misunderstand... »

As usual, it was always and only *my* fault.

For months she seemed to have only the wish to quarrel and, to be honest, also I, exasperated by now for her own behaviour, had enough... but a little less.

As was our custom from time, an absolute silence reigned between us. To while away the time, I started to leaf through some magazines, so I had avoided to keep turning over in my mind this umpteenth discussion. While I was admiring various dreaming resorts, where we had could spend our vacation, a pretty miss went in the waiting room. To define her only a "pretty miss" - I have to admit - was restrictive. Just to be concise: all her curves were optimum and abundant.

I tried to read the nameplate hanging from the generous low-cut and, in spite of the eye was inclined - in an own anarchic motion - to slip in the inner of the décolleté, I was able at last to read the nameplate: Sibilla Khumana.

« Professor Mac Koonbaa can receive you, please follow me, » she said, with extreme courtesy and professionalism. We stood up ourselves and followed her. My eyes - by instinct - went down to admire her perfect backside. Just a moment later, my wife's bag - with all his heavy contents - smashed against my stomach, shattering the unconscious desire to pat that soft surface that waddled before my eyes with a sort of hypnotic power, suggesting to my subconscious an only thing: "Touch me!"

« Well! » My wife roared in my ear with a faint voice, while we crossed the threshold that led us to the "sancta sanctorum" of that private office.

The assistant took us a seat into two very comfortable pit-stalls, placed in front of a desk, behind it there was a third, vacant. We turned aside to thank the girl and an instant later - materializing, almost he were appeared from nowhere - came to sight one man with a not much trustworthy look.

A giant, almost two meters of stature, with long, bristly and blond hair; a thick beard, bristly and blond too and two eyebrows that, to not make a poor impression with the rest,

were thick, bristly and blond - stared at us with his blue eyes, while he turned a not lighted pipe between his teeth.

Looking this bad human version of a plush, I considered myself repentant about the choice I had done, especially when - standing aside the desk - he highlighted the presence of a short skirt in Scottish fabric. Just under the "refined" article of clothing in tartan, he dressed a couple of wonderful white knee socks with a sort of sock-laces that ended with two red pompons.

« Where have you led me? Idiot! » My wife hissed in my ear. For once, I believed that she were right.

« Hello, I'm professor Mac Koonbaa. »

The pitch of the voice was a little shrill and the accent was like a foreigner, rather typically English; in short it was a halting Italian that - in the as a whale - reminded the speaking of Stan Laurel, the one thin of the couple Hardy & Laurel, just to agree.

« I'm glad, we are Mr. Felice¹ and Mrs. Fortunata² Allamano, » I said, standing up - In a respectful way - to shake hands with him.

He ignored that, letting me raised to my feet and with my hand stretched out like a perfect idiot. He looked me up and down, the he sat down on the desk edge, crossing his shaggy legs and catching tightly his own pipe in his hands.

« Come on, tell me your problems, I'll listen to you with my eyes closed, so I can visualize better the situations. Do you mind if I smoke? »

By instinct I wanted to remember him that the law forbids it and I - in particular - really feel disgusted when someone smokes, but I thought to be very impolite.

My wife - that hate smoke like me... not, more than me - gave me a withering glace because I had pronounced those words and, before I was sitting down again, she dealt me a powerful kick in the shin.

« Who start to tell? » The professor asked us.

¹ His name means *happy* in Italian.

² Her name means *lucky* in Italian.

« I! » She answered with a tone so peremptory that was even difficult for me to conceive the idea to contradict her.

I stayed listening the list of my all fault (true and supposed), Fortunata told about them singly with a strange expression of satisfaction in her face that I noticed. In my opinion it was a series of bagatelles. Things as the toilet bow let open, the toothpaste tube put in a wrong way, her sleep troubles coming from my sleeplessness problem and so on.

When my turn came, I make a list of my wife behaviours that I don't like. I had things more serious than my slight faults. Not my venial sins, but real mortal sins, as the fact that:

- I had - always - to sleep in a bed with not-properly stretched sheets;
- her meals was disgusting, but I can never raise a blame about her cooking;
- I could never dress myself or buy clothes complying my wish, but I'm forced to follow her taste;
- I was a sleepless, only because he snores;
- I was forced to live in a house where the heating system is always at the higher level and to sleep under a excessive number of blankets only because he always felts cold

and so on.

When I ended, the professor stayed in silence, not only for few minutes, but for a lot, causing a sense of bewildered in my wife and in me.

He was there, almost motionless. Eyes closed. A smoke cloud that came out sometimes from his mouth was the only thing that showed us he was alive.

May be he was asleep bored by our married life?

At a certain point he pulled out the pipe from his lips, he gave out three concentric smoke rings and he opened his eyes looking at us with a mad glance.

« I just say that nothing you have told me is notable. You haven't any real couple problem. »

My wife and I looked at each other in our eyes upset and surprised we said with one voice: « What do you mean with "we haven't any real couple problem"?! »

Immediately we turn our hands towards the professor to hear the answer. Two intertwined smoke rings - like two chain rings - were raising to the ceiling.

He asked us: « Do you see those two smoke rings? »

« Yes. » We answered, with an amazed surprise tone for that "artistic" smoke emission.

« You're so: two distinct characters **joined** but, at the same time, **separated**. »

My wife and I look at each other in our eyes another time with a more and more puzzled face.

« You're two characters, joined by a feeling, but physically separated. The each other acceptance requires **coexistence in common spaces, endurance spirit and identification**. All you need is that! It's called *empathy*. »

His explanation didn't serve to eliminate the perplexity expression from our faces and the sudden silence dropped in the room was broken only by unexpected professor's words.

« May I offer something to drink? »

« No, thank you, » we answered together, in an unusual - what a perfect - harmony.

As He didn't listen to us, the professor switched the intercom asking to his collaborator: « Please, Sibilla, can you kindly bring me the usually drinks for our visitors? »

As last time, I crossed the glance with my wife's who - only moving her lips and without emitting noises - clearly pronounced the period: "This man is totally crazy!"

« You have to understand that, » the professor restart to expound, « at first, there's the falling in love. It's a bandage over our eyes that prevents us to see the other like it is, it forces us to imagine him or her as we wish he or she may be. It exalts his or her good quality, but it hides the bad ones. In other words, it's the embodiment of our desires. »

We nodded in assent. For once, my wife and I were coming to an agreement about something.

« What may bring us to be married, and to live together, it's the true love. Do you know what the true love is? »

For the fear to give a wrong answer, we both shrugged our shoulders without answering, opening our arms with the palms of hands to the ceiling, and making a dubious face like an idiot.

« The true love is the clear vision and acceptance of another person like he or she is, all inclusive faults. It's the other person homologation inside our space. It's all frontiers abolition to receive the other, building a shared place that belongs to both. »

My wife and I look at each other with a face that seemed to say: "the answer was very easy, isn't it?"

When we start again to gaze the professor, two intertwined smoke rings were raising again to the ceiling. For one more time we were distracted, so how he could in that exploit remained an enigma.

« Do you see those two smoke rings? »

Amazed, we answered: « Yes... »

« You're like these two smoke rings, joined by a common space, but without being one only thing. Two chain rings have as intersection the empty set. This is a simple set theory rule. »

« Sorry professor, » my wife attended « can you explain this question more precisely? I think that *my husband* hasn't understood that well... »

There, she hadn't understood and asked to the beanpole to explain again the question.

After all, the point is that he explained this passage was very good for me. In fact - to be honest - I had misunderstood these things about **joined** but **separated** rings and about the **common** but **not shared** space. To tell the truth my brain - alike **that person's** pipe - was smoking from the firsts abstruse and complex concepts about wedding, falling in love and true love.

« Sure... oh, here's Sibilla! »

Without our seeing it, his assistant come in with a tray and over it there were two small glasses, both with a disquieting lightning blue electric liquid inside. We didn't really hear any noise, it'd be better to say that the girl

took physical shape next me as she was appeared from nothing.

« Let you drink! It isn't a poison. Let' you taste it, it's good. »

As I didn't want to offend him in no way, I taste it as first without hesitancy.

In effect, in spite of consistence and colour - at least worrying - that liquid was good and it tasted like forest fruits.

« My dear taste it, it's good! » I said, to urge my wife to do the same, or rather to not offend in any way the professor. She was still looking to the glass with horror and suspect, staying immobile, without to dare in touching it, like a baby girl that have to swallow a too much bitter medicine.

Even if she was hesitating, she also tasted it no much.

« It's fantastic! It tastes of cacao » she overtook me holding that in an enthusiastic way.

I gazed my wife horrified. How could she mistake the forest fruits flavour for the cacao one? Here's solved the mystery about my wife bad cooking.

« What were we talking about? » the professor took up. « Ah, about you two, yes, that's right. »

Our glace go back to the professor, who was still near those two mysterious little smoke rings, joined each other like a chain. For another time we had loosen the instant when he had breed to those two shapes.

« You two are like these rings, **tied** each other, but **not joined up**. You haven't an intersection. You aren't in symbiosis. You still retain your to much marked individuality. You don't accept compromises and protect *our* territory. That fells you the other like a *person from outside* who **threats** and **invades** your jurisdiction zone. In other words, you are in what I call "the couple relationship *Limbo*". Alike a lot of couples you are stayed immobile at the **ford midpoint** between true love end the falling in love. You individualities have to accept the other in a common space, trough the identification road. All that starting from the good faith opinion: "who loves you can't hate you!" »

My wife plugged her lips with a paper tissue, then she said: « Sorry professor if I seem incompetent, but what have my husband and I to do to end our ford crossing instead of staying at bain-marie, if you let me say this expression »

The professor smiled heartily to us.

« You have to do all and nothing, madam! You need to identify each other! Today is... Tuesday! Well, in the next twenty-four hours we have to stay at home. Please, you haven't absolutely to go out! If you need about something, it's better if you stop going back home and you bring it. Well then, at this point next Monday you have to do the same for twenty-four hours and next Tuesday you'll come to me, at the same time. I jot down an appointment on my diary. »

We both rose up perplexed. He shook hands with us without adding something else and the secretary come to meet and take to the door us.

Thoughts were milling in my mind, a few of "BUT", a lot of "IF" and some "WHY". Nevertheless I didn't succeed in giving free play to my doubts and followed the assistant murmuring sentences without any meaning.

In the waiting room another couple was waiting for their turn, they *probably* were in my wife's and mine same condition.

I noticed that the husband was staring the assistant's fine behind and consequently his wife just stoked her elbow at the level of his liver. I gazed this man dignified ache and thought: "Yes, they're really in our same condition!"

02 - Unwelcome effects and contraindications

Before exiting the professor's assistant had given me a brochure. Now, in the park, I still had it in my hands, like it was glued on them. Usually I didn't resist temptation to throw immediately any brochure someone given me. As I had unbelievably retained, I thought to read it.

« You mind to drive, dear, aren't you? » I asked to my wife sweetly as usually.

« I don't, of course, Felice! Why don't you want to drive » that was, as usual, her *rude* answer.

« For a simply reason, Fortunata, because I wish to read the brochure that they gave us, because it's *always* my turn and because I believe that, *for only one time*, you could. »

We went in the car, my wife puffing, so I ask her: « What? There's something wrong? »

« There's nothing! » That was her *acid* and not very convincing reply.

« Come on, you are thinking about something... » I insisted exacerbated.

« No, I'm thinking about nothing *at all!* Do you want to quarrel? » She rebutted, with a threatening manner.

« No, *absolutely* not, but you... » I hazarded.

« But me, what?! But if I follow you to this lunatic! A "wizard"! But who have suggested him? But haven't you seen him!? » She shouted abuse towards me, peppering all her sentences with filthy abuse about me. Luckily she didn't fancy quarrelling, I thought.

In the meantime, I gave a look to the brochure, just to show that I didn't pay much her abuses and not to found myself in the unpleasant condition to have to reply.

« Actually, he was suggested from of mine: Paolo Gatto³, » I murmured.

« Of course... »

³ This surname means cat in Italian.

« What's of course? »

« What's his wife's name? »

« Francesca Cane⁴, why? »

« Exactly: Cane and Gatto⁵? »

« Exactly: Cane and Gatto? Otherwise: Paolo e Francesca! Only a couple like that could find this kind of consultant... Look, if I recall the name that he had: Mac Koonbaa... I'm surprised that he wasn't a black and dressed like a sorcerer! »

In fact the names weren't a great help in assuming a serious and professional tone to this affair. The assistant too, after all, with every names that exist just Sibilla Khumana she had to be called!

My wife tried to insist in touching a sore spot: « After all, what do we expect? Mr and Mrs Allamano⁶! Whatever came it's welcome for us, in any case you always are Felice and I always am Fortunata. »

At last she silenced herself starting to grunt. As matter of fact, she laughed and grumbled with a low voice, but the outcome was very similar to the pork cry.

>>> TO BE CONTINUED...

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⁴ This surname means dog in Italian.

⁵ In Italian: "Dog and Cat".

⁶ In Italian their surname means: "very simple persons".