

The black dog and the blue fox

a breakup tale, by Mathias Clivaz

1.

Once upon a time, there was a little fox who had been frightened by life. It wasn't that he was fearful, often on the contrary one might have said that he showed real courage, but people had him believe that he wasn't suitable for this world. Occasionally, he had beautiful reddish flashes in his fur, flashes that were out of the ordinary and which his comrades laughed at, because they themselves were afraid to stand out. And because his parents decided to live in two separate places, he got stretched in trying to give twice as much, and his sense of home suffered from it. So he got scared. To protect himself, he decided to breathe only halfway, so as to give air to others and not be reproached for taking up too much space. And because he breathed halfway, he turned blue.

The little fox grew up and made his way through life. He witnessed injustice, and when he tried to make things right, some people made the injustice even worse; yet he never lost sight of the fire burning in his heart. Of course his fur was blue, hiding his real colours, but he was proud of the gifts life had given him and in return he gave his best at everything he did. Season followed season and years went by, and the blue at times receded, at times grew, for he was learning from it but also suffering. Was there a way for him to breathe without taking the air from others? And could he give more air to others who needed it? For some reason, he believed that he would attain his true form only when he would be older, needing to be seasoned by life and acquire experience. So he went onto small and big adventures, encountered many creatures, met love, friendship and hard times, like every living being. Never losing his dream that one day he would be able to shake off his fear.

Then, one day, he felt he was ready. It might have been a bit preposterous, like the first flower in spring opens its petals while the rest of nature is still dormant, waiting prudently for winter to end. He felt ready, and in his heart he made a wish.

And as it happens in stories (but not only in stories), a couple of weeks later he met someone.

2.

Once upon a time, there was a little dog who had been frightened by life. It wasn't that she was fearful, often on the contrary one might have said that she showed real courage, but people had her believe that she wasn't suitable for this world. In her fur sometimes a scintillation could be seen in which all the colours seemed to meet, but her comrades told her that to have all colours is like having no colours at all, because they were afraid themselves not to belong to any. And because where she lived attracting eyes could be dangerous, she was made to understand that her desire to shine had no place under the sun. So she got scared. Having to hide her colours, she decided to walk often in the shade, so she wouldn't become a target nor a source of worries for others. And because she mixed in with the shade, she turned black.

The little dog grew up and made her way through life. Because she knew what it takes to live in the shadows, she became good at giving light onto others. Yet she wanted to find a spot where she would feel that the sun was shining for her too, and never lost sight of the colours in her heart. Season followed season and years went by, and the black dog tried out different things, at times nurturing her soul under the cover of the night and stars, at times entering the sunlight with her whole body. How was she to confront others in the open? And was there a way to serve others, while also serving herself? She believed that a time would come when she would dare to know. So she went onto small and big adventures, encountered many creatures, met love, friendship and hard times, like every living being. And eventually she decided to leave everything she knew and travel, in order to see if she could find her answer – or maybe invent it – by wandering far away.

Then, one day, she felt she was ready. It might have been a bit preposterous, like the birds sing with the first glimmer of dawn while the rest of nature is still asleep, waiting for the sun to appear. She felt ready, and in her heart she made a wish.

And as it happens in life (and also in stories), a couple of weeks later she met someone.

3.

At that time, the black dog lived in a city by the sea, the blue fox in a city by the mountains. But a connection had been made, and their desire to meet one another was whispering to the ears of the world. Was it the world who made it possible? The flutter of some secret electricity? In any case, chances were that they both departed from their cities, going on a travel; and there they met.

The fox felt fire in his chest when he first saw her: her black curly hair scintillating in a way that spoke of her hidden gems and of deep honesty, her eyes sparkling with life, and mischief. And the dog took an interest in him too: that flash of red which could occasionally be seen passing beneath all that blue, burning with will and dedication, made her colours waggle inside her body.

They sniffed one another, and talked and walked, and ran, and drank, cherishing each other stories, the desire to confide meeting the warmth to be understood. They were amazed at the mystery of the other and at the way it made them feel. She didn't feel like hiding, he didn't feel like halfbreathing. And so together, they felt free.

His fire evoked her sparkle to the surface; her colours talked his struggle into serenity. How extraordinary such a thing can be, no one is really able to express. But the thought that they could be together and meet, again and again, for their entire lifetime if they wanted to, quickly made them grow into imagining what it would be like to come together. Their eyes were full of gratitude when they were looking at each other and at the world around them. How was it even possible for such a chance meeting to happen, for such warmth to exist in the body?

They began inventing new languages, a new way of barking and new sounds; they even made drawings, took photographs and wrote poems. Everything was new, and everything was ancient: it is this moment of a relationship we call passion, when the beginning and the end seem to touch. There was a part of enchantment, a part of illusion. Yet when they asked questions sincere answers were always given. At the same time as passion, friendship had begun to grow.

One night they stayed together under the moonlight. The olive trees around them fluttered softly. Everything was quiet. That night he saw in her fur, a rainbow giving itself to the world; and she saw in his fur, the fire shining bright. And that's how they knew.

4.

As it is a story, not every detail can be recalled, nor every spoken word or gesture. As it is a story, told to the world, some things we can leave unsaid, because, simply, it belongs to them. The dog and the fox. It is there in their heart to be sure, in their body, in their mind.

Of course, everything we've told so far didn't happen in a day, rather in weeks, and soon in months. They were meeting whenever they could, missing each other when they couldn't, and thus summer came to an end. But before it ended, they met once more in this foreign land.

It was in a city that some call eternal, because indeed it is very old; yet not as old as the feeling we call love, said to have been the first born out of the original chaos. In that city they walked and ran and barked and drank, following desire into its dance—while also, little by little, anticipating the next steps, when they would make their love known and step into the world together.

Yet, because all had happened so fast, they were grieving. The lives they had lived before meeting each other were something to be cared for, to be cherished and taken with them into the flow of their becoming. She was grieving past relationships, and, although he didn't talk much about it at the time, he was too. Grief concerned each of them in relation to their past, making it plain that they were coming into their relationship already formed. They were in love, and two.

Of aquamarine and thyme, of colours that touch through and transcend: that night, when she asked him if he would marry her?—dimensions whispered, he listened, his heart blooming with the hundred ears of the forest, when he answered yes.

It was a pact between strangers. An alliance of intentions, a conversation hidden. Knowing: that there would be harder times. So much life was going on between them: how wouldn't they be moved? All their pasts were there, being stirred and called into the present: what to make with them? Many things concealed through the ages were coming back to be heard... And the futures—but who could speak about the futures?

So much was there, on this threshold.

5.

And so they began their travels to the worlds they knew. First they moved to the fox's den, in the city by the mountains, curious to know if it could be a place where to live. Later they went to the dog's lair, in the city by the sea, and it was all the same a starting-place for them both.

What did they want? A place they would call home. A place where air would circulate, where the sun would shine for everyone. A place where they wouldn't feel the need to escape. A place where protecting shadows would also exist. A place where to cook and experiment, a place where to invite the world for a feast. A place from which to expand.

Yet at one point every love has to make a choice: either stay in the realm of passion, which is impossible and leads either to disappointment or to despair; or turn into real love, which is the only one that can invite the future into the relationship, because it is lived in the present and the present is the threshold without which the future cannot exist.

To make it a little harder, their present was then stretched between two cities. The prospect of living together months later seemed all the more far away that they lacked the time to invite it into their lives and nurture it, day by day. To make it a little harder, they were both in a process of

transformation that asked each of them to be present where they were; and it was easy then to look in the direction of passion to escape or to hide, instead of facing it.

The fox felt fear when they were together in his city, reacting to wounds from a past in which he was breathing only halfway. He got confused, and at one point fear sprung in his lungs that he wouldn't have enough air to breath, that he would give himself away. As a protection, he reacted with pride and a spirit of contradiction, and it was in such disguise that his fear wounded her. What could be more dire than to hurt the one that makes you feel home? That night, he had not been ready to acknowledge his fear. But she gave him a chance, to understand and to grow. And later, when they were together in her city, he finally understood that he was afraid, and began to look into the fire.

The dog had been unsettled by the fox's fear, she had been ready to put limits, but she saw she could trust him and she gave him her best support. At the same time, a year full of changes had made her feel overwhelmed, and her fear wanted to jump over the difficulties of the present, at the risk of leaving undone the process she was in. Feeling overexposed, she tried to hide in the shadow of their relationship, which made it difficult for her to express what she felt. The fox understood he needed to take better care of himself, so as to create space for her. She felt it and went back to her own process, an important thing for them both since they wanted to grow, side by side. And later, she was able to acknowledge her fear, and found the courage to cast her own shadow into the world.

When we are alone and get afraid, we find ways to behave that compensate for what our fears stop us from doing, and little by little we get used to such moves. Yet when we are with someone and get afraid, fear makes us aliment the hope that love will save us, creating confusion. Although the blue fox and the black dog knew this, at times they got confused. And fears confused began to crystallize and form symmetries, which threatened their relationship's elasticity. They both felt at times the world getting tighter because of this, and melancholy came as a result, their fears mirroring each other. He was afraid to be too old, she was afraid to be too green. She got afraid not to be able to carry on sustained discussions, he got afraid not to be able to carry on a healthy lifestyle. Sometimes he was carried away by his feelings, which made her feel uncared for and unsecure; sometimes she was forgetting things that she said she would do, which made him feel neglected and uneasy. They felt pressured and afraid to disappoint, while at the same time hopeful and afraid to be let down.

Is it useful to address all these fears, one by one? It is, because they were all part of a process of discovery and recognition, of themselves and of their relationship. Passion and friendship were there since the beginning and, truth to stay, it is a powerful form of love that starts like this; yet the danger comes at the next step, and depends on whether or not confusion can be looked through, and symmetries be resolved into the becoming of dissymmetry. They both needed to let go of the desire to be perfect, to be in control, and allow for the space and time to change. Allow for vulnerability. Allow for patience and understanding to be given. And that's not easy.

Forgetting about things and being carried away by emotions, that happens for a reason, and if you change one thing here, others will move in another place and change the dynamic of the whole. In conversation or in lifestyle, in emotions or in memory, the question is not how to give satisfaction, how to meet expectations, but to understand where such behaviours come from, and how differences allow for movement. When two skies meet in synastries, we do not ask if their stars superpose, but how they can dance together and evolve in all the spaces in between.

The black dog loved that the fox wanted to have a healthy lifestyle, because it was good for him, and the blue fox loved that the dog wanted to have sustained conversations, because it was good for her, and because for each of them it was not something they wanted to do in order to please the other, but wanted for themselves since a long time. They saw the other as a possibility to be truer to

themselves, giving them momentum. Experience is made of so many layers that get intertwined. It is the beauty of it, the magic in meeting other creatures, in sharing life and love.

6.

Autumn came to pass, and soon winter arrived. The black dog and the blue fox met with the first snow. Everything was covered in white, all was silent of this special silence, and they observed nature in her sleep... And they also threw snowballs and shook off some trees!

While they were walking, that afternoon in the woods, she asked him something, to which he wanted to answer with all his heart; yet melancholy made him stay silent. His answer was yes, a thousand times yes. It is strange how things sometimes by not being said become so resonant, present in so many presents, like snow falling when no one is looking.

Walking next to her, by the mountains or by the sea, always touched him in the same way: the feeling of being grounded, of being right where he wanted, where he needed to be. He felt her care, her disposition towards him, the creation they were in. Her voice... in her voice there were forests of moss and dark soil, growing mangroves with agile fingers, rich earth and fruits exploding under the teeth. The black dog was able to tell him things in a way that no one had been able to tell him before. She was so perceptive, and her cleverness an earthly blessing in a way that she didn't seem to realize. Her smile, her laugh... her singing when she showered under the rain or a waterfall... her reading next to him, completely absorbed... to him it was happiness, it was home.

The black dog loved their wandering too, and the way he looked at the clouds and discovered so many creatures and stories in them. The fox had this inner strength, this drive; one day she wondered how it was possible to harbour such a sensitivity as his simultaneously, making him fragile at times. Both traits manifested in the way he looked at things, in his way of taking care of plants and people, with tenderness, and seriousness. The way he was engaging made her feel such warmth. And his hands, his voice... his voice when he was saying her name, to her it was home, it was happiness. She would answer by making him laugh, annoy him and see his little smile, be bossy and feel him stir but also listen. She loved that, when she wanted to withdraw, he would simply understand.

During the past months, difficulties didn't overrun them, simply because so much was going on between them, and between them and the world in which they were slowly taking roots. Because they were learning from each other, in the wavering of their desires, and needs.

Difficulties didn't overrun them, yet difficulties were talking inside their hearts about what they needed to do, each of them, in a movement of coming back to oneself. Somehow, they already knew.

To be able to take any step now, they needed to be like nature in winter, they needed the secret work of the soul, the hidden one. Future was on the doorstep, and if it was indeed the future then it would flourish at one point; but to dance with it they needed the present to take place. They needed to let go, to belong to the transmutation, without knowing exactly where it would lead.

To be loved the way they felt loved was still hard to believe. Was it real? Was it for them, really? When your wish becomes a reality, the difficulty, maybe, is to become a reality yourself.

For the time to come, it wouldn't be about what was comfortable, but about what was right. So, like an archer shooting an arrow, they drew deep—and released.

7.

Separation allowed them to let go of the idea of perfection, and to let symmetries fall away like old skins. It allowed them to detach from comparisons, and, discovering their own fears, to comprehend what their fears had bound under their spell.

At times they would fail, at times they would cope, at times they would rise. It was a new travel, one to know themselves and reflect, one to meet the real with a serene heart. They worked hard, faced obstacles, soldiered on. They went to many metaphorical fields of battle, and confronted who the world wanted them to be, and the idea of themselves they had made to compensate.

Many emotions came to visit them, and sometimes stayed for a while: grieving the past, and also missing each other; the feeling of solitude, and of being exposed; of shame, but also of acceptance, towards themselves and, in parallel, towards each other, fostering a new kind of elasticity. The feeling of modesty, which we get only when we assume who we are. Ancient loyalties also became more evident. Each emotion they tried to accommodate and to question, so as to find the right fulcrum, from which to pivot and rearrange the dynamic of their forces and perspectives.

Sometimes, as by pure happenstance, they reached a shore unseen, a shore of unfringed silence, of presence: there, for a moment, everything seemed in equilibrium—and there, for a moment, it was like the other was so close. Next thing the waves would sweep them back into the sea...

They both realised that the process they were in was already underway before they met. Their relationship, instead of stopping them, gave them impetus to continue on their own path, showing them the obstacles more clearly than before. She took more steps towards shining her colours into the world, he took more steps towards assuming his fire as his own.

When they would meet again, they wouldn't have accomplished everything: but they would be both on their path. And that's a good place from where to start.

8.

As of today, we don't know what has become of them. The black dog and the blue fox. We have lost their trace in the immensity of the world. You can imagine the end of the story if you want, according to your own heart. But truly, what happens next is up to them.

As for you, who read this story (which is also life), create your own, care for it, dare.

Remember: that this is not about waiting, not about hope, but about finding peace (and peace is a practice). And if sometimes you are not sure, if sometimes you don't know: ask.

To the sincere heart there will always be a voice to answer.

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