

CHAPTER 1

The first time, he remained stunned for an interminable time. If only time exists. For what had just happened to him was simply unbelievable. And yet he was gifted with a fertile imagination. More than that, even. That imagination was like a wave that surges from nowhere and never stops its devastating course. A fearsome tsunami that shakes everything in its path, overturns all codes, destroys all illusions, creates the craziest oddities, brought the impossible to life, fulfills the most audacious dreams.

But what had just happened to him there...how to define it without falling into the most inane platitudes? To restore it in all its intensity? How not to reduce the majestic phoenix to the state of a meagre bird without wingspan, whose only feat would be to manage to fly out of the nest? Even in his wildest dreams, he could not have imagined living such an experience.

Ariel was a writer, a novelist, to be exact. That's how fertile his imagination was. Just as his taste buds were fertile when it came to cocktails. At the age of forty-three, he had accumulated a hundred recipes, and he continued to create new ones himself. First for his own personal pleasure, and then to test them before sharing them with his friends. He used to do it as a connoisseur, as the epicurean that he was. He rarely abused it, he had to keep his reason and all his intellectual faculties for the writing of his novels. But that evening, he

thought that surely he had dosed a bit too much, and that's why he was lamenting so much, in that early morning covered with white jelly. For once again he had not had the presence of mind to write down the recipe or the exact doses of each of the alcohols he had mixed. He always proceeded blindly, and then wrote down the names of the alcohols he had used so that he could reproduce the cocktails for his friends, if these had found them good. But this time, the effects were so fantastic - much more than the themes of his novels - that he would regret for the rest of his life not having measured out the magic drink, and then recorded and carefully archived the formula. For given what he had just experienced, it was no exaggeration to speak of a magic formula.

Over there... Over there, no more existential questions to be asked. No more fear, no more obsession. The whole of the Great Whole accessible at will. With the added bonus of the superfluous blessedness that makes you king of the world. The best of the best, the great class. Luxury, power, wealth and glory at will. No more fear of missing, of no longer pleasing the public, of no longer selling books, of no longer being enlightened by the neon lights of fame. Fame and money for life. Enough to afford the most luxurious hotels on heavenly sites. To be adored by the most beautiful women, appetizing and sensual, clever and imaginative, innovative in the pleasures of the flesh. While the wine flows, as an inexhaustible source of well-being. In other words, paradise on earth.

How, after that, to wake up in a good mood in the ordinary bed in the ordinary room of one's ordinary home?

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The first time, she had cried her eyes out. How can one experience such happiness and then have to give it up so suddenly? It was like being miraculously transformed into a blossoming rose at the height of its bloom, bathed in its heady fragrance, but at the same time feeling the wound of its thorns all the time. On every square inch of skin. Then we have no other solution than to leave this body, to give up this happiness that hurts so much. Knowing that from this moment on, nothing will ever be the same again. Not on earth, not in heaven, not in the infinitely small, not in the infinitely great. Nowhere. Stay or go ? Painful dilemma. Ineffable torture.

Elda was what we call a utopist. She seemed to have been born with this heightened idealism that illuminated her every thought and guided her every action. As if her dreams of perfection had preceded her birth. As if she had begun them at another time.

At thirty-eight, she was an accomplished woman. Still as pretty as when she was twenty, but with a beauty without artifice. Intelligent, but humanistic intelligence. She obeyed no rules other than those dictated by her conscience. By her love of life and respect for nature. She did not want to belong to any group, be it political, social or religious. Elda was a free electron and was fully assuming it. She didn't want to depend on anyone, so that she could remain in complete control of her thoughts. Her sense of honor and joy of life was very important to her.

CHAPTER 2

Comfortably seated in his private jet, Ariel quietly sips a cocktail, not as good as the ones he lovingly prepares for himself, but which still lets himself enjoy it with his eyes closed. At his side, caressing and purring like a cat rubbing at your legs to ask for milk, is a beautiful young woman. Long blond hair, pulpy mouth, firm and prominent breasts, slim waist and wide hips, long, shapely legs. The archetype of the perfect woman in his eyes. The one who expects nothing more from you than to satisfy her greedy appetites as much as yours and, from time to time, to receive from you some pretty dresses, jewellery, perfumes and luxury accessories.

Everything is perfect, he thinks to himself. In a few hours, I'll be able to take a dip in the lagoon, before spreading myself naked on the white sand to be roasted as much as I like, no matter think all those terrorists of formatted well-being who don't know how to enjoy life!

Ariel owns an island lost in the middle of the Pacific. He has just acquired it and paid cash for it for a truly indecent amount of money. This last gesture has just ranked him definitively among the richest men on the planet, which is not to displease him, and even gives him intense pleasure. A kind of timeless certainty, that nothing bad can happen to him, the exhilarating sensation of hovering over the world, and especially over all those underlings who continue to struggle in their false lives, their false projects, their false beliefs, their false idols, their false utopias. *That's what life is all about, he says to himself, it's being there, at high altitude, it's living the anticipated happiness of soon being in paradise, the happiness that one has made for oneself, by dint of willpower and endurance.*

Hovering in the realm of his megalomaniacal thoughts as his jet flies above the clouds, Ariel has totally forgotten that if he is where he is today, it is not only by dint of courage and willpower - of which he is only moderately endowed - but above all because he inherited from his father - himself endowed, on the other hand, with extraordinary courage and willpower - the multinational that the latter created and succeeded in making bear fruit over the years. It must be said that Ariel is a shrewd business strategist, and that until now he has never really needed to show courage or will to keep this family business running smoothly on his own. His only real job is to make sure that the money comes in regularly, so that he can maintain his current lifestyle with peace of mind. Nothing else needs to worry him, and it is with great "leisurely" consciousness that he immediately drives out of his mind such parasitic thoughts as "such wealth is indecent" "you should give some of your money to the needy", which the well-meaning minds, those he calls "politically correct", are accustomed to belch out in their cabbage leaves or their blogs. He never lets any parasitic thought pollute the quietness of his mind when he is in some place of well-being, such as where he is standing now, with a drink in his hand, a beautiful blonde woman hanging on his arm, trying to excite him with her clever footwork.

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Her descent onto the tarmac bathed in gentle warmth and caressed by the trade winds is always a great source of enjoyment for Ariel, an almost orgasmic pleasure. Leaving the snow and cold of winter, to find yourself on an island totally preserved from the hustle and bustle of this world, bathed perpetually in an ideal temperature of between 77°F and 83°F, isn't that the top of the top? Especially if this island belongs to you personally. How can you

not feel a kind of nirvana when you set foot on it? Ariel does not sulk his pleasure, which he shares generously with his companion of the moment :

"Isn't life beautiful?" he asks her in an enthusiastic voice, while letting his hand wander down her lower back.

"It's true, I'm very lucky to be here with you."

"You can say it, sweetheart. Measure that luck, measure it well, and taste it intensely. You're not gonna get to experience this twice in your life."

"Why, is this the last time you're coming here?"

"No, why ?"

"So if you're coming back, you don't intend to take your little dove with you again... she says by sticking to him."

"My sweet dove, you know what we said, that was the deal between us: no strings attached. We have a good time together, time we feel good. Then as soon as things start to get bad, we go our separate ways. I told you, I'm not a man to be tied down and I hate conflict. And in a couple, after the moonlight romance always comes conflict..."

"..."

"Laure..." he says in a softened voice when he sees her sad little tune, "don't worry, darling. Look at the sun, smell the perfumes. We'll have fun here, you'll see. Don't think about tomorrow, enjoy it!"

Then, slowly approaching her neck, he whispers in her ear:

"Who knows what tomorrow will bring?"

With these words, the smile returns to Laure's face. She puts her head on his shoulder, dreamy, and finds this sensual and dynamic gait at once that once made him fall for her, this new beautiful companion of pleasure.

Ariel is what we can call a seducer. He loves women and they return it well to him. He is always warm, loving and protective towards all those who enter his life, but he only gives them what he wants to give them. His time, his money, his tender attentions, his sexual skills, sometimes some confused feeling resembling a little at love, but he has firmly decided that he would never, ever become attached to any of them. Full freedom is his top priority. Love and all this bullshit from another time only makes men completely idiotic and locks them up behind very strong bars, tied hand and foot. It's not for him! He's always very honest about that with his new girlfriends. He announces the colour from the start. They agree, as it were, to go on a kind of love cruise with him, a beautiful trip that he will make unforgettable, and then, goodbye. Everyone at home. And so far, none of them have ever found fault with it. It must be said that his way of life and the possibilities it offers to everyone who crosses his path for a longer or shorter period of time are strong arguments that never fail to weigh in the balance. What unconscious person would refuse a cruise in the Caribbean or an all-expenses paid stay in a large luxury hotel with sea view and SPA treatments at will? Some of them sometimes have the desire to take Ariel for themselves, to make him change his mind by making him fall in love, but so far, none of them have ever succeeded, as he always does everything in his power to ensure that such a curse never falls on him. So it is not likely that happens to him.



Barely arrived on Elda, the name he instinctively gave to his island, without ever being able to explain how or why he made this choice, he has only one desire, to take a dip in the sea. And as he never gave up satisfying the slightest of his desires, he plants his

friend Laure on the terrace of his villa, after having invited her to discover by herself the magnificence of the place. In any case, she will have the swimming pool all to herself and will be able to bask in the sun at her leisure. He prefers to enjoy the wild beauty of his favourite beach alone. This is a privilege he has never shared with anyone else. His own little pleasure. That's just the way it is. Of course, Laure can go there as often as she likes, but not with him. It's part of the contract. The day she asked him the reason, he was unable to answer, but he felt absolutely no embarrassment. Take it or leave it.

As soon as he arrives on the beach, he quickly gets rid of his shorts, then his bermuda shorts, before rushing into the water with a loud cry of jubilation. What a joy! But what a joy! He advances, advances, advances again in this turquoise water where thousands of multicoloured fish are swimming. Then, when the water has reached the level of his waist, he starts to swim, with delirious enthusiasm. He has the impression that his body is going to dissolve in the water or that he is going to be miraculously lifted up into the air, so light does he feel. His heart overflows with joy. So much so, that he could not describe this sensation in all its luminous intensity.

After about ten minutes of swimming in this paradisiacal water, he comes back to the beach. He lies down on the sand and begins to observe the azure sky. A few thin clouds stretch out like silk filaments. He closes his eyes and lets himself be rocked by the noises, his body deliciously caressed by the sun and the wind. He looks good, there, naked on this beach. He wouldn't want to be anywhere else in the world. He feels so good and relaxed that he ends up falling asleep, filled with gratitude for life: *to say that I am imagining all this and at the same time I am in the story!*

He wakes up a quarter of an hour later, and it is about time, because his forehead and cheeks are already heavily reddened by the sun. He feels that it's getting hot. He knows, however, that in the tropics you have to apply a lot of high-protection sunscreen, but he was in such a hurry to dive into the water!

Ariel's not the patient type. When he's decided something, he wants it now. A rich man's whim, he readily admits, and without the slightest sense of guilt. Only afterwards, you have to accept the consequences, and in this moment, the results are sunburns all over his body and his nose so red that he can compete with the local lobsters. *Anyway, it's not serious, he thinks to himself; a little bit of Biafine on the way home and it won't appear there anymore.*

He sits up and is about to get up to leave, when his eye is drawn to something shiny on the water of the lagoon, straight ahead. He squints his eyes to see what it is: a point of light that sparkles like a jewel. The scattered light is very intense, but not blinding. Ariel more sharpens his gaze. His vision is now focused on this strange halo in the center of which he seems to see... Oh no... no... tell me it's not him... not already... no... don't bring me back already... please... I've only just arrived. Let me have some more fun. Ariel's sharpening his vision even more. Now he can clearly see the scene in the centre of the light bubble: a man is sitting in front of his computer, and that man is himself. Himself, writing the novel he is now in. He immediately remembers the incredible experience he had had the day before, when he was writing the fourth chapter of his novel. He was typing since hours, glued to his keyboard, impatient to discover the rest of the story he was creating himself. Writing a novel always does that to him. It's almost as if he was splitting up and his other one was dictating the rest of his stories to him. He was beginning to feel tired, and his eyes were starting to

burn after he had stared at the screen. It is at this moment that it had happened. There was an unusual sign on the page he was writing. There, in the middle of a paragraph, between the first two lines. Some kind of semicolon... or maybe a question mark mixed with a three, or... "*What the hell is that?*" He had been looking closely at the sign. In front of his astonished eyes, he had seen it grow up and grow and grow up to reveal what it really was. Ariel had opened his eyes wide, then, to make sure he wasn't dreaming, he had closed them for a moment. He had squinted his eyelids, then he had rubbed them vigorously, before reopening his eyes. The thing was still there. Or rather he was. For what was staring him in the eyes, smiling gently and holding out both arms, was a little man dressed all in black who was telepathically inviting him to join him on the page, between the lines of this novel he had started a few days earlier. And that's how Ariel had found himself, in spite of himself, without being able to explain it today, on the third page of the fourth chapter of his novel. All around them thousands of words and all sorts of single letters, dots, commas, dashes, which were dancing. Little by little, some of the letters had begun to disappear in an artistic blur, so that soon afterwards only the novelist and his double could be seen exchanging glances. A few seconds later, when all the letters of all the words in all the sentences had been erased from the page, Ariel had instantly found himself on the comfortable seat of his private jet, sipping the delicious nectar he had just described in his novel.

CHAPTER 3

With her arms dangling, her eyes wide open, her mouth open, Elda contemplates the wonderful landscape before her eyes. She can't believe it. A few seconds before, she was at home correcting the copies of an assignment distributed the day before to her students, and here she is now in this paradisiacal place, even more fabulous than all those she has so often imagined on the screen of her crazy desires. A few metres away from her, a waterfall pours its crystal-clear water over a natural pool surrounded by sublime flowers: hibiscus, mysterera, parrot beaks, birds of paradise and other equally beautiful and colourful varieties. The water of the cascade emulsifies elegantly along a rock, scattering its droplets in sprays of sparks. Wonderful fragrances reach her nostrils, wich are pulsating with excitement. Elda closes her eyes to smell them more intensely. This time it's wonderful. None of her previous journeys have been as intense as the one she's on now. It seems to her that as she "takes off", the landscapes become more and more beautiful, and this one is simply sublime. And again, she is far from it with this qualifier! Because no word seems strong enough to describe what she feels.

She doesn't want to leave this place anymore.

She doesn't want to leave this place.

But if she could only choose to leave everything and stay here, how could she do?

While asking herself this question, again and again, she moves slowly, without losing a single opportunity to admire the landscape. She makes her way between monumental ferns, staked here and

there with touches of colour brought by dozens of varieties of flowers. "I'm in paradise here, it's not possible! she marvels." Arriving very close to the waterfall, she still remains a few seconds to admire this Edenic apparition, before undressing to taste the pure water.

Ideal temperature. Neither too hot nor too cold. No hesitation to have. As soon as she dips her toes into the pool, she moves forward frankly and dives in immediately. *What a marvel! It's really delicious!* she rejoices as she starts to swim. *When I think that just five minutes ago I was bent over my notebooks, stuck to the radiator because of the freezing cold! I'm so lucky to be here, though... I wonder what it will be like next time. It can't possibly be better than today.*

It must be said that as her improvised "trips" go by, the regions she visits are more and more beautiful. But this one is really incredible. It corresponds exactly to her vision of paradise.

Once out of the water and dressed, without even taking care to dry her body with her hands, she decides to continue her exploration of the place. She sees a narrow strip of moss between the ferns. A sort of natural path that seems to attract the walker. She takes it without any hesitation, especially since this side of the site is decorated with dozens of magnificent flowers. Barefoot, her shoes in hand, she follows the path for a distance of about five hundred meters, not knowing where to put her amazed gaze, an ecstatic smile lighting up her face. Each patch of vegetation is breathtakingly beautiful. She's tasting intensely the bewitching elixir of an unparalleled Eden, in the scent of flowers and the enchanting cries of exotic birds.

As she advances, the moss begins to become scarce, gradually turning into sandier soil. Ferns have given way to rushes. She

perceives a new sound and as she listens more accurately, she understands that what she hears is the characteristic sound of the lapping of waves. Even before she reaches the end of the path, she guesses that she is approaching the sea. Just a few more metres, just enough time to go around a small bend through rushes and reeds, and she discovers it: a paradisiacal lagoon, whose natural splendour leaves her speechless. She stands on a small dune and the lagoon sleeps below, in the pure blue of a cloudless sky, lit by a bright sun and bordered by a white sandy beach. Motionless and silent, she remains there for a few seconds contemplating this sublime landscape. It seems to her that time is suspended. That the world has stopped turning. That everything makes sense and loses it at the same time at this moment. There is nothing to do, nothing to say. Just stand there and look, listen, feel... To be.

She moves forward again, then down the dune. Her legs sink into the fine, burning sand. She is now off the path. Her view is no longer obstructed by the high stems of the rushes, so she has plenty of time to contemplate the entire lagoon. An unequalled marvel of turquoise water surrounded by white sand bordered by palm and coconut trees. *The beach of paradise*. The one every man dreams of treading on one day. Even more astonishing: it is totally deserted. The great luxury. Elda considers herself to be the luckiest woman in the world, to be in this place of dreams, and yet she is surprised to see no one there. What is this place on the planet where one can enjoy to satiety an extraordinary panoramic view and then take a leisurely stroll in the most peaceful of solitudes?

At the very moment when she makes this reflection to herself, she sees an indistinct shape in the distance. A dark shadow on the white sand. It looks like an elongated body... Is it an animal? A human being? She moves a little further in that direction. Two

hundred meters further on, she looks intensely, to better distinguish the silhouette in a horizontal position. So, she is not on a desert island... Arriving at it's height, she can see that it is indeed a person and not an animal. A man, more exactly. Completely naked. And who seems to be deeply asleep. Which is only an impression, she will soon realize, because just as she is about to turn around, in a hurry to leave this embarrassing situation, the man wakes up, and her eyes immediately cross hers. He leaps to his feet, as if he had just been bitten by an insect, and before the young woman has a chance to say a word, he screams:

"Who are you? What are you doing here?"

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean to bother you..."

"This is a private beach ! How did you get here?"

Elda frowns. That's a weird question. "How did you get here?" What does it matter how I got here? And more importantly, what am I going to say to him? Will I say that I was transported? He already looks furious, if I give him this answer, this hound is capable of jumping down my throat!

"I'm waiting. How did you get here? This is a private beach."

"What do you care?" answers Elda. The man's aggressive tone annoys her. "Do I ask you how you got here?"

"I happen to be at home. So I can come and go on this island as I please. This is a private beach!"

"Oh ! Are we on an island?"

What an idiot! But what am I saying?

"Are you making fun of me now? Don't you know you're on an island?"

"Yes... I know... I didn't mean it ... can you get dressed, please?"

"No, I won't get dressed. I'm at home, I can walk around naked if I want to. This beach isn't public! It's private! Is that clear?"

"Well, to be clear, it's perfectly clear! That's the fourth time you've told me: it's a private beach. I understand, don't worry about it."

The man quickly turns around to take his clothes on the sand. Now Elda has a stunning view of his scarlet-red sunburned buttocks. Which makes her smile. He puts on his shorts and Bermuda shorts in three seconds, then turns towards her and comes back:

"All this doesn't tell me how you got here."

It's a real obsession! Well, I'm not going to get away from it, I'm going to have to find something to say. If we're on an island, there must be an airport somewhere...

"By plane. I flew in."

"Wrong answer. No plane can land or take off from here except mine. From a private airstrip, on a private beach".

Here we go again. He likes that word "private".

"So? Are you going to answer me, yes or no?"

"I arrived by boat", she lies. "I'm sorry, I didn't know it was a private island."

"You came by boat..." the man repeats in a suspicious tone. "And where is your boat? If a boat had docked on this island, I'd know. I would have seen it, mostly. A boat is big. We're here on the only beach that can accommodate one. The rest of the island is surrounded by reefs."

"There... that way... further on," she answers with aplomb. "It's a very small boat. A fishing-boat, in fact. That's why you didn't see it."

"All right, that's enough now! Stop taking me for a fool! Tell me when and how you got here!"

The situation is getting critical right now, Elda thought. Apparently, it's really impossible that I could have gotten to this place through normal channels...

"Who are you, anyway? What's your name?"

Ah, that's a question I can answer, she thinks, momentarily relieved.

"Elda Deram."

As soon as she answers, the man suddenly freezes and stares at her silently with big round eyes.

"What? What name did you say?"

"Deram."

"No, I meant what first name?"

"Elda", she answers, looking surprised. *He's really weird, this guy.*

"Really ! Your first name is Elda?"

"Yes, my first name is Elda. Is there something wrong with it? Is it forbidden to be called Elda on your precious island?"

"Elda is the name I gave my island."

Elda remains speechless for several seconds, then she asks:

"No... really?"

"I tell you the truth. You are currently on Elda Island", he says in a softened tone, greatly astonished look.

"How about that! Elda on Elda. This is incredible!"

"Indeed, it's incredible, which leads me to ask you once again: how did you get here? "

This time he has a slight smirk on his face and a sparkling eye.

I have to save time, quickly! To find something plausible to answer, she says to herself. I can't tell him the truth! That I'm here by the sole effect of my imagination and my desire to escape! At best he won't believe me, of course, at worst he'll think I'm crazy.

"I'll tell you, but first I'd like to know your first name, too. Now that you know mine", she replies kindly.

"Ariel. My name is Ariel Dumontier. "

Elda's holding back a smile. *Ariel... he has a guardian angel's name. But not the good manners, anyway...*

The man with an angel's first name is now looking at her - or rather, detailing her from head to toe - with an enticing smile and a look that says a lot about his new intentions. *What is he doing to me now? Is he trying to charm me?*

"So", Miss Elda, "what brings you to my island?" he insists once again, while happily plunging into her cleavage, which is nevertheless quite discreet.

Well, yes! He's really trying to seduce me! Well, now the situation is getting critical. If only I could get out of here immediately, as quickly as I got there!

No sooner has she had time to make that wish than she suddenly feels herself being lifted up into the air, at the same time as her lower limbs, then her upper limbs, then her whole body, disintegrate inch by inch, like a building attacked by termites. At accelerated speed, of course.

CHAPTER 4

Ariel opens one eye, then the other, a little blinded by the sun, then he stretches out nonchalantly, a radiant smile lighting up her crimson face. He has just had an incredible dream, and although a little disappointed - no, very disappointed, in fact - that it was only a dream, he feels surprisingly well. The divine creature that came to visit him in his sleep has marvellously excited him, and in that moment of his awakening, it would be impossible for him to hide it, naked as he is, and feeling his still very present desire rise at the thought of this unknown person appearing out of nowhere. Then he realizes that he is in Bermuda shorts. *But how, but... how is it...* he frowns. *I don't remember getting dressed when I came out of the water, though, he thinks to himself. You're getting old, mate, you're saying nonsense. Or maybe you've got a sunburn on your head, or maybe you've had a bit too much rum. No one came to put your clothes back on. You put your clothes back on and don't remember, that's all. Unless it was that pretty girl who did it," he laughs, with a naughty look. Maybe I was visited by a mermaid, who knows...too bad I woke up, I would have liked to know the rest of my adventure with Elda. All the same, what a coincidence! A young woman so pretty, who bears the name of my island! It's still very strange...I would have liked, for once in my life, having had a premonitory dream.*

Come on, wake up, old man, women like that don't exist in reality," he says to himself, "and so much the better, besides, it's too complicated."

He gets up quickly, shakes himself up, chases away with the back of his hand the rest of the sand stuck to his body, which is still a little damp, and then heads for his villa. Upon arrival, Laure is lying on a deckchair by the pool, reading an adventure novel. She doesn't hear him coming, for she is immersed in a seemingly captivating plot. He places himself behind her, puts his hands on her shoulders, then gently brings them down along her arms, while placing a kiss in the hollow of her neck.

" Hmmm...you smell good", he tells her, seducer. Are you all right, darling? He still has in mind the sublime apparition of his sleep. This woman has awakened his sexual appetites, which, by the way, are never really drowsy. But it must be said that at this instant they are particularly alert.

"Wonderfully well. "

"Me too, and to see you there, so lovely, so sexy in that bikini that fits you so well... "he adds as he continues exploring his body with his hands.

"We're fine here, it's true, " she says, "but... "

"But? I am listening to you, darling", Ariel answers, while placing her mouth on her chest now offered to the pleasure of her greedy glance.

"But it is a little too quiet, nevertheless... "

"Too quiet?" he answers, laughing, by standing up and looking her straight in the eye. "What do you mean? What did you expect? We're the only inhabitants of this dream island. Isn't it wonderful?"

"Exactly... I didn't expect this... "

"What did you expect, then? " he answers, hilariously, "a concert of cockatoos or macaws? "

"I thought we'd see people... we'd go to parties... there'd be music, dancing... like when we go to Ibiza. "

Ariel's face is getting darker.

"I warned you, though. I told you it would just be you and me, here, you and me alone. Doesn't that suit you? "

"It's not that, I don't... "

"What's that, then?"

"Well...to tell the truth..."

"Tell me. "

"I thought you were playing a joke on me. I thought you wanted to surprise me. That when I got here, I'd actually find a lot of people ready to welcome me to my birthday party. "

"A lot of people? Your birthday...? "answers Ariel, who suddenly feels uncomfortable. Oh, no... I forgot her birthday!

"You know it's my birthday today, right? "

"Of course! "He lies shamelessly. "And that's my gift," he adds with incredible bad faith: this one-on-one trip to a deserted island where no one will bother us. Where we will be able to coo quietly. I think it's romantic, don't you? Any other woman would find it romantic."

"It's very romantic, darling, really, and I thank you for this beautiful gift, but you know... I'm more used to the party. It's too quiet for me here."

Ariel keeps silent for several seconds. He can't believe this ingratitude.

"All right, since it's too quiet for you here, I won't keep you."

"And how do I do that? Do I swim back?"

"Oh, because that's it? You've made up your mind? You've already thought at the idea of leaving, and how? "

"Well... since there are only two of us on this island, since our plane has left, yes, I wondered it."

"If that's all it is, no problem! Don't worry, I'll call my pilot back, he'll take you where you want to go. Ibiza, St. Bart's, Palm Beach... wherever you want."

"Don't take it like that..."

"The discussion is closed. Just give me a few seconds."

Immediately, Ariel grabs her smartphone and orders in a firm voice at his pilote to come back to Elda as soon as possible.

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The next morning, first thing in the morning, Laure's suitcases, in impressive numbers, are loaded into the aircraft hold, while she climbs the steps of the boarding stairs, a big smile on her lips, her face radiant at the idea of soon finding a decor more in keeping with her personality and her insatiable desire for parties and frivolity totally uninhibited. Ariel didn't even want to accompany her on the small runway, vexed and angry at such ingratitude. His pride took a terrible blow. He thought he was so irresistible that any woman would agree to leave everything for him and devote herself only to him! On the other hand, all this is of an unstoppable logic. Where did he meet Laure? In a drunken evening. Why did he like her right away? For his venal and superficial side, in addition to his physical appearance, particularly her pulpy forms. Why did he choose her, rather than another? Because he knew that with her everything would be simple. He would only have to snap his fingers while skillfully pushing his luxurious watch out of his sleeve, for the beautiful one to fall in his arms. Between consenting adults, she and he would live a pleasant adventure, without getting in each other's way, until they both had had enough, and then it would be over! No feelings. No attachment. Feelings are complicated from the start, complicating you and making your life more and more complicated. They turn you upside down without warning. They bludgeon you.

They knead you. They wash you, then dry you. They suffocate you. Until you become an empty shell. After all, what's he complaining about? Laure is gone, a little fast, certainly, he would have liked to spend a few nice moments with her, but finally, could her presence really have filled this emptiness that has begun to insinuate itself in him for some time? A depressing emptiness, which at the same time - paradox of paradoxes - he is hoping and praying for. Why else would he prefer to go to his beach alone, swim alone in its turquoise waters, dream alone, looking up at the sky?

His thoughts take him gently back to that charming apparition he met on the beach a few hours before. Or rather to this incredibly realistic dream that gives him the strange feeling of having really met this woman. Without further prevarication, he decides to go back, thinking that perhaps, if he was in the same place and under the same conditions as the day before, the same dream would come back. Against all logic, given the way he sees life, he hopes that this same dream will produce the same effect: that inexplicable disturbing disorder that he always flees like the plague and which the day before made a new string vibrate in him.