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Traduzione di "La Regina delle Tenebre" di Grazia Deledda

At twenty-five years old, beautiful, rich, engaged, without having ever experienced any real, grave sadness, Margi Magda, one day like any other, all of a sudden felt her heart become black and empty.

It was like the start of a sudden physical illness, that came day by day, growing, spreading, expanding.

She was happy in her house, and waited for another source of happiness. But in order to achieve this new happiness, she had to abandon the past, and it seemed to her that *now* her regret about her distant family, the charming paternal house, her lost freedom, her abandoned homeland, could have given her indescribable nostalgia, poisoning her new happiness. There were hours in which, especially at night, in the darkness, she would feel deep anguish, living in the future. Now she would open her eyes, look around her bedroom suffused of dense, half lit light, and think:

-No, I won't leave anything, I won't abandon anything, ever, ever!

And so? And the entertained dream of love of long years? Ah, the present happiness was incomplete, it was not even happiness in comparison to the other things. And in certain hours, especially in the tender, violet evenings, she was consumed, like ever, in the desire of the beloved distance.

Sometimes she thought that real happiness could be in the blend of the present and the future, in living with her husband in the paternal house.

But it was a flash of light, which followed an impenetrable, frightening darkness. Yes, and so, and then? And then, she felt that, after, two, three, ten months, the love would die (maybe it was already dying, if she, not already a bride, clearly envisioned the end of it), and

from this great dream it would leave a man and a woman tied to the laws of the men, no longer that of the heart. But she also could not accept this: yes, if they were loved forever, like in the novels, they would have always been happy, yes, and so, and then? And then everything had to fall, time passed, death came. Ah, it was this evil of Magda, or at least, in certain hours of pondering, it seemed to her that this was her evil.

She *felt* the time pass, felt the futility of everything, and in the end she had a terrible fear of dying. This fear poisoned her life, the life to which she thought that in order to control the events with scrutiny over the inescapable years, she had to be so tenaciously attached. The idea of the *end* made her heart freeze every impulse, every joy, every idea of pleasure dried her out. So much that she at least thought.

She started to become grim, engrossed. If she went into town, if in the entertainment she was stunned, on the way back she felt a dark disgust with herself. Well, the happiness has passed: why was she stunned so foolishly, forgetting that time was passing?

And if then the instinct dragged her to remember, and remembering to still feel the satisfaction of her triumphs, of her elegance, of her splendor, a demon sneering at her inside, taunting her. Then she looked away disgusted, astonished how she abandoned the small thoughts of her feminine futility.

She started not coming out, not even for a walk: she only went in the countryside, diving in like a fragrant purification in the sight of sacred nature, that she sensed and understood strongly; but she did not even feel serene; the idea of fleeting time and the uselessness of things also followed her there.

The person that mainly took offense to Magda's moral illness was her long distance fiancé. She did not write him anymore, or write him harsh letters, bringing up strange things to him. She found him vulgar, and often, irritated by the miseries of the world and the perfidies of

society, she poured all of her bitterness on him. She would then regret it, but it was a weak and fleeting regret. One day, finally, examining herself well, she thought to find the cause of her dark emptiness that encircled her. She seemed to not love her fiancé anymore, and at the eve of the broken marriage the long dream of long years entertained. They called her crazy, and in fact, under the joint arches of her black, furrowed eyebrows, her dark black eyes had a fear radiant of insanity.

She also believed she had gone crazy, sometimes, and she was depressed by everything. She went in the time when all of her existence was strange. She didn't leave her rooms in the day: she left at night, wandering in her carriage in the sleeping countryside. She dressed in black, and her dark hair had a headband of steel with five diamonds that shined more than the stars.

Now they called her the queen of darkness: the farmers that watched over the top of the vineyards, some pastor that went sleepily behind grazing flocks in the night, some nocturnal hunter lying on the cold grass of the shoulders, saw her more than once descending her carriage, with those five stars in front, and leaning himself against the bollards, on the edge of the fragrant valley, or above the bridge, like she was focused on far flames of the mountain, or on the voice of the running water. One time at a reunion of elegant and thoughtless people, a group of foolish young men began to discuss the evident craziness of the queen of darkness. And one supported that idea and convinced his friends that Magda wanted to imitate Marina di *Malombra* and that, like her, she would have ended up committing crimes. They didn't talk about anything else. Magda often also turned to the ideas of having become crazy; or she at least felt that all of her soul was sick. One time she felt the need to recover her old life, to return to society; but beyond the rest, the fear of the crowd's gossip and the shocked curiosity with which her return would welcome held her back.

And she felt sad, sad until her death; she looked for a break in her thoughts about death; but when she intensely imagined the end of her life, the complete suspension of her thoughts, of her feelings, the stiffness of her body, the destruction of all of herself, she felt an unspeakable terror.

One night, finally, she left like usual, and she stopped in front of the railing that looked out on the valley. She felt more sad than ever, but something unusual, a faint veil of tenderness, a vague nostalgia of distant memories, trembled in her sadness.

It was the end of summer; an interlunar night, shined with some of the purest stars. There was an unusual, very delicate freshness in the air, and the valley's wild fragrances salivate heavily over that barely sensitive freshness. In the far mountains, that blocked the scenery of the vast, wide valley, the flames of the subsoilers that set fire to the stains, burnt so large, so bloody that the light arrived as far as Magda like the light of the moon. She remained there for a long hour, stretched out on the railing of the bridge: at the reflection of the distant flames, the five diamonds shone like drops of dew. The water passed scarcely under the bridge, with a tenuous whisper, continuous, faint, melancholic. The voice of the water also, that night, had an uncommon trembling, gentle, as of a tired voice, as of a voice that would speak in dreams. And the distant mountains burned, illuminating the unadulterated, starry night. The show was divine, and in the intense contemplations of that mysterious night, Magda forgot herself, she felt her sadness fall.

The flames of those poor, distant workers seemed to also illuminate the darkness that tightened the magnificent, budding brow. A concealed thought, maybe born before in the profound mysteries of her psyche, shone and revealed itself all of a sudden in the dark mind.

The queen of darkness felt like an artist, she felt like she was closed in her restless soul; the distinct reflection of nature and things. And she thought:

-- I will start to work tomorrow, and my work will be like the endeavors of the workers that light the mountain on fire, illuminating the night and fertilizing the land. I will describe this night, then I will write the story of my soul, returned to the world, to life, to love; and the world, life, love, and myself, will live in my work. And nothing more will destroy us.