

BLUE LOTUS

M.H.
MATAR

ADAPTED AND
ILLUSTRATED BY:
LUKA JAPARIDZE





M.H. MATAR

**WRITER AND
STORYTELLER**

Motaz H Matar is a filmmaker by training and a storyteller at heart. He holds an MFA in Cinematic Arts and an MA in Serial Storytelling. A Palestinian based in Dubai, he teaches media at the university level and believes his soul cannot think without a picture.

In 2017, while studying in Germany, he wrote his first book, *The 28 Mansions of the Moon*, and fell in love with the literary form. By 2019, he completed *The Pigeon Whisperer* and a collection of novellas. Writing became his way to understand life—and himself.



LUKA JAPARDIZE

**ARTIST
& ILLUSTRATOR**

Luka Japardize is a Georgian artist and illustrator whose work spans multiple styles, combining fine arts, illustration, and mural painting. A graduate of the Faculty of Fine Arts at the Tbilisi State Academy of Arts, he is known for his versatility and flexible techniques—ranging from vintage comic-inspired visuals to contemporary character design and narrative compositions. His practice includes editorial illustration, posters, murals, and commissioned works, with a focus on bold, expressive storytelling.



To the Golden Era

To the voices that still sing in grainy recordings, to the flickering film reels that refuse to fade, and to the timeless love stories etched in black and white.

To the dreamers who find themselves in the echoes of a song, in the glow of an old theater, in the shimmer of nostalgia.

This is for the past that shaped us, the art that endures, and the stories that refuse to be forgotten.

THE SMELL OF THE NILE RIVER WAS SEDATING AND INTOXICATING WHEN I SMELLED IT FOR THE FIRST TIME.

BUT TODAY THE NILE HAD A SCENT UNLIKE ANY OTHER, AND IT WOULD NEVER BE THE SAME AGAIN. IN THE DEPTHS OF THE NILE WERE BURIED SECRETS AND STORIES FROM THE PAST:

FROM THE GOLDEN AGE,

FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD,

FROM EIGHT THOUSAND YEARS AGO.



DID CIVILIZATION BEGIN HERE?

DID MY LIFE BEGIN HERE?

WHERE DOES THE FUTURE ORDER BEGIN?



I WAS AT THE MOVIES, AT AN OLD DOWNTOWN THEATRE PLAYING OLD CLASSICS.

I WAS ALONE BECAUSE I WANTED TO BE ALONE. WELL, I WAS SOMEONE WHO ENJOYED MY OWN COMPANY ANYWAY.

THE GLAMOUR OF THE SILVER SCREEN AND SYMPHONIES, THE EPIC GRANDEUR OF THE GOLDEN AGE.

HOW MANY TIMES HAD I BOUGHT A TICKET FOR THAT SAME MOVIE?

HUNDREDS? THOUSANDS?

I HAD LOST COUNT.

I'D SIT IN A CORNER.

THE TICKET MASTER WOULDN'T ASK
ME FOR MY TICKET ANYMORE.

BUT FOR THE FIRST TIME, I FELT
MY FACE CHANGE AS I CAME IN.

THE LOOK ON HIS FACE LOOMED
FROM OVER THE TICKET COUNTER.

I WAS WORRIED I'D DONE
SOMETHING WRONG.

GOD KNOWS HOW OFTEN I CAME TO
THIS PLACE. NEVER HAD I FELT
SUCH A STRANGE FEELING.

TICKETS

I WAS IN THERE
AND NOWHERE.

HAPPY AND UNHAPPY.

NOSTALGIC AND MISERABLE.

BUT THE VIBES OF THE
MOVIE WERE STILL THE
SAME: THE GRAININESS
OF THE SCREEN, THE
CHIC ATTIRE, THE
NIGHTINGALE VOICE OF
ABDEL HALIM.

I MEMORIZED THE LINES, TOUCHED BY
EVERY SOUND, SONG, AND FLARE.

EVERY SHOT REVIVED ME MORE THAN EVER.

I LIVED MORE VIVIDLY
THAN EVER.

I STARED MORE THAN EVER.

I WISHED TO BE AN ACTOR.

TO SHARE THE SOUL OF ABDEL HALIM,
TO ENTER THE WORLD OF THE BLUE
LOTUS OF CAIRO AS HE HANDS IT TO
HIS MAIN ACTRESS TURNED LOVER.

AND THEN THE ENDING SCENE,
WHERE ABDEL HALIM STAYS ON
STAGE AND SINGS; SHE SITS
WITH FEAR IN HER EYES, HER
GAZE AT MY FLIPPED CUP. THE
ENCHANTING VOICE. THE MUSIC
PLAYED, AND THEN IT STOPPED.

SOMETHING WEIRD HAPPENED.

FOR A SPLIT SECOND, ABDEL HALIM STARED AT
ME AND THEN THE LIGHTS CAME ON. THE MEEK
TICKET MASTER, WHO WAS THERE BEFORE,
CAME OVER TO APOLOGIZE.

THERE WAS AN
ERROR IN THE PROJECTOR,
AND WE HAVE TO
CLOSE DOWN.

WE'RE
SORRY.

THEN, WITHOUT SAYING WHY, HE DISAPPEARED, AND
THE FILM TURNED OFF, THE PROJECTOR WOUND
DOWN, AND I DRAGGED MYSELF AWAY. I ASKED
MYSELF HOW THIS HAD NEVER HAPPENED BEFORE
AND WHY SOMEONE COULD REMAIN FAR BEYOND
COMPREHENSION.

WAS THIS LIFE A MIRACLE?

WAS MY LIFE ONLY A MOVIE?

A man in a blue suit and dark shoes is walking from left to right across a city street at night. He is in the foreground, slightly to the left of the center. Behind him is a closed shop with a blue sign that reads 'مدينة المنورة' (Madinat Al-Munora) and 'للأفلام الكرتونية والتسجيلات' (للأفلام الكرتونية والتسجيلات) and 'جمله - قطاعي' (جمله - قطاعي). To the right of the shop is a doorway with a yellow door. Above the doorway is a sign that says 'HALIM'S LOOK...'. To the left of the shop is a dark doorway with a sign that says 'خمس دقائق' (خمس دقائق). Above the shop is a balcony with a railing and a window with shutters. Above the balcony is a sign that says 'I WALKED BY THE NILE.' Above the balcony is a sign that says 'FISHERMEN AND PEOPLE WERE CHAOTICALLY ENGAGED IN THE PACE OF LIFE.' Above the balcony is a sign that says 'STILL, THE VOICE OF ABDEL HALIM RESONATED IN MY EARS AND MY HEART.' Above the balcony is a sign that says 'MY FACE WAS NOT THE SAME AS IT NEEDED TO BE.' Above the balcony is a sign that says 'I NEARLY MET THE TICKET MASTER'S FACE.' Above the balcony is a sign that says 'I RAN BACK TO THE DOOR OF THE THEATRE.' Above the balcony is a sign that says 'IT WAS CLOSED WHY DOES IT CLOSE IN THE DAYTIME?' Above the balcony is a sign that says 'I SNUCK AROUND TO THE BACK, NOTICING THE MOVIE POSTER GLOWING IN FLICKERING NEON. I SAW THERE WAS NO ENTRANCE TO THE THEATRE.' Above the balcony is a sign that says 'HAD I BEEN LIVING IN WHAT I'D BEEN WATCHING ALL MY LIFE - A MOVIE?'

WHEN I WALKED OUTSIDE,
LIFE WAS THE SAME.

I WALKED BY THE NILE.

FISHERMEN AND PEOPLE WERE CHAOTICALLY
ENGAGED IN THE PACE OF LIFE.

STILL, THE VOICE OF ABDEL HALIM
RESONATED IN MY EARS AND MY
HEART.

MY FACE WAS NOT THE SAME AS IT
NEEDED TO BE.

I NEARLY MET THE TICKET
MASTER'S FACE.

HALIM'S LOOK...

I RAN BACK TO THE DOOR
OF THE THEATRE.

IT WAS CLOSED WHY DOES
IT CLOSE IN THE DAYTIME?

I SNUCK AROUND TO THE BACK, NOTICING THE MOVIE
POSTER GLOWING IN FLICKERING NEON. I SAW THERE
WAS NO ENTRANCE TO THE THEATRE.

HAD I BEEN LIVING IN WHAT I'D BEEN WATCHING ALL MY LIFE - A MOVIE?

THE FILM, LIKE A MOVIE, LIKE LOVE, BURST APART, ITS FRAGMENTS SCATTERED, AND THE TICKETS WERE PLASTERED ACROSS THE ARENA IN TEARS.

LOVE LOST. THE SCENE OF THE MOVIE ETCHED ITSELF INTO ME, AS PERMANENT AS THE PAST.

HALIM'S EYES WERE TELLING ME SOMETHING, THOUGH I COULDN'T YET GRASP IT. I CRIED A DESTINY, A MESSAGE WAITING TO BE UNRAVELED.

THE TICKET MASTER'S EYES GLEAMED LIKE NO OTHER, THEIR COLORS MUTED IN SHADES OF BLACK AND GRAY. THE BLUE LOTUS HE HELD DELICATELY SHIMMERED. HE EXTENDED IT TOWARD ME, HIS VOICE STEADY AND COMMANDING:

TAKE IT

MY HAND TREMBLED.

TAKE
WHAT?

I ANSWERED, CASTING SILENCE.

HALAL FOOD



TAKE THE
BLUE LOTUS...
WHAT NOURISHES A
BLUE LOTUS? A
WATERY WICK.

THE BLUE LOTUS,
IT'S YOUR TICKET
TO THE PAST!...

IT'S YOUR
TICKET TO LOVE,
TO REBIRTH.

WHAT ARE
YOU TALKING
ABOUT?

I STILL DON'T
UNDERSTAND.



I TOOK THE BLUE LOTUS FROM
THE TICKET MASTER.

THERE WAS A FLASH OF
LIGHT AND A WINDSTORM
INSIDE THE MOVIE THEATRE.

THE TICKET MASTER
DISAPPEARED.

I WAS LEFT ALL
ALONE AGAIN.



EVERYTHING WAS DIFFERENT.

I WAS IN EGYPT IN 1960,
ON THE SET OF A FILM
FOR ABDEL HALIM HAFEZ.

THE PORTAL
WAS OPEN.



A Stranger In a Golden Age

I was left all alone again. Everything was different. I was in Egypt in 1960, on the set of a film for Abdel Halim Hafez. The portal was open.

Maybe you know what you thought you knew, but everything is different on the other side. Everything is different when you access the portal. It's things that were kept as secrets...



Questions

- 1. What do you think the Golden Era holds behind its velvet curtain?**
- 2. Will Ali step into a memory or rewrite it?**
- 3. Will he brush shoulders with Abdel Halim Hafiz, or just hear him in the wind?**
- 4. What secrets does the past still whisper—and why do we keep listening?**



Stay Tuned

**Coming
Soon**

Contact me



www.mhmatar.blog