When Max Montgomery met Andi Traynor for a first date, he had high hopes. They went surfing on a California beach early in the morning and had a great time. Exhausted and happy, the couple left the ocean. Then, out of the blue, 56-year-old Max collapsed. He lay on the sand, silent and still. Fortunately, Andi was a doctor, whose years of training kicked in. She immediately began to perform CPR. It was the first time her lips had touched his. You could say it was their first kiss. It saved Max’s life. Max came to in the ambulance. His first emotion was one of embarrassment. He said he felt ashamed he had ruined a perfect date. At the hospital, doctors diagnosed Max with a heart attack. He got on the horn to tell Andi the news. He also wanted to apologize for ruining their day together. Andi broke down in tears when she heard his voice. She said, “I was so relieved because I was so upset that I had met this amazing person and now he could be gone.” Max went into surgery the next day. After his operation, he told Andi he’d understand if she didn’t want a second date. Max explained, “Who wants to date someone who just had a heart attack?” Andi said she did. She said the whole experience made her appreciate who Max really is. A few weeks after surgery, the two had another date. They were strolling along the beach when Andi said, “You can kiss me for real now.” Max did exactly that. He claimed at that moment his heart felt healed inside and out. Some say finding true love is rare. In a world with seven billion people, what are the chances you’ll ever bump into your soulmate? Former NASA roboticist, Randall Munroe, has studied the mathematical possibility of such a question. He believes the odds are stacked against us finding our soulmate. If we assume our soulmate is of the opposite gender and within a few years of our age, we would still have to find them in a pool of 500 million potential soulmates. It’s like finding a needle in a haystack. Perhaps Andi and Max would beg to differ. They might say that finding a soulmate defies numbers. As John Steinbeck once wrote, “If it is right, it happens… Nothing good gets away.”

Every August, Klepatan says goodbye to his lover Malena, before going to South Africa where he spends the spring and summer. Every March, like clockwork, he flies back to Croatia to be with his partner. Klepatan and the love of his life, Malena, are birds, storks to be more specific. And they have been continuing their long distance romance for the past 16 years. Klepatan is one of millions of birds that travel thousands of kilometers between South Africa and Croatia as the weather warms, but his relationship with Malena is one of a kind. In 1993, Malena was shot by a hunter in Croatia. A school caretaker named Stjepan Vokic found the wounded bird and took her home. He cared for the bird until she was healthy and named her Malena, which means ‘little one’. Stjepan nursed Malena back to health, but she still cannot fly properly. He wanted to make sure that Malena didn’t miss out on the joys of motherhood. To help her find a mate, Stjepan built her a nest on top of his house. In that nest, Malena and Klepatan first met, fell in love and have raised many baby storks. The local media celebrate Klepatan’s yearly visits. There is a 24-hour live video feed of Malena’s nest playing in the capital of Croatia. Klepatan not only arrives on the same day but often at the same hour. In 2016, he broke the pattern and arrived six days late. It was so out of character that people panicked that something terrible must have happened to him. When another suitor arrived in his place, Malena would accept no substitutes for Klepatan. She attacked the new bird until he flew off. Klepatan and Malena have 4 to 5 baby storks every year. Since Malena can only fly short distances, Klepatan handles the flight training of their children. In March, Klepatan departs again on his 13,000-kilometer flight home leaving Malena behind. This is when Stjepan steps in again to keep Malena from getting lonely. He says that after Klepatan leaves Malena, she mourns for ten days. “Then I take her in the car to the meadows for fishing, to take her mind off it.” During the cold winter months, he brings Malena into his house to live with him. The ever-caring Stjepan feeds her fish and the unlikely pair watch nature documentaries together on TV.