

## THE CANDLE HOLDER

Twenty years ago, in a small village bordering the sea in Turkey, lived a young orphan. She had lost both her parents, taken by the waters who until then gave them the means to live. So often the sea swallows in silence those she has fed. The girl stayed with her aunt and was forbidden the access to the shore. The sea was a sound for her, a sound that remained in her ears as it settles in the shells collected on the sand. It was her horizon, a blue stripe in which the sun descends to bath every evening. How she wished to dip her toe, the little one, just the little one, in the salty waters. But she could not approach, her aunt always kept her near. To be sure the girl stayed in reach, she taught her how to craft metal. And from the noise coming out of the hammer hitting the copper, she knew where exactly the girl stood or sat. As the cows carrying a bell around their necks so that their shepherds could locate them, the girl banged the metal, in an even rhythm, from dawn to sunset.

One day, copper ran out in the village. The aunt could not let her niece idle. She took the jewels left by the departed parents, melted them and gave them to the orphan to be worked on. All was in order. The aunt listened, quietly, to the dear daily sound that claimed everything was in order. Hammer in hand, the girl shaped a candle holder out of the unformed piece of metal. But, at every hit, a tear rolled down her cheek. She did not pay attention, occupied she was to listen to the waves. And without notice, the candle-holder received all the tears, until it was filled to a half. Coming back from her day dreams, the girl saw this wonder. She dipped her finger in the salty water that came out of her eyes. She brought it to her mouth and a fish jumped out. He wriggled a few seconds on the sandy ground, stood up, walked to the candle-holder, drank the water left and ran off. The girl marked the object with a pattern, sign of this event. In the evening, she asked her aunt if she could keep this candle-holder with her, if this one could stay in the family and not be sold in the market. The aunt did not refuse and the girl took a candle out of the drawer.

Locked in her room as every night, she lit the candle and watched the flame playing around. Wax-tears rolled down, one after the other, silent cries of a flame who cannot get free from the thread who keeps it attached. The wax gathered on the stand of the candle-holder, forming a perfect sailing ship. The girl went to the door to knock and call her aunt. But before she gave the first knock, she noticed that this time the locker was not placed properly. She stepped out and her steps took her to the forbidden shore. There she handed the little boat to the waves. On its own, it set off. It placed itself onto a rock - a rock where many sailors left their lives - and a flame shot out. For one year, every night, the girl repeated the same ritual and escaped to give her candle boats to the waters. For this year, there had been no accidents and all the sailors that were coming to Turkey got back safely to their families.

At the end of 365, the girl took off her shoes. She dipped one toe, the little toe. She dipped a second, and a third. The fourth and the fifth joined together and dragged behind them the entire foot. The water did not feel cold, but slightly too fresh. The girl stepped in. The second foot followed. She walked slowly. She walked straight forward. In her room, the candle-holder rang twice. She heard the dear sound that called her back to the shore. Drenched, a taste of salt at the corner of her lips, she went back.

In the morning the whole village was gathered at the sea side. 365 little candle boats, upside down, were tossed by the waves. Each villager wanted to read here the sign of a terrible upcoming event. The aunt joined them and curious the girl followed from afar. The candle-holder rang in her hands. The girl came to a rock and stepped in the sea. Before her aunt could reach her, she was carried away by the boats of wax, free now to dip at will her little-toe, her arms, her cheeks.