

# Blue Bull

Storytailors

By Ana Leonor Freire Branco

Tepid light morning, fluttering fog, purpled blue sky, great extension of yellow tarnished sand. Her lost look was staring at the window. There they were, the small blue beings, subdued, in a blue tunic, crossing their legs, firm, sitting above the waves, which move forward and backward, white flat hair, their own, not the wave's. The music was always there, a melancholic sound. Small beings, almost childish, if it wasn't for their lack of expression. Serious, impenetrable, absorbed in the uttered melody, with the greatest concentration and extremely at ease. As if there was anything else but these high notes with no lyrics. They were away from the waves, from the sea, from all the rest, although they noticed her presence, although they could feel her, she knew they could. Júlia, or her look, was lost. And the blue beings, in the background of the sand, serene, singing. Many mornings, without a warning, without a schedule or a booked day, out of time.

She had always measured time, with accomplishments. She didn't use to question it. She used to wake up really early in the morning, when she could hear the dogs barking outside. She used to open the green windows gateway, she used to run downstairs and... good morning dead! She used to leave him, still in the morning, at the breakfast table, by himself, with a chocolate milk glass right in front of him and a kiss him on his cheek. "See you later!" There were no questions in the morning. At night, when they would come back home, they would do all the talking. The night used to bring dialogue, while the day used to happen inside oneself.

At sunrise, she used to get the flock free. Be free and get free, she used to wonder. She used to observe the slow walking of the sheeps. How could they spend all the night locked up, and not to jump, to gallop or to push one another, once the gates were finally opened! She couldn't understand it. Sheeps... Could they have an idea of what society was? Why were they hiding in their own natural environment? Could they be naturally passive? And, with this kind of thoughts, she used to guide them to the hills, with the concern and the condescension these animals rouse in her. She used to sit under the sun, or under a shady tree, with her headphones and the book she had brought the eve from the library. In rainy days, she used to protect herself in small cubicles she used to build with umbrellas, and, thanks to her lantern, she could continue a slower reading, interrupted by gusts of wind. In the afternoon, when she heard the nearest school bell ringing, at 17.00 pm, she used to abandon the flock for a while, in order to observe the children's outrush, from the top of a wall. What a difference! Those "sheeps" ran, shoted in all directions: home, coffees, bicycles, dark corners, or sunny corners, according to their passionate preferences. She used to look at them, with the same curiosity she would have if she could look at herself from the outside. They represented the energy she had accumulated during the day and they could make her see her inner euphoria materialized. When the first man wearing a tie was

coming outside, she used to turn back to her sheeps. Her aim was now to gather them as quickly as possible, in order to get to the library before 6.00 pm. She rarely could do so. The flock had no rush. Sometimes, she would find the gates closed, therefore, she used to ring the bell effusively. She believed luck had no rules. Then, she used to hear: "Don't you know that schedules are made to be respected, young girl?", Or: "Hasn't anyone taught you good manners?", Or: "If we make an exception for everyone who arrives late...", Or just: "No, time out. My labor schedule is done, and I also want to go home, I'm tired and I have that right". She was actually right, but sometimes Júlia couldn't keep that in mind and there was no loss in trying. In these occasions, Júlia used to read again the book from the eve. She could read the same book over and over again. Sometimes, over five times! But at the fifth time, she confessed, she slept more than she read. And she used to come back home thinking that the literary vision she could have of her day didn't include practical problems, like time, when it's hard to spend it, cold, sleep, injuring her foot, spending the whole day without talking with anyone, speaking to herself, or to the sheeps, or being surrounded by ants because of the left over of her lunch, or repeating the same gestures all day, wishing to burst, wishing to fly, wishing to abandon the flock, or being in the kitchen roasting a few chestnuts in winter.

In one of those evenings, however, and this "however" was expected, since happenings are always preceded by "however", "once", or "suddenly", even if in the real world they keep coming without warning... In one of those evenings, however, nothing could be more expected than... the stepmother! Of course! The first time Julia saw her, she was standing in the living room. Resting her elbow on the cupboard. She was expelling the smoke of her cheroot all over the house, what made her shape look little delineated. At first, the smoke, then the voice behind the smoke. That's what Julia retained of this meeting. And she didn't need anything else to feel she was living any literary moment. Once again, she forgot practical factors. She found out soon who this woman was, as well as what she was doing at her place. Anyway, she only realized the consequences this presence could have in her life a few months after her father has married Milenai.

The truth was that the stepmother had nothing to do with the evil characters from fairytales. She was nor the gothic witch with mysteriuos powers, neither a sorceress capable of metamorphosis and over-human forces. She was a character who came nor from the future, neither from any other planet to bring evil to the world. She had not even a small part of what could be attractive, or great. She was real, and, worse than that, she was the proof that the fear of every day life hasn't got a hundred part of the beauty, of the intensity of the enthousiasm of the horror felt in imagination. Julia had to war evey day, and it wasn't to save the world, to protect the society, or to accomplish any other great cause. The greatest sacrifice she had to suffer consisted in the fact that Milenai had taken all her usual duties. The stepmother couldn't stand sheeps, and over all, she couldn't stand her stepdaughter was a sherperdess. She gave her instead a rare animal, which was given to her during one of her travels in India: a blue bull. "If you want to guide an animal to the hills, at least it will be this one" she had said.

Julia could be happy without the sheeps, but she was upset of being limited to guide only one animal. She didn't have to run anymore to gather the flock, and she couldn't observe the way animals live in society. Before, she was feeling lonely. Now, she was feeling more than lonely?? Are there different stages of loneliness? When you are alone, you can't be lonelier than lonely. Before, it was already loneliness. And she could entertain herself like this for hours and hours. She was always wondering about something. The moments which used to please her the most were those when she

was conscious that she was wondering, that she was producing something, anything. She had new ideas, new theories and that was to create something that didn't exist before. Or even if it existed, because some one might had said it, thought it, or written it, what did she care?! The feeling of having lots and lots of stuffs inside of her and managing to give it away, to expell it and infect the whole world with it was enough to fulfill her. She had found a way of feeling herself and a way of being felt.

So, she started sharing these feelings with the bull. The more she talked, the more she felt like talking. She ascribed ideas, words and enormous answers to it. She used to start with "Do you think...", "Look...", "I'm wondering about...". And she created the answered she imagined the bull could give her "but...", "don't you think better that...". As time went by, she stopped making introductions. She began the dialogue right away. Until the day...

Until the day, the afternoon, during the unrested hours after resting from lunch, when she looked to the bull in a an avid, uncontrolled way that used to precede the impulsive fall of words and...in a sweet, understanding voice the animal exclaimed "so, tell me". For a moment she thought she was getting crazy. But she concluded that she was definitely too lonely and that it was better to stop the fullish game of dialogs she had began. It was becoming dangerous to the point that now she could think the bull had started talking. Imaginig has its own risks. "What's wrong?" insisted the bull.

- You speak? She asked wrinkling her brows.
- It seems so. You should be really incredulous if you thought that bulls couldn't speak.
- You speak.
- Yes and from now on, I promise you won't feel lonely anymore. I'll be with you, I'll speak a lot with you.

Don't make promises you won't want to keep, thought Julia. But she was so willing to believe him, that she throw herself into him and hug him as if he was the only and last creature in the all earth. He wasn't certainly the only, nor the last, but he had spoken inside her, or outside her, she couldn't tell. Perhaps in both ways. He had guessed what she needed, what she was urging to ear. More than that, he had guessed her. Julia had been opening herself to him for days, but from that moment on she started to feel him in her, a part of what until then had been only "me". She throw herself to the most tearing, and most intense breaking of silence

Well, Milenai didn't enjoy the news! The entire village heard about "the girl of the talking bull". The words exchanged between the blue divinity and Julia were fast token to the stepmothers ears. And, once again "when you tell a story, you allways add something". Therefore, the neighbours who eared them, enriched the matters, added subjects, and extract simplicity. The versions which get to Milenai were about a bull who actually was a disguised prince who promised her lots of trunks with jewls of inestimable prices, who was wondering to offer her a star with much more energy than the sun. They even told her that the animal promised the girl he would give her the youth potion, that he had told her that he would make her fly in carpets made of petal of flowers never seen before. At first, the stepmother didn't believe. But Julia was becoming more and more different. The stepdaughter was constantly smiling, she started getting up earlier and earlier, and getting home later and later. She never asked for

her flock again. She no longer have been seen reading the same book, she actually was hardly seen reading any book at all. In that moment, Milenai started to feel consumed by rage. Perhaps...Perhaps the village people were right. She couldn't stand the idea of being the one who had so unworriedly given the animal to her stepdaughter. Her gift from India. She couldn't forget she was the OONNEEE! Who had given it to her stepdaughter. The animal she had once considered as stupid and stinky was now her little pretty bull. It was urgent to repair the situation and to force the bull talking to her!

And Milenai started to get up every morning the moment she could ear the dogs barking. She started singing in the dawn, wearing a scarf around her head and a crook in her hand, trying desperately to correspond to the image she had of a sheperdess. With such an interpretation, the bull must speak to her! After managing to expel Julia again to her sheeps, she began her plan of attack! She spent days after days with the bull in the fields. Sometimes she sang, sometimes she danced, other times she beated it with a stick. Sometimes she took it to the most green and juicy prairies, others she made it starve, trying to beat him with balckmail. Sometimes she laughed, trying to seduce it with her good mood, other times, she cryed, trying to tuch it. Sometimes she didn't stop talking, trying to contaminate it with her words, other times she kept herself mude, in order to make it take the initiative and talk. Nothing. Never, anything. From the animal, not the quietest sound.

Júlia, on the other hand didn't know what to do. She was feeling anguished and anxious. After all, it really was possible to be lonelier than lonely: when you are lonely after not being lonely. She still had her ideas, her subjects, but everything kept diing just after being born. Just as if she had no skin and thousands of restless centipede were walking over her flesh. It hurt. It burnt! She looked to her flock, but now she couldn't see it with the former joy. Her thoughts were dried, rinkled, they were hanging in the brunches till they fall, not giving themselves away, not anymore. Sometimes, she had booms of rebellion. "Damn sheeps which don't understand what I'm going through! Damn bull who lied! Damn Milenai! Go away being a stepmother of anyone elsa! I hope you blow his tympanums with your stupid little chants! I hate everything and everyone! I'll chew, eat and swallow my own thoughts! It's for the best! I'll keep them just for myself. I don't care about loneliness and such spooniness! As long as I still have music, words to read and hands to write, I'm alive! Just for myself, my thoughts...And when I'll get fat and puffed up with my thoughts that I no longer won't stand them, I'll through them up! I'll through them up all over everyone! Just get it! And I'll through my emotions up too! And I hope it hurts! I hope it hurts everyone who it gets. By that time I won't be me anymore! And I will shout them! I will shout everyone! Everything! No more whisperings!... And if no one ears it, if no one touches it, it's for the best! And if I get lonely! And "if" and "if"! The "if" which never let me see clearly, the "if" that stop and delay! Get rot, stupid world of "if"! If there is only me, there won't be any "if"! If there is only me, I won't be afraid! Just for myself, my own thoughts...!" And then her eyes got weat. She bited her lip..."Spooninesses", she kept repeating. I hope someday the bull shout at her ears!...And she become deaf! When she expect it the less...

What Júlia didn't know was that the attempts of the stepmother in order to make the bull speak were vain. The bull kept himself in silence. Desperate, Milenai had recourse to all the theaters remembered of: she tried to bellow, to seduce the bull with herds of cattle, and even grass she finally tasted. Of course her neighbours knew nothing of it. To the village people, she told the animal reavealed her incredible secrets. "He has treasures", she said. "Gold. Intire galaxies". He would make a queen of her. He actually was a prince. A charming and charmed prince! "No one talks like he does! He has a sweet, inebriating

voice. Melodious sound, true potion of life for the privilege ones he talks to. A real prince! No doubts about it! More than that, a prince who serves with the devotion of a lover, who, being more than myself, lies on my feet!" Everyone envied Milenai. Everyone, except Júlia. When the girl heard about all those nonsenses, she felt relieved. A real prince, for sure. Charmed and charming, of course! Sweet, delightful voice, potion of life, she perfectly agreed. Yes, it was true that he had treasures and galaxies, but treasures and galaxies very different from those of Milenai referred to. Treasures and galaxies that could hardly be suspected by the stepmother. Milenai's mistake was to assume the bull possessed castles, and lands very well determined. Milenai did wrong, when she talked about massages made with boiled rice in Turkish steam, hairdressings obtained thanks to essences extracted of honey-combs and other details which lead Júlia to interior laughs when she saw her getting home covered with blues, traces of soil and vestiges of chlorophyll. After all, the bull kept being faithful to her! Once she realized it, she got angry with herself. How could she have thought he would rather be with Milenai! She understood that the bull had been under Milenai's care against his will.

Her nights became longer since then. Once she was sure her father and Milenai were asleep, she escaped to the stable, where she remains with the bull until dawn, with her little blue bull. Milenai soon noticed something weird about her stepdaughter. Not only the girl had incredible rings round her eyes, but she also got back to the relaxed distraction of former times.

Obsessed by her desire almost more competitive than real, one night, Milenai followed her stepdaughter to the stable. And she saw what she was willing not to see: the bull and the girl, partners in words between straws. The stepmother could finally hear the sound of the bull's voice, but it wasn't addressed to her. Astonished, enraged. Júlia had done nothing at all to make the animal speak. She had just arrived near him and the most kind words were pronounced in a heavenly tone. Milenai had never had that effect in him. "Damn pet!! Damn! If he doesn't speak with me, he won't speak never again!...I'll cut his tongue out!"

The decision was taken and the action was supposed to take place just the day after, cause matters of rage, as matters of passion, are essentially due to haste and rest of reason.

The day was still stretching its arms when Júlia noticed that her stepmother was already in the kitchen. "Good morning, my dear! I was thinking you've been working so hard with the flock. The sheep are so fat, that I thought today you don't need to take them to the fields. You need a rest. Besides, the bull has been so quiet lately that I think he won't mind I take a break myself and your father will only get home after dinner. Let's go to a movie. Look, I heard there's a movie about a book you have read...How was it called? Ah, right, It's probably that one. And then we'll go for a walk. We haven't talked much these days. We can catch the 6.30 am train and come back on the 23.30 pm's. What do you think? But sit here for a while. This is for you, see? I've made you a few toasts!"

The situation was at least unexpected. Milenai and cinema? A chat? Toasts? The stepmother soon realized how stupid she had been, by adopting the behaviours she used to read in kitsch stories. Júlia stared at her completely amazed. She had certainly over reacted. The stepdaughter would get suspicious of such plans. So, Milenai decided to change her strategy and chose a more realistic technique, more irresistible, more realistically boring and convincing. "Júlia, I'm sorry, you are right in being suspicious, you see. The truth is that I'm not well, you know. I've been having some problems and

I need to talk. I thought you might didn't mind to listening to me. I feel so lonely". This time, Júlia didn't seem so surprised to her. For some reason, it is always more easy to believe in other people sadness, or in our own, than in their happiness..or our own. The fall can be arised, and supported, you rise, you regret, you comfort. The rising knows no limits. It can be done by oneself alone, higher and higher. You can't help to make someone fly. Therefore, when you're down, in trouble, it is more probable to obtain company and support than when you're happy and hopping. We have our brains wached with "help others out when they need you", and "I'm really happy for you", but there is no water to "I want to be happy with you".

- I'm so happy, please come join me!!!!!!

- No, I'm sorry, today is not quite good for me. I've got some stuff to do.

And you don't think about your answer anymore, because the person is happy, the person is "ok".

- I feel completely depressed, I need help!

- I'm coming! She/He needs me, I'll get there in a second!

There's something heroic in going. I'm going to save.

And Júlia was no exception. She went. She wasn't surprised with her stepmother's sadness and Milenai was bright enough to realiz that just on time. Or maybe not that bright... Because even when you want to be machiavelic, or mainly when you want to be machiavelic, it takes some preparation, a meticulous mind and some previous dedication. Milenai had acted by impulse and, we have said it already, she wasn't the traditional witch of fairytails, who obtains what she wants thanks to spells. It seems obvious that the creature who wasn't ashamed to bellow in order to attract the bull's voice, wasn't properly a Mme de Merteuil, neither in subtilness, nor in passions or in the lack of them, and even this lady ended up by being trapped! So, our stepmother forgot a few details...

The agility she was lacking of in pratice was nevertheless rewarded by some megalomalous and novelish ideas. The plan consisted in spending the day with Júlia. She wanted the girl to be so tired at night, that she wouldn't have strength to join the bull in the stable. When Júlia would be asleep, Milenai would escape to the stable and she would cut the bull's tong. Nothing easier. The eve, she had prepared an enormous bawl, a sharpened knife and a white sheet that she would insert in the pet's throat, to avoid his shrieks...What, to tell the truth, she would enjoy..."Ah! Listen to yourself now, stupid animal?!!" Borrowed from the greeks, the dinner menu of the following day would be roasted tong and Júlia would eat it in a rush, thinking she would be able to speak with the bull just after her meal. The revenge would be proportional to Milenai's efforts to communicate with the animal. While Júlia was preparing herself to get out with her stepmother, Milenai was entertained choosing the best recipe of her cooking book and she was writing some notes aside. She wanted the most succulent condiments to be there.

When the night fell, Júlia was actually very tired. Milenai had managed to talk during the entire day. She had told her stepdaughter all about a childhood she had imagined for herself. She told her episodes of friends and she resumed all the touching subjects that she had ever heard, ending by creating an uninterrupted speech, an amalgam of sounds and subjects that had nothing to do one with another. Júlia was no longer capable of distinguishing them by the end of the day. She only hopped her stepmother to be quiet.

When she got home, exhausted, the girl went right to her room. Half asleep, with her eyes closed, she saw the kitchen corner she had observed in the morning. Under the chimney, near the stove, there was a bowl that was stuck in her memory. She hadn't think about it during the rest of the day and in the morning she had forgotten to ask what it was doing there. The image became more and more concrete, more defined. Now she could also remember a sharpened knife under a sheet which was covering the bowl. She was trying to push her sleep away, in order to find what that things could possibly be doing there, when suddenly, some bits of the speech pronounced by Milenai during the afternoon occurred to her. Amongst the sentences more or less melancholic and the descriptions of terrifying moments to which the stepmother tried to give a particular dramatical tonality, some revolutionary and spontaneous quotations had come to her, revealing what in fact the mysterious woman was thinking. "The only way of relieving from what is obsessing us is to cut it by the root", and then, excited, "To tear it apart from us, to cut it, to kill it". Then, she had got calmer and she had returned to the whisperings. Júlia balanced between considering it weird, sad, or agreeing. In an other moment, the stepmother suddenly had asked "Don't you think? Don't you think? Don't you think revenge is prettier, more fare and flattering of the avenger, when it is astucious, unexpected and cruel?! If it must be, it's irrelevant if it is cruel or quiet, it still is revenge". To not feel guilty concerning what she was preparing to do in the end of the day, or to cuddle her brightness, she had had appeal to some considerations that she couldn't avoid expressing. Thinking about these words, and keeping the image of the knife in mind, Júlia managed to definitely push the sleep away and went down the wooden stairs. All that evening seemed unreal to her. She had heard Milenai. She had found her odd, worried, but she couldn't tell her what she really was thinking. She had heard Milenai, but she didn't like it. She had answered her as if each word was over flown by another one. Now, Júlia wanted to get it clear. Since she couldn't find her stepmother, she took the kitchen direction. She wanted to check the bowl image she had in mind. The object was no longer in the corner. However, she saw her stepmother seated in an armchair in the living room, with a cigarret in her hand, as quiet as Júlia had wanted her to be during the whole afternoon. She was wearing an apron covered with blood stains and she addressed Júlia a provoking smile. No!!! It couldn't be possible! Now everything seemed clear enough! Milenai had killed the blue bull!!! Júlia throw herself at her stepmother. "I'll strangle you, you sick woman!! How could you??!! I should have got it before! I'll kill you!" Milenai tried to answer, but her arguments had no value. The girl was possessed by anger. She couldn't hear anything. She nailed Milenai's neck. Milenai started screaming and shouting and she woke the whole house up. In fact, the stepmother hadn't materialized her covered plan yet. She had just prepared a mixture of cows'blood to conserve the tongue as soon as she would get it. She was just improving her cooking to be. Quickly, the father came running to help his wife, and he forced his daughter to take a sleeping pill, making her to fall in the deepest sleep, not giving her thus the chance to explain herself. Milenai just said to her husband that since she couldn't sleep, she had decided to prepare a new recipe to surprise him the following day.

In bed, her eyes closed, Júlia didn't know if she was asleep. If she was asleep, she was certainly having a nightmare. She could see her stepmother's smile and the poor bull, who she believed was dead. She was sad, very sad. She lost any hope, her eyes were blind, her body was empty, her thoughts were inexistent. Apathy, alternated with sorrow. Melancholy, nostalgia, loss. She missed what it had been before, she was revolted against what it was now. All matters were mixing in order to empty in an only abyss: escaping. But even this way out wasn't easy. It implied a "where to" that Júlia couldn't determine. Running away would only make sense if she actually was running away from something and far of that thing. Since there are lots of stepmothers around there, running away from this one would

change nothing at all. Since the death of her sweet friend could not be erased, every and any escapes would be only a door of entrance to the same situation.

She was having this kind of thoughts, when she heard someone singing. She soon remembered the blue beings she hadn't seen for a long, long time (at least since the moment she had started existing in her own story). She ran to the window to see them swinging in the sea. Repeated, rythmed gestures, just as if they were willing to make her forget. Yes, to erase everything she had inside of her head. Now, not later. Abandoning defenitely everything that was still connecting her to the rotten world she was a part of. Leaving behind people with irritating behaviours, fake situations created by people who protects above all their own self-estimate, who contribute to a state of "pseudo-social" balance. People who believe they are better and that they have more rights than the others. People who don't look to themselves. People from the navel. So, lucky them if they manage to think like that. Live happy in your universe of adult smiles and behaviours made of "I'm so weak, but It's not well seen to show it, so I'll adopt a strong behaviour, suggesting however pseudo-gently how sensitive I am", and "I may be a bitch to no matter who, cause deep down there, very down there, I know I am extremely sensitive". And other elements of this kind of people think: "Oh! What an example to be followed! Although he/she is sensitive (like everyone else, by the way), he/she keeps his/her dignity and strenght. Certainly amazing!". Those who are patient enough may content themselves with this. Júlia was much more charmed by the blue beings'behaviour. And if she could, she would move to another universe. Lucky her, cause that same day, one of the creatures separated itself from the singing others and walked through the serene sand, slowly, in Júlia's direction. Júlia felt her tears coming down over her face. Fear, aesthetic commotion, or sadness, cause she could see what normally she would only be able to touch. The real domain was melted with the untouchable one. What so far had been only an object of contemplation, appearance, auditory, imaginative, was now standing in front of her. The being said nothing. It just looked at her in silence for a few seconds, she couldn't tell how many...In the eyes, there was life, something that was undeniably being given to her. Far away, the song... In the house, everyone was still sleeping. "Did you come to get me?" She asked. She obtained no reply. She let herself go, carried by the attraction of the stranger. She followed the creature through the sand, until she got to the bull with blue skin. He was still alive! The girl just grasped his nape of the neck with all the strength she could. She couldn't believe he was actually there. She climbed over him and waited for no agreement: Let's go!...

Days and days went by. The bull and the girl somewhere out there. Mounts, roads. Night, morning. Words. Hugs. A whole new point of view. Far from the stepmother, far from everything. Finally. But they had to stop. To rest, because dreams end up soon when you are tired and starving.

Soon the quarrels began. Where to stay? It wouldn't be difficult to find a room for Júlia, but they couldn't say the same thing about the bull. No house would accept to have an animal of that size, hairy, blue inside.

"Then, we will sleep on the streets!" Declared the brave girl. "I'll be close to you. I won't be afraid and I won't feel the cold." "Is it possible that this girl doesn't get tired of being so naïve?!", thought the animal in a compound of impatience and silent tenderness. "I obvious wouldn't let her stay outside just because of me!". After many vain attempts, the girl despaired. She got so badly humoured, that the bull started to regret having upset her. By that time, they had sighted a small inn, near the road. A last chance. With no strength to more words, or attitudes, Júlia shouted: "I'm tired of this! You'll spend the



night by yourself then, alone, and I'll have white sheets and jam for breakfast. She abandoned the bull at the door and jumped into the cosy bed that was given to her, as someone who gets home after many, many years.

The next morning, refreshed for having sleep all night, Júlia met the animal outside. He was folded over his front paws, shrunk. "Ah! Ah! You see! I was right! If I had stayed near you, you wouldn't have been so cold! Come on! Get up!" And she amused herself tickling him. The sleepy bull opened an eye. He had spent a terrible night laying on the sidewalk, brushed by rain. His back was hurting and the blue color of his skin was blurred by mud. But the girl's great humour gave him strength to arise. He said nothing about the awful night he had spent and though Júlia was watching him in those conditions, she didn't ask anything. They continued their walks day after day. They got used to stop at night in hostels where the girl slept, while the animal stayed outside. Getting more and more shrankled, the bull said no word about it, perhaps because of his pride. He thought the affection he felt about Júlia was reciprocal. If she wasn't worried about his condition, it was because he was certainly over reacting. If it had been the other way round, if Júlia was the one who was sleeping in the street, he wouldn't stand if she got sick. So, he was pretty sure that she would oppose herself to let him in street, in case he really was as sick as he was feeling. Days walked through winter.

"Good morning, my little bull!" shouted the girl in a lazy morning of December. No answer. "Bull?!". She found the animal abated, his eyes faden away. That morning, the animal was almost dead of cold. His sweat had turned into ice. His eyelids had no strength to open themselves. In that moment, Júlia realized how selfish she had been. "Bull! Bull! I'm sorry!" And for the first time for a long, long time, she cried. "I'm sorry!". But she knew all words, any words, were vain in a situation that had already been ruined. "I'm sorry!". But how to apologize? What is there to be apologized? We can always say we are sorry, but there's nothing to blame more than our own incapacity to deal with circumstances, our incapacity to make them less hurting, less serious. When you go through a hard time, nothing is better than having not lived that time. She ran to the hostel and, without being noticed, she stole the two blankets, which had warmed her during the night before. Then, when passing by the living room, she took the bronze jar that contained the milk she had drunk and she took an apple that she put in her pocket. Back in the street, she involved the animal with the blankets and she put little bits of the apple into his mouth. Then, she layed next to him and she kissed him and hug him a lot. Later, in that evening, the bull could already open his eyes and talk. "I'm sorry, my little bull!" Bull! I'm sorry! I promise I won't rather be comfortable than being with you again. I won't abandon you ever again! I promise!" The animal with bluish skin didn't consider her guilty of anything. They just didn't have known how to plan their trip. Next time, they would prepare it better. Only that. And they were already better equipped. They had blankets to nights equally hostiles. And so they left looking for a place where they both could stay for further nights.

Luckly, they soon found a farm where a girl was needed for house works. "Well, here it is!" said Júlia excited. "I will work in this house for food and shelter and you'll be able to rest in the stable next to the cattle. I'll join you every night for a chat." The animal agreed. In the "Silver Farm", as everyone used to call that place, the girl was very well received. Inside, the house reflected light, because of the silver-plated furniture and of the windows that were covering all the rooms. It was the most beautiful vision the girl had ever had. Mr. Jerónimo, a short, thin man, really wrinkled, had two daughters not too older than Júlia: Laura and Bruna, whom Júlia got very well along with. During the morning, Júlia fulfilled her tasks:

to clean the windows. There were so many, that even though she started her duty at 6 am, she only finished it at the evening. However, she didn't feel discouraged. She was so charmed by the beauty and the brightness of the house, that sometimes she hardly could distinguish if the moon was appearing inside, or outside the house. In the afternoon, she was Bruna and Laura's companion. The girls enjoyed to tell her their adventures and trips all over the different continents. At night, as promised, Júlia used to visit her little blue bull, whose fur was becoming brighter and brighter thanks to the good treatments he was receiving. Their existence was becoming easier, near those kind people.

In a few months, Júlia knew more about her new friends than she had ever known about the people she used to live with before. Besides, the girls chatting, there was no dinner party where Bruna and Laura didn't take their most recent friend. Parties which were sometimes glamorous. Parties that Júlia had only glimpsed in books, or in her imagination. Parties that other times were relaxed, barbecues and meetings of friends, where the good mood was everywhere. Now she didn't have to content herself anymore with the vision of the children getting out of school. Now she had grown up children just in front of her, and she was amongst them. Perfumed men walked in the gardens, through the rooms of tidy, cleaned houses. Some of them looked pompous and critical.; others, in the bars corners were observers with less words and less ironical smiles, but maybe even more criticals, if only she could get to know them better; others were just standing there holding cups in their hands and songs on their lips. Seen from the outside, everything seemed directly extracted of a realistic picture, or from the lyrics of these contemporaries authors who work extremely to describe the current society. Everything was new and everything was starving for attention: places, decoration and, above all, people. Júlia easily attributed them the searchlights they all seemed to require so badly. But time went by and after many parties, the girl started to feel depleted. All the energy she had in each "soirée" was immediately sucked by everything, by everyone. As if they were on stage. Everything, everyone kept demanding the maximum concentration, everything, everyone had details which were worthed to be contemplated. When she arrived to the meetings, even though people's words were rarely addressed to her, she couldn't hear nothing but screamings coming from everywhere: "See us, listen to us, pay us attention". Everyone, everything claimed for more and more senses. She gave her eyes, her hears away, she swallowed presences, colors and voices. She gave herself away as much as she could. But nothing, nothing was ever enough. She felt she had to be concentrated in everybody at the same time, no longer not to miss anything, because she had realized it was impossible, she would find beauty in everything, but because she couldn't be indifferent to what was so badly asked of her: attention, more and more. Sometimes, while she washed the windows, she wondered about those pictures seen from the outside. A meeting of people where each one seemed to ask for no more than other's presence, not for the others themselves, but because they had senses that were capable of catching them. They all were that: suckers of senses. And in the center of all that, a fight was going on: who was the most seen, the most heard, the most felt. Who was the strongest presence there. Protagonism. Everyone was nothing but characters in a fight for the main role of a story to be written, whose existence everyone wanted to force. Worse than that, Júlia realized now that seeing and giving were not enough to her anymore. She wanted senses for herself too. She also wanted to be heard, seen, felt. Now she wanted to demand, more than to give. She secretly envied Laura and Bruna who seemed to move more naturally in these scenes than her. So, she decided to dedicate herself to the cult of appearance. After all, she concluded this was the best way to attract others senses. She started observing her gestures and best smiles in the glass of each window. She trained new hairstyles, she asked to borrow shirts and from her new friends. Bruna and Laura were delighted with Júlia's transformation, as long as, of course, she would remain less

pretty than themselves. Since there wasn't time enough for everything, the girl started stealing seconds, minutes, hours to the moments she had consecrated to the bull. The conversations she used to keep with the animal seemed more and more boring. What to talk about with a blue animal?! She believed she had nothing more to know about him. They were together for a few years now and they had run out of philosophical subjects, as if one and the other had known no evolution. She didn't know what was still there. Friendship, no doubt of it. But laziness was there too and friendship required no words. It could be kept by itself. As long as their past was still in common, their friendship could be there, she wondered. Therefore, the little time she now was spending with the bull, was soon replaced by no time at all. One night, after missing her meetings with the animal for a long time, Júlia decided to visit her friend, more for obligation, than because she was willing to see him. For a few days now, she wasn't feeling calm and satisfied. On the one hand, as she started to participate in the fights for attention that her nights had become, she was feeling exhausted, tired of these competitions and starve of being seen. Besides, she thought her duty of friendship was to talk with the bull. On the other hand, she remembered the last times that she had been with the bull and she couldn't avoid wishing she was in a "soirée". She couldn't feel well anywhere and maybe it wasn't such a bad idea to share this feeling with the bull. He had always been understanding. But she got completely astonished when she arrived to the stable and she didn't find the blue puff amongst the cattle. Could he possible had run away without telling her anything?! She couldn't tell if she was angry, or terrified for being kept away from the being she loved the most, even if lately she loved him very passively.

Upset, she went to see Mr. Jerónimo, to ask him what had happened.

- Ah! That divinal animal! He said.

"Oh! No!" thought Júlia with her eyes wide opened.

- Did you eat him?! she asked.

- "Are you kidding me, girl! To eat him! He was a magical bull! A talking bull, as I heard"...he shouted with a large and a bit disdainful smile. "Albert was the one who realized it. Fifteen days ago! Do you know he can't distinguish colors? And he thought the bull was the same color as the others. He was preparing himself to kill him, but the right moment he was going to cut his throat, the bull talked. He asked Albert if he knew you, Júlia, and he asked him to transmit you a message, something wild about some blue beings. He was probably delirious, that poor animal. And Jerónimo laugh loud again".

- But what have you done to him?Where is he?

- Well, you know, news are fast spread. The notice of a talking bull was told by the whole village. I don't know how you didn't notice it. You have been sleeping, girl! Well, we have finished by selling him to someone called Millenai who has offered a fortune for him! Just between you and me: it has been a damn of a deal! In my opinion, Albert has been the one who was delirious and the animal has never spoken. Even because, according to Albert, the bull has never mentioned any word after that. His only particularity was to be a blue bull. But for the price the woman has payed for him, even if he was a bull with rainbowed skin color, I would refuse to sell him. How could the skin color be useful to me if it wasn't for the money I could get by selling him? Besides, the woman who bought him believed blindly in the lie, and she was so determined in buying him, that I couldn't deny. I'm telling you that thanks to this business neither me, nor my daughters, or my future grandsons and great grandsons, nor even you will have to worry about the future. Why are you staring at me like that? I've just told you that you have nothing to worry about from now on, Júlia.

- No! I'm leaving right now! I've got to go join the bull! I have to find the bull.

- Silly girl! Do what ever you want. I didn't know you had so much love for this animal. You hadn't seen him for such a long time!

Júlia left the house in a rush, without saying goodbye, and without taking anything at all with her. She would find the bull no matter what. Her feelings were messed up. What was wrong with her? It was her fault! Guilt! Guilt! She hadn't known how to like. She had never known what to keep a promise! She hadn't been capable of it. She had been selfish! She was hating herself! She was hating! She had always been better in not liking than in liking. She had always been better in guilt and in everything that is tenebrous than in noble behaviours. She no longer cared about dinner parties and "soirées"! She no longer appreciated beauty! She was now willing for broken branches, scary landscapes, trips in dark and desert roads. Welcome darkness! She would get lost in them, she would enter in them, in darkness, in sleep, in the hole of loneliness, she would live like an hermitage, she would be alone, a lonely naked, fat being, with hair in a mess. And she would laugh alone with the memory of the bull, of the blue beings that had crossed her life. Voices, she wanted them strident. No matter what anyone said, every sound would seem moaned to her. Hate! She hated everything! She had been a sheep for a few days and she was regretting it bitterly, she would regret it for the rest of her days! Hate! Dark! She was willing it. She hadn't known how to see. She hadn't known how to act. She had never known! "I'm sorry! I'm sorry! Guilt! Help!". She was in hell. "What have I done? What the hell have I done?!" She was getting insane. No one knows exactly for how long Júlia rambled on paths she didn't know, nor how she subsisted. The girl herself didn't know. The only thing that is known is that no blue being came to help her, that many years went by, during which Júlia just wanted to disappear.

Until the moment when we've found her again. A different Júlia. With a serious aspect, a little older, a woman wearing large and light clothes in assumed tones. With a lost look and a thinking sadness. She no longer had her former way of walking, but a slow, decided all new way. Her eyes were heavy. There seemed to be nothing else to know. She seemed a young wise woman disappointed with wisdom.

One afternoon, she found in a fair of old stuff, one of those many she accustomed herself to visit always with the intention of finding the bull, an old tablet with the following registrations on it: "magical bull". Suddenly, she felt a glow in her eyes that she had thought she would never feel again. She addressed herself to the seller immediately.

- Good afternoon. May I see the magical bull? Please let me see him!
- Oh! I'm sorry maam! I have no magical bull. This is only a tablet. Since it is painted with many cheerful colors I thought some child could find it amazing and might wanted to buy it.
- But do you know anything concerning that "magical bull"?
- To be honest, I don't know much. The only thing I know is that a few monthes ago a lady came around with a bull who according to everyone, was able to talk. The lady put up a circus on a wooden stage and she was willing to pay a lot of money to the one person who could make him speak. You wouldn't believe the evil inventions that have been suggested. The animal has been beated, massacred, threatened. A lot of people has tortured him. They even tried to steal him in order to sell his skin, which really is a rare one. Well, when they lost hope and the lady was starting to be seen as crazy because she insisted the bull could speak, a man came from the side of the "Golden mansion" and he to buy him, I don't know exactly with what purpose. I think she has sold him, because I've never heard

anything else neither about the mad woman of the enchanted bull, nor about the animal. From there on, I don't know anything else.

- "Golden Mansion", you have said?

- Yes. It's a small palace on the other side of the river. The owner of the house never gets out, but he has a lot of people working for him. If you want, I can take you there myself.

Júlia waited no more. She accepted the offer and they both put themselves on the road.

When they arrived in front of the palace, Júlia just couldn't believe in her eyes. A golden mansion with more than three floors, a labyrinthic garden, a lake, more than ten windows of different shapes. In her way to the front door, she was picking the right words to address to no matter who would live behind those huge walls. She had already observed many enormous mansions, but none like this one. She had always wondered what would be inside. Sometimes she could see some candlelight, some shadow. Sometimes, at night, when she walked around places like this one, she risked to get close enough to hear a voice, or the movement of a chair from the garden. Now, she would get inside. She didn't have to knock at the door. A man was preparing to get in.

- Good afternoon, she politely said, looking as eased as interrogative.

He didn't reply. He stopped, as if he was waiting for an explanation.

- Good afternoon. I would like to know if you have a bull, an animal with blue fur. Insisted Júlia.

- You certainly aren't expecting me to tell you what I have or have not in my house, without telling me at least first who you are.

It was complicated to explain all the story to that man, mainly because she didn't know if he actually knew about the bull's skills. She resumed the situation adding:

- You see, sometime ago a bull who used to follow me everywhere, has been stolen from me. He was the only memory I kept from my family. He was my only friend. He had a particularity: blue fur. Someone told me he might be here.

- If you knew how many people have already come here with this kind of stories! Do you think I'll let you come in just because of that?

- Very well, then. I'll tell you something that you probably didn't hear before. If you don't have that bull here, in your house, I'll kill myself. Here. Now. You probably have never seen a suicide. It might be useful for any thesis of yours, what do you think? I've been looking for this animal for a long time now. I'm exhausted. I can't stand it anymore and if I don't find him, I no longer want the stupid existence I've been living so far. I've got too much energy accumulated and I've been wasting it in unfruitful searches. I'll save the remains of this energy to make a firm and irreversible decision like this one. It might be the only great and powerful thing I'll ever do. Does it seem a cheap emotional blackmail to you? Maybe...Yes, probably it is. But let it be! I'm tired of not finishing my actions because of what others may think about it. Do you know how it feels to be sitting in a table, surrounded by people, willing to get up and run away and not to do it because half of those people wouldn't ever speak to you again, unless they would want to criticize you? Enough of that! This time, I'll really do what I want. This is my last chance. So: either the bull is here and you let me see him, or I'll kill myself here and now, period. I haven't got much to lose anyway.

The man was staring at her. In fact, he had never heard something like that. Of course he couldn't avoid considering that it actually was emotional blackmail and that Júlia had no principles, no moral, that

she was some kind of fool and that everything was nothing but a childish show. Histerical girls! But he actually found all that melodrama kind of funny. He finished by answering with a joked tonality:

- Then, tell me your name please, I'll see if the bull is inside and if he is available.
  - Júlia. Tell him I'm sorry for having changed him for my vanity.
  - O.k, don't worry, I'm sure he didn't notice it. He answered sarcastically.
- Jorge came inside. He waited a bit behind the door and then he came back.
- The bull asked me to tell you that he is too tired to see you now, but he also said that you're forgiven.
  - I don't believe you! Let me see him please.
- They were having this conversation, when an old man, much older, appeared.
- Jorge? What's going on? Why are you taking so long? Whom are you speaking with?
  - Ah! Father! I'm sorry. This is Júlia. She asked me if she could see the blue bull. I've already told her that he is too tired.
  - And why do you insist to see the bull, Júlia? Asked Charles.
  - Because I must talk to him. I must say I'm sorry. I want to be with him again.
  - She has threatened to commit suicide, if we don't let her see the animal. Added Jorge.
  - Listen, let's go inside. We will solve this matter. I don't feel like standing here.

Inside, the palace was almost as beautiful as scary. Mirrors everywhere, a baroque decoration let few spaces to rest the view. Lots of golden cuts, windows, many angels, tapestries and then something that had nothing to do with the rest: african masks in each corner. A particularity: all the angels of the house had the same face, an only expression, the expression of a beautiful little girl with long red hair. Júlia felt shoked, but she remained speechless. She was taken to an ample room with a balcony hidden by flying curtains. The three of them had a seat. Father and son, side by side. Júlia in front of them. After the moment of silence that all the visitors insisted on when they could see the inside of the palace, Charles started speaking:

- You can stay here for tonight. You look harmless and you need a rest. After dinner, I'll show you your room. You'll see the bull tomorrow.
- So, he actually is here.
- Yes, unless we are talking about different animals.
- I want to see him now! I've waited too long.
- You are stubborn and not polite at all. I've received you in my house and still you are rude. Jorge, if you don't mind, I would like to have a word with Júlia, alone.

Jorge shrank his shoulders and he left the room.

- I know your story, Júlia. I bought the bull, cause he seemed to be almost dead. I've wanted to give him some good moments before death took him. I've had all kinds of cares with him during a week. That was enough for him to be reestablished. He didn't seem the same animal after that! But he kept the same sad, desolated expression. I also have a deep anguish myself. My younger daughter has died drowned in the lake you have seen in the garden two years ago and there isn't a single day that I don't think about her: the things she used to do, what she used to say, the way she used to make me laugh, the way she talked, the way I felt relieved and protected when she was coming home. Sometimes, everything seems like a great lie to me. I have dreams where she is still walking around here, as if nothing had happened, others where I'm with her and I know the tragedy that is going to happen, others

where everything has already happened, but where I see her coming back home. Coming back. Somehow I have identified my sadness with the bull's. I've started to talk to him. About everything I had in mind. I've started sharing with him everything that I couldn't share with human beings, in order not to worry them about myself, or simply not to remind them of what has made them suffer too. One day, the bull has replied to me. I thought I was insane. People had told for so long that the bull was able to speak, that now I was hearing him. But I was wrong. The following day, the bull spoke again and in the other day too. So it was truth. The animal could talk. He ended by telling me his own story and your own. So I knew your name. I want you to wait one more night before you could see the bull. I think it will be a deserved revenge, to make you suffer a little bit more for everything you have made him go through, for all the times he has helped you, for all the times you have denied him. Your anxiety is acute and your regrets are alive. You deserve it. I'll only take you to him tomorrow morning. Even though I am sure that if he knew you were here, he would also want to see you immediately. But I won't tell him anything until tomorrow morning.

Júlia held her head between her hands. She couldn't answer back. She was confused. Who was this man who was judging her?! Couldn't he see how desperate she was?! He had suffered, right. But he could avoid her suffering and he wasn't doing it, just because he didn't want to. To sleep. It was the only thing she could do, to fall asleep quickly in order to wake up in the following day as soon as possible. The night had to finish fast. Charles didn't object when the girl wanted to go to her room right away.

The next morning, Jorge, who didn't know anything about the animal's skills and who considered all that allure for the bull a real nonsense, led Júlia to the bull.

- Here, there he is. He said after they had both walked through the woods. If you would rather talk with someone human, I'll be in the living room, reading the newspaper.

Júlia paid no attention to Jorge's words. She ran in the bull's direction. When she finally got near him, she hugged him and squeezed him with all her strength, crying, kissing him and squeezing him all over again. With so much strength, so much, that she could feel his bones cracking. She wanted them to become dust under her arms. After these moments of effusion, the words came out of her like a fall. Everything at the same time. There was so much to be said. She didn't know how to start. "I love you" was the first thing she said. Then "I'm so sorry!" and "I love you" and then she laughed and cried. And she hugged him again.

Well, once their first meeting was through, they had all the following days to actualize their conversations. Charles let Júlia stay at his place without asking anything of her. Jorge enjoyed watching the girl running from the house to the woods and from the woods to the house. He could still remember her first words when she got there and they still made him laugh.

Once, he intercepted her:

- Hi! Around here?

He made her company through the woods and then he invited her to sit a bit with him in the garden, before her everyday conversation with the bull. She accepted. She would make the bull wait just a little bit. Nothing to worry about. The next day:

- Júlia, would you join me? I would like to talk to you.

- Sure. She said.

And the day after that:

- Júlia?

And the next one:

- Jorge are you coming?

And they went: Júlia with Jorge, Jorge with Júlia. One with the other they ended to move to a house near the beach, taking the blue bull with them, of course. But, as time went by, the animal was more and more forgotten. He was the past, the memory, the beauty and he was living infinitely in Júlia. The girl didn't even had to see him, or to talk with him. As everything that becomes eternal and assimilated by the body, by the mind, by senses, he had effects on the girl's behaviour, in the way she acted, the way she thought, the way she loved. Júlia could feel him inside of her. She didn't realize it, but she didn't even needed to see him, to listen to him anymore, cause he was already a part of her "me". Years went by like this. One night, Júlia got up at dawn missing him a lot. She wanted to see the animal. She needed to feel the sound of his voice, the touch of his fur, the blue of his eyes. She started looking for him in the entire house, just as if he actually could be there. She looked around her. There was all the furniture that she had chosen herself so carefully, the flowers she had picked up the eve, the translucent curtains that she decided to hang above her windows, everything she had constructed little by little. Everything seemed a bit unknown to her. "Bull?" She opened the door of the house and felt the salt of the waves on her lips. The sand was cold. The sun was just arising. She walked by the sea. Suddenly, she stopped. Amongst the bones of the bull, a blue skin appeared. It was the skin of a handsome young man covered by the carcass of the animal. He was laying dead on the sand, bending over himself. He looked nothing at all like the past Júlia had in mind. However, she didn't feel surprised. She leaned over him. She took his hands with one of her own's. With the other one she wrote something in the sand, that the sea soon erased. Far away, she heard the blue beings sing over the foam. Júlia walked in their direction. Soon, she had water by her shoulders, but she still wasn't close enough of the blue beings. She kept going on to approach them, and on, and on, and on...