

## FROTTAGE WORKSHOP

### THE GATE

Oskar was quite fond of the old lattice gate at the bottom of the garden. It looked out over the town, but standing there made you feel as though you were in the countryside. Every time he passed through, it welcomed him with a cheerful creak.

'It wouldn't close any more,' his father told him, 'the planks were all rotten. Look at the magnificent wrought-iron gate we have now.'

Oskar begged him not to burn the planks. He arranged them like a fragile raft floating on the grass in the garden. He spent hours standing, sitting or lying on his raft.

Time drags on, alone at sea, with no land in sight. Suddenly, on the horizon, Oskar sees a piece of driftwood with paint flaking off it like a fish.

"No, not a fish," he thinks to himself, "more like a mermaid." He pulls her aboard.

"Take me to your home!" he makes the mermaid say.

— I can't, Oskar replies to the mermaid, I've been lost at sea without food or drink for a month. But you can stay with me until my last breath. After that, you'll carry my body to the ocean floor.

"Liar," said the mermaid, "you had lunch just before you came out to play on your raft; take me with you. Out at sea, nobody wants me. I'm too different. You seem different to me too; we'll play together in your room."

— "I'm not playing. I'm lost out at sea. And if you don't believe me..."

Oskar picks up the chipped piece of plank and throws it over the railing.

"Hey there, no rubbish on the pavement!" says a passer-by, who kicks it back into the garden.

Touched by this poor mermaid, rejected by everyone, Oskar takes her home.

"Oh no," says his father, "not that in your room, it's all worm-eaten, it'll bring in nasty bugs."

He throws the plank out of the window.

Oskar is alone in his room. Suddenly, he sees something moving on the floor. It's an earwig wriggling desperately on the floorboards. Noticing that its body ends in a fish-like tail, Oskar exclaims:

"Oh, my darling, my little mermaid, you'd taken refuge in that old plank. Don't worry, I'll look after you now; you won't be rejected any more."

He catches the earwig in a matchbox, which he slips under his pillow. Oskar knows he is lying, that he is afraid of being stung, that it is not 'his darling'. But he continues to speak to it tenderly. He brings it some greenery.

The next morning, he opens the box slightly and discovers the poor creature lifeless. He feels real tears, salty as sea water, running down his cheeks.

## MASK WORKSHOP

### THE ATTIC

When he learns that he will soon be spending the night at his grandmother's house, Oskar isn't sure whether to look forward to it or be scared of the night ahead. All he can think about is the ceiling of the bedroom that awaits him. Right above his bed is a damp patch. It must be coming from a leak in the roof of the attic just above. Or perhaps there is another, far more mysterious reason. Sometimes the stain seems to hide, or else it makes its presence known. But every time, Oskar sees a monster-like shape in it. A monster still alive, staring him straight in the eye.

One night, the monster in the stain makes a sound, as if it were whispering. Trembling, Oskar decides to inspect the attic directly above the stain. He has never been up into the attics before. It's forbidden.

Oskar climbs the stairs in the dark. The door is locked. He looks through the keyhole. All he can see are shadows. Something seems to be moving—perhaps a piece of fabric stirred by a draught? Perhaps a strong wind has blown a tile off the loft roof? Or maybe it's a large-winged bird that has taken advantage of this opening. Or perhaps it's a far more mysterious presence? 'I've told you before, you're not allowed in the loft!'

It's his grandmother. He must have woken her up trying to open the door. Oskar studies his grandmother's wrinkles. It's impossible to tell whether she's angry, surprised, or admiring of his boldness.

'I heard a noise in the attic. But it's locked. What's in there? '

— "That attic holds all my memories. You must leave them be."

"It's as if there's something else there, perhaps even someone.

— It's possible; my memories do as they please with their lives now. I'm no longer interested in them; if they're looking for company, that's their prerogative. Come on, stop thinking about it, go back to bed and have sweet dreams."

Alone in his room, Oskar stares at the ceiling for a long time. The monster in the stain, clearly visible, stares him straight in the eye as never before.

The next day, over breakfast, Oskar says to his grandmother:

'I think your memories really want my company. Would you mind giving me the key to the attic? '

She takes his hand to go upstairs, opens the door, and they spend the day together in the attic, searching for everything that lies hidden there.

## CALLIGRAPHY WORKSHOP

### THE SACRED COW

“For the legs,” said the teacher, “push four charred matches into the potato. Place the burnt end facing downwards to resemble the animal’s hooves.”

Oskar doesn’t like doing this. It’s as if he were slitting open a real cow’s belly.

“For the head: a small potato. Two broken matches will make the horns. For the eyes: use the sulphur tips of unstripped matches.”

His cow stares at him so intently that Oskar cannot leave her all alone at school. She will sleep beside him. In the middle of the night, he wakes with a start. He’d had such strange dreams that his cow must have had something to do with them. Oskar checks to see if the animal’s eyes have lit up in the dead of night. No. She hasn’t moved a muscle. He’d love so much for her to give him a sign.

One morning, he discovers a small pink bud at the base of her head. It looks like a mouth. As if his cow wanted to tell him something. It’s a sprout growing on the potato. A little bigger every day. Oskar doesn’t understand what his cow is trying to tell him. One day, during break time, he is drawn to a little girl’s pendant. Its shape is almost identical to the sprout coming out of his cow’s mouth.

The little girl said, ‘It’s a lucky letter. It’s from my country. I can speak my country’s language, but I can’t write it. I’d really like to. My grandmother received a long letter from her brother. I love his handwriting. But tell me, why are you so curious about my language?’

— It’s so I can talk to my cow,’ said Oskar.”

The little girl turned on her heel without saying a word. Oskar was confused. He wanted to make amends.

The next day, he went to find the little girl and gave her his cow.

“It’s a sacred cow; I love her very much.

— Thank you, I’ll take good care of her.”

Winter passed. One morning, the little girl went to find Oskar.

“Good news,” she said to him, “your cow has had a calf!” Oskar’s eyes widened.

“Yes,” she continued, “as soon as you gave her to me, I buried her in a flowerbed in the estate. When spring came, I went back and discovered the happy news. Come round to my place tomorrow after school; we’ll celebrate.” ”

The next day, Oskar finds himself in the grandmother’s small flat. She has prepared a meal of... small potatoes. Oskar is devastated.

He says, “No, thank you, I’m not hungry.” The little girl translates for her grandmother.

So the grandmother takes out the letter in her brother’s beautiful handwriting. It says:

‘He’s hungry. Every day. In prison. Back home. The region is in turmoil.’

To convey the letter’s contents, the grandmother didn’t need to say a word. She carved a prison out of a potato. Her brother is a long bean. She turns the matches Oskar had taken for his cows into flaming aeroplanes.

Oskar throws himself into her arms. He has just met someone who speaks the same language as him.

## BEAD WORKSHOP

### SEASHELLS

Oskar is quiet.

“Do you want to play?” asks his grandmother.

“No, no, I’m looking out of the window.”

“But we’re going through a tunnel.”

“I’m imagining we’re in a submarine at the bottom of the sea.”

The train pulls into the station late in the evening. They head to the Hôtel de la Plage.

At night, Oskar listens to the waves endlessly punctuating the darkness.

The next morning, they lie on the sand.

“Do you want to go for a swim?”

“No, no.”

“All right, then you can look after my things and I can swim for longer.”

Lost in thought, Oskar lets his eyes fall on the shells. “Oh, there’s one with a little hole right in the middle; that must be a special one. Here’s another one a bit further on, with the same hole.” He gets up and sets off in search of the shells with holes. “They must be very precious. They must come from the depths. Their hole must help them get back to the surface.” Oskar collects as many as he can.

When he returns to where he was...

There’s nothing left. His grandmother has gone off without him. He heads for the sea wall and spots her hat in the distance. It’s her; that’s her jacket. He runs to meet her.

“Grandma!”

— “Do I look like a granny?” said an unfamiliar face.

The stranger looked him in the eye and realised he’d got the message. She hurled his grandmother’s belongings at him and ran off.

Oskar returned to his spot just as his grandmother came out of the water. He was silent.

“My Oskar, you’ve been lost in your thoughts all this time. That’s not good. Thoughts are like waves. Some of them can carry you too far away.”

Back at the hotel, Oskar threads a golden cord through his hollow shells. He makes a crown out of them and places it on his head. He says to his grandmother: “I am the king of my thoughts. No matter where they take me, they will always be part of my kingdom.”

Oskar is having a royal holiday.

On the day of their return, at the station, whilst his grandmother is buying newspapers, he hears: “Well, we don’t say goodbye to Grandma.” It is the stranger.

She is lying on a bench, as if on a bed. She must be at rock bottom. He hands her his crown: “Here, you can make a necklace out of it too.”

“Oh, you’ve lost your crown,” his grandmother asks when she returns.

— “No, no, I still have it. It will always be on my head. In my thoughts.”

## WRITING WORKSHOP

### THE WINDOW

Through the window at the back of the classroom, Oskar watches a spider in its web. It looks as though it's dead, but at any moment it could pounce on its prey. Suddenly, Oskar feels the tip of a long leg brush against his shoulder. It is the teacher who, with the tip of her finger, brings him back to the reality of the classroom.

"Oskar, we're waiting for you. Which story have you chosen to recite?"

Caught in its web, Oskar hadn't even opened his recitation book.

"You're so lost in your thoughts," continues the teacher, "you'll recite 'The Lost Child in the Forest'. Don't forget to learn it by heart for next Friday."

Back home, Oskar discovers "The Child Lost in the Forest".

It is an endless forest. "My memory is too small," Oskar thought to himself. "It will never be able to hold such a vast story." Suddenly, he had an idea...

... On the day of the recitation, it was Oskar's turn.

"Miss," he says to the teacher, "I've got terrible stomach cramps. Can I keep my hand under my jumper while I tell the story?"

So, with his hand on his stomach, Oskar launches into "The Child Lost in the Forest".

Everything starts off wonderfully, exactly as he'd planned.

It is worth noting that, the day before, Oskar had gone to the forest near his home. From the trunk of an old fir tree, he had collected large drops of sap and carefully placed them on his stomach, before sticking small pieces of moss-covered bark of various shapes onto them. One to remind him of the wolf, another of the owl, the doe, the hill... So, just by running his hand over his stomach, he could recall his story.

Before the class, spellbound by his ease, Oskar plunged into the heart of the forest. Suddenly, as the wolf passes by, he hears a low growl! It is his tummy rumbling, as if the story were coming to life inside him. It sounds like a real wolf growling inside him. Oskar, taken aback, is seized by cramps. He is laid down on a bench. When they lift his jumper to massage him... they discover the state of his tummy. Oskar closes his eyes. He's afraid that some might guess his trick and call him: 'Cheat, cheat.' But on the contrary, he hears them exclaim: 'A miracle, it's a miracle! He was so immersed in his story that a real forest has grown inside him.'

Huddled close together, the pupils formed a circle around Oskar. They watched him as though he were a creature that had escaped from an unreal world. Oskar said nothing, didn't move. He was playing dead. In the classroom, no one moved, no one spoke. There was a profound silence.

A silence which, until then, had never before emerged from the forest of lost children.

## PAINTING WORKSHOP

### THE CHILD IN THE FOREST

A child finds himself lost in the forest. He's scared and cold. He comes across a lone grey wolf. 'Give me your fur!', the child tells the wolf. The wolf complies. The child leaves without a word of thanks. The night is so dark that the paths are all one. The child comes across an owl. 'Give me your eyes!' The owl gives its eyes. No matter where the child looks, the forest is still there. The child feels lonely and looks for someone to play with. He comes across a doe. 'Give me your soon-to-be-born fawn!' 'Wait a little longer.' – 'No, now!' The doe opens her belly and gives him her fawn.

Without a word of thanks, the child takes the fawn in his arms. The first hill he has to climb makes him feel weak. He tosses the fawn in a ditch. At the top, he comes face to face with a wild boar. 'Give me your strength!', he orders. The boar runs up and charges at the child. It knocks him down, tramples him, ploughs him into the ground. Exhausted by the blows, the boar retreats into the depths of the forest. 'I don't understand', the child thinks as he watches the boar go. 'He gave me his strength, but I still feel as weak.' The child crawls to the foot of an ancient tree. 'Give me your wisdom', he whispers to the tree. At that moment, a small golden leaf falls from the tree and lands on the child.

'Thank you', says the child, closing his eyes. Leaves fall by the hundred, by the thousand. They end up covering the body of the sleeping child. When you see a bunch of dead leaves lost in the dark, cold forest, pay attention to the little voice emerging from it and asking insistently, 'I'm so alone, please give me your hand.'

## THEATER WORKSHOP

### THE LYNX TRIAL

On the tables: paper, cardboard, glue, scissors, paintbrushes. Everyone is busy preparing for the end-of-year party. Suddenly, Victor bursts into the classroom. He's twenty minutes late. His eyes wide with shock, he repeats: "I've just seen the lynx."

"No need to shout it from the rooftops. I've seen one too."

The words just slipped out of Oskar's mouth.

He'd have liked nobody to hear him, but...

"Ma-da'am, Oskar says he's seen one too."

All eyes turn in his direction.

"You've actually seen a lynx and you haven't told anyone! That's impossible."

"Ma'am, my dad's in the secret service. Tomorrow morning, I'm taking his lie detector with me. Oskar won't be able to play the smart alec anymore."

'No, no, he must confess now!'

Sensing the tension rising rapidly, the teacher claps her hands:

"Oskar has the right to defend himself. I suggest we hold a fair trial.

First of all, we'll make our judge and lawyer costumes.

I'll be the judge. Who among you would like to play the defence lawyers?"

No one. "Well, Oskar can look after himself, too."

The whole class wants to demand a harsh sentence whilst dressed as the prosecutor. Everyone is cutting out white wigs, ruffs and long-sleeved black robes. Victor, for his part, is making himself a lynx mask.

"I shall be the ghost of the lynx prowling around the trial."

Oskar doesn't move or say a word. Suddenly, the headteacher bursts into the classroom:

"Children, let's all gather in the village hall. Mr M..., the PE teacher, has just brought in a young lynx that he found by the side of the road this morning. It must have been hit by a car. Luckily, it's only slightly injured. While we wait for the vet to arrive, you can all come and have a look at it."

Victor said to the teacher: "As long as Oskar keeps quiet, he remains my prisoner." Comme Oskar says nothing; she leaves the two of them alone in the classroom.

Victor turns to Oskar: 'If you tell the truth, I'll tell the truth.'

Oskar still says nothing. Victor takes off his lynx mask.

"Well, says Victor, I'll tell you mine anyway. The lynx I saw, it's the one next to him. He was lying motionless in a ditch. I thought he was dead.

'I didn't dare touch him. I ran off.'

Oskar said, 'I don't know the truth. I think I might have seen one once, but it was so far away, I'm not really sure.'

Victor puts his mask back on and says: "I'll be your lawyer."