

Night walk

She had walked along the coast until night had sucked up day, until darkness had triumphed over light.

The dark sea, as black as ink, washed against the foot of the dark red rock.

Her bare feet on the pebbles sought out the steps that wound between the houses dug from the rock, huddled together, facing out to sea.

Small doors, small terraces, windows reflecting a few passers-by.

Light sources drew the contours of groups of friends, of couples, of solitary silhouettes.

The landscape was changing, imperceptibly, constantly. Faces disappeared, others appeared.

She climbed slowly and the effort to reach the last step was exhausting.

She spotted an open door. A silhouette deep inside, seemingly waiting.

In the half-light you could see only his open white shirt, his lit cigarette and the brightness of his eyes.

She entered, found him sitting beside the bed.

"I was waiting for you," he said with a smile. "I thought you weren't coming."

"Here I am. I was looking for you. What's your name?"

"Angelos, and you?"

"Aurora."

He pulled her towards him, their hearts beat as one.

He looked her deep in the eyes.

"I want us to climb the steps together, to go together all the way to the top of the ridge."

And they set out, hand in hand.

A starry sky and a half moon lit up the steps and, through the windows of the houses, made the silhouettes come alive.

Around them everything was a stage set. Actors and spectators were performing the play of life.

Every scene a human story.

They continued to climb, holding each other tight.

Each step an offering, each step an ecstasy.

And then came the moment when he was overcome with tiredness.

"I am stopping here. You go on and wait for me. I'll join you."

She reached out and touched his face. The forehead, the cheeks, the lips. Her hands kept their trace.

Now she climbed alone, and absence was with her.

All night, little lights on the steps sketched out a path of hopes where each one belied the other. Her bare feet left the prints of disappointed hopes.

She struggled up to the last step.

She had left the darkness behind her. Day broke.

Dawn lit up the houses, terraces and rocks with a thousand colours.

She felt a wingbeat.

Angelos took her by the hand and, under the rising sun, carried her to another pure white island. Before them lay the immensity of the shimmering blue.

Ios Karaïndrou

Translation : Charles Penwarden

Text in *Jakob Gautel. Absences*, cat. expo., coll. "L'Atelier du sculpteur/musée Zadkine", éditions Paris-Musées, 2006.