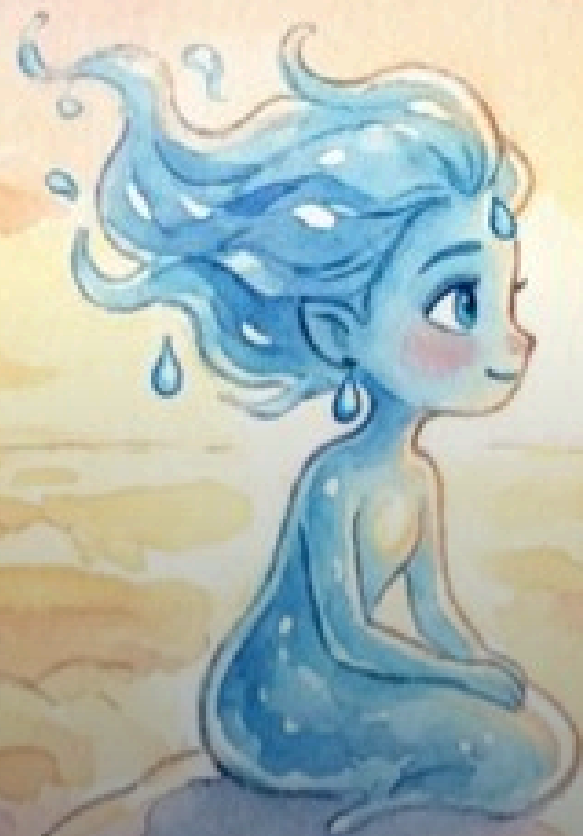




VOLUME 1

Carlota the Water Drop

Getting to Know the Sea

I am Carlota, a little water drop. I was born at the very top of a mountain, and I'm heading south in search of something that can save the world's water. Will you come with me?



There once was a mountain so tall that
the clouds barely reached its knees.

At the very top lived Nieve Grande, an
enormous glacier of white and blue ice,
like a giant blanket over the summit.

Nieve Grande had watched whole centuries go by. He had seen sunrises so beautiful that even he was left open-mouthed.

But lately he was sad. Because each year he grew a little bit smaller. And he knew it.

One morning, a little sunbeam —one of those curious ones that sneak in everywhere— found Nieve Grande asleep and tickled him right on the belly.

Nieve Grande stirred. And at his edge, a tiny little drop stirred too.

—Carlota —said Nieve Grande, in that slow, deep voice that mountains have—. Before you go, listen to me.

—Do you see how I grow smaller every year? Is there anything in the world that can stop it? Something that keeps the rivers, the lakes and the seas alive when everything else fails? I cannot see it from up here. But you can find it. Travel south, Carlota. Bring it back. To save me.



The little drop stayed silent for a moment.

She looked at Nieve Grande's grey edges. She looked south, so far away and so unknown.

—How will I know when I've found it? —she finally asked.

The glacier smiled; glaciers smile very slowly, but very beautifully.

—Because it will warm you from the inside.

The little drop took a deep breath. She stretched. And all at once...

Plop!



She broke away from the mountain and began to roll south, a little scared and a little excited, because sometimes those two feelings are the same.

Nieve Grande watched her drift away from his summit.

And he waited.

She rolled over stones, leaped down waterfalls and rode on clouds until one day the air changed.

It smelled of salt. It smelled of something enormous.

Carlota peeked out slowly, like when you open a door without knowing what's behind it.

And then she saw it.

Enormous. Shining. Moving every which way at once.

A big wave lifted her gently and whispered:

—Welcome to Tijuana, little drop.



On the shore was Valeria, a girl with her bare feet in the wet sand and a notebook in her hand.

Carlota arrived riding a little wave, right up to her feet.

—Hello —said Carlota—. I come from a very tall mountain and I'm going south, looking for something that warms you from the inside. Something that can save Nieve Grande.

Valeria thought for a moment. Then she pointed down the shore.

—Then you have to meet Sandra.



Sandra was kneeling in the sand with little transparent vials so small they fit in the palm of her hand. She wasn't alone. There were more people with vials all along the shore, so focused they seemed to be listening to the sea.

When Sandra filled one with seawater, Carlota slipped inside with a single leap.

“From in here I can hear everything,” she thought.

—What do you do with those vials? —asked Valeria.

Sandra crouched down to her eye level.

—I look for tiny, almost invisible creatures in the water —she explained—. If there are many, the water is sick. And sick water makes the children who swim in it sick too. That's why we have to get to know it: to tell when it's well and when it needs help.

—And why do you do it?

Sandra looked at the sea for a moment.

—Because this sea deserves for someone to truly know it —she said.

Then she turned to Valeria.

—Do you want to get to know it too? Put your hand in. Slowly. And listen.

Valeria put her hand in slowly, with her fingers spread open.

The sea was cold. And alive. And moving all the time.

Then she pulled her hand out and looked at it, shiny and wet.

—It's different —she murmured— when you truly know it.



Carlota slipped out of the little vial back into the sea and felt something warm inside. Like a little spark.

Could this be it? she thought. Could this be what Nieve Grande sent me to find?

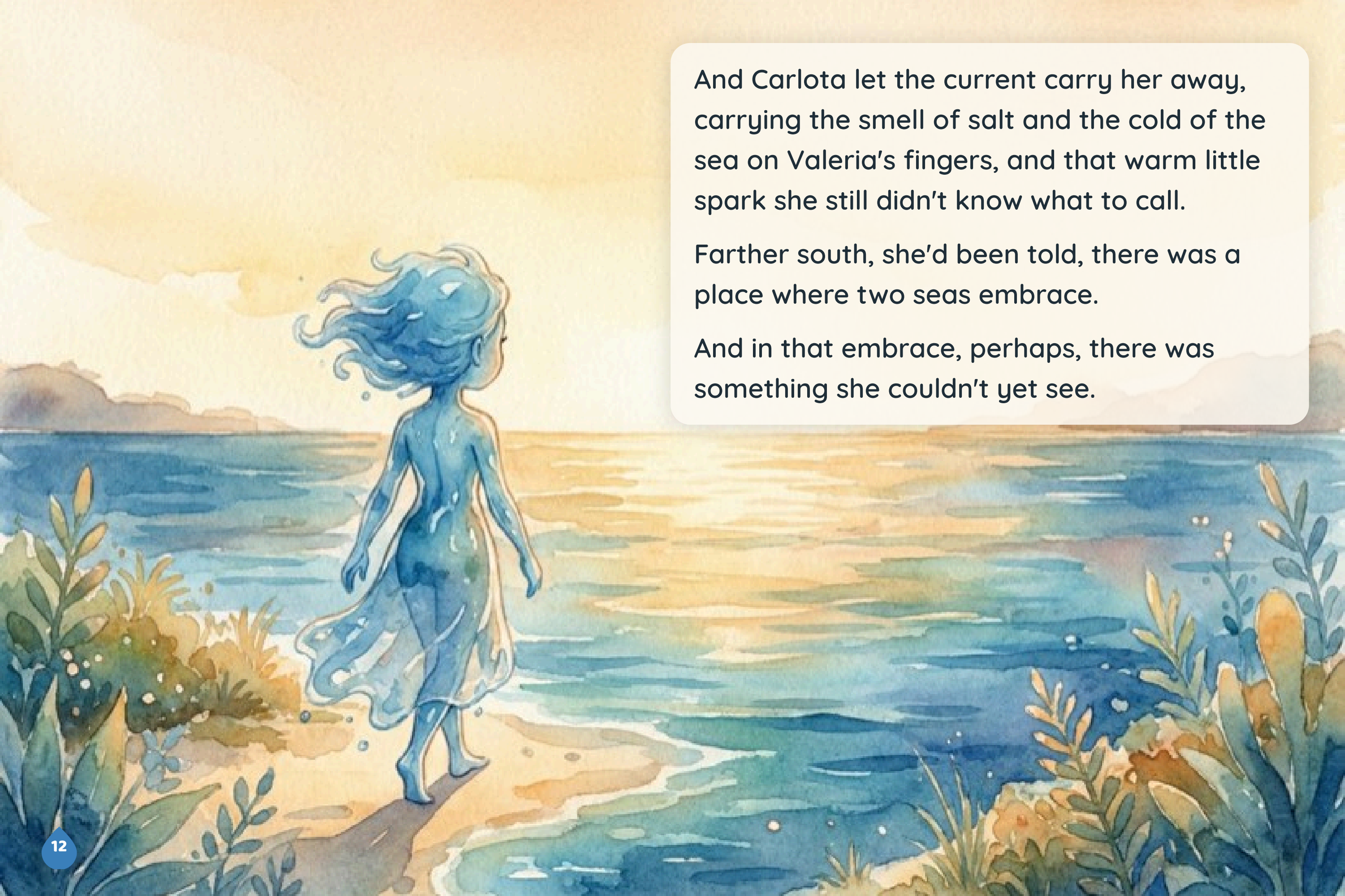
But the spark was still small. The treasure had to be farther south.

—Are you going to find it? —Valeria asked softly—. The thing that can save Nieve Grande.

—I'm going to try —said Carlota.

Valeria opened her notebook and wrote down what she had just understood:

First, get to know it. Then take care of it. That's how you love the sea.



And Carlota let the current carry her away,
carrying the smell of salt and the cold of the
sea on Valeria's fingers, and that warm little
spark she still didn't know what to call.

Farther south, she'd been told, there was a
place where two seas embrace.

And in that embrace, perhaps, there was
something she couldn't yet see.

NOTA

Tijuana Waterkeeper goes out every week with their little vials to get to know the sea. Because this sea deserves for someone to truly know it.

Somewhere, high on a mountain, Nieve Grande waits.

And you? Do you know the water that lives near you?