

MATHILDE PASCAL

KRISZTINA MAROS

# MINT, TEA AND ORANGE

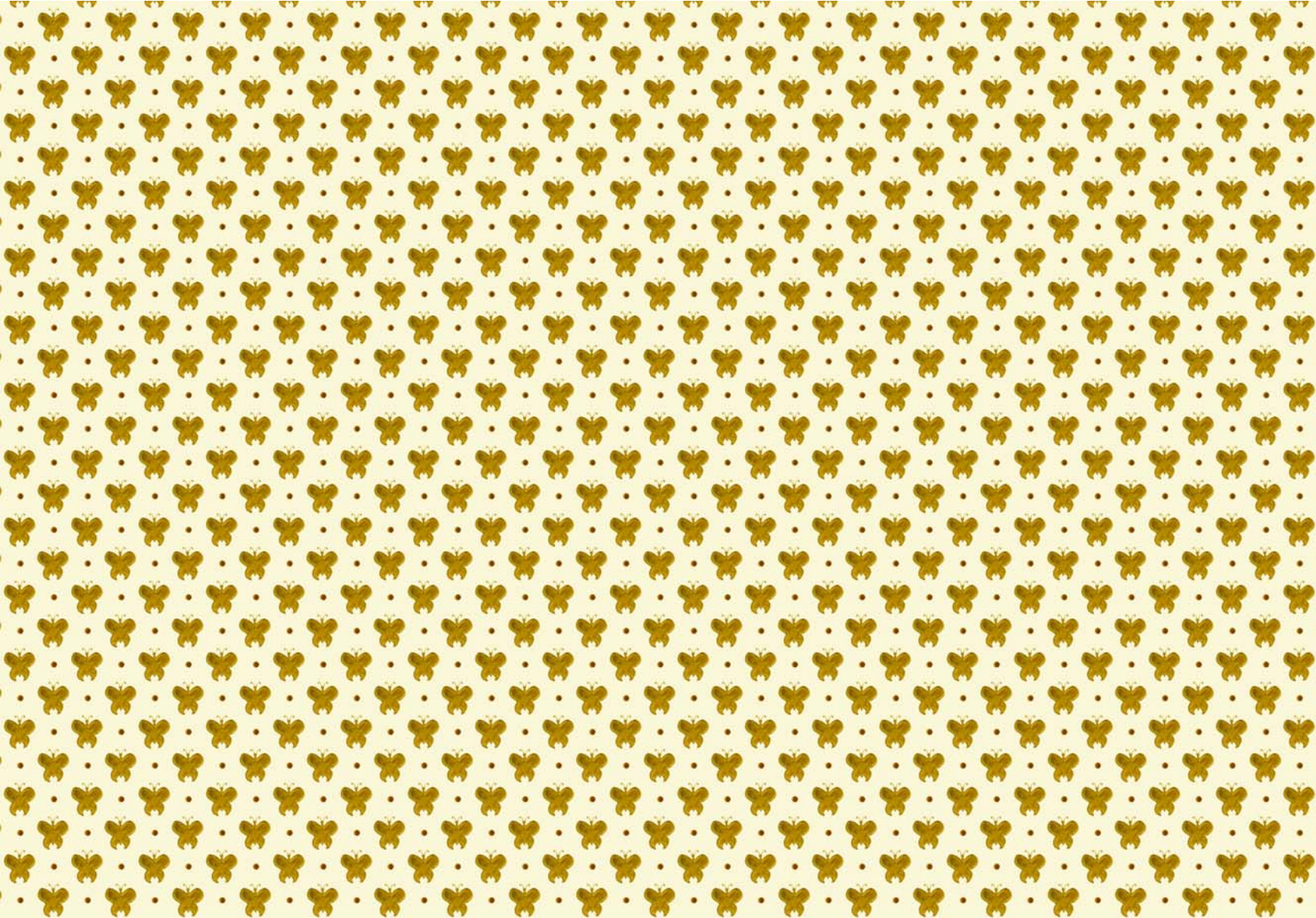
## MINT, TEA AND ORANGE

A story of friendship between a little girl and an old man who meet around a cup of green tea.

MATHILDE PASCAL: MINT, TEA AND ORANGE



TANDEM JEUNESSE



MATHILDE PASCAL

KRISZTINA MĀROS

# MINT, TEA AND ORANGE



TANDEM JEUNESSE

*Emily thought to have three common points with her old, so old neighbour Mister Farouk. They both loved the sea. They both seem to be very lonely. People were whispering on their way. They whisper that Emily had no mother. They whisper that Mr Farouk was coming from one of this far away, strange and dangerous places, countries that you heard of on TV.*



*They drank the tea in the garden, surrounded by scents and cats. It was a golden, warm and sweet tea, and mint leaves were dancing in the cup. It tasted like summer, like the gentle touch of a sunbeam over an orange tree.*





*Mr Farouk learned things too, he learned that you could be afraid a school, of an empty room, that kite could dance in the sky, until the day when Emily asked*

*- Can you teach me to do tea?*

*He looked at her, smiling.*

*- Tea used to be a man business. Yet, my grand-mother always made the best tea of the whole region. So yes, I think you can learn. First, drink, and tell me what you are drinking.*



Emily thought to have three common points with her old, so old neighbour Mister Farouk. They both loved the sea. They both seem to be very lonely. People were whispering on their way.

They whisper that Emily had no mother. They whisper that Mr Farouk was coming from one of this far away, strange and dangerous places, countries that you heard of on TV. Still, Emily was a quiet little girl, and the old man had a lovely house with white walls, a garden full of flowers and ever happy cats.

Emily and the old man met everyday, exchanged hellos, sometimes sad and short, sometimes bubbling with laugh. Summer arrived one morning, with its sea tinted in changing colours. The beach suffocates under cries and towels. It was the worst season to lonely people, the worst season to Emily. It became the season when Mr Farouk invited her for an afternoon tea. It was a serious invitation, the type that cannot be declined. Emily had to accept.

They drank the tea in the garden, surrounded by scents and cats. It was a golden, warm and sweet tea, and mint leaves were dancing in the cup.

*It tasted like summer, like the gentle touch of a sunbeam over an orange tree.*

*They had tea almost every day, and Emily discovered the country that made people whispering. A place of mountains, valleys, countless stars, strange and yet familiar trees, cedars, honeysuckle, giant date, blooming orchards, a place where the water was bright and fresh.*

*Emily learned of the children that still lived there, and of the one who had chosen the world.*

*Mr Farouk learned thinks too, he learned that you could be afraid a school, of an empty room, that kite could dance in the sky, until the day when Emily asked*

*- Can you teach me to do tea?*

*He looked at her, smiling.*

*- Tea used to be a man business. Yet, my grand-mother always made the best tea of the whole region. So yes, I think you can learn. First, drink, and tell me what you are drinking.*

*He poured a glass of tea. Emily drank, and hesitated. It was only water, sugar, mint, tea and oranges. Was she supposed to find a secret ingredient?*

*All she could finally say was;*

*- It's sweet, and yet bitter, all together.*

*The old man looked pensively the ocean.*

*- My grand-mother was name Jahida. She had prepared this tea for weddings, departures, births, funerals, to cheer when fear was calling at the door. She had prepared it for men, women, sometimes even children. She had prepared it silently, or with so many words that the tea was cold before the end of the discussion. It is her life that you are drinking, and it is sweet, and bitter at the same time.*

*He poured a second glass, and Emily was to drink again. The taste had changed. It was stronger, sweeter, burning and asking for a song.*

*- Jahida was beautiful. She used to smile when she prepared the tea. Do you know the only day when she couldn't prepare it? It was the day of her wedding, a day of joy over the valley. The taste of love is on this glass. This will be even sweeter, continued Mr Farouk pouring a third glass. Jahida died twenty years ago, she was older than I.*

*That day, my mother prepared the tea, until death came to take her too. Now the recipe is mine.*

## *The last glass is for death.*

*Emily drank the delicate, sweet tea. The sun was playing on the empty glass, and the little girl marvelled that it had contained the life, the love and the death of a foreign women.*

*Summer after summer, Emily learned the simple gesture of Mr Farouk. She learned to listen the water, to air the tea powder, to cut the freshest mint, to roll oranges, to count the sugar, five times, to wait, to speak.*

*With time, whispers faded, new invitees came for the tea. Lifes were blooming in small golden glasses.*

*-the end-*