



Happy Birthday



Wishes Made from Wax

By Krista Martino-Hecht

Fantasy - Modern Fairytale

The Wishing Wax candle shop was a place where hard wax became granted wishes, if only on one's annual origin-day. The village witch who owned the shop, Baba Année, made the magic candles from scratch all on her own, as she had no one to help her.

Baba Année stretched her creaky bones as she prepared her materials. She tried to forget about her aching loneliness as she turned on the stove. She lifted a large silver urn by its golden handles and placed it over the heat to simmer. Baba Année poured the blue wax in first and waited a moment before lowering a new wick into it. Soon, she had pulled out a fresh wishing candle. She meant to carve it up, likely in the shape of a star, but first, she would need a new color.

She once had a second urn for this exact purpose, but someone had stolen it. Baba Année made do anyway, refilling her present urn with purple wax, when the shop doors burst open. There, a young girl stood, wearing a fancy petticoat, diamond-encrusted gloves, and shiny new boots. She was the chief's daughter and the richest girl in the whole village.

"Baba Année, listen to me *now!*" the girl snapped. "I am twelve today, and I deserve a wish."

"As you want, Sara," Baba Année said, without looking up from her work.

"I wish my pockets were full, to make me richer."

Baba Année snapped her fingers. "So it shall be."

There was no origin-day candle to light, and the girl did not bother to wait for it. She stuck her hands into her pockets greedily, where they already bulged with new wealth. But when she pulled them out, she saw they were only bunches of coal.

"Use the coal to keep warm, and perhaps you may learn of the varying ways of richness." The girl rushed out in a flurry of anger; Baba Année simply dipped her candle into the purple wax, unfazed.

Her door opened again, and there stood the village pretty boy. His hips cocked, he gazed at himself in a hand-held mirror before bothering to address the witch. "Baba Année, as you already know, I am seventeen today, and I deserve a wish."

"As you want, Sasha," Baba Année said and pulled the candle out to dry.

"I wish to stay a young buck forever, so I can chase cute girls whenever I want."

Baba Année snapped her fingers. “So it shall be.”

In a flash, the young man turned into a gleaming buck: a proud, male deer with antlers as high as the ceiling. He pranced around and snorted with confusion.

“Perhaps now you may know what it is like to be chased and coveted,” Baba Année said, and waved a hand. A push of magic forced the buck out of her shop and allowed Baba Année to work again in peace. Her candle was not yet finished.

Baba Année added a final color: pink, for good things to come. Gently, the old witch carved the multi-colored candle with practiced hands. She cut tiny slivers from the thick candle to fold down into leaves, flowers, and handles.

The witch quickly thought of her own wish before pinching the wick between two fingers. A flame ignited on its tip, and she watched it dance about.

Baba Année’s door opened, and then shut again carefully. A skinny boy had crept into the shop’s shadows, looking cold and hungry. His clothes were torn up, his face red-raw, and his eyes saddened. It was Sam, the village orphan. He had never visited her before.

“Please, Baba Année, I do not wish to interrupt,” he said.

“Nonsense, my child. Is it your origin-day?”

“Yes, Baba Année. Today, I am ten. May I have a wish?”

“As you want. You must blow out the candle’s flame for it to work properly.”

The boy shuffled into the light and held a shiny object. It was Baba Année’s stolen urn.

“First, I must apologize,” Sam said. “I stole this urn to protect my little sister from the cold. I had nothing else, and this was sitting alone, drying outside...”

“I accept your apology,” Baba Année said softly. “But I must ask, how can your sister possibly fit in my urn?”

“Like this,” the boy said, digging into the urn and producing a tiny mouse. She stood on her back legs and sniffed the air. Her whiskers twitched.

“Oh my!” Baba Année laughed. “She is cursed, then.”

The boy shook his head. “No, Baba Année, she is simply my only friend. We have grown close, so I consider her my family. As you know, I have no one else.” The boy hung his head. “My wish is for this little mouse to be safe and happy, and for you to give her a more comfortable place to live.”

Baba Année noticed again how little the boy had for himself. “Is that truly your wish?”

“Yes.”

“Then so it shall be.”

The boy leaned forward and blew on the candlewick. The flame went out and thrust them into darkness. Baba Année snapped her fingers, and ten beautiful candles flickered on all around them, lighting the other rooms. There was now a fresh bed fit for a young boy, and a tiny mouse’s bed beside it.

“Is that...for me?” the boy asked.

“If you want it. With me, your mouse-sister will be warm and well-fed, and in return, you could assist me in my candle-making.”

“Oh, thank you, Baba Année!” Sam said. He picked up his mouse-sister and danced with her in his hands. “A real home for us both!”

Baba Année prepared fresh soup for the boy in her returned urn and felt glad. The boy was pure of heart, and he had agreed to share her home. That had always been the witch’s only wish.



About Krista Martino-Hecht

Krista Martino-Hecht is an author of whimsical fantasy stories and a 2018 graduate of the Glasgow Fantasy Masters’ program. She currently lives in Queens, New York, with her husband and works at Regis High School as an assistant librarian. Before that, she worked at Books of Wonder, a children’s specialty bookstore. When she’s not writing, or reading, she’s fondly remembering her time in Scotland.