

La Virgen de la Candela

My grandfather talks, or just listens, to the man in uniform with the crooked neck and the flighty gaze, his former friend, now crazed victor, the instrument of his ruin.

- *"No hi ha res a fer."*

The factory closed, the workers gone. My grandfather wants to kill himself. Clearly, lucid. Everything ends.

No grandfather. It's not true, I'm here, in the next century.

- *"Here ends the family, the land, the honor and, above all, the good name ... Per sempre."*

Avi, I never changed my name, none of us did, three women, still called like you, the times have changed, Avi. Although not as much as you prayed for. This is the year I recover my honor, I swear. I invoke your weariness to my bones, I pray for integrity, to your name. You lift me up. La Virgen de la Candela extends her hand. All the way from the future, I hide in her mantle, such is the power of my thoughts of you.

- *"Think of your children!"*

You look up, a last look at the stone pine cone, over the closing door. Move the family to Barcelona, look forward no more, but always up. You were always humble. Your woman sour.

- *"Santa Mare de Deu, you are life and truth"*

She smiles and caresses your cheek, exquisite, blue eyes, red curls.

Your son falls at the feet of a French girl, they marry, and you meet her mother at the wedding, my other angel. Her war began where yours ended.

Thérèse also flees. By foot. To the South. Her little daughter asleep in her arms, my mother falling, crawling, scratching her knees in the brambles, dying of pneumonia. A German army doctor gives her penicillin. Thérèse trembles. A divine saint like yours protects them too, murmurs over them, in French.

Your heart, her heart, you are angels, but your children only remember steel.

Both, my mother and your son, banished from their enchanted forests; Valls and Lille, dragged to cities by the Mediterranean. Nice and Barcelona. Barcelona and Nice. At gun point. My life already escaping at one and the other. Daughter of the Sea, Granddaughter of the Forest.