



Little pretty lady,

Beautiful hands, artist's hands, dealing with dry plants, dry flowers, and beautiful thorns, sorting her drawers filled with endless stones, roots, remnants left behind by nature, making collages with watercolors and charcoals.

I loved visiting her studio, downstairs under the house, and the pine trees smelled under our steps...

She lives in a kibbutz, where the trees dominate the space, the sound of cows dominates the air, running dogs playing, dominating freedom, independent. The smell of the earth invaded our memories; she was part of my memories. They were our close family, where we went to spend the summer holidays.

They all spoke Hungarian. I did not understand the language, but it was the accent that touched my identity, my father's accent. It became "my"

language, so familiar I could understand their conversation. It was a comfortable sound; it was her accent too, with this rolling RRRRRR.

A little beautiful tiny lady, her force impressed me, her very clear blue eyes were always expressive. She did not talk much, but she drew and painted, modeled figures with red earth, and baked. She became a teacher, also my teacher, a figure in my life.

She was married to a very tall man, a big man, maybe her protector. He made goat cheese and spices, arak, and vodka. He knew all the plants and butterflies. He was her man, but he was also the man of other women...

I once dreamed of myself, dressed in a 1940s grey tier-suit, walking fast in a brown, grey old town in Europe during the war. I was speaking a language I did not know, a familiar language I could understand, but it was my language... I was going up and down over and over again, the long narrow stairs, in my 1940s hill shoes, bringing the children down fast.

The last time I went down, the car was gone, I was left with an empty cradle.

One day, not too long ago, she told me her life story, a tale that woke up the images of my dream... the dream came alive:

She took care of babies in Rudolf Israel Kastner's camp. One morning the black shirts arrived with big trucks, they rushed everyone into the empty trucks...

She went up and down the stairs to save the babies. The last time she came down, no one was there anymore, empty. The trucks were gone, the people were gone, she was alone. 1944.

The people never came back.

Then she met him, tall, handsome like her. They went through cold Hungary, resisting, the days of danger, counting the days of the war... She was very pretty; it saved her.

They walked until Marseilles; they had their first boy. All three of them crossed the Mediterranean Sea to reach the other shore, where they built a new home, a kibbutz, a family.

They all spoke a language I do not understand, the same language as my father's.

She awakened in me the interest in nature, to express, to create, to use art. She made me sensitive to beauty, to life, to cruelty.

Today I am married to a very tall, big man, my husband, my friend, my protector.

I live on the other side of the Mediterranean shore, in Europe, four hours from Marseilles. I paint, I draw, I try to understand people. I find the 'others' only mirrors of myself, and the world small, an ephemeral land for the living, and the others my companions...

I use art as my tool, a tool to dialogue.

She just celebrated her 90th birthday, and she does not remember anything anymore, not even the flowers under her house or us.

She does not talk. She still colors the flowers with soft pastels, bright colors, reproducing nature, recreating life... but in silence.