

and a body to remember with

rocked her and cuddled her to warm her up. She kissed her sweetly on the nose, the cheeks. They fell asleep entwined.

She was awakened by the blaring radio and the nasal voice of the man with the open fly: this *puta* doesn't sing, my lieutenant. Maybe this whore doesn't know, my lieutenant. We don't know what else to do to her, my lieutenant. I think she doesn't know.



She doesn't know. She doesn't know how to walk with crutches. Her right leg isn't there anymore, but it still hurts. She's alive. *I hurt, therefore I am*. Her mother, her son, and the cultural attaché to the embassy are waiting for her. A car with diplomatic plates followed by a military jeep take them to the airport. Her country, long and narrow, stays down there, framed by the salty water of the Pacific Ocean and the mute stature of the Andes. The yellow sweater, with no sleeves, is in her handbag. Her son will need the sleeves before winter arrives in Canada. It's very cold there. She closes her eyes and knits and knits, while she feels her son asleep on her chest, and her mother's hand patting her dark hair, down to her shoulders.

in the company of words

HEY PILAR VALLEJO, REMEMBER WHEN we used to run down Ferrari Street and the boats looked so small down there in the bay and we were so goofy, pretending to be nuts, and then we hung around on the corner with our hands in our pockets and whistled *Madame Butterfly* arias after my brother took us to the Victoria to see the movie with Mario Lanza?

And remember School Number 20 on top of Bellavista Hill, those starched, white girls, ruffles and ribbons, shiny shoes and circles of Nugget shoe polish on our ankle socks, girls reciting *Piececitos de Niño*, times tables, Arturo Prat's last words: *all aboard, boys*; and you raising your hand, saying, Miss Graciela, I think he was pushed, and Miss Graciela putting you in the corner for being a smartass and me making faces at you, throwing paper airplanes with messages inside?

And remember Mondays, when we were all spotless, even you and me, singing the national anthem at the top of our lungs in the playground of the Girls' School Number 20, listening to the boys across the street, the ones from the *Men's* School Number 19, singing the national anthem at the top of *their* lungs but a little ahead or behind us? It was pandemonium, but finally we

