



"You're not having *relations* with someone. . .?" she asked, falsely casual. She knew how the story played out in the north. What concerned her was me: as a thirty-something unaccompanied female, I was alien, Other.

"*Casada*," I assured her.

Her relief was evident. "Married!" Sara smiled. "Ah!"

But doubts persisted. "No children, then?"

Logic infallible. I was nearly double the age she had been when she had her first.

Pausing, suddenly nervous, my heart issued a reminder. "*Estoy embarazada*," I announced slowly, taking pains to round my a's, the edge of my tongue light against the back of my teeth on the 'd.' Pronouncing perfectly and for the first time in reference to myself.

"Now? At this very moment?" she asked, brightening.

It came out: it was recorded. "Right now, *em-bar-a-za-da*," I repeated. I had learned the news several hours earlier. I hadn't even told my own mother yet.

Taking my hand, Sara commenced a string of directives on care—for myself, for the baby.

Perhaps, on similar mornings in the following months, she thought of me. I bought one of her embroidered napkins to take home, not knowing I would be going so soon, a mess of tears, a body in emergency. "*Pain has various echoes, opening its wounds in other bodies*," writes Oaxacan poet Abraham O. Nahón. As fear and grief coursed through me, I felt Sara's wounds, her *susto*, bloom in my body, her story taking on new resonance.

Back home, wrapping warm tortillas in Sara's napkin, I clung to that moment when we were two mothers—one actual, one expectant—chatting. I imagined her imagining me, rounding out, *embarazada*. Perhaps she prayed for my safety and that of my husband and our child. Perhaps she prayed we'd maintain each other.

Perhaps the vowels fell flat, though. Not round enough, forced, accented poorly. Trying it on for size I had liked the sound of it, the feel of it, and it was true, that day, those weeks. But a month later I was lighter than the day I had said it for the first time. Still, I imagined myself in her eyes, *embarazada*.

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## The Missing War

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The cool foyer of the Athens War Museum provided a much-needed respite from the shirt-soaking blare of the August heat. The Acropolis

beckoned, but I preferred indoor sightseeing in those middle hours of the day when most Greeks enjoyed their afternoon naps. Besides, what self-respecting ethnographer can resist a museum created and curated by a country's armed forces? The Ancient Greeks invented history as we know it today, and "history" meant "military history" to those first scribes of the past. Herodotus had a serious sword fetish.

"One ticket please," I said to the conscript sitting behind a low table playing with his smart phone. His crisp uniform and black boots contrasted with my flimsy dress and Birkenstocks.

"Three euro," he said. "English?"

I nodded. He handed me a ticket and a brochure.

I strolled into the exhibit. The Athens War Museum catalogued the evolution of modern combat from bows and arrows and clubs to tanks and semi-automatic machine guns; the Greeks had inflicted damage on their fellow human beings with just about everything. I'd been on Syntagma Square the night before. Black-clad riot police with Plexiglas shields, batons, and tear gas clashed with Molotov-cocktail-lobbing protestors. Years of externally imposed austerity had turned the Greek people against the Greek state. Greek history in two sentences: Invaders must be repelled; Order must be maintained.

From the Peloponnesian through the Persian Wars, from the Balkan Wars to the two World Wars, the War Museum promoted one simple message: good Greek boys have been protecting the fatherland since antiquity. Sabers and daggers filled the cases about the wars of the Classical Era. Bayonets, muskets and uniforms narrated the struggle for Greek independence. Gas masks and pistols represented the battles of the First World War.

But I had come for the communists. I buttered my scholarly bread with the recent past, and my fascinations lay with the leftist rebels who fled to the mountains and led guerilla assaults against their German and Italian occupiers during the Second World War. Many young Greeks had been attracted to Marx's critiques of capitalism and the dream of a world where people were no longer divided into exploiters and exploited. I spent most of my two hours reading the biographies of the young idealistic men and women whose grainy black and white photos adorned the walls of the third floor.

After the exhibit on World War II, the curators presented a few cases of the uniforms and weapons of the Greek soldiers who fought in the Korean War. After that, a small sign with an arrow pointing toward the stairs directed me to the "Exodus." This was the end of the exhibit.

Wait a minute, I thought. They skipped one. I wandered back around the third floor to ensure that I had not missed any displays. Nothing. I descended to the second floor. Could there be a special room that I missed? I studied the map in my brochure but found nothing. I sought out the soldier in the foyer.

He now sat with a colleague, another thin youth in uniform who arranged some souvenir statuettes of Achilles behind a desk covered with postcards and key rings of Spartan helmets.

"Excuse me," I said. "Where can I find the exhibit on the Greek Civil War?"

The first soldier glanced at the second then looked back to me. "What war?"

"The war from 1946 to 1949. Between the communists and nationalists." I said. "The exhibits are all chronological, but they skip from World War II straight to Korea. Did I miss a special room?"

The second soldier stood up and smiled at me, perhaps pleased that I knew my Greek history. "No exhibit for that war," he said.

"No exhibit? How?"

Fearful that Greece would fall under communist control after 1945, the United States and Great Britain backed nationalist Greeks against the insurgents of the Greek Communist Party, many of them former partisans who helped defeat the Nazis. The Civil War devastated the country, with over 150,000 killed and a million people displaced. Some 30,000 children of Greek communists were exported to avoid internment in re-education camps. The roughly 25,000 boys and girls who stayed behind spent years apart from their families on remote islands learning not to become Marxists. By 2013, many of these children were now elderly pensioners, pensioners who might spend an afternoon visiting the Athens War Museum.

The first soldier wrinkled his forehead, shrugging. "Maybe they no have good information," he said in broken English. "Or maybe they no want to make that story here."

I made a face, shaking my head.

The second soldier pushed his chin out and made a "tch" sound. "No, no, no," he said.

He walked up to me and gestured out through the doorway onto the Athens streets soon to be heaving with protestors.

He sighed. "The only wars that go into a museum are the finished ones."

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## Subway Amulets

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### The Seasoned Commuter's Uniform

Right before reaching some stops there is a brief two to three-second pause that feels like floating, a suspension of business, a small breath of calmness and expectation not unlike the few seconds that come before an