

# LAGINAK:

## *Shadows: Nekane*

(translated by Kristin Addis)

When I ran into her at the museum I had to make an effort not to appear nervous, and I think I succeeded even though I was trembling inside. I hadn't seen Marga since 1997. I remember the year clearly because the last time we met, she recommended that I read Alessandro Baricco's novel *Silk*, which had just come out in Spanish, and I loved it; it was at a similar event that she had mentioned the novel to me as if it had no particular importance, and it turned out to be a nice surprise for me.

She also tried to show that she was calm: she hugged me quickly, as if it hadn't been years. I couldn't find the strength in my arms to hold her tighter and longer.

We observed the usual niceties. "You look great. How long have you been using rouge?" Since Mikel, I thought, but I didn't go into details on that or on the many other things she asked me. I don't think she expected an answer anyway; her questions were like her hugs – quick and polite, insignificant.

Marga had gone downhill a bit and had put on some weight. The index and middle fingers on her right hand were yellowed with nicotine and her blue roots gave away the fact that she dyed her hair. I didn't say anything, of course.

Marga and I had been friends through the four years of high school, "from *SuperPop* to Rimbaud," as she liked to say. During those years, more than being merely friends, we had formed our own sect. And had it happened almost from the first, when we were assigned to sit next to each other: I was García and she was Garcíandía. For a while, I used to go to Marga's house almost every afternoon. Her parents, unlike mine, had a hi-fi and they used to let us use it. We would spend hours listening to Silvio Rodríguez's *Rabo de nube* and Lou Reed's *Berlin*, and reading, and talking, and smoking. What Marga said when she finished reading *Breakfast at Tiffany's* is engraved in my memory: "I agree with Holly: 'Home is where you feel at home, I'm still looking'." And I laughed, even though I didn't think what she said was particularly funny. Marga and I hardly ever argued. We didn't even try. Maybe that's what friendship is.

“Do you like the exhibition?” she asked at one point, but she didn’t wait for my answer. “Me neither. Shall we get out of here?” I said OK, we could go to a nearby bar for a drink or something, but she shook her head: “I’d rather go for a walk if it’s all the same to you. You know...” she added with a smile, “that must seem strange to you, huh? You were always the hiker.” It’s true. Though I loved hiking in the mountains, I just barely managed to drag Marga with me a couple times. The second time, she nearly ended up dehydrated as we were hiking the Irumugarrieta and she never came with us again.

Now that I think about it, the mountains were one of the things that started to come between us: I met Urko, my first husband, in the hiking club. The mountains, and our studies, of course. Marga went to Madrid to the Diplomatic Corps School, while I was at Sarriko, never quite finishing my degree in Economics. And the pile of letters we wrote each other at first dwindled in the following years. Then – I’ve never understood it – Marga went into politics and there were fewer and fewer opportunities to get together. So, the mountains, our studies, and the Yassin affair, of course.

“The place with the elms is nice for walking, don’t you think?” I said it was, and meant it: it was one of those warm afternoons that can only be enjoyed in the fall. The long shadows of the trees made me think of arrows. Our shoes made a soft noise as we walked through the fallen leaves, and I had a sudden strong urge to kick the newly fallen chestnuts. But I didn’t- dare.

“Have you read Barrico’s latest?” she asked. “It’s a short essay, not a novel. It’s called *Next*, it’s about globalization. I don’t know if you’re interested, but it’s well written and helps you understand a few things.” She paused and looked behind her for the first time, just for a second. Then she went on: “There is something in the book which made me think. When he talks about the events of September 11, Barrico says something about future wars. He says the traditional concept of foreign wars has become obsolete. From now on, all wars will be domestic: chronic, inevitable, civil wars. And I closed the book and thought that in the Basque Country then, we must be the most globalized and the most modern since our wars have been just like that for ages. Don’t you think?”

I don’t know what I answered, but again, I don’t think she expected an answer. We kept on talking about one thing and another until we reached the railway bridge. I had to go, I told her then, we’d get together again some time. Another brief hug and we went our separate ways: I to the north to my house, and Marga to the east, her bodyguard behind her.

I don’t know whether or not she lived over there somewhere.