

Dennis Reid / PLAZA DEL LOMA

October tourists trickled through Barcelona train station as I sipped that final Spanish coffee, the heavy black in my mouth on the train to Paris, an airplane, Canada. That was before the cold weather, before the demonstrations. Three months earlier I had stepped through summer suitcase in hand, through Catalonia three days in high plains dust, the truck rattling. I thumbed a ride with her from Nice. She spoke no English, I no Spanish. It was a ride of awkward silences, then hand motions and much laughing; her body tight under a cotton workshirt, sweat in the armpits. We drank late the last night before Barcelona, almost to the point of understanding. Ouzo, Cointreau, cervesa. Driving further, she surprised me before I her. And after, hunched against me expecting someone to hit her.

The next day, exhausted by the sun, the cool lawn, I fell asleep. "Move. Move." I looked up the soldier's carbine, its toylike vented muzzle, with the tourist's blankness. His black cap and black uniform was too formal, too *pretty* I thought then, for the budding heat.

Seven thousand miles and six months later I remember that pulling blackberry suckers from the bush. They're everywhere, like the brambles in sleeping beauty. All summer they reclaimed the garden, the fences I left. Their slivers stick under my skin and I pick around them like I picked around her in Plaza Del Loma, carefully, avoiding scratches. Around the magnificent ceramic star the radicals gathered, argued, drinking all night in noisy open-air cafes, planning meetings, rallies, printing leaflets. I neither understood nor cared to know what it was about; I was attached to her for the mornings, simple as that; giggling under sheets we dampened at night. It seemed to take all summer drawing my finger down her thigh, and she, the core of that anger, using me like a drink after work. I thought she loved me, *me* who couldn't speak her language. I planned a scene which, of course,

was pointless: she was in her web and I was a bauble from another world. So we sat in the train station, pigeons circling like wind-up toys. I see her long brown hair, breasts taut like the flesh of oranges.

"You go," she shrugged matter of fact as if noting a chipped fingernail.

"Not the revolution, really?"

"What do *you* know?" She was so contemptuous I almost laughed. But it *was* unreal and sweat beads on my forehead as I chop these snaking vines as if it would change something; September, October, the heat growing; soldiers fidgetting with orders they didn't want to obey. October 23rd was a riot neither side expected — overturned cars, gasoline bombs, toppled bronze monuments. Seven killed. She among them, on her side with a stunned disbelief as blood squirted from her ribs. I left with blood on my hands and raze this silly, rooted undergrowth. I can feel her bite my shoulder. I stop and finger the scar, the fault, not simply mine.