

HOPE

My paternal great-grandmother Blanca Rojas Llorens, and her two brothers, Antonio and Ramon, were born any time between 1918 and 1922 in Tarragona. The three of them suffered the terrible consequences of the Civil War and the bloody Ebre Battle between 1936 and 1939. Blanca and Ramon could get rid of the conflict by running away to France during the "retirada", the exode of thousands of republicans in February 1939 They returned after the war, in different decades, apart from Antonio who died fighting against the Francoists in the Ebre Battle with the XV Army Corps led by famous Lieutenant Colonel Manuel Tagüeña.

Blanca couldn't remember the last time she had gone outside if it weren't to get water. It was eleven o'clock in the morning, his mother told her again to be careful. She left the house with that pitcher that was crushing her back. As she was walking under that burning sun that announced the arrival of spring, she watched as the eyes she had drawn two weeks ago on the container were staring at her and wanted to convey to her a highly necessary joy. The rifles in the background broke the silence of the narrow streets, and made her panic as if she had first heard them.

The way back was always much longer, trying not to spill a single drop of the liquid. They lived in a very small house that seemed strangely cozy to her, right in front of a square where just then only a couple of uniformed soldiers could be distinguished. The atmosphere at home was more tense since the neighbor had informed them that the Francoists had abused her daughter for hours, before finally killing her. Her cries passed through the walls as if they didn't exist and flooded each of the rooms in their home. His brothers were particularly terrified, a word had been going through the neighborhood for some days that the soldiers were taking young boys to fight.

After a month, the army broke into Blanca's house and took her older brother, Antonio, in the blink of an eye, so as to fight against the insurgents near the Segre

River. Then, the mother, absent, depressed inside, hid Ramon, fearing that his fate would be the same as her first son's.

Antonio found himself surrounded after a few hours by what he prayed would have never happened, holding a shotgun and shooting from behind cover at guys who were in the same circumstances as him.

On August 4, 1938, a bomb dismembered his body when he left a trench that had been protecting him from the enemy side. His inconsequential corpse was thrown into a common grave with his companions, and his relatives never heard anything else about him.

The development of the war in Tarragona was getting worse and worse exponentially and the defenseless and innocent inhabitants saw how their lives became a constant nightmare, where malevolent monsters stole their desire to keep living. Blanca was particularly strong and positive, and made sure that her mother did not fall into a dark hole where she could not get out.

The mother's grandparents lived close to the cathedral, hence she and Blanca went to visit them. As they said goodbye as if they were not going to hug again, the planes began to fly over the sky and spread panic at vertiginous speed. The bombs began to fall before anyone could take shelter. Blanca was lost in the crowd, hearing her horrified mother calling her name. She tried to keep calm. A republican caught her unaware and threw himself on top of her to save her life, giving his own, from the explosion of a bomb that she had not been able to detect. The mother managed to locate her and brought her badly injured home. The events of that afternoon made the mother decide to send her children abroad and exempt them from continuing to witness that madness.

In a week, she had found the people who would take responsibility for her children; a French family with many resources who had fled to their native country. The two children, who had acquired unthinkable maturity during those months of uncertainty and suffering, left the state with the Forrestierres, after saying goodbye between

tears to the mother who promised them that their eyes would look at each other again.

Blanca was not entirely comfortable in that luxurious house, but she knew that if she had gone on living in Tarragona that meant being in constant danger of death. She was sitting on the steps of the outdoor garden, looking at the horizon and a light breeze caressed her face, reminding her of her mother. She had drawn big eyes on the floor that radiated happiness and complacency, a feeling that seemed inaccessible to her, which finally seemed to embrace her though.