

Christos Kalli

IN THE FALL, MY GRANDMOTHER SPEAKS
TO THE WAR

The war knocks on the door.
She asks *What can I do*
to keep you satisfied?
Pours onion soup into a bowl
pushed on the side of the table, smiling.
Outside, darkness and light
pile like lovers, resenting each other.
In the bowl, pool of broth
the spoon couldn't get to,
deep enough to drown a boat.
Gathers her thoughts in the reflection
of her face, the way mothers
gather their daughters in front of
a fireplace to say *Run, go*
play in another country's empty yard.
In another country's empty yard,
as she waits for the war to say
a word, she brings water to a boil,
searches through a wreckage
of seeds, roots, and leaves,
picking anise, thistle, and chamomile.
She breathes in the smoke
of her village and tells the war
You haven't slept at all
during my lifetime — do you need
a bed? The answer is in
the silence and the summer
of 1974, the sweatdrops
and watermelon juice dripping
from her chin, the laughter
in the backyard filled with sunset,
the school uniforms she had
to leave behind. Still silence.
She unfolds the bedsheets,
stretching the white, ironed edges,
saying goodnight, goodnight,
goodnight, her left eye turned
towards the kitchen knife.