

In Word and Thread

A letter to

Agnesse de le Plache



MICCA

Dear Agnesse,

You were over eighty years old when your name entered the judicial records. More than eighty years. That is an entire lifetime, Agnesse. You were the wife of Georges de le Court and you lived here in Ellezelles. The personal details almost end there.

Behind those few facts lies a long life that has disappeared from view. Sometimes I imagine how often you walked the same roads that still wind through these hills today. What your house looked like. Whom you loved. What you did on an ordinary morning, long before anyone associated your name with witchcraft.

On 26 October 1610, all of that came to an end. Together with five other women from Ellezelles, you were condemned. Your sentence was *corde et feu*: first the rope, then the fire.

In my e-book *Around the Table, a conversation based on true events*, I brought the six of you together again. There, I let you speak about fear. About people who kept their heads down for fear of gossip, jealousy and accusations. About fear passed from mother to daughter. I gave you those words. They are not a historical testimony, but they try to say something about the world into which you and the other women were drawn.

Perhaps that is why I wanted to make something for you in which protection is so strongly present.

A large shawl. Warm and heavy enough to wrap around your shoulders. I did not make it neat or perfect. There are loose threads, holes, rough color changes and stitches that are not quite as they should be. As if the shawl had already existed for a long time before I made it. As if someone had worn it, repaired it and worn it again.

Diamonds appear throughout the shawl. We also talk about them in *Around the Table*. I have you ask what they mean, and I tell you about their ancient associations with femininity, fertility and protection. With the womb and with new life.

Now I think above all of that last word: protection.

You had lived for more than eighty years when it was decided that you posed a danger. Of all those years, only a few details ultimately remained in the archives: your name, Agnès de le Plache, your husband Georges de le Court, Ellezelles as your place of residence, your advanced age and the date on which you were condemned.

That is why, more than four centuries later, I place this shawl around your shoulders.

The diamonds could not protect you then. They cannot protect you now either.

But they can carry your name.

*With love,
Mieke*