my witch was a poor witch: no shoes, a black tattered dress with patches crawling over it like red and blue spiders, and a shaky black house with curtains on the window that matched her dress.

My witch was a sad witch: face unfed, hands the barren breadbaskets that sit at the center of the table with their mouths open, waiting for a crumb. She was certainly unique among the other witches that looked the same: ugly mole on the nose, green skin, and yellow eyes. But without exception each frightening witch sported a clean black dress, the buckles on her black shoes, on her black hat, shiny and polished and new, as if she had just taken her scaring dress out of its factory box. My witch was the only one drawn in profile, as if she couldn’t look you in the eyes to ask: “Is there anything to eat?”

I stood at the front of the room to explain my witch’s poverty and I couldn’t come up with anything to say, except that things were looking better for this witch: she had migrated to the United States, she had a job and loved the secondhand stores, where everything was used, but nothing had holes and so there was no longer a need for patches.

“And is this your witch’s name?” the teacher asked, pointing at the word I had printed at the bottom of the page.
And that’s when I froze because I had written _Avelina_, my mother’s name, the prettiest gift I could find to console this poor witch who had traveled so far just to discover that her broom was to sweep the gingerbread houses of all the other witches the kids had drawn for fifth grade Halloween.