

2 — PENCADENIC

Extracts from *Enfance Marine*. Chapters 3 and 9

"For me there was another house, a house complete, like the ones children draw, with a roof and a chimney out of which an arabesque of smoke curls obliquely, never straight, with a mischievous pirouette and a dragon, a door flanked by two windows, each divided into six panes, and a man standing in front of it, his arms wide open inviting all who will to enter. The man is my grandfather. The house is the house at Pencadénic.

I think I was brought there the day my aunt ran along the shore with a child in her arms that she seemed to want to rescue from its woes. The entire Banastère brigade was disbanded, my father stationed on a moor somewhere around Vannes. The departure must have looked like panic because the barracks were vacated on the same day and as many ox carts as there were families had to be fetched from nearby villages. I was sent to my grandparents to get me out of the way while they moved.

There was really just a narrow inlet to cross and a few kilometres of shingle, and we were there!

My Grandfather's house, standing apart from the others, was the first one to appear and the only one that was shiny, with its blue slate roof wet and its white façade, the door standing open, which you could see from afar. The yard spread out around it like a skirt of light. My gaze then fell on the well, with its back like a giant snail towards us, and the garden surrounded by a wall topped with a trellis that looked like bunches of green grapes hanging down.

The garden was in the shape of a triangle and my gaze fell on the far corner where one of the elms was rustling in the wind. Later I found out that the sea was at the bottom of the garden, and understood why it was the shape of a ship's prow rising up to be carried along.

I was five years old. My grandmother reminded me of it. She was an educated person who was sent to a convent when she was young, and taught her own children to write.

She took care of my education herself; there was a reading session every day, even several times a day. The big book of masses would come out of the cupboard. She would sit on the closed lid of the bed chest; I would take my place on a small bench and lean on her knee... So I learned to read with words that had no meaning. She chose mainly Latin texts in large print."