



Universidad Latina de Panamá

Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación y Desarrollo Humano

Traducción del libro “Los Ocupantes” de Yoselin Goncalves Págs 51-100

**Proyecto final de graduación presentado como requisito para optar por el título de
Licenciatura en Inglés con énfasis en Traducción**

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Dedication

I dedicate this work, first and foremost, to my mother, whose unconditional love, strength, and unwavering support have been the foundation of my achievements. Her sacrifices and encouragement have inspired me every step of the way, and this accomplishment is as much hers as it is mine.

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Introduction

Translation plays a fundamental role in communication, as it allows people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds to understand each other. It acts as a bridge that connects communities, preserves knowledge, and facilitates the exchange of ideas across borders. Through translation, literary, academic, and scientific works reach a broader audience, enriching the global dialogue. In a multicultural world, translation ensures access to vital information, promotes inclusion, and fosters intercultural understanding. Moreover, it contributes to the dissemination of cultural heritage and social values. Without translation, countless voices and perspectives would remain isolated and unheard. Therefore, translation is not only a linguistic tool but also a key to mutual respect and global coexistence.

The purpose of translation techniques is to help translators preserve the meaning, tone, and style of the original text while adapting it to the grammatical and cultural norms of the target language. These techniques provide strategies for addressing specific linguistic challenges such as idiomatic expressions, syntactic differences, or cultural references. By using them, translators can choose the best approach to maintain fidelity and naturalness in the translation. Techniques like transposition, modulation, adaptation, and equivalence allow for flexible problem-solving and decision-making during the translation process. Furthermore, translation techniques are useful for analyzing how meaning is constructed and conveyed in both source and target languages. Their application is essential for professional translations in literature, audiovisual media, legal documents, and more. Mastery of these techniques is a core competence for any translator. They are crucial in determining the success and clarity of a translated work.

The purpose statement of this final project is to translate at least fifty pages of the book *Los Ocupantes*, written by Yoselin Goncalves, while applying various translation techniques that will determine our knowledge on how to implement them properly and functionally. In this project, we will try to answer the following question: How does the implementation of certain translation techniques reflect the meaning and content of the book *Los Ocupantes*, written by Yoselin Goncalves?

In the first chapter of this translation work, we discuss the theoretical framework of translation, including the most relevant translation techniques and strategies according to experts in the field. In the second chapter of this final project, we translate fifty pages from the source text in Spanish to the target language English in two columns, showing the original and translated version side by side. This allows for better analysis and clarity. In the third chapter of this translation, we propose some conclusions and recommendations as well as the challenges we faced, such as cultural adaptation, semantic ambiguity, or syntactic reformulation. A glossary of the key terminology used throughout the project is also included to support reader comprehension. Finally, a bibliography and an annex are presented, containing relevant resources, external references, and the full translation sample. This structure aims to demonstrate both practical translation skills and academic analysis in a coherent and structured way.

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First Chapter

1.1 Antecedents

Book translation plays a major role in the global distribution of information such as knowledge, literature, and culture. Translation works as a bridge between languages, allowing stories, perspectives, and ideas to be accessible to readers all around the world, allowing cultural exchange of different societies, preserving diverse voices, and contributes to the development of literature. Through translation, literature that was once limited for only Spanish readers can be accessed by a larger audience. By translating “Los Ocupantes” by Yoselin Goncalves, it offers an opportunity for a Latin American narrative to be reachable for English speaking readers. Allowing them to have a new perspective of the author’s style, themes, emotions, and cultural elements, offering to meet Latin American experiences through literature.

Yoselin Goncalves was born on May 21, 1993, in Barquisimeto, Venezuela and also holds Portuguese nationality. Goncalves is a publicist, writer, editor, and visual artist. Graduated from Universidad Tecnológica de Panamá in Literary Creation. She was also part of the Writers’ Training Program (PROFE) by the Panamá’s National Institute of Culture (INAC) in 2017. Goncalves is the author of many books such as: “El acecho de los inmortales volúmenes I y II (2017), “No apagues la luz” (2019), “La cosecha” (2020), “Los lugares que escondemos” (2023), and “Ferozes: Compilación de autoras jóvenes venezolanas” (2023). Goncalves’s writing focuses on psychological depth, and poetic language. Her works often explore themes of identity, trauma, memory, and the supernatural.

Yoselin Goncalves is a Luso-Venezuelan writer known for her work in the horror and suspense genre. Goncalves has gained recognition for her unique style that uses both

psychological tension and the supernatural. Yoselin Goncalves has been passionate about literature from a young age, and has cultivated a deep interest in stories that explore fear and trauma. Her storytelling is marked by her rich character's development and emotionally intense plots. Over time she has gained a loyal readership in Latin America by contributing to modern horror literature and engaging with her fans through book events and social media where she shares insights into her creative process.

Los Ocupantes is a novel written by Yoselin Goncalves and published in May 2021 by El Taller Blanco Ediciones in collaboration with Editorial Gente Nueva. It was printed in Bogotá, Colombia, as part of the "Comarca Mínima" collection, with a limited run of 250 copies, each of 95 pages in its online version. The book's ISBN is 978-958-49-2784-2. The cover illustration was created by Juan Francisco Carrillo, and the layout and design were done by Editorial Gente Nueva. The editorial process was overseen and corrected by El Taller Blanco Ediciones.

The novel tells the story of the Rivera family, who move from Caracas to Barquisimeto hoping for a better life. They end up living in a turquoise colonial house on 13th Street, in the Santa Isabel neighborhood. At first, everything seems normal, but soon the house starts to feel strange. There are creepy noises, weird things happening, and a feeling that something isn't right. What was supposed to be a fresh start turns into a nightmare. Besides dealing with money problems and family issues, they also have to face scary and unexplained events. The story focuses on each family member, especially the children, and how they live through all this. The house almost feels alive, like it holds the pain and fear of the people inside it. The novel mixes real-life problems with psychological horror, making it both emotional and scary.

“Los Ocupantes” shows how problems like trauma, poverty, and violence can affect families through many generations. The story is told through different points of view, showing how each character is shaped by their past, especially things like loss, silence, and being left behind. Even though there are many dark and terrifying moments, there are also scenes full of love and strength—especially when the children try to protect each other. The novel explores how fear becomes a part of everyday life, and how people learn to live with it. It uses elements of the gothic genre to talk about deep emotional and social pain, making the horror feel very real. The story also shows how women often carry the emotional weight of the family, but they also keep hope alive. In the end, the novel mixes fantasy with real-life struggles, creating a sad but powerful story.

The purpose of “Los Ocupantes” isn’t just to scare the reader, but to make them think about the emotional, social, and spiritual problems that affect our lives. The house in the story is a symbol of things like family trauma, money problems, and the invisible pain passed down from one generation to the next. Goncalves uses gothic elements to show the emotional effects of things like domestic violence, being abandoned, and feeling left out by society. By mixing normal everyday life with strange and scary moments, the author makes readers think about their own fears and the systems that cause people to suffer. The book makes us think about what it means to belong, to remember the past, and to keep going. In the end, the haunted house is not only a scary place, but also a symbol of memory, strength, and identity.

1.2 Justification

This translation is highly relevant for the author, Yoselin Goncalves, because it allows her work to reach a broader international audience. By translating *Los Ocupantes* into English, her story can resonate beyond Spanish-speaking readers, gaining exposure in global literary markets. This step not only increases the visibility of her writing but also enhances her reputation as an emerging voice in contemporary literature. The translation preserves the originality of her ideas while adapting them to a wider cultural context. It also validates her creative efforts, as being translated into another language reflects the literary value and potential impact of her work. Additionally, it opens opportunities for international publishing, literary awards, and academic discussion. For the author, this translation is a milestone that supports her professional growth and artistic reach.

For me, as a student of translation at Universidad Latina de Panamá, this project represents a meaningful academic and professional challenge. Translating *Los Ocupantes* gives me the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge to a real-world literary text, enhancing my skills in context adaptation, cultural transfer, and language accuracy. It allows me to explore literary translation, which demands more than literal conversion; it requires understanding the emotions, style, and narrative voice of the author. This experience will strengthen my ability to make creative and precise linguistic decisions. Furthermore, it helps build my portfolio and professional credibility as a future translator. Engaging with an original Panamanian work also allows me to contribute to promoting national literature abroad. In short, this translation is a critical step in my development as a culturally aware and skilled translator.

The translation of “Los Ocupantes” will benefit a variety of audiences. English speaking readers will gain access to a powerful story that was previously unavailable to them, enriching their understanding of Latin American perspectives and themes. Scholars, teachers, and students interested in contemporary Latin American literature will also find the translated work a valuable resource. It can be included in academic programs that explore translation studies, intercultural communication, or Hispanic literature. Additionally, the Panamanian literary community will benefit from the international recognition of one of its authors. The translation promotes cultural exchange and encourages other writers to consider translation as a way to share their stories with the world. Publishers and literary agents may also discover new talent through such projects, fostering a greater appreciation of Latin American voices.

1.3. Objectives of the Project

1.3.1 General Objective

To translate from Spanish into English the pages 51 to 100 from the book “Los Ocupantes” written by Yoselin Goncalves.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives.

1. To implement seven translation techniques from the source language of the book “Los Ocupantes” written by Yoselin Goncalves into the target language, in this case Spanish, providing two examples per technique.
2. To demonstrate effective use of the mechanics of writing in the target language: punctuation, capitalization, coherence, and unity.
3. To analyze the structure of the target language so the syntax, semantics, and pragmatics of both languages are identified and translated.
4. To interpret the cultural and sociological aspects of the source language that may determine a fluid translation that also reflects an awareness of the culture of the target language.

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 Translation techniques implemented:

Translation acts as a vital link that unites different parts of the world, making communication and cultural exchange possible among members of any society. It plays a key role in our daily routine whether we realize it or not. From the user guides of our phones and computers to the subtitles of the TV shows we enjoy, translation is everywhere. Without it, much of the information and convenience we have access to today would not exist. Our current level of global knowledge and interaction simply wouldn't be possible without translation.

The translator's main task is to convert the content of the original text into the target language as accurately and naturally as possible. To achieve this, it's essential to know and apply appropriate translation techniques. These techniques serve as practical tools to produce the clearest and most faithful version of the message in the target language. There are several types of techniques, and the translator must select and apply them based on the context, style, and challenges present in the text to be translated.

1. Translation Technique: Modulation

1.1 Definition: "Modulation involves using a different phrase from that used in the source content to preserve the same meaning in the target language. With this technique, you change a perspective to convey the idea in a way that aligns with the natural patterns of the target language. Thus, a reader in the target language won't be confused by an unexpected phrase."

(Mustafin, 2020, pr.9)

1.2 Example #1:

Source Text: Liduvina estaba muy pequeña. (P.54)

Target Text: Liduvina was very young. (P.54)

1.3 Example #2:

Source Text: el dueño siempre se quejaba de ellas porque subían a la platabanda a robar sus mangos. (P.53)

Target Text: the owner always complained about them because they climbed up to the roof to steal his mangoes. (P.53)

1.4 Analysis: In both examples, the translation required a change in perspective to convey the intended meaning naturally in English. In the first case, *estaba muy pequeña* was rendered as *was very young*, shifting from a literal reference to size to one of age, which better fits the context in the target language. In the second case, *platabanda* was translated as *roof*, adapting the term to a more familiar concept for English-speaking readers. This technique ensures that the message is preserved while adjusting the wording to be culturally and linguistically appropriate in the target text.

2. Translation Technique: Transposition

2.1 Definition: “The method called transposition involves replacing one word class with another without changing the meaning of the message. Beside being a special translation procedure, transposition can also be applied within a language.” (Vinay et al, 1995, p.88)

2.2 Example #1:

Source Text: "Decían que el hombre que vivía ahí tenía un pacto con el diablo..." (P.53)

Target Text: "They said that the man who lived there had made a pact with the devil..." (P.53)

2.3 Example #2:

Source Text: "Eran historias que pasaban de generación en generación..." (P.53)

Target Text: "These were stories that had been passed down from generation to generation..." (P.53)

2.4 Analysis:

In both examples, I used transposition because the grammatical structure of the sentence changes when translated into English, but the original meaning is preserved. In the first sentence, the structure "tenía un pacto" (literally "had a pact") is turned into "had made a pact" to sound more natural in English. In the second one, the passive construction "que pasaban" becomes "that had been passed down," which requires a shift from an active to a passive voice. I chose this technique to maintain the fluidity and clarity of the target language while respecting the context and tone of the source text.

3. Translation Technique: Reduction (Also known as omission technique)

3.1 Definition: "As with single words, an idiom may sometimes be omitted altogether in the target text. This may be because it has no close match in the target language, its meaning cannot easily be paraphrased or for stylistic reasons." (Baker, 1992, p. 77)

3.2 Example#1:

Source Text: Casi siempre le quedaban arañazos. (P.54)

Target Text: She always ended up with scratches. (P.54)

3.3 Example#2:

Source Text: No volvió a verlo nunca más luego de ese día. (P.54)

Target Text: She never saw him again. (P.54)

3.4 Analysis:

In both examples, the technique of reduction is applied to remove words or expressions that would be considered redundant in English.

In Example 1, the words "*casi*" (almost) and "*le quedaban*" (she was left with) are omitted. In the target language, the simplified phrase "*always ended up*" conveys the same core meaning without unnecessary length, maintaining fluency.

In Example 2, the original phrase "*nunca más luego de ese día*" (never again after that day) is shortened to "*never saw him again*". The elements referring to the exact moment ("after that day") are omitted because in English, the concept of "never again" already implies that no further encounter took place, making the additional detail redundant.

In both cases, the essential meaning of the original is preserved while avoiding repetition, which results in a more natural and concise expression in the target language.

4. Translation Technique: Borrowing

4.1 Definition: According to Molina and Hurtado Albir (2002), borrowing is one of the basic translation techniques that involves "taking a word or expression straight from another language" (p. 499).

4.2 Example #1:

Source Text: Aragua, Monagas, Trujillo y Barquisimeto. (P.55)

Target Text: Aragua, Monagas, Trujillo, and Barquisimeto. (P.55)

4.3 Example #2:

Source Text: machete en mano. (P.55)

Target Text: machete in hand. (P.55)

4.4 Analysis: In both examples, specific terms from the source language are kept in their original form in the target language. Proper nouns such as Aragua, Monagas, Trujillo, and Barquisimeto are directly transferred because translating them would alter their identity. Similarly, the word machete is preserved in English, as it is a culturally recognized term that conveys the same meaning without losing its essence. The use of borrowing here ensures that the cultural and geographical references remain intact while maintaining clarity for the reader.

5. Translation Technique: Literal

5.1 Definition: “It may be useful to distinguish literal from word-for-word and one-to-one translation, Word-for-word translation transfers SL grammar and word order, as well as the primary meanings of all the SL words, into the translation, and it is normally effective only for brief simple neutral sentences” (Newmark, 1988, p. 56)

5.2 Example #1:

Source Text: Los vecinos contaban muchas cosas.(P.53)

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

Target Text: The neighbors told many things.(P. 53)

5.3 Example #2:

Source Text: Adiós fiestas, adiós juegos, adiós viajes.(P. 58)

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

Target Text: goodbye parties, goodbye games, goodbye trips.(P.58)

5.4 Analysis: Both examples maintain the exact grammatical structure and word order of the source text while directly translating each term to its most common equivalent in English. This approach ensures the preservation of meaning without altering the syntactic arrangement. The simplicity and neutrality of the sentences allow the literal translation to be fully effective, making them clear demonstrations of this technique.

6. Translation Technique: Calque

6.1 Definition: Calque is a specific type of borrowing in which an expression from the source language is translated literally, preserving both its structure and the meaning of its components in the target language (Newmark, 1988, p. 56).

6.2 Example #1:

Source Text: Al lado de la casa de la 13 había una casa también misteriosa. (P.53)

Target Text: Next to the house of number 13 there was also a mysterious house. (P.53)

6.3 Example #2:

Source Text: Noelia le tiraba una taza de plástico desde abajo para meter ahí los mangos.(P.53)

Target Text: Noelia threw her a plastic cup from below to put the mangoes in. (P.53)

6.4 Analysis: In these examples, the calque technique is applied by transferring the syntactic structure and lexical elements of the source text directly into the target language. In “the

house of number 13,” the phrase mirrors the Spanish “la casa de la 13,” maintaining the original order and prepositional structure instead of adapting it to a more idiomatic form like “number 13’s house.” Similarly, “threw her a plastic cup from below” preserves the sequential imagery and structure of “tiraba una taza de plástico desde abajo,” without altering the spatial reference or the action’s composition. This approach ensures that the cultural and descriptive elements of the original remain intact, which is especially valuable in literary translation where atmosphere and stylistic fidelity are key.

7. Translation Technique: Adaptation

7.1 Definition: Adaptation is a translation technique used when a cultural element from the source language has no direct equivalent in the target language. In this case, the translator replaces the original expression with one that has a similar meaning and impact for the target audience. This technique is often applied to cultural references, idioms, or customs to ensure that the translation is both natural and comprehensible to the reader (Vinay & Darbelnet, 1995, p. 39).

7.2 Example #1:

Source Text: Fue por un refresco... (P.97)

Target Text: She went for a soda... (P.97)

7.3 Example #2:

Source Text: Sus padres se acercaron con dos paquetes de cotufas en las manos. (P.97)

Target Text: Their parents arrived with two bags of popcorn in their hands. (P.97)

7.4 Analysis: Both examples illustrate the use of adaptation. In the first case, the Spanish word *refresco* was translated as *soda*, a more familiar term for English-speaking readers, particularly in the U.S. context. While *refresco* could also mean "soft drink" in English, *soda* is the cultural equivalent that resonates more naturally. In the second case, *cotufas* is a

Venezuelan regionalism referring to popcorn. To avoid confusion, the translator adapted the term to *popcorn*, the standard word in English. These decisions reflect the translator's effort to maintain the cultural function of the terms while ensuring clarity and accessibility for the target audience.

Second Chapter

2.1 Translated Document

<p>Página 51</p> <p>vida normal, la apatía generalizada, hacían que la familia permaneciera en esa casa, a pesar de las perturbaciones constantes e inexplicables. Quizás y eso no lo decían, aunque algunos lo pensaran, no se trataba solo de la casa, sino también de ellos. De sus secretos y oscuridades, de los problemas que los embargaban en una sensación de miedo, estupor y pesadumbre.</p>	<p>Page 51</p> <p>normal life, the general apathy, made the family stay in that house, in spite of the constant and inexplicable disturbances. Perhaps, and this they did not say, although some thought so, it was not only about the house, but also about them. Of their secrets and obscurities, of the problems that overwhelmed them in a sense of fear, stupor and gloom.</p>
<p>Página 52</p> <p>ESPACIO EN BLANCO</p>	<p>Page 52</p> <p>BLANK SPACE</p>
<p>Página 53</p> <p>Capítulo 6</p> <p>La otra casa</p>	<p>Page 53</p> <p>Chapter 6</p> <p>The Other House</p>
<p>Al lado de la casa de la 13 había una casa también misteriosa. Los vecinos contaban muchas cosas. Decían que el hombre que vivía ahí tenía un pacto con el diablo o que había matado a sus hijos, cuando en realidad</p>	<p>Next to the house at number 13 was another mysterious house. The neighbors told many things. They said that the man who lived there had made a pact with the devil or that he had killed his children, when in reality</p>

ellos se fueron hacía muchos años y, de hecho, vivían cerca del barrio. Eran historias que pasaban de generación en generación, navegando por ese río del tiempo donde la verdad y la fábula se entreveran hasta perder sus identidades.

Un día Mercedes les dijo a sus nietos que todo eso eran inventos de los vecinos porque el hombre no salía casi nunca de su casa. El mismo había creado un halo de misterio a su alrededor. Las niñas preferían no mirar mucho la casa cuando iban a comprar dulces a la bodega. Lucía oscura y triste.

Sin embargo, el dueño siempre se quejaba de ellas porque subían a la platabanda a robar sus mangos. Tenía un árbol de mango inmenso, tan grande que estaba inclinado hacia el techo de la casa de Mercedes.

Subir no era fácil. Para hacerlo tenían que escalar la ventana de hierro diseñada como una especie de escalera, pero ubicada a una distancia prudente del techo. Entonces Abril subía con la ayuda de Noelia, esta luego la

they had left many years ago and were actually living nearby. These were stories that had been passed down from generation to generation, floating down the river of time where truth and fiction intertwine until they lose their identities.

One day, Mercedes told her grandchildren that all of this was made up by the neighbors because the man hardly ever left his house. He had created an aura of mystery around himself. The girls preferred not to look too closely at the house when they went to buy candy at the store. It looked dark and sad.

However, the owner always complained about them because they climbed up to the roof to steal his mangoes. He had a huge mango tree, so big that it leaned toward the roof of Mercedes' house.

Climbing up wasn't easy. To do so, they had to climb the iron window designed as a kind of ladder, but located at a safe distance from the roof. So Abril climbed up with Noelia's help, who then

esperaba abajo mientras Luz y Alba vigilaban la puerta trasera. Al subir el último peldaño de la ventana, Abril tenía que sujetarse del borde. Alzaba todo el cuerpo, primero una pierna, luego se impulsaba con los brazos, y después la otra pierna. Noelia le tiraba una taza de plástico desde abajo para meter ahí los mangos. Se acercaba

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con cuidado en un intento de no hacer demasiado ruido para evitar que el vecino amargado saliera a amenazarlas con dispararles con su escopeta. Luego de llenar la taza, Abril se acercaba al borde y la estiraba para que Noelia subiera un poco y la tomara. Bajar era lo complicado. Tenía que hacerlo de espaldas y primero con las piernas. No siempre lograba tocar el primer peldaño de la ventana y a veces tardaba como una hora en bajar. Tenía que hacerlo con cuidado porque en la caída podía romperse una pierna.

waited for her below while Luz and Alba watched the back door. When climbing the last step of the window, Abril had to hold on to the edge. She lifted her whole body, first one leg, then pushed herself up with her arms, and then the other leg. Noelia threw her a plastic cup from below to put the mangoes in. She approached

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carefully trying not to make too much noise so that the bitter neighbor wouldn't come out and threaten to shoot them with his shotgun. After filling the cup, Abril would approach the edge and stretch it out so that Noelia could climb up a little and take it. Going down was the hard part. She had to do it backwards, starting with her legs. She didn't always manage to reach the first step of the window, and sometimes it took her as long as an hour to climb down. She had to do it carefully because she could break a leg if she fell.

Casi siempre le quedaban arañazos del borde del techo en la barriga.

Por aquellos días, su bisabuela Liduvina vivía aún con la familia. Era una anciana grosera y amargada a quien no le interesaba mantener una relación amistosa con ningún miembro de la familia. La aguantaban porque no había opción: era parte de la familia. No hablaba de otra cosa que de brujería y espíritus. En su habitación había velas encendidas todo el tiempo y horribles muñecos. Narraba historias sin mucho sentido, de su vida en el campo, de cómo había escapado de allí luego de ser una esclava de sus padres.

Solía remontarse al pasado y describir los altos árboles alrededor de la choza donde vivía de niña con sus padres. La maleza abundante, las lombrices y el sonido de los gallos en la madrugada. Cuando salía el sol, el calor era tan abrasador que se iban al río más cercano para bañarse. Allí el agua casi siempre estaba fría y corría cristalina.

She always ended up with scratches on her stomach from the edge of the roof.

In those days, her great-grandmother Liduvina still lived with the family. She was a rude and bitter old woman who was not interested in maintaining a friendly relationship with any member of the family. They put up with her because there was no choice: she was part of the family. She talked about nothing but witchcraft and spirits. In her room there were candles lit all the time and horrible dolls. She told stories without much meaning, about her life in the countryside, about how she had escaped from there after being a slave to her parents.

She used to go back to the past and describe the tall trees around the hut where she lived as a child with her parents. The abundant undergrowth, the worms, and the sound of roosters at dawn. When the sun came up, the heat was so scorching that they would go to the nearest river to bathe. There, the water was almost always cold and crystal clear.

Pero no duraron mucho tiempo en aquel lugar. Los vecinos, al enterarse de que su madre y su tía practicaban la brujería, las corrieron de la zona. Liduvina estaba muy pequeña, pero aún recuerda la paliza que le propinó su padre a su madre cuando se enteró. No volvió a verlo nunca más luego de ese día.

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A partir de ese momento recorrieron Aragua, Monagas, Trujillo y Barquisimeto. La sombra de la adversidad parecía seguir las a cualquier lugar. A donde llegaban, despertaban inseguridad, desconfianza. La madre y la tía de Liduvina leían las cartas, aunque casi no había clientes. Un día, su madre le hizo una brujería al marido de una de sus clientes, tal vez para amarrarlo, pero el hombre se enteró y fue a buscarla, machete en mano. Su madre se salvó porque la mujer le suplicó a su esposo que no hiciera nada, que ella era la única

But they didn't stay there long. The neighbors, upon learning that her mother and aunt practiced witchcraft, drove them out of the area. Liduvina was very young, but she still remembers the beating her father gave her mother when he found out. She never saw him again .

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From that moment on, they traveled through Aragua, Monagas, Trujillo, and Barquisimeto. The shadow of adversity seemed to follow them everywhere. Wherever they went, they aroused insecurity and mistrust. Liduvina's mother and aunt read cards, although there were almost no customers. One day, her mother cast a spell on the husband of one of her clients, perhaps to bind him, but the man found out and went looking for her, machete in hand. Her mother was saved because the woman begged her husband not to do anything, that she was the only one to

culpable. Así vivían.

El dinero siempre fue motivo de angustias y problemas, pues su madre y su tía no ganaban demasiado. Y cuando tenían suerte, el dinero no tardaba en desaparecer rápidamente. Ya mayor, Liduvina aprendió muy pronto los oficios de su familia, mientras trabajaba limpiando casas. Conoció al padre de Mercedes en una de ellas. Su madre no dudó en convencerla de que lo sedujera para quedarse con la casa. El plan funcionó por un tiempo, pero cuando nació Mercedes, el padre se la arrebató de los brazos y se la llevó a Caracas. A Liduvina no le importó demasiado aquel despojo. Odiaba el llanto de aquella niña, alimentarla, sentirla cerca. Le producía un asco tremendo. Ser madre no era una de sus tareas favoritas.

Se quedaron con la casa hasta que la empeñaron para salir de deudas y comprar comida.

blame. That's how they lived.

Money was always a source of anxiety and problems, as her mother and aunt did not earn much. And when they were lucky, the money quickly disappeared.

When she was older, Liduvina quickly learned her family's trades while working as a house cleaner. She met Mercedes' father in one of the houses. Her mother did not hesitate to convince her to seduce him so they could keep the house. The plan worked for a while, but when Mercedes was born, the father snatched her from her arms and took her to Caracas. Liduvina didn't care much about that loss. She hated the girl's crying, feeding her, feeling her close. It made her feel tremendous disgust. Being a mother was not one of her favorite tasks.

They kept the house until they pawned it to pay off debts and buy food.

No lograron recuperarla y al poco tiempo se la quitaron. Un día su madre le dijo que ya no podía vivir con ellas.

—Tienes que irte, ya no puedo mantenerte.

Lo que me dan mis trabajitos es todo lo que tengo. El dinero que te dan tampoco alcanza. Somos muchas.

—Pero te puedo ayudar con lo de los trabajos...

—Nahh. Para eso tengo a tu tía.

Liduvina se marchó con una maleta pequeña. Alquiló una habitación en Barquisimeto y conoció a varios hombres.

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Se embarazó cinco veces y abandonó a tres de sus hijos. Mantuvo a Víctor y Virginia porque necesitaba ayuda. Pero pronto se aburrió de ellos. Estaba cansada de su vida.

Reunió algunos trabajos en diferentes casas y compró pasajes para Caracas.

They were unable to get it back, and soon after, it was taken away from them. One day her mother told her she could no longer live with them.

"You have to go, I can't support you anymore. What I earn from my odd jobs is all I have. The money they give you isn't enough either. There are too many of us."

"But I can help you with the jobs..."

"Nah. I have your aunt for that."

Liduvina left with a small suitcase. She rented a room in Barquisimeto and met several men.

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She got pregnant five times and abandoned three of her children. She kept Victor and Virginia because she needed help. But she soon got bored with them. She was tired of her life. She gathered some money working in different houses and bought tickets to Caracas.

Le tomó un tiempo encontrar a Mercedes, pero con la brujería logró ubicarlos. Poco le importaba la impresión de su hija al verla, pues no se conocían. Disfrutaba mucho de la brujería, por lo que no quería perder su tiempo trabajando en casas de familia. Estaba harta de limpiar la mierda de los demás y quería deshacerse de los dos niños.

Liduvina se fue con ellos a Barquisimeto, esperando no encontrarse con su madre, pero al llegar, comprendió que había muerto. Vio su espíritu seguirla hacia la casa de la calle 13 de Santa Isabel. Pronto se dio cuenta de que ese lugar era el espacio de sombras que siempre necesitó en su vida.

Esa casa arrastraba consigo una historia de crímenes, sufrimiento y sangre. Liduvina abrazaba las paredes, olía el perfume nauseabundo que expelían, notaba las presencias.

Sabía que estaban a la espera desde hace mucho tiempo. Un día se animó a hablarles:

It took her a while to find Mercedes, but with witchcraft she managed to locate them. She didn't care much about her daughter's impression of her when she saw her, as they didn't know each other. She really enjoyed witchcraft, so she didn't want to waste her time working in family homes. She was tired of cleaning up other people's messes and wanted to get rid of the two children.

Liduvina went with them to Barquisimeto, hoping not to run into her mother, but upon arriving, she realized that she had died. She saw her spirit follow her to the house on 13th Street in Santa Isabel. She soon realized that this place was the space of shadows she had always needed in her life.

That house carried with it a history of crime, suffering, and blood. Liduvina hugged the walls, smelled the nauseating perfume they exuded, and felt the presences.

She knew they had been waiting for a long time. One day she dared to speak to them:

—¿De dónde vienen?

—De aquí.

—¿Siempre estuvieron aquí?

—Eso creemos. Esta casa nos pertenece.

Liduvina empezó a carcajearse mientras la familia la miraba con una mezcla de temor y resignación.

Liduvina salió a buscar a Noelia. Ese día le tocaba a ella subir a buscar mangos. Alba se adelantó y le dijo que Noelia había salido disparada al baño. Liduvina estuvo caminando por horas en el patio, mirándolas con sus ojos vacíos y acusadores.

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Tenía el cabello corto y gris, el rostro surcado de arrugas y el labio inferior inclinado hacia abajo. Se le sentía un ligero olor a alcohol.

Las niñas veían a Noelia de reojo, quien estaba arriba, esperando. Al final, Liduvina se cansó y se metió en la casa. Noelia logró bajar, refunfuñando, y dijo que no volvería a subirse.

“Where do you come from?”

“From here.”

“Have you always been here?”

“We think so. This house belongs to us.”

Liduvina began to laugh while the family looked at her with a mixture of fear and resignation.

Liduvina went out to look for Noelia. That day it was her turn to go up and pick mangoes. Alba went ahead and told her that Noelia had rushed off to the bathroom. Liduvina walked around the courtyard for hours, staring at them with her empty, accusing eyes.

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He had short gray hair, a face lined with wrinkles, and a downturned lower lip. He smelled slightly of alcohol.

The girls glanced sideways at Noelia, who was waiting upstairs. Finally, Liduvina got tired of waiting and went inside. Noelia managed to climb down, grumbling, and said she would never climb back up

Pero lo hizo de nuevo. Unas cinco veces más.

Beatriz en aquel entonces trabajaba en una corrida de caballos, Virginia en una tienda de ropa y Camila... nunca se sabía muy bien qué hacía Camila. Hubo un tiempo en el que preparaba galletas para vender, pero después el negocio se vino abajo cuando comenzaron a surgir las pastelerías en la cuadra. Siempre hubo un hombre distinto a su lado cada semana, tipos un poco raros, embobados por ella, capaces de soltarle todo el dinero que pidiera. Se mudaba muy seguido. Vivió por un tiempo cerca de la casa de la 13, en un lugar alquilado por un malandro. Un día Abril salió con su hermana y lo vio sentado en una silla de madera limpiando una pistola.

Les pareció que era un juguete, pero cuando Abril se lo comentó a su madre, esta se puso nerviosa. Luego, cuando llegó Beatriz, se lo dijo en voz baja.

again. But she did it again. About five more times.

Beatriz was working at a horse race track at the time, Virginia was working in a clothing store, and Camila... no one ever really knew what Camila did. There was a time when she baked cookies to sell, but then the business collapsed when bakeries started popping up on the block. There was always a different man by her side every week, guys who were a little weird, mesmerized by her, willing to give her all the money she asked for. She moved very often. She lived for a while near then house on 13th Street, in a place rented by a thug. One day, Abril went out with her sister and saw him sitting on a wooden chair cleaning a gun.

They thought it was a toy, but when Abril mentioned it to her mother, she became nervous. Then, when Beatriz arrived, she told her in a low voice.

—El tipo limpió el arma frente a las niñas
—le susurró.

—Se lo diré. Igual tenemos que irnos.

Una semana después, unos hombres se acercaron a la entrada de esa casa, llamaron al malandro y, cuando este salió, le dispararon. Murió en el instante. Camila se había mudado ese mismo día.

A medida que pasaba el tiempo, se ensanchaba una distancia enorme entre Abril y sus hermanos. Sabía que estaban, que se querían, pero los recuerdos a veces eran difusos. Nunca imaginó que una ausencia ocuparía tanto

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espacio. A pesar de sus silencios, de sus encierros y de su alejamiento del mundo, siempre los esperó.

Las niñas pocas veces eran supervisadas por los adultos. Cuando iban al trabajo, las dejaban solas. No había dinero para contratar niñeras. Sin embargo, fueron criadas para entender las consecuencias de cada acto. Virginia les hizo entender la

“The guy cleaned the gun in front of the girls,” she whispered.

“I’ll tell him. We have to leave anyway.”

A week later, some men approached the entrance to that house, called out to the thug, and when he came out, they shot him. He died instantly. Camila had moved that same day.

As time passed, a huge distance grew between Abril and her brothers. She knew they were there, that they loved each other, but the memories were sometimes vague. She never imagined that an absence could take up so

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much space. Despite her silences, her seclusion, and her withdrawal from the world, she always waited for them.

The girls were rarely supervised by adults. When they went to work, they were left alone. There was no money to hire babysitters. However, they were raised to understand the consequences of every act. Virginia made them understand the

importancia de ser responsables. Si se les ocurría salir sin permiso; Adiós fiestas, adiós juegos, adiós viajes. Pero procuraban dejarlas en la casa de su tío Víctor.

A medida que crecían, dejaron de preocuparse por supervisarlas. Ya eran grandes, debían aprender a cuidarse, argumentó Beatriz. A veces los ruidos raros resonaban en la casa, pero podían dormir semanas sin sentir presencia alguna. Noelia, en su fascinación por los deportes, empezó a practicar básquetbol, por lo que no podían verla tan seguido en las tardes. Alba, en cambio, quería salir, divertirse con las amigas del colegio, pero no tenía edad suficiente para que le dieran permiso. Luz tenía unos padres muy sobreprotectores y pocas veces se quedaba hasta tarde. Siempre estaba en alerta, con sus grandes ojos fijados en la ventana o la puerta, esperando el llamado de su madre.

importance of being responsible. If they went out without permission; goodbye parties, goodbye games, goodbye trips. But tried to leave them at their Uncle Victor's house.

As they grew up, they stopped worrying about supervising them. They were grown up, they had to learn to take care of themselves, Beatriz argued. Sometimes strange noises echoed in the house, but they could sleep for weeks without feeling any presence. Noelia, in her fascination with sports, started playing basketball, so they could not see her as often in the afternoons. Alba, on the other hand, wanted to go out and have fun with her school friends, but she was not old enough to be allowed to do so. Luz had very overprotective parents and she rarely stayed up late. She was always on alert, with her big eyes fixed on the window or the door, waiting for her mother's call.

Conversaban a solas mientras jugaban cartas y adivinanzas. Se reían mientras hablaban de cuál chico de la cuadra era el más guapo. En aquel entonces, Abril tenía una extraña fascinación por el vecino del frente, pero él le dijo que solo podían ser amigos. Le parecía, además, que el cabello alborotado, castaño y sin brillo de Abril no era nada atractivo. ¿Qué tenía que ver el cabello con gustarle a alguien? Una vez se lo preguntó a Mercedes y esta le respondió que no se preocupara, que los niños eran tontos.

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En uno de los cuartos de la casa de Víctor había una ventana bastante curiosa, con varios agujeros alineados en la pared. Parecía una ventana, pero de pronto parecía ser otra cosa, aunque nunca dieron con el nombre. Era como una pared ahuecada. Esos agujeros miraban hacia la casa del terror.

Una tarde, mientras se maquillaban, Liduvina salió gritando por la puerta trasera. Intentaron ignorarla, pero sus

They would chat alone while playing cards and riddles. They laughed as they talked about which boy on the block was the best looking. Back then, April had a strange fascination with the neighbor across the street, but he told her they could only be friends. He felt, furthermore, that Abril's tousled, dull brown hair was not attractive at all. What did hair have to do with liking someone? He asked Mercedes once, and told him not to worry, that kids were dumb.

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In one of the rooms in Víctor's house, there was a rather strange window, with several holes lined up along the wall. It looked like a window, but then again, it seemed like something else, although they never figured out what to call it. It was like a hollowed-out wall. Those holes faced the haunted house.

One afternoon, while they were putting on makeup, Liduvina ran out the back door screaming. They tried to ignore her, but her

gritos aumentaron. Liduvina era tan cruel con ellas que llegaron a pensar que la casa era un reflejo de su maldad.

—¡Creo que ahí viene! —gritó Luz.

Alba se levantó y cerró la puerta trasera, que era el acceso más fácil para ella. Empezaron a hablar del próximo viaje planeado por la familia materna de Alba. Unos minutos después, los gritos de Liduvina se seguían escuchando. Decía que estaban malditas. En aquel entonces no tenían ni la menor idea de lo que significaba estar maldito. Solo llegaron a la conclusión de que estaba muy loca. Noelia se levantó, riendo, se acercó a la puerta, la abrió y salió. Las chicas se abalanzaron hacia ella, en un intento de evitar que saliera, pero Noelia las esquivó. La esperaron con el corazón desbocado mientras Alba vigilaba la puerta, y Abril veía por los huecos de la pared. Entonces vieron sorprendidas cómo Noelia se aproximaba a Liduvina, se giraba, se inclinaba y se bajaba el short

screams grew louder. Liduvina had been so cruel to them that they began to think the house was a reflection of her wickedness.

"I think it's coming!" Luz shouted.

Alba got up and closed the back door, which was the easiest way in for her. They began talking about the upcoming trip planned by Alba's mother's side of the family. A few minutes later, Liduvina's screams could still be heard. She was saying they were cursed. Back then, they had no idea what it meant to be cursed. They simply concluded that she was completely crazy. Noelia stood up, laughing, walked to the door, opened it, and stepped outside. The girls rushed toward her, trying to stop her from going out, but Noelia dodged them. They waited for her with their hearts pounding while Alba watched the door and Abril peered through the holes in the wall. Then, to their surprise, they saw Noelia approaching Liduvina, turning around, bending over, and pulling down her shorts

y las pantaletas. Había vencido el miedo presionado por el hartazgo que le producía la actitud de la abuela. Hubo un estruendo de risas. Liduvina quiso atraparla, indignada, y le gritó una sarta de groserías, pero Noelia se subió con rapidez la ropa y corrió hacia la puerta. Intentó alcanzarla, pero era demasiado veloz debido a sus prácticas en el básquet. Alba cerró la puerta apenas entró. La recibieron con vítores, aplausos y risas. Luego siguieron hablando. Se sentaron en la cama con todos los labiales dispersos. Luz se recostó cerca de la ventana mientras intentaba echarse sombra en los ojos. Abril se concentró en ponerse un

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labial rosado. A Noelia no le interesaba mucho el maquillaje, pero se pintó los brazos con un labial azul. De repente, Luz soltó un chillido.

—¡Quítate de la ventana! —le gritó Abril.

and underwear. She had overcome her fear, pushed by the exhaustion caused by her grandmother's behavior. A burst of laughter erupted. Liduvina, furious, tried to catch her and shouted a string of insults, but Noelia quickly pulled her clothes back up and ran toward the door. She tried to catch up, but Noelia was too fast thanks to her basketball training. Alba shut the door just as she came in. They welcomed her with cheers, applause, and laughter. Then they kept chatting. They sat on the bed with all the lipsticks scattered around. Luz lay down near the window while trying to apply eyeshadow. Abril focused on putting on a

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pink lipstick. Noelia wasn't very interested in makeup, but she painted her arms with a blue lipstick. Suddenly, Luz let out a scream.

"Get away from the window!" Abril shouted at her.

Luz se apartó con miedo. Liduvina metió un palo de escoba por uno de los huecos en un intento por golpearlas.

—Shh. No digan nada —les dijo Abril y se quedaron petrificadas y en silencio. El palo bailó en el aire por unos instantes, pero después desapareció. Al parecer se cansó de insistir. La vieron partir hacia la casa con pasos lentos y tambaleantes. Su corto cabello gris rizado se agitaba con el viento. Abril miró en dirección a la puerta y creyó ver a una persona de pie. Se acercó con el ceño fruncido, temerosa, a ver por uno de los huecos, pero la figura se dispersó.

—Ya es tarde, vamos a dormir —dijo Alba.

Eran las doce. Se acomodaron en las dos camas mientras recogían el maquillaje. A Abril le extrañó que la mamá de Luz no la llamara, ni que tampoco escuchara los gritos. Se quedó dormida con ese pensamiento. En algún momento de la madrugada, se escucharon unos gritos y unos golpes que retumbaron en la casa.

Luz backed away, frightened. Liduvina stuck a broomstick through one of the holes in an attempt to hit them.

"Shh. Don't say anything," Abril told them, and they froze in silence. The stick waved in the air for a moment, then disappeared. It seemed she got tired of trying. They saw her walk back to the house with slow, staggering steps. Her short, curly gray hair swayed in the wind. Abril looked toward the door and thought she saw someone standing there. She walked over cautiously, frowning, to peek through one of the holes, but the figure faded away.

"It's late, let's go to sleep," said Alba.

It was midnight. They settled into the two beds while putting the makeup away. Abril found it strange that Luz's mom didn't call her, nor did she hear the screams. She fell asleep with that thought in mind. At some point during the night, screams and loud bangs echoed through the house.

Abril se fue despertando, aún estaba oscuro. De pronto sintió un manotazo en el brazo. Noelia la miró asustada. Apenas distinguió su rostro. La sintió levantarse de forma apresurada, aunque medio adormilada. Cuando la puerta se abrió, Beatriz cayó de rodillas. Tenía la piel blanca y temblaba.

—El Silbón. El Silbón —repitió fuera de sí. Noelia cerró de nuevo la puerta y la ayudó a levantarse.

—Está borracha otra vez —dijo Noelia moviendo la cabeza. El cabello oscuro lucía desaliñado, y tenía las botas embarradas de lodo y chicle. Temblaba. Su piel morena tenía una capa ligera de sudor. Su camisa escotada reflejaba sus senos prominentes. Estaba ebria, sí, pero también muy atemorizada.

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Beatriz les contó que acababa de llegar del trabajo cuando escuchó el silbido. En los llanos de Venezuela existe la leyenda de un espectro maldito que, tras matar a su

Abril started to wake up—it was still dark. Suddenly, she felt a smack on her arm. Noelia looked at her, scared. She could barely make out her face. She felt her get up in a rush, still half-asleep. When the door opened, Beatriz fell to her knees. Her skin was pale, and she was shaking.

“El Silbón. El Silbón,” she repeated, out of her mind. Noelia closed the door again and helped her up.

“She’s drunk again,” Noelia said, shaking her head. Her dark hair was messy, and her boots were covered in mud and chewing gum. She was trembling. Her brown skin had a light layer of sweat. Her low-cut shirt revealed her prominent breasts. She was drunk, yes—but also deeply afraid.

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Beatriz told them she had just gotten home from work when she heard the whistle. In the plains of Venezuela, there is a legend about a cursed specter who, after killing his

padre, deambula por la llanura desde tiempos muy antiguos. Posee un silbido bastante peculiar e imposible de olvidar, suena como las notas do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, sí. Es una leyenda que se ha extendido por años, es parte del país.

Beatriz no supo qué escuchó esa noche exactamente, pero se veía demacrada, enferma. Dijo cosas sin sentido, frases sin terminar, nombres que nunca había pronunciado. Se pasaba las manos por el rostro, suspirando.

Era una mujer fuerte, trabajaba demasiado a pesar de sus escándalos, y verla en ese estado las sorprendió a todas. Comprendieron lo fuerte que podían ser, pero también lo vulnerable que a veces eran. Beatriz se levantó, medio tambaleante, pero con firmeza. Se sostuvo de la pared y caminó hacia la habitación de Víctor.

¿Había sido la casa? Era ese lugar. Esa calle 13 del barrio Santa Isabel.

father, has wandered the grasslands since ancient times. He has a very peculiar and unforgettable whistle—it sounds like the notes do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti. It's a legend that has been passed down for generations; it's part of the country.

Beatriz didn't know exactly what she had heard that night, but she looked worn out, sick. She said things that made no sense—unfinished sentences, names she had never spoken before. She kept running her hands over her face, sighing.

She was a strong woman, worked too much despite her outbursts, and seeing her in that state shocked them all. They realized how strong they could be—but also how vulnerable they sometimes were. Beatriz stood up, a bit unsteady, yet determined. She leaned against the wall and walked toward Víctor's room.

Was it the house? It was that place. That 13th Street in the Santa Isabel neighborhood.

Algo los seguía arrastrando hacia una oscuridad que los sobrepasaba.

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ESPACIO EN BLANCO

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Capítulo 7

La visita

La Policía Técnica Judicial, conocida en aquellos años como la PTJ, era un cuerpo policial de temer debido a sus duras prácticas. Cazaban malandros (cómo la gente decía) y no tenían ninguna piedad con ellos. Se hablaba mucho sobre los ajusticiamientos y sus violaciones a los Derechos Humanos. Un día, Víctor se acostó a dormir a altas horas de la noche después de trabajar. El día siguiente era su cumpleaños.

Despertó asustado, y de inmediato levantó las manos al ver a un hombre de negro apuntándole con un arma en la cara. Lo levantaron y lo esposaron a una silla. Se escuchaban rumores de venta de drogas que

Something kept dragging them into a darkness far greater than themselves.

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Chapter 7

The Visit

The Technical Judicial Police, known in those days as the TJP, was a feared police force due to its harsh methods. They hunted down thugs (as people called them) and showed no mercy. There was much talk about executions and their violations of Human Rights. One night, Víctor went to bed very late after work. The next day was his birthday.

He woke up startled and immediately raised his hands when he saw a man dressed in black pointing a gun at his face. They got him up and handcuffed him to a chair. Rumors had spread about drug sales hidden

escondía a través de su negocio de panes.

Camila y Beatriz hablaban en el patio mientras la primera esparcía un tinte en el cabello. De repente, Noelia gritó y señaló hacia arriba. Hombres vestidos de negro caminaban por los techos de ambas casas. Tres de ellos saltaron y les dijeron que se quedaran quietas o les iban a disparar. Empujaron a Noelia en su dirección y les dijeron que no podían hablar. Las encerraron en una de las habitaciones. Allí un policía les preguntó dónde escondían la droga. Negaron, confundidas.

Los otros policías empezaron con los destrozos: rompían los armarios, las camas, las almohadas, los peluches, todo lo que hallaban a su paso. Alba lloraba en un rincón. Le hacían preguntas a Víctor sobre sus negocios, a quienes les vendía pan y dónde escondía la droga. Él mantenía una expresión dura, mirándolos como si

through his bread business.

Camila and Beatriz were talking in the yard while the former applied hair dye. Suddenly, Noelia screamed and pointed upward. Men dressed in black were walking on the roofs of both houses. Three of them jumped down and told them to stay still or they would shoot. They shoved Noelia toward them and told the women they couldn't talk. They locked them in one of the rooms. There, a police officer asked where they were hiding the drugs. They denied it, confused.

The other officers began destroying everything: they broke the closets, the beds, the pillows, the stuffed animals—everything in their path. Alba cried in a corner. They kept questioning Víctor about his business—who he sold bread to and where he was hiding the drugs. He kept a hard expression on his face, staring at them as if

ellos no estuvieran ahí. Se encogió de hombros y les dijo que no sabía nada de drogas.

—Me estás haciendo perder la paciencia —le dijo uno de los policías.

Víctor miró pasar a los otros policías que seguían revisando todo, hasta las cañerías.

—Te informaron mal. Yo vendo panes.

—Así que me informaron mal —el policía soltó una carcajada y negó con la cabeza—.

Tú y yo sabemos que no. No hables si no quieres, pero la vamos a encontrar.

Ambos se miraron fijamente hasta que el sujeto se levantó de la silla.

La inspección siguió por largas horas. Camila tuvo que suplicarle al policía que por favor la dejara salir porque tenía un tinte en la cabeza y se quedaría calva si no se quitaba el químico. El policía la acompañó hasta el baño y la vigiló mientras se quitaba el tinte en el lavamanos. Al regresar, el policía aprovechó para decirles que su hermano pasaría muchos años de cárcel.

they weren't even there. He shrugged and told them he didn't know anything about drugs.

“You're testing my patience,” one of the officers said.

Víctor watched the other officers continue searching—even checking the plumbing.

“You've been misinformed. I sell bread.”

“So I've been misinformed,” the officer laughed and shook his head. “You and I both know that's not true. Don't talk if you don't want to, but we're going to find it.”

They stared at each other until the officer stood up from the chair.

The inspection went on for hours. Camila had to beg the officer to let her out because she had dye in her hair and would go bald if she didn't wash it off. The officer accompanied her to the bathroom and watched as she rinsed the dye out in the sink. When they came back, he took the opportunity to tell them that her brother would be spending many years in prison.

—Bueno, no sabemos nada, ¿qué quiere que le diga? Coño, no sabemos

—le respondió Camila enojada.

—Qué vamos a saber nosotras de lo que hace mi hermano —dijo Beatriz.

Noelia apretó sus manos en la pierna de Beatriz. Ella bajó la mirada y le acarició el cabello. Ese día Mercedes y Julián estaban trabajando y no llegarían hasta casi al anochecer.

Mientras esperaban, escucharon unos pasos en la cocina.

—¿Hay alguien más en la casa? —preguntó el policía.

—No que sepamos. Mamá está trabajando, mi otro hermano también. Iba a venir una sobrina, pero no creo que sea ella. —dijo Beatriz.

El policía miró los ojos desorbitados de Camila y el rostro furioso de Beatriz. Les dijo que esperaran y que no salieran, que iba a ver quién andaba por ahí. La casa permanecía en silencio, lo único que se escuchaba era el sonido de su

“Well, we don’t know anything, what do you want me to say? Damn it, we don’t know,” Camila snapped.

“How would we know what my brother does?” Beatriz said.

Noelia gripped Beatriz’s leg tightly. She lowered her gaze and stroked Noelia’s hair. That day, Mercedes and Julián were at work and wouldn’t be back until almost nightfall.

While they waited, they heard footsteps in the kitchen.

“Is there anyone else in the house?” asked the officer.

“Not that we know of. Mom’s working, and so is my other brother. A niece was supposed to come, but I don’t think it’s her,” Beatriz said.

The officer looked at Camila’s wide, startled eyes and Beatriz’s angry face. He told them to wait there and not to come out—he was going to check who was in the house. The house remained silent. The only thing they could hear was the sound of their

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agitadas respiraciones. Unos minutos después oyeron unos pasos apresurados acercándose a la habitación. El policía entró pálido y sudando.

Son ellos, se dijo Camila.

—Vamos, salgan, aquí no hay nada —les gritó.

El policía las empujó fuera de la habitación y salió de la casa con rapidez. Se acercó a otro de los policías que vigilaba la entrada del garaje. Discutían algo, enojados, pero ellas no lograban escuchar. Otro policía más se les acercó, al parecer era el jefe, y habló con ellos por unos minutos. Fueron en dirección a sus camionetas.

—Creo que se van —dijo Beatriz, mirándolos por la ventana.

—Sí, y Víctor no está con ellos —observó Camila.

Julián entró en ese momento, sorprendido de ver a la policía salir de la casa.

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rapid breathing. A few minutes later, they heard hurried footsteps approaching the room. The officer came in, pale and sweating.

It's them, Camila thought.

“Come on, get out, there's nothing here!” he shouted.

The officer shoved them out of the room and rushed out of the house. He approached another officer who was guarding the garage entrance. They were arguing, clearly angry, but the girls couldn't hear what they were saying. Another officer came over—he seemed to be the chief—and talked to them for a few minutes. Then they all walked toward their trucks.

“I think they're leaving,” said Beatriz, watching them through the window.

“Yeah, and Víctor's not with them,” Camila observed.

Julián walked in at that moment, surprised to see the police leaving the house.

—¿Qué pasó? —le preguntó a Camila.

—Víctor. Lo acusan de vender droga.

Julián se les quedó mirando y después miró en dirección a la casa de Víctor. Sabía que su hermano había cambiado demasiado después de la mudanza. Era violento, golpeaba a su mujer y ahora tenía problemas con la justicia.

—¿Qué nos ha pasado, Dios mío?
—suspiró.

La policía no halló nada a pesar de haberlo registrado todo. Al irse, dejaron destrozos en toda la casa. Los vecinos los veían desde la calle, murmurando entre ellos. Después, Julián habló con Víctor y le pidió explicaciones. Este le dijo vagamente que no sabía por qué buscaban drogas. Pero Julián advirtió un brillo malicioso en sus ojos. Un brillo que nunca había visto en su hermano.

Este lugar nos ha corrompido, se dijo en silencio.

“What happened?” he asked Camila.

“Víctor. They’re accusing him of selling drugs.”

Julián stared at them, then looked over toward Víctor’s house. He knew his brother had changed a lot since the move. He had become violent, hit his wife, and now had trouble with the law.

“What’s happened to us, dear God?” he sighed.

The police didn’t find anything, despite having searched everything. When they left, they left the whole house in shambles. The neighbors watched from the street, whispering to each other. Later, Julián spoke with Víctor and demanded an explanation. He vaguely said he didn’t know why they were looking for drugs. But Julián noticed a malicious gleam in his eyes—a look he had never seen before in his brother.

This place has corrupted us, he thought silently.

—¿Qué habrá visto ese oficial? —preguntó Beatriz mientras limpiaba el desastre que habían dejado la casa. Camila la ayudó a levantar las almohadas acuchilladas.

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—A ellos. Y ellos lo vieron también.

Los conflictos familiares no cesaron. Al igual que los económicos. Como eran muy pobres, hicieron todo lo que pudieron para intentar ser felices. Al menos por las niñas.

Vivían con sus baches, pero también disfrutaban de esos escasos momentos en los que la realidad era menos severa y opresiva. Abril escuchó a Virginia decir que la casa destilaba malas energías, energías que se adherían a todos y que los iban consumiendo. En aquel entonces ella no lo comprendió, pero años después pudo entender lo que quiso decir.

Los negocios familiares no funcionaban. Se incrementaron las discusiones. Las peleas entre los padres de Alba y Noelia eran cada vez más seguidas y más violentas.

“What do you think that officer saw?”

Beatriz asked as she cleaned up the mess they had left in the house. Camila helped her pick up the slashed pillows.

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“They saw them. And they saw him too.”

The family conflicts didn’t stop—nor did the financial ones. Because they were very poor, they did everything they could to try to be happy, at least for the girls. They lived through their rough patches, but also enjoyed those rare moments when reality felt less harsh and oppressive. Abril once heard Virginia say that the house gave off bad energy—energy that clung to everyone and slowly consumed them. At the time, she didn’t understand, but years later, she would come to grasp what she meant.

The family businesses didn’t work out. Arguments became more frequent. The fights between Alba and Noelia’s parents grew more violent.

De un momento a otro, Víctor empezó a beber demasiado y cuando llegaba borracho golpeaba a su esposa.

Abril jalaba a Alba porque le daban unos ataques de nervios horribles, y la arrastraba hacia bajo de la cama. Se quedaban ahí, quietas, temblando de pies a cabeza mientras escuchaban los insultos.

Los insultos y los golpes. Veían cosas volar por los aires. Como una cuchara grande de metal, los zapatos, la plancha.

—No llores, ya va a pasar —le decía Abril.

Noelia los perseguía por toda la casa, en un intento infructuoso por calmarlos, pero Víctor la apartaba, ignorando las súplicas de su hija. Después de un rato se cansaba de golpearla y se iba a dormir. Aquella locura sucedió muchas veces. Pero nunca se separaron. Ver esa violencia dejaba en Abril y Alba una sensación helada, con pesadillas.

Out of nowhere, Víctor began drinking heavily, and when he came home drunk, he would hit his wife.

Abril would pull Alba under the bed during those moments because she would have terrible panic attacks.

They would stay there, still, trembling from head to toe, while they listened to the insults.

The insults—and the blows. They saw things fly across the room: a large metal spoon, shoes, the iron.

“Don’t cry, it’ll be over soon,” Abril would whisper.

Noelia chased after them around the house, trying in vain to calm them down, but Víctor would push her aside, ignoring his daughter’s pleas. After a while, he’d get tired of hitting and go to sleep. That madness happened many times. But they never separated. Witnessing that violence left a cold feeling in Abril and Alba—nightmares followed.

Cuando todos se acostaban a dormir, las presencias se deslizaban por las habitaciones. Incluso Abril podía jurar haber escuchado a uno de ellos reírse en más de una oportunidad. Se tiraba la sábana encima, como para protegerse de las presencias malignas

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y repetía: «La sangre de Cristo tiene poder». Eso le dijo Virginia que repitiera cuando las cosas se pusieran feas. La sábana y esa suerte de conjuro la hicieron sentir un poco mejor, aunque siempre tuvo problemas para dormir, todos los días despertaba en la madrugada. Escuchaba, sentía, pero después de un tiempo decidió dejar de prestarles atención. Ellos no iban a tener el dominio total de su vida y sus miedos. Eran una familia dentro de otra familia. Tenían una misión, pero ¿cuál era?

Cuando Abril cumplió los diecisiete años, su madre se mudó a Mérida con sus dos

When everyone had gone to bed, the presences would slide through the rooms. Abril could even swear she heard one of them laughing more than once. She would pull the sheet over herself, as if it could protect her from the evil presences.

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and she would repeat, “The blood of Christ has power.” That’s what Virginia told her to say when things got bad. The sheet and that sort of incantation made her feel a little better, even though she always had trouble sleeping—every day she would wake up in the middle of the night. She would hear things, feel things, but after a while, she decided to stop paying attention. They weren’t going to take full control over her life and her fears. They were a family within a family. They had a mission—but what was it?

When Abril turned seventeen, her mother moved to Mérida with her two

hermanos.

Después de su partida, solo la veía cada dos años. El dolor por la ausencia se quedó vacilando en su pecho, con dolor y angustia.

En aquel tiempo la dejaban ir sola al colegio y podía salir sola también a otros lugares, pero primero debía justificar muy bien sus salidas.

Conoció a Karina, una compañera del colegio, cuando cursaba el tercer año. Vivía cerca y la invitó a su casa. Al llegar, tuvo esa misma aprensión que sentía cuando estaba en la casa de la 13, aunque no tan fuerte. Se topó con un altar de muñecos extraños, velas encendidas y un olor a aceite y frutas.

—Mi mamá está en el patio leyendo las cartas.

Se dirigieron a la habitación de Karina. Abril dejó el morral en el suelo y se sentó en la cama. Su habitación era pequeña, pintada de morado intenso y adornada con varios afiches de diferentes artistas.

brothers.

After she left, Abril only saw her every two years. The pain of her absence lingered in her chest, full of sorrow and anguish. At that time, she was allowed to go to school alone and also go out by herself, but she first had to give a very good reason for going out.

She met Karina, a classmate, when she was in the third year of high school. Karina lived nearby and invited her to her house. When she arrived, Abril had the same uneasy feeling she always got at the house on 13th Street—though not as strong. She came across an altar with strange dolls, lit candles, and a smell of oil and fruit.

“My mom’s out in the yard reading cards.”

They went into Karina’s room. Abril dropped her backpack on the floor and sat on the bed. The room was small, painted in a deep purple, and decorated with several posters of different artists.

El de Michael Jackson la miraba directamente. Se sentó inquieta al borde de la cama.

—¿Tu mamá lee las cartas?

—Sí, eso hace.

A Abril se le revolvió la memoria de la familia, y sintió que quería salir corriendo, pero tampoco quiso ser grosera.

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Unos minutos después, su madre las llamó para comer. La saludó sonriendo, y evitó mirarla a los ojos. Tenía el cabello rojo y alborotado, y una sonrisa bonita. Llevaba un vestido largo. También muchas pulseras y collares de colores.

—Quieres preguntar algo —dijo la madre de repente y se sentó frente a ella.

Karina seguía concentrada en su comida como si nada, mientras Abril retuvo las ganas de gritar. Gritar y salir corriendo de aquel lugar. La madre le sonrió y entonces la miró a los ojos. Abril bajó enseguida la mirada.

One of Michael Jackson stared right at her. She sat nervously at the edge of the bed.

“Your mom reads cards?”

“Yeah, that’s what she does.”

A wave of family memories rose in Abril, and she felt like running away—but she didn’t want to be rude either.

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A few minutes later, her mother called them to eat. She greeted Abril with a smile, avoiding eye contact. Her red, messy hair framed a pretty smile. She wore a long dress—along with lots of colorful bracelets and necklaces.

“You want to ask something,” the mother suddenly said, sitting across from her.

Karina remained focused on her food, as if nothing was happening, while Abril fought the urge to scream. Scream and run out of that place. The mother smiled at her and then looked her straight in the eyes. Abril quickly looked away.

—No creo —dijo con una sonrisa nerviosa.

—Tranquila, puedes preguntarme.

Karina sonrió. Abril tragó en seco. Se humedeció los labios y asintió. Tal vez podría ayudarme, pensó. Entonces se decidió a contarle lo que sucedía en la casa de la 13. La madre la escuchó atenta y después de terminar de hablar, frunció el ceño.

—No dudo de lo que me cuentas. Las presencias de la casa, la violencia que se respira. Ese tipo de prácticas eran muy comunes en la guerra. Me refiero a la magia negra. La gente era muy peligrosa, desconocía los límites entre el bien y el mal. No les importaba ir al infierno con tal de hacer sufrir a generaciones enteras, créeme. Pero tengo entendido que todo lo que ocurrió en la guerra está bien documentado. Tienes que ir a la biblioteca. Quizás ahí encuentres algo. No te digo nada más concreto porque para hacer esos análisis, yo

“I don’t think so,” she replied with a nervous smile.

“It’s okay, you can ask me”.

Karina smiled. Abril swallowed hard, licked her lips, and nodded. Maybe she can help me, she thought. Then she decided to tell her about what was happening at the house on 13th Street. The mother listened attentively and, once she finished speaking, frowned.

“I don’t doubt what you’re telling me. The presences in the house, the violence in the air. That kind of thing was very common during the war. I mean black magic. People were dangerous back then—they didn’t know the limits between good and evil. They didn’t care about going to hell if it meant making entire generations suffer. Believe me. But as far as I know, everything that happened during the war is well documented. You have to go to the library. Maybe you’ll find something there. I can’t give you anything more concrete

cobro, mi niña. Bueno, ¿ya terminaron de comer?

Abril miró su plato de frijoles con ganas de vomitar. Nunca más volvió a ir a esa casa.

Sin embargo, convencida del consejo de la madre de su amiga, decidió ir a la biblioteca del barrio. Preguntó por los libros de historia de Barquisimeto. En efecto, las batallas de la guerra de la independencia alcanzaron los predios de Santa Isabel. La batalla de los Horcones, por ejemplo, ocurrió el 22 de julio de 1813 y se libró entre Barquisimeto y Quíbor,

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donde el coronel José Félix Ribas venció a las tropas realistas comandadas por el coronel español Francisco Marías Farías Oberto. El enfrentamiento ocurrió en el antiguo Municipio Concepción del distrito Barquisimeto, hoy llamado Iribarren. Allí estaba el barrio de Santa Isabel. Muchas personas murieron en esa batalla, sobre esas

because for that kind of analysis—I charge, my girl. So, are you done eating?”

Abril looked at her plate of beans with the urge to vomit. She never went back to that house.

However, convinced by her friend’s mother’s advice, she decided to go to the neighborhood library. She asked for history books on Barquisimeto. Indeed, the battles of the independence war had reached the outskirts of Santa Isabel. The Battle of Los Horcones, for example, took place on July 22, 1813, and was fought between Barquisimeto and Quíbor,

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where Colonel José Félix Ribas defeated the royalist troops led by Spanish Colonel Francisco Marías Farías Oberto. The battle took place in the former Municipality of Concepción in the Barquisimeto district, now known as Iribarren. That’s where the Santa Isabel neighborhood was located. Many people died in that battle, on that

tierras. No solo soldados, también mujeres, hombres y niños civiles.

Eso era todo. No encontró ningún otro dato relevante que la ayudara a encontrar una respuesta. Solo la sospecha de los muertos y de la posibilidad de que hubiera algo enterrado bajo el terreno donde vivían.

Abril regresó a la casa decepcionada por no haber encontrado nada más, pero ¿qué esperaba encontrar?, ¿acaso los nombres de las personas que habitaban la casa? Recordó lo que le había contado Virginia una vez sobre el vecino amargado. La familia de él vivió en Santa Isabel durante décadas. Quizás conociera el origen de esas personas, tal vez tuviera las respuestas.

Tomó la decisión de acercarse a la casa misteriosa en las próximas vacaciones. Abril sentía que el tiempo pasaba muy lentamente después de haber tomado la decisión de ir a visitar al vecino. El miedo y la incertidumbre no la dejaban dormir.

land—not only soldiers, but also women, men, and civilian children.

That was all. She didn't find any other relevant information that could help her find an answer. Only the suspicion of the dead and the possibility that something might be buried beneath the land they lived on.

Abril returned home disappointed that she hadn't found more—but what had she expected to find? The names of the people who once lived in the house? She remembered what Virginia had once told her about the bitter old neighbor. His family had lived in Santa Isabel for decades. Maybe he knew the origin of those people—maybe he had the answers.

She decided to visit the mysterious house during the upcoming vacation. Abril felt that time was moving painfully slow after deciding to visit the neighbor. Fear and uncertainty kept her from sleeping.

La espera se hacía eterna y su abuela paterna notó su inquietud. Abril le dijo que no se preocupara. Finalmente llegaron las vacaciones.

Intentar convencer a Alba para que la acompañara no fue fácil, pero al cabo de un par de días lo logró. Alba tenía miedo, pero tenía más miedo aún de que Abril no regresara. El vecino las aterraba.

La primera vez que fueron no salió nadie. Desde afuera, entre la maleza, pudieron notar las luces amarillentas. Pero no escucharon nada más. Así que se marcharon y regresaron

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al día siguiente. Esta vez las ventanas se encontraban abiertas, aunque no se notaba el interior desde las rejas de la entrada. En eso se escuchó un sonido y se sobresaltaron. Oyeron unas llaves que entraban en el cerrojo de la puerta, después el chirrido de esta al abrirse. Abril le tomó la mano a Alba para que no saliera corriendo. El vecino era un hombre como de setenta años, canoso,

The wait was agonizing, and her paternal grandmother noticed her restlessness. Abril told her not to worry. Finally, vacation arrived.

Convincing Alba to go with her wasn't easy, but after a couple of days, she succeeded. Alba was scared—but even more afraid that Abril might not come back. The neighbor terrified them.

The first time they went, no one came out. From outside, through the weeds, they could see the yellowish lights. But they didn't hear anything else. So they left and returned

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the next day, they returned. This time the windows were open, although you still couldn't see inside from behind the front gate. Then a sound startled them. They heard keys turning in the lock, followed by the creaking of the door opening. Abril grabbed Alba's hand to keep her from running away. The neighbor was a man of about seventy, gray-haired,

<p>bajito y flaco. Se le veía enojado.</p> <p>—¿Qué quieres? —dijo.</p> <p>Abril apretó con más fuerza la mano de su prima que estaba muda y temblando.</p> <p>—Queremos saber...</p> <p>—¿Qué? —el vecino se llevó las manos a la cintura. Llevaba puesta una camisa blanca y un short azul.</p> <p>—Quisiera saber si conoce a los viejos dueños de la casa de mi abuela. La historia de esa familia.</p> <p>El vecino las observó con la extraña expresión de siempre. Estuvo por unos minutos mirándolas, como en un intento de intimidación. Pero Abril estaba dispuesta a no marcharse hasta encontrar respuestas. Esperaron.</p> <p>—Qué va —dijo y se volteó para regresar al interior de la casa.</p> <p>—¡Oiga, vecino! ¡Por favor! ¡Los espíritus no se van!</p> <p>Él se detuvo y dio media vuelta. Primero miró a Abril, después a Alba.</p>	<p>short, and skinny. He looked angry.</p> <p>“What do you want?” he said.</p> <p>Abril squeezed her cousin’s trembling hand even tighter.</p> <p>“We want to know...”</p> <p>“What?” the neighbor said, placing his hands on his hips. He wore a white shirt and blue shorts.</p> <p>“I’d like to know if you knew the previous owners of my grandmother’s house. The history of that family.”</p> <p>The neighbor stared at them with the same strange expression as always. He kept looking at them for a few minutes, as if trying to intimidate them. But Abril was determined not to leave until she got answers. They waited.</p> <p>“No way,” he said, turning around to head back inside.</p> <p>“Wait—sir, please! The spirits haven’t left!”</p> <p>He stopped and turned back around. First he looked at Abril, then at Alba</p>
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—¿Pidieron permiso para venir?

Las dos dijeron que sí con la cabeza, sabiendo que era mentira. Él se acercó refunfuñando algo que no lograron escuchar. Abrió la reja y las dejó pasar.

La casa se veía más pequeña por dentro, más deteriorada. Había un sofá marrón, medio desvencijado, en el centro de la sala, varias sillas de madera y un viejo televisor.

Al parecer solo había una sola habitación.

Un olor a arepa quemada y a café recién colado impregnaba el ambiente.

—Siéntense, pues.

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Se sentaron en el sofá. Abril tuvo que soltarle la mano a Alba porque no paraba de apretársela. Se miraba los nudillos, evitando mirar al vecino.

—Así que pidieron permiso para venir.

—Sí —dijo Abril con firmeza.

—Mentirosas. No pidieron nada de permiso.

Mocosas mentirosas. ¿Ahora qué quieren?

“Did you ask for permission to come?”

They both nodded, even though they knew it was a lie.

He muttered something under his breath that they couldn't hear and opened the gate to let them in.

The house looked smaller on the inside—more run-down. There was a brown, worn-out couch in the middle of the living room, a few wooden chairs, and an old TV. It seemed like there was only one bedroom. The air was filled with the smell of burnt arepas and freshly brewed coffee.

“Sit down, then.”

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They sat on the couch. Abril had to let go of Alba's hand because she wouldn't stop squeezing it. She stared at her knuckles, avoiding eye contact with the neighbor.

“So you asked for permission to come.”

“Yes,” Abril said firmly

“Liars. You didn't ask for anything. Lying little brats. So what do you want now?”

¿Más mangos?

Se sentó justo al frente de ellas. Las miraba como escudriñándolas. Abril tragó en seco y se armó de valor.

—No, es que... queríamos saber... bueno, si sabía algo de los espíritus. Los de la casa..

—Algo sé sobre esa pendejada —dijo riéndose. Sus dientes se movían cuando se reía—,

ustedes están muy carajitas para estar pensando en esas cosas. Qué vaina, vale.

¿Tu mamá dónde está?

—Trabajando. ¿Sabe o no sobre los otros dueños? —preguntó Abril con enojo. El miedo había disminuido. Se trataba solo de un viejo cascarrabias. No se iba a dejar intimidar por él.

—Oh, vaya, qué personalidad. ¿Y a tu amiga le comieron la lengua los ratones?.

Alba se volvió a sobresaltar.

More mangoes?"

He sat down right in front of them. He looked at them as if studying them. Abril swallowed hard and gathered her courage.

“No, it’s just... we wanted to know... well, if you knew anything about the spirits. The ones in the house...”

“I know a thing or two about that nonsense,” he said, laughing. His teeth moved when he laughed.

“You girls are too young to be thinking about that kind of stuff. What the hell, man. Where’s your mother?”

“She’s working. So, do you know or not about the previous owners?” Abril asked with some irritation. The fear had faded. He was just a grumpy old man. She wasn’t going to let him intimidate her.

“Oh wow, what a personality. And what happened to your little friend—cat got her tongue?”

Alba flinched again.

—Es mi prima.

—Bueno, eso. Les puedo decir que mi familia ha estado aquí desde que fundaron este barrio. Mucha gente ha pasado por este barrio, mucha gente ha muerto. En esa casa de al lado vivía gente con plata. Y sí, ellos me contaron sobre las cosas que oían ahí dentro.

Abril iba a decir algo, pero decidió quedarse en silencio, no quiso interrumpirlo.

—No he desayunado y ustedes vienen a preguntarme vainas.

—Lo siento, pero es que necesitamos saber qué es lo que ocurre. Nos vamos a volver locos. ¿Quiere que le traiga el desayuno?

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Él bufó y negó con la cabeza. Se rascó la barba de varios días y después se quedó pensativo. Alba le dijo a Abril en el oído que tenían que irse porque su tía se iba a dar cuenta de su ausencia. No tardaban tanto comprando dulces, la excusa que dieron para salir de casa. Pero Abril se negó.

“She’s my cousin.”

“Right, that. What I can tell you is that my family’s been here since this neighborhood was founded. A lot of people have come through here. A lot of people have died.

The folks who lived next door used to have money. And yeah, they told me about the things they used to hear in that house.”

Abril was about to say something, but she decided to stay quiet. She didn’t want to interrupt him.

I haven’t even had breakfast, and here you are asking me all this crap.”

“I’m sorry, but we really need to know what’s going on. We’re going crazy. Want me to bring you breakfast?”

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He snorted and shook his head. He scratched at his days-old beard and then fell into thought. Alba whispered in Abril’s ear that they had to go—that their aunt would notice they were missing. Buying candy, their excuse for leaving the house, never took this long. But Abril refused.

Ya estaban ahí y había que aprovechar todo lo que el vecino pudiera contarles.

—Se llamaban Sara y Rogelio.

—¿Quiénes?

—Los que hicieron esa brujería. No me mires así, querías saber. Hay algo ahí enterrado. Algo maligno. Mi madre me habló de ellos. Y a ella se lo contó a su vez mi abuela. Sara y Rogelio eran una pareja atípica, se querían mucho, y adoraban esa casa. Pero la maldijeron. La maldijeron por generaciones. La pobre Sara tuvo cinco abortos y nunca pudo tener un hijo, al parecer tenía un problema congénito. Rogelio quedó agotado de intentarlo, la casa se empezó a enturbiar pues ambos se sentían frustrados. Estuvieron a punto de separarse, pero lograron seguir adelante, aunque Sara enloqueció, nunca pudo recuperarse de las pérdidas. ¿Y quién no? La pobre. Rogelio al parecer tenía negocios extraños con los

They were already there, and she wanted to take advantage of everything the neighbor could tell them.

“Their names were Sara and Rogelio.”

“Who?”

“The ones who did the witchcraft. Don’t look at me like that—you wanted to know. There’s something buried there. Something evil. My mother told me about them. And her grandmother told her. Sara and Rogelio were a strange couple, they loved each other deeply, and they adored that house. But they cursed it. They cursed it for generations. Poor Sara had five miscarriages and could never have a child—apparently she had a congenital condition. Rogelio grew tired of trying. The house began to darken, because both of them felt frustrated. They were about to separate, but somehow stayed together—though Sara lost her mind, she never recovered from the losses. And who would? Poor thing. Rogelio, it seems, had shady business dealings with the

soldados, lo vigilaban y también a la casa. No creas que eso se va a terminar mañana, muchachita. Sara y Rogelio no querían que nadie se quedara con su propiedad. Tiraron esa brujería para evitar que los soldados se quedaran con ella. Ustedes viven en un osario.

—¿Un qué?

—Un cementerio, carajita.

Mientras Abril intentaba asimilar sus palabras, Alba volvió a jalar de su mano con insistencia.

—Tenemos que irnos —dijo Abril levantándose de pronto.

—Si fuera tu papá, te daría unos coñazos por salir sin permiso. Qué va, son unas inventoras.

Salieron de la casa caminando con rapidez, escuchando

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los regaños del vecino en la lejanía. Abril no podía dejar de pensar en Sara y Rogelio. ¿Cómo serían?

soldiers. They watched him—and the house.

Don't think this will end anytime soon, girl.

Sara and Rogelio didn't want anyone else to have their home. They cast that spell so the soldiers wouldn't take it. You're living on an ossuary."

"A what?"

"A graveyard, kid."

As Abril tried to process his words, Alba began tugging insistently at her hand again.

"We have to go," Abril said suddenly, standing up.

"If your dad were here, he'd give you a good beating for sneaking out. Damn kids, making stuff up."

They walked out of the house quickly, listening

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The neighbor's scolding faded into the distance. Abril couldn't stop thinking about Sara and Rogelio. What were they like?

¿Cómo fue su amor?

—Se nos olvidó preguntarle el nombre —le dijo a Alba.

Ella echaba chispas por los ojos.

—No volveré a acompañarte en tus locuras.

No me interesa cómo se llama. Me voy

—¿A dónde?

—Lejos de tu locura.

Alba se alejó furiosa y cruzó la calle hacia la bodega, tal vez para comprarse el helado que dijo que se compraría. Abril siguió el camino hacia la casa, pensativa. Tenía que escribir en su diario sobre ello, sobre todo. Se le ocurrió la idea de ir preguntándoles a todos sobre sus experiencias con la casa. Sabía que algunos se iban a negar, pero necesitaba respuestas para contar la historia. Cuando llegó, la miró. No lo había notado antes, pero el centro de la reja principal se veía un poco inclinado hacia abajo y los bordes hacia arriba. Podía jurar que la casa le estaba sonriendo.

What was their love like?

“We forgot to ask him his name,” she said to Alba.

Alba’s eyes were shooting sparks.

“I’m never joining you on your crazy adventures again. I don’t care what his name is. I’m leaving.”

“Where to?”

“Far away from your madness.”

Alba stormed off, crossing the street toward the corner store—maybe to buy that ice cream she had mentioned. Abril kept walking home, deep in thought. She had to write about all of this in her diary. Everything. Then the idea came to her: she could ask everyone about their experiences in the house. She knew some would refuse, but she needed answers to tell the story. When she arrived, she noticed it. She hadn’t before—but the center of the front gate sloped slightly downward, while the edges tilted up. She could swear the house was smiling at her.

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ESPACIO EN BLANCO

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Capítulo 8

Nos seguía arrastrando

Recordar el pasado nunca fue un ejercicio fácil para Julián Rivera. Evitaba remontarse al momento en que todo comenzó. Solo muchos años después se armaría de valor para hacerlo. Volver a esas imágenes que tanto lo perturbaron. Pero su sobrina, Abril, lo alentó a recordar. Le dijo algo sobre un libro que iba a escribir. Al inicio, Julián le comentó sus primeras impresiones con la casa, su belleza y sus colores. Todo lo que vivieron desde el primer momento.

A poco de llegar a la casa de la 13, Julián empezó a acondicionar la última habitación para él. Con el tiempo esta se había ido llenando con los libros de una pequeña

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Chapter 8

It kept dragging us

Remembering the past was never an easy task for Julián Rivera. He avoided going back to the moment when it all began. Only many years later would he gather the courage to do so. To return to those images that had disturbed him so deeply. But his niece, Abril, encouraged him to remember. She told him something about a book she was going to write. In the beginning, Julián shared his first impressions of the house with her—its beauty and its colors. Everything they experienced from the very first moment.

Shortly after arriving at the house on 13th Street, Julián began to set up the last room for himself. Over time, it had filled with books from a small

biblioteca a un lado de la cama, el clóset al frente y afiches de Queen y películas de moda. Era su guarida, ese lugar privado donde podía ser él mismo.

Recordaba también a sus hermanas. Virginia era la más inocente de todas. Procuraba no meterse en problemas. Era amigable con las personas e intentaba que todos estuvieran cómodos en su presencia. Camila y Beatriz eran distintas. Se metían en problemas, iban a fiestas casi todos los fines de semana y tenían muchos novios. Camila solía escribir historias en sus diarios, y a veces esas historias se convertían en obras que actuaban cuando eran niños. Por un tiempo creyeron que se convertiría en escritora, pero abandonó esa pasión por otras más extrovertidas y arriesgadas

Él detestaba que sus amigos comentaran sobre lo promiscuas que eran sus dos hermanas. Pero supuso que era

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library beside the bed, a closet in front, and posters of Queen and popular movies. It was his hideout, that private place where he could be himself.

He also remembered his sisters. Virginia was the most innocent of all. She tried not to get into trouble. She was friendly with people and tried to make everyone feel comfortable around her. Camila and Beatriz were different. They got into trouble, went to parties almost every weekend, and had many boyfriends. Camila used to write stories in her diaries, and sometimes those stories became plays they performed when they were children. For a while, they thought she would become a writer, but she abandoned that passion for more extroverted and risky pursuits.

He hated that his friends talked about how promiscuous his two sisters were. But he supposed it was

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una etapa, que pronto volverían a ser las mismas, que no se iban a dejar llevar por lo que sea que esté ahí afuera o dentro de la casa. Pero no cambiaron, todo lo contrario, sus desastres persiguieron a la familia durante años.

Julián dejó el colegio para trabajar y ayudar con las deudas. Primero como asistente arreglando pequeñas cosas en las casas, luego en un taller de autos y después como albañil. Por esos días empezó a salir con una mujer que después se convirtió en su esposa y la madre de Luz.

Entre sus recuerdos afloraba también la imagen del pastor Vladimir Vorobiov, aquel hombre bajito que bendijo la casa por petición de Mercedes. Su madre había insistido en llamarlo porque las presencias se hicieron cada vez más atemorizantes y suponía que la presencia de un hombre religioso podría ayudarlos.

Vladimir había emigrado de Rusia a Venezuela con su familia en los años sesenta. Su madre había muerto de cáncer y

it was just a phase, that soon they would be the same again, that they wouldn't let themselves be carried away by whatever was out there or inside the house. But they didn't change—quite the opposite—their chaos followed the family for years.

Julián left school to work and help with the debts. First as an assistant fixing small things in houses, then in an auto repair shop, and later as a construction worker. Around that time, he started dating a woman who later became his wife and the mother of Luz.

Among his memories also surfaced the image of Pastor Vladimir Vorobiov, that short man who blessed the house at Mercedes's request. His mother had insisted on calling him because the presences became increasingly frightening and she believed that the presence of a religious man might help them.

Vladimir had emigrated from Russia to Venezuela with his family in the 1960s. His mother had died of cancer and

su padre lo acompañaba todos los domingos a la iglesia.

Vladimir tenía esposa y dos hijos. Se dedicaba con fervor a la iglesia desde muy chico y no dudó en sumarse a un grupo religioso cuando llegó a Venezuela. Se le conocía por su sensibilidad, sus dotes para el sermón y su simpatía. Había ayudado a muchas familias que sufrían de fenómenos paranormales. Al menos eso decían Mercedes y los vecinos.

Aquel día, Vladimir llegó a la casa con su hijo y una jarra de agua bendita. Como todos estaban muy nerviosos, Julián decidió acompañarlo por la casa. No era devoto, por lo que le parecía una tontería todo ese ritual, mezcla de superstición y exorcismo, pero no quiso discutir con su madre. El pastor sumergía su mano temblorosa en el agua y después salpicaba las paredes. Se detenía en los rincones y lanzaba un chorro de agua bendita

his father used to accompany him to church every Sunday.

Vladimir had a wife and two children. He had devoted himself fervently to the church from a young age and didn't hesitate to join a religious group when he arrived in Venezuela. He was known for his sensitivity, his gift for preaching, and his charm. He had helped many families who suffered from paranormal phenomena. At least, that's what Mercedes and the neighbors said.

That day, Vladimir arrived at the house with his son and a jug of holy water. Since everyone was very nervous, Julián decided to accompany him around the house. He wasn't religious, so he thought the whole ritual was nonsense—a mix of superstition and exorcism—but he didn't want to argue with his mother. The pastor dipped his trembling hand into the water and then sprinkled it on the walls. He stopped in the corners and threw a stream of holy water

mientras murmuraba oraciones. Julián lo seguía en silencio. En un momento, Vladimir se acercó a la pared de la sala, puso su mano sobre ella y la retiró de inmediato, como

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como si algo le hubiera quemado. Se quedó unos minutos observando la pared en silencio. Julián quiso interrumpirlo para decirle que se le hacía tarde para ir al trabajo, pero supuso que sería imprudente.

—¿Está bien, pastor? —le preguntó.

—Sí, no es nada.

Pero se le notaba inquieto. Lo siguió de cerca por el estrecho pasillo y cuando llegaron a la cocina, Vladimir se detuvo.

Julián podía jurar que veía algo de lo que no quería hablar, lo cual lo enfureció un poco.

¿Para qué vino entonces? ¿Para guardarse información? Vladimir se inclinó levemente hacia delante y después se enderezó. De repente, el pasillo se sintió más estrecho de lo normal.

while murmuring prayers. Julián followed him in silence. At one point, Vladimir approached the living room wall, placed his hand on it, and immediately pulled it away, as if

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as if something had burned him. He stood for a few minutes silently staring at the wall. Julián wanted to interrupt him to say he was going to be late for work, but he thought it would be imprudent.

“Are you alright, pastor?” he asked.

“Yes, it’s nothing.”

But he looked uneasy. Julián followed him closely down the narrow hallway and when they reached the kitchen, Vladimir stopped.

Julián could swear he was seeing something he didn’t want to talk about, which irritated him a little. Why did he come then? To keep secrets? Vladimir leaned forward slightly and then straightened up. Suddenly, the hallway felt narrower than usual.

—¿Pastor...?

—No es nada.

Mientras caminaba, en vez de alzar los pies, los arrastraba. Se acercó al baño con lentitud. Lo bendijo, hizo una cruz con su mano y murmuró algo en un idioma que Julián no logró comprender. Sabía que era un emigrante ruso, pero nunca lo había escuchado hablar en su lengua natal.

—¿Cree que con eso todos se van a ir? —le preguntó un tanto escéptico.

Vladimir lo miró. La expresión de tristeza que tenía sobresaltó a Julián, pero intentó mantenerse firme. Vio la respuesta en sus ojos. Vladimir bajó la mirada hacia sus manos, las cuales restregaba con impaciencia, como si quisiera quitarse una pegajosa suciedad.

—Creo que es más fuerte que todos nosotros. Pero lo intentaré.

Julián asintió con el corazón compungido. El pasillo pasaba de caliente a frío y después se calentaba otra vez.

“Pastor...?”

“It’s nothing.”

As he walked, instead of lifting his feet, he dragged them. He slowly approached the bathroom. He blessed it, made a cross with his hand, and murmured something in a language Julián couldn’t understand. He knew he was a Russian immigrant, but had never heard him speak in his native tongue.

“Do you think that will make them all go away?” he asked somewhat skeptically.

Vladimir looked at him. The expression of sadness he wore startled Julián, but he tried to stay firm. He saw the answer in his eyes. Vladimir looked down at his hands, which he was rubbing impatiently, as if trying to wipe off something sticky.

“I think it’s stronger than all of us. But I will try.”

Julián nodded, his heart sinking. The hallway went from hot to cold and then got warm again.

A medio camino había una ventana que daba hacia el patio, pero estaba cerrada. Era la ventana por la que las niñas subían a buscar mangos. El pastor emprendió su camino de regreso.

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Julián no quiso mirar atrás. Al salir, la luz de la calle le golpeó en el rostro como si hubiera estado días en la oscuridad. Se pasó las manos húmedas por el pantalón.

—Gracias por venir, pastor. De verdad que se lo agradezco mucho —le dijo Julián como si murmurara. Todavía se sentía un poco enojado, aunque no lograba identificar el porqué. ¿Era por la actitud de Vladimir? ¿Por la falta de su propia comprensión? ¿Su falta de fe?

—De nada, mi querido Julián, pero... ten cuidado, ¿de acuerdo?

—Claro.

Después de aquella visita, la familia tenía la esperanza de que todo terminara. Confiaban en que las oraciones de Vladimir

Halfway down there was a window looking out to the yard, but it was closed. It was the window the girls used to climb to pick mangoes. The pastor began to make his way back.

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Julián didn't want to look back. When he stepped outside, the streetlight hit his face as if he had been in darkness for days. He wiped his damp hands on his pants.

“Thank you for coming, pastor. I really appreciate it,” Julián said almost in a whisper. He still felt a little angry, though he couldn't quite say why. Was it because of Vladimir's attitude? His own lack of understanding? His lack of faith?

“You're welcome, dear Julián, but... be careful, alright?”

“Sure.”

After that visit, the family hoped it would all be over. They trusted Vladimir's prayers

sirvieran para ahuyentar o darles paz a los supuestos espíritus que habitan en la casa.

Esa misma noche, se sentaron a comer y a ver la televisión con más ánimos. Pero cuando llegó la hora de acostarse, las presencias hicieron notar su enojo. Se escucharon ruidos, platos rotos, sollozos...

Los espíritus se manifestaron de modo más intenso, como si el agua bendita en vez de aplacarlos los hubiera alterado y fortalecido.

—No se van a ir —dijo Liduvina.

—No, no lo van a hacer. Tenemos que decidir —suplicó Víctor.

—¿Qué cosa? —dijo Mercedes.

—No podemos mudarnos porque no tenemos dinero. Además, mi madre no quiere que vendamos la casa. Tampoco papá —intervino Julián.

—No nos queda sino convivir con ellos —suspiró Mercedes y miró a su alrededor.

Sabía que estaban escuchando—. Aceptar que estarán aquí por mucho tiempo. Y que también son parte de la familia.

would drive away or at least bring peace to the supposed spirits inhabiting the house.

That same night, they sat down to eat and watch TV feeling more hopeful. But when it came time to go to bed, the presences made their anger known. They heard noises, breaking dishes, sobbing... The spirits manifested even more intensely, as if the holy water had stirred them up rather than calmed them down.

“They’re not going to leave,” Liduvina said.

“No, they won’t. We have to decide,” Víctor pleaded.

“Decide what?” Mercedes asked.

“We can’t move. We don’t have money. Besides, my mother doesn’t want us to sell the house. Neither does dad,” Julián added.

“All we can do is live with them,” Mercedes sighed, looking around. She knew they were listening. “Accept they’ll be here for a long time. And they’re part of the family, too.”

—Mamá... —empezó a decir Víctor.

—Shhh. No podemos correrlos. Ya lo intentamos, Víctor.

—¿Cómo podemos vivir así?

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—Escucha, hijo. Observa y escucha. No nos harán daño. Nos necesitan para seguir alimentándose con nuestros miedos.

—¿Y qué pasará cuando dejemos de sentir miedo? —preguntó Virginia.

En ese momento se escuchó el sonido de unos platos reventar contra el suelo. La abuela Liduvina esbozó una sonrisa ladina, apenas perceptible y respondió la pregunta que Virginia había dejado en el aire espeso de las incertidumbres:

—No tendrán comida.

Julián tiene muy nítida en la memoria la vez que distinguió la figura de un hombre alto con sombrero en la casa. Una tarde, al declinar el día, vio caminar por el pasillo e internarse en su habitación. Esa fue la primera vez que lo notó. La segunda fue

“Mamá...” Víctor began.

“Shhh. We can’t drive them out. We already tried, Víctor.”

“How can we live like this?”

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Listen, son. Watch and listen. They won’t hurt us. They need us to keep feeding on our fears.”

“And what will happen when we stop being afraid?” Virginia asked.

At that moment, they heard the sound of plates shattering on the floor. Grandma Liduvina gave a sly, barely noticeable smile and answered the question Virginia had left hanging in the thick air of uncertainty:

“They won’t have any food.”

Julián has a very vivid memory of the time he saw the figure of a tall man with a hat in the house. One afternoon, as the day was ending, he saw him walk down the hallway and enter his room. That was the first time he noticed him. The second was

cuando despertó una noche con terribles ganas de mear, sudado y con sed. Antes de levantarse, ahogó un grito al verlo parado al borde de la cama. Tenía una expresión lastimera, como si llevara una profunda tristeza auestas. No pudo recordar el color de sus ojos, ni la forma de su rostro. Desapareció de su vista a los pocos segundos.

Las niñas sentían cosas raras. Las veía jugar dentro y de repente correr asustadas hacia el patio. Mercedes iba detrás de ellas para intentar calmarlas. Sin embargo, a pesar de las historias que le decían con lágrimas en los ojos, Mercedes decidió ignorar las presencias, olvidarse de esos ocupantes sin nombres y sin historia. Después de escucharlas, iba a la habitación de Julián con los nervios de punta.

—Las niñas tienen un amigo imaginario, Julián.

—¿Amigo imaginario?

—Sí. Juegan con él. ¿Sabías?

when he woke up one night needing to pee badly, sweaty and thirsty. Before getting up, he stifled a scream when he saw the man standing at the edge of the bed. He had a pained expression, as if carrying a deep sadness. He couldn't remember the color of his eyes, or the shape of his face. He disappeared from view after a few seconds.

The girls felt strange things. He saw them playing inside and suddenly running scared into the yard. Mercedes followed them to try to calm them down. However, despite the stories they told her with tears in their eyes, Mercedes chose to ignore the presences, to forget about those nameless, storyless occupants. After listening to them, she would go to Julián's room, her nerves frayed.

“The girls have an imaginary friend, Julián.”

“An imaginary friend?”

“Yes. They play with him. Did you know?”

—No.

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—Bueno.

—¿Cómo se llama?

—¿Quién?

—El amigo imaginario.

—No sé. No tiene nombre.

Julián suspiró.

—Son cosas de niños, mamá. Es normal.

Pero no lo era. Ella lo sabía y él también.

Camila y Beatriz se abrieron camino a través de ese mundo de sombras y secretos.

Trabajaban mucho, día y noche. Camila tenía a Abril, Natalia y Edward. Por un tiempo cuando vivió con aquel marido golpeador, solía mentir más seguido. Les decía a sus hijos que mintieran sobre el origen de aquellos golpes. Julián no lamentó que aquel hombre se fuera de sus vidas. Sin embargo, cuando dejó a su esposo, algo se marchitó dentro de ella. Beatriz estuvo un tiempo interesada en los estudios, también

“No.”

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“Well.”

“What’s his name?”

“Who?”

“The imaginary friend.”

“I don’t know. He doesn’t have a name.”

Julián sighed.

“They’re just kids’ things, mom. It’s normal.” But it wasn’t. She knew it, and so did he.

Camila and Beatriz made their way through that world of shadows and secrets. They worked a lot, day and night. Camila had Abril, Natalia, and Edward. For a while, when she lived with that abusive husband, she used to lie more often. She told her children to lie about the origin of those bruises. Julián didn’t regret that man leaving their lives. However, when she left her husband, something inside her withered. Beatriz was interested in studying for a while, also

un poco en la literatura, pero al terminar el bachiller, le dijo a su familia que no estudiaría más. Ni qué decir lo que sintió Mercedes, pero ninguno era capaz de retar a Beatriz. Era su decisión. Ella llegaba casi siempre en la madrugada, se quitaba los zapatos en la entrada de la casa y reía de forma altanera. La mayoría de las veces se escuchaba la voz de un hombre junto a la de ella. Mercedes se levantaba llorando, suplicando a Dios de rodillas por sus hijas. Pero ese fervor, esa protección, a Beatriz y a Camila nunca le importaron. Aquello causó un profundo enojo y tristeza en Julián. Nunca les perdonó a sus hermanas por el dolor que le causaron a su madre.

Camila comenzó a mentir más después de la muerte de su esposo, a crear historias imaginarias que asumía como suyas, como esas novelas que escribía en sus diarios cuando estaba

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pequeña. Una vecina le dijo a la familia que

a bit in literature, but when she finished high school, she told her family she wouldn't study anymore. One can't even begin to describe what Mercedes felt, but no one dared challenge Beatriz. It was her decision. She would almost always come home at dawn, take off her shoes at the entrance, and laugh defiantly. Most of the time, the voice of a man could be heard alongside hers. Mercedes would get up crying, begging God on her knees for her daughters. But that fervor, that protection, never mattered to Beatriz and Camila. That caused deep anger and sadness in Julián. He never forgave his sisters for the pain they caused their mother.

Camila began lying more after her husband died, creating imaginary stories she took on as her own, like those novels she used to write in her diaries when she was

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little. A neighbor told the family that

Camila era una mentirosa patológica, pero por falta de dinero nunca pudieron buscar ayuda psiquiátrica.

A Julián le preocupaban más sus sobrinos, los cuales quedaron huérfanos de padre.

Abril al menos tenía a alguien que estaba ahí para cuidarla. Adrián se ganó la confianza de Julián cuando estudiaron juntos en el colegio, pues la familia de Adrián vivió en Santa Isabel por un tiempo.

Luego se mudaron. Él era capaz de hacer cualquier cosa por su hija. En cambio, Camila solo era capaz de hacer cualquier cosa para ella misma.

Una noche, Julián volvió a sentir un calor muy fuerte en su habitación. Como si de repente se elevara la temperatura sin razón aparente. Supuso que no había nadie en la casa debido al silencio. Luego se levantó porque necesitaba buscar una tijera para cortar un trozo de tela. Se dirigió a la sala, la encontró arriba de la mesa y cuando iba a regresar a su habitación se detuvo en seco.

Camila was a pathological liar, but because they didn't have money, they were never able to seek psychiatric help.

Julián was more concerned about his nephews, who had been left fatherless. At least Abril had someone there to look after her. Adrián earned Julián's trust when they studied together in school, since Adrián's family lived in Santa Isabel for a while.

Then they moved away. He was willing to do anything for his daughter. Camila, on the other hand, was only capable of doing anything for herself.

One night, Julián again felt an intense heat in his room, as if the temperature had suddenly risen for no apparent reason. He assumed no one else was home because of the silence. Then he got up because he needed to find some scissors to cut a piece of fabric. He went to the living room, found them on the table, and when he was about to return to his room, he froze.

Vio pasar a un hombre alto vestido de negro, quien se alzó el sombrero a modo de saludo, y siguió de largo hacia su habitación. Esperó unos segundos antes de seguirlo, temblaba de pies a cabeza. Apretó los dientes y quiso correr, pero no podía.

No puedes escapar de él, escuchó su propia voz en la cabeza.

Caminó con lentitud, apretando la tijera en su mano, como si fuera a utilizarla, como si aquella presencia tuviera piel y huesos donde enterrarla. Se acercó, tragando en seco, con el corazón palpitándole salvajemente. Se aproximó apenas al cuarto.

Vio su televisor, el clóset y la silla donde arrojaba la ropa sucia. Luego se asomó un poco más y vio la cama y sus zapatos tirados donde los había dejado.

—Esta debió ser su habitación —murmuró.

—¿Julián?

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He saw a tall man dressed in black walk by, who lifted his hat in greeting and continued toward his room. Julián waited a few seconds before following him, trembling from head to toe. He clenched his teeth and wanted to run, but couldn't.

You can't escape him, he heard his own voice in his head.

He walked slowly, clutching the scissors in his hand as if he were about to use them, as if that presence had flesh and bone into which he could plunge them. He got closer, swallowing hard, his heart pounding wildly.

He approached the room, saw his television, the closet, and the chair where he threw his dirty clothes. Then he leaned in a bit more and saw the bed and his shoes where he had left them.

“This must have been his room,” he murmured.

“Julián?”

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Se sobresaltó al escuchar su nombre y casi grita. Su esposa lo miraba desde la puerta, su hija lamía un helado de fresas. Él se rio.

—Hay cucarachas en la habitación. Bueno, ya no. Las maté.

Luz se acercó sonriendo y lo abrazó por una pierna.

—No las he visto, pero Luz trae a la habitación muchos dulces. Debe ser por eso.

—Sí.

—¿Tienes hambre? —le dijo su esposa. Se acercó para dejarle un beso en los labios, pero notó los de él fríos y temblorosos. Julián la alejó.

—No, no quiero comer.

Tenía el estómago contraído. Se sentó al borde de la cama y evitó mirar a su alrededor. Su esposa haría preguntas y no quería alarmla. Luz entró diciendo que iba a sacar su caja de juguetes.

—Pero no puedes prestarles los juguetes a tus primas. Los van a dañar.

He jumped when he heard his name and almost screamed. His wife was looking at him from the door, his daughter licking a strawberry ice cream. He laughed.

"There were cockroaches in the room. Well, not anymore. I killed them."

Luz walked over smiling and hugged his leg.

"I haven't seen them, but Luz brings a lot of candy into the room. That must be why."

"Yeah."

"Are you hungry?" his wife asked. She leaned in to kiss him on the lips, but felt them cold and trembling. Julián pushed her away.

"No, I don't want to eat."

His stomach was tight. He sat on the edge of the bed and avoided looking around. His wife would start asking questions, and he didn't want to alarm her. Luz walked in saying she was going to take out her toy box.

"But you can't lend your toys to your cousins. They'll break them."

Luz jaló una caja cerca de la biblioteca y miró a su madre. A ella no le agradaba que su hija jugara con sus primas, aunque no comprendía bien los motivos. Una vez le dijo que eran sucias y desordenadas, que romperían sus juguetes, que eran malas. Y aunque su madre intentó distanciarlas, Luz siempre buscó el modo de escaparse. Solo las tenía a ellas después de todo.

Bajó la mirada hacia sus juguetes y suspiró.

—Entonces me iré a jugar con sus juguetes.

—Luz.

—Déjala —le reprochó Julián—, son sus primas.

Luz corrió hacia la casa de Víctor. Cuando su madre salió de la habitación, Julián miró a su alrededor, desconfiado.

—Esta es mi habitación ahora, amigo. No pienso compartirla —le dijo a la presencia en voz baja.

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Julián se sentía atrapado en su habitación.

Tal como aquel hombre que se le aparecía.

Luz pulled a box close to the bookshelf and looked at her mother. She didn't like her daughter playing with her cousins, though she didn't really understand why. Once, she said they were dirty and messy, that they'd break her toys, that they were bad. And even though her mother tried to keep them apart, Luz always found a way to sneak over. They were all she had, after all.

She looked down at her toys and sighed.

"Then I'll go play with their toys."

"Luz."

"Let her," Julián reproached her. "They're her cousins."

Luz ran to Victor's house. When his wife left the room, Julián looked around, wary.

"This is my room now, friend. I'm not going to share it," he said to the presence in a low voice.

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Julian felt trapped in his room. Just like that

man who appeared to him.

En aquel entonces trabajaba como albañil en una empresa de decoración de interiores.

Regresaba a su casa, comía, jugaba un poco con su hija y volvía a dormir. Al día siguiente hacía todo otra vez, pero la sensación de agobio en el cuarto no desapareció. Quizás esa habitación le pertenecía al hombre del sombrero. Cuando se sentaba a leer, lo sentía a su lado. Sus ojos escrutándolo en silencio. A veces pasaba las páginas con lentitud por si el hombre leía con él. Es probable que Julián se estuviera volviendo loco. Pero ¿y si la casa era también parte de su delirio?

Ahora que lo pensaba, muchas veces se sintió como si estuviera atrapado en una película de terror de bajo presupuesto. Una de serie B. Porque no había respuestas, ni revelaciones, ni ninguna explicación lógica. Solo eran ellos, la casa y sus propias oscuridades auestas. Mercedes conoció a un hombre que se convirtió en su novio por unos años. Él le brindó confianza, cariño,

At the time, he worked as a construction worker for an interior decorating company.

He would come home, eat, play a little with his daughter, and go back to sleep. The next day he did it all over again, but the oppressive feeling in the room never left. Maybe that room belonged to the man with the hat. When he sat down to read, he felt him by his side, eyes watching him silently. Sometimes he turned the pages slowly as if the man was reading with him. Maybe Julian was going crazy. But what if the house was part of his madness too?

Now that he thought about it, he often felt like he was trapped in a low-budget horror movie. A B-movie. There were no answers, no revelations, no logical explanation. It was just them, the house, and their own darkness. Mercedes met a man who became her boyfriend for a few years. He gave her trust, affection,

amor y pudieron entender un poco lo que sucedía en la casa. Esta nueva pareja tenía una idea de lo que estaba sucediendo, pero apenas le refirió vagos detalles. Solo le dijo a Mercedes que, en tiempos pasados, una familia había enterrado algo cerca de la puerta trasera. Sugirió que ninguno debía acercarse a ese lugar por lo peligroso.

Se llamaba Cipriano y se dedicaba a la santería, específicamente a la magia blanca, según les contó. Fue la figura de abuelo y padre que Alonso nunca pudo ejercer. Era un poco raro y tenía una extraña fascinación por los niños. Camila y Beatriz contaban raras experiencias. Como que se les quedaba mirando por un buen rato o que a veces las tocaba de más. Mercedes escuchó esas historias, decidió ignorarlas. Ellas evitaban estar cerca de él. Desde lejos era más amigable, simpático, pero de cerca era intimidante. Tenía cuatro autos que trabajaban

love, and they managed to understand a little about what was happening in the house. This new partner had some idea of what was going on, but only gave vague details. He just told Mercedes that, in the past, a family had buried something near the back door. He suggested that no one should go near that place because it was dangerous.

His name was Cipriano and he practiced Santeria, specifically white magic, according to what he told them. He became the grandfather and father figure Alonso could never be. He was a bit strange and had a weird fascination with children. Camila and Beatriz shared odd experiences, like him staring at them for a long time or touching them a little too much. When Mercedes heard these stories, she decided to ignore them. They avoided being near him. From afar, he was friendly, pleasant, but up close, he was intimidating. He had four cars working

como taxis. También un terreno enorme y un pequeño taller. Le gustaba caminar por las casas que visitaba. Observar los lugares con mucha atención. Un día, después de caminar por todo el patio de la casa de la calle 13, dijo que algo se encontraba enterrado en sus tierras.

—¿Qué cosa? —le preguntó Mercedes.

—Hicieron una brujería muy poderosa y lo enterraron allá —señaló el lugar donde lavaban la ropa, cerca de la puerta trasera. El sol del mediodía se reflejó en su cabeza, resaltando sus abundantes canas.

—Podemos sacarlo —dijo Mercedes.

—No, ¿estás loca? Deja eso, no puedes tocarlo. Es muy peligroso. Solo pueden desenterrarlo quienes cavaron en esa tierra, y ellos están muertos. Hay un límite de tiempo, cuando se cumpla, todo acabará.

—¿Cuánto tiempo?

—No lo sé, siglos tal vez —dijo él mirando hacia el lugar señalado—. Prométeme que nunca vas a tocarlo, ni a desenterrar nada.

like taxis. He also owned several taxis, a large piece of land, and a small workshop. He liked walking around the houses he visited, observing the places carefully. One day, after walking through the yard of the house on 13th Street, he said something was buried in the land.

"What is it?" Mercedes asked him.

"They did a powerful witchcraft and buried it there," he said, pointing to the spot near the back door. The midday sun reflected off his graying head.

"We can dig it up," Mercedes said.

"No, are you crazy? Leave it alone. You can't touch it. It's too dangerous. Only those who buried it can unearth it, and they're dead. There's a time limit; when that runs out, it will all end."

"How long?"

"I don't know, maybe centuries," he said, staring at the spot. "Promise me you'll never touch it or dig up anything."

Prométemelo.

Su mirada era profunda y seria. Mercedes asintió y se apretó las manos.

—Sí, claro. Si dices que no lo toque...

—No. Nunca.

—Pero ¿por qué?

—¿Necesitas un por qué para todo?

—Sí.

—Bueno, es peligroso.

Necesitaban creer que pronto todo iba a acabar, a pesar de que el tiempo seguía corriendo y los espíritus se seguían aferrando a sus paredes. Después de unos años, Cipriano se llevó a Mercedes a vivir con él, y luego moriría en circunstancias extrañas.

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Julián estuvo a punto de enloquecer de no haber sido por su hija y su esposa. Estuvieron ahí cuando ya no aguantaba más la opresión del cuarto y temía derrumbarse en pedazos. Vivía con miedo, aunque lo reprimió por años. No solo temía por él,

Promise me."

His look was serious and intense. Mercedes nodded, squeezing her hands.

"Yes, of course. If you say don't touch it..."

"No. Never."

"But why?"

"Do you need a reason for everything?"

"Yes."

"Well, it's dangerous."

They needed to believe everything would end soon, even as time passed and the spirits clung to the walls. A few years later, Cipriano took Mercedes to live with him, and then he died under strange circumstances.

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Julian almost went insane if not for his daughter and wife. They were there when he could no longer bear the oppression of the room and feared falling to pieces. He lived in fear, though he suppressed it for years. He feared not just for himself

sino también por su familia. La casa los estaba consumiendo.

Al caminar por las calles, Julián miraba siempre por encima de su hombro y podía jurar que en muchas oportunidades vio al hombre del sombrero sonreírle desde lejos.

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Capítulo 9

Había tanto dolor...

Uno de los asistentes del pastor Vladimir había hecho una investigación en los terrenos de la casa de la familia Rivera porque querían ampliar la iglesia y esperaban que la zona estuviera en aptas condiciones antes de ofertar. Luego de los resultados, el asistente confirmó lo que decían los rumores: que la historia de esos terrenos estaba vinculada a la de las guerras del siglo XIX, una época cruenta en la que

but for his family too. The house was consuming them.

Walking down the streets, Julian always looked over his shoulder and could swear that, on many occasions, he saw the man with the hat smiling at him from afar.

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Chapter 9

There was so much pain...

One of Pastor Vladimir's assistants had conducted research on the Rivera family's land because they wanted to expand the church and hoped the area was suitable before making an offer. After the results, the assistant confirmed the rumors: the history of those lands was tied to 19th-century wars, a bloody time when

cientos de personas murieron de forma trágica a causa de batallas y ajusticiamientos. También salió a flote la leyenda de que en ese terreno estaban enterradas unas monedas de oro. Sin embargo, no encontraron ningún documento que ratificara ese tesoro. Parecían invenciones forjadas por la imaginación popular y que pasaban de generación en generación; cuentos de viejas, como los suelen llamar. Pero ¿y si había algo de verdad en ellos?

Junto con sus abogados, el pastor Vladimir le hizo una propuesta a Mercedes para que le vendiera la propiedad a la iglesia. Sin embargo, obtuvo una respuesta desfavorable. Ella se negaba a venderla porque, aseguró, ya estaban acostumbrados, era la única propiedad que tenían, y no deseaban desprenderse de ella, aun con la perturbación que les producían los espíritus.

Con el tiempo, la lozanía y simpatía de Mercedes se habían ido desvaneciendo,

hundreds died tragically due to battles and executions. Legends also surfaced about gold coins buried in that land. However, no documents confirmed such treasure. They seemed to be tales passed down by old storytellers, but what if there was some truth?

Together with his lawyers, Pastor Vladimir made Mercedes an offer to sell the property to the church. However, she refused. She insisted they were used to it, it was their only property, and despite the torment caused by the spirits, they wouldn't part with it.

Over time, Mercedes's freshness and charm faded,

como si el viento de las adversidades le hubiera ido arrebatando la vitalidad. Se le notaba agotada, ojerosa, angustiada.

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Una mezcla de compasión y curiosidad hizo que Vladimir no dudara en aceptar bendecir la casa cuando Mercedes se lo pidió. Aún recuerda ese día como uno de los más difíciles que le tocó vivir.

Cuando Mercedes fue a visitar al pastor, este le estrechó la mano y la sintió un tanto áspera, tal vez debido a su trabajo. Llevaba puesto un vestido verde, largo, un poco raído. Tenía el cabello castaño sujeto en un moño. Era una mujer regordeta y de mejillas largas. Vladimir sabía un poco de su historia, en especial, por los comentarios de los vecinos. Que era una mujer muy dedicada a sus hijos y a su hogar. Que había dejado al esposo y desde entonces trabajaba.

La invitó a que tomara asiento y se dispuso

as if the wind of adversity had gradually stripped away her vitality. She looked tired, with dark circles under her eyes, and distressed.

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A mix of compassion and curiosity made Vladimir not hesitate to agree to bless the house when Mercedes asked him. He still remembers that day as one of the hardest he ever lived through.

When Mercedes went to visit the pastor, he shook her hand and found it a bit rough, maybe because of her work. She wore a long green dress, somewhat worn. Her brown hair was tied up in a bun. She was a plump woman with long cheeks. Vladimir knew a bit about her story, mainly from neighbors' comments. That she was very devoted to her children and her home. That she had left her husband and had worked ever since.

He invited her to sit down and prepared to

a prestarle atención a su relato.

—Nos mudamos en el 81. ¡Qué íbamos a imaginar que esa casa tan bonita era una cueva de lobos! Era hermosa, pastor Vladimir, hermosa. Con sus colores, sus flores... Pero se ha ido marchitando rápidamente. La casa ya no posee esa vida que irradiaba cuando la compramos. Se sienten, se ven y se escuchan cosas raras. Ya sé lo que debe pensar, pastor, pero también sé que ha ayudado a muchas familias. La hermana María me contó que les echó una mano hace dos años... bueno, como le decía, pastor Vladimir, tengo que proteger a mis hijos y a mis nietos. Creo que las niñas, Abril y Alba, son las más afectadas. Abril ve cosas y Alba no aguanta a sus padres, la pobre. Es horrible.

Le ofreció un pañuelo para que se limpiara las lágrimas.

—Entiendo. Por supuesto que los ayudaré, claro que sí, iré mañana mismo.

A Mercedes se le iluminaron los ojos y le

listen to her story.

“We moved in ’81. We never imagined that such a beautiful house was a den of wolves! It was beautiful, Pastor Vladimir, beautiful. With its colors, its flowers... But it has withered quickly. The house no longer has the life it radiated when we bought it. Strange things are felt, seen, and heard. I know what you must think, Pastor, but I also know you’ve helped many families. Sister María told me you helped them two years ago... well, as I was saying, Pastor Vladimir, I have to protect my children and grandchildren. I think the girls, Abril and Alba, are the most affected. Abril sees things, and Alba can’t stand her parents, poor thing. It’s horrible.”

He offered her a handkerchief to wipe her tears.

“I understand. Of course I will help you, of course I will, I’ll come tomorrow.”

Mercedes’s eyes lit up, and she

dio las gracias varias veces. Vladimir le aseguró que todo iba a estar bien.

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Con agua bendita y oraciones trataría de expulsarlos. Se había dedicado a esto durante muchos años, casi desde su llegada a Venezuela.

Desde muy pequeño, Vladimir tenía el don de ver fenómenos inmateriales. Al comienzo, su madre le dijo que eran pesadillas, que no se preocupara. Pero al cumplir los cinco años, un espíritu lo tomó de los hombros y lo lanzó fuera de la habitación. Sus padres quedaron petrificados en sus sillas. No les quedó alternativa sino confiar en sus palabras. Dejaron de enviarlo a la escuela y empezó a ver clases en casa. Su aprendizaje fue bastante lento, apenas tenía conocimiento de algunas cosas sobre literatura, filosofía y ciencia. Le iba muy mal con las matemáticas. Luego, cuando comenzó a escasear la comida, su padre decidió que

thanked him many times. Vladimir assured her everything was going to be alright.

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With holy water and prayers he would try to expel them. He had dedicated himself to this for many years, almost since his arrival in Venezuela.

Since he was very young, Vladimir had the gift of seeing immaterial phenomena. At first, his mother told him they were nightmares, that he shouldn't worry. But when he turned five, a spirit grabbed him by the shoulders and threw him out of the room. His parents were left petrified in their chairs. They had no choice but to believe his words. They stopped sending him to school and he started studying at home. His learning was quite slow; he only knew a little about literature, philosophy, and science. He did very poorly with math. Later, when food became scarce, his father decided they

tenían que irse. Llegó una tarde con un trozo de revista en la mano donde se leía en letras grandes: VENEZUELA RECIBE CON ALEGRÍA A TODOS LOS EMIGRANTES.

Dos meses después, estaban en el país petrolero.

Vladimir y su hijo llegaron temprano a casa de los Rivera. Lo que le dijo Mercedes sobre el deterioro era cierto, la pintura se desconchaba con facilidad, a pesar de que parecía recién pintada. La familia se marchó para que el pastor hiciera su trabajo con tranquilidad. Solo se quedó Julián, quien lo recibió con una sonrisa y lo invitó a pasar.

Se sintió incómodo al entrar, pero fue una sensación momentánea. Le pidió a su hijo que mejor lo esperara afuera. Tenía un presentimiento. Julián lo acompañó en todo el trayecto. Lo miraba con una expresión seria, era un hombre alto, de piel muy blanca y cabello negro, con ojos saltones y

had to leave. One afternoon he came home with a torn magazine page that read in big letters: VENEZUELA WELCOMES ALL IMMIGRANTS WITH JOY.

Two months later, they were in the oil-rich country.

Vladimir and his son arrived early at the Rivera house. What Mercedes had said about the deterioration was true; the paint flaked off easily, even though it looked freshly painted. The family left so the pastor could do his work in peace. Only Julián stayed, who greeted him with a smile and invited him in.

He felt uneasy when he entered, but it was a brief feeling. He asked his son to wait outside. He had a hunch. Julián accompanied him the whole way. He looked at him with a serious expression. He was a tall man, very pale skin and black hair, with large,

oscuros. Se parecía bastante a su madre. Era un buen muchacho. Al menos eso era lo que le pareció. Siempre ha sido así de serio,

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pastor, le decían los vecinos. No habla mucho, pero trabaja bastante. Llega agotadísimo, el pobre.

Vladimir no se detuvo a hablar con Julián, no era necesario; además, tenía programado un viaje a Valencia y no quería llegar tarde.

Empezó a orar a medida que rociaba la casa con agua bendita. En oportunidades anteriores, podía sentir una liberación rápida, una luz inmediata. Pero no esa vez.

Mientras más se adentraba en el pasillo, más oscuridad se cernía a su alrededor. La pesadez y las vibraciones lo entumecieron.

Por unos instantes quiso irse. Mientras recorría el lugar, su propia confianza, atribuida por los trabajos de éxitos durante tantos años, se empezaba a desvanecer. Al

dark eyes. He looked a lot like his mother. He seemed like a good young man. At least that's what he thought. He had always been so serious,

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pastor, the neighbors would say, he's always been like that. He doesn't talk much, but he works hard. He comes home exhausted, poor thing.

Vladimir didn't stop to talk with Julián, it wasn't necessary; besides, he had a trip to Valencia planned and didn't want to be late.

He began to pray as he sprinkled holy water around the house. In previous times, he could feel a quick release, an immediate light. But not this time. The deeper he went

into the hallway, the more darkness fell around him. The heaviness and vibrations numbed him. For a moment he wanted to

leave. As he walked through the place, his own confidence—gained from so many years of successful work—began to fade.

When

regresar le comentaría de su visita a los miembros de la iglesia. Julián le preguntó si estaba bien, pero apenas logró escucharlo y le respondió palabras vagas. Se encaminó hacia el pasillo, casi arrastrando los pies, obligándose a continuar. Puso su mano sobre una de las paredes.

Algo ocurrió allí. Aunque no tenía claro el significado de las imágenes en su cabeza, sabía que algo horrible había pasado. Un hombre alto con sombrero, una mujer de vestido blanco tendida en el piso y envuelta en sangre. Otro hombre disparándole al del sombrero. Una niña corriendo por el pasillo hacia el patio. Una mujer apareciendo de improviso y golpeando a otra con una piedra. Tres soldados españoles arrastrando a un bebé por el piso. Una mujer gritando con las manos en la cabeza. Dos personas inclinadas con una taza de barro en las manos murmurando palabras incomprensibles. No pudo distinguir lo que contenía la taza. ¿Brujería? Luego se le

he returned, he would tell the church members about his visit. Julián asked if he was okay, but Vladimir barely heard him and gave vague replies. He headed into the hallway, almost dragging his feet, forcing himself to continue. He placed his hand on one of the walls.

Something happened there. Though the meaning of the images in his head was unclear, he knew something terrible had occurred. A tall man with a hat, a woman in a white dress lying on the floor covered in blood. Another man shooting the man in the hat. A girl running down the hallway toward the patio. A woman appearing suddenly and hitting another with a stone. Three Spanish soldiers dragging a baby across the floor. A woman screaming with her hands on her head. Two people hunched over with a clay cup in their hands murmuring incomprehensible words. He couldn't make out what was in the cup. Witchcraft? Then an

proyectó en la mente una explanada de tierra y polvo donde unos caballos chocaban entre sí, mientras las sombras de sus jinetes enfebrecidos agitaban sus espadas en el aire y emitían unos gritos que resonaban en su cerebro de manera ensordecedora.

Es un cementerio, se dijo.

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Se giró y miró a Julián. Estaba a la espera de que le dijera algo. Tragó en seco y suspiró. Le pidió que se cuidara y salió del pasillo casi corriendo. Se le enredaba la lengua, apenas podía articular palabras, estaba sofocado. La maldad que se respiraba en ese lugar era intolerable. Nunca había sentido algo así.

—Mantenlos vigilados. Pueden volverse locos —le dijo a su hijo en susurros cuando cruzaron el umbral de la puerta.

—¿Qué encontraste? —le preguntó este en voz baja.

—Maldad —murmuró.

open field of dirt and dust appeared in his mind, where horses crashed into each other while the shadows of their frenzied riders waved swords in the air and screamed in deafening echoes in his brain.

It's a cemetery, he told himself

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He turned and looked at Julián. He waited for him to say something. He swallowed hard and sighed. He told him to take care and almost ran out of the hallway. His tongue tangled, he could barely form words, he was suffocating. The evil in that place was unbearable. He had never felt anything like it.

“Keep an eye on them. They might go crazy,” he whispered to his son as they crossed the doorway.

“What did you find?” his son asked quietly.

“Evil,” he murmured.

Giró la cabeza hacia la casa y pudo ver cómo varias sombras se proyectaban en las paredes, como multiplicando su oscuridad. Tragó en seco. Se alejó casi tropezando al doblar la esquina.

Qué maldad, Dios mío.

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Capítulo 10

Era mucho más que oscuridad

Víctor también vio cosas extrañas en la casa, pero nunca quiso contarle a Alba, por mucho que insistió. Su hija quiso sacarle toda la información posible para el libro que estaba escribiendo Abril. No sabía qué momento o cuál circunstancia llevó a que su prima escribiera sobre la casa, pero esta le había pedido ayuda para recopilar toda la información posible. Pero Víctor no estaba convencido de querer ayudar. Escuchaba a su hija en la lejanía y Alba no pudo alcanzarlo. Su padre era una persona muy

He turned his head toward the house and saw how several shadows stretched along the walls, multiplying their darkness. He swallowed hard. He stumbled away as he rounded the corner.

Such evil, my God.

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Chapter 10

It Was Much More Than Darkness

Víctor also saw strange things in the house, but he never wanted to tell Alba, no matter how much she insisted. His daughter tried to get all the information she could for the book Abril was writing. He didn't know when or why his cousin decided to write about the house, but she had asked for help gathering as much information as possible. But Víctor wasn't sure he wanted to help. He listened to his daughter from afar and Alba couldn't reach him. Her father was a very

distante, a veces un extraño.

Adrián tampoco quiso contar demasiado.

Pero, según les dijo Mercedes años después, había visto por la ventana a un hombre sin cabeza. Le dijo que se quedó paralizado, mirando hacia la calle. Escuchó a los caballos rechinar.

—Se le veía pálido. Temblaba. —les describió—. Luego creo que escuchó a la Llorona, porque empezó a pegar gritos por toda la casa. Eso le pasa por andar bebiendo en la calle, claro. Pobre. Imagínate escuchar eso... Pero quién lo manda, ¿verdad?

—Nadie quiere ver algo así, mamá —le respondió Julián.

—No, pero quién lo manda...

—No estaba borracho.

—Sí estaba.

—No lo recuerdo.

—Qué vas a recordar. Quien lo vio fue Virginia.

—Virginia dormía.

distant person, sometimes a stranger.

Adrián didn't want to say much either. But, according to what Mercedes told them years later, he had seen a headless man through the window. She said he froze, staring out at the street. He heard the screeching of horses.

“He looked pale. He was shaking,” she described. “Then I think he heard La Llorona, because he started screaming all through the house. That’s what he gets for drinking in the street, of course. Poor thing. Imagine hearing that... But that’s his fault, right?”

“No one wants to see something like that, mom,” Julián answered.

“No, but that’s what he gets...”

“He wasn’t drunk.”

“Yes, he was.”

“I don’t remember.”

“What are you going to remember. Virginia saw it.”

“Virginia was asleep.”

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—No. Ella estaba ahí.

—Bueno, en fin. Eso fue lo que vio.

—¿Qué vio? —preguntó Abril.

—Pues al jinete sin cabeza y a la Llorona

—dijo Mercedes.

—¿La Llorona? ¿En serio?

—La Sayona —dijo Julián.

—¿Qué Sayona nada! —gritó Mercedes.

—Él me dijo.

—Tú estabas durmiendo.

—No, yo no dormía.

Aunque no quedó muy claro quién estaba en ese momento, algo vio Adrián esa noche.

Durante mucho tiempo, Alba creyó que era exageración de su familia, pero ahora no estaba tan segura de ello. ¿Por qué no se iban? ¿Cuál era su misión? Quienes fueran esos espíritus, lograron intensificar la corrupción que todos llevaban dentro.

La única información que tenían era la historia que les contó el viejo de la casa misteriosa y lo de Cipriano. Después de

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“No. She was there.”

“Well, anyway. That’s what he saw.”

“What did he see?” asked Abril.

“Well, the headless horseman and La Llorona,” said Mercedes.

“La Llorona? Seriously?”

“La Sayona,” said Julián.

“Sayona, my foot!” Mercedes shouted.

“That’s what he told me.”

“You were sleeping.”

“No, I wasn’t sleeping.”

Even though it wasn’t clear who was really there at that moment, Adrián saw something that night. For a long time, Alba thought her family exaggerated, but now she wasn’t so sure. Why didn’t they leave? What was their mission? Whoever those spirits were, they managed to amplify the corruption everyone carried inside.

The only information they had was the story told by the old man from the mysterious house and what Cipriano said. After that

aquella confesión, Alba no podía evitar mirar hacia aquel lugar de la casa. Recordó cómo lo veía de reojo mientras jugaba, bajo el intenso rayo de sol del mediodía antes de irse a comer o cuando salía a buscar a sus primas. Siempre miraba en esa dirección, como esperando una señal. Pero aquello no duró mucho tiempo. Creció y poco a poco dejó de interesarle. Abril era la más sensible de todas y a la que más le tocó padecer esas experiencias.

Para Alba, lo más aterrador de su vida fue la convivencia de sus padres. Se peleaban constantemente. Sufría de nerviosismo, no tenía la capacidad para entender ciertas situaciones. Sufría también de ataques de ansiedad que se manifestaban en cualquier momento. Incluso en el colegio. Varias veces vomitó el almuerzo y tuvieron que llevarla de urgencias al hospital. Su corazón palpitaba con fuerza, empezaba a sudar y después a agitarse. Luego la nada.

confession, Alba couldn't help looking toward that place in the house. She remembered how she would glance at it while playing, under the midday sun before going in to eat or when she went out to look for her cousins. She always looked in that direction, as if waiting for a sign. But that didn't last long. She grew up and gradually lost interest. Abril was the most sensitive of them all and the one who suffered the most from those experiences.

For Alba, the most terrifying thing in her life was living with her parents. They fought constantly. She suffered from anxiety, couldn't understand certain situations, and also had panic attacks that could happen at any time—even at school. Several times she vomited her lunch and had to be rushed to the hospital. Her heart would pound, she'd start sweating and gasping. Then, nothing.

Sus padres le decían que estaba creciendo, que era cosa de la adolescencia, que pronto volvería a ser normal. Nunca se trató esa ansiedad. En cambio, su hermana era más sensata y capaz de analizar las cosas de una manera distinta. Noelia no sufría de ataques, pero dejaba salir el dolor a través del deporte. Distraía su mente.

Tampoco es que vivió muchas experiencias en la casa del terror, pues solía distraerse demasiado, tenía tantas preocupaciones desde muy pequeña. Sus padres absorbieron gran parte de su tiempo. Solo tuvo una experiencia que le contó a Abril por teléfono, no se atrevía a verla en persona para contarle.

Cuando tenía trece años, se dirigió a la casa para buscar a Liduvina porque su mamá había hecho sopa y quería compartirla un poco. Cuando entró, sintió un aroma a perejil y a frutas podridas. En eso vio a un hombre en silla de ruedas. Era una silla vieja, oxidada, y el hombre llevaba un vaso

Her parents told her she was growing up, that it was just part of adolescence, that soon she would be normal again. That anxiety was never treated. On the other hand, her sister was more sensible and able to analyze things differently. Noelia didn't suffer from attacks, but let the pain out through sports. It helped distract her mind.

She didn't really experience much in the haunted house either, as she was always too distracted and had too many worries since she was very young. Her parents absorbed most of her time. She only had one experience, which she told Abril over the phone—she didn't dare say it to her face.

When she was thirteen, she went to the house to look for Liduvina because her mom had made soup and wanted to share some. When she entered, she smelled parsley and rotting fruit. Then she saw a man in a wheelchair. It was an old, rusty chair, and the man held a red cup

rojo en la mano; su mirada se perdía en algún lugar por encima de su cabeza. No tenía cabello. Sus ojos eran enormes, vacíos. Quiso correr y llorar, pero no pudo moverse. Sintió que todo a su alrededor empezaba a vibrar. Además, estaba ese olor... el de fruta podrida. El aroma se intensificó.

—¿Qué quieres?

Se sobresaltó y gritó. Ella la miró con el ceño fruncido. Se encontraba de pie en el mismo lugar donde vio al viejo en silla de ruedas.

—Mi mamá... mi mamá... mi...

—¿Te comieron la lengua los ratones? Qué estúpida.

—No... es... mi mamá...

—Ya lárgate, estoy cocinando.

Salió disparada sin mirar atrás. Le dijo a su mamá que la bisabuela estaba cocinando y que le dijo que se largara. Eso explicaría su cara de susto. No quiso decirle que había visto algo que no se podía explicar a ella misma. La

in his hand; his gaze was lost somewhere above her head. He had no hair. His eyes were huge, empty. She wanted to run and cry, but couldn't move. She felt everything around her start to vibrate. And that smell... the rotting fruit. It grew stronger.

“What do you want?”

She jumped and screamed. The woman looked at her with a frown. She was standing in the same spot where the old man in the wheelchair had been.

“My mom... my mom... my...”

“Cat got your tongue? How stupid.”

“No... it's... my mom...”

“Just get out, I'm cooking.”

She bolted out without looking back. She told her mom that her great-grandmother was cooking and told her to leave. That would explain her terrified face. She didn't want to say she'd seen something she couldn't even explain to herself. She

miró por un rato.

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Sus ojos la inspeccionaron. Suspiró y se pasó la mano por el cabello negro.

—Esa vieja no tiene nada que hacer con su vida, además de joder a su propia familia.

Pásame el plato para servirte.

Alba recuerda lo mucho que disfrutaron de su niñez, sin el agobiante mundo tecnológico que llegaría en pocos años a transformar los entretenimientos infantiles.

Su familia materna organizaba fiestas y viajes y casi siempre se llevaban a Abril para disfrutar juntas de aquellos paseos.

Mientras se divertían fuera, no les quedaba demasiado tiempo para pensar en lo que sucedía en la casa de la calle 13. Aunque a veces Abril hacía algunos comentarios, como recordando algo inconcluso.

Alba, en cambio, se encerró tanto en los problemas familiares que a veces no comprendía muy bien la realidad. La

watched her for a moment.

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Her eyes inspected her. She sighed and ran her hand through her black hair.

“That old woman has nothing to do with her life except mess with her own family. Hand me the plate so I can serve you.”

Alba remembers how much they enjoyed their childhood, without the suffocating technological world that would arrive a few years later to transform children’s entertainment. Her maternal family organized parties and trips and almost always took Abril along so they could enjoy those outings together. While they were out having fun, they didn’t have much time to think about what was happening at the house on 13th Street. Though sometimes Abril would make comments, as if remembering something unfinished.

Alba, on the other hand, became so wrapped up in her family’s problems that sometimes she couldn’t quite understand reality. The

casa los devoraba poco a poco, pero ella solo podía pensar en su madre, en los golpes, en el dolor.

Noelia también sufrió la oscuridad de la casa. Era muy buena, incluso mejor que los chicos, pero abandonó el básquet el último día del campeonato. Era parte de la selección de baloncesto femenino y competiría con la selección de Caracas. Como el partido era un domingo, todos pudieron asistir. Llegaron al Domo Bolivariano a eso de las tres de la tarde. Era la arena de la sede principal del equipo Los Guaros de Lara, una instalación de propiedad pública administrada por el gobierno a través de Fundela (Fundación para el Deporte del Estado Lara). Era utilizado también por aquellos que practicaban voleibol, balonmano, boxeo y hockey de sala.

Al bajarse del Chevrolet de su papá, enlazó el brazo con el de Abril.

La marea de gente se apresuró a tomar los

house was devouring them little by little, but she could only think about her mother, about the blows, about the pain.

Noelia also suffered the darkness of the house. She was very good, even better than the boys, but she quit basketball on the last day of the championship. She was part of the women's basketball team and would compete against the Caracas team. Since the game was on a Sunday, everyone could attend. They arrived at the Domo Bolivariano around three in the afternoon. It was the arena and home of the Los Guaros de Lara team, a public facility managed by the government through Fundela (Foundation for Sport of Lara State). It was also used by those who practiced volleyball, handball, boxing, and indoor hockey.

When they got out of her dad's Chevrolet, she linked arms with Abril.

The wave of people hurried to grab the

mejores asientos. Mientras, sus padres se fueron a comprar cotufas.

—¡Aquí! —les gritó Virginia cuando los vio entrar. Alzó la mano y la movió.

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A su lado se encontraba Beatriz y Mercedes.

Del otro lado estaban Julián y Luz.

—Iré a comprar un refresco. Ya vengo —dijo Abril, se soltó y desapareció en la marea de personas que entraban. La cancha era un domo cerrado, pero estaba muy bien iluminada. Contaba con luces que se proyectaban en diferentes direcciones. A pesar de no ser un grupo tan popular, había bastante público.

—Ya va a empezar. ¿Y Abril? —preguntó Virginia. Beatriz se reía con unos sujetos dos gradas más abajo.

—Fue por un refresco...

Sus padres se acercaron con dos paquetes de cotufas en las manos, esquivaron a varias personas hasta sentarse cerca de ella. Los

best seats. Meanwhile, their parents went to buy popcorn.

“Here!” Virginia shouted when she saw them come in. She raised her hand and waved it.

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Next to her were Beatriz and Mercedes. On the other side were Julián and Luz.

“I’m going to get a soda. I’ll be right back,” said Abril, letting go and disappearing into the crowd entering. The court was a closed dome but well lit. Lights shone in different directions. Even though it wasn’t such a popular group, there was quite an audience.

“It’s about to start. Where’s Abril?” asked Virginia. Beatriz was laughing with some guys two rows down.

“She went for a soda...”

Their parents arrived with two bags of popcorn in their hands, dodging people until they sat close by. The

entrenadores ingresaron a la cancha al igual que el equipo de Noelia y el equipo contrario. Se elevaron los aplausos y los gritos.

Noelia se inclinó para amarrarse las trenzas, se le veía la piel perlada de sudor, a pesar de que aún no comenzaba el partido. Abril apareció con dos refrescos. Al llegar, se sentó al lado de Alba y le entregó una Coca-Cola. Sus ojos marrones con vetas verdes la miraron.

—¿Ya va a comenzar?

—Sí —le respondió, dando un sorbo de su bebida.

Sonó el pitazo y comenzó el partido. Al inicio, todo parecía normal. Las chicas gritaban, el público también gritaba y aplaudía. Los entrenadores se veían emocionados y frustrados a la vez. Pero Alba sintió que algo pasaba, aunque no supo descifrar lo que era. Buscó a su hermana con la mirada y vio que se levantaba del suelo porque una de las chicas del equipo

coaches came onto the court along with Noelia's team and the opposing team. Applause and cheers rose up.

Noelia bent to tie her braids, her skin already beaded with sweat even though the game hadn't started yet. Abril appeared with two sodas. When she arrived, she sat beside Alba and handed her a Coke. Her brown eyes with green flecks looked at her.

“Is it starting?”

“Yes,” she replied, taking a sip of her drink.

The whistle blew and the game began. At first, everything seemed normal. The girls shouted, the crowd also shouted and applauded. The coaches looked both excited and frustrated. But Alba felt something was happening, though she couldn't figure out what it was. She looked for her sister and saw her get up off the floor because one of the opposing players

contrario la empujó. Se pasó el brazo por la frente y se dispuso a seguir en la jugada. Pero no encestaban. El entrenador se llevó las manos a la cintura y le gritó algo que no se logró escuchar. Llevaba short, una gorra blanca y una camisa roja que decía en la parte de atrás: ENTRENADOR LUCAS.

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—Noelia no está bien —dijo Abril.

Tenía la mirada fija en la cancha y se le veía preocupada. Se giró para mirar a Luz. Esta miraba a Noelia con el ceño fruncido. Víctor dijo que tal vez no comió bien antes de salir de la casa.

—Está cansada —dijo Beatriz.

Todos estaban confundidos. Noelia era la mejor jugadora de baloncesto femenino. Casi siempre hacía ganar a su equipo. Alba alzó la mirada hacia el marcador. Ellas seguían en cero. El equipo contrario encestó varias veces.

—No está bien —repitió Abril y la miró—.

¿No lo notas?

had pushed her. She wiped her forehead with her arm and got back into the play. But they weren't scoring. The coach put his hands on his hips and yelled something that couldn't be heard. He wore shorts, a white cap, and a red shirt that said on the back: COACH LUCAS.

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“Noelia’s not okay,” said Abril.

Her eyes were fixed on the court, looking worried. She turned to look at Luz, who was frowning at Noelia. Víctor said maybe she hadn't eaten properly before leaving the house.

“She’s just tired,” said Beatriz.

Everyone was confused. Noelia was the best female basketball player. She almost always made her team win. Alba looked up at the scoreboard. They were still at zero. The other team had scored several times.

“She’s not okay,” Abril repeated, looking at her. “Can’t you see it?”

Volvió a mirar a su hermana. Ella corría y asentía a lo que le gritaba el entrenador, pero no estaba concentrada... parecía perdida, sin ánimos. Alba se levantó, nerviosa.

—Tenemos que sacarla de ahí.

—¿Qué pasa? —preguntó Víctor.

—Noelia no está bien. Parece enferma.

—No puedes interrumpir el partido —dijo Víctor.

Abril la tomó de la mano y la jaló en dirección hacia donde se encontraba Noelia.

—Vamos.

Mercedes preguntó qué pasaba con su nieta y le contestaron que pescó un virus y que no se sentía bien. Alba no estaba tan segura de que estuviera enferma.

El partido no duró demasiado porque el equipo de Noelia solo anotó dos veces. Se elevaron los aplausos y gritos de los que apoyaban al equipo contrario cuando todo terminó. Noelia estaba con la cabeza gacha, avergonzada, ignorando a sus compañeras.

She looked at her sister again. Noelia was running and nodding at whatever the coach shouted, but she didn't seem focused... she seemed lost, listless. Alba stood up, nervous.

“We have to get her out of there.”

“What's wrong?” asked Víctor.

“Noelia's not okay. She looks sick.”

“You can't interrupt the game,” said Víctor.

Abril took her hand and pulled her toward where Noelia was.

“Come on.”

Mercedes asked what was wrong with her granddaughter, and they told her she caught a virus and didn't feel well. Alba wasn't so sure she was sick.

The game didn't last long because Noelia's team only scored twice. Cheers and screams erupted from the opposing team's supporters when it ended. Noelia kept her head down, ashamed, ignoring her teammates.

Alba casi tropieza cuando intentó salir para alcanzarla. Abril iba a su lado y Luz se pegó detrás de las dos. Se acercaron lo suficiente para verla. Salió de la cancha, ignorando a su entrenador y las miró. Por unos segundos pareció sorprendida, pero después sus facciones se relajaron. Sudaba.

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—¿Noelia? —Alba avanzó hacia ella.

Escuchó a sus padres gritar a lo lejos, pero los ignoró.

—¿Qué te pasó? —le preguntó. Noelia se encogió de hombros.

—Creo que ya no quiero jugar baloncesto.

—¿De qué hablas?

—No es para mí.

Sus padres se acercaron para abrazarla, al igual que Mercedes. Alba seguía sorprendida por sus palabras.

—No importa que no hayas ganado, Noelia.

Lo importante es que te diviertas, ¿no?

Vamos a la casa, te prepararé unas arepas

Alba almost tripped as she tried to catch up to her. Abril was by her side, and Luz stayed close behind them. They got close enough to see her. She walked off the court, ignoring her coach, and looked at them. For a moment she seemed surprised, but then her features relaxed. She was sweating.

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“Noelia?” Alba stepped toward her. She heard her parents shouting in the distance but ignored them.

“What happened to you?” she asked. Noelia shrugged.

“I think I don’t want to play basketball anymore.”

“What do you mean?”

“It’s not for me.”

Her parents came closer to hug her, as did Mercedes. Alba was still surprised by her words.

“It doesn’t matter if you didn’t win, Noelia.

What matters is that you have fun, right?

Let’s go home, I’ll make you some delicious

deliciosas... —le decía Mercedes. Abril jaló Alba hacia un costado.

—¿Por qué dijo eso? —preguntó Alba.

—Es la casa —dijo Abril con seguridad.

Aquella confesión le pareció tan absurda que Alba no le contestó por unos minutos.

Miró a su hermana avanzar sin ganas, con la espalda gacha. Abril la miró, insistente, con sus ojos más verdes que marrones. Suspiró.

—Es una tontería. ¿Qué tiene que ver? Seguro tiene un problema.

—¿No viste su mirada?

Confusa, Alba miró de nuevo a Noelia. La vio abrazar a Virginia. No sonreía. Su expresión era muy extraña, como... si no estuviera. Se apretó la chaqueta contra el cuerpo porque de repente empezó a sentir mucho frío. Luz la rodeó del brazo, temblaba un poco.

—¿Qué pasa con su mirada? —murmuró Alba.

—Es vacía y distante. La oscuridad de la

arepas...” Mercedes said to her. Abril pulled Alba aside.

“Why did she say that?” Alba asked.

“It’s the house,” Abril said confidently.

That confession seemed so absurd to Alba that she didn’t answer for a few minutes.

She watched her sister walk away reluctantly, her back bent. Abril looked at her insistently, her eyes more green than brown. She sighed.

“It’s nonsense. What does it have to do with anything? Surely she has a problem.”

“Didn’t you see her look?”

Confused, Alba looked again at Noelia. She saw her hugging Virginia. She wasn’t smiling. Her expression was very strange, as if... she wasn’t really there. Alba hugged her jacket tight because she suddenly started feeling very cold. Luz linked her arm, trembling a little.

“What’s wrong with her look?” Alba murmured.

“It’s empty and distant. The darkness of the

casa también la persigue —dijo Abril.

Noelia no volvió a jugar. Un par de meses después intentó unirse a la policía nacional, pero sin éxito. Alba intentó sacarle información, pero sus intentos fueron en vano. Noelia no comprendía sus preguntas o se hacía la que no entendía.

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Se volvió distante, encerrada en su propio mundo. Los dejó a todos a un lado. Alba se preguntó en distintas oportunidades por qué ella. Por qué ella y no Abril o Luz. Pero esa oscuridad terminó por alcanzarlas a todas. A Alba en sus ataques, a Abril en sus escritos y a Luz en su falta de concentración en la vida. Era inevitable. La casa vivía dentro de todos.

Después de contarle su experiencia a Abril, esta anotó todo en su libreta. Muy poco entendía lo que hacía su prima y varias veces discutieron sobre esa obsesión de escribir sobre la familia y sobre la casa.

house is chasing her too,” Abril said.

Noelia never played again. A couple of months later, she tried to join the national police but failed. Alba tried to get information out of her, but her attempts were in vain. Noelia didn't understand her questions or pretended not to.

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She became distant, locked in her own world. She pushed everyone aside. Alba wondered on several occasions: why her? Why her and not Abril or Luz? But that darkness eventually reached them all. Alba through her anxiety attacks, Abril through her writings, and Luz through her lack of focus in life. It was inevitable. The house lived inside all of them.

After sharing her experience with Abril, she wrote everything down in her notebook. Alba understood very little of what her cousin was doing, and they often argued about that obsession with writing about the family and the house.

-Es nuestra historia, Alba- Le dijo Abril-.
¿Por qué no contarla?

“It’s our story, Alba,” Abril told her. “Why
not tell it?”

Third Chapter

3.1 Challenges faced in the process of the translation

As students of 2-2025 Final Project, as a community of learning, we came up with the following challenges and solutions that we have faced during this Final Project:

Challenges	Descriptions	Solutions
Limited Literature Review	Difficulty finding comprehensive studies on specific topics	Extensive database searches, including journals, theses, and conference papers; consult experts in the field
Defining Clear Research Questions	Ambiguity or broad scope making research unfocused	Narrow down topics; formulate specific, manageable research questions
Data Collection Constraints	Accessing appropriate translation texts or corpus	Use online databases, open-access sources, or create your own corpus
Methodological Complexity	Choosing suitable translation analysis techniques	Review existing methodologies; consult methodology guides or experts
Language Barriers	Challenges in analyzing texts in multiple languages	Collaborate with bilingual scholars; use translation tools judiciously
Formatting and Citation Issues	Inconsistent citation styles or formatting errors	Use reference management software; follow institutional guidelines
Time Management	Procrastination or workload overload	Develop a detailed timetable; set regular milestones
Critical Analysis Development	Difficulty in providing in-depth critique of translations	Practice comparative analysis; seek feedback from advisors
Ethical Considerations	Handling copyrighted texts or sensitive data	Obtain necessary permissions; anonymize data where required

3.2 Conclusions

As 2-2025 students of the Final Project of the Bachelor's Degree program in English with an emphasis in translation, we cooperatively came up with the following shared and common conclusions after a long process of deliberating on them in many instances as a community of learning about learning that have grown together as family with a common goal:

The process of translation is an intricate and dynamic endeavor that extends beyond simple linguistic substitution. It requires careful analysis of the source text's structure, style, and context, as well as a comprehensive understanding of cultural, historical, and literary aspects. Effective translation involves multiple stages, including comprehension, interpretation, and re-expression, ensuring that the original message, tone, and stylistic nuances are preserved. This multifaceted process demands both linguistic proficiency and cultural sensitivity to produce a final product that resonates authentically with the target audience while maintaining fidelity to the source material's intent.

Achieving the essence of a book in the target language goes far beyond literal word-for-word translation. It involves a nuanced grasp of the underlying themes, mood, and emotional subtleties embedded within the original text. A translator must interpret the author's intent and reflect the original voice, allowing the target readers to experience a similar emotional and intellectual response as the original audience. This requires a deep engagement with the source material, creative adaptability, and the ability to re-create cultural references, idiomatic expressions, and stylistic choices in a way that preserves the heart of the book without diluting or distorting its core message.

An essential aspect of faithful translation is the respect for and understanding of both the source and target cultures. This entails recognizing cultural specificities and making informed decisions about how to adapt or retain cultural elements to avoid misinterpretation or cultural insensitivity. A translator must act as a cultural mediator, balancing faithfulness to the original context with relevance and accessibility for the target readership. This cultural sensitivity not only enhances comprehension but also fosters intercultural dialogue, celebrating diversity and promoting mutual understanding through the translated work.

The application of various translation techniques plays a vital role in ensuring quality and readability. Strategies such as semantic equivalence, dynamic equivalence, adaptation, and localization are employed to address linguistic differences, idiomatic expressions, and cultural references. Thoughtful use of these techniques enables the translator to overcome obstacles posed by language gaps, ensuring that the translated text remains coherent, engaging, and faithful to the stylistic and thematic elements of the original. Effectively applying these methods enhances the overall naturalness and authenticity of the translation, making it more appealing and meaningful for the target audience.

Ultimately, being faithful to the author's original purpose and intent is paramount in the translation process. This involves understanding the author's objectives, the intended audience, and the contextual framework within which the work was created. A translator must make deliberate choices that reflect the author's voice and message, ensuring that the translated version remains true to the original's core values and aims. By doing so, the translation not only respects the integrity of the source work but also provides a coherent and impactful experience for readers in the target language, fostering genuine appreciation and understanding of the author's creative vision.

3.3 Recommendations

As 2-2025 Final Project students of the School of English, we came up with the following recommendations:

To optimize the translation process for maintaining cultural fidelity, translators should prioritize thorough cultural research before beginning their work. This includes understanding the socio-cultural context, idiomatic expressions, and cultural sensitivities inherent in both source and target languages. Implementing a systematic pre-translation phase that focuses on cultural nuances can significantly reduce misinterpretations and enhance the overall quality of the translated text. Furthermore, adopting a collaborative approach involving cultural experts or native speakers can provide valuable insights and ensure authenticity. Emphasizing iterative review and feedback throughout the process helps refine translations, making them more aligned with cultural expectations. Ultimately, a culturally conscious approach to translation fosters clearer communication and builds mutual respect among diverse audiences.

Regarding the implementation of translation techniques, practitioners should adopt a flexible, context-sensitive approach rather than relying solely on rigid, formulaic methods. Techniques such as localization, paraphrasing, and adaptive translation enable translators to better capture the intended tone and cultural relevance. The integration of modern translation technologies like computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools and machine learning algorithms can streamline workflows and improve consistency, especially in large-scale projects. However, technological tools should complement, not replace, human judgment, which remains crucial for ensuring cultural appropriateness. Continuous training in new translation techniques and technology literacy can bridge the gap between traditional skills and emerging tools.

Encouraging ongoing professional development ensures that translators stay updated with best practices, ultimately improving the effectiveness and cultural sensitivity of their work.

Given that translation is a vital means of communication among cultures within a globalized world, it is essential to foster cultural literacy among translators. This involves integrating intercultural competence training into translator education programs, emphasizing the importance of understanding cultural similarities and differences. By cultivating awareness of cultural taboos, values, and social norms, translators can produce texts that resonate more meaningfully with target audiences. Moreover, translators should view themselves as cultural mediators, facilitating dialogue rather than merely transferring words from one language to another. Developing cross-cultural empathy enhances the translator's ability to adapt content appropriately and reduces misunderstandings. Emphasizing the intercultural function of translation underscores its importance as a bridge for global understanding and cooperation.

To effectively implement translation techniques in a rapidly evolving technological landscape, professionals must embrace innovation without sacrificing quality. Incorporating artificial intelligence and machine translation can significantly accelerate project timelines and handle large volumes of content efficiently. Yet, these tools should be used judiciously, with human oversight to ensure cultural and contextual accuracy. Training programs should include instruction on working with advanced translation technologies, alongside traditional methods, to foster adaptability. Moreover, developing customized glossaries and translation memories can enhance consistency across projects and languages. Continuous evaluation of new tools and techniques is necessary to stay ahead of technological developments and to maintain high standards of accuracy, branding, and cultural appropriateness in global communications.

Finally, translation should be recognized not only as a linguistic activity but also as a means of fostering intercultural understanding and diplomacy. Translators play a pivotal role in promoting dialogue, peace, and mutual respect among diverse communities. To maximize this potential, educational and institutional frameworks should encourage translators to adopt strategies that highlight shared values and cultural commonalities. Promoting awareness of translation's social impact can inspire more ethically conscious practice and increase public trust in translated content. Additionally, cultural exchange programs and international collaborations should be supported to enhance cross-cultural communication skills. Ultimately, embracing translation as a tool for cultural diplomacy enriches global interactions and contributes to a more interconnected and empathetic world.

3.4 Glossary

1. Retraído (Shy). “A shy person is nervous and uncomfortable in the company of other people”. (Collins Dictionary, 2025)
2. Vislumbrar (Glimpse). “If you get a glimpse of someone or something, you see them very briefly and not very well”. (Collins Dictionary 2025)
3. Pesadumbre (Sorrow) “Sorrow is a feeling of deep sadness or regret”. (Collins Dictionary, 2025)
4. Crepúsculo (Twilight). “Twilight is the time just before night when the daylight has almost gone, but when it is not completely dark”. (Collins Dictionary 2025)
5. Halo (Halo). “A circle of light appearing to surround the sun or moon and resulting from refraction or reflection of light by ice particles in the atmosphere”. (Merriam-Webster, Dictionary 2025)
6. Desvencijado (Rickety). “Liable to fall or break down because weak; shaky”. (Collins Dictionary 2025)
7. Escudriñar (Scrutinize). “If you scrutinize something, you examine it very carefully, often to find out some information from it or about it”. (Collins Dictionary 2025)
8. Fervor (fervor): “Fervor for something is a very strong feeling for or belief in it”. (Collins Dictionary, 2025)
9. Reojo (Glance). “If you glance at something or someone, you look at them very quickly and then look away again immediately.”. (Collins Dictionary 2025)

10. Carcomido (Gnawed): “to consume; wear away; corrode”. (Collins Dictionary, 2025)
11. Distorsionar (distort): “If something you can see or hear is distorted or distorts, its appearance or sound is changed so that it seems unclear”. (Collins Dictionary, 2025)
12. Desdicha (unhappiness): “the quality of being sad or not satisfied”. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025)
13. Zozobra (Anxiety). “Anxiety is a feeling of nervousness or worry”. (Collins Dictionary 2025)
14. Fraternidad: “You can refer to people who have the same profession or the same interests as a particular fraternity”. (Collins Dictionary, 2025)
15. Implorar (Beg) “If you beg someone to do something, you ask them very anxiously or eagerly to do it”. (Collins Dictionary 2025)
16. Lozanía (vitality): “If you say that someone or something has vitality, you mean that they have great energy and liveliness”. (Collins Dictionary, 2025)
17. Ratificar (Ratify). “When national leaders or organizations ratify a treaty or written agreement, they make it official by giving their formal approval to it, usually by signing it or voting for it”. (Collins Dictionary 2025)
18. Vislumbrar (glimpse): “an occasion when you see something or someone for a very short time”. (Cambridge Dictionary,2025)
19. Prejuicio (Prejudice). “Prejudice is an unreasonable dislike of a particular group of people or things, or a preference for one group of people or things over another”. (Collins Dictionary 2025)

20. Umbral (threshold): “The threshold of a building or room is the floor in the doorway, or the doorway itself”. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025)
21. Brujería (witchcraft): “the activity of performing magic to help or harm other people”. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025)
22. Ensimismado (Engrossed). “If you are engrossed in something, it holds your attention completely”. (Collins Dictionary 2025)
23. Perturbación (disruption): “the action of preventing something, especially a system, process, or event, from continuing as usual or as expected”. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025)
24. Escrutinio (scrutiny): “the careful and detailed examination of something in order to get information about it”. (Cambridge Dictionary, 2025)
25. Apatía (Apathy). “You can use apathy to talk about someone's state of mind if you are criticizing them because they do not seem to be interested in or enthusiastic about anything”. (Collins Dictionary, 2025)

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Annex

Los ocupantes

Yoselin Goncalves



El Taller **Blanco**
EDICIONES



Yoselin Goncalves

Author



David, 28 de enero de 2025

Señora
Yoselin Goncalves
Autor de
"Los ocupantes"
E. S. M.

Respetados Señora Goncalves:

Por este medio le solicitamos la autorización para la traducción de la obra escrita por ustedes, titulada "Los ocupantes". Dicha traducción estará siendo realizada por los estudiantes:

- **José Acevedo (8-940-1707)**
- **Eileen Varela (8-983-526)**

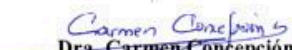
Esta traducción, será realizada con el objetivo de optar por el título de la **LICENCIATURA EN INGLÉS CON ÉNFASIS EN TRADUCCIÓN**. Los estudiantes serán asesorados por docentes de nuestra institución educativa.

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Sin más que agregar, le agradecemos su valiosa atención y contribución.

Atentamente,


Dra. Carmen Concepción
Directora Ejecutiva




Firma del autor



ANEXO 3
Declaración Jurada



UNIVERSIDAD LATINA DE PANAMÁ

DECLARACIÓN JURADA

Yo José Luis Acevedo Caballero con cédula de identidad personal número, 8-940-1707 estudiante graduando del programa/carrera de Licenciatura de Inglés con Énfasis en Traducción declaro bajo la gravedad del juramento que el material que aparece en este trabajo de graduación, en la opción: Proyecto Final (Tesis, proyecto final, pasantía, otro), es de mi producción intelectual, en razón de lo cual exoneró a la Universidad Latina de Panamá de cualquier responsabilidad relacionada con este aspecto.

Como constancia, firmo la presente declaración el día 24 del mes de Agosto del año 2025.

Firma del estudiante:

Cédula: 8-940-1707