



Institute of
Translation
and Interpreting

Name:

Date:

Course:

University:

Abstract

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Brief	4
3. Basic extralinguistic features of the ST	5
3.1. ST and TT Munday's translation specification sheet.....	5
4. Nord's TOSTA source text analysis: Macro-level	6
4.1. Sender/sender's intention.....	6
4.2. Receiver	10
4.3. Text function and Overall Strategy	13
5. Challenges encountered: Micro-level analysis	15
5.1. Pragmatic translation problems: Culture-bound terms	16
5.1.1. Terminology/historical terms	16
5.2. Intercultural translation problems: Text-type conventions	19
5.2.1. Letter format research and emotions.....	19
5.3. Interlingual translations problems.....	22
5.3.1. Explicitness (syntax).....	22
5.3.2. Adjective function (order).....	24
5.4. Text-specific translation problems	25
5.4.1. Metaphors (Personification) and Onomatopoeias.....	25
5.4.2. Humour	26
6. Conclusion	27
7. Bibliography	29
8. Appendix.....	35
8.1 Source Text: Selected Chapters (First Chapter, Abridged version of Chapters 2 and 3) from the novel The Third Wife of Faraday House by B.R. Myers	35
8.2 Target Text: La Tercera Esposa de la Casa Faraday por B.R. Myers.....	52
8.3 Table 1: An applied version of Munday's Translation Specification Sheet	70
8.4 Table 2: Mary Higgins Clark Award Criteria.....	71
8.5 Table 3: Other examples of researched terms	71
8.6 Table 4: Examples of different adjective order	72

Translation Commentary

1. Introduction

In this extended translation project, I will look at a translation brief for a historical fiction novel targeting modern audiences, *The Third Wife of Faraday House* (2024) by B.R. Myers. I will begin analysing the commission using Munday's translation specification sheet and proceed to explore the highlights of my observations with Nord's TOSTA model to understand some of the source text (ST) characteristics. The analysis will then provide a better idea of the initial assumptions I made, helping me establish a translation strategy. From here, I will assess the challenges to reflect upon how loyally I adhered to said approach, and which elements needed to be negotiated through translation procedures. To meet word count expectations, three chapters have been selected, the latter two an abridged version of the original texts. A final version of the target text (TT) as well as its original counterpart will be presented in the appendix at the end of the commentary.

2. Brief

Following B.R. Myers's success with *A Dreadful Splendor* (2022), a historical fiction novel set in Victorian England that has been well-received by English-speaking readers, William Morrow Paperbacks has another Gothic novel ready to be published by the author, *The Third Wife of Faraday House*. The book has all the staples Myers features in her previous book, brimming with romance, mystery and ghosts, but this time, it has shifted location to Halifax, Nova Scotia (Canada). The story and new setting have once again caught the interest of Canadian, UK and US English readers, and the aim is now to translate the novel for Latin-

American audiences acquainted with the genre, following the marketing that pitches the story as a ‘love letter to Gothic fiction’ (Goodreads, n.d.). The novel should, however, also attract new readers, particularly young women looking for stories resembling the popular Regency-period romances following the widespread success of shows such as *Bridgerton* (2020) and *My Lady Jane* (2024) (Screen Rant). The translation should replicate the same tone, emotion and style of the original, but any shortfalls in comprehension should be adapted to the target audience. The novel is to be distributed through the same medium as the English one, both in physical and eBook format, and has been passed to Umbriel for translation, a publisher known for its wide catalogue of translated historical fiction books. It is to be published and released on 15th June 2025.

3. Basic extralinguistic features of the ST

3.1. ST and TT Munday’s translation specification sheet

Munday (2016, p.316) explains that, in the initial stages of the translation process, it is best to analyse the ST. This step, described by Shei (2005) and referenced in Munday’s work, includes understanding the ‘translation purpose, method and readership’, which will in turn inform ‘the norms’ to follow in the TT. In order to visualise this information, he recommends producing a translation specification sheet. This table usually portrays the beginning stages of understanding the extralinguistic features, or the ST elements that will inform the TT constraints and overall strategy, as well as justify its final decision. The table I produced can be found in the appendix.

Based on the initial details of the specification sheet, which I retrieved mainly from the brief, it would seem most elements are ‘informative details’ (Munday, 2016, p.317) not that

different from ST to TT. The author is the same for both, as well as the motive and readership. However, this seemingly superficial comparison can give insight into the more ‘subjective details’. Initially, I could thoroughly research the author to understand how her debut might inform the latest one, and whether there are some similarities that could give insight into the strategy to follow. As for the target readership, both seasoned and new readers could perhaps anticipate specific linguistic traits when met with selling terms such as ‘Gothic’, ‘mystery’ and ‘romance’ in comparison to a contemporary rom com novel, for example, where they might expect other characteristics. I will look into how these features are deployed and how different they might be received in an in-depth analysis with Nord’s TOSTA model serving as a more detailed continuation.

4. Nord’s TOSTA source text analysis: Macro-level

4.1. Sender/sender’s intention

Nord (2005, p.53-54) suggests starting with finding as much information as possible about who the sender of a text is and examining their intention, or ‘which function the sender intends the text to fulfil’, as well as the desired effect on the receiver. By understanding the intention behind the text, the translator can begin analysing the ‘structuring of the text’ that best fits the needs of both its content and form. This text organisation will in turn inform the receiver or reader about the text type and therefore the function in which they should be using the text.

While searching the author’s page, ‘B.R. Myers’, I could see she has been publishing YA novels (books targeted towards young adults) for some time, in the genres of contemporary romance, thrillers and science fiction. This could perhaps have been inspired by the authors she mentions reading throughout her teenage years, such as Lois Duncan (known for her YA novels),

Ray Bradbury (science fiction), and Stephen King (horror). That she ventured towards adult readers through Gothic fiction could be an amalgamation of these genres, as seen not only on her website, where the author claims to be always in the lookout for ‘a good scare’, but also in the reviews of her previous novel, *A Dreadful Splendor* (2022), which can be found at the last pages of *The Third Wife of Faraday House* (2024). The key words highlighted throughout the blurbs praise it for being a ‘spooky gothic romance’ (Hawkins, 2022, cited in Myers, 2024, p.346) all the while excelling at being ‘thrilling, atmospheric and propulsive’ (Ryan, 2022, cited in Myers, 2024, p.346). These are also common elements in her latest novel, pitched as the perfect amalgamation of ‘mystery and spooky thrills’ and ‘friendship and romance’ (Myers, n.d.).

Indeed, as Invaluable (2019) describes in its article, Gothic fiction thrives in atmospheric elements that combine to create an eerie, dangerous ambience, often plagued by foretelling nightmares, hunted pasts and recurrent omens. It also mentions that stories can include intense romances often leading to tragedy, and that protagonists can take the form of anti-heroes, where their flaws and ‘monstrous elements’ are driven by passion, easily influenced and weighted by sorrow. Likewise, villains tend to be ‘autocratic, male characters’ likely to be in positions of power, with complex, deceiving facades that initiate with sympathetic dispositions so as to ‘fool the reader of their deceptive nature.’

Based on the synopsis and confirmed throughout the narrative, these elements are present in the story. Firstly, the protagonist Emeline Fitzpatrick is described as restless and naïve, reminded of her twenty-one years of age and the menacing way her time for finding a match is running out, as well as how, in people’s eyes, she is unable to detect when she is being used. Amidst unwanted marriage proposals, she desperately hopes to escape the stifling situation with

her lover, Frederick Fletcher, a lieutenant in the British Navy with whom she has had a secret but ambiguous relationship. Her ‘hopes end in scandal’ (Myers, n.d.), reducing her options to Captain Graves, a wealthy and mysterious privateer twice widowed living in his seaside manor. Faraday House seems to give all the signs of clearly being hunted, and to complicate things, when Emeline arrives there, his second wife is still suspiciously alive.

With her debut Gothic novel, Myers won the Simon & Schuster Mary Higgins Clark Award (criteria details in the appendix), part of the Edgar Awards honouring work written in the ‘Edgar Allan Poe mystery fashion’ (Mystery Writers, n.d.). This award was created in the name of Mary Higgins, a suspense author whose 51 novels have earned bestsellers positions. In order to be eligible for the award, the novel has to follow guidelines established by the author, which include not only classic staples of the genre, but also traits from the strong heroines Higgins is known for. Some of the specifications, which also seem to be incorporated into Myers’ second novel, state that the protagonist must be a ‘nice young woman’ whose life suddenly changes (in this case, alluding to how Emeline’s life will take an unexpected course in the haunted house) and how she, despite not looking for trouble, solves her own problem through courage, independence and intelligence, qualities set against the haunting backdrop of the previous wives’ mystery. From the reviews, it could be said that Myers contrasts these sombre tones with an unexpected hint of light-heartedness, as her first book was praised for having a ‘healthy doses of heart and humour’ (Ryan, 2022, cited in Myers, 2024, p.346), and in her second one, Emeline is described as ‘genuinely hilarious’ (green, 2024), which could perhaps engage new readers or add an unexpected twist to the seasoned readers’ expectations.

Being born and raised in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and ‘member of the Writer’s Federation of Nova Scotia’ (Myers, n.d.) allows the author to utilise her own context to add another layer of novelty to the already well-established genre, modifying the setting towards what could be a refreshing environment to experiment on. Perhaps already aware of the steady competition in the current historical fiction department, where England is the usual setting for these stories (Connor, 2022), Myers uses a lesser-known location that can tick all the main boxes for Gothic fiction whilst providing change. To start with, as explained in Murray’s article (2024), forests account for 79% of Nova Scotia’s landscape. This is likely used in the author’s favour to play along the gothic staples that contribute to ‘the fear and uneasiness’ (Invaluable, 2019). Likewise, Murray points out how, at earlier times, Nova Scotia’s only highway was the sea, roads’ accessibility being directly dependent on the tides. Since most of the story takes place in an isolated land, this adds to the foreboding and feeling of entrapment.

In terms of cultural commentary, Myers includes relevant societal issues of the time, such as racism and segregation, elements of Gothic fiction that make it, according to Gray’s article, ‘Gothic roots and Conventions’, a ‘reactionary genre’ that brings to the surface ‘repressed societal fears’. As a brief mention of this historical context, immigrant settlers from France mostly established in Acadia, Nova Scotia, from where they came to be known as Acadians (Britannica, 2024). However, a disagreement between boundaries became a scenario for armed conflicts, a ‘power battle between the French and British’. In 1749, Halifax became a British military town and naval base, a core element that will be seen in the form of Emeline’s first love, Lieutenant Frederick Fletcher of the British Navy. The Acadian Expulsion occurred in 1755, right after The Seven Years War between France and Britain, in which around ‘6,000 Acadians were ‘dispersed [...] on ships to various American colonies’. This lingering tension will be seen

throughout the very first chapters in the form of derogatory dialogue, in which Emeline is discouraged by her guardian Mrs Shackleton to be seen together with Jane Finney, rumoured to be acquainted with or blood related to the Acadians. Reverend Pellerine, another important character in the novel and Emeline's subsequent love interest, is also Acadian. After the war, Halifax became an 'important merchant hub and a base for British privateering captains', settling in 1816 as 'the major British naval station in North America' (MacGuigan, 2016), which will also play a role in understanding Captain Graves, Emeline's imminent marriage offer and owner of Faraday House.

4.2. Receiver

Nord (1997, p.80) warns that translating work targeted towards communities or cultures where the author is unknown could present 'serious problems'. However, apart from the author's website, it seems Myers does not have an overtly defined community of English-speaking followers when compared to books that get more exposure through platforms such as TikTok and Instagram. An example of this is *It Ends with Us* (Hoover, 2016), *Fourth Wing* (Yarros, 2023) or *Powerless* (Roberts, 2023) where book hauls, interviews, reading challenges, vlogs and movie adaptations result in a wider reach and a more active fanbase (Tyralla, 2024). So far, Myers seems to have a rather small audience with, as of 26 October 2024, 437 followers on Goodreads, 714 ratings and 264 reviews for *The Third Wife of Faraday House* (2024), while *A Dreadful Splendor* (2022) has 6,600 ratings and 1,166 reviews. These numbers could suggest TT audiences may not be more knowledgeable than ST ones, and a similar gap is to be expected.

Nord (1997, p.80) also argues literary texts are usually addressed to 'receivers who have specific expectations conditioned by their literary experience' or what she calls 'literary

competence'. As McGuire (2019) writes in her article, Gothic fiction is a genre that remains 'conservative' throughout time in that there are general rules and expectations. For the seasoned reader used to Gothic novels, there is a chance that classics like *Rebecca* (Du Maurier, 1938), *Jane Eyre* or *Wuthering Heights* (Brontë, 1847) come to mind as the main blueprints to follow, comparing their stylistic features with this book. However, it is important to remember Myer's novel was published in 2024, and therefore might be imitating a style that nonetheless could be adapted differently nowadays. Readers familiar with the genre will most likely understand that the language and form are not to be exact copies of the time. Instead, they would expect to be immersed in elements such as the 'mood' the novel offers and the way horror 'modifies and accents' the story. (McGuire, 2019).

Adding the romantic and comedic elements could be a selling point to capture an even wider audience not familiar with the genre. *Pride and Prejudice* (2005) has regained attention after 17 years thanks to social media, and newer series have successfully emerged to meet the demand for these types of shows. Such is the case for *Bridgerton* (2020), which blends a mixture of comedy, heart-aching romance and glittering high society that appeals to millions of spectators (Morrison, 2022). As Booth (2021) explains, anticipating and waiting for upcoming seasons has led to viewers craving a similar experience through other forms of content, namely books. *The Third Wife of Faraday House* seems to understand this, marketing itself on the author's website as a Regency-era book from the outset despite not being set in England, which would most likely capture the reader's attention as a selling point and meet their assumptions with something unexpected.

Other titles in recent years have also managed to play with the idea of setting a story outside of England, such as *Mexican Gothic* (García, 2020) and *The Hacienda* (Cañas, 2022), which take place in a historical Mexico, or *The Haunting of Las Lágrimas* (Cleese, 2022) in Argentina. These have allowed many readers to see their own culture and historical context be the scenario for gothic elements to play in (Donnella, 2020). It seems to no longer be an experience limited to a particular space and time, but to be a universal collective experience across cultures. As such, readers have more options and are allowed the freedom to draw ‘on individual culture-specific experience’ acquired from literary texts (Nord, 1997, p.84). Myers could be pulling in Latin-American readers who have read both the classic books as well as the versions with their own culture represented in them, making them well-equipped and curious for yet another setting to discover.

As discussed above, Nord (1997, p.82) explains that receivers interpret certain markers as literary ‘in connection with their own culture specific expectations’, which can also be activated by ‘extra-textual signals’. This means that by looking at external elements such as the book design, for example, ‘literary markers’ can be identified, which may hint at the intended function. When looking at the book cover, readers automatically know it is a novel, as it is explicitly stated. The title seems to pay homage not only to the solid staple of Gothic stories relying on deceased wives (*The Third Wife*), but also to the manor itself (of *Faraday House*) where most of the plot takes place. This is supported by the image of the woman inside the house, encompassing the classic enclosed feeling of a haunted house. Already, the reader could identify what type of book they are getting into. The delicate colours and elegant font design, coupled with the candelabra and pianoforte playing a faithful reference to the wealth and grandeur of the Regency time (Random bits of fascination, 2019), could also catch the eye of a wider, mostly

feminine audience. Likewise, additional flourishes and designs such as sparkles, leaves and birds clash with the tagline ‘Til Death Do Us Part...’, a widely known line often associated with marriage, which continues to reinforce the mystery element while perhaps communicating that, despite the romance and humour behind it, darkness lies ahead.

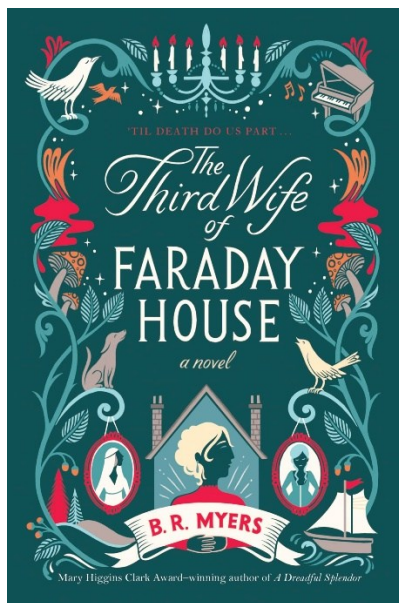


Figure 1: Book cover of *The Third Wife of Faraday House*

4.3. Text function and Overall Strategy

Nord (1997, p.89) explains that, when considering text function and effect, and the delicate balance between the ST and TT equivalence, additional demands need to be met when it comes to literary translations. She states the TT should act as an independent piece, sufficiently able to stand on its own, all the while reproducing the ‘literary structure of the original’ as a means to convey its ‘genre, artistic value and linguistic beauty’ to TT readers, allowing them to see why the original piece of work is ‘worth translating’. As the brief instructs to preserve the

emotions and purpose of the original, the main text function could be classified as an expressive one. The author's intention is to portray a mysterious, amusing and romantic amalgamation of a novel, heavily reliant on ambience and the protagonist's feelings, while the target reader will expect to experience the same effect as a ST reader and hopefully enjoy the story the same way.

Since creating a similar effect suggests having the same function as the original, I will need to apply an equifunctional instrumental translation in order to reach a comparable expressive level. Despite the world corresponding to a 'source-culture reality' (Nord, 1997, p.87) by taking place in 1816 Halifax, the story is not an educational history book, nor was it targeted towards a specific geographical readership as seen by its multiple publishing houses. Instead, it could be said that its historical component is used to 'motivate personal insights about reality' (Nord, 1997, p.80). Except for perhaps some Canadian readers who might be familiar with the historical context of Halifax in the nineteenth century, it is unlikely even English-speaking readers would be acquainted with the period, as it would be the case for Latin-American audiences. As Nord (1997, p.87-90) explains when discussing cultural distance, ST and TT readers could understand the world of the text 'at an equal distance from both the source and the target cultures' by 'coordinating the text with their world knowledge', therefore finding themselves 'at more or less the same distance from the text world.' If anything, subjects such as societal expectations, class difference, hierarchical order, discrimination, fear and romance are universally known topics experienced throughout history and, as mentioned before, Gothic fiction is a well-established and international genre.

The fact that the protagonist is a young woman plays a role in making the story more accessible, as it is narrated in the first person, calling for a more personal experience. The goal

will involve replicating the feelings of the original which, as a girl facing a haunted house and finding love and intrigue within, should not require a lot of adaptability in terms of foreignness. This does not mean, however, that the way it is narrated should be dismissed, as it must be rendered as faithfully as possible to give a sense of the period, but it should also preserve the ST quality of being approachable to the reader in its writing style. Likewise, Nord (1997, p.85) suggests that the ST's 'textual features' should be interpreted and supported alongside secondary sources, which will be indispensable for using the appropriate terminology. In other words, the TT should stand on its own and 'be received as being literary within the context of the target literature'. (Nord, 1997, p.90).

5. Challenges encountered: Micro-level analysis

Once the translation strategy is underway, challenges arise. Nord (1997, p.58) argues that, in a functional process, there should be a strategic order to these problems, starting foremost with the 'pragmatic level', in which the function of the text (in this case, instrumental) and its text type will determine which elements are to be modified or preserved, according to the communicative means. These could then lead to challenges based on 'differences in language system' and, in more unconventional literary cases, to decisions taken based on 'the translator's personal preferences', always 'respecting the function of the translation'. Nord categorizes these into sections, and I will use some of them to identify challenges below:

5.1. Pragmatic translation problems: Culture-bound terms

5.1.1. Terminology/historical terms

Historical fiction writers tend to carry out a considerable amount of research (Tod, 2024), and it was of essential priority to convey a similar sense of truthfulness and authenticity in the translation. The debate on how much of the vocabulary of the period to include, or what Hughes (2019) names in her article ‘Ancient or Modern? Language in Historical Fiction’ ‘anachronism in language’ is therefore not only experienced by the author, but also the translator. In some instances, the research on my part required finding specific terms for the intricate dress Emeline wears for a ball, such as the ‘silk gauze’ it is made of, ‘trimmed’ with ‘ribbon rosettes’ (page 41), while her hairstyle curled into ‘tight ringlets’ parted in the middle (page 36). Websites such as *Jane Austen.co.uk* helped me find relatively close equivalents for fashion, household items and social terms related to the Regency era in England, a period which was as influential in Halifax despite its geographical distance (Johnson, 2020). Equally helpful were websites specialising in periods after the Regency times, such as *La Casa Victoriana* which, despite being more focused on the Victorian era, allowed me to choose from a broader selection of alternatives that were still relevant to apply. More examples of researched terminology can be found in the appendix.

In other instances, the challenge was in finding the most appropriate term given the circumstances or purpose in the novel. For instance, for the word ‘maid’ (page 36), I noticed ‘sirvienta’ was the more straightforward and common equivalent. However, ‘servant’ sounds harsh coming from Emeline, who not only resents putting herself above anyone despite society dictating otherwise, but also has an affinity with her childhood maid Ada, which makes the term’s ‘expressive meaning’ (Baker, 2018, p.12) even more irrelevant. Instead, I decided to go

with ‘criada’, which still refers to a paid employee, but within the context I thought it could convey a ‘softer’ connotation that reflects the more long-term caring quality of the role and the almost motherly figure she represents. Additionally, this alternative carries a more ‘dated’ usage (Reserva de palabras, n.d.), appropriate for the time without falling into more modern terms that strive to deviate from the subordinate connotation (Castro and Galeana, 2019), e.g. ‘empleada doméstica’ (housekeeper).

Likewise, lines such as ‘gained an audience’ (page 41) or to ‘run a household for Frederick’ (page 37) were important to portray as accurately as possible, especially since they did not have a literal translation. These require some level of adjustments in order to favour the ‘pragmatic sense’ of the ‘higher unit’ (Samuelsson, 2016, p.101) The closest equivalent I could craft for Emeline when talking about ‘gaining an audience’ to speak with Captain Graves was ‘conseguir una reunión privada’, in which the ‘audience’ part that would otherwise not have had the same meaning if translated literally is paraphrased into ‘private reunion’ to demonstrate the more intimate quality of the interaction. As for ‘running the household’, the verb ‘running’ is shifted to ‘administer’ (‘administrar el hogar’), to stress the firm regulations and expected responsibilities of the lady of a household. However, leaving ‘for Frederick’ identical in the TT (e.g., ‘para Frederick’) could give the impression of being too subservient, undermined and, most importantly, too literal, so instead I decided to slightly alter it to ‘with Frederick’ (con Frederick).

One of the biggest challenges was differentiating the terms used to name buildings in the novel, as these seem to be closely related. ‘Mansion’ is used as a synonym to describe the admiral’s ‘British style’ manor, (page 41), while the Faraday estate, a term which is also within the title of the novel, is referred to as ‘House’. Many of these properties clearly reflected the

English influence of the Regency times, and were often own by ‘notable figures’ (Which Museum, n.d.). Upon searching websites in Spanish discussing these historical houses, there are several options: ‘mansión’ is a straightforward way to translate ‘mansion’, which I decided to use as it easily reflects the proportions and importance of the admiral’s house. ‘Manor’ is sometimes translated as ‘casa señorial’, which I also applied not only for variety purposes, but also because both terms stress the grandeur and rural landscapes of the properties, which in turn reflected on the wealth of the owner (Corchado, 2022), making them ideal for the opulent and vast premises of upper-class Halifax. Some websites used similar terms, such as ‘finca’ (estate) and ‘casas solariegas’ (manor house) (Visit Britain, n.d.). In other cases, they leave the name in English, e.g. ‘Chatsworth House’ while proceeding to describe it with one of these Spanish equivalents once it was mentioned again.

By following that last example, leaving ‘Faraday House’ in English could have been an option, but I purposefully did not translate it until the very end in order to decide how to best describe it based on the overall translation decisions. Upon inspecting my work once again, the only terms I did not translate were names of people and places, to preserve the authenticity of the setting and time. On the other hand, as previously discussed, maintaining accuracy also means taking the time to translate the rest as much as possible, be it historical attire, environment descriptions or hierarchy terms within society. As seen above, there are plenty of terms available, but I figured ‘House’ was not a particular case needing paraphrasing or resorting to elaborate synonyms to translate it. I also concluded that characters referring to a house with its English counterpart would be slightly jarring considering how common the noun is and that, within the translated story, they are speaking in Spanish. Therefore, I decided to do a partial translation: I simply translated ‘House’ to ‘Casa’, for a rather straightforward option. I feel going for a literal

procedure in this case respects not only the ST, as ‘Faraday’ is still left as it is, adding to the ‘foreignization’ (Samuelsson, 2016, p.104) and therefore authenticity of the novel, but the familiarity in the word ‘House’ leaves it open to interpretation. It will be known to the gothic reader as a typical noun to include in titles, the estates being haunted characters themselves (Mayquist, 2022), but the term is also general enough to not give away whether the house is homely or sinister to the unassuming reader unacquainted with the genre until they immerse in the story, adding to its mysterious appeal.

5.2. Intercultural translation problems: Text-type conventions

5.2.1. Letter format research and emotions

Letter format is a key component in the beginning stages of the story, where Emeline continuously writes to Frederick in a futile attempt to get news from him. As Dr Holloway (n.d.) informs, a love letter was a ‘serious matter’, ‘valuable because of what intimate sentiments it contained’. In fiction, their importance is equally preserved: websites such as Jane Austen Literacy Foundation (2024) inform how classics like *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) include letters, used as literary devices that depict ‘pivotal moments in the plot’ and illustrate how characters feel. Contemporary letters have their own set of formatting and conventions, but in this case the historical element is at play to provide an additional challenge. According to *Her Reputation for Accomplishments* (2015), a website specialising in the Regency era, despite there being many ways on letter etiquette at the time, writing was considered a private and individual affair, and many variations were possible. This offered me some leeway into replicating Emeline’s penmanship based on the ST’s tone. Dr. Holloway continues explaining how a young woman writing to a man was deemed improper unless they were engaged or married, and it is precisely

this desperate move what I wanted to preserve throughout the multiple letters, as Emeline clearly sends them with illicit urgency.

There were plenty of terms and lines showing Emeline's passion and consequent distress for Frederick's absence. It was important for me to preserve the intensity contained within words such as 'solace', 'yearn' and the 'easing of a suffering heart' (page 34), as these distinctively reflect the 'vocabulary of the Gothic' mentioned in Harris article (2019). Here, he explains how words depicting 'fear', 'sorrow', 'haste', and 'terror' build up the heroine's predicament. This became a challenge on its own, especially for longer strings of words, as the fine line between sounding too close to the ST to the point of reading unnatural clashed with the also important factor of maintaining this heightened emotional sense, which should feel distant from contemporary writing by reflecting the period while also remaining consistent with the darker elements of the genre. This is precisely what Baker (2018, p.62) remarks as one of the biggest difficulties in translation: the tension between 'what is typical and what is accurate'.

As an example, Emeline's anxiety at how memories affect her is described in her letters as a 'stirring of every fiber of her being' (page 35). I needed a close representation to the 'undoing' or 'loss' of oneself, and looking to adapt a similar overwhelming emotion, I decided to proceed with 'avalancha de emociones' (onrush of emotions), which is exclusively used to portray a psychological state (Cuartodpereyra, n.d.). This is what Samuelsson (2016, p.102) calls a 'trope change' under the semantic strategies, in which the general 'figurativeness' is preserved, but the 'realization of this feature is different'. Another instance is line 38, in which Emeline laments how the rain on the window 'matches' her silent weeping. By changing the verb 'match' to 'reflect' ('reflejo'), there is a functional play of words of not only comparing, but also using

the mirror-like quality of the window in a metaphorical sense, building upon the desolate entrapment while remaining close to the ST.

Emeline also resorts to lines containing the word ‘how’ (e.g. ‘how much I yearn for your attention, page 34; ‘How cruel [...]’, page 35) as a tool to express her longing or excitement for what she does not have. Dr Holloway (n.d.) remarks that women typically wrote letters with ‘modesty’ and reserve’. There is one line, however, that despite using this demure pattern, deviates slightly from the full devotion and charm towards Frederick, namely: ‘How eager I am to see if you speak the truth.’ (page 34). Behind these words are what I believe to be Emeline’s doubts about how sincere her lover is about his promises. The sentence is devoid of exclamation marks, which are usually present to convey joy and excitement in such instances (University of Sussex, n.d.), and the conditional ‘if’ is charged with what I assumed to be a barbed doubt, using sarcasm or irony to send a warning. I decided to replicate this in Spanish by reformulating the structure in a way that could still deliver the incredulity within, namely by doing a ‘clause structure change’ (Samuelsson, 2016, p.94). I used two consecutive verbs in Spanish, in which the ‘eagerness’ is directly contained within the verb ‘wish’: ‘Cuánto *ansío ver*’ (How I *wish to see*) instead of the adjective + linking verb + infinitive form (How *eager I am to see*) English tends to favour for expressing desires or emotions (Grammaring, n.d.). Likewise, the conditional ‘if’ (‘*si lo que dices es verdad*’) is maintained, as this is a key point in showing Emeline’s true feelings.

5.3. Interlingual translations problems

5.3.1. Explicitness (syntax)

In some instances, due to the possible lack of clarity, it was necessary to resort to what Samuelsson (2016, p.105) calls an ‘explicitness change’ by applying gender and number to nouns or pronouns that were otherwise neutral in the ST. Despite emerging rules allowing for more flexible patterns in gender denotation (Arruti, 2018), this is a historical novel that has conventions of the time, and as such, gender-neutral options were not necessarily a possibility. An example of this is page 40, in which Mrs Shackleton references her ‘cousin’. No name was given, but because they are mentioned as the source from which information about Captain Graves was acquired, I assumed she referred to a woman, adding the declination to ‘prima’ (cousin) that would render it feminine. Historically, gossip was a way to pass information, acting as a powerful tool women used as leverage to stay afloat in a world that did not encourage their curiosity (Random Bits of Fascination, 2021). Therefore, despite not having the absolute truth as to the gender, in order to comply with what would have been more realistic at the time, and due to the fact that the cousin is not relevant to the story nor do they appear or are mentioned a second time, I decided to remain consistent with this choice for other scenarios as well. I make the assumption to assign the masculine form to ‘future partner’ (‘futuro compañero’) in page 42 when referring to young women searching for suitors, as well as translating ‘suitable prospects, (page 39)’ in its feminine form (‘buenas candidatas’) when talk of possible partners for Captain Graves is made, as, once again, the book clearly follows a line of conventions when it comes to norms of the time.

When Emeline says, ‘two already have’ (page 39), the sentence is implicit but clear enough to understand that two already ‘have died’. In Spanish, however, there seems to be no way of saying it without explicitly mentioning the verb ‘to die’, e.g. ‘dos ya *murieron*’ since ‘dos ya han’ or ‘las dos ya han’, literal translations of the English counterpart, would not make sense on their own, rendering them incomplete. Clarification is needed again when Emeline asks disappointedly whether Mrs Shackleton is coming with her to the ball (page 39), ‘You’re coming?’ could work for either enquiring exclusively for Mrs Shackleton or whether Judge Shackleton was joining as well, but in Spanish the verb declination would be affected by the number of people, and a decision needed to be made. It is only by continuing reading that it is confirmed the two of them will go, as it was expected for respected members of society to make public appearances together (Random Bits of Fascination, 2021) and, as a person of authority, the judge is no exception.

On page 46, the ST allows for a smooth transition in Emeline’s narrative where, upon having danced with Joseph and returning to Mrs Shackleton, she internally remarks that ‘Her face was an interesting shade of red.’ Here, the opposite occurs: the possessive pronoun (her) does not have a gender in Spanish ‘su rostro’ (literally ‘their face’), which could suggest either Joseph was the one having a red face (since it was previously mentioned that he had a penchant for blushing and having a shy nature) or Mrs Shackleton, in her fury. To avoid further confusion, I made an emphasis that it is ‘her’ face (‘El rostro de *ella* estaba pintado de un interesante tono rojizo.’), which might be slightly overstated but allows for a smoother reading afterwards.

5.3.2. Adjective function (order)

The novel particularly relies on the use of adjectives, meant to enrich the descriptive scenes that dictate the Gothic. As Harris (2019) asserts, these can control ‘how we think of the nouns they modify’ in order to ‘amplify’ feelings or place an ‘increased emphasis or sense of importance’. While in English adjectives are typically added before the noun, in Spanish they can be placed differently depending on the intention (Lingolia, n.d.). Occasionally, the novel displays large passages of detailed description, such as page 42, where the author lists a variety of adjectives to describe the evening: there is a ‘continuous drizzle’ a ‘wet sheen’, and a ‘pasty gray sky’ that made Emeline wish her ‘thin pink cloak’ was warmer. Spanish adjectives usually go right after the noun, but in order to conjure some of the ambience and more sombre aesthetics, I attempted to do a mix of both the traditional noun-adjective order as well as the epithet form or qualifying adjective order, in which adjectives purposefully go before the noun in order to emphasise the quality of subject in question (Correas, 2024). My choices were mostly out of what felt right and balanced to the stylistic choices, as well as taking into account the overall cohesion of the paragraphs as whole entities. As such, while for the previous instance in page 42 I resorted to the traditional noun-adjective order believing it fits the narrative (e.g. ‘*llovizna continua*’ ‘*lustre frío y húmedo*’ ‘*cielo gris claro*’ ‘*mi capa rosa*’, for page 54 I thought variety would do justice to the author’s descriptive choices. I felt compelled to mix up the order to avoid sounding too repetitive, all the while preserving the dream-like descriptions of Bermuda in Emeline’s head. Some of these choices are illustrated in the appendix.

5.4. Text-specific translation problems

5.4.1. Metaphors (Personification) and Onomatopoeias

In some instances, inanimate objects, feelings or scenes are given human qualities or life-like descriptions, playing a role in ensuring the narrator gets a vivid imagery of the surroundings. For example, when describing how the fog ‘claimed its victory’ by ‘eating everything that resembled land’ (page 47), the author continues imbuing into the story the descriptive features of Gothic literature, ‘making the ordinary disturbingly unfamiliar’ (eNotes, n.d.). I decided to play around with these personifications by either adapting them to Spanish conventions or leaving them purposefully literal. Thus, for the previous example (‘claiming victory’), there is a similar idiom in Spanish, namely ‘cantó victoria’ (sang its victory), which I thought was an appropriate ‘cultural filtering’ (Samuelsson, 2016, p.104) that could render the same meaning in a natural adaptation. However, I decided to leave how the fog was ‘eating everything’ unchanged (‘comiéndose todo’), serving as a voracious descriptor that under this specific setting would not be out of place in the narrative. I also preserved the format describing how the night was ‘opening her mouth’, or how the trees seemed to ‘lean in’ (page 48), as I deemed these imperative to adding to the sinister, sentient intention of the environment against the protagonist.

Some of these ambience effects can also be seen in the onomatopoeias the author relies on to describe movements meant to continue the ‘sense of fear and tension’ (Villines, 2017). As an example, Emeline resorts to saying ‘There was a *thump*’ (page 47) to describe the carriage careening onwards, or that she fell with a *thud* (48), emphasising them in italics. These would have been harder to translate in Spanish. In fact, as Marcos (n.d.) warns in his article about the usage of onomatopoeias within a Spanish narrative, they do not seem to work well with first-

person narration and are usually discouraged unless the intention is a more colloquial context. Instead, he recommends their usage in dialogue form, where the term can be added to give a sense of the character's speech. If I wanted to incorporate the onomatopoeia into Emeline's narrative, I would perhaps have needed to formulate it as 'el carruaje hizo *pum*' (the carriage did a *thump*), which I felt did not sound ominous or increased the tension, but rather undermined it to a mostly child-like narrative at a time where more suspense was needed. Likewise, I could have added the onomatopoeia by itself '*pum*' without context, but this would have lost the valuable descriptive information given in the ST. Instead, to continue the flow of the text, using Samuelsson's (2016, p.106) 'information change' by reformulating the onomatopoeia to a more natural-sounding phrase: 'sonó un golpe' (literally 'a thump sounded') serves to preserve the mystery, as the ambiguity will propel the reader to seek the source and outcome of said sound's effect. The same method works for the *thud* sound when Emeline falls: Omitting the onomatopoeia gets compensated by the description of how she fell (e.g. 'con un golpe sordo', which implicitly describes the subdued, muffled quality of the impact (RAE, n.d.).

5.4.2. Humour

In contrast or as a response to the meticulous conventions of the Regency era, literature offered the perfect opportunity for commentary, with Jane Austen, for example, resorting to satire and a 'dry, wicked sense of humour' to critique the 'laws and conventions' of the time (Jane Austen's House, n.d.). Despite being targeted at an eighteenth-century audience, these jabs are still relevant to this day, being appraised and discussed by modern readers as explained by Overstreet (2022), which showcases several examples of clever ways in which Austen included irony in her work. The novel seems to integrate a similar sense of humour, as comical moments

are narrated within Emeline's train of thought, mostly through the delivery of sarcastic lines using metaphors and imagery. When Mrs Shackleton runs upstairs, she is described as an 'unrelentless hammer', and how the way she opens the door 'almost gets it unhinged' (page 37). Her eyes cloud over as 'a warning before the storm' (page 39); the way she constantly stands next to Emeline is as rigid as a 'sentry' (43), and her group of gossiping friends are seen as 'judgmental cohorts' (43). In a social encounter, Emeline's 'I appreciate his bravery' (44) salutes Joseph's attempt at initiating conversation with Mrs Shackleton, while on a more serious instance, believing herself to be in danger of dying from the cold, Emeline laments how Mrs Shackleton would surely chastise her for not dying attractively, proceeding to lie down, cross her arms and close her eyes. I decided to keep these as literal as possible to preserve the tone, as the casualness in them works well in juxtaposition with the seriousness or conventions of the situations. Even if translating into Spanish tends to be lengthier (Lexic Language Solutions, n.d.) and the TT did end up longer by a few additional words, I attempted to maintain the clipped irony and overall humorous essence of the remarks. One instance where I slightly deviate from the original is the line 'So much for an open casket' (page 49). Here, striving to find an equivalent, I changed the idiom 'so much so for' to a longer paraphrase: 'y ahí se va mi esperanza de' (there goes my hope for) in which I also add the word 'hope' to make it clear that Emeline still jokes amidst a tense situation, as she sarcastically wishes to 'lie' beautifully in her casket.

6. Conclusion

As seen in this essay, *The Third Wife of Faraday House* offered a scenario to apply a translation methodology into a literary text. Upon inspecting the brief's motives, I started with Munday's specification sheet, which offered some insight into understanding the author's

previous work and the beginning stages for moving deeper into research under Nords's TOSTA analysis. Here, I took into consideration factors that could determine my approach, especially how the Gothic genre and its elements, as well as the audience receiving them, can add additional aspects to consider within the context of translating a novel. After determining the functional framework on which the text operates, I decided to proceed with an equifunctional instrumental strategy, which allowed me to approach the TT as a whole entity while aiming for a close representation of the ST. However, as is expected when it comes to creative writing, challenges while maintaining this goal emerged. A discussion of these difficulties allowed me to keep in mind the interconnected relationship between the brief, the ST analysis and the functional strategy, which guided me in attempting to choose the appropriate procedures to overcome them. Looking at the final product, the aim of applying theory to a dynamic historical fiction text is hopefully achieved. It would be interesting to see how a more 'anglicised' version of the text could have impacted the text were the brief's instructions to be different. *The Silent Companions* (Purcell, 2017), for example, a Gothic novel set in the nineteenth century, preserves untranslated terms such as 'shock', 'smog' and 'The Bridge' within the Spanish version. Perhaps being categorised as horror plays a role in its translation decisions, and further exploration of the subgenres within historical fiction could throw light into different strategies. Exploring techniques that cater to various levels of immersion or distance within historical fiction novels could in turn illustrate how vast and multilayered the genre is, acknowledging the challenges literary translation faces when having the responsibility of ensuring readers embark on a successful journey back in time.

7. Bibliography

References

Chesterman, A. (2016) *Memes of Translation: The spread of ideas in translation theory*. Revised edition. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Munday, J. (2016) *Introducing Translation Studies: Theories and Applications*. 4th edition. Oxon; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Nord, C. (1997) 'A Functional Typology of Translations', in A. Trosborg (ed) *Text Typology and Translation*. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Nord, C. (2005) *Text analysis in translation: Theory, methodology, and didactic application of a model for translation-oriented text analysis*. 2nd edition. Amsterdam: Rodopi.

Nord, C. (1997) *Translating as a purposeful activity: Functionalist approaches explained*. Reprint, Abingdon: Routledge, 2014.

Source Text

Myers, B.R. (2024) *The Third Wife of Faraday House*. New York: William Morrow Paperbacks

Referenced novels

Austen, J. (1813) *Pride and Prejudice*. New York: Modern Library

Cañas, I. (2022) *The Hacienda*. New York: Berkley

Cleese, W.M. (2022) *The Haunting of Las Lágrimas*. London: Titan Books

García, S. (2020) *Mexican Gothic*. New York: Del Rey

Myers, B.R. (2022) *A Dreadful Splendor*. New York: William Morrow Paperbacks

Purcell, L. (2017) *The Silent Companions*. London: Penguin Books

Rebecca, Y. (2023) *Fourth Wing*. San Francisco: Entangled: Red Tower Books

Roberts, L. (2023) *Powerless*. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers

Referenced TV shows and movies

Bridgerton (2020) Directed by Julie Anne Robinson. Available at: Netflix. (Accessed 20 November 2024).

It Ends with Us (2024) Directed by Justin Baldoni. Available at: Netflix. (Accessed 9 February 2025).

My Lady Jane (2024) Directed by Jamie Babbit and Stefan Schwartz. Available at: Amazon Prime Video. (Accessed 25 November 2024).

Websites and articles

Arruti, L. (2018) 'Cómo utilizar un lenguaje neutro en tus textos', *Laumedia*, 12 December. Available at: <https://laumedia.es/como-utilizar-un-lenguaje-neutro-en-tus-textos/> (Accessed 20 January 2025).

Booth, J. (2021) '19 Books To Read If You Loved Netflix's "Bridgerton"', *Good Housekeeping*, 31 July. Available at: <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/g35407870/books-like-bridgerton/> (Accessed 13 February 2025).

Bythrow, N. (2024) 'Prime Video's Bridgerton Substitute With 93% RT Score Becomes Massive Streaming Success', 8 July, *Screen Rant*. Available at: <https://screenrant.com/my-lady-jane-show-streaming-success-prime-video-bridgerton-comparison/> (Accessed 11 February 2025).

Castro, A. and Galeana, J. (2019) 'Ni "criadas", ni sirvientas, ni "chachas", son trabajadoras del hogar', *El Universal*, 30 March. Available at: <https://www.eluniversal.com.mx/mochilazo-en-el-tiempo/ni-criadas-ni-sirvientas-ni-chachas-son-trabajadoras-del-hogar/> (Accessed 18 February 2025).

Connor, L. (2022) 'Which UK destinations inspired gothic literature greats?', *National Geographic*, 8 October. Available at: <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/uk-destinations-gothic-literature-inspiration> (Accessed 13 February 2025).

Corchado, I. (2022) 'Tipos de vivienda en el Reino Unido', *The Curiolancer*, 31 May. Available at: <https://www.thecuriolancer.com/viviendas-en-el-reino-unido/> (Accessed 1 January 2025).

Correas, M. (2024) 'Epíteto | Adjetivos epítetos, significado y ejemplos', *QuillBot*, 18 July. Available at: <https://quillbot.com/es/blog/figuras-literarias/epiteto/> (Accessed 29 December 2024).

Cuartodpereyra (n.d.) 'Avalancha de emociones'. Available at: <https://cuartodpereyra.wixsite.com/ignacianosdecorazon/single-post/2017/06/02/avalancha-de-emociones> (Accessed 17 January 2025).

Donnella, L. (2020) 'Colonialism, Eugenics And Downright Terror In 'Mexican Gothic'', *NPR*, 24 September. Available at: <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2020/09/24/398263892/colonialism-eugenics-and-downright-terror-in-mexican-gothic> (Accessed 13 February 2025).

eNotes (n.d.) 'Gothic Elements and Personification in "The Birds"'. Available at: <https://www.enotes.com/topics/birds/questions/gothic-elements-and-personification-in-the-birds-3138299> (Accessed 20 January 2025).

Goodreads (n.d.) <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/199635061-the-third-wife-of-faraday-house> (Accessed 26 October 2024).

Grammaring (n.d.) 'Adjective + TO- infinitive'. Available at: <https://www.grammaring.com/adjective-to-infinitive> (Accessed 25 January 2025).

Gray, S. (n.d.) 'Gothic Roots and Conventions', *Pressbooks*. Available at: <https://pressbooks.pub/guidetogothic/chapter/chapter-1/> (Accessed 20 January 2025).

green (2024) *Goodreads*, 30 December. Available at: <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/199635061-the-third-wife-of-faraday-house> (Accessed 3 January 2024).

Harris, R. (2019) 'Elements of the Gothic Novel', *Woodbury University*, 22 April. Available at: <https://woodbury.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Elements-of-the-Gothic-Novel-Handout.pdf> (Accessed 3 December 2024).

Her Reputation for Accomplishments (2015) 'Anatomy of a Regency Letter', 6 May. Available at: <https://herreputationforaccomplishment.wordpress.com/2015/05/06/anatomy-of-a-regency-letter/> (Accessed 17 December 2024).

Hughes, C. (2019), 'Ancient or modern? Language in historical fiction', *Carolyn Hughes Author*, 14 April. Available at: <https://carolynhughesauthor.com/2019/04/14/ancient-or-modern-language-in-historical-fiction-2/> (Accessed 8 January 2025).

Holloway, S. (n.d.) 'The Real Rules of Courtship: Dating in the Regency Era', *Masterpiece*. Available at: <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/specialfeatures/the-real-rules-of-courtship-dating-in-the-regency-era/#> (Accessed 28 December 2024).

Invaluable, (2019) 'The Top 10 Elements of Gothic Literature', 28 October. Available at: <https://www.invaluable.com/blog/elements-of-gothic-literature/?srsId=AfmBOopXH4hKPqQxYfty82Er-nArafYlX1Kn33zt3DGnB5sGCTMyX6Aq> (Accessed 27 November 2024).

Jane Austen's House (n.d.) 'She's very funny'. Available at: <https://janeaustens.house/learn/school-visits/online-resources/who-is-jane-austen/humour/> (Accessed 15 February 2025).

Johnson, S. (2020) 'Fanny Palmer Austen's Choice of Style and Dress' *Sheila Johnson Kindred*, 28 August. Available at: <https://sheilajohnsonkindred.com/news/tag/regency+dress> (Accessed 16 January 2025).

La Casa Victoriana (2011) 'Moda Victoriana: Ropa Femenina', 26 November. Available at: <https://lacasavictoriana.com/2011/11/26/moda-victoriana-ropa-femenina/> (Accessed 3 December 2024).

Lexic Language Solutions (n.d.) 'Translating from English into Spanish: Common challenges'. Available at : <https://www.lexictranslations.com/en/translating-from-english-into-spanish-common-challenges/> (Accessed 24 February 2025).

Lingolia (n.d.) 'Position of Adjectives in Spanish Grammar'. Available at: [https://espanol.lingolia.com/en/grammar/adjectives/location#:~:text=noun%20%2B%20adjective,adjectives%20\(los%20adjetivos%20calificativos\).&text=These%20adjectives%20can%20also%20come,ser%2C%20estar%20%2Cparecer%20](https://espanol.lingolia.com/en/grammar/adjectives/location#:~:text=noun%20%2B%20adjective,adjectives%20(los%20adjetivos%20calificativos).&text=These%20adjectives%20can%20also%20come,ser%2C%20estar%20%2Cparecer%20) (Accessed 20 February 2025).

MacGuigan, P. (2016) '1816: The Year Without Summer', 10 April, *Canada's History*. Available at: <https://www.canadashistory.ca/explore/environment/1816-the-year-without-summer> (Accessed 10 November 2024).

Marcos, A. (n.d.) 'Las onomatopeyas y la narrativa', *Escuela de Escritores*. Available at: <https://escueladeescritores.com/blog-las-onomatopeyas-y-la-narrativa/> (Accessed 14 January 2025).

Mayquist, K. (2022) '7 Gothic Novels with Creepy Estates', *Electric Lit*, 25 March. Available at: <https://electricliterature.com/7-gothic-novels-with-creepy-estates/> (Accessed 19 February 2025).

McGuire, S. (2019) 'The Appeal of Gothic Horror', *Reactor*, 28 October. Available at: <https://reactormag.com/the-appeal-of-gothic-horror/> (Accessed 4 December 2024).

Morrison, R. (2022) 'Just How Much is Jane Austen a Precursor to Bridgerton?', *Literary Hub*, 17 March. Available at: <https://lithub.com/just-how-much-is-jane-austen-a-precursor-to-bridgerton/> (Accessed 13 February 2025).

Murray, J., Foot R., Jamesabra, E., Mcisaac J. (2024) 'Nova Scotia', *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 7 March. Available at: <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/nova-scotia> (Accessed 1 December 2024).

Myers, B.R. (n.d.) <https://brmyers.ca/> (Accessed 15 November 2024).

Mystery Writers (n.d.) 'Information About 2025 Edgar® Awards For Works Published in 2024'. Available at: <https://mysterywriters.org/edgars/edgar-award-category-information/> (Accessed 27 November 2024).

Overstreet, M. (2022) 'The Queen of Shade and Sass: A Guide to the Humor of Jane Austen', *Book Riot*, 4 January. Available at: <https://bookriot.com/humor-of-jane-austen/> (Accessed 15 February 2025).

Random Bits of Fascination (2019) 'What was the pianoforte and how did it feature in Austen's works?', 23 February. Available at: <https://randombitsoffascination.com/2019/02/23/the-pianoforte-of-jane-austens-day/> (Accessed 15 February 2025).

Random Bits of Fascination (2021) 'Social Networking in the Regency Era', 7 September. Available at: <https://randombitsoffascination.com/2021/09/07/social-networking-in-the-regency-era/> (Accessed 28 December 2024).

Random Bits of Fascination (2021) 'Did You Hear' Gossip, Scandal and Satire in Jane Austen's World', 28 September. Available at: <https://randombitsoffascination.com/2021/09/28/did-you-hear-gossip-scandal-and-satire-in-jane-austens-world/?cn-reloaded=1> (Accessed 28 December 2024).

Real Academia Española (n.d.) 'Diccionario del estudiante'. Available at: <https://www.rae.es/diccionario-estudiante/sordo#:~:text=3.-,adj.,Un%20golpe%20sordo.> (Accessed 30 December 2024).

Reserva de palabras (n.d.) 'Criada: significado y ejemplos'. Available at: <https://www.reservadepalabras.org/criada/> (Accessed 18 February 2025).

Spruce, S. (2024) 'Issue 111: An Exploration of Regency Letter Writing', *Jane Austen Literacy Foundation*, 30 May. Available at: <https://janeaustenlf.org/pride-and-possibilities-further-articles/2024/5/9/issue-111-an-exploration-of-regency-letter-writing> (Accessed 17 December 2024).

The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica (2024) 'Acadian', 21 December. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Acadian> (Accessed 1 December 2024).

Tyralla, B. (2024) 'BookTok: A new era in the history of reading', *Yale Daily News*, 8 October. Available at: <https://yaledailynews.com/sjp2024/2024/10/08/booktok-a-new-era-in-reading-history/> (Accessed 9 February 2025).

Tod, M.K. (2024) 'Research & Historical Fiction', *A Writer of History*, 20 February. Available at: <https://awriterofhistory.com/2024/02/20/research-historical-fiction/#:~:text=There%20is%20probably%20no%20other,that%20for%20writing%20straight%20history> (Accessed 8 January 2025).

Visit Britain (n.d.) 'Vive un sueño: visita las casas señoriales más mágicas de Gran Bretaña'. Available at: <https://www.visitbritain.com/es/cosas-que-hacer-en-gran-bretana/vive-un-sueno-visita-las-casas-senoriales-mas-magicas-de-gran> (Accessed 28 December 2024).

Villines, L. (2017) 'Elements of gothic literature', *Prezi*, 15 December. Available at: <https://prezi.com/p/e0dh2vakzptb/elements-of-gothic-literature/> (Accessed 1 December 2024).

Which Museum (n.d.) 'Historic houses in Nova Scotia'. Available at:
<https://whichmuseum.com/place/nova-scotia-8998/t-historic-house> (Accessed 19 December 2024).

8. Appendix

8.1 Source Text: Selected Chapters (First Chapter, Abridged version of Chapters 2 and 3) from the novel *The Third Wife of Faraday House* by B.R. Myers

Chapter One

October 25, 1816

Lieutenant Frederick Fletcher, British Royal Navy

Halifax, Nova Scotia

My dearest Frederick,

It has been over a month since we saw each other and yet it feels like a century. Memories of our last time together give me solace, but also remind me how much I yearn for your attention. I know you are much too busy with your duties to return my correspondence, but a simple line or two will ease my suffering heart.

Mrs. Shackleton watches me with her ever-critical eye, and I worry she suspects our plans. When Judge Shackleton arrived home, they spoke in his study for nearly an hour, which is quite possibly the longest they've been in the same room since I've lived here. I fear she has passed on her suspicions to him. I cannot predict what his actions might be, but if we act quickly, disaster will be avoided.

Forgive me for the grim warning, darling. Let me end this note on a prettier vision. Do you remember the last thing you whispered in my ear? I do. In fact, I go to sleep every night reliving that wonderful moment over and over. How eager I am to see if you speak the truth. You told me my hair will outshine the Bermuda sun.

Yours adoringly,

Emeline

November 1, 1816

Lieutenant Frederick Fletcher, British Royal Navy

Halifax, Nova Scotia

My dearest Frederick,

Another week has gone by without word from you. I want to be strong, but my spirit is crumbling. The rain on the window matches my silent weeping. I am counting the days until I can announce our engagement. The heat rises to my cheeks even as I write this, recalling our stolen moments.

But being apart aches my soul. Please send word, even a short note will do. My fretting is noticeable, and I fear Mrs. Shackleton will send me to the sanatorium. The house is large, but I feel her disapproving gaze no matter where I hide. I do not exaggerate her vindictiveness. How cruel and unbelievably heartbreaking it would be if I was taken away only to have you arrive the moment after, unable to rescue me.

Yours forever,

Emeline

November 8, 1816

Lieutenant Frederick Fletcher, British Royal Navy

Halifax, Nova Scotia

My dearest Frederick,

I am delirious with anticipation as I will most certainly see you at the admiral's ball tonight. I scarcely believe I will be able to keep from wrapping my arms around you. However, I know we must keep our interactions appropriately respectable, so as to not alert Mrs. Shackleton. But I believe too much distance may be just as suspicious, so I expect you to dance with me at least once.

Frederick, she plans to marry me off to the highest bidder among a handpicked selection of the wealthiest bachelors. I heard her speaking with the judge of it last night. They even talked of some arthritic old cousin with a title in England. My skin crawls at the thought of any man but you touching me.

Let me assure you, my desire to be your wife has nothing to do with the pull of Bermuda or even leaving this house. It is you. Only you. As I write this letter, I keep looking up to stare out the window with such intensity I'm surprised I haven't conjured you before my eyes, walking down the street outside.

I can picture your smart navy-blue uniform, how your bronze hair feels through my fingers, your smile, your lips, your fingers untying the ribbons of my dress. Forgive my shaking hand as even the memory of our time together stirs every fiber of my being.

Until tonight, my darling.

Emeline

Hooves clotted on the cobblestones, echoing through the fog, growing louder as they neared the house. My heart began to race. The afternoon post! I turned toward the long bedroom

window, nearly rising off the vanity seat. “Ouch!” My scalp smarted with the sudden tug of hair. I eased back down, facing forward again into the mirror. My face frowned back at me from inside its oval mahogany frame, the wood carved into intricate rosebuds. Beneath it on the vanity table sat a porcelain dish of hairpins, a crystal perfume bottle, and a cup of tea that had long grown cold. The only item here I could claim as my own was the small frame of Mother’s portrait.

Ada twisted another of my blond curls and fastened it with a pin. “Sorry, Miss Emeline,” she mumbled, the words polite, but her tone tired and impatient. Ada had been my maid since I was ten, and I had the feeling she still viewed me as that little girl.

Her tongue worked the corner of her mouth while she added a pink ribbon to my curls. Mrs. Shackleton had insisted upon the style: parted down the middle, the top brushed flat, with the sides curled in tight ringlets and pinned close to my ear. In the back, a long braid was to be wound into a high bun.

Ada had been working on it for nearly an hour. Her round cheeks flushed brighter as I squirmed on the embroidered cushion of the vanity. My entire head throbbed from all the pulling and pinning.

The chance of a letter from Frederick gave me hope. I could bear the tediousness of preparing for the ball if I knew it would be one of the last times I would have to endure Mrs. Shackleton’s orders. Since breakfast, I had been stuck in my bedroom, made to wait in my dressing gown. Mrs. Shackleton believed my complexion suffered from unnecessary activities such as moving about the house and idle conversation. Reading was also forbidden, for the strain would cause my eyes to redden and squint. Arriving at the dance with a tired expression and a weary smile, she said, would be a tremendous failure.

A brand-new dress, dyed a soft pink and trimmed with lace, hung at the front of the wardrobe, freshly pressed by Ada. The short, puffed sleeves and low bodice were a shiny satin, while the skirt was covered in a silk gauze accented with a dozen ribbon rosettes. It also came with a pair of matching wool shoes and long evening gloves in the same sheer gauze. I would be a picture, just as Mrs. Shackleton wanted. I wouldn’t be stepping into that frock until the last moment. I was surprised Mrs. Shackleton didn’t insist I stand for the entire ride to prevent a wrinkle. She mentioned several times that the lace had been ordered especially from England.

“Wouldn’t it be more fun if we could put on our hair like a bonnet?” I said to Ada, wanting to make amends for raising my voice. “None of this fussing about, wasting time sitting and staring at the mirror.”

A limp brown strand of hair fell across Ada’s face. She blew it off her forehead impatiently. “I wouldn’t mind an hour of sitting,” she replied.

Heat bloomed across my cheeks. She would never utter that kind of reply in front of Mrs. Shackleton. How was I ever going to run a household for Frederick if I couldn't keep my own maid in line? The familiar tremor started in my stomach.

Outside the window, I watched the post carriage come to a stop. After a few moments, a knock sounded at the front entrance downstairs. I closed my eyes and wished for the one thing that would make my troubles disappear. I waited for one of the maids to come with a letter.

Silence ticked by, and each passing second pressed tighter against my chest. I could barely breathe.

There was a muffled cry of elation from the foyer, and at first my heart swelled, but then I steadied myself. The letter I was hoping for would not have elicited such a reaction from Mrs. Shackleton. Ada and I exchanged curious glances in the mirror.

Frederick was known to my guardians, but only as Lieutenant Fletcher, a regular guest who accompanied the admiral—certainly not my secret lover. Two years ago, before the war ended, the harbor was cluttered with ships, and naval officers were regular visitors to the house. They spoke fondly of their port in Bermuda. Brightly colored birds serenaded them with lush, throaty songs, like the most gregarious opera singers. And the hot sunlight radiated off long stretches of beaches, making the powdery soft sand feel like burning coals. But shade could always be found under the long stretching leaves of the palm trees, their coconuts split open for a refreshing drink. The turquoise waters were always warm and welcoming. It was the perfect opposite to Halifax's foggy waterfront, which was lined with taverns that carried the odor of stale draft beer and urine.

Mrs. Shackleton's shoes sounded like an unrelenting hammer on the staircase, growing louder as she ascended to the second floor and gaining momentum as she came down the hall. My bedroom door nearly came off its hinges when she burst in.

I shrank in my seat, ignoring the familiar splinter of irritation at her continuous disregard for my privacy. The one time I asked Mrs. Shackleton to not barge into my room without knocking, she pinned me with a cold stare and said, "Your room? Nothing in this house is yours. You'd do best to remember that an ounce of gratitude will go a long way."

I had learned that gratitude, like respect, didn't require sincerity to elicit the desired outcome. As such, I curled my lips into a well-practiced smile as she entered without knocking.

"Tremendous news!" Mrs. Shackleton's eyes were wide and sparkling. The elation looked out of place on her pinched face. She held up a letter, then began to fan herself with the paper, trying to catch her breath. I was unsure if she was hot from the quick climb of the stairs or the obvious excitement. When she saw my hair, though, her usual judgmental expression pulled down the corners of her mouth, her uncharacteristic grin erased.

“No, no, no,” she said to Ada. “There’s too much height in the back.” Her tone was harsh and scandalized, as if Ada had brought in a wharf rat and plopped it on my head.

“I prefer this style,” I said.

Mrs. Shackleton ignored me. “Take it all down and restart,” she ordered. Ada stiffened behind me, chewing her lip. Her eyes started to fill. I sat still and forced myself to remain indifferent. I was encouraged to be beautiful and silent, much like everything else in this house.

“What was your news?” I asked brightly, hoping to deflect attention from Ada, who was clearly trying not to cry.

Mrs. Shackleton’s expression lifted. She held up the letter. “Another suitor has been found!”

The breath left my lungs. This was the first time she had mentioned her marriage scheme to me directly. I had discovered that she was making inquiries nearly six months ago, hence my determination to marry Frederick, but having her confirm my fear so frankly was chilling. She had no consideration for my feelings; even my very awareness of the matter was irrelevant to her. “How many will it take?” I tried to tease to disguise my anger. “Surely one is enough.”

With a patronizing air, she said, “This offer will give us more leverage against the other interested parties.”

Nothing is more romantic than leverage. I bit my tongue to hold back from saying this out loud. She dominated every choice in my life, but I would not let her pick my husband. And the only way to accomplish that was to marry Frederick and leave as soon as possible.

“You’re nearly twenty-one, Emeline,” she explained impatiently. “Your beauty is renowned, but it’s not eternal. With the navy relocating to Bermuda in the coming months, the local merchants’ income will most certainly suffer. It’s only a matter of time before they leave as well. If we wait any longer, the only eligible bachelors in Halifax will be pirates, rum runners, or farmers.” She gave me a satisfied smile. “My cousin on the South Shore confirms Captain Graves is presently looking for a new wife. He’s a retired shipping merchant who found his fortune in trading and now owns several sawmills.” She squinted at the letter, then added, “And the general store as well.”

“*New wife?*” I questioned.

Mrs. Shackleton ignored my question and continued to read. “He has an estate with a staff large enough to take care of a home three times the size of the governor general’s. He’s worth a considerable amount and has influence with the magistrate.” Looking up at me, she concluded, “He’ll certainly be the head figure of a very powerful family for generations.”

I didn’t need Captain Graves or his large estate and several businesses. I had the love of Lieutenant Fletcher, which was worth all the wealth in the world. But as she continued to stare at

me, waiting for an utterance of gratitude, I realized my future with Frederick was not secured . . . not yet. Not officially. And if Mrs. Shackleton knew what I was planning, she'd lock me in this room until my wedding day to the old buffoon of her choice.

Pushing that miserable image away, I concentrated instead on how it would feel to finally be in Frederick's arms again, and how liberating it would be to board a ship bound for Bermuda with him, leaving behind this wretched city and all its horrible memories. "He sounds promising" was all I said to Mrs. Shackleton. My hands clenched together in my lap, my thumbnail pressing into the crook of my pointer finger, hard enough to leave a half-moon on the soft flesh.

Ada scrunched up her nose. "Why send word to Halifax, though? Are there no suitable prospects closer to his home? If he's such a catch and all?"

I silently cheered Ada for her thoughtful question, which I hadn't even considered asking. I wasn't clever enough to think of these things myself.

Mrs. Shackleton's brows came together. Her eyes clouded over, a warning before the storm. As much as I envied Ada's gumption, she was not as sensitive to Mrs. Shackleton's moods, and I was often left to take the brunt of the blow.

"As a man of wealth, he has the luxury of being selective." Then she added, in a matter-of-fact tone, "He's had two previous wives. Both died in childbirth. Such tragedy to befall a good man." She turned to me. "You're very lucky. Any young woman would be dying for the chance to marry Captain Graves."

Two already have, I thought.

"Hurry now and finish that," she ordered Ada, pointing to my hair. "We're leaving for the admiral's within the hour."

I frowned. "You're coming with me? But I already told Jane I would pick her up in our carriage."

Mrs. Shackleton made an exasperated sound at the back of her throat. "Jane Finney? I won't have you arriving with the likes of her. I have it on good authority her father has ties to the Acadians, blood related even. You know those French Catholics would sooner see the entire British Navy sink to the bottom of the Atlantic than defend our shores against the Americans."

Her reasoning sounded far-fetched; Jane wasn't Catholic, and I couldn't think of any way the Acadians had ever done Mrs. Shackleton wrong. But I knew little of politics, and perhaps Frederick would agree with her. Still, I replied, "Jane is my friend."

She gave a sigh of bored indifference. "All girls are competition. They may pretend to be your friends, but they are sly and cunning. And you . . .?" She shook her head at me with a look of pity. "You're not clever enough to know when they're using you." She put the letter on the vanity

and pushed Ada to the side, taking her place behind me. Then she leaned down so our faces were side by side.

We regarded each other in the mirror.

“Your father wasn’t suited to business. He invested more than he could afford, even gave loans to those he knew would not be able to pay him back,” she said. “When he died, he left you and your mother penniless.” She tutted, then paused, letting my mind fill the silence with everything I already knew. She repeated the horrible story I’d heard a thousand times: “Nothing and no one could bring her out of her misery. She died of a broken heart.” Sighing, she placed a hand on my hair. “It’s a shame she never saw how lovely you turned out.”

She spoke as if my beauty could have saved my mother. I remained quiet. I knew what had truly killed her.

Then she smiled. “But it was God’s providence, as it allowed you to come to me, so I could groom you for better things.”

The knot in my stomach tightened. I looked at our faces in the mirror, side by side. Her long nose had a point at the end that reminded me of a crow. Even when she was amused, her thin lips had a way of naturally turning down, as if fighting the smile. Though gray had begun to streak her flat curls, purposely ironed close to her face, Mrs. Shackleton hadn’t changed much from the very first time I saw her, when I was brought to her house ten years ago. “I’ll take care of her like she was my own,” she had told Mother. Even then, at the age of ten, I could feel her critical stare push down on me.

“Hmm?” she prompted, bringing me back to the present.

“Yes,” I agreed. “I am grateful.”

She rose to her full height and left the room, abruptly closing the door behind her. The letter remained on the vanity, a silent prop reminding me that time was running out.

I had to secure my marriage to Frederick. Tonight.

Ada’s shoulders relaxed as soon as Mrs. Shackleton left. She attended to my hair and wove the strands into a more traditional style. Then she went to fetch the dress hanging on the door of the wardrobe, quickly skimming her eyes over the pleats to check for any possible flaws.

I went to my desk and penned a note to Jane, apologizing for the removal of the offer of the judge’s carriage. When I handed it to Ada to take for the houseboy for delivery, her face was pale, not at all like her usual rosy complexion. She chewed her lower lip.

“What is it, Ada?” She scrunched her nose. “That man, Captain Graves,” she began. “Pardon me for saying so, Miss Emeline, but doesn’t it seem odd that both his wives died in the same way?”

I turned to the dress, pretending to examine the puffed sleeves. “In childbirth? It is unfortunately far too common. Surely those misfortunes had nothing to do with him.”

I meant that; it did not seem all that odd, though indeed very sad. I knew nothing of Captain Graves. He might be a good man or bad man, though he was certainly a wealthy man. None of this mattered to me. I would thwart Mrs. Shackleton’s plans before I ever gained an audience with him. But even as I thought all this, a shiver ran down my spine.

Mother always said that meant someone had walked over your grave.

Chapter Two

The evening brought a continuous drizzle that lacquered the city in a cold, wet sheen as the pasty gray sky slowly churned to black, like a bruise setting in. I sat in the carriage across from the judge and Mrs. Shackleton, wishing my thin pink cloak were a fur wrap. Before we left, Ada had offered to fetch blankets for my knees, but Mrs. Shackleton shooed away the notion immediately, reasoning the extra weight would surely crush the silk gauze of my skirt.

I tried to conjure a sunlit beach with a chaise longue under a palm tree.

As we bumped over the uneven cobblestones, the fetid fish odor of the waterfront seeped into the carriage. It lingered even after we passed the taverns and managed to entwine itself with the heavy scent of Mrs. Shackleton’s rosewater perfume, creating an aroma that was somehow both floral and dead and reminded me distinctly of funerals.

A desperate wanting grew inside my chest, expanding with every turn of the wheel as we neared our destination. I took small breaths through pursed lips, keeping my gaze on my lap, unable to trust my own expression. I was certain Mrs. Shackleton would be able to detect my scheme; every wish and every prayer I had been repeating in my mind all day would be written across my face.

At last, we turned off the main street and eased onto the pebbled circular driveway of the admiral’s manor. The three-story stone mansion stood before us, its elegant British style proudly on display. The sloped roof was topped with a balustrade, and wide steps rose to the front entrance, flanked by four columns. Candlelight glowed from within, including from the dormers on the third floor, making the house seem alive, joyful.

My heart was jumping a terrific beat inside my chest. I would see Frederick soon and everything I’d been praying for would materialize. We could finalize our plans in person and set a wedding date.

Judge Shackleton took a sip from his flask and tucked it back into his jacket pocket as our carriage drew closer. His silk top hat sat on a mop of gray curls. He’d barely mumbled a word the entire ride, and I had the distinct notion he was sore at missing an evening at the gaming

house. Judge Shackleton was a powerful man with many people under his employment, but when he arrived home, Mrs. Shackleton was the one in charge.

Our ride came to a stop. The judge offered an arm to escort Mrs. Shackleton. I followed behind them. She hissed over her shoulder to me, “Lift your dress! The puddles will ruin the hem.”

As we stepped inside to wait for our cloaks to be taken by the footmen, I slipped my hood back, looking up at the foyer’s large chandelier.

Mrs. Shackleton nudged the judge as she pointed admiringly toward the vibrant yellow flowers hand-painted on the wallpaper. I surreptitiously brushed my fingertips against them as we were ushered forward in line, hoping I would see those vibrant hues in real life soon enough. Mrs. Shackleton exchanged greetings with the elderly couple in front of us. I lowered my hand and stood in place, staying quiet until they’d finished speaking. Then Judge Shackleton waved a hand in my direction. “And, of course, you remember Miss Fitzpatrick,” he said. Then he paused two beats—like he always did when he had to explain my relationship to them—and added, “My wife’s ward of eight years.”

“Ten,” Mrs. Shackleton corrected.

My smile appeared automatically. I curtsied and thanked them when they complimented my hairstyle. Mrs. Shackleton declared it was her particular inspiration.

After our cloaks were taken, we were ushered toward the ballroom. The hallway carried the muffled conversation of partygoers and the lilt of violins. The dancing was already underway. My pulse quickened, eager and restless, as I imagined waltzing with Frederick. The doorway to the ballroom was flanked by columns carved with images of cherubs holding wreaths of flowers. The judge took a glass of wine from a waiting servant and promptly meandered away to greet various acquaintances.

My legs shook as I stood beside Mrs. Shackleton at the threshold of the candlelight-bathed room. A group of musicians, no fewer than twenty in number, sat on the balcony, playing a lively tune that spun around us as if luring us closer to the dance floor. Their bows moved across the strings in quick, darting fashion, the festive tempo of the song competing with the boisterous conversation of the party below.

The perimeter of the dance floor was lined with eager young women, each hoping to catch the eye of a future partner. They giggled and spoke to one another from behind their gloved hands. I snuck a few glances their way as I dutifully followed Mrs. Shackleton to a cluster of gray-haired women resting on a settee beside the grand fireplace. I curtsied and smiled to each one while Mrs. Shackleton provided them with laborious details about my dress. They all congratulated her on such a fine purchase, then slipped into their usual gossip. Unlike their younger counterparts

across the way, they did not speak in hushed tones or behind gloved hands. They also didn't laugh.

But neither did I. Sadly, I fit in with the older ladies more than I wanted to acknowledge. I rallied against my gloom by picturing Mrs. Shackleton at the next party, having to tell them all I had eloped to Bermuda. I would only be sad to miss hearing their gasps of shock.

Swaths of silk dresses blurred past us as dancers spun in time with the music. The deep blue jackets of the Royal Navy officers punctuated the scene. But where was my officer? I put a hand to my curls, hoping the ribbon Ada had braided in was still in place. Mrs. Shackleton stood like a sentry at my side, taking all the air. She and her spiteful ensemble of judgmental cohorts were given a wide berth by most of the partygoers, with no one stopping longer than to give a polite nod or curtsy. Ever so slightly, I craned my neck, surveying the crowd, hoping to catch the familiar wave of copper hair, standing head and shoulders above all others.

Two painfully long songs later, panic had set in. My palms were sweating as the air became thick with the warmth of the crowd. Doubts trickled like raindrops down a windowpane, continuous and unrelenting, as I imagined the various reasons for Frederick's absence. What if he had never even received my letters? What if he was sent away on a secret mission for the admiral? What if his ship became lost at sea or destroyed in a storm or hit an iceberg? What if he was captured by privateers and thrown overboard? What if I never saw him again?

Mrs. Shackleton eyed me suspiciously. "Smile," she said.

The order was so ingrained, my lips turned upward without thought, like I was her living doll. I continued to search every small swatch of blue uniform, hoping the face I had been dreaming about for weeks would appear. My imagination started to mold my worries into visions of doom.

I'd seen those large, hulking ships on the waterfront. I knew far better than anyone that accidents happened. Deadly accidents. The pulse rose to my throat as I pictured a grave with my love's name etched into the granite.

Finally, I recognized a face—one that sparked a keen sense of guilt. Jane Finney stood by herself at the room's entrance. Her profile was so much like that of her brother, Joseph. He had a relaxed smile and kind eyes, but he could never hold my gaze for longer than a second—even when he proposed last year. I wondered if he still stuttered. I wondered, secretly, if he still thought of me.

Last year, when I told Mrs. Shackleton of his proposal, she burst out laughing. "Joseph Finney! If you want to end up with scurvy and eight babies pulling on your skirt, then go ahead, but don't expect the judge and me to keep you in this lifestyle."

I told her that I'd politely turned him down, but she sensed my uncertainty, my wondering. "I don't love him," I declared.

“Love?” She scoffed, waving her lace handkerchief in the air. “Money is the only thing that can assure you a comfortable life. Amiable companionship is much easier developed if your stomach is full and your bed is warm.”

The music ended, sending a new rush of dancers to the floor. A server paused in front of us with a silver tray of oysters. I silently declined; my stomach was so knotted it felt impossible to consider eating anything. I had skipped lunch earlier, hoping my nerves would be settled by now. Mrs. Shackleton slurped two with astounding speed, but then made a face after the last one and finished it off with a generous sip of wine. “Mind the oysters,” she said. “I believe they might be a touch warm.”

I noticed Jane making her way closer. Then I froze, for her companion had joined her. Mrs. Shackleton uttered a poorly disguised sound of dislike as the couple stopped in front of us.

“Evening, Mrs. Shackleton.” Joseph Finney stood beside his sister, doing his best to stand taller than his ordinary stature would allow. I appreciated his bravery in making sure to address her first. “I h-h-hope your health is well?”

She frowned. “God willing.”

Jane and I merely curtsied to each other. I hoped she understood the decision about the carriage had nothing to do with me. A horrible awkwardness followed, and my face warmed.

Joseph cleared his throat. His kind eyes pinned me in place. “May I have the p-p-pleasure of the next dance, Miss Fitzpatrick?”

Mrs. Shackleton’s fingers clasped painfully around my elbow like a claw.

I wondered if I could subtly shoo him away before Mrs. Shackleton swatted him like a fly. I had already done enough to break his heart; the least I could do now was shield him from her barbed comments. “Thank you, but—” My sentence was cut short as I watched Frederick enter the room.

One by one, heads turned as he walked past the guests lining the dance floor. His pace was relaxed and at ease; he was comfortable in this crowd. The men shook his hand or slapped him on the back, yet I could tell they envied his effortless charm. When he neared the group of young girls, they nudged one another, their faces glowing with matching blushes. He smiled graciously, absorbing their admiration as if each guest had come tonight just for him—as I had.

Everyone else blurred as I took in his broad shoulders and straight posture. A wave of copper hair complemented his fair complexion, but the steadiness of his eyes was a testament to the strength and courage that gave his uniform a more pronounced respect. Even without looking at the insignia on his epaulets, anyone could tell he was a man of high rank.

A calmness enveloped my soul. He was here. He was safe. Everything would fall into place. All my problems would be erased.

I stared at Frederick, ignoring everything else but him, willing his attention to turn to me. Then finally, miraculously, he angled his face and our eyes locked. Heat grew in my chest as he continued to hold my gaze. The intensity in his expression nearly took my breath away. Any moment he would stride across the dance floor and reach for me. My hands flexed inside the delicate gauze gloves, anticipating his touch. An eternity passed, but he remained in place, watching me from a distance. Then something softened in his expression, almost aloof. A sudden coolness straightened the hair on my arms. The air crackled around me; I nearly screamed his name. The waiting was torturous. The only thing keeping my wool shoes planted on the floor was the fear of Mrs. Shackleton's reaction if I raced across the dance floor to meet him.

Why did he refuse to come closer? Surely there was no etiquette that would prevent him from approaching Mrs. Shackleton, as he had dined at the judge's house several times and was always regarded with delight on her part.

Anger grew under the thin lacquer of trust. I could not imagine treating him the same way, ignoring his pleas or dismissing his suffering so easily. My fragile relief hardened into a sharp sting of betrayal.

Then, with the slightest of movements, his attention switched to the man standing with me.

Joseph still waited patiently for my reply, his eyebrows raised hopefully. The next selection of music was a livelier tune. "Yes," I said, giving him my standard smile. He replied with an expression of delighted surprise.

Mrs. Shackleton did nothing to soften her sound of dissent at my answer.

The tempo of the dance gave us little time to converse, which was a blessing as Mr. Finney stuttered more when he was also trying to concentrate on steps. Mrs. Shackleton was in deep conversation with one of her acquaintances. Their noses nearly touched as they leaned toward each other, no doubt exchanging bits of whatever scandalous gossip provided entertainment for them. My attention was purely fixed on watching Frederick watching my dance partner and me, but every time I caught his eye, he turned away.

I started to shake. My limbs became heavy, and I nearly tripped into another dancer. My emotions coupled with the lack of food had made me unsteady. The song seemed to stretch on forever, depleting all my hope and energy with every note.

At last, the music ended.

“Are you enjoying y-y-yourself?” Joseph held out his arm to escort me back to Mrs. Shackleton. Her face was an interesting shade of red. I imagined she hated me spending time with a match so unworthy. A few whispers broke through my daze as my name was repeated on various lips.

Joseph regarded me with a growing expression of concern. Spots appeared before my eyes. The floor tilted sickeningly as blackness took over my vision. My knees unhinged. I fell backward . . . and into a pair of strong arms.

I blinked up at Frederick’s face. His blue eyes glinted as if he was enjoying a private joke.

A rush of concerned voices filled the air around us, but Frederick ignored them as he stood me back up. He put an arm around my waist and maneuvered us through the gawking dancers to a set of double doors. A fellow officer ran ahead and opened them, leading us to the back stone patio. The cooler air was welcoming and helped clear away some of the overwhelming dizziness. A million questions were on the tip of my tongue. My gaze lowered to his boots, suddenly overwhelmed and oddly shy.

We reached a corner of the patio where tall shrubs provided some privacy. I was gently sat down on a bench flanked with lanterns. Frederick spoke with authority to the other officer. “Please fetch a glass of water for Miss Fitzpatrick.”

Chapter Three

Before dawn, my trunk was packed and loaded onto the carriage by the hired driver. I stood on the steps of the judge’s house, shivering in the mist. Ada handed me a basket of provisions for the journey; she was the only one who had risen to see me off.

I waved goodbye from the carriage as the driver pulled away. The moon reflected in the puddles with cruel poetic satire. All I had wanted was freedom under the hot sun.

My bones seemed hollow. The farther the carriage took me from Frederick, the more painful the pull behind my ribs. I remembered our hushed promises, imagining our life in Bermuda, where I would finally be away from Mrs. Shackleton’s constant critical gaze. At least in the carriage I could relax my expression and let the stone smile slip away. I had to have faith he would receive my letter.

Shoreham was nearly a full day’s journey. The sun rose, revealing that the stone houses and shops had been replaced by trees and thick forest growth. It was a never-ending journey of ruts and bumps. I had never been outside the city, and to see the world stretch on with no buildings or other persons in sight was jarring. The unfamiliarity of it made me feel like a kite that suddenly lost its string and was at the mercy of the breeze.

After we changed horses, I ate a pork pie and a wedge of cheese. All that remained in the basket was an apple. I picked the last few crumbs of Ada's pastry from my skirt as I willed an image of Frederick leaving the harbor, setting a course for Captain Graves's island with my letter folded inside his jacket pocket, close to his heart. The salt spray beading his copper hair as he stood at the bow, eager to rescue me.

I was brought out of my daydream when the carriage came to a stop. I pulled back the curtain. The late-afternoon light had dulled as the evening closed in.

I took in a tidy rural street with pleasant-looking buildings. The driver jumped from his seat and sauntered into the post office. Through the window I could see him speaking with a thin man. He touched his spectacles, nodded, then handed the driver several packages.

Without a word to me, the driver took the mail and added it to a satchel slung across his chest. Before we pulled away, the postmaster came to the doorway. Mrs. Shackleton's order sounded as a ghostly echo. I smiled and gave him a wave. He didn't return the greeting. Instead, he dropped his eyes, shaking his head at the ground.

I leaned out of sight, pressing into the seat. My cheeks warmed with embarrassment and confusion.

The land sloped downward, affording me a view of the shore ahead, and beyond it, a vast slate-gray ocean. In the distance, an island studded with trees jutted out of the mist. The carriage veered closer to the beach, allowing me to make out a winding road of stones that emerged from the ocean floor itself. There was a *thump* as the carriage settled onto this precarious path.

Jostling back and forth, I gripped the seat to keep myself steady. The view from either window afforded the same scene: nothing but water. I hazarded a peek at the wheels and saw the carriage barely fit the width of the trail. All that separated me from being swallowed up by the North Atlantic was a few feet of rock.

Gulls cried overhead, sounding like a screaming warning of death. The fog claimed its victory, eating up anything that resembled land.

Once the carriage made it to the island, the ride became smoother. I let go of the seat and wrapped my cloak around myself more tightly. I survived the trip across, but what exactly would be waiting for me? Who was Captain Graves, really?

Another thought slipped through; one I had been pushing away since stepping into the carriage. How long did I have before the wedding? And how was I supposed to introduce myself? I practiced it out loud a few times. "Hello, Captain Graves," I said, trying to calm my voice. "I'm Emeline Fitzpatrick, your new wife." A shiver rippled over my skin as if someone had walked over my grave.

New wife.

How odd both wives had died the same way. But it was an unfortunate reality of womanhood, one I found difficult to shake: the joy of a new life can so often turn to death instead.

We took a sharp incline. The trees reached out, nearly touching the carriage, blocking the remaining light. Night was opening her mouth ready to swallow me whole.

The carriage lunged then tipped dangerously. It seemed to hang in midair before slamming down with a crash, tilting to the side. The horse snorted ferociously as the driver hollered a few expletives. My own scream got swallowed up in the chaos as I fell with a *thud* to the floor. My dress pooled around me. The door wrenched open. The driver was breathing hard with his cap askew.

“Are you all right, miss?” He offered me his hand.

I stepped out of the carriage with his help. “I think so,” I said, testing my legs. My elbow throbbed.

The back wheel had broken its axle. The driver lifted his cap and scratched his head as he looked up the lane, measuring some invisible solution to our problem. He sniffed, then unhitched the horse. “I’ll head up the rest of the way to the house,” he said, reins already in his hands. “I don’t have a saddle for you, and I’ll make better time if I ride by myself.”

I thought this was rather selfish of him but stayed quiet.

“You’ll be safe here,” he said, nodding to the tilted carriage. “It’s warmer to wait inside.”

I refused to agree. He was leaving me all alone in a strange place.

He mounted the poor horse, still a bit wobbly himself after that crash. “I’ll return with the steward to bring you and your things up to the estate. It won’t be but a quarter of the hour.”

“That long?” I rubbed my sore elbow. The trees of the forest seemed to lean in as if listening. How large was the island?

He turned away. “Faraday House is only on the other side of the hill.”

Faraday House. I repeated it a few times to myself, surprised at how pretty it sounded, almost regal.

As he rode away, I watched until I could no longer see the back of him. Then I strained my ears until the thumping of the hooves disappeared as well. Then all was silent.

Too silent.

I had never been inside such an absolute void of sound. It was unnerving. The city was always humming with life: the clip-clop of hooves on the cobblestones, the jovial jokes from the butcher's boy who delivered to the house every week, the canons going off from Citadel Hill when the navy ships entered the harbor.

But the only sound on this island was my breathing. It was as if I was the only thing alive here. The gloominess seemed to deepen as dusk claimed the sky. The cold penetrated through my petticoats and long stockings. There wasn't enough wool to keep out the dampness of the ocean air. Shivering, I climbed back into the carriage.

My stomach growled. I found Ada's basket tipped over in the corner. The apple was underneath, bruised, but I finished it with gratitude. I wondered how far "on the other side of the hill" was. And what if the driver had an accident on the way to the house and never got there? What if I was left here all night?

The driver would return in the morning to find me frozen to death, lips blue and perfect curls stiff with ice.

Mrs. Shackleton would never forgive me if I didn't take steps to die in an attractive position. After adjusting my bonnet, I leaned back in the seat, eyes closed, hands crossed over my chest. I could almost hear the mourners say the same thing as they paraded by my coffin: *She's the most beautiful corpse we've ever seen.*

I allowed myself the morbid satisfaction of Frederick crumbling, knowing he was responsible for my early demise. He'd never marry, but instead would grow into a bitter old man, crippled with secret guilt. Only when he was on his deathbed would he finally admit our engagement.

The faint echo of heavy hooves got my attention. The driver was quick! I pulled my thoughts to a more reasonable matter, hoping there was a lovely fireplace and steaming supper waiting for me.

The horse came closer, but then it growled. My insides twisted with fright. The bruised apple threatened to come up. The creature outside my carriage was no horse. A bear? I held my breath and crouched to the floor, covering myself with my cloak.

Claws scratched at the door. "Go away, go away," I whispered. "Please, almighty Lord, make it go away."

The door handle sounded noisily, frantically twisting and turning. The beast had hands like a man! I quaked uncontrollably, certain it could smell my terror.

So much for an open casket. Mrs. Shackleton would be livid.

The door was flung open. I pushed myself to the farthest side of the carriage, clutching the cloak under my chin. White fangs dripping with saliva lunged toward me. The head was huge with deep-set eyes, and a sloppy wet nose.

“Moses,” a man’s voice called out. “Get down!”

The beast backed up and sat on its haunches, a long pink tongue lolling to one side.

8.2 Target Text: La Tercera Esposa de la Casa Faraday por B.R. Myers

Capítulo uno

25 de octubre de 1816

Teniente Frederick Fletcher, Marina Real Británica

Halifax, Nueva Escocia

Mi querido Frederick:

Ha pasado más de un mes desde que nos vimos, mas se siente como si fuera un siglo. Los recuerdos de nuestro último encuentro me consuelan, pero también me recuerdan cuánto anhelo tu atención. Sé que te encuentras muy ocupado con tus responsabilidades como para responderme, pero una o dos oraciones de tu parte aliviarían el sufrimiento que siento en mi corazón.

La señora Shackleton me observa con su ojo crítico todo el tiempo y me preocupa que sospeche de nuestros planes. Cuando el juez Shackleton llegó a casa, hablaron en su estudio por casi una hora, lo cual es posiblemente el tiempo más largo que se han tomado en esa habitación desde que vivo aquí. Temo que ella le haya informado de sus sospechas. No puedo anticipar las acciones del juez, pero si actuamos rápido, podremos evitar un desastre.

Disculpa mi desagradable advertencia, querido. Permíteme terminar esta carta de una mejor manera. ¿Recuerdas lo último que me susurraste al oído? Yo sí. De hecho, me acuesto todas las noches recordando ese maravilloso momento una y otra vez. Cuánto ansío ver si lo que dices es verdad. Dijiste que mi cabello brillaría más que el sol de Bermudas.

Tuya con adoración,

Emeline

1 de noviembre de 1816

Teniente Frederick Fletcher, Marina Real Británica

Halifax, Nueva Escocia

Mi querido Frederick:

Se termina otra semana en la que no he sabido de ti. Quiero ser fuerte, pero mi determinación se desvanece. La lluvia en la ventana es reflejo de mi llanto silencioso. Cuento los días hasta que pueda anunciar nuestro compromiso. Me ruborizo incluso mientras escribo, recordando nuestros momentos en secreto.

No obstante, estar separados me duele en el alma. Te pido que me des señales de vida; incluso una pequeña carta bastará. Mi desespero se está notando, y temo que la señora Shackleton me envíe al sanatorio. La casa es grande, pero siento su mirada de desaprobación sin importar dónde me esconda. No estoy exagerando sus ansias de venganza. Cuán cruel e increíblemente desgarrador sería que me llevaran lejos de aquí y que llegues justo después, sin poder rescatarme.

Siempre tuya,

Emeline

8 de noviembre de 1816

Teniente Frederick Fletcher, Marina Real Británica

Halifax, Nueva Escocia

Mi querido Frederick:

Estoy delirando de anticipación, pues muy seguramente te vea en el baile del almirante esta noche. Dudo que pueda controlar mis ansias de envolverte en mis brazos. No obstante, sé que debemos mantener nuestras interacciones debidamente respetables, para evitar que la señora Shackleton sospeche. Sin embargo, creo que mucha distancia será igual de sospechoso, así que espero que bailes conmigo al menos una vez.

Frederick, ella planea casarme con el mejor postor de entre una cuidadosa selección de los solteros más adinerados. La escuché hablando de esto con el juez anoche. Incluso hablaron de un primo viejo y con artritis que posee un título nobiliario en Inglaterra. Me da escalofríos la mera idea de que otro hombre me toque aparte de ti.

Te aseguro que mi deseo de ser tu esposa no tiene nada que ver con la idea de Bermudas o incluso irme de esta casa. Eres tú. Sólo tú. Mientras escribo esta carta, continúo mirando por la ventana con tal intensidad que me sorprende que no te haya materializado ante mis ojos, caminando por la calle afuera.

Puedo imaginar tu elegante uniforme azul marino, la manera en que tu cabello cobrizo se siente entre mis dedos, tu sonrisa, tus labios, tus dedos desatando los botones de mi vestido. Discúlpame por mi mano temblorosa, pues incluso el recuerdo de nuestro tiempo juntos desata en mí una avalancha de emociones.

Te veré en la noche, querido.

Emeline

El sonido de pezuñas resonó en los adoquines, haciendo eco en la niebla, incrementando mientras se acercaba a la casa. Mi corazón comenzó a galopar. ¡El correo de la tarde! Me giré hacia la larga ventana de mi habitación, casi arrastrando conmigo la silla del tocador. —¡Ay! — Me dolió el cuero cabelludo con el jalón repentino. Volví a sentarme lentamente, mirando de frente al espejo. Mi rostro me frunció el ceño de vuelta dentro del marco de caoba, la madera tallada en elaborados capullos de rosas. Debajo, en la mesa del tocador, yacía una bandeja de porcelana llena de horquillas, una botella de perfume de cristal y una taza de té ya templado desde hace un tiempo. El único objeto que me pertenecía era el pequeño retrato de Mamá.

Ada le dio vueltas a otro de mis rizos rubios y lo fijó con una horquilla. —Lo siento, señorita Emeline —murmuró entre dientes, las palabras respetuosas pero su tono uno cansado e impaciente. Ada había sido mi criada desde que tenía diez años, y algo me decía que todavía me veía como una niña pequeña.

Su lengua se asomó en la esquina de su boca mientras añadía un lazo rosa a mis rizos. La señora Shackleton había insistido en este estilo: dividido en el medio, la parte de arriba plana, con los lados enroscados en rizos apretados y fijados cerca de mis orejas. En la parte de atrás, una larga trenza se enrollaría en un moño alto.

Ada había estado trabajando en esto por casi una hora. Sus mejillas redondas se enrojecieron aún más mientras yo me retorcí en el cojín bordado del tocador. Mi cabeza entera palpitaba de todos los jalones y tirones.

La probabilidad de recibir una carta de Frederick me daba esperanza. Podría soportar la tediosa preparación para un baile si supiera que sería una de las últimas veces que tendría que aguantar las órdenes de la señora Shackleton. Me encontraba encerrada en mi habitación desde el desayuno, forzada a esperar con mi bata puesta. La señora Shackleton estaba convencida de que mi complexión sufría debido a actividades innecesarias como caminar por la casa y tener conversaciones banales. Leer también estaba prohibido, ya que el esfuerzo causaría que mis ojos se enrojecieran y se entrecerraran. Dijo que presentarse al baile con un rostro cansado y una sonrisa exhausta sería tremendo fracaso.

Un vestido nuevo, teñido de un rosa claro adornado con encaje, colgaba en la parte delantera del armario, planchado recientemente por Ada. Las mangas cortas tipo farol y el corpiño con escote eran de un satén brillante, mientras que la falda estaba cubierta de una gasa de seda acentuada con docenas de rosetas de encaje. Venía acompañado de un par de zapatos de lana que hacían juego y largos guantes de noche hechos con la misma gasa transparente. Me vería radiante, tal y como la señora Shackleton quería. No me metería en ese vestido hasta el último momento. Me sorprendí de que la señora Shackleton no insistiera en que me mantuviera de pie durante todo el trayecto para evitar arrugas. Mencionó varias veces que el encaje había sido ordenado específicamente desde Inglaterra.

—¿Acaso no sería más divertido si pudiéramos amarrarnos el cabello en un bonete? —le dije a Ada, intentando hacer las paces por haber alzado mi voz—. Nada de estas preocupaciones innecesarias, perdiendo el tiempo y mirándose el espejo.

Un mechón fino de cabello marrón cayó entre los ojos de Ada. Se lo quitó de su frente con impaciencia. —Me vendría bien una hora para sentarme —respondió.

El sonrojo se extendió por mis mejillas. Ella nunca contestaría de esa manera delante de la señora Shackleton. ¿Cómo sería capaz de administrar un hogar con Frederick si ni siquiera podía mantener a mi criada a raya? El familiar temblor comenzó en mi estómago.

Fuera de la ventana, vi al carruaje del correo detenerse. Poco después, alguien tocó la puerta en la entrada principal de abajo. Cerré los ojos y rogué por la única cosa que haría que mis problemas desaparecieran. Esperé a que una de las criadas viniera con una carta.

El silencio se extendió, haciendo que cada segundo ejerciera presión en mi pecho. Apenas podía respirar.

Se escuchó un grito de júbilo amortiguado desde el vestíbulo, y al principio mi corazón dio un vuelco, pero traté de tranquilizarme. La carta que estaba esperando no habría provocado tal reacción en la señora Shackleton. Ada y yo intercambiamos miradas curiosas en el espejo.

Mis encargados conocían a Frederick, pero sólo como el teniente Fletcher, un invitado regular que acompañaba al almirante, sin duda no como mi amante secreto. Hace dos años, antes de que terminara la guerra, el puerto se encontraba abarrotado de barcos, y los oficiales navales visitaban la casa con regularidad. Solían hablar con cariño de su puerto en Bermudas. Aves de brillantes colores daban serenatas con cantos guturales y exuberantes, como los más sociables cantantes de ópera. La cálida luz del sol radiaba sobre los amplios tramos de playas, haciendo que la fina y suave arena se sintiera como carbones ardientes. Sin embargo, siempre se podía encontrar una sombra bajo las largas hojas de las palmeras, sus cocos abiertos por la mitad para una refrescante bebida. Las aguas turquesas siempre eran cálidas y acogedoras. Era completamente lo opuesto a Halifax y su costa brumosa, la cual estaba flanqueada por tabernas que arrastraban el olor rancio de cerveza y orina.

Los zapatos de la señora Shackleton sonaron como un imparable martillo en las escaleras, aumentando en volumen mientras ascendía al segundo piso y ganando velocidad mientras venía por el pasillo. La puerta de mi habitación casi se arrancó de sus bisagras cuando irrumpió.

Me encogí en mi asiento, ignorando la familiar punzada de irritación ante su continua indiferencia por mi privacidad. La única vez que le pedí a la señora Shackleton que no entrara sin tocar antes, me clavó una mirada fría y dijo: —¿Tu habitación? Nada en esta casa te pertenece. Harías bien en recordar que una pizca de gratitud sería más que bienvenida.

Aprendí que la gratitud, como el respeto, no requería sinceridad para obtener el resultado deseado. Por tal razón, pinté una sonrisa bien practicada en mi rostro mientras ella entraba sin tocar a la puerta.

—¡Maravillosas noticias! —Los ojos de la señora Shackleton brillaban enormes. El entusiasmo se veía fuera de lugar en su rostro amargo. Levantó una carta y comenzó a abanicarse con el papel, intentando recuperar el aliento. Dudaba si estaba acalorada por la subida rápida por las escaleras o el evidente entusiasmo. No obstante, cuando vio mi cabello, su típica expresión sentenciosa hizo que la comisura de sus labios bajara, borrando su inusual sonrisa.

—No, no, no —le dijo a Ada—. Hay demasiado volumen en la parte de atrás. —Su tono era uno severo y horrorizado, como si Ada hubiera traído una rata del muelle y la hubiese lanzado en mi cabeza.

—Prefiero este estilo —dije.

La señora Shackleton me ignoró. —Quítalo todo y comienza de nuevo —ordenó. Ada se tensó detrás de mí, mordiéndose el labio. Se le empezaron a aguar los ojos. Me quedé quieta y meforcé a permanecer indiferente. Se me incitaba a ser hermosa y callada, como todo lo demás en esta casa.

—¿Qué me tenías que contar? —le pregunté alegremente, esperando desviar la atención de Ada, la cual claramente intentaba no llorar.

El rostro de la señora Shackleton se iluminó. Levantó la carta. —¡He conseguido otro pretendiente!

Me quedé sin aliento. Esta era la primera vez que me mencionaba su estrategia de matrimonio directamente. Descubrí que ya estaba haciendo sus investigaciones hace casi seis meses atrás, y a esto se debía mi determinación de casarme con Frederick, pero verla confirmar mis miedos tan francamente era escalofriante. No tenía la menor consideración por mis sentimientos; incluso mi conocimiento de la situación era irrelevante para ella. —¿Cuántos más harán falta? —bromeé, intentando ocultar mi ira—. De seguro uno es suficiente.

Con falsa condescendencia, dijo: —Esta oferta nos pondrá por delante de las otras partes interesadas.

No hay nada más romántico que la ventaja. Me mordí la lengua para evitar decir esto en voz alta. Ella dominaba todas las decisiones en mi vida, pero no dejaría que escogiera mi esposo. Y la única manera de lograr esto era casarme con Frederick e irme tan pronto como fuera posible.

—Ya casi tienes veintiún años, Emeline —explicó con impaciencia—. Tu belleza es renombrada, pero no eterna. Con el traslado de la marina hacia Bermudas en los próximos meses, los ingresos de los comerciantes locales seguramente se verán afectados. Es solo cuestión de tiempo para que

también se vayan. Si seguimos esperando, los únicos pretendientes en Halifax serán los piratas, los contrabandistas de ron y los granjeros. —Me dirigió una sonrisa satisfecha—. Mi prima en South Shore me confirmó que actualmente el Capitán Graves está buscando una nueva esposa. Es un comerciante de carga retirado que hizo su fortuna negociando y ahora es dueño de varios aserraderos —escudriñó la carta y añadió—: Así como de la tienda.

—¿*Nueva esposa*? —cuestioné.

La señora Shackleton ignoró mi pregunta y continuó leyendo.

—Tiene una propiedad con un personal lo suficientemente grande para hacerse cargo de un hogar tres veces el tamaño del gobernador general. Es considerablemente adinerado y ejerce influencia en el magistrado. —Dirigiéndome la mirada, concluyó diciendo—: Ciertamente será la imagen de una poderosa familia por generaciones.

Yo no necesitaba al Capitán Graves o sus enormes propiedades y múltiples negocios. Poseía el amor del teniente Fletcher, el cual valía más que todas las riquezas del mundo. Pero mientras ella continuaba mirándome, esperando unas palabras de gratitud, me di cuenta de que mi futuro con Frederick no estaba asegurado...todavía no. No oficialmente. Si la señora Shackleton supiera lo que estaba planeando, me encerraría en esta habitación hasta el día de mi boda con un viejo bufón de su predilección.

Haciendo a un lado esa miserable imagen, me concentré en su lugar en cómo se sentiría estar en los brazos de Frederick nuevamente, y cuán liberador sería abordar un barco dirigido a Bermudas con él, dejando atrás esta desdichada ciudad y todos sus horribles recuerdos. —Suena prometedor —fue todo lo que le dije a la señora Shackleton. Apreté las manos en mi falda, mis uñas ejerciendo presión en la curva de mi dedo índice, lo suficientemente duro como para dejar una media luna en la suave piel.

Ada arrugó su nariz. —¿Para qué traer la noticia hasta Halifax? ¿Acaso no hay buenas candidatas más cerca de su hogar? ¿Si es que es tan irresistible como dicen?

Le aplaudí silenciosamente a Ada por su razonable pregunta, la cual ni siquiera había considerado hacer. No era lo suficientemente lista como para pensar en estas cosas por mí misma.

La señora Shackleton frunció el ceño. Sus ojos se nublaron, el aviso antes de la tormenta. Por más que envidiara las agallas de Ada, ella no era tan sensible al genio de la señora Shackleton, y usualmente me tocaba a mí enfrentar la peor parte.

—Como hombre adinerado, tiene el lujo de ser selectivo —luego añadió, con un tono casual—: Tuvo dos esposas anteriormente. Ambas fallecieron mientras daban a luz. Qué tragedia le aconteció a tan buen hombre —se giró hacia mí—. Eres muy afortunada. Toda joven moriría por tener la oportunidad de casarse con el capitán Graves.

Dos ya murieron, pensé.

—Apúrate y termina eso —le ordenó a Ada, señalando mi cabello—. Nos vamos al baile del almirante dentro de una hora.

Fruncí el ceño.

—¿Vienen conmigo? Pero ya le dije a Jane que la buscaría en nuestro carruaje.

La señora Shackleton hizo un sonido exasperado desde lo profundo de su garganta. —¿Jane Finney? No permitiré que llegues acompañada de gente como ella. Mis fuentes me dicen que su padre tiene conexiones con los acadianos, incluso relaciones de sangre. Sabes que esos católicos franceses preferirían ver a la Marina Británica entera hundirse en las profundidades del Atlántico antes que defender nuestras costas de los americanos.

Su argumento sonaba exagerado; Jane no era católica, y yo no podía pensar en ninguna manera en que los acadianos le hubieran hecho algo malo a la señora Shackleton. No obstante, yo conocía poco de política, y quizá Frederick estuviera de acuerdo con ella. Aun así, respondí: —Jane es mi amiga.

Ella suspiró con aburrida indiferencia. —Todas las jóvenes son competencia. Puede que pretendan ser tus amigas, pero son astutas y maliciosas. ¿Y tú...? —negó con la cabeza con una mirada de lástima—. No eres lo suficientemente astuta como para darte cuenta de cuándo te están utilizando.

Colocó la carta en el tocador y empujó a Ada a un lado, tomando su espacio detrás de mí. Luego se inclinó hasta que nuestros rostros estuvieron uno al lado del otro.

Nos observamos en el espejo.

—Tu padre no era apto para los negocios. Invirtió más de lo que se podía permitir, incluso le dio préstamos a aquellos que sabía que no le podrían pagar de vuelta —dijo—. Cuando falleció, te dejó a ti y a tu madre sin un centavo.

Chasqueó la lengua mientras hacía una pausa, dejando que mi mente llenara el silencio con todo lo que ya sabía. Ella solía repetir la horrible historia que había escuchado miles de veces. —Nada ni nadie podría haberla sacado de su miseria. Murió de un corazón roto —suspirando, colocó una mano en mi cabello—. Es una pena que no haya visto lo hermosa que resultaste ser.

Hablaba como si mi belleza pudiese haber salvado a mi madre. Me quedé callada. Yo sabía lo que realmente la había matado.

Luego, ella sonrió. —Pero fue la providencia de Dios la que te permitió venir hacia mí, para que pudieras prepararte para mejores oportunidades.

El nudo en mi estómago se apretó. Observé nuestros rostros en el espejo, uno al lado del otro. Su larga nariz era puntiaguda, lo cual me recordaba a un cuervo. Incluso cuando estaba de buen humor, sus labios delgados tenían la natural tendencia de doblarse hacia abajo, como si lucharan contra una sonrisa. Si bien las canas ya habían empezado a aparecer en sus rizos planos, los cuales estaban intencionalmente planchados contra su cara, la señora Shackleton no había cambiado mucho desde la primera vez que la vi, cuando llegué a su casa hace diez años. —La cuidaré como si fuera mía —le había dicho a mi madre. Incluso para ese tiempo, con diez años, podía sentir su crítica mirada enfocada en mí.

—¿Mmm? —incitó, trayéndome de vuelta al presente.

—Sí —afirmé—. Estoy agradecida.

Se enderezó por completo y salió de la habitación, cerrando abruptamente la puerta detrás de ella. La carta permaneció en el tocador, silenciosa, recordándome que se me estaba acabando el tiempo.

Tenía que asegurar mi matrimonio con Frederick. Esta noche.

Los hombros de Ada se relajaron en cuanto se fue. Se ocupó de mi cabello y trenzó los mechones en un estilo más tradicional. Luego procedió a traer el vestido colgado de la puerta del armario, echando un vistazo rápido a los pliegues en busca de imperfecciones.

Me dirigí a mi escritorio y le escribí a Jane para disculparme por cancelar mi propuesta de compartir el carruaje del juez. Cuando se la pasé a Ada para que se la diera al mozo que la entregaría, su rostro estaba pálido, muy diferente a su típica complexión rosada. Se mordió el labio inferior.

—¿Qué pasa, Ada?

Arrugó su nariz. —Ese hombre, el Capitán Graves —comenzó—. Disculpe que lo diga, señorita Emeline, pero ¿acaso no es extraño que ambas esposas hayan fallecido de la misma manera?

Me giré para vestirme, fingiendo examinar las mangas infladas. —¿En el parto?

Desafortunadamente, es muy común. Seguramente esas desgracias no tuvieron nada que ver con él.

Lo dije en serio; no parecía ser tan extraño, si bien muy triste. No sabía nada del Capitán Graves. Puede que fuera un hombre bueno o malo, aunque ciertamente uno adinerado. Nada de esto me importaba. Arruinaría los planes de la señora Shackleton antes de que me consiguiera una reunión en privado con él. No obstante, mientras pensaba todo esto, un escalofrío me recorrió la columna.

Mamá siempre decía que eso significaba que alguien acababa de caminar sobre tu tumba.

Capítulo dos

La noche trajo consigo una llovizna continua que bañó la ciudad en un lustre frío y húmedo, mientras que el cielo gris pálido se tornaba lentamente negro, como un moretón de varios días. Me encontraba sentada frente al juez y la señora Shackleton, deseando que mi capa rosa fuera un manto de lana. Antes de irnos, Ada se ofreció a buscarme mantas para mis rodillas, pero la señora Shackleton rechazó la idea inmediatamente, diciendo que el peso adicional seguramente aplastaría la gasa de seda en mi falda.

Intenté conjurar una playa soleada con una tumbona debajo de una palma.

Mientras nos sacudíamos sobre los adoquines, el olor fétido a pescado proveniente de la costa se filtró por el carruaje. Permaneció incluso después de pasar las tabernas, y logró mezclarse con la pesada fragancia del perfume de agua de rosas de la señora Shackleton, creando un aroma que era tanto floral como podrido y me recordaba distintivamente a los funerales.

Un ardiente deseo creció en mi pecho, expandiéndose con cada giro de las ruedas mientras nos acercábamos a nuestro destino. Tomé pequeñas bocanadas de aire a través de labios fruncidos, manteniendo la mirada en mi falda, desconfiando de mi propia expresión. Estaba segura de que la señora Shackleton detectaría mi estrategia; cada deseo y oración que estuve repitiendo en mi mente durante todo el día estarían escritos en mi cara.

Por fin, giramos hacia la calle principal y llegamos al redondel empedrado de la casa señorial del almirante. La mansión de tres pisos se impuso ante nosotros, su estilo británico y elegante orgullosamente en exhibición. El techo inclinado estaba rodeado con una balaustrada, y amplias escaleras se elevaban hasta la entrada principal, flanqueadas por cuatro columnas. La luz de las velas brillaba desde adentro, incluyendo las buhardillas del tercer piso, haciendo que la casa se viera viva y alegre.

Mi corazón latía desenfrenadamente en mi pecho. Vería a Frederick pronto, y todo por lo que estaba orando se materializaría. Podríamos terminar nuestros planes en persona y decidir la fecha de la boda.

El juez Shackleton le dio un sorbo a su frasco y lo metió nuevamente en el bolsillo de su chaqueta mientras nuestro carruaje se acercaba. Su sombrero de copa de seda descansaba sobre una mata de rizos grises. Apenas había murmurado una palabra durante todo el trayecto, y asumí que estaba enfadado por perderse una noche en el casino. El juez Shackleton era un hombre poderoso con muchas personas bajo su empleo, pero cuando llegaba a casa, la señora Shackleton era la que tenía la tutela.

Nuestro carruaje se detuvo. El juez ofreció su brazo para escoltar a la señora Shackleton. Los seguí pasos atrás. Ella siseó por encima de su hombro: —¡Recoge tu vestido! Los charcos arruinarán el dobladillo.

Mientras entrábamos para esperar a que los lacayos tomaran nuestras capas, me bajé la capucha, observando el enorme candelabro del vestíbulo.

La señora Shackleton le dio un codazo al juez mientras apuntaba con aprecio hacia las brillantes flores amarillas pintadas a mano en el papel de pared. Disimuladamente, las acaricié con las yemas de mis dedos mientras nos hacían avanzar en fila, esperando poder ver esos tonos vibrantes en la vida real pronto. La señora Shackleton ofreció sus saludos a la pareja de ancianos en frente de nosotros. Bajé mi mano y me quedé en mi sitio, permaneciendo callada hasta que terminaran de hablar. El juez Shackleton agitó su mano en mi dirección. —Y, por supuesto, recuerdan a la señorita Fitzpatrick —dijo. Luego se detuvo por dos segundos, como siempre hacía cuando tenía que explicar mi relación con ellos, y añadió: —La pupila de mi esposa por ocho años.

—Diez —corrigió la señora Shackleton.

Mi sonrisa apareció automáticamente. Hice una reverencia y les agradecí cuando me hicieron cumplidos por mi peinado. La señora Shackleton declaró que la inspiración fue particularmente suya.

Luego de que retiraran nuestras capas, nos hicieron pasar al salón de baile. El pasillo trajo consigo la conversación amortiguada de los invitados y la cadencia de los violines. La danza ya estaba en su curso. Se me aceleró el corazón, ansioso e inquieto, mientras me imaginaba bailando un vals con Frederick. La entrada hacia el salón de baile estaba flanqueada por columnas talladas con imágenes de querubines agarrando guirnaldas de flores. El juez tomó una copa de vino de un sirviente y rápidamente se alejó para saludar a varios conocidos.

Me temblaban las piernas, parada al lado de la señora Shackleton en el umbral del salón, bañado por la luz de las velas. Un grupo de músicos, no menos de veinte en total, se encontraba en el balcón, tocando una alegre melodía que se filtraba entre nosotros como si buscara atraernos a la pista de baile. Sus arcos se movían a través de las cuerdas de una manera rápida y eficaz, el ritmo festivo de la canción compitiendo con el bullicio de la fiesta de abajo.

El perímetro del salón de baile estaba rodeado de jóvenes ansiosas, cada una esperando poder atraer la atención de un futuro compañero. Se reían con nerviosismo y se hablaban detrás de sus manos enguantadas. Les echaba un vistazo de vez en cuando mientras seguía obedientemente a la señora Shackleton hasta un grupo de mujeres canosas descansando en un canapé al lado de la chimenea. Hice una reverencia y le sonreí a cada una mientras la señora Shackleton les proveía detalles penosos de mi vestido. Todas la felicitaron por una compra tan exquisita, y luego

pasaron a sus chismes de siempre. A diferencia de sus contrapartes más jóvenes, ellas no hablaban en murmullos o detrás de manos enguantadas. Tampoco se reían.

Ni yo. Tristemente, encajaba más con las damas más ancianas de lo que quería admitir. Batallé contra mi pesimismo imaginando a la señora Shackleton en la próxima fiesta, obligada a decirle a todo el mundo que me escapé hacia Bermudas. Solamente me daría tristeza perderme los gritos de sorpresa.

Hileras de vestidos de seda pasaban rápidamente a nuestro alrededor mientras los bailarines giraban al tiempo de la música. Las chaquetas azul marino de los oficiales de la Marina Británica sobresalían en el panorama. ¿Pero dónde estaba mi oficial? Pasé una mano por mis rizos, esperando que el lazo que Ada trenzó siguiera en su lugar. La señora Shackleton se mantuvo parada como un centinela a mi lado, ocupando todo el espacio. Ella y su malicioso séquito de criticonas eran evitadas por la mayoría de los invitados, nadie deteniéndose por más tiempo de lo necesario que para un asentimiento de cabeza educado o una reverencia. Estiré ligeramente mi cuello, observando la multitud, esperando divisar las familiares ondas de cabello cobrizo sacándole más de una cabeza a los demás.

Dos dolorosamente largas canciones después, el pánico se había establecido en mí. Me sudaban las palmas mientras el aire se tornaba denso con el calor de la multitud.

Las dudas caían como gotas de lluvia deslizándose por el cristal de una ventana, continuas e imparables, mientras me imaginaba varias razones por las cuales Frederick se ausentó. ¿Y si nunca recibió mis cartas? ¿Y si lo enviaron lejos en una misión secreta del almirante? ¿Y si su barco se extravió en el mar o se destruyó en una tormenta o chocó con un témpano de hielo? ¿Y si fue capturado por corsarios y lanzado por la borda? ¿Y si nunca lo volvía a ver?

La señora Shackleton me miró con sospecha. —Sonríe —dijo.

La orden estaba tan arraigada en mí que mis labios subieron automáticamente, como si fuera su muñeca viviente. Continué inspeccionando todos los uniformes azules, esperando que el rostro con el que había soñado durante semanas apareciera. Mi imaginación comenzó a distorsionar mis preocupaciones en visiones fatales.

Había visto esos enormes y descomunales barcos en la costa. Sabía mejor que nadie que los accidentes podían ocurrir. Accidentes mortales. El pulso me subió hasta la garganta mientras imaginaba una tumba con el nombre de mi amado grabado en el granito.

Finalmente, reconocí un rostro, uno que suscitó un agudo sentido de culpa. Jane Finney se encontraba sola en la entrada del salón. Su perfil era muy parecido al de su hermano, Joseph. Él tenía una sonrisa relajada y ojos gentiles, pero nunca podía sostener mi mirada por más de un segundo, incluso cuando me propuso matrimonio el año pasado. Me preguntaba si todavía tartamudeaba. Me preguntaba, en secreto, si todavía pensaba en mí.

El año pasado, cuando le conté a la señora Shackleton de su propuesta, irrumpió en carcajadas. —¡Joseph Finney! Si quieres terminar sufriendo de escorbuto y ocho bebés tirando de tu falda, entonces adelante, pero no esperes que el juez y yo te mantengamos en este estilo de vida.

Le dije que lo rechazaría educadamente, pero ella percibía mi incertidumbre, mis dudas. —No lo amo —declaré.

—¿No lo amas? —se burló, agitando su pañuelo de encaje en el aire. —El dinero es lo único que te puede asegurar una vida cómoda. Un compañerismo amistoso es mucho más fácil de desarrollar si tu estómago está lleno y tu cama cálida.

La música se detuvo, enviando una nueva oleada de bailarines a la pista. Un mozo se detuvo en frente de nosotros con una bandeja plateada de almejas. Me negué silenciosamente; mi estómago estaba tan apretado que me parecía imposible considerar comer cualquier cosa. Había saltado el almuerzo antes, esperando que mis nervios ya se hubieran tranquilizado. La señora Shackleton sorbió dos con sorprendente rapidez, pero hizo una mueca después de la última y lo remató con un generoso sorbo de vino. —Cuidado con las ostras —dijo—. Me parece que están un poco tibias.

Me percaté de que Jane se acercaba. Luego me congelé, pues su compañero se había unido. La señora Shackleton hizo un sonido de disgusto mal disimulado mientras la pareja se detenía en frente de nosotros.

—Buenas noches, señora Shackleton.

Joseph Finney se encontraba junto a su hermana, haciendo su mejor esfuerzo para parecer más alto de lo que su ordinaria estatura le permitía. Aprecié su valentía en asegurarse de dirigirle la palabra primero. —¿E-e-espero que esté bien de salud?

Ella frunció el ceño. —Dios mediante.

Jane y yo simplemente nos hicimos una reverencia. Esperaba que entendiera que la decisión del carruaje no tuvo nada que ver conmigo. Se hizo un silencio terrible, y mi rostro se sonrojó.

Joseph se aclaró la garganta.

Sus ojos gentiles me fijaron en el lugar. —¿Me concedería el p-p-placer del siguiente baile, señorita Fitzpatrick?

Los dedos de la señora Shackleton me apretaron dolorosamente el codo, como una garra.

Me preguntaba si podría ahuyentarlo sutilmente antes de que la señora Shackleton lo aplastara como una mosca. De mi parte ya había hecho suficiente para romperle el corazón; lo menos que podía hacer ahora era protegerlo de sus comentarios punzantes. —Gracias, pero —mi oración fue interrumpida al ver a Frederick entrar en la habitación.

Una tras otra, las cabezas giraban mientras él pasaba por delante de los invitados que se encontraban alrededor de la pista de baile. Su paso era uno relajado y cómodo; se sentía a gusto con su multitud. Los hombres le estrechaban la mano o le daban golpecitos en su espalda, pero yo sabía que envidiaban su encanto natural. Cuando se acercó a un grupo de chicas, se codearon las unas a las otras, sus rostros brillando con sonrojos idénticos. Les sonrió, absorbiendo su admiración como si cada invitado hubiese venido esta noche solo por él, así como lo hice yo.

Todos los demás se desvanecieron mientras admiraba sus hombros anchos y su postura erguida. Una onda de cabello cobrizo complementaba su tez clara, pero la firmeza de sus ojos era testamento de la fuerza y la valentía que le daban a su uniforme un respeto más marcado. Incluso sin ver la insignia en sus hombreras, cualquiera podría adivinar que era un individuo de alto rango.

La calma envolvió mi alma. Estaba aquí. Estaba seguro. Todo encajaría en su lugar. Todos mis problemas desaparecerían.

Miré a Frederick, ignorando todo lo demás excepto él, conspirando a que su atención se dirigiera a mí. Por fin, milagrosamente, inclinó su cara y nuestros ojos se encontraron. El calor se esparció por mi pecho mientras continuaba sosteniendo mi mirada. La intensidad de su expresión casi me dejó sin aliento. En cualquier momento cruzaría la pista de baile y se dirigiría a mí. Flexioné mis dedos dentro de los delicados guantes de gasa, anticipando su toque. Pasó toda una eternidad, pero se mantuvo en su lugar, mirándome desde la distancia. Luego algo se amortiguó en su expresión, tornándola casi distante. Un frío repentino me recorrió el brazo. El aire crepitó a mi alrededor; casi grité su nombre. La espera era una tortura. Lo único que mantenía mis zapatos de lana plantados en el piso era el miedo a la reacción de la señora Shackleton si corría a través del salón de baile para reunirme con él.

¿Por qué se negaba a acercarse? Seguramente no había una etiqueta que le prohibiera acercarse a la señora Shackleton, ya que había cenado en la casa del juez varias veces y ella siempre lo recibía con deleite.

La ira creció bajo la delgada capa de confianza. No podía imaginar tratarlo de la misma manera, ignorando sus suplididos o descartando su sufrimiento tan fácilmente. Mi frágil alivio se congeló en un punzante dolor de traición.

Luego, con el más mínimo movimiento, dirigió su atención al hombre parado a mi lado.

Joseph seguía esperando pacientemente por mi respuesta, levantando sus cejas con esperanza. La próxima selección de música era una melodía animada. —Sí —dije, ofreciéndole mi habitual sonrisa. Él respondió con una expresión de grata sorpresa.

La señora Shackleton no hizo nada para disimular su sonido de desacuerdo ante mi respuesta.

El ritmo del baile nos daba poco tiempo para conversar, lo cual fue una bendición, ya que el señor Finney tartamudeaba más cuando intentaba a la misma vez concentrarse en los pasos. La señora Shackleton estaba metida en una conversación profunda con una de sus conocidas. Sus narices casi se tocaban mientras se inclinaban entre ellas, sin duda intercambiando palabritas sobre cualquiera que fuera el chisme escandaloso que les estuviera proveyendo entretenimiento. Mi atención estaba completamente enfocada en ver a Frederick observarnos, pero cada vez que lo atrapaba mirándome, se giraba.

Empecé a temblar. Mis extremidades se tornaron pesadas, y casi me tropecé encima de otro bailarín. Mis emociones, combinadas con la falta de alimentos, me hicieron inestable. La canción parecía extenderse una eternidad, vaciándome de toda mi esperanza y energía con cada nota.

Finalmente, la música paró.

—¿Está d-d-disfrutando? —Joseph extendió su brazo para escoltarme de vuelta con la señora Shackleton. El rostro de ella estaba pintado de un interesante tono rojizo. Imaginé que me odiaba por pasar tiempo con un candidato que no valía la pena. Unos cuantos susurros me sacaron de mi aturdimiento mientras mi nombre se repetía en varios labios.

Joseph me observó con una creciente expresión de preocupación. Puntos negros aparecieron frente a mis ojos. El suelo se inclinó enfermizamente mientras la oscuridad se apoderó de mi visión. Mis rodillas se desboronaron, y me caí hacia atrás... en un par de brazos fuertes.

Parpadeé, topándome con el rostro de Frederick.

Sus ojos azules brillaron como si estuviera disfrutando de un chiste privado.

Una oleada de voces preocupadas se filtró a nuestro alrededor, pero Frederick las ignoró mientras me ponía de pie. Colocó un brazo alrededor de mi cintura y nos maniobró a través de los bailarines boquiabiertos hasta unas puertas dobles. Un oficial corrió adelante y las abrió, dirigiéndonos al patio empedrado trasero. El aire frío fue bienvenido y me ayudó a disipar un poco el abrumador mareo. Tenía un millón de preguntas en la punta de mi lengua. Mi vista bajó a sus botas, repentinamente abrumada y extrañamente tímida.

Llegamos a una esquina del patio donde los arbustos altos proveían algo de privacidad. Me sentó delicadamente en un banco flanqueado por linternas. Frederick le habló al otro oficial con autoridad. —Un vaso de agua para la señorita Frederick, por favor.

Capítulo tres

Antes del amanecer, el conductor contratado empacó y colocó mi maleta en el carruaje. Me encontraba parada en los escalones de la casa del juez, temblando en la niebla. Ada me pasó una canasta con provisiones para el viaje; fue la única que se levantó para despedirse de mí.

Me despedí con la mano desde el carruaje mientras el conductor se alejaba. La luna se reflejaba en los charcos como una sátira cruel y poética. Todo lo que quería era libertad bajo un sol caliente.

Mis huesos parecían estar huecos. Mientras más se alejaba el carruaje de Frederick, más doloroso se tornaba el jalón detrás de mis costillas. Recordé nuestras promesas murmuradas en secreto, imaginando una vida en Bermudas, donde finalmente estaría lejos de la constante y crítica mirada de la señora Shackleton. Al menos en el carruaje podría relajar mi expresión y dejar que la sonrisa de hielo se derritiera. Debía tener fe de que él recibiría la carta.

Shoreham se encontraba a casi un día de viaje. El sol salió, revelando cómo las casas de piedra y las tiendas habían sido reemplazadas por árboles y la espesa maleza del bosque. Era un recorrido de surcos y baches sin fin. Nunca había estado fuera de la ciudad, y ver el mundo expandirse sin edificios ni otras personas a la vista era perturbador. El desconocimiento me hizo sentir como una cometa repentinamente cortada de sus cuerdas, a la deriva de la brisa.

Luego de cambiar de caballos, me comí una tarta de cerdo y un pedazo de queso. Todo lo que quedaba en la canasta era una manzana. Limpié las últimas migajas del hojaldre que hizo Ada de mi vestido mientras conjuraba la imagen de Frederick zarpando del muelle, dirigiéndose a la isla del Capitán Graves con mi carta doblada dentro del bolsillo de su chaqueta, cerca de su corazón. El salitre cubriendo su cabello cobrizo mientras se mantenía de pie en proa, ansioso de rescatarme.

Salí de mi ensueño cuando el carruaje se detuvo. Abrí la cortina. La luz de la tarde había mermado mientras se adentraba la noche.

Divisé una calle rural y ordenada con bonitos edificios. El conductor saltó de su asiento y caminó hacia la oficina postal. Lo podía ver a través de la ventana hablando con un hombre delgado. Este se acomodó sus lentes, asintió con la cabeza y le entregó al conductor varios paquetes.

Sin dirigirme la palabra, el conductor tomó el correo y lo metió en un bolso que cruzaba su pecho. Antes de que retomáramos nuestro camino, el jefe de correos se acercó a la entrada. El comando de la señora Shackleton se escuchó como un eco fantasmal. Le sonreí y saludé con la mano. Él no devolvió el saludo. En su lugar, bajó la mirada, negando con la cabeza.

Me incliné lejos de su vista, presionándome contra el asiento. Mis mejillas se sonrojaron de vergüenza y confusión.

El camino se inclinaba hacia abajo, dándome acceso a una vista de la costa adelante y, más allá, a un extenso océano gris. A lo lejos, una isla salpicada de árboles sobresalía de entre la neblina. El carruaje se acercó más a la playa, permitiéndome distinguir un camino sinuoso de piedras que emergía del mismo suelo oceánico. Sonó un golpe mientras el carruaje se acomodaba en este precario camino.

Mientras me sacudía de un lado a otro, me agarré del asiento para mantenerme en mi sitio. La vista de ambas ventanas solo me permitía ver la misma escena: nada más que agua. Me arriesgué a echarle un vistazo a las ruedas y vi que el carruaje apenas cabía en el camino. Todo lo que me impedía ser tragada por el Atlántico Norte eran unos cuantos pies de piedra.

Las gaviotas chillaban en lo alto, sonando como una alarmante advertencia de muerte.

La niebla cantó victoria, comiéndose todo lo que pareciera ser tierra.

Una vez el carruaje llegó a la isla, el trayecto se tornó más suave. Solté mi agarre del asiento y envolví la capa alrededor de mí con más fuerza. Sobreviví el viaje para atravesarla, pero ¿qué exactamente me deparaba? ¿Quién era el Capitán Graves, realmente?

Otro pensamiento irrumpió en mi mente; uno que llevaba evitando desde que me subí al carruaje. ¿Cuánto me quedaba antes de la boda? ¿Y cómo se supone que me introdujera? Lo practiqué en voz alta varias veces. —Hola, Capitán Graves —dije, tratando de calmar mi voz—. Soy Emeline Fitzpatrick, su nueva esposa. Un escalofrío me recorrió la piel como si alguien hubiese caminado sobre mi tumba.

Nueva esposa.

Qué extraño que ambas esposas hubieran muerto de la misma manera. No obstante, era una desafortunada realidad de ser mujer, una que se me hacía difícil olvidar: la alegría de una nueva vida puede frecuentemente tornarse en una muerte en su lugar.

Tomamos una inclinación empinada. Los árboles se acercaron, casi tocando el carruaje, bloqueando la luz restante. La noche abrió su boca, lista para tragarme entera.

El carruaje arremetió y se inclinó peligrosamente. Pareció mantenerse suspendido en el aire antes de estrellarse con estrépito, volcándose hacia el lado. El caballo relinchó ferozmente mientras que el conductor gritaba improperios. Mi propio grito se perdió en el caos mientras me caía con un golpe sordo en el suelo. Mi vestido se arremolinó a mi alrededor. La puerta se abrió de golpe. El conductor respiraba con dificultad, su gorra torcida.

—¿Se encuentra bien, señorita? —Me ofreció su mano.

Bajé del carruaje con su ayuda. —Eso creo —dije, probando caminar en mis piernas. Mi codo latía.

La rueda trasera se había roto en su eje. El conductor se quitó su gorra y se rascó la cabeza mientras miraba el camino, evaluando una solución invisible a nuestro problema. Inhaló y desenganchó al caballo. —Seguiré el resto del camino a la casa —dijo, con las riendas ya en sus manos—. No tengo un sillín para usted, y adelantaré el paso si cabalgo solo.

Esto me pareció bastante egoísta de su parte, pero permanecí callada.

—Aquí estará segura —dijo, señalando el carruaje volcado—. Es más cálido si espera adentro.

Me negué a darle la razón. Me estaba dejando sola en un lugar extraño.

Montó el pobre caballo, el cual todavía estaba un poco tambaleante luego del choque.

—Regresaré con el mayordomo para traerla tanto a usted como sus pertenencias a la propiedad. No debe tomar más de un cuarto de hora.

—¿Tanto tiempo? —Me froté el codo adolorido. Los árboles y el bosque parecían inclinarse como si estuvieran escuchando. ¿Cuán grande era la isla?

Se alejó. —La Casa Faraday está apenas al otro lado de la colina.

La Casa Faraday. Me lo repetí varias veces, sorprendida por lo lindo que sonaba, casi majestuoso.

Lo observé mientras se alejaba cabalgando, hasta que no pude ver su espalda. Luego agudicé el oído hasta que el golpe de las pezuñas también desapareció. Después, todo estaba callado.

Demasiado callado.

Nunca había estado dentro de un vacío de tal magnitud. Era desconcertante. La ciudad siempre gozaba de vida: el clip-clop de las pezuñas en los adoquines, las bromas alegres del ayudante de la carnicería que hacía entregas semanalmente, los cañones resonando desde Citadel Hill cuando los barcos náuticos entraban al muelle.

Sin embargo, el único sonido en esta isla era mi respiración. Era como si yo fuera el único ser viviente aquí. La oscuridad pareció profundizarse mientras el atardecer se apoderaba del cielo. El frío penetró a través de mis enaguas y medias largas. No había suficiente lana para mantener la humedad del aire de mar fuera. Temblando, subí al carruaje.

Me rugió el estómago. Encontré la canasta de Ada volcada en una esquina. La manzana estaba abajo, amortiguada, pero la terminé con gratitud. Me preguntaba cuán lejos “al otro lado de la colina” quedaba. ¿Y si el conductor tuvo un accidente de camino a la casa y nunca llegaba? ¿Y si me quedaba aquí toda la noche?

El conductor volvería en la mañana para encontrarme congelada, con los labios azules y los rizos perfectos tensos con hielo.

La señora Shackleton nunca me perdonaría si no tomaba las precauciones para morir en una posición atractiva. Luego de ajustar mi bonete, me incliné en el asiento, con los ojos cerrados y las manos cruzadas sobre mi pecho. Casi podía escuchar a los dolientes decir lo mismo mientras desfilaban mi ataúd. *Es el cadáver más hermoso jamás visto.*

Me permití la morbosa satisfacción de imaginar a Frederick desmoronándose, sabiendo que fue responsable de mi muerte temprana. Nunca se casaría, y en su lugar se tornaría en un hombre

viejo y amargado, incapacitado con su culpa secreta. Solo cuando estuviera en su lecho de muerte admitiría nuestro compromiso.

El eco lejano de pezuñas pesadas llamó mi atención. ¡Qué rápido vino el conductor! Dirigí mis pensamientos a un tema más sensato, deseando que una maravillosa chimenea y una cena humeante me estuvieran esperando.

El caballo se acercó, pero luego gruñó. Mis entrañas se torcieron de miedo. La manzana amortiguada amenazó con volver a salir. La criatura afuera del carruaje no era un caballo. ¿Un oso? Aguanté mi aliento y me agaché en el suelo, cubriéndome con mi capa.

Unas garras arañaron la puerta. —Vete, vete —susurré—. Por favor, Señor todopoderoso, haz que se vaya.

La manija de la puerta sonó fuertemente, torciéndose y girando de manera frenética. ¡La bestia tenía manos, como un hombre! Temblé incontrolablemente, segura de que podía oler mi terror.

Y ahí se va mi esperanza de un ataúd abierto. La señora Shackleton estaría furiosa.

La puerta se abrió de sopetón. Me empujé a la parte más lejana del carruaje, aferrando la capa debajo de mi barbilla. Colmillos blancos goteando saliva se arrojaron hacia mí. La cabeza era enorme, con ojos separados y una nariz mojada.

—Moisés —llamó una voz masculina—. ¡Bájate!

La bestia retrocedió y se sentó en sus patas traseras, una lengua larga y rosada colgándole de lado.

8.3 Table 1: An applied version of Munday's Translation Specification Sheet

ST details	TT constraints
Author: B.R. Myers	Author: B.R. Myers
Language variety: Canadian and US English, novel	Language variety: Latin-American Spanish, novel
Genre, text type: Historical fiction, Gothic fiction, romance, mystery (possibly an expressive function)	Genre, text type: Historical fiction, Gothic fiction, romance, mystery (possibly an expressive function)
Publication outlet: publishing house, William Morrow paperbacks (US, HarperCollins)	Publication outlet: publishing house, Umbriel
Date of publication: 20 August 2024	Date of publication: 15 June 2025
Title of the whole text: The Third Wife of Faraday House	Title of the whole text: To be analysed and decided in the translation process
Length: 352 pages	Unknown
Motive: Second Gothic novel by the author; entertainment; expanding to new and seasoned audiences	Motive: The first novel was not translated, but this second one wants to expand to new and seasoned audiences
Readership: people acquainted with the genre, but also new readers	Readership: people acquainted with the genre, but also new readers
Place of publication: Canada, the US and the UK, both in physical and online bookstores	Place of publication: Latin-American countries, both in physical and online bookstores

8.4 Table 2: Mary Higgins Clark Award Criteria (Mystery Writers, n.d.)

• The protagonist is a nice young woman whose life is suddenly invaded.
• She's self-made and independent, with primarily good family relationships.
• She has an interesting job.
• She is not looking for trouble—she is doing exactly what she should be doing and something cuts across her bow.
• She solves her problem by her own courage and intelligence.
• The story has no on-scene violence.
• The story has no strong four-letter words or explicit sex scenes.

8.5 Table 3: Other examples of researched terms

Page number in the ST	ST	TT
23	post carriage	carruaje del correo
39	rum runners	contrabandistas de ron
44	scurvy	escorbuto
41	houseboy	mozo
42	gaming house	casino
50	butcher's boy	ayudante de la carnicería
48	postmaster	jefe de correos
43	footmen	lacayos
38	foyer	vestíbulo

45	epaulets	hombreras
47	trunk	maleta
36	admiral	almirante
38	guardians	encargados
42	flask	frasco
38	naval officers	oficiales navales
37	frock	vestido
37	dressing gown	bata
42	top hat	sombrero de copa
43	waltzing	bailando un vals
45	handkerchief	pañuelo de encaje

8.6 Table 4: Examples of different adjective order (words in bold represent nouns, italics adjectives)

Page number	ST	TT
--------------------	-----------	-----------

Page 37	<i>Brightly colored birds serenaded them with lush, throaty songs, like the most gregarious opera singers.</i>	<i>Aves de brillantes colores daban serenatas con cantos guturales y exuberantes, como los más sociables cantantes de ópera.</i>
Page 37	<i>And the hot sunlight radiated off long stretches of beaches, making the powdery soft sand feel like burning coals.</i>	<i>La cálida luz del sol radiaba sobre los amplios tramos de playas, haciendo que la fina y suave arena se sintiera como carbones ardientes.</i>
Page 37	<i>But shade could always be found under the long stretching leaves of the palm trees, their coconuts split open for a refreshing drink.</i>	<i>Sin embargo, siempre se podía encontrar una sombra bajo las largas hojas de las palmeras, sus cocos abiertos por la mitad para una refrescante bebida.</i>

Page 37	The <i>turquoise</i> waters were always <i>warm and welcoming</i> .	Las aguas turquesas siempre eran <i>cálidas y acogedoras</i> .
Page 41	The evening brought a <i>continuous</i> drizzle that lacquered the city in a <i>cold, wet sheen</i> as the <i>pasty gray</i> sky slowly churned to black, like a bruise setting in.	La noche trajo consigo una llovizna continua que bañó la ciudad en un lustre frío y húmedo , mientras que el cielo gris pálido se tornaba lentamente negro, como un moretón de varios días.
Page 41	I sat in the carriage across from the judge and Mrs. Shackleton, wishing my thin <i>pink</i> cloak were a fur wrap.	Me encontraba sentada frente al juez y la señora Shackleton, deseando que mi capa rosa fuera un manto de lana.