

Dear early readers,

When I read the first draft of *The Fountains of Silence*, I devoured the pages in awe. Of course, I knew to expect gorgeous prose, intricate plotting, compelling characters, and hidden history. For those things, Ruta has become well known. But I didn't anticipate the read would be such a visceral experience.

*The Fountains of Silence* takes us to Madrid, Spain, in 1957, during the height of General Francisco Franco's regime. There, we follow four main characters as they attempt to shake off the shackles of their pasts and make their own futures. For Daniel, it means forsaking the family's thriving oil business for photojournalism. For Ana, Rafa, and Puri, it means finding fulfilment in a country governed by fear and loss, and emerging from the long shadows cast by their parents.

Before I read this novel, I knew very little about what Spain was like under Franco's rule. I knew nothing of the secrets, of the scandal, of the oppression and lack of choice. It's a true testament to Ruta's strengths and abilities—as a researcher, a storyteller, a writer, and a human—that, just as *Between Shades of Gray* and *Salt to the Sea* have done, *The Fountains of Silence* will not only have you caring for characters, and for an entire country's legacy that may be worlds away from your own, but will leave you better informed about our collective global history as well.

Through history, Ruta taps into our intrinsic need for connection, and the power of empathy. More than that, her talent for unearthing parts of the past and making them vital to our world today is what makes her, what I like to call, a literary archeologist.

This is so much more than a novel about the repercussions of war, the legacy of violence, and the power of silence. It is an exploration of identity, dignity, and the freedom that may be possible if we speak our truths aloud. And its messages—about seeking truth and justice, persevering through hardship—have never been more timely, or more important.

This book is a heart-rending read, and a much-needed conversation starter.

Grab a pack of tissues, and enjoy.

Best wishes,



Liza Kaplan  
Senior Editor

PHILOMEL BOOKS

**M**adrid, 1957. Under the fascist dictatorship of General Francisco Franco, Spain is hiding a dark secret. Meanwhile, tourists and foreign businessmen flood into Spain under the welcoming guise of sunshine and wine. Among them is eighteen-year-old Daniel Matheson, the son of an oil tycoon, who arrives in Madrid with his parents hoping to connect with the country of his mother's birth through the lens of his camera. Photography—and fate—introduce him to Ana, whose family's interweaving obstacles reveal the lingering grasp of the Spanish Civil War—as well as chilling definitions of fortune and fear. Daniel's photographs leave him with uncomfortable questions amidst shadows of danger. He is backed into a corner of decisions to protect those he loves. Lives and hearts collide, revealing an incredibly dark side to the sunny Spanish city.

Master storyteller Ruta Sepetys once again shines light into one of history's darkest corners in this epic, heart-wrenching novel about identity, unforgettable love, repercussions of war, and the hidden violence of silence—inspired by the true post-war struggles of Spain.

Includes vintage media interstitials, oral history commentary, photos, and more.

**RUTA SEPETYS** is an internationally acclaimed, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of historical fiction published in over sixty countries and forty languages. Sepetys is considered a “crossover” novelist as her books are read by both teens and adults worldwide. Her novels *Between Shades of Gray*, *Out of the Easy*, and *Salt to the Sea* have won or been shortlisted for over forty book prizes, are included on over sixty state award lists, and are currently in development for film. Winner of the Carnegie Medal, Ruta is passionate about the power of history and literature to foster global awareness and connectivity. She has presented to NATO, to the European Parliament, in the United States Capitol, and at embassies worldwide. Ruta was born and raised in Michigan and now lives with her family in Nashville, Tennessee.

You can visit Ruta Sepetys at [rutasepetys.com](http://rutasepetys.com)  
or follow her on Twitter @RutaSepetys

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Thank you,  
PHILOMEL BOOKS

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**THE**  
**FOUNTAINS**  
*of*  
**SILENCE**

*a novel*

**RUTA SEPETYS**

PHILOMEL BOOKS

ALSO BY RUTA SEPETYS

*Between Shades of Gray*

*Out of the Easy*

*Salt to the Sea*

PHILOMEL BOOKS

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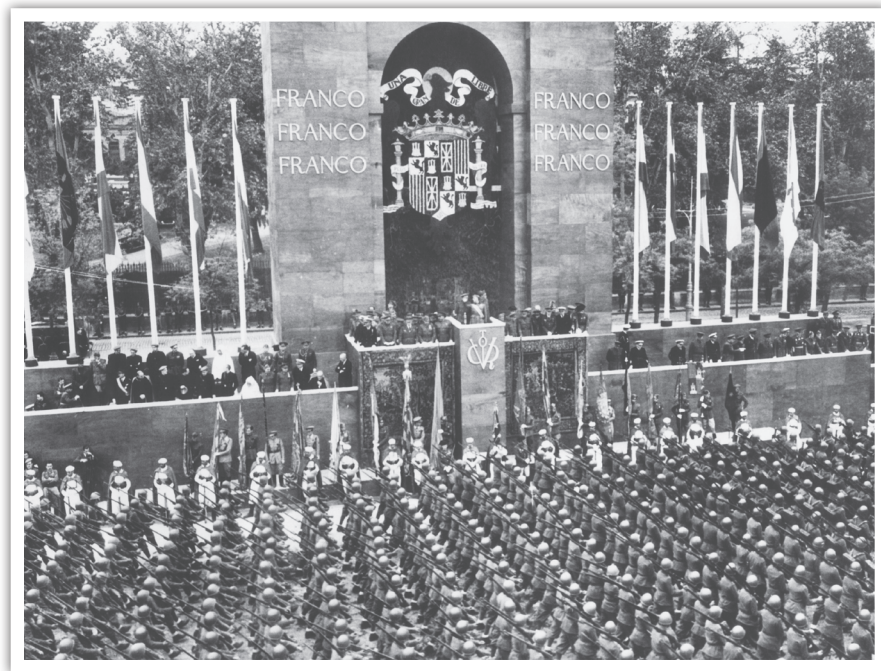
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This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents either are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, businesses, companies, events, or locales is entirely coincidental.

The oral history excerpts included herein contain the personal recollections and opinions of the individuals interviewed and are meant to provide historical context. The views expressed should not be considered official statements of the U.S. government or the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training.

Bullfighting was popular throughout Spain in the 1950s. Save the bulls. Learn more at [PACMA.es](http://PACMA.es).

*For Kristina and John*



Everett Collection Historical / Alamy Stock Photo

*Francisco Franco's victory parade in Madrid celebrating his triumph in the Spanish Civil War. May 1939.*

The Spanish Civil War (1936–1939) began as a military revolt against the democratically elected Second Spanish Republic and continued as an armed conflict between the Nationalists and the Republicans. The Nationalists were led by Generalísimo Francisco Franco and aided by Hitler and Mussolini. The Republicans were led by the democratic government at the time and aided by Mexico, the Soviet Union, and volunteers from over fifty countries, with support from academics, creatives, workers, unions, and leftists. Internally divided, the Republicans were not able to stop the Nationalist advance and surrendered in March of 1939.

Franco's dictatorship lasted thirty-six years.





*We have only died if you forget us.*

—anonymous epitaph  
SPANISH CIVIL WAR MASS GRAVE

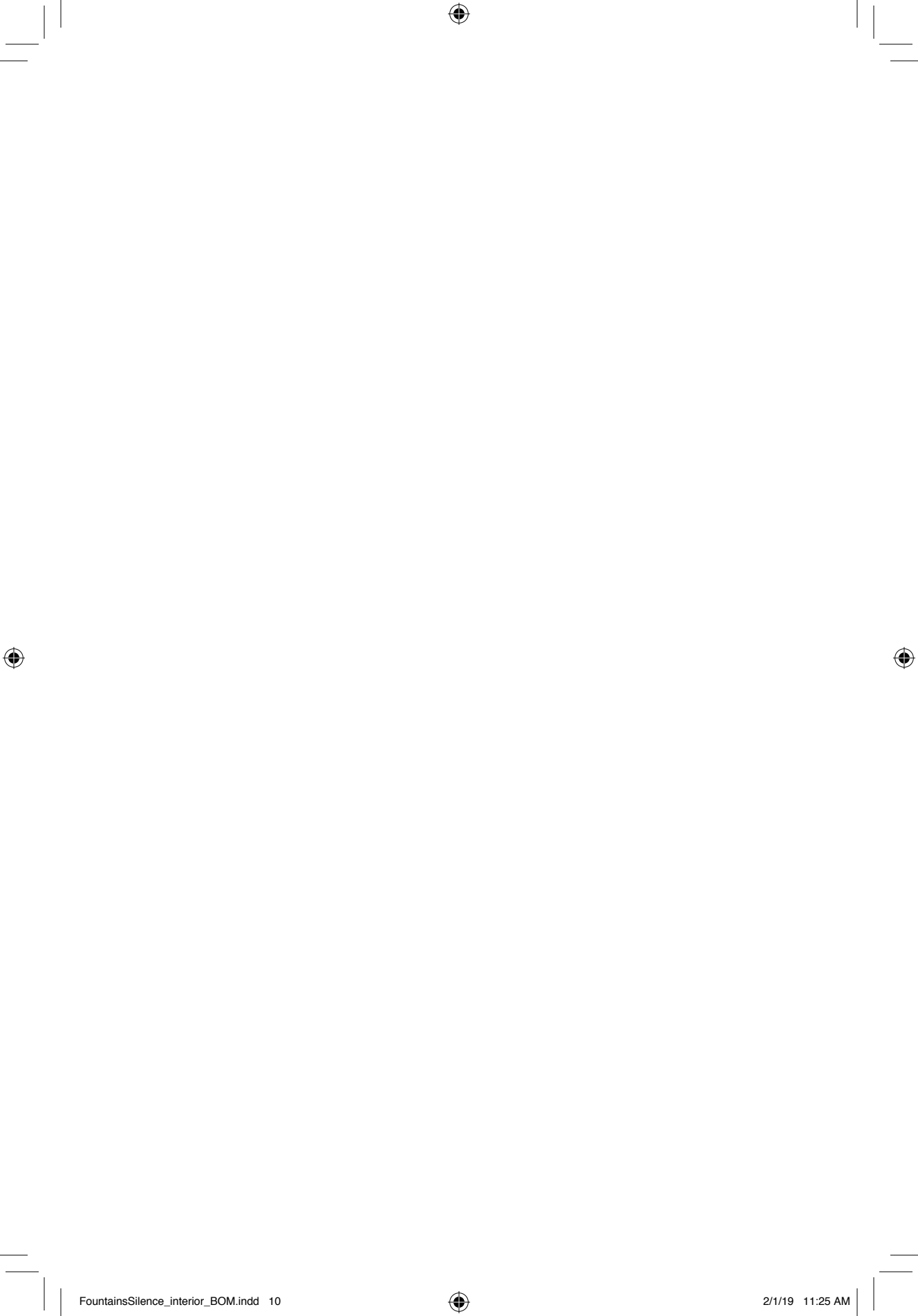


# PART ONE

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1957  
MADRID, SPAIN





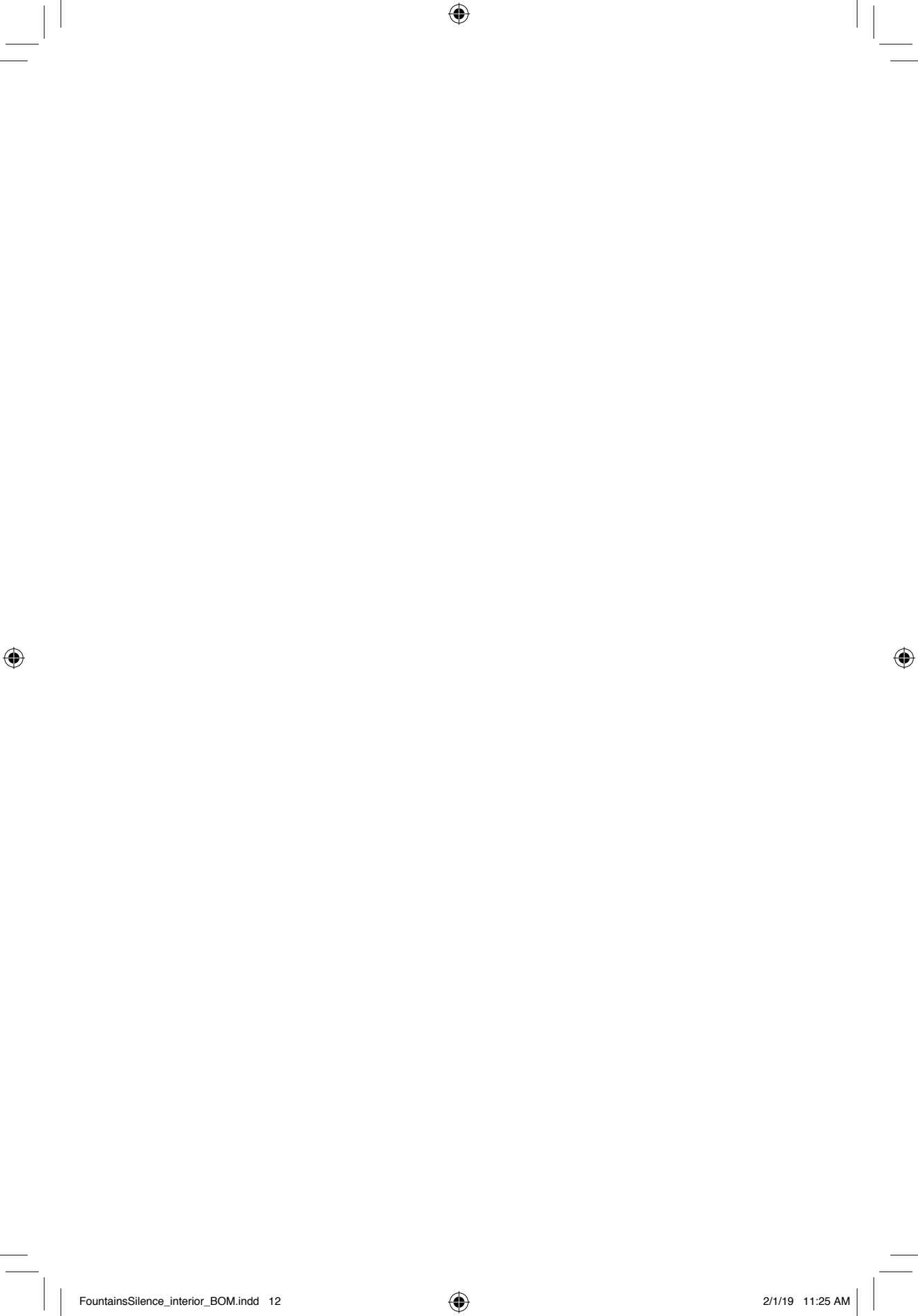
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I've never been happy about sending an Ambassador to Spain, and I am not happy about it now, and unless Franco changes in his treatment of citizens who do not agree with him religiously I'll be sorely tempted to break off all communication with him in spite of the defense of Europe.

—HARRY S. TRUMAN, 33rd president of the United States  
August 2, 1951

*Memorandum from Truman to Secretary of State Dean Acheson*  
*Acheson Papers—Secretary of State File*  
*Truman Library Archives*

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They stand in line for blood.  
June's early sun blooms across a string of women waiting patiently at *el matadero*. Fans snap open and flutter, replying to Madrid's warmth and the scent of open flesh wafting from the slaughterhouse.

The blood will be used for *morcilla*, blood sausage. It must be measured with care. Too much blood and the sausage is not firm. Too little and the sausage crumbles like dry earth.

Rafael wipes the blade on his apron, his mind miles from *morcilla*. He turns slowly from the line of customers and puts his face to the sky.

In his mind it is Sunday. The hands of the clock touch six.

It is time.

The trumpet sounds and the march of the *pasodoble* rolls through the arena.

Rafael steps onto the sand, into the sun.

He is ready to meet Fear.

In the center box of the bullring sits Spain's dictator, Generalísimo Francisco Franco. They call him *El Caudillo*—leader of armies, hero by the grace of God. Franco looks down to the ring. Their eyes meet.

*You don't know me, Generalísimo, but I know you.*

*I am Rafael Torres Moreno, and today, I am not afraid.*

“Rafa!”

The supervisor swats the back of Rafael's damp neck. “Are you

blind? There's a line. Stop daydreaming. The blood, Rafa. Give them their blood."

Rafa nods, walking toward the patrons. His visions of the bullring quickly disappear.

Give them their blood.

Memories of war tap at his brain. The small, taunting voice returns, choking daydreams into nightmares. *You do remember, don't you, Rafa?*

He does.

The silhouette is unmistakable.

*Patent-leather men with patent-leather souls.*

The Guardia Civil. He secretly calls them the Crows. They are servants of Generalísimo Franco and they have appeared on the street.

"Please. Not here," whispers Rafael from his hiding spot beneath the trees.

The wail of a toddler echoes above. He looks up and sees Julia at the open window, holding their youngest sister, Ana.

Their father's voice booms from inside. "Julia, close the window! Lock the door and wait for your mother. Where is Rafa?"

"Here, Papá," whispers Rafael, his small legs folded in hiding. "I'm right here."

His father appears at the door. The Crows appear at the curb.

The shot rings out. A flash explodes. Julia screams from above.

Rafa's body freezes. No breath. No air.

*No.*

*No.*

*No.*

They drag his father's limp corpse by an arm.

*¡Papá!*



It's too late. As the cry leaves his throat, Rafa realizes. He's given himself away.

A pair of eyes dart. "His boy's behind the tree. Grab him."

Rafa blinks, blocking the painful memories, hiding his collapsed heart beneath a smile.

"*Buenos días, señora.* How may I help you?" he asks the customer.

"Blood."

"*Sí, señora.*"

Give them their blood.

For more than twenty years, Spain has given blood. And sometimes Rafa wonders—what is left to give?

## 2

It's a lie.  
It has to be.

*I know what you've done.*

Ana Torres Moreno stands two levels belowground, in the second servants' basement. She rips the small note to pieces, shoves them in her mouth, and swallows.

A voice calls from the hall. "Hurry, Ana. They're waiting."

Dashing through the windowless maze of stone walls, Ana wills herself to move faster. Wills herself to smile.

A weak glow from a bare bulb whispers light onto the supply shelf. Ana spots the tiny sewing kit and throws it into her basket. She runs to the stairs and falls in step with Lorenza, who balances an assortment of cigarettes on a tray.

"You look pale," whispers Lorenza. "*¿Estás bien?*"

"I'm fine," replies Ana.

*Always say you're fine, especially when you're not,* she reminds herself.

The mouth of the stairway appears. Light from a crystal chandelier twinkles and beckons from the glittering hall.

Their steps slow, synchronize, and in perfect unison they emerge onto the marble floor of the hotel lobby, faces full of smile. Ana scrolls her mental list. The man from New York will want a newspaper and matches. The woman from Pennsylvania will need more ice.

Americans love ice. Some claim to have trays of cubed ice in their

own kitchens. Maybe it's possible. Ana sees advertisements for appliances in glossy magazines that hotel guests leave behind.

*Frigidaire! Rustproof aluminum shelving, controlled butter-ready.*

Whatever that means. Beyond Spain, all is a mystery.

Ana hears every word, but guests would never know it. She scurries, filling requests quickly so visitors have no time to glance out of their world and into hers.

Julia, the matriarch of their fractured family, issues constant reminders. "You trust too easily, Ana. You reveal too much. Stay silent."

Ana is tired of silence, tired of unanswered questions, and tired of secrets. A girl of patched pieces, she dreams of new beginnings. She dreams of leaving Spain. But her sister is right. Her dreams have proved dangerous.

*I know what you've done.*

"For once, follow the rules instead of your heart," pleads her sister.

Follow the rules. To be invisible in plain view and paid handsomely for it—five *pesetas* per hour—this is the plan. Her older brother, Rafael, works at both the slaughterhouse and the cemetery. Between two jobs he makes only twelve *pesetas*, twenty cents according to the hotel's exchange desk, for an entire day's work.

Ana hands the sewing kit to the concierge and heads quickly for the staff elevator. The morning is gone, but her task list is growing. Summer season has officially arrived at the hotel, pouring thousands of new visitors into Spain. The elevator doors open to the seventh floor. Ana shifts the basket to her hip and hurries down the long corridor.

"Towels for 760," whispers a supervisor who shuttles past.

"Towels for 760," she confirms.

Four years old, but to Ana, the American hotel smells new. Tucked into her basket is a stack of hotel brochures featuring a handsome bull-fighter, a matador, holding a red cape. In fancy script across the cape is written:

*Castellana Hilton Madrid. Your Castle in Spain.*

Castles. She saw old postcards as a child. The haunting newsreel rolls behind her eyes:

The tree-lined avenue of Paseo de la Castellana—home to Spanish royalty and grand palaces. And then, the bright images fade. 1936. Civil war erupts in Spain. War drains color from the cheeks of Madrid. The grand palaces become gray ghosts. Gardens and fountains disappear. So do Ana's parents. Hunger and isolation cast a filter of darkness over the country. Spain is curtained off from the world.

And now, after twenty years of nationwide atrophy, Generalísimo Franco is finally allowing tourists into Spain. Banks and hotels wrap new exteriors over old palace interiors. The tourists don't know the difference. What lies beneath is now hidden, like the note disintegrating in her stomach.

Ana reads the newspapers and magazines that guests discard. She memorizes the brochure to recite on cue.

*Formerly a palace, Castellana is the first Hilton property in Europe. Over three hundred rooms, each with a three-channel radio, and even a telephone.*

"If you are assigned to a guest in a suite, you will see to their every request," lectures her supervisor. "Remember, Americans are less formal than Spaniards. They're accustomed to conversation. You will be warm, helpful, and conversational."

"Ay, I'm always warm and conversational," Lorenza whispers with a wink.

Ana wants to be conversational, but her sister's call for silence contradicts hotel instruction. The constant tug in opposite directions makes her feel like a rag doll, destined to lose an arm.

A man in a crisp white shirt emerges from a door into the hallway. Ana stops and gives a small bob. "*Buenos días, señor.*"

"Hi ya, doll."

*Doll. Dame. Kitten. Baby.* American men have many terms for women. Just when Ana thinks she has learned them all, a new one appears. In her English class at the hotel, these words are called terms of endearment.

After what happened last year, Ana knows better.

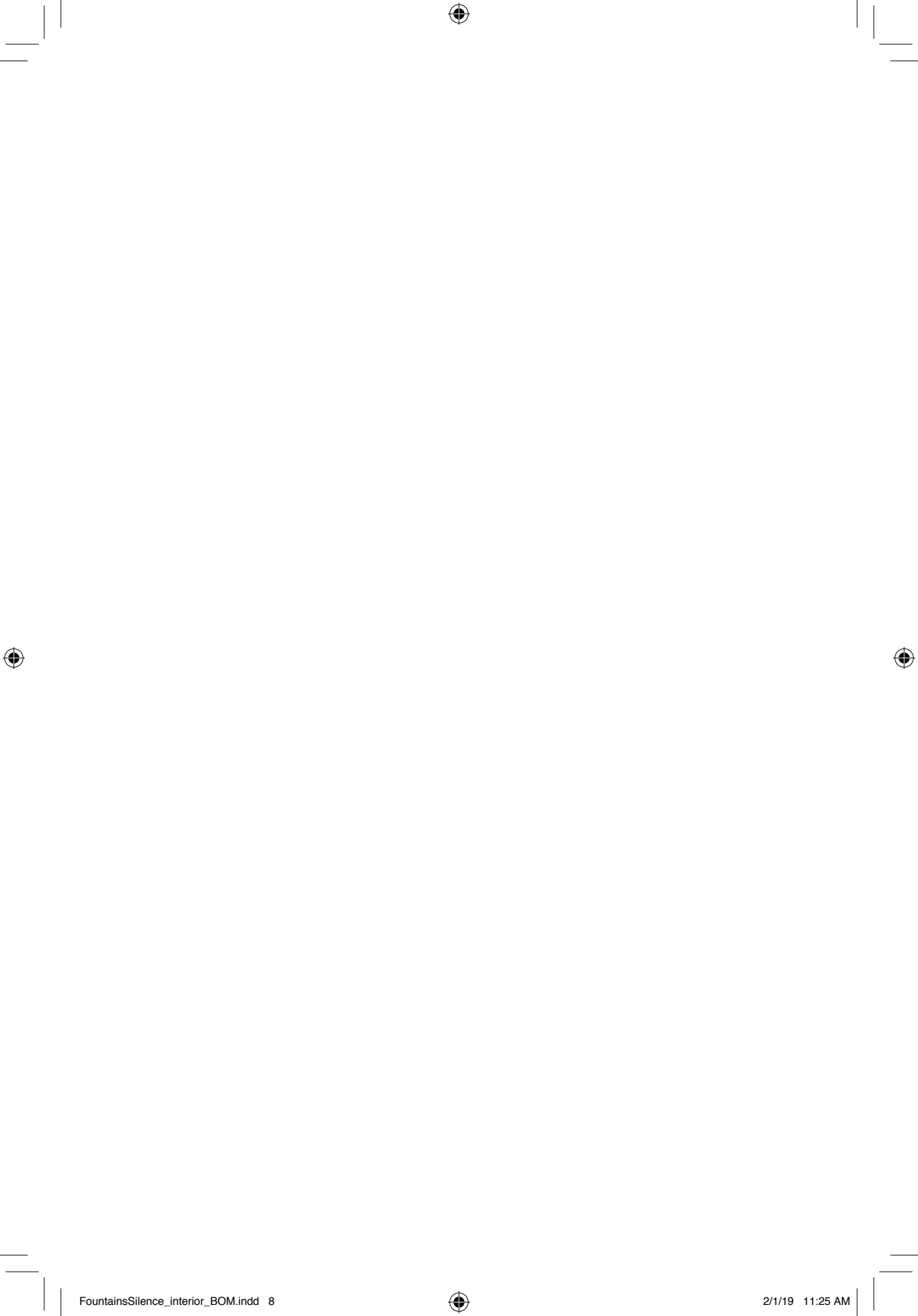
American diplomats, actors, and musicians arrive amidst the swirling dust of Barajas Airport. They socialize and mingle into the pale hours of morning. Ana secretly notes their preferences. Starlets have favorite suites. Politicians have favorite starlets. Many are unaware of what transpired in Spain decades earlier. They sip cava, romanticizing Hemingway and *flamenco*. On rare occasion someone asks Ana about Spain's war. She politely changes the subject. It's not only hotel policy, but also the promise she made.

She will look to the future. The past must be forgotten.

Her father executed. Her mother imprisoned. Their crime was not an action, but an ambition—teachers who hoped to develop a Montessori school with methods based on child development rather than religion. But Generalísimo Franco commands that all schools in Spain shall be controlled by the Catholic Church. Republican sympathizers must be eradicated.

Her parents' offense has left Ana rowing dark waters of dead secrets. Born into a long shadow of shame, she must never speak publicly of her parents. She must live in silence. But sometimes, from the hidden corners of her heart, calls the haunting question:

*What can be built through silence?*



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They are calling the Hotel Castellana Hilton here “The Forty-ninth State” and with some justification, because only in America does there seem to be more Americanos. . . .

. . . There are diplomats and generals, admirals and hill jumpers, phony counts and real ones, movie actresses trying to look like movie actresses and non-actresses also trying to look like actresses. Some of the steadies have been here so long now that they have to cut them loose from the bar stools. And there is usually a magnificent assortment of weirdies.

. . . I have seen faces around here that haven’t emerged since the old contract-letting days of World War II. They crowd the bar and give cocktail parties and search endlessly for ‘contacts,’ for Spain is opening up more and more to outside trade, and there is, of course, big dough to be made in the construction of the military bases here.

—ROBERT C. RUARK

*from “Call Hotel Hilton The 49th State”*  
*Defiance Crescent News, Defiance, Ohio*  
March 1, 1955

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### 3

They know he's a tourist.

It's not the camera that draws their stare. It's his clothing. The eyes of the locals pull first to Daniel's mud-dulled boots. Their gaze crawls over his denims, pausing briefly at the belt buckle displaying the silhouette of Texas. A quick survey then continues north over his plaid shirt, but as soon as they see his camera, they quickly turn away.

People look at him, but no one speaks to him.

Two small boys walk by a newspaper stand. The front page of the paper features a picture of Spain's leader. The boys stop and raise their right arms in salute to the photograph.

*¡Franco! El Caudillo de España.*

Daniel snaps a picture.

The words and Franco's photo, in various configurations, appear everywhere. On the country's coins, postage stamps, trolley cars, and street signs. Daniel looks at the newspaper photograph. General Franco is short with a bland face and retreating hairline. His tiny mustache is perhaps his only distinguishable feature. Small in stature, his grip over the country looms tall, absolute.

"Dan's six foot one now," bragged his father recently. "Isn't that right, big man?"

Wrong. Height doesn't make a man big or powerful. He and his father look through different lenses.



As he exits Retiro Park, noise erupts like a clowder of screaming cats. Motor scooters blister down the scalding pavement, darting between wheezing buses and honking cars. A little girl in a ruffled dress sits on the handlebars of a motorcycle as her wild driver whips through traffic.

Daniel pauses on the sidewalk. Madrid roars with an exotic energy of deep colors. Cars and shoes are black, blending with street tapestries of charcoal, Goya brown, and dark currant. The churning scenes are accented by swirling exhaust and snaps of Spanish. His mother, born in Spain, is adamant he speak the language of her country. For the first five years of his life she spoke to him only in Spanish. Although the language is familiar, all else in Madrid is foreign.

On the corner near the entrance to the park, tired donkeys pull lumbering carts. Vendors hawk souvenirs. A pencil of a man stands behind an assortment of Spanish folding fans. He holds several at once, flicking them open to flutter like painted butterflies. The vendor motions to the badge hanging from Daniel's camera strap, asking if he's a journalist.

*“¿Periodista? ¿Americano?”*

Daniel nods at the half-truth and continues walking. The camera was a high school graduation present from his mother. The badge is from a local paper back home in Dallas.

“I want to be a photojournalist,” he announced recently at the dinner table.

“Trust me, you'll grow out of it,” said his father.

He won't. Photographs are spontaneous and exciting, something that he creates, not inherits. They're a story of his own making, instead of an ancestral narrative steeped in oil fortune. He thinks of the type-written letter at home in his desk drawer.

\* \* \*

Dear Mr. Matheson,

Congratulations, you have been selected as one of five finalists for the 1957 Magnum Photography Prize.

His portfolio is due in September.

His father doesn't understand. Daniel won't tire of photography, but he is tired of frugal listeners who are generous with opinion. And the opinions are many:

He should pursue football instead of boxing.

Photography's a waste of time.

The family oil business will be his happily ever after.

Those who think they know him best don't really know him at all.

Girls were no different. "Daniel Matheson. My, my, where have *you* been hiding?" joked the pretty debutantes crowding the jukebox at Nelson's.

He hadn't been hiding. He'd always been there but the girls had never noticed—until he returned as a senior, four inches taller and several yards stronger. His phone started ringing. They loved his truck, his photos, and hearing him speak Spanish with the waiters at El Fenix. Suddenly, he was "interesting." And suddenly, he was foolish enough to believe them.

After three months of dating Laura Beth, "interesting" no longer interested her.

"What about penny loafers instead of boots?" she suggested. "Let's take your father's Cadillac instead of your truck." And, "Oh, him? He's just a good friend of the family."

His school buddies at St. Mark's laughed. "What did you expect?"

She rides dressage. You ride rodeo. Everyone knows she's fickle. She's not worth the whiskey." Thankfully, it was his Spanish heritage that ended the relationship with Laura Beth. He was "too ethnic." *Gracias, Madre.*

Daniel passes a café. The dry, windy air infuses with oil, garlic, and paprika. Heaps of prawns, eel, fried peppers, and spiced sausages fill the large glass window. He snaps a picture. The warm wind funnels through his hair. Madrid is as hot as Dallas. He turns a corner onto a narrow, cobbled street and tucks into a doorway. Daniel looks at his watch and then to the position of the sun. His parents are waiting at the hotel for lunch. His father will be annoyed with him. Again.

Approaching heels echo in the distance. Daniel raises the lens to his eye.

A nun.

Her steps are quick. Purposeful. She carries a small bundle wrapped in cloth. She looks constantly over her shoulder, as if she's being followed. Daniel remains in the doorway, unnoticed, waiting for the perfect shot. A breath of wind swirls the nun's black robes. She reaches down with a hand to tame them. As she does, the breeze lifts the cloth, revealing the contents of her bundle.

A baby's face, gray like smoke, stares at Daniel.

His breath hitches as he presses the shutter.

The child is dead.

The nun's eyes, wide with panic, snap to his lens.

Hammering the shutter produces nothing but an empty clicking. He's out of film.

His hand dives into his pocket for a new roll. He loads as fast as he can, but it's no use. When he looks up the nun has disappeared, replaced by two men in capes and wing-shaped hats. They're carrying rifles.

The Guardia Civil. The military force that serves Franco.

Daniel's favorite poet, Federico García Lorca, described them:

*Who could see you and not remember you? Patent-leather men with patent-leather souls.*

“Steer clear of them,” warned his father.

But their sinister appearance, like human crows, curls a beckoning finger toward Daniel’s lens. He slides farther into the doorway to conceal himself. It’s not illegal to photograph the Guardia Civil, is it?

Just one picture. For the contest.

Daniel presses the shutter. Did he get it?

A flap of wings. A silent bomb explodes.

The men are instantly upon him, slamming him against the door, yanking the badge hanging from his camera strap.

“¿Americano?”

“Sí, señor. *Americano*,” replies Daniel, fighting the urge to shove them away. He tries to remain polite. “*Yo hablo español.*”

The guard sneers. “¿Y qué? Because you speak Spanish you think you have the right to photograph whatever you please? Hand over the film. Now!”

Daniel fumbles nervously to open the back of his camera and remove the roll. Are they going to arrest him?

The guard rips the film from his hand. “Your badge is worth nothing here. Where are you staying?” he demands.

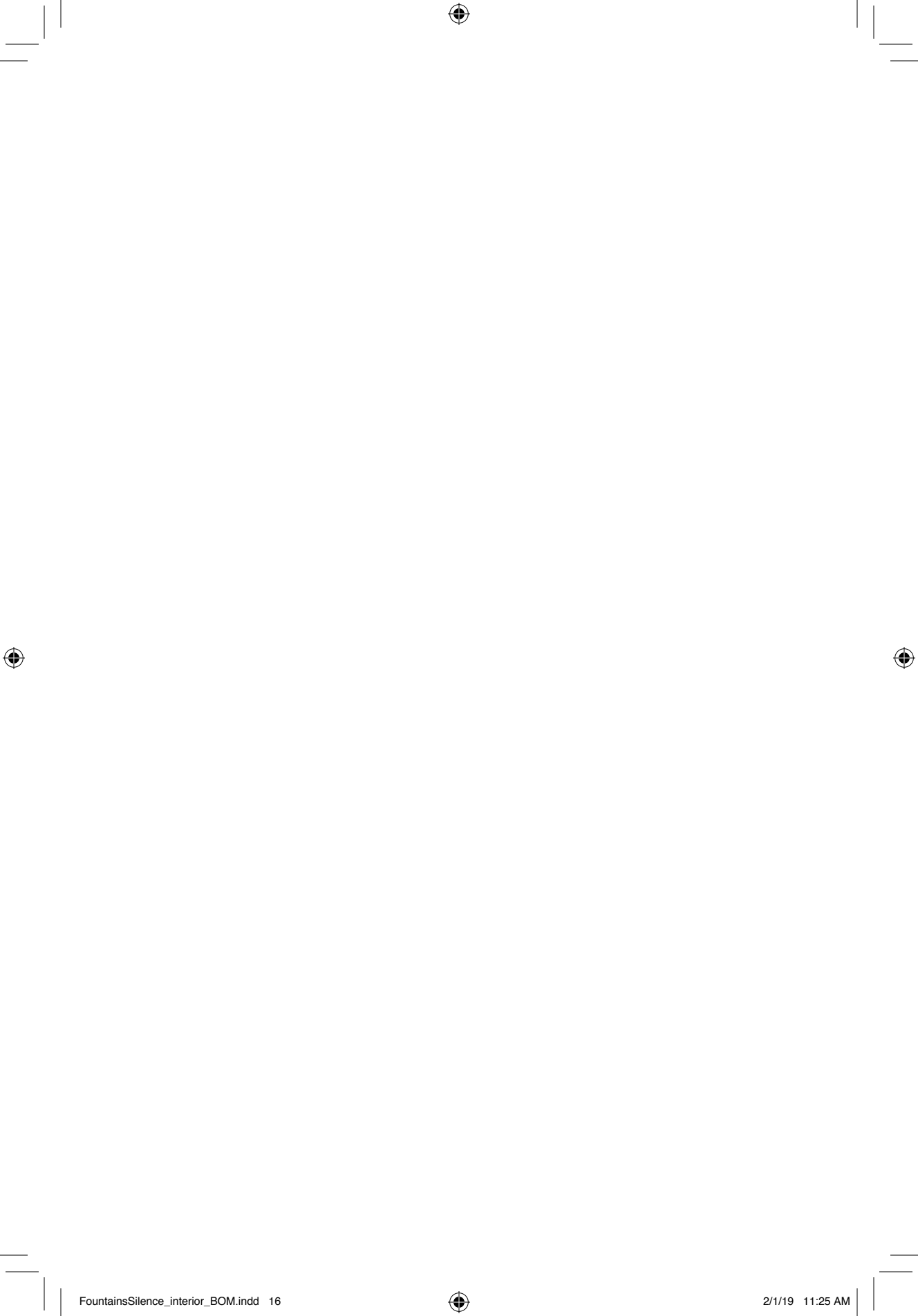
“The Castellana Hilton.”

*Wait.*

*No.*

As soon as the words leave his mouth, Daniel wants to grab them, take them back, and hide them.

But it’s too late.



.....

. . . The system was very rigid. It was Franco's Spain. You did not want to fall under the hands of the Guardia Civil or the police. The jails were pretty bad and people were getting thrown in there all the time.

—ALEXANDER F. WATSON, U.S. consular officer, Madrid (1964–1966)

*Oral History Interview Excerpt, September 1996*  
*Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection*  
*Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training*  
*Arlington, VA [www.adst.org](http://www.adst.org)*

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## ( 4 )

Puri holds a baby on her lap. She ties strings on the booties that match the pale rose of the child's cheek. This tiny girl loves sounds, so Puri makes popping noises with her mouth. The infant giggles and smiles in delight, alive with joy and wonder.

A brass medallion hangs from the child's neck by a white string. Puri turns the pendant over and runs her thumb across the engraving.  
20 116.

20 116 is unaware she's an orphan. She doesn't realize she's been brought to the Inclusa, the orphanage in Madrid. She has no idea she is held by Purificación Torres Pérez, or that Puri wears a black apron bearing the red arrows of the Falange, the Spanish fascist movement.

"Your duty, your mission as a woman is to serve," lectured her school instructors. Puri is grateful to serve through working with children.

"We're going for photos. It will be fun," coos Puri to the infant.

20 116 is dressed in beautiful clothes that don't belong to her. Puri will take her to the small white room on the third floor. A man with a boxy black camera will come and hover in front of the orphan, capturing her portrait. Puri will soothe her after the spark of scary flashbulbs. She will make the popping noises.

20 116 will be returned to her ruffled bassinet in the nursery. The pretty clothes will be returned to the dark closet of Sister Hortensia.

One outfit for girls. One outfit for boys.

Sister Hortensia oversees each infant with sincere and devoted affection. Photos of the child will be shared with loving couples in

Spain. Puri smooths the baby's downy wisps of hair, thankful there are so many families willing to adopt unfortunate children.

A large framed portrait of Franco hangs at the front of the room.

"Our defender, *El Caudillo*, he is watching," Puri whispers to the baby. "He is taking care of us." She lifts the infant's tiny right arm in salute toward the picture. She bounces her in rhythm and sings the anthemic melody:

*"He's Franco, Franco, Franco. Our guide and captain."*

A nun from a local hospital sweeps frantically into the room, summoning Sister Hortensia. There are nods. Whispers.

"In the street. Yes, just now. And the Guardia Civil . . ."

Puri strains to hear.

20 116 begins to whimper. Puri makes the popping sound.

The two nuns look to Puri.

Puri turns her back.

**A**na checks the register in her apron pocket for her assigned guest.

Daniel Matheson.

She knocks lightly on the door. No reply.

Using her passkey, she lets herself into the room.

Warmth. Quiet. The air-cooling is turned off and the door to the balcony stands open. The sheer pearl drape rises and falls on the hot breeze.

Most tourists want air-cooled rooms along with their ice. But this guest is different. This visitor welcomes the hot, dry breath of Madrid into the large suite. His clothes are not yet tucked into the drawers or closet. They spill from open suitcases on the floor amid other litter of arrival. Stacks of newspapers and magazines sit atop the coffee table. A magazine title, *LIFE*, calls out to Ana. Resting next to the newspapers is a yellow box labeled GE PHOTO FLASHBULBS.

Hotel guests bring an array of expensive belongings. A man from Illinois works for a company called Zenith. He has “transistor” radios in a rainbow of colors, small enough to fit in your pocket. A musician down the hall has a portable record player housed in a suitcase. How do they earn the money to buy such things? The petit lobster appetizer on the hotel menu costs more than most Spaniards earn in months.

“They often leave food untouched, just sitting on the tray,” she tells her brother, Rafael.

“Sure, it’s not expensive for them,” he explains. “American men have something called ‘minimum wage’ for working. One U.S. dollar

per hour. And that's their lowest wage. Can you imagine?" Rafa leans in toward Ana. "Those rich Americanos are happy, not hungry. Put some lobster in your pocket for me," he says with a conspiring nod.

Ana laughs at her brother's teasing. Their older sister, Julia, does not laugh. Julia worries. When not holding her baby, her hands hold each other, wringing twists of concern.

"We have five mouths at the table now. No one can lose their job," says Julia.

Ana loves her job, along with the English classes and the relaxed American atmosphere it provides. She could not bear to lose the position. But Rafa is right. Most guests at the hotel have never known hunger—not hunger for food, nor hunger for life.

Her family has known both.

An open magazine sits quietly on a chair. A photo of an American family stares at Ana. She gently sets down the towels and bends to pick up the magazine.

American girls wear cuffed socks with black-and-white shoes. They stare at pictures of singers who perform something called rock-and-roll music—music considered indecent in Spain. What would happen if Spanish girls wore pants on the street? Would they be apprehended? Would an unmarried woman in Spain ever be allowed a passport?

Ana dreams of travel, of one day leaving Spain. What lies outside the country's borders is untouchable for families like hers. For decades, Francisco Franco has believed that outside influence will corrupt Spain's purity and identity. The train tracks in Spain are purposely wider than the rest of Europe's to prevent unwanted entries and exits.

"Spain needs money and foreign investment, that's why Franco allowed the American hotel," claims Rafa. "Ay, a castle in Spain for Americanos," he laughs.

It's true. After years of isolation, select industries have been invited

from America—tourism, motion pictures, and oil. Americans stay at the Castellana Hilton. But the Hilton has more than just hotel rooms. It has a business office. Ana's English is strong. Once she's worked at the hotel for two years she may apply for a position in a different department. The secretarial team from the business office travels with executives throughout Spain. They leave Madrid.

A key clatters in the lock. A tall young man with dark hair enters the room. They both jump, startled. The magazine flutters to the floor.

"Welcome back, *señor*," Ana greets the guest as instructed.

The young man stands, holding a camera. He stares at her, then looks nervously about the room. His clothes are different from those Ana sees in magazines. Most Americans are polished and tidy. This boy is handsome but rugged. His hair has a mind of its own.

His low voice breaks the silence. "*Lo siento. No era mi intención asustarte.*"

"You didn't scare me," smiles Ana.

"Oh, you speak English," he says quietly.

"And you speak Spanish very well, *señor*, but not Spanish from Spain. Perhaps you speak Spanish"—she pauses—"from Mexico?"

The side of his mouth lifts, almost reaching a smile. "Texas. Must be my accent. But my mother is from Spain." He points to the door. "My parents are in the suite down the hall." He attempts to smooth his tousled hair and that's when Ana notices. His sleeve is torn.

He sets down the camera and moves to retrieve the magazine. Ana reaches it first.

She feels his eyes upon her as she swaps the magazine for the towels.

"Ah, yes. Your parents are the Mathesons of Dallas. You arrived yesterday. Welcome to the Castellana Hilton, *señor*. I hope you are enjoying your stay?"

"Yes, ma'am." He nods.

Unlike “sugar” or “doll,” Ana has been told, “ma’am” is a term of respect, not endearment. She looks at the young man as she picks up the towels. At most, she is two years older.

“My parents,” he says quietly. “Have they stopped by my room?”  
“No, *señor*.”

His shoulders retreat with relief.

A knock sounds at the door. His blue eyes flash wide and a finger flies to his lips, requesting silence. Ana stands facing him, clutching the towels.

The knocking continues, followed by a woman’s voice behind the door.

“Daniel, are you back?”

He looks to Ana and shakes his head quickly. His lips form the word *no*, followed by a sheepish grin.

Ana stifles a laugh, trying to contain her wide smile. She hates the spot of gold that tops her lower side tooth.

“Maybe he left the radio on and that’s what you heard,” says a man’s voice.

*Radio?* Daniel mouths the word.

Ana points nearby. He leans across her and snaps it on low. He smells . . . nice.

After a few moments, Daniel cocks his ear toward the door. “I think they’re gone,” he whispers. He exhales deeply, as if trying to calm himself. “Sorry about that. I’m trying to avoid my parents.”

“Yes, I can see that,” she says with a laugh. She turns and takes the towels to the bathroom.

The telephone rings.

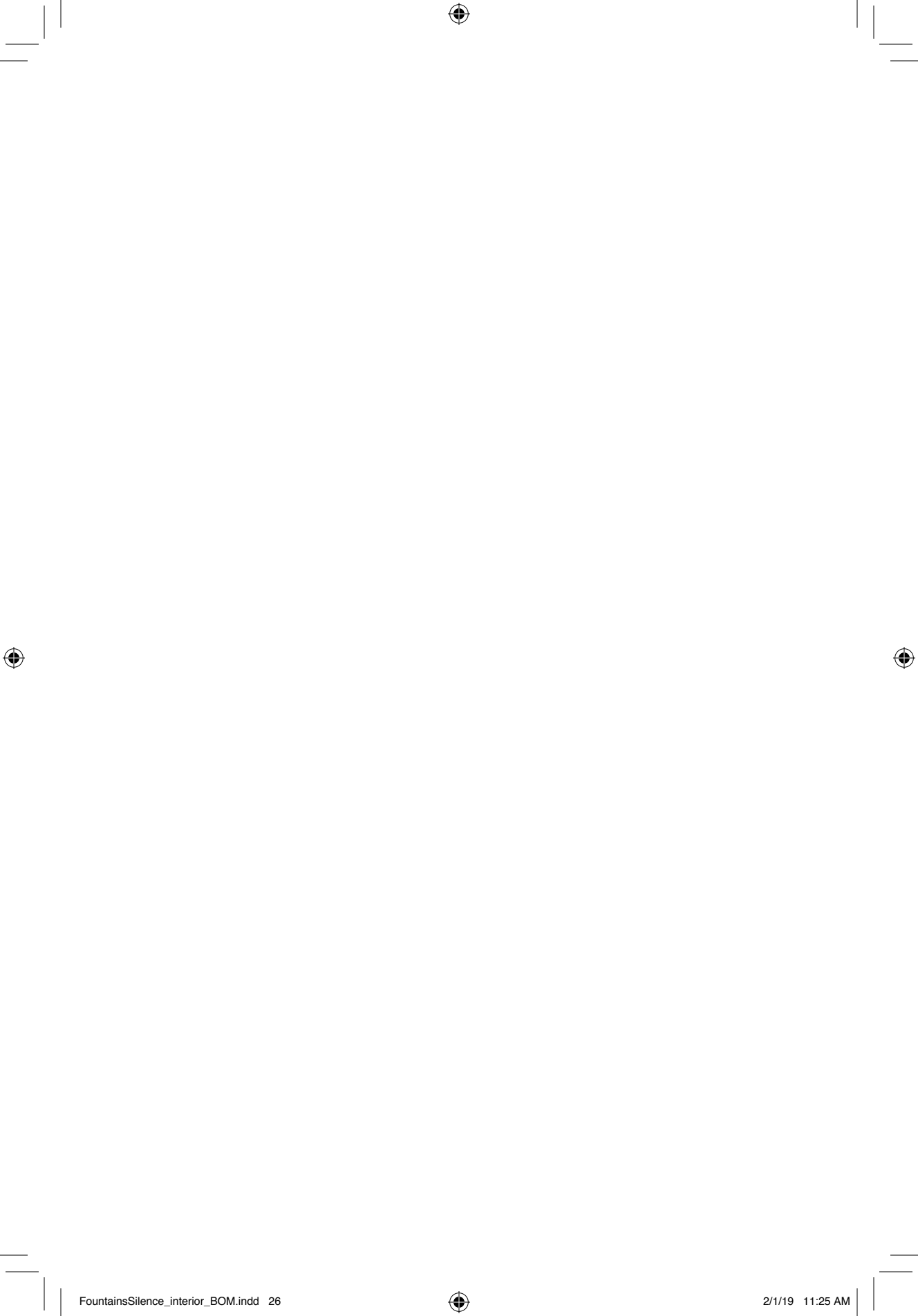
“Aw geez, now they’re calling from their room,” says Daniel.

She wants so desperately to be conversational, to discover why he’s avoiding his parents, but heeds her sister’s warning. “Is there anything you need, *señor*? If not, I’ll be going,” says Ana.

“No. Thanks a lot for your help.” He pauses, looking at her. “Say, your English is better than my Spanish. Are you from Madrid?”

Ana looks him straight in the eye. She smiles and lies.

“*Sí, señor*, from Madrid.”





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When I first went there, to Spain in '55, you had the feeling of depression when you got into Spain, repression. It was true. Everybody was careful what they said, what they did, how they disported themselves.

—WILLIAM W. LEHFELDT, U.S. vice consul, Bilbao (1955–1957)

*Oral History Interview Excerpt, April 1994*  
*Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection*  
*Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training,*  
*Arlington, VA [www.adst.org](http://www.adst.org)*

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““**R**ebellious, bohemian, vulgar. These are the words used to describe Miguelín, the new bullfighter.”

Rafael looks up from the newspaper. His friend Fuga sits on a crate in the cemetery shed and nods, urging Rafa to continue.

“Following his presentation at Las Ventas in Madrid,” reads Rafa, “this *torero* assures audiences that he is one to watch.”

Fuga points to the image of a matador in the newspaper.

“Sí, that’s him, Miguelín,” says Rafa. “Shall I show you how to write his name? I’ve told you, if you’re going to be a famous bullfighter, you have to learn your letters.”

The offer is ignored. Fuga teeters back on the arthritic box, stabbing the dirt with a shovel. His mane of black hair, wild and unkempt, cannot conceal his feral eyes. Those who pass him look twice. They not only see him, they feel him. He is a gathering storm.

Fuga’s gaze ticktocks between Rafa and a miniature plywood casket, the size of large shoebox, that sits near his feet.

“Ay, another baby?” says Rafa.

Fuga says nothing, just stares at the little coffin.

Some friendships are born of commonality. Others of proximity. And some friendships, often the unlikely ones, are born of survival. Rafa and his friend are comrades of hardship. They refuse to speak of the boys’ home in Barcelona. It was not a “home.” It was a hell-hole, a slaughterhouse of souls. The “brothers” and “matrons” who ran the institution took pleasure in the humiliation of children. The mere memory is poison.

The torments, like mental cockroaches, still crawl through Rafa's mind: holding a coin against the wall with his nose; kneeling on chickpeas; being held down and burned with cigarettes. He remembers pure fear causing him to wet the bed, then the brothers tying the soiled sheet around his neck, insisting he wear his cowardice like a cape for all to see. He remembers losing weight, losing his hair, losing his courage.

“¡Basta!”

Stop. The word reaches him before his friend's punch. The sting of pain is the customary antidote, a promise fulfilled when memory grabs hold. The memories are poison. Don't take the poison.

“Gracias.”

Fuga nods, his fierce eyes softening beneath the wilderness of his hair. His hand suddenly extends from his pocket, offering a small mandarin to Rafa.

Rafa craves the citrus of the orange, but it's too generous. He can't take his friend's only meal. He shakes his head.

Fuga shrugs. “Entonces, ask her?”

“Her” means Julia, his older sister. The favor is one only she can fulfill.

“Sí, I'll ask her.” Rafa tears the newspaper into a stack of neat squares. “Ana says they don't use newspaper in the American hotel. She says the guests are provided rolls of soft white tissue in the toilets. When you become famous, *amigo*, you're going to buy us all white tissue for the outhouse.”

Fuga stares at the baby's casket. “No,” he hisses. “When I become famous, I'll unmask the evil homes and rescue the children.” He stabs the shovel into the dirt. “Tell me the words from your book again.”

He is referring to a thin volume that Rafa cherishes. It's a favorite book of his father's, containing the philosophy of Seneca.

“Gold is tried by fire and brave men by adversity,” says Rafa.

“Sí,” whispers Fuga. “I will emerge from this fire and when I do”—his head snaps to Rafa, wild eyes ablaze—“I'll burn them all down.”

## 7

Daniel reluctantly takes a chair in his parents' suite. How could he be so stupid? Why didn't he tell the guards he was staying at the Ritz? They could have followed him there and no one would have known. The guards must have better things to do than chaperone a kid with a camera. It's not a big deal.

But if it's not a big deal, why is he still sweating? The images flash constantly through his mind.

The gray baby. The nun's face snapping toward the lens. Her look of shock as she scurried away. The sudden appearance of the guards.

Daniel stares at the camera in his lap. Thankfully, they didn't notice the roll in his pocket. Will the image of the infant appear on film as it remains fixed in his mind?

Bringing the camera to his eye, he frames his broad-shouldered father against the small hotel desk. His dad looks up and shakes his head. The disappointment presses Daniel's well-worn guilt button. Why can't he find passion in oil drilling like his father? It would be so much easier.

His mother evaluates her dresses and clears the annoyance from her throat.

"It was an accident, Martin. Daniel didn't know."

"I'm getting tired of these 'accidents,' María. Two days before our trip he got into a fight at the movie theater."

"I didn't pick a fight, Dad. I was defending a friend," says Daniel. He *was* defending a friend—while enjoying the opportunity to slug a longtime neighborhood bully.

“You’re mighty lucky the Dallas police let you off with a warning. You’re eighteen. You can be tried as an adult. And this?” His father opens his arms in query. “We’ve been in Madrid barely twenty-four hours, and the lobby manager tells me you were escorted back by the Guardia Civil?”

“I wish the valets wouldn’t have seen,” says his mother.

“I wish you hadn’t bought him that camera,” snaps his father.

“I wish you’d stop arguing,” says Daniel.

“We’re not arguing.” His mother sighs and turns to Daniel. “Your father and I, we have weeks of engagements and trips, *cariño*. I thought it would be exciting for you to explore on your own. But maybe it’s not safe. I no longer have family in Spain if something happens while we’re away. And now you’re so far from Laura Beth.”

He still hasn’t told his parents about the breakup. They’ll ask all sorts of questions. Daniel examines his camera, dodging the topic of Laura Beth and wishing he had photographed the pretty girl in his hotel room. “I’m sorry. It was a dumb mistake. I’m completely fine on my own. Really.”

He gives his mom an apologetic shrug. Recently, his mother’s tone has developed a tired edge. She’s the one who begged to return to Spain, but since arriving, she seems nervous. Daniel recognizes his mother’s reaction—it’s her fear of not fitting in.

María Alonso Moya Matheson was born in the Galicia region of Spain but raised as a Spanish American in Texas. In public, his mother is the wife of an oil magnate and appears completely American. She baked fund-raiser cakes for the Eisenhower campaign. She supports the Hockaday School and the Junior League, and is accepted by the social-ites of Preston Hollow and Dallas at large. At home, his mom speaks to him only in Spanish. He is *cariño*, darling, or *tesoro*, treasure. Many of their servants have Spanish heritage. His mother makes certain that Spanish food and customs are fixtures in his life.

“It’s difficult navigating two cultures,” she once told him. “I feel like a bookmark wedged between chapters. I live in America, but I am not born of it. I’m Spanish.”

His mom is thrilled that oil business has brought them to Spain. She wants to expose them to the country her late parents so adored. Pure Spain. Noble Spain. This is her plan.

His father snaps open his briefcase.

“I’m not here to bail you out of trouble, Dan. This isn’t a vacation for me. Franco will only grant drilling rights to a few American companies. I’ll tour the sites and close a deal before summer’s end. *That’s* the plan,” says his father. “Do you understand?”

“Yes, sir,” replies Daniel.

Daniel is freshly graduated from St. Mark’s School of Texas. In the fall he’ll enter Texas A&M University and following graduation he’ll join the family oil operation—his college tuition is contingent upon it.

Daniel’s thoughts return to the image of the dead baby; the photograph could anchor his portfolio submission. The cash award from the Magnum prize could easily pay for a year of journalism school instead of Texas A&M.

“We’re invited to a dinner reception at the Van Dorns,” says his father. “They have a son your age and he’s back from boarding school in Switzerland.”

“The Van Dorns. Diplomats from Oyster Bay, the Long Island set,” says his mother. “Several of these prestigious families have posts in the U.S. Embassy. Daniel, *mi amor*, please wear slacks and a tie. I wish you wouldn’t wear those denims all the time. You look like a ranch hand.” She grimaces. “Is your sleeve torn?”

Daniel quickly examines his shirt. “Oh, must have caught it on something.”

The guards took his film *and* tore his sleeve? If that’s how they treat tourists, how do they treat locals? He heads toward the door.

His mother gently takes his arm. “I saw they have postcards in the lobby. Make sure to mail a card to Laura Beth each day. Her family will expect that.”

He exits the room with his camera, unwilling to cause a scene.  
No need to worry his mother with the truth about Laura Beth.



**P**uerta del Sol. The heartbeat of Madrid. Evening gathers tourists and locals who linger near the fountains and stairs to the Metro. The words GONZÁLEZ BYASS glow green from the TÍO PEPE sign atop a building, throwing an eerie radiance into the paling sky.

Ana walks down the narrow cobblestone street. The swallowed note is gone, but a taste remains.

*I know what you've done.*

She looks over her shoulder before slipping through the unmarked door. At the bottom of the darkened stairway, a soft light pulses beneath the entry. She pauses to listen, then pushes through the door.

A rainbow of color bursts with greeting. Glistening bolts of silk and satin climb from the floor to the ceiling. Shimmering fabrics in sea blue, deep amethyst, and gleaming gold cascade across worn countertops. Sketches and patterns are pinned across the walls. Three women sit at tables while two others work heavy material through machines.

Ana bends to retrieve a small pearl from the floor. In this snug space, ceremony is created. The beautiful fabrics and jewels are not for party dresses or wedding gowns. They are created and used for one person only.

*El torero.* The matador.

*Traje de luces.* Suit of lights. Named because the gemstones and beads sewn onto the fabric reflect and sparkle as if operated by a hidden

switch. One suit is comprised of countless pieces, taking months to construct; each detail completed by a different person. One woman specializes in pants, another in capes, and yet others in complicated threadwork. Her sister's specialty—beading and gemstones.

Like her brother, Rafa, Ana's cousin Puri loves the bullfighters. But Ana loves the bulls. She detests bullfights. Divided family loyalties are common, yet unspoken.

The workshop, generally full of chatter, is now devoid of voices. This means that Luis, the master tailor and owner of the shop, fits a matador in the next room.

Ana's sister, Julia, sits on a wooden chair in the corner. A lamp rings a halo of quiet light into her lap. She pushes a needle through the rigid seven-layer fabric, sewing one of hundreds of sapphire gemstones onto a cropped jacket.

Julia's fingers are silent narrators, embroidered with scars. Ana pulls an empty chair to her sister's side. She retrieves a small pair of pliers from a nearby table and sets a hand on her shoulder.

"Finish with these," whispers Ana. "Your hands, they'll bleed soon."

Julia nods gratefully, accepting the pliers to grip the needle.

Ana motions with her head toward the fitting room. Which bullfighter stands behind the door?

"Ordóñez," Julia whispers.

Ana looks to her sister. Julia's face, thirsty of color, needs rest and sun. Julia has a new baby girl, just four months old. The baby is not yet strong. Neither is Julia. She clings desperately to the child, and together they cry through the nights.

Fascist doctrine states that a woman's ultimate destiny is marriage, motherhood, and domesticity. For poor families, like theirs, hunger turns a blind eye to mandates. Many women from impoverished families take positions of manual labor.

But Julia is special. Her talent as a seamstress affords her the opportunity to work in a shop. Luis needs Julia's skills to please his matadors. Julia needs the wages to feed her family and pay their debts.

"We must pool our earnings," reminds Julia's husband, Antonio. "All wages and coins shall be deposited into this old cigar box."

To move from impoverished Vallecas to a small flat in Lavapiés—this is the plan. Julia rations and counts everything, pinching every last *peseta*. For now, four adults and a newborn baby share a dark, single room. But they are together. Which is what their mother wanted.

Ana has no memory of the war, but she remembers the tears of separation after her parents disappeared. She remembers crying desperately the day she left Zaragoza to be raised by her aunt and uncle in Madrid. Though her aunt and uncle have a daughter of their own, her cousin Puri is different. Obedient. Puri is free of heartache and shame. Free of secrets. Ana envies her.

"How was your palace today?" Julia asks.

*Lies and threats. But don't worry, I swallowed them.*

"The same. Ice and more ice," says Ana with a laugh. She tries to redirect the conversation. "I'll be on the seventh floor for the summer. I'm assigned to a very wealthy family, staying through August. They have a son about my age."

Julia nods.

"He's from Texas," says Ana. "He has American magazines."

Julia's expression shifts from fatigue to fear. "That hotel is not real life, Ana. Not for people like us."

"Julia, it seems unbelievable to us, but for them it's real life!" says Ana. "American women drive their own cars and fly around the world on airplanes. It's not considered sinful. They don't need *permiso marital*. They can seek employment, open a bank account, and travel without their husband's permission."

Julia glances over her shoulder before whispering, "Ana, please

stop picking through trash in the hotel rooms. Stop reading those books and magazines! You know very well that the content is banned in Spain. This is not America.”

Julia is right. In Spain, women must adhere to strict subordinate roles in the domestic arts. Ana remembers the teachings of the *Sección Femenina*: “Do not pretend to be equal to men.” They also teach that purity is absolute. Women’s bathing suits must reach the knees. If a girl is discovered in a movie theater with a boy but no chaperone, her family is sent a yellow card of prostitution.

Julia’s brow buckles as she reaches for Ana’s hand. Even her whisper is unsteady. “The world at the hotel is a fairy tale. I’m sorry, Ana, but that is not our world. Please remember that. Be careful who you speak to.”

“It’s my job to be conversational,” says Ana.

“And that’s fine, as long as it’s a one-way conversation. You may ask questions but try not to answer any.”

That might work. Guests enjoy talking about themselves. As long as she reveals little about her own life, there’s no need for concern. Her stomach turns, digesting the note.

“Ana, is something wrong?” asks Julia.

“No.” She smiles. “Nothing at all.”