
Opening Extract from...

The Seamstress

Written by María Dueñas

Translated by Daniel Hahn

Published by Penguin Books Ltd

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MARÍA DUEÑAS

Translated by Daniel Hahn

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ALWAYS LEARNING PEARSON

To my mother, Ana Vinuesa

To the Vinuesa Lope and Alvarez Moreno families,
for their old days in Tetouan
and the memories they treasured thereafter

To all former residents of the Spanish Protectorate
of Morocco,
and to the Moroccans who lived with them

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PART ONE

THE FOUNTAIN OF CYBELE IN MADRID

Chapter One

A typewriter shattered my destiny. The culprit was a Hispano-Olivetti, and for weeks, a store window kept it from me. Looking back now, from the vantage point of the years gone by, it's hard to believe a simple mechanical object could have the power to divert the course of an entire life in just four short days, to pulverize the intricate plans on which it was built. And yet that is how it was, and there was nothing I could have done to stop it.

It wasn't really that I was treasuring any great plans in those days. My ambitions remained close to home, almost domestic, consistent with the coordinates of the place and time in which I happened to live, plans for a future that could be within my grasp if I reached out my fingertips. At that time my world revolved slowly around a few presences that seemed to me firm and eternal. My mother had always been the most solid of them all. She was a dressmaker, working in a shop with a distinguished clientele. She was experienced and had good judgment, but she was never any more than a salaried seamstress, a working woman like so many others who for ten hours a day sacrificed her nails and pupils cutting and sewing, checking and adjusting garments destined for bodies that were not her own and gazes that would rarely be aimed at her. I knew little about my father in those days. Practically

nothing at all. He had never been around, nor did his absence affect me. I never felt much curiosity about him until my mother, when I was eight or nine, ventured to offer me a few crumbs of information. That he had another family, that it was impossible for him to live with us. I swallowed up those details with the same haste and scant appetite with which I polished off the last spoonfuls of the Lenten broth before me: the life of that alien being interested me considerably less than racing down to play in the square.

I had been born in the summer of 1911, the same year that the dancer Pastora Imperio married El Gallo, when the Mexican singer Jorge Negrete came into the world. When the star of that age they called the Belle Époque was fading. In the distance the drums of what would be the first great war were beginning to be heard, while in Madrid cafés people read *El Debate* and *El Heraldo*, and on the stage La Chelito fired men's passions as she moved her hips brazenly to the tempo of popular songs. During those summer months King Alfonso XIII managed to arrange things in such a way that, between one lover and the next, his fifth legitimate child, a daughter, was conceived. Meanwhile, at the helm of the government was Canalejas the liberal, who couldn't predict that just a year later an eccentric anarchist would put an end to his life, firing three bullets to his head while he was browsing in the San Martín bookshop.

I grew up in reasonably happy surroundings, with more constraints than excesses but nonetheless with no great deprivations or frustrations. I was raised in a narrow street in a fusty old neighborhood in Madrid, right beside the Plaza de la Paja, just a couple of steps from the Palacio Real. A stone's throw from the ceaseless hubbub of the heart of the city, a world of clothes hung out to dry, the smell of bleach, the voices of neighboring women, and cats lying out in the sun. I attended a makeshift school on the mezzanine of a nearby building: on its benches, meant to be used by two people, we kids arranged ourselves in fours, with no sense of order, pushing and shoving, shouting our renditions of "The Pirate's Song" or our times tables. It was there I learned to read and write, to master the four functions of basic arithmetic as well as the names of the rivers crisscrossing the yellowed map that hung from

the wall. At the age of twelve I completed my schooling and became an apprentice in the workshop where my mother was employed. My logical fate.

The business of Doña Manuela Godina—the owner—had for years produced fine garments, very skillfully cut and sewn, highly regarded all over Madrid. Day dresses, cocktail dresses, coats, and cloaks that would later be shown off by distinguished ladies as they walked along La Castellana, around the Hippodrome, and the Puerta de Hierro polo club, as they took their tea at Sakuska or entered the ostentatious churches. Some time passed, however, before I began to find my way into the secrets of sewing. At first I was the whole workshop's girl: the one who took the charcoal from the braziers and swept the cuttings from the floor, who heated the irons in the fire and ran breathless to buy thread and buttons from the Plaza de Pontejos. The one who was in charge of getting the just-finished garments, wrapped in big brown linen bags, to the exclusive residences: my favorite job, the greatest joy of my budding career. That was how I came to know the porters and chauffeurs from the best buildings, the maids, housekeepers, and butlers of the wealthiest families. I watched—unseen—the most refined of ladies, daughters, and husbands. And like a mute witness I made my way into their bourgeois houses, into aristocratic mansions and the sumptuous apartments of charming old buildings. Sometimes I wouldn't get past the servants' area, and someone from the household would accept delivery of the dress; at other times, I was directed to go to the dressing room, so I would make my way down corridors and catch glimpses of drawing rooms, where my eyes would feast on the carpets, chandeliers, velvet curtains, and grand pianos that sometimes were being played and sometimes not, thinking all the while how strange it would be to live in such a universe.

My days shifted effortlessly between these two worlds, and I became less and less aware of the incongruity that existed between them. I would walk down those broad roads rutted with carriage tracks and lined with large imposing doorways just as naturally as I would pass through the crazy network of winding streets that formed my neighborhood, streets filled with puddles, rubbish, the cries of vendors,

and the sharp barks of hungry dogs. Where everyone always went in a hurry, and at the cry of "*Agua va!*" you had better take cover to avoid being splattered with urine from a window above. Craftsmen, minor businessmen, employees, and newspaper vendors lately arrived in the capital filled the rental houses and gave my neighborhood its villagey feel. Many of them only left its bounds when obliged to; my mother and I, on the other hand, did so early each morning, to get over to Calle Zurbano and quickly buckle down to our day-to-day tasks in Doña Manuela's workshop.

After my first two years as an apprentice, the two of them decided that the time had come for me to learn how to sew. At fourteen, I started with the simplest things: fasteners, overcasting, loose tacking. Then came buttonholes, backstitches, and hems. We worked seated on little rush chairs, hunched over wooden boards supported on our knees, where we placed the fabric we were sewing. Doña Manuela dealt with the customers, cutting, checking, and correcting. My mother took the measurements and dealt with all the rest: she did the most delicate needlework and assigned the remainder of the jobs, supervising their execution and imposing rhythm and discipline on a small battalion consisting of half a dozen older dressmakers, four or five young women, and a number of chatterbox apprentice girls, always keener on laughing and gossiping than on doing their work. Some of them ended up good seamstresses, and the ones who couldn't sew well ended up doing the less desirable tasks. When one girl left, another would replace her in that noisy room, so incongruous compared to the serene opulence of the shop's façade and the sobriety of its luminous front room to which only the customers had access. The two of them—Doña Manuela and my mother—were the only ones who could enjoy its saffron-colored drapery, its mahogany furniture, its luminous oak floor, which we younger girls were responsible for waxing with cotton rags. Only they, from time to time, would receive the rays of sunlight that came in through the four high balcony windows facing the street. The rest of us remained always in the rear guard: in the gynaeceum, freezing in winter and hellish in summer. That was our workshop, that grey space around the back whose only openings were two little windows onto an

interior courtyard, where the hours passed like breaths of air between the humming of ballads and the noise of scissors.

I learned fast. I had agile fingers that adapted quickly to the shape of the needles and the touch of the fabrics. To measurements, draping, and volumes. Neck, bust, outside leg. Under bust, full back, cuff. At sixteen I learned to tell fabrics apart, at seventeen to appreciate their qualities and calibrate their possibilities. Crêpe de chine, silk muslin, georgette, Chantilly lace. Months passed as if turning on a Ferris wheel: autumns spent making coats in fine fabrics and between-season dresses, springs sewing flighty dresses destined for long, faraway Cantabrian holidays, the beaches at La Concha or El Sardinero. I turned eighteen, nineteen. Bit by bit I was initiated into handling the cutting work and tailoring the more delicate components. I learned to attach collars and lapels, to predict how things would end up. I liked my work, actually enjoyed it. Doña Manuela and my mother sometimes asked me for my opinion; they began to trust me. "The girl has a fine hand and a fine eye, Dolores," Doña Manuela used to say. "She's good, and she'll get better if she stays on track. Better than you, you needn't worry about that." And my mother would just carry on with what she was doing, as if she hadn't heard a thing. I didn't look up from my working board either. But secretly I watched her out the corner of my eye, and in her mouth—studded with pins—saw the tiniest trace of a smile.

The years went by, life went by. Fashion changed, too, and at its command the activities of the workshop adjusted. After the war in Europe straight lines had arrived, corsets had been cast aside, and legs began to be shown without so much as the slightest blush. When the Roaring Twenties came to an end, however, the waistlines of dresses returned to their natural place, skirts got longer, and modesty once again imposed itself on sleeves, necklines, and desires. Then we launched ourselves into a new decade and there were more changes. All of them together, unforeseen, almost one on top of another. I turned twenty, the Republic arrived in Spain, and I met Ignacio. It was one September Sunday in Parque de la Bombilla, at a riotous dance that was crammed full with workshop girls, bad students, and soldiers on leave. He asked

me to dance, he made me laugh. Two weeks later we began to sketch out plans to marry.

Who was Ignacio, and what was he to me? The man of my life, that's what I thought then. The calm lad who I sensed would be a good father to my children. I had already reached the age when girls like me—girls with no professional expectations—had few options other than marriage. The example of my mother, who had raised me alone and in order to do so had worked from sunrise to sunset, had never seemed to me a very appealing fate. In Ignacio I found someone with whom to pass the rest of my adult life without having to wake up every morning to the taste of loneliness. I was not stirred to the heights of passion, but rather an intense affection and the certainty that my days by his side would pass without sorrows or stridency, sweetly gentle as a pillow.

Ignacio Montes, I thought, would come to be the owner of that arm of mine that he would take on a thousand and one walks, the nearby presence that would offer me security and shelter forever. Two years older than I, thin, genial, as straightforward as he was tender. He was tall, with a skinny build, good manners, and a heart whose capacity to love me seemed to multiply with the hours. The son of a Castilian widow who kept her well-counted money under the mattress, he lived intermittently in insignificant boardinghouses and was an eager applicant for bureaucratic jobs as well as a perpetual candidate for any ministry that might offer him a salary for life—War, Governance, the Treasury. The dream of nearly three thousand pesetas a year, two hundred and forty-one a month—a salary that is set forever, never to be changed, dedicating the rest of his days to the tame world of departmental offices and secretarial offices, of blotters, untrimmed paper, seals, and inkwells. It was on this that we based our plans for the future: on the back of a perfectly calm civil service that, one round of exams after another, refused stubbornly to include my Ignacio on its list of names. And he persisted, undiscouraged. In February he tried out for Justice and in June for Agriculture, and then it started all over again.

In the meantime, unable to allow himself costly diversions, and yet utterly devoted to making me happy, Ignacio feted me with the

humble possibilities that his extremely meager pocket would allow: a cardboard box filled with silkworms and mulberry leaves, cones of roasted chestnuts, and promises of eternal love on the grass under the viaduct. Together we listened to the band from the pavilion in the Parque del Oeste and rowed boats in El Retiro on Sunday mornings when the weather was pleasant. There wasn't a fair with swings and barrel organ that we didn't turn up at, nor any *chotis* that we didn't dance with watchlike precision. How many evenings we spent in the Vistillas gardens, how many movies we saw in cheap local cinemas. Drinking a Valencian *horchata* was a luxury to us, taking a taxi a dream. Ignacio's tenderness, while not overly bold, was nevertheless boundless. I was his sky and his stars, the most beautiful, the best. My skin, my face, my eyes. My hands, my mouth, my voice. Everything that was me made up the unsurpassable for him, the source of his happiness. And I listened to him, told him he was being silly, and let him love me.

Life in the workshop in those days, however, followed a different rhythm. Things were becoming difficult, uncertain. The Second Republic had instilled a sense of apprehension in the comfortable prosperity surrounding our customers. Madrid was turbulent and frantic, the political tension permeating every street corner. The good families extended their northern summer holidays indefinitely, seeking to remain on the fringes of the unsettled, rebellious capital where the *Mundo Obrero* was declaimed loudly in the squares while the shirtless proletariat from the outskirts made their way, without retreat, into the Puerta del Sol. Big private motorcars began to be seen less and less on the streets, opulent parties dwindled. Old ladies in mourning prayed novenas for Azaña to fall soon, and the noise of bullets became routine at the hour when the gas street lamps were lit. The anarchists set fire to churches, the Falangists brandished pistols like bullies. With increasing frequency the aristocrats and *hauts bourgeois* covered their furniture up with sheets, dismissed the staff, bolted the shutters, and set out hastily for foreign parts, taking jewels galore, fears, and banknotes across the borders, yearning for the exiled king and an obliging Spain, which would still be some time in coming.

Fewer and fewer ladies visited Doña Manuela's workshop, fewer

orders came in, and there was less and less to do. Drip by painful drip, first the apprentice girls and then the rest of the seamstresses were dismissed, till all that were left were the owner, my mother, and me. And when we finished the last dress for the Marchioness of Entrelagos and spent the next six days listening to the radio, twiddling our thumbs, without a single soul appearing at the door, Doña Manuela announced, sighing, that she had no choice but to shut up shop.

Amid the turbulence of those days in which the political fighting made theater audiences quake and governments lasted three paternosters, we barely had the chance to cry over what we'd lost. Three weeks after the advent of our enforced inactivity, Ignacio appeared with a bouquet of violets and the news that he had at last passed his civil service exam. The plans for our little wedding stifled any feelings of uncertainty, and on a little table we planned the event. Although the new breezes that swept in with the Republic carried on them the fashion for civil weddings, my mother—whose soul housed simultaneously, and with no contradiction, her condition as single mother, an iron Catholic spirit, and a nostalgic loyalty to the deposed monarchy—encouraged us to celebrate a religious wedding in the neighboring church of San Andrés. Ignacio and I agreed; how could we not, without toppling that hierarchy of order in which he submitted to all my desires and I deferred to my mother's without argument. Nor did I have any good reason to refuse: the dreams I had about celebrating that marriage were modest ones, and it made no difference to me whether it was at an altar with a priest and cassock or in a large room presided over by a Republican tricolor flag.

So we prepared to set the date with the same parish priest who twenty-four years earlier, on June eighth, as dictated by the calendar of saints' days, had given me the name Sira. Sabiniana, Victorina, Gaudencia, Heraclia, and Fortunata had been other possibilities that went with the saints of the day.

"Sira, Father, just put Sira—it's short, at least." That was my mother's decision, in her single motherhood. And so I was Sira.

We would celebrate the marriage with family and a few friends. With my grandfather, who had neither his legs nor his wits, mutilated

in body and spirit during the war of the Philippines, a permanent mute presence in his rocking chair next to our dining room balcony windows. With Ignacio's mother and sisters who'd come in from the village. With our next-door socialist neighbors Engracia and Norberto and their three sons, as dear to us as if the same blood flowed right across the landing. With Doña Manuela, who took up the threads again to give me the gift of her final piece of work, in the form of a bridal dress. We would treat our guests to sugar-plum pastries, sweet Málagan wine and vermouth. Perhaps we would be able to hire a musician from the neighborhood to come up and play a paso doble, and some street photographer would take a dry-plate picture for us, which would adorn our home, something we did not yet have and for now would be my mother's.

It was then, amid this jumble of plans and preparations, that it occurred to Ignacio to prepare me to take the test to make me a civil servant like him. His brand-new post in administration had opened his eyes to a new world: that of the administration of the Republic, an area where there existed professional destinies for women that lay beyond the stove, the wash house, and drudgery; through which the female sex could beat a path, elbow to elbow with men, in the same conditions and with their sights set on the same dreams. The first women were already sitting as deputies in the parliament; the equality of the sexes in public life was proclaimed. There had been recognition of our legal status, our right to work, and universal suffrage. All the same, I would have infinitely preferred to return to sewing, but it took Ignacio just three evenings to convince me. The old world of fabrics and backstitches had been toppled and a new universe was opening its doors to us: we had to adapt to it. Ignacio himself could take charge of my preparation; he had all the study topics and more than enough experience in the art of putting himself forward and failing countless times without ever giving in to despair. As for me, I would do my share to help the little platoon that we two would make up with my mother, my grandfather, and the progeny to come. And so I agreed. Once we were all set, there was only one thing we lacked: a typewriter on which I could learn to type in preparation for the unavoidable typing test. Ignacio had spent months

practicing on other people's machines, passing through a *via dolorosa* of sad academies smelling of grease, ink, and concentrated sweat. He didn't want me to have to go through the same unpleasantness, hence his determination that we should obtain our own equipment. In the weeks that followed we launched ourselves on our search, as though it would turn our lives totally around.

We studied all the options and did endless calculations. I didn't understand about detailed performance features, but it seemed to me that something small and light would be most suitable for us. Ignacio was indifferent to the size, but he did take extraordinary care over prices, installment payments, and terms. We located all the sellers in Madrid, spent hours standing at their window displays, and learned to pronounce exotic names that evoked distant geographies and movie stars: Remington, Royal, Underwood. We could just as easily have chosen one brand as another; we could just as well have ended up buying from an American establishment as a German one, but our choice settled finally on the Italian Hispano-Olivetti on Calle de Pi y Margall. How could we have known that with that simple act, with the mere fact of having taken two or three steps and crossed a threshold, we were signing the death sentence on our time together and irreparably twisting apart the strands of our future.

Chapter Two

I'm not going to marry Ignacio, Mother."

She was trying to thread a needle and my words made her freeze, the thread held between her fingers.

"What are you saying, girl?" she whispered. Her voice seemed to emerge broken from her throat, laden with confusion and disbelief.

"That I'm leaving him, Mother. That I've fallen in love with another man."

She scolded me with the bluntest reproaches she could bring herself to utter, cried out to heaven, begging God to intercede, appealing to the whole calendar of saints, summoning dozens of arguments to persuade me to retract my intentions. When it became clear that none of it was doing any good, she sat down in the rocking chair next to my grandfather's, covered her face, and began to cry.

I bore the moment with a feigned fortitude, trying to hide the nerves that lay behind the bluntness of my words. I was afraid of my mother's reaction: Ignacio had come to be the son she'd never had, the presence that filled the masculine gap in our little family. They talked to each other, they understood each other, they got along. My mother made the stews he liked, shined his shoes, and turned his jackets inside out when the attrition of time had begun to rob them of their

luster. He, in turn, complimented her when he saw her in her finery for Sunday Mass, brought her egg-yolk sweets, and—half in jest and half seriously—sometimes told her that she was more beautiful than I.

I was aware that my daring would bring down all that comfortable domesticity. I knew that it would topple the scaffolding of more lives than just my own, but there was nothing I could do to stop it. My decision was firm as a post: there would be no wedding and no civil service exams; I wouldn't learn to type on the little table and never would I share children, bed, or joys with Ignacio. I was going to leave him, and the strength of a gale would not be enough to curtail my resolve.

The Hispano-Olivetti storefront had two large display windows that showed their products off to passersby with proud splendor. Between the two of them was a glass door, with a bar of burnished bronze crossing it diagonally. Ignacio pushed it and we went in. The tinkling of a little bell announced our arrival, but no one came out to meet us right away. We stopped there, inhibited for a couple of minutes, looking at everything displayed with such reverence, not daring even to brush against the pieces of polished wood furniture where those typewriting marvels rested, one of which we were about to select as the one most suited to our plans. At the back of the spacious room devoted to the displays, there was apparently an office. From it came men's voices.

We didn't have to wait much longer. The voices knew that there were customers, and one of them—housed in a rotund body, darkly dressed—approached us. As soon as the affable clerk greeted us, asking what we were interested in, Ignacio began to talk, describing what he wanted, requesting information and advice. Mustering all his professionalism, the clerk proceeded to enumerate the features of each machine on display in rigorous detail, with such monotonous technical precision that after twenty minutes I was ready to fall asleep from boredom. Ignacio, meanwhile, absorbed the information through all his senses, indifferent to me and to anything other than gauging what was

being offered to him. I decided to move away from them, totally uninterested. Whatever Ignacio chose would be a good choice. I couldn't care less about keys, carriage return levers, or margin bells.

So I dedicated myself to walking through the other parts of the display in search of something with which to appease my boredom. I stared at the big advertising posters on the walls proclaiming the store's products with colored illustrations and words in languages I did not understand. Then I approached the windows and watched pedestrians hurrying past along the street. After a while I returned unwillingly to the back of the store.

A big cupboard with mirrored doors ran along part of one wall. I considered my reflection in it, noticing that a couple of strands had come loose from the bun in my hair. After attending to that I took advantage of the opportunity to pinch my cheeks and give my bored face a little color. Then I examined my attire at leisure. I had made myself get into my best dress; after all, this purchase was supposed to be a special occasion for us. I smoothed out my stockings, upward from my ankles; slowly and deliberately I adjusted the dress on my hips, at the waistline and collar. I retouched my hair again and looked at myself from the front and the side, calmly observing the copy of myself that the mirror glass returned to me. I struck poses, made a couple of dance steps, and laughed. When I tired of the sight, I continued wandering around the room, killing time as I ran my hand slowly over the surfaces, snaking languidly around the pieces of furniture. I barely paid any attention to what had really brought us there; to me there was nothing to distinguish between those machines apart from their size. There were big, solid ones, yet there were small ones, too; some seemed light, others heavy, but to my eyes they were no more than a mass of dark unwieldy contraptions unable to generate the slightest charm. I positioned myself reluctantly in front of one of them, brought my index finger toward the keys, and pretended to press the letters closest to me. The *s*, the *i*, the *r*, the *a*. "Si-ra," I repeated in a whisper.

"Lovely name."

The man's voice came from just behind me, so close that I could

almost feel his breath on my skin. A shudder ran up my spine and I turned around, startled.

"Ramiro Arribas," he said, holding out his hand. It took me a moment to react, perhaps because I wasn't used to anyone greeting me so formally, perhaps because I had not yet managed to absorb the impact this unexpected presence had on me.

Who was this man, where had he come from? He clarified it himself, his eyes still fixed on mine.

"I am the manager of the establishment. I'm sorry not to have attended to you earlier; I was trying to place a call."

And watching you through the blinds that separate the office from the showroom, he should have added. He didn't say it, but he let it be guessed at. I intuited it from the depths of his gaze, the sonority of his voice, from the fact that he had approached me rather than Ignacio and the length of time he held my hand. I knew that he had been watching me, considering my erratic wanderings around his establishment. He had seen me arranging myself in front of the mirrored cupboard: readjusting my hair, conforming the lines of the dress to my shape, and fixing my stockings by running my hands up my legs. Perched in the shelter of his office, he had absorbed the outlines of my body and the slow cadence of each of my movements. He had appraised me, calibrated the shapes of my silhouette and the lines of my face. He had studied me with the sure eye of someone who knows exactly what he likes and is used to getting what he wants with the immediacy that his desires dictate. And he resolved to show this to me. I had never seen this before in any other man; I had never believed myself capable of awaking such a desire in anyone. But just as animals scent food or danger, with the same primal instinct I knew that Ramiro Arribas, like a wolf, had decided to come for me.

"Is that your husband?" he said, gesturing toward Ignacio.

"My fiancé," I managed to answer.

Perhaps it was only my imagination, but I thought I sensed the trace of a satisfied smile.

"Perfect. Please, come with me."

He made way for me, and as he did, he positioned his hand gently

at my waist as though it had been waiting to be there its whole life. He greeted Ignacio pleasantly, dispatched the salesclerk to the office, and took up the reins of the matter with the ease of someone who gives a clap and makes pigeons take flight. He was like a conjuror combed with brilliantine, the features of his face marked with angular lines, a broad smile, a powerful neck, and a bearing so imposing, so manly and decisive, that beside him my poor Ignacio looked like he was a century away from reaching manhood.

He learned that the typewriter we were planning to buy would be for teaching me to type, and he praised the idea as though it were a matter of great genius. Ignacio saw him as a competent professional who offered technical details and beneficial payment options. For me he was something more: a tremor, a magnet, a certainty.

We took a while longer to finalize the negotiations. Over the course of that time the signals coming from Ramiro Arribas didn't stop for a single second. An unexpected, glancing touch, a joke, a smile; double entendres and looks that pierced the depths of my being. Ignacio, self-absorbed and unaware of what was happening before his very eyes, finally decided on the portable Lettera 35, a machine with round white keys on which the letters of the alphabet were set with such elegance that they seemed to be carved with a chisel.

"Superb decision," the manager concluded, praising Ignacio's good sense. As though he had been the master of his own free will and hadn't been manipulated with the great salesman's wiles to buy that particular model. "The best choice for slender fingers like those of your fiancée. Do please allow me, miss, to see them."

I quickly sought Ignacio's gaze to gain his consent, but I didn't find it: he had gone back to focusing on the typewriter. I held my hand out shyly. Faced with my fiancé's innocent passivity, Ramiro Arribas stroked my hand slowly and shamelessly, finger to finger, with a sensuality that gave me goose bumps and made my legs shake like leaves in a summer breeze. He only let go when Ignacio looked away from the Lettera 35 and asked for instructions on completing the purchase. They agreed that we'd leave a deposit of 50 percent that afternoon and make the balance of the payment the following day.