

— PROLOGUE —

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*The city of Rosca. Early morning: Monday, April 29th.*

The cathedral clock was ten minutes slow. Carmen Viguera knew this so she didn't look up. She looked at her watch instead: 6.40 a.m. 'I'm ten minutes late,' she thought, as she hurried through the centre of the city.

She crossed the *Plaza Mayor*. It was covered in flowers. They were there to welcome the president who was going to visit Rosca in a few days' time. But Carmen took no notice. She didn't like the president and she was late for work.



*She ran down the Calle Alta ... and stopped in front of the side entrance.*

She worked as a cleaner\* in the U.S. consulate. It was a large, modern building on the far side of the square, opposite the Grand Hotel. She worked in the hotel, too, in the evenings. She had to: she had three small children and a husband who didn't earn much money.

She began to run. She ran down the *Calle Alta*, a narrow street to the right of the consulate, and stopped in front of the side entrance.

She looked up. The entrance was dark. She could only see the first step which led up to the door. She took a small torch from her pocket and turned it on.

A man was lying at the top of the steps. His eyes were open but he couldn't see anything.

He was dead.

The torch fell from Carmen's hand. She screamed.