



JOURNEY TO THE RIVER SEA

The Translation of Children's Literature

First Reader: Onno Kusters

Second Reader: Roselinde Supheert

Tanja van Putten

5506689

Abstract

This thesis discusses the translation problems that occur when translating children's literature, and some possible solutions to these problems. Eva Ibbotson's book *Journey to the River Sea* will be looked at specifically, and a chapter will be translated. The naturalizing translation method and the exoticizing method will be discussed while looking at different opinions on these methods. The translation problems will be discussed using Nord's four categories. The status of children's books and their translations will be looked at, and the effect this has on translation strategies. Specific attention will be paid to pragmatic translation problems such as the setting of the novel, and some translation problems specific for this text, such as the translation of the character names and the style of the novel. Culture specific elements and their translation will also be discussed.

Table of contents

Abstract	page 1
Introduction	page 3
<i>Journey to the River Sea: The Translation of Children's Literature</i>	page 4
Bibliography	page 11
Translation <i>Journey to the River Sea</i> chapter 12	page 12
Source text	page 19

Introduction

Journey to the River Sea by Eva Ibbotson is a book written for children, published in 2001. The story is about Maia who, after her parents die, goes to Brazil with her governess to live with distant relatives. Despite winning awards on publication, such as the Nestlé Smarties Book Prize, the book has never been translated into Dutch. In my opinion this book should be translated into Dutch because the adventures in a country far away and the relatable protagonist would be very enjoyable for Dutch readers. This particular book has many different characters such as the nice and helpful protagonist, a stern governess with a heart of gold, two mean twins, an adventurer, and an actor who longs to go back to England. All these different characters bring the story in the beautiful Amazon forest to life and will make its readers long for a happy resolution of the story for all of its characters. These and more aspects of the story will capture the imagination of the reader and stay with him or her for a long period of time after finishing the book.

Journey to the River Sea: The Translation of Children's Literature

In translating this book translation problems will arise which are specific for children's literature. One of the problems which occurs most often, is the problem of translating the tone and atmosphere of the novel. How does one recreate the tone of the source text which consists of both the perspective of the child as well as some darker elements? Another translation problem is the aspect of the author's implied view on childhood and education, and the view of the translator. The translator can choose to change the book in such a way that his or her own views on childhood are reflected. Another aspect of translating children's literature is the question whether or not to keep the original names of the characters. In Coillie and Verschueren's *Children's Literature in Translation: Challenges and Strategies* multiple authors discuss topics such as character names (Jan van Coillie en Walter P. Verschueren) and cultural references (Isabel Pascua-Febles). Gillian Lathey wrote *Translating Children's Literature* which discusses some translation problems specific for children's literature.

This thesis will consist of a translation relevant analysis of the source text which will assess its various translation problems and discuss translation strategies, using Nord and Chesterman, and research using Lathey and Coillie to tackle translation problems that are specific for children's literature. A 2500-word translation of a part of *Journey to the River Sea* with footnotes will follow the analysis.

Jan van Coillie and Walter P. Verschueren edited the book *Children's Literature in Translation: Challenges and Strategies*. This book discusses some of the translation problems that apply specifically to children's literature, but also discusses some attitudes to translators of children's literature. In the editor's preface it is said that "Nowhere else is the mediating role of the translator so strongly felt as in the translation of children's literature" (1). Because of translations children all over the world can read stories from different countries. According to Gillian Lathey in her chapter "The Translator Revealed", translators have always been invisible. It can be understood from this chapter that according to Lathey the status of children's books is too low, and that more attention should be paid to children's literature and their translators. Göte Klingberg in *Het Vertalen van Kinderboeken (The Translation of Children's Books)* also mentions the lack of appreciation the translators of children's literature receive; their names are often not even mentioned in reviews. Birgit Stolt in the same book mentions that the biggest problem in translation is the problem of how faithful a translation should be to the original text. She mentions two opposite strategies: the naturalizing method and the exoticizing method. It is important to stick to one of the two

methods, otherwise the book will get very confusing for the reader. According to her the difference between translating children's literature and literature for adults is that the problem of faithfulness is more in the background with children's literature. This has to do with respect for the writers of children's books. The amount of respect a source text receives can differ greatly. For example the Bible has to be translated very faithfully but for texts like *Robinson Crusoe* there is honour in adapting it. This has an effect on the translation method chosen.

Lathey discusses some translation strategies used by Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) in "The Translator Revealed", such as her decision to change anything foreign to an English equivalent, so children would not be disturbed or alienated. Wollstonecraft translated *Elements of Morality for the Use of Children*. Wollstonecraft's translation strategy is largely influenced by the view on childhood at the time in which she translated the book. According to Kimberley Reynolds, the view on children was that they were born sinful so children needed to be guided because their natural instincts could not be trusted. So the representation of morals and values are very important to Wollstonecraft. That book contains "social and moral instructions of children through fables and stories taken from daily life rather than fanciful tales, which at the time were considered to be a dangerous incitement of the child's uncontrollable imagination" (Lathey 8). Her translation is a naturalization, which is a familiar translation strategy, but the difference from modern practice is in the "primacy of the moral message and the vision of the implied child reader" (12). Her cultural surroundings and the common view on children of the time had a large influence on her translation strategy.

This could be a possible solution to the problem of translating culture specific elements. In her chapter "No Innocent Act (On the ethics of translating for children)" Lathey mentions that the general attitude towards children's literature shifts over time. "At different points in history, views about translation and adaptation have changed from a tradition of "belles infidèles" to equivalence, even strict accuracy, and back again" (16). She discusses some advantages and disadvantages to domestication and foreignization. Children should be able to find and appreciate the foreign in translated texts and learn to tolerate differences, but they should not be discouraged by them. In her chapter "Translating Cultural References", Isabel Pascua-Febles mentions that nowadays it is more common to keep the setting of the book and the names of the characters the same as in the source text. "If the current tendency towards internationalization is respected, most of the proper names used in the source text would be retained in the translation" (11).

Gillian Lathey wrote the book *Translating Children's Literature*. In the introduction it is mentioned that translating children's books seems much easier than it is. Children's literature is "a literature that conveys with a light touch the joys, humour and mischief of childhood, as well as its more troubling undercurrents" (1). It is emphasized that it is just as challenging to translate children's literature as translating for adults. Children's books may be just as demanding in their complexity or style (1). With translating children's books there is a danger of over-explanation or reinterpretation from an adult's point of view (15). During the later stages of childhood there is an increasing complexity of narrative structure necessary to hold the child's attention, and a need to identify with protagonists (16). This applies to *Journey to the River Sea*. Readers need to be able to feel what the protagonist is feeling. In this case the protagonist will be about the same age as the readers are, and the story is described from her point of view. This makes the story very personal. So the challenge for the translator is to replicate the child's voice in another language. In chapter 2 "Meeting The Unknown" it is mentioned that cultural mediation is more necessary in some countries than in others. In the UK, where only a very small percentage of published books are translated works, this may be more desirable than in countries where the majority of books are translated works, so people are more used to reading translated texts (2). It also depends on how widespread the source culture is.

The source text was written by Eva Ibbotson. The main aim of the text is to entertain children and young teenagers. Eva Ibbotson tells an exciting story about a girl who moves to a far-away country. The book was first published in England in 2001. The target audience of the book will be children of around the same age as the protagonist Maia, so about ten years old. In the book no non-verbal elements such as pictures are used. The language used is adapted to the main protagonist who is about ten years old. A large part of the text consists of her train of thought and shows what Maia is thinking, so these passages are written in language a child would use. The tone of the text depends on the way the protagonist feels at that moment, which is generally optimistic. She tries to see the positive in life and in people, like the beautiful forest and the fact that she will meet new family members. She looks forward to meeting the twins and tries to see the positive in them, even when they are mean from the start. She is quick to make new friends when she goes dancing in Manaus. Sometimes the tone is more negative, for example when she is lost in the forest. In that situation she uses words like "utterly crestfallen" (74) which illustrate the panic she is feeling in that moment.

The target text will be written by a freelance translator for Gottmer Publishers. They have published books written by Eva Ibbotson before. The target of the text is the same as the

target of the source text, which is to entertain children and young teenagers. Another target of both texts can be to give some moral wisdom such as bad behaviour will not be rewarded. This moral is clearly demonstrated in the text by the way the unkind Carters end up at the end of the novel. The text will be translated for Dutch readers, specifically for Dutch children and teenagers. There will be no use of non-verbal elements such as pictures. The language and tone will be kept as similar to the source text as possible, so it will be written largely from Maia's perspective and in language that she would use.

In *Denken over Vertalen (Thinking about Translating)* Christiane Nord mentions four categories of translation problems. These categories are pragmatic translation problems, translation problems specifically for two cultures, translation problems specifically for a language pair and translation problems specifically for one text. Pragmatic translation problems are caused by differences between two communicative situations, so for example because of differences between time and place between the source text and the target text. According to Diederik Grit it depends on the target audience, the type of text and the target of the text how these should be translated. It also depends on the translation strategy used by the translator; whether the strategy used is a naturalizing method or an exoticizing method. The beginning of the novel takes place in London, England, while the majority of the novel takes place in Manaus in Brazil. This causes a number of translation problems in the novel. An example of this is the typically English food Cloves dreams about eating again, such as "semolina bake" or "jam roly-poly" or "plum duff with cornflour sauce" (Ibbotson 19). Many of these dishes will mean little or nothing to Dutch children. How to translate these dishes is a problem. Possible solutions could be translating the dishes literally and hope that children will understand them. This however could cause confusion or even cause the reader to enjoy the book less. Other solutions could be giving an explanation in footnotes or between brackets, but because this is a novel for children this is hardly an option. A more probable solution would be to translate the different foods to something more neutral, so that Dutch children would be able to recognize it, but it would not be necessarily Dutch. In *Translating Children's Literature*, Lathey mentions that the translation of food is one of the most common and significant challenges in translating fiction and poetry for children (7). An equivalent has to be found, or an alternative with the same impact on the child's taste buds. If a food is universally known this may not be necessary, however with the British foods mentioned in *Journey to the River Sea* this is not the case. So some strategies are to leave the cultural markers so that readers can enjoy and appreciate difference, or to replace culture-specific items with local ones with a similar impact.

On page 31 of *Journey to the River Sea* Maia notices that the twins are wearing their gloves, while they are very close to the house. For a Dutch child nowadays it will be less clear why it is so striking to Maia that the twins are wearing gloves. So a solution could be to leave Maia's remark as it is, however young readers will probably wonder why Maia even notices this. Another solution could be to add a small sentence explaining why Maia wonders about this, by explaining that it is not usual to wear gloves inside or near your own home. On page 170 Maia's dress is described as an "Elizabethan dress". This description will not hold much meaning to a young Dutch reader. Translating this word literally is not really an option. A better solution would be to describe the dress. Another example is the name of Mrs Carter's scent, which is "Passion of the Night". Leaving this name in English does not add much and will likely only cause confusion. So this name can be best translated to Dutch, so for example "Passie van de Nacht". On page 170 "Pentonville Prison" is mentioned. This name will be familiar to British people, but it does not have the same meaning to many Dutch people. It does have to be made clear that it concerns a prison, because earlier on in the sentence it is mentioned that the eye of a murderer arrived. A solution in this case would be to leave the word "Pentonville" out entirely, or to keep it and assume that it will not bother the reader. On page 170 "those hams one sees on butchers' slabs near Christmas" is used to describe the way the twins look in their dresses. However, in the Netherlands it is not usual to eat ham for Christmas. But because of the sentimentality attached to this comparison translating this to something more neutral is hardly an option.

Translation problems that are specific for two cultures are differences of norms and conventions between the target and the source culture. Examples of such differences are genre conventions, measurement units, politeness, and currency. There are not very many translation problems belonging to this category in *Journey to the River Sea*. An example of a translation problem because of different conventions to do with politeness, is the curtsy Maia makes when she meets the Carters for the first time in chapter three. Young contemporary readers may wonder about this, but because the reader knows that she is British and that the story takes place quite some time ago, it is likely that they will accept it as a part of her culture and not feel alienated by it, also because it is explained that she has to make a curtsy because it is the polite thing to do.

Translation problems specific for a language pair are for example differences of verb tenses or specific expressions. So differences in structure between the source language and the target language. For example longer sentences are more normal and acceptable in English than in Dutch, so in the Dutch translation commas will be necessary more often or sentences

will have to be made shorter. On page 73 for example, this sentence "...coming towards her silently like a boat in a dream" would sound better in the Dutch translation with the addition of a comma. The Dutch sentence will then be: "...een kano tevoorschijn gekomen die stilletjes op haar af kwam, zoals een boot uit een droom". The comma improves the rhythm. Another common difference between English and Dutch is the use of subordinate clauses. On page 170 it is said that Mr Carter comes outside "to say goodbye, holding a small box containing the eye of...". In Dutch this would be "vasthoudend een kleine doos bevattende het oog van", which makes the sentence sound very archaic and does not reflect the language a child would use. So this sentence would sound better: "terwijl hij een kleine doos met het oog van ... vasthield".

Nord's fourth category is about translation problems that specifically concern one text. The solutions to these problems differ per text and cannot always be copied when translating a different text. Examples of this are word plays, but in the case of *Journey to the River Sea* character names and style are more relevant to discuss. The names of the characters can stay the same because they are not very difficult for Dutch readers and they add to the English aspect of the novel. This also goes for Mr and Mrs, this adds to the English aspect and will not disturb Dutch readers. None-character names, however, can be changed, such as the name of the ship which is mentioned on page 172. Keeping the name of the ship *Bishop* in English does not add much and a Dutch translation of that name such as *Bisschop* would make it easier for a young Dutch reader. On page 175 the "Natural History Museum" is mentioned. This is not a name as such, it serves to give the function of the building, and so it would be better to change it to Dutch with for example "Natuurhistorisch Museum".

According to Birgit Stolt adults often underestimate what children can understand. The name Emil from Astrid Lindgren's stories was changed to Michel in German, because there already was another famous Emil in Germany. The name Michel is not known in Sweden at all, while other names from the book stayed the same. Children are perfectly able to understand that people with the same name are still different people; often there are people with the same name at school. So Stolt is against changing names.

Akiko Yamazaki sees no point in translating a book if by doing so all traces of its original country are lost. One of the reasons for translating, as she sees it, is to provide a perspective into another culture. (57). She argues that foreignness in a book can be attractive rather than repellent. She argues that "it is actually better not to change names but to leave them as they are as a signal to remind the readers of their entrance into a different system that requires a different mode of reading" (59). These names are a constant and recurring reminder

that the characters are from a different culture than the reader's. The names in *Journey to the River Sea* also remind the reader that the characters are British and that they are reading about a foreign country. There is no need to change the names or their spelling as the names are not difficult and some of them are similar to Dutch names, Beatrice for example is similar to the Dutch name Beatrix, which is a name that everyone in the Netherlands knows. It is important to leave the names foreign, this serves as a constant reminder that the story is set in a different country.

An important aspect of the style is that the novel is written from Maia's point of view, which means that she tells the reader what she knows and sees. By her word choice it becomes clear what she thinks, which greatly influences the atmosphere of some passages and the perspective on certain characters. When Maia's opinion of something or someone changes, the word choice makes this shift very clear. One example of this is Maia's opinion of the twins. At the beginning of the novel she is looking forward to meeting them, and so the first time she meets them she describes them as "They were fair, they were pretty and they were dressed in white" (30). After she has known them for a while and knows how mean the twins are, her description of them changes. When Maia and the twins get dressed for a party, she describes them as having "short necks coming out of a double row of ruffles" which makes them look "a little like those hams one sees on butchers' slabs near Christmas" (170). This shows that Maia's perspective has a big influence on the way the story is told.

This novel was written for young readers, from the perspective of a young girl in her early teens. It is set in Britain and Brazil, in the early 20th century. The first translation problem is then to choose for a more exoticizing translation method or a more naturalizing method. Does the fact that the book is set in a foreign country make the book more enjoyable, or does it make the novel too difficult and therefore less enjoyable? Because of the differences in time and place this novel contains many pragmatic problems, such as the typically British food that is mentioned. There are also problems specific for this text, such as the names of the characters. This is a children's novel, so it is harder to decide how to translate the food for instance and whether to keep the names the same or not, because the young age of the intended reader has to be kept in mind. However, it is also important not to underestimate the reader. I believe that a foreign setting does not necessarily make a book less enjoyable for readers in their early teens, but can in itself educate and intrigue so overall an exoticizing translation method would be better.

Bibliography

- Coillie, Jan Van., and Walter P. Verschueren. *Children's Literature in Translation: Challenges and Strategies*. Manchester: St. Jerome, 2011. Print.
- Grit, Diederik. "De Vertaling van Realia." *Denken over Vertalen: Tekstboek Vertaalwetenschap*. Ed. Ton Naaijken. Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2010. 189-196. Print.
- Ibbotson, Eva. *Journey to the River Sea*. London: Macmillan, 2008. Print.
- Lathey, Gillian. *Translating Children's Literature*. London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016. Print.
- Nord, Christiane. "Tekstanalyse En De Moeilijkheidsgraad Van Een Vertaling." *Denken over Vertalen: Tekstboek Vertaalwetenschap*. Ed. Ton Naaijken. Nijmegen: Vantilt, 2010. 145-52. Print.
- Reynolds, Kimberley. "Perceptions of Childhood." The British Library. The British Library, 06 Mar. 2014. Web. 20 June 2017.
- Stolt, Birgit. "Hoe Emil verandert in Michel." *Het vertalen van kinderboeken*. Den Haag: Nederlands Bibliotheek en Lektuur Centrum, 1980. 7-24.
- Yamazaki, Akiko. "Why Change Names? On the Translation of Children's Books." *Children's Literature in Education*. 33.1 (2002): 53-62

Translation *Journey to the River Sea* chapter 12

‘Blijf!’ zei Finn tegen zijn hond. ‘Blijf en bewaak de hut’. De hond keek hem aan met wanhopige ogen en jankte even.

‘Je hoorde me wel,’ zei Finn. ‘Blijf!’

Hij jankte nog een keer¹; toen draaide de hond zich om en plofte neer² voor de hut.

‘Zal hij echt blijven?’ vroeg Clovis.

‘Natuurlijk. Ik ben niet zo lang weg.’ Finn zou Clovis in zijn verstopplek installeren in het museum en daarna stiekem terug naar het meer gaan³.

Het was al bijna donker, maar Finn kende de waterweggetjes die naar Manaus leidden op zijn duimpje⁴. Hij zou Clovis via dezelfde route meenemen in zijn kano als hij met Maia had genomen. Er was meer dan genoeg tijd; Sergei’s feestje begon pas over een paar uur – en Maia ging de tweeling pas bewerken als het feest al in volle gang was⁵.

Finn had zijn haar weer donker gemaakt; hij droeg zijn hoofdband en een kralen band om zijn arm. Clovis droeg de pet en het uniform van de leerlingen⁶ van de St Joseph School⁷ in Manaus. De vader van Finn had geprobeerd hem daar naartoe te sturen, maar al na de eerste week was Finn thuis gekomen en had hij Bernard gezegd dat als hij wilde dat Finn terug ging, dan zou hij hem in de boeien moeten slaan en aan zijn haren terug sleuren.

Als iemand een glimp van ze zou opvangen in de achterafstraten van Manaus terwijl ze op weg waren naar het museum, zouden ze denken dat het een jongen was die terug naar school werd gebracht door zijn Indiaanse bediende. ‘Juist; ik denk dat we alles hebben: de sleutels, een lamp, je tas, het geld om naar je pleegmoeder te gaan. Nee, wacht. Er is nog iets.’ Finn voelde rond in zijn zak. ‘Hier, ik wil dat je dit hebt.’ En hij gaf hem Bernard Taverner’s horloge aan de zilveren ketting.

Clovis staarde ernaar en draaide het om. ‘Dit kan ik niet aannemen. Hij is van je vader, toch?’

¹ Dit moet van een zelfstandig naamwoord een werkwoord worden, ‘een jank’ bestaat niet in het Nederlands. Dus: hij jankte nog een keer.

² Hij plofte niet ‘zichzelf’ neer, dus het terugverwijzen is eruit. Andere optie: hij gooide zichzelf neer, maar dat geeft een ander beeld dan neerploffen.

³ De letterlijke vertaling van het woord ‘lagoon’ is in het Nederlands ‘lagune’ of ‘kustmeer’. Deze woorden zullen een kind weinig zeggen, en het woord ‘meer’ dekt de lading voldoende. Het Engelse woord ‘to slip’ wordt tot uitdrukking gebracht met het woord ‘stiekem’.

⁴ Uitdrukking in het Engels is vertaald met een equivalente uitdrukking in het Nederlands.

⁵ ‘start working on the twins’ is geworden ‘de tweeling bewerken’.

⁶ ‘cadet’ is in het Nederlands ook ‘cadet’, maar omdat het twijfelachtig is of kinderen dat woord kennen, is het veranderd naar het wat algemenere woord ‘leerlingen’.

⁷ Realia, naam van de school is behouden.

‘Ja. Maar als je mij gaat zijn, is het beter als je hem hebt,’ zei Finn en draaide zich snel om. Het was veel moeilijker dan hij had gedacht om het horloge dat hij zo vaak in de handen van zijn vader had gezien, zomaar weg te geven⁸.

Ze duwden de kano van de kant en Finn begon het meer over te peddelen. De hond jankte weer, maar hij bewoog niet, en toen waren ze door de biezen en op weg.

Het was een stille tocht. Als ze iets moesten zeggen deden ze dat fluisterend⁹. Finn stopte op de plek waar hij Maia had afgezet de eerste keer dat ze elkaar ontmoetten, en bond de kano vast aan een boom. Hij zou teruggaan zodra Clovis veilig zat op de verstopplek.

Ze wachtten een half uur totdat het helemaal donker was. Er was geen maan en geen straatverlichting in de smalle straatjes waardoor Finn Clovis leidde. Toen ze bij de achterdeur van het museum kwamen, hoorden ze het geluid van dansmuziek uit het huis van de familie Keminsky komen. Het feest was begonnen.

Dit keer voelde Maia zich niet als Assepoester. Net als de tweeling ging ze ook naar het feest, en terwijl ze zich aankleedde vergat ze de taak die haar te wachten stond bij Sergei thuis bijna¹⁰. Ze had een nieuwe jurk, de laatste die een van de zusters van haar school in Londen met haar had gekocht voordat ze wegging, en hij was erg mooi. Het was van¹¹ donkerblauwe zijde met een erg bolle rok¹² en een rij van kleine parelknopjes op het lijfje. Minty¹³ had haar tot op haar heupen hangende haar geborsteld en het los gelaten, en de tweeling keek niet gelukkig toen ze haar zagen¹⁴.

‘Je bent te mager voor zo’n lage kraag.’

‘En je haar zal door de war gaan.’

‘Zal ik het weer vlechten?’ vroeg Maia aan Miss Minton, en haar gouvernante trok met haar mond en zei, ‘Nee.’

De tweeling droeg hun favoriete feestjurk, een nogal vlezige kleur¹⁵ roze, wat misschien jammer was omdat hun korte nekken die uit een dubbele rij ruches kwamen ervoor zorgden

⁸ De volgorde van de zin is veranderd.

⁹ “In whispers”, zelfstandig naamwoord wordt dus een tegenwoordig deelwoord.

¹⁰ Zinsvolgorde is veranderd.

¹¹ Dit eerste deel van de zin is toegevoegd.

¹² In de brontekst wordt de jurk beschreven als een “Elizabethan dress”. Dit zal veranderd moeten worden omdat het een Nederlands kind weinig zal zeggen.

¹³ Namen blijven hetzelfde in de vertaling.

¹⁴ De volgorde is veranderd.

¹⁵ Dit woord staat niet in de brontekst.

dat ze er een beetje uitzagen als de hammen die je altijd bij de slager zag met Kerstmis¹⁶. Ze hadden meerdere armbandjes¹⁷ om, zodat ze rinkelden als ze liepen, en ze hadden een ongelukje gehad met hun moeders geurtje. Beatrice had wat gepakt en het achter haar oren gespetterd en toen had Gwendolyn geprobeerd het van haar af te pakken en de dop was eraf gegaan, zodat ze allebei ontzettend roken naar ‘Passie van de Nacht’.¹⁸

Mrs Carter was niet van plan achter te blijven in de bungalow. Ze had zichzelf uitgenodigd voor een avondje kaartspelen¹⁹ in de club in Manaus. Mr Carter kwam naar buiten om dag te zeggen terwijl hij een kleine doos met het oog van een moordenaar die was opgehangen in de²⁰ Pentonville²¹ gevangenis, vasthield. Het was die ochtend aangekomen en hij was er erg blij mee.²²

‘Heel leuk,’ zei hij afwezig, kijkend naar Maia’s jurk, en hij kreeg een boze blik van zijn vrouw. ‘De tweeling ook... erg pakkend,’ - en hij liep snel terug zijn studeerkamer in.

Tegen de tijd dat de taxi van de familie Carter²³ bij het huis van de familie Keminsky aankwam, was het negen uur. Er hingen Chinese lantaarns tussen de bomen; er hing een geur van sinaasappelbloesem in de lucht; muziek stroomde uit de ramen. Maia was nog nooit in zo’n luxueus huis geweest. De muren hingen vol met mooie kleden en schilderijen van Russische heiligen in gouden lijsten. Witte vazen met lelies en rode kerststerren stonden aan de zijkanten van de trap; honderden wassen kaarsen glinsterden in de kristallen kroonluchter. Sergei en Olga kwamen nu aangerend om ze te begroeten.

‘Je ziet eruit als een prachtige golf met je jurk en je haar,’ zei Olga²⁴ terwijl ze de blauwe zijde aanraakte, en Sergei zei dat ze op moesten schieten want ze gingen bijna de polonaise doen. ‘En we zijn goed in de polonaise, of niet soms?’

Toen kwamen de graaf en gravin uit de zitkamer om ze te begroeten. De graaf zag eruit als een plaatje uit een boek over de Russische steppes, met een geborduurde bloes met een hoge kraag en wijze donkere ogen en een zwarte baard. De gravin was een mooie maar slordige

¹⁶ Hoewel het in Nederland niet gebruikelijk is om ham te eten met Kerstmis, is het door de sentimentele waarde die Maia toevoegt aan die vergelijking toch wenselijk om het te behouden.

¹⁷ De vertaling bevat verkleinwoorden waar die er in de brontekst niet zijn.

¹⁸ Realia is letterlijk vertaald, zodat de betekenis duidelijk wordt. De Engelse naam zou niks toevoegen.

¹⁹ Bridge is vertaald met het meer algemene ‘kaartspelen’. Met dit woord weten kinderen meteen waar het over gaat.

²⁰ Lidwoord moet toegevoegd worden.

²¹ Naam wordt behouden. Niet nodig om het te veranderen; het woord ‘gevangenis’ maakt al duidelijk wat het is.

²² Onderwerp van de zin is veranderd van het oog naar Mr Carter.

²³ Er moet ‘familie’ voor gezet worden, terwijl dit in het Engels niet nodig is.

²⁴ Daar is een komma weg die er in de brontekst wel staat.

vrouw die een emerald hanger van onschatbare waarde enigszins scheef over haar jurk droeg en Maia in een warme omhelzing nam.

‘De kinderen hebben me veel over je verteld,’ zei ze, en ze strekte haar armen uit naar de tweeling, die achteruit deinsden. De tweeling werd niet geknuffeld. Dat maakten ze altijd vanaf het begin duidelijk.²⁵ Mademoiselle Lille kwam en nam Miss Minton mee, en al snel was het feest in volle gang.

Achteraf bedacht Maia zich wat een geweldige avond het zou zijn geweest als ze gewoon een normale gast was die niks anders hoefde te doen dan zich vermaken. De graaf en gravin waren de meest fantastische gastheer en gastvrouw²⁶. Rozenwater werd aan de dansers geserveerd in kristallen bekers; in de eetkamer zag het eten dat op een witte damasten tafelkleed was uitgesteld er sprookjesachtig uit. En de graaf had echte zigeuners gevonden om voor ze te spelen.

Maar ze moest zich aan een tijdschema houden. Clovis zou veilig in het museum zitten om 10 uur. De kraaien waren al terug in pension Maria.²⁷ Tussen 10 en zonsopgang de volgende ochtend, als de *Bisschop* zijn ankers licht, moest ze Clovis’ verstopplek verraden aan de tweeling.

En ze moest ervoor zorgen dat ze zouden handelen. Ze wou dat iedereen nou maar niet zo aardig voor haar was geweest om haar mee te trekken om te dansen of om limonade drinken of om de tuin in te gaan. Niet alleen Sergei en Olga en Netta, maar²⁸ iedereen.

Maar het was tenminste niet moeilijk om de tweeling in de gaten te houden. Als ze ze niet kon zien in hun vleesroze jurken of als ze de armbandjes niet kon horen rinkelen, kon ze ze nog ruiken, want ze liepen nog steeds in een wolk van hun moeders ‘Passie van de Nacht’. De grote staande klok in de hal sloeg 10 keer. Tijd om te beginnen.

Maia deed niet mee aan de volgende dans en liep naar het grote raam dat uitkeek op de haven. De tweeling, die niet danste, keek naar haar. Maia kwam terug, maakte een rondje over de dansvloer met een Braziliaanse jongen, stopte toen en ging terug naar het raam. De tweeling keek nog steeds naar haar. Oh alsjeblieft, laat Clovis gelijk hebben, bad ze.

Ze liep terug naar het raam voor de derde keer, en ja hoor, Clovis had gelijk. De tweeling volgde haar.

²⁵ De volgorde van de zin is veranderd voor een beter ritme.

²⁶ Het Engelse woord is “host”, dus onzijdig. In het Nederlands kan dit niet.

²⁷ De volgorde is veranderd.

²⁸ ‘Maar’ toegevoegd voor extra nadruk, loopt lekker

‘Waar kijk je naar?’

Maia draaide zich om, geschrokken. ‘Niks... ik bedoel... Ik vroeg me gewoon af wanneer de *Bisschop* vaart. Is het morgenochtend? Ze hebben het niet uitgesteld?’

‘Ja, morgenochtend.’²⁹ ‘Waarom wil jij dat weten?’

‘Ik wil niet echt.. Ik vroeg me gewoon af. Mr Low en Mr Trapwood zullen meevaren, toch? Ze gaan echt terug naar Engeland?’

De tweeling keek elkaar aan.

‘Wat maakt jou dat uit?’

‘Niks.’

Maia begon nu erg zenuwachtig en schuldig te kijken. ‘Helemaal niks.’

Ze ging langzaam naar de deur en liep de kamer uit, ze wierp maar één nerveuze blik naar de tweeling. Niet steeds achterom kijken, had Clovis gezegd; niet overdrijven.

Beatrice en Gwendolyn waren nu echt achterdochtig.

‘Denk je dat ze toch weet waar die Taverner jongen uithangt?’

‘Als ze het niet weet, waarom is ze dan zo schrikkerig?’

‘Er is nog steeds tijd voor de beloning.’

‘Ik ga d’r in de gaten houden,’ zei Beatrice.

‘Ik ook,’ zei Gwendolyn.

Maia was stil gaan staan op de overloop. De Keminsky familie had daar een icoon geplaatst; een Heilig Schilderij met een brandende lamp eronder.

Het schilderij was van Sint Theodosius, een heel erg dunne heilige met enorme zwarte ogen.

Maia had nog nooit naar een Russische heilige gebeden, maar toen ze de tweeling hoorde komen viel ze op haar knieën.

‘Alstublieft’ brabbelde ze hardop, ‘Bewaar hem alstublieft veilig. Laat de kraaien³⁰ zijn verstopplek alstublieft niet vinden voordat ze wegvaren. Alstublieft.’

De tweeling had halt gehouden op de trap om te luisteren. Nu, toen Maia opstond volgden ze haar de trap af en een lege garderobe in³¹ waar alle kinderen hun buitenspullen hadden gelaten toen ze aankwamen.

²⁹ In plaats van ‘it is’, om het extra te benadrukken, klinkt het in het Nederlands beter om nog een keer te herhalen wat ze vroeg.

³⁰ De crows: bijnaam voor Low en Trapwood. Wel naar het Nederlands vertalen voor de duidelijkheid.

³¹ Volgorde van de zin is enigszins veranderd.

Ze deed haar best om niet achterom te kijken. Maia liep naar haar toiletta's. Behalve haar borstel en haar schoenen had ze ook een pakje nootjes en een boterham verstopt, ingepakt in een papieren zakje. Ze haalde ze eruit.

‘Voor wie zijn die?’

Beatrice was achter haar gaan staan. Nu wrikte ze haar arm naar achter en Maia liet de nootjes vallen.’

‘Je kunt het ons maar beter vertellen.’

‘Voor niemand... voor mezelf.’ Maia liep steeds roder aan.

‘Doe niet zo dom. Het huis is vol eten. Je ging ze aan iemand geven of niet soms? De jongen die je verstopt.’

‘Nee. Nee. Oh alsjeblieft..’

Beatrice had Maia's arm vastgepakt en draaide hem om.

‘Je doet me pijn. Hou op!’

Het was nu helemaal niet nodig om te acteren. Beatrice deed haar echt pijn. En nu pakte Gwendolyn haar andere arm en rukte hem naar achteren.

‘Laat me los!’

‘Niet voor je zegt waar hij is. Niet voor je toegeeft dat je het weet.’

Er kwamen echte tranen in Maia's ogen toen de tweeling, ieder aan een kant, haar armen nog verder naar achteren rukte.

‘Het is alleen... oh alsjeblieft. Je wil niet dat hij gepakt wordt – hij wil niet terug naar Engeland. Hij is maar een jongetje en hij is zo bang.’

De tweeling slaakte een kreetje van voldoening. Ze hadden haar te pakken.

Nog twee gemene rukken, toen greep Gwendolyn een handvol van Maia's haar vast en draaide het van haar hoofd weg.

‘Snel, waar is hij? Als je het niet zegt zullen we je echt pijn doen.’

‘En je gezicht krabben zodat je dierbare Sergei nooit meer naar je wil kijken.’

Maia slikte hard en snotterde. Dat was niet moeilijk; de tweeling waren verrassend sterk als ze een gemene bui hadden.

‘Als ik het zeg laat je me dan los?’

‘Ja. Behalve als je liegt.’

‘Hij is in het museum... in het Natuurhistorisch Museum maar alsjeblieft alsjeblieft verraad hem niet! Hij is geen misdadiger en-‘

‘Waar in het museum?’

De deur vloog open en Sergei stond in de deuropening. ‘Wat zijn jullie aan het doen? Hoe durven jullie! Laat haar los!’

De tweeling liet Maia’s armen vallen. Toen renden ze naar buiten langs Sergei en hij was alleen met Maia.

‘Wat een gemeneriken die meiden!’ zei hij, terwijl hij een arm om Maia heen sloeg. ‘Waar ging dat over?’

‘Dat kan ik je niet zeggen, Sergei, maar alles is goed geloof me.³² Alles is echt goed.’

‘Ik ga ze vermoorden,’ mompelde Sergei met knarsende tanden. ‘Ik ga ze echt vermoorden.’ Maar toen hij de tweeling ging zoeken waren ze nergens te bekennen.

³² ‘Geloof me’ klinkt Nederlandse dan ‘vertrouw me’

Chapter Twelve

'Stay!' said Finn to his dog. 'Stay and guard the hut.'

The dog looked at him with despairing eyes and howled briefly.

'You heard me,' said Finn. 'Stay!'

Another howl; then the dog turned and threw himself down in front of the hut.

'Will he really stay?' asked Clovis.

'Of course. I won't be long.' Finn was going to settle Clovis into his hiding place in the museum and then slip back to the lagoon.

It was already almost dark, but Finn knew the waterways which led to Manaus like the back of his hand. He was going to take Clovis in the canoe by the same route as he had taken Maia. There was plenty of time; Sergei's party did not start for another couple of hours – and it was not till the party was in full swing that Maia was going to start working on the twins.

Finn had darkened his hair again; he wore his headband and a circlet of beads round his arm. Clovis was dressed in the cap and uniform of the cadets of St Joseph's school in Manaus. Finn's father had tried to send him there, but after the first week Finn had come home and told Bernard that if he wanted Finn to go back, he would have to handcuff him and drag him there by the hair.

If anyone caught a glimpse of them in the backstreets of Manaus as they made their way to the museum, they would think it was a boy from the college being taken back to school by his Indian servant.

'Right; I think we've got everything: the keys, a lamp, your satchel, the money so you can get to your foster mother. No, wait. There's something else.' Finn felt in his pocket. 'Here, I want you to have this.' And he handed him Bernard Taverner's watch on its silver chain.

Clovis stared, turned it over. 'I can't take this. It's your father's, isn't it?'

'Yes. But if you're going to be me, you'd better have it,' said Finn, and turned away quickly for it was far harder than he had expected, giving away the watch he had seen so often in his father's hands.

They pushed the canoe off and Finn began to paddle out of the lagoon. The dog howled again, but he did not move, and then they were through the rushes and on their way.

It was a silent journey. If they had to speak they did it in whispers. Finn stopped where he had dropped Maia the first time they met, and tied the canoe up to a tree. He would make his way back as soon as Clovis was safe in the hiding place.

They waited for half an hour, till it was entirely dark. There was no moon, and no street lighting, in the small lanes along which Finn led Clovis.

As they came to the back door of the museum, they heard the sound of dance music coming from the Keminskys' house.

The party had begun.

This time Maia did not feel like Cinderella. She was going to the party as well as the twins, and as she dressed she almost forgot the job that faced her when she reached Sergei's house. Her dress was new, the last one the matron of the school in London had bought with her before she went away, and it was very pretty. A dark blue, rustling silk cut like an Elizabethan dress, with a very full skirt and a row of tiny pearl buttons on the bodice. Minty had brushed out her waist-length hair and left it loose, and the twins, when they saw her, did not look pleased.

'You're too skinny to wear a low neckline.'

'And your hair will get into a mess.'

'Shall I plait it again?' Maia asked Miss Minton, and her governess pursed up her mouth and said, 'No.'

The twins were dressed in their favourite party pink; rather a *fleshy* pink, which was perhaps a pity because their short necks coming out of a double row of ruffles made them look a little like those hams one sees on butchers' slabs near Christmas. They wore several bracelets, so that they tinkled as they walked, and they had had an accident with their mother's scent. Beatrice had taken some and sprinkled it behind her ears and then Gwendolyn had tried to take it from her and the stopper had come off, so that both of them smelled violently of 'Passion in the Night'.

Mrs Carter did not mean to stay behind in the bungalow. She had invited herself to play bridge in the club in Manaus. Mr Carter came out to say goodbye, holding a small box containing the eye of a murderer who had been hanged in Pentonville

prison. It had arrived that morning and excited him very much.

'Very nice,' he said absently, looking at Maia's dress, and was glared at by his wife. 'The twins too . . . very fetching,' – and he hurried back into his study.

It was nine o'clock before the Carters' cab drew up at the Keminskys' house. There were Chinese lanterns strung between the trees; the air smelled of orange blossom; music streamed from the windows.

Maia had never been in such a sumptuous house. The walls were hung with rich tapestries and paintings of Russian saints framed in gold. Tubs of white lilies and crimson poinsettias were massed on the sides of the staircase; hundreds of wax candles glittered in the crystal chandeliers.

Sergei and Olga now came running out to greet them.

'You look like a beautiful wave with your dress and your hair,' said Olga, touching the blue silk, and Sergei said she must hurry because they were going to play a polonaise next. 'And we're good at polonaises, aren't we?'

Then the count and countess came out of the drawing room to greet them. The count looked like a picture from a book about the Russian steppes, with a high-necked embroidered blouse, wise, dark eyes and a black beard. The countess was a beautiful, untidy woman who wore a priceless emerald pendant slightly askew over her dress and enfolded Maia in a warm embrace.

'The children have told me so much about you,'

she said, and held out her arms to the twins, who backed away. The twins did not get hugged. They always made that clear from the start.

Mademoiselle Lille came to lead Miss Minton away, and soon the party was in full swing.

Afterwards Maia thought what a wonderful evening it would have been if she had been just an ordinary guest with nothing to do except enjoy herself. The Keminskys were the most amazing hosts – rose-water was served to the dancers in crystal goblets; in the dining room the food laid out on a white damask cloth was like food in a fairy tale; Russian piroshkis, rare Brazilian fruits, a three-tiered cake for Olga's birthday – and the count had found proper gypsies to play for them.

But she was working to a timetable. Clovis would be safe in the museum by ten o'clock. The crows were already back in the Pension Maria. Between ten and dawn the following morning, when the *Bishop* pulled up her anchors, she had to betray Clovis' hiding place to the twins.

And she had to make sure that they would act.

If only everyone hadn't been so nice to her, whisking her off to dance, to drink lemonade or go into the garden. Not just Sergei and Olga and Netta, everyone.

But at least it wasn't difficult to keep track of the twins. If she couldn't see them in their flesh-pink dresses or hear the tinkle of their bracelets, she could smell them, for they still moved in a cloud of their mother's 'Passion of the Night'.

Ten o'clock struck on the big grandfather clock in the hall. Time to begin.

Maia excused herself from the next dance and went to the big window which looked out towards the docks.

The twins, who were not dancing, watched her.

Maia came back, circled the floor once with a Brazilian boy, then stopped and went back to the window.

The twins were still watching her. Oh please, let Clovis be right, she prayed.

For the third time she returned to the window, and yes, Clovis was right. The twins followed her.

'What are you looking at?'

Maia swung round, startled. 'Nothing . . . I mean . . . I just wondered when the *Bishop* is sailing. It is tomorrow morning? They haven't put it off?'

'Yes, it is. Why do you want to know?'

'I don't really . . . I just wondered. Mr Low and Mr Trapwood are going to be on her, aren't they? They're definitely going back to England?'

The twins exchanged glances.

'What does it matter to you?'

'It doesn't.' Maia was beginning to look very flustered and guilty. 'It doesn't at all.'

She made her way slowly to the door and left the room, allowing herself only one anxious glance at the twins. Don't keep turning round, Clovis had said; don't overdo it.

Beatrice and Gwendolyn were now definitely suspicious. 'Do you think she knows where the Taverner boy is after all?'

'If she doesn't, why is she so jumpy?'

'There's still time for the reward.'

'I'm not going to let her out of my sight,' said Beatrice.

'And I'm not either,' said Gwendolyn.

Maia had paused on the landing. The Keminskys had placed an icon there; a Holy Picture with a lamp burning underneath.

The picture was of St Theodosius, a very thin saint with huge black eyes. Maia had never prayed to a Russian saint before, but as she heard the twins coming, she fell to her knees.

'Please,' she gabbled aloud. 'Please keep him safe. Please don't let the crows find his hiding place before they sail. *Please.*'

The twins had stopped on the stairs to listen. Now, as Maia got to her feet, they followed her downstairs and into an empty cloakroom where the children had left their outdoor things when they arrived.

Careful not to look back, Maia went to her sponge bag. As well as her hairbrush and her shoes, she had hidden a packet of nuts and a sandwich wrapped in greaseproof paper. She took them out.

'Who are they for?'

Beatrice had come up behind her. Now she wrenched her arm back and Maia dropped the nuts.

'You'd better tell us.'

'No one . . . For me.' Maia was getting more and more flustered.

'Don't be silly. The house is full of food. You were going to give them to someone, weren't you? The boy you're hiding.'

'No. No. Oh please . . .'

Beatrice had taken Maia's arm and was twisting it.

'You're hurting me. Stop it.'

There wasn't any need to act now. Beatrice was really hurting her. And now Gwendolyn took her other arm and jerked it back.

'Let me go!'

'Not till you tell us where he is. Not till you admit you know.'

Real tears came to Maia's eyes as the twins, one on either side, yanked her arms still further back.

'It's only . . . oh please . . . You don't want him to be caught – he doesn't want to go back to England. He's only a boy and he's so afraid.'

The twins gave grunts of satisfaction. They had caught her out!

Two more savage yanks, then Gwendolyn took hold of a handful of Maia's hair and twisted it away from her scalp.

'Quick, where is he? If you don't tell us we'll really hurt you.'

'And scratch your face, so that your precious Sergei won't want to look at you again.'

Maia gulped, sniffed. It wasn't difficult; the twins, when in an evil mood, were surprisingly strong.

'If I tell you will you let me go?'

'Yes. Unless you lie to us.'

'He's in the museum . . . in the Natural History Museum, but please, please don't give him away! He's not a criminal and—'

'Whereabouts in the museum?'

The door was thrown open and Sergei stood there. 'What are you doing? How dare you! Let her go!'

The twins dropped Maia's arms. Then they ran out past Sergei, leaving him alone with Maia.

'They're fiends, those girls!' he said, putting an arm round Maia. 'What was it about?'

'I can't tell you, Sergei, but it's all right, trust me. It really is all right.'

'I'll kill them,' muttered Sergei through clenched teeth. 'I'll really kill them.'

But when he came to look for the twins, they were nowhere to be seen.

Chapter Thirteen

The twins, in their flesh-pink party frocks and satin shoes, had run out into the street. They panted across the square, turned down a side road, and as they ran they quarrelled.

'We can't go and see those men without Mummy,' said Gwendolyn.

'Yes we can. I know where the Pension Maria is; it's quite near.'

'But it's down by the docks. There are awful men there. I'm not going without Mummy,' said Gwendolyn obstinately.

'All right then, we'll get her. But don't blame me if she tries to get half the reward.'

'She won't. We wouldn't let her. It's for us and no one else.'

A man came out of his house and stood by his garden gate.

'You see, he wants us for the White Slave Traffic,' said Gwendolyn, and tried to run faster.

The man, who had come out to walk his dog, crossed the road but the twins did not stop till they reached the club where their mother was playing bridge.

'Right, that's it,' said Mr Trapwood. He shut the lid