

The Craft of Emotion in Isabel Allende's *Paula*

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Isabel Allende's narrative, from her first novel *The House of the Spirits* (1982) through the most recent works, has often been branded as "sentimental."¹ This label implies a kind of literary second tier, as "serious" literature is supposed to rely more on the rational and less on the emotional, on the part of both writer and reader. Allende has never denied the strong role of emotion in her work, and in fact has embraced it, in defiance of what she views as more masculine ways of seeing the world and of writing her world. As she asserts in a 1987 interview, "the important thing is not to produce literature, but rather to touch people's hearts" (*El Pais*, 20 November 1987; translation mine). Contemporary currents in feminist criticism have ratified this perspective, exploring and exposing the underlying assumptions which have led to the dismissal of much women's writing as somehow inferior because of its focus on sentiment. Sue Campbell observes, for example, that "emotionality as an assessment of expression seems directly connected to involuntary response . . . interpreted as reactive and symptomatic rather than initiatory, deliberative, and significant" (53).²

Such debates carry a certain theoretical interest with regard to many of Allende's works of fiction; but in terms of the book *Paula* (1995), the portrayal of emotion unabashedly takes center stage. As Allende spins out the story of her daughter's illness and death, she herself also spins, as narrator and as mother, into a crisis of terror and of mourning, through an emotional tumult

which ends ultimately in peace for her daughter and resigned acceptance for herself. Reading the book is itself an emotional experience; many of its readers comment on the difficulty of coping with the flood of their own emotions as they force themselves to turn the pages and to reach the story's ending. While Allende claims that this book differs from her others in its lack of narrative planning and plotting, in the fact that it was indeed written from the heart rather than from the head, even under these circumstances she continues to employ particular narrative strategies to draw the reader into the tale, to manage the dual strains of identification and distance, and to retain the feeling of authenticity, of actual lived experience, while at the same time producing a page-turner of a story. While the work is written to feel extremely "reactive" (to borrow Campbell's term), in fact it carries a great deal of narrative intentionality, as it offers a portrait of maternal grief and, simultaneously, of artistic coping mechanisms.

The tragic story is well known to those who have followed Isabel Allende's career; in 1991 her 28-year-old daughter Paula became ill, as the result of an attack of a rare genetic disorder known as porphyria. During the critical phase of this attack, she suffered severe brain damage and lived in a coma for almost exactly one year; she died in December 1992.³ The story of the book's composition is also widely known. Allende stayed by her daughter's bedside in Madrid for six months, until she was able to move them both back to her California home, in May 1992. Immobilized and desperate, watching her daughter grow increasingly irretrievable, Allende began to write the story of Paula's illness and, in a parallel story line, a chronicle of her own memories. The book's powerful opening depicts the fusion of both of these aims, while demanding the attention of her unconscious daughter: "Listen, Paula. I am going to tell you a story, so that when you wake up you will not feel so lost" (3). Later in the narrative, Allende clarifies the relationship between her own physical and psychological entrapment during that year and the writing of this work, as well as clarifying the link between the narratives of Paula's present and of Isabel's past:

This immobility is a strange experience. . . . Now I am forced to inaction and silence; no matter how much I run I get nowhere, and if I scream, no one hears. You, Paula, have given me this silence in which to examine my path through the world, to return to the true and the fantastic pasts, to recover memories others have forgotten, to remember what never happened and what still may happen. (162)

While the book—whose generic classification is problematic—has not been widely studied by literary critics, it has had an enormous impact on readers, particularly on those who have endured similar experiences.⁴ Since the book's publication, Allende has received hundreds of letters of response, and she has attested that both the writing of the book—an “exorcism”—and the resulting letters of solidarity have helped her to survive the tragedy of her daughter's death.⁵ As regards the craft of writing emotion, this book is different; Isabel explains in her narrative that while her past work was the product of mysterious shadows for whom she functioned merely as a medium (a magically-real way of characterizing her creative imagination), now she only writes the emotions that she feels and the events as they transpire. Quoting her own fictive narrator from an earlier novel, she acknowledges her past affinity for emotional writing: “Eva Luna says at the end of my third book: *I also try to live my life as I would like it . . . like a novel*” (260); but she notes that, in contrast, today's bitter reality, that of her daughter's illness, threatens to stem that sentimentalized creative process: “When I look back, it seems to me that I was the protagonist of a melodrama; now, in contrast, everything is suspended, I have nothing to tell, the present has the brutal certainty of tragedy” (260).

Allende now claims no control over the level of emotionality in her story; she claims to record and to recall rather than to create. She even alleges that she will—albeit unsuccessfully at times—attempt to avoid sentimentality in the writing of this particular work, as a way of honoring her daughter's literary and real-life predilections: “I will try not to be sentimental, I know how much you hate that, Paula, but you will have to forgive me if sometimes I break down. My nerves are shattered” (79).

Even several years later, in her autobiographical essay (*Mi país inventado*), Allende claims that *Paula* was published exactly as it was originally composed, with no final editing, no conscious manipulation of the narrative. She alleges in that essay that this book (like *The House of the Spirits*) was “dictated from another dimension . . . [U]ndoubtedly I received help from the benign spirit of my daughter” (*Mi país inventado* 203, translation mine). Allende claims that she did very little editing of this manuscript; she adjusted the chronology in certain places and fleshed out detail in others, but fundamentally, she claims, the book appears in published form much as it was first written, on a stack of yellow legal pads. The narration has a carefully maintained tone of orality and spontaneity that lends credence to this assertion. Nevertheless, Allende is an experienced and sophisticated writer, and this work, like her novels, demonstrates certain artistic decisions, choices of arrangement and pace, of narrative juxtaposition and artistic rhetorical devices. A study of the work’s structure reveals consistency and effectiveness (whether by intuition or by design) in the management of pace and intensity. There is also a directing of the emotional tides of the narration, which allows the story to carry tremendous impact and authenticity—particularly for those readers who have experienced similar agony—without completely draining or distancing the audience, an intrinsic danger of such a chronicle. The intricate narrative interplay between the chronicling of death and the elaboration of life, the interaction between the paralyzed present and the more active past, has even led Mujica (and some readers) to conclude that the balance falls towards the positive, that “this is not a sad book” (36).⁶

Allende employs her storyteller’s craft, particular narrative strategies, to manipulate the current of the book’s emotion. The most powerful rhetorical device she employs is the use of second-person direct address, as in the opening sentence quoted above (“Listen, Paula . . .”). The work consists of two unequal halves and an epilogue; in the first and longer part of the narration, Isabel purports to write a letter to her daughter, as a substitute for the memory that Paula most likely has lost. Those familiar with the author’s interviews over the past decades will recall that *The*

House of the Spirits (1982), Allende's first and most celebrated novel, also supposedly began as a letter to her grandfather, in order to demonstrate to him that the family history would not be lost upon his death. The fusion of that fictional narrative and this too-real chronicle of tragedy constitutes a powerful statement about the role of writing at critical moments of Allende's own life.

Structurally, the novel consists of seventeen unnumbered and untitled segments (ten in Part One and seven in Part Two), varying in length from ten to twenty-seven pages.⁷ Each chapter is divided into sections, demarcated by a white space between them. This space generally signals a shift in focus from one memory to another, or from past to present, but on occasion serves merely to mark the pace of the narration. In other words, at times the white space merely slows the pace of the story's telling—a kind of narrative respiration. This is one of the devices that allows Allende to control the narrative's intensity; when she realizes that the accumulated tension will interfere with the continued reading of the text, she invites the reader to pause, or implies that she pauses, before taking up again the thread of the narrative.

The sub-chapters range in length from one to ten pages, the functionality of which will be discussed below. Those sections that deal with Paula generally begin with direct address, and frequently with a question; obviously, the questions are answered intradiegetically only with silence. This constitutes the primary narrative strategy for communicating the anguish of the speaker—in most cases Isabel—and for evoking a visceral empathy from the reader who knows that the questions fall on unhearing ears. At the outset of the final paragraph of the book's first and very powerful section, the one which began with the imperative "Listen, Paula," Isabel concludes with a second imperative, seeking a different sensory response: "Look, Paula, this is Tata's picture. . . . That's *you*. My mother and I are standing behind you . . ." (6). The vivid image of the mother holding photos in front of her comatose daughter's unseeing eyes, the direct discourse with no respondent, jolts the reader who has become involved in this story's telling and in the telling of tales (in this case, the story of how

Paula's grandparents met), reminding us that the primary story line is the narration of real anguish, and that the Eva Luna who used to create her own novelistic reality is frustrated and ineffective here; she will not evoke a response.

These demands for a dialogue are even more acute in the cases of direct interrogation. The first ten chapters of the book are punctuated with Isabel's questions to her daughter; for example, in the second chapter: "Will you get well, Paula? . . . What goes through your thoughts? . . . Do you want to live, Paula? . . . Do you want to die? Perhaps you have already begun. What meaning do the days have for you now?" (34-35). At the outset of the fourth chapter, Isabel asks the question closest to the heart of a mother: "Will you know I am your mother when you wake, Paula?" (75). These wrenching rhetorical questions mark the distance between the mind of the writer/speaker and that of the inert addressee, as well as contributing to the above-mentioned oral quality of the narrative. Like the imperatives, they function to emphasize the anguish of the recognition that the mother's efforts to evoke a response are, and will continue to be, in vain. Perricone, in her 1998 study of the work, discusses the transformation of real people into characters, who are reinvented in a literary mode (43); however, in these unanswered interrogations, the author reminds us that she has no control over her protagonist, from whose mind she is locked out.

As we have noted, while some sections are dedicated to the story of Paula's illness and the chronicle of her hospital stay, others contain the autobiographical narrative of Isabel Allende herself, beginning before her own lifetime, with the history of her grandparents (who have become familiar to us as Esteban Trueba and Clara of *The House of the Spirits*). But even within these intercalated narratives, the second-person form of address may intrude, as an abrupt reminder to the reader that this story is not merely an autobiography, but a narrative intended for Paula.⁸ One of many examples of this intrusion of the addressee occurs in the ninth chapter. There Isabel is describing a play that she had helped to direct, for which her husband Michael had learned all of the songs; she adds: "You and Nicolás learned the songs, too,

and ten years later, when I couldn't remember even the titles, you two could perform them from start to finish" (175). Just when the natural and familiar cadences of Isabel's storytelling have lulled the reader into forgetting the circumstances of the narration's existence, these brutal reminders forcibly juxtapose happy memories from the past with this present, distorted reality.

The reader grows accustomed to this device, and learns to look for the "Paula sections," the ones that comprise the gripping emotional epicenter of the work. However, in the book's Part Two, the absence of this device is as marked as was its presence in Part One. In an anguished parallel to the opening sentence of Part One, Isabel at the outset of Part Two inverts the sentence, using the same structure that powerfully conveyed her desperate hope now to convey her hopeless desperation. The opening sentence of Part One read: "Listen, Paula . . . so that when you wake up you will not feel so lost" (3); this opening to Part Two admits: "I am no longer writing so when my daughter wakes up she will not feel so lost, because she is not going to wake up. These are pages Paula will never read . . . (205). While this sentence is immediately undercut by Isabel's own appalled rejection of her thought ("No! Why do I repeat what others say if I don't really believe it?" [205]), her denial is undercut by the fact that she too has eliminated the reader-address; the narrator of the book no longer narrates to Paula.⁹

The grammatical structure of the storytelling is also carefully manipulated to create and maintain a certain level of emotionalism. Commas replace semicolons almost completely in the narrative, resulting in frequent run-on sentences conveying urgency, frustration, grief, or an onslaught of memories. The most effective sentences are those which recount events and actions in a tumbling, chaotic order that intuitively communicates the witness's panic and helplessness. This occurs, for instance, in the fifth chapter, when Paula suffers a critical cardiac arrest; Isabel rhetorically re-creates her own terror when she writes:

We had never seen you so ill; you were burning with fever, and we could hear a terrifying rumble from your chest and see the whites of your eyes through a slit between your eyelids, suddenly your

blood pressure plummeted almost to zero and the alarms on the monitors sounded and the room filled with people, all working so hard around you that they forgot about us, and that was how we came to be present when your soul escaped your body, as they injected drugs and administered more oxygen and tried to make your exhausted heart start beating again. (92)¹⁰

The actual death of Paula occurs in one phrase among the thirteen tumbling clauses of this sentence. That one phrase, “when your soul escaped your body,” forms a poetic and emotional parenthesis within the chaos of the physical observations and the frantic medical attempts at resuscitation.

A similar kind of discursive catharsis occurs in the last pages before the work’s Epilogue, as the narrator faces the reality that her daughter will not recover, and she chronicles the final surrender of hope:

My feet are heavy with mud and my clothes are dripping and my soul is bleeding, and as it grows dark, and when finally I can go no farther after walking and stumbling and slipping and getting up to flounder on, I drop to my knees, tear my blouse, ripping off buttons, and with my arms opened into a cross and my breast naked, I scream your name, Paula. (324)

In both instances, the conscious manipulation of grammatical structure serves to underscore the concentrated emotional intent of the story’s telling.

Another effective rhetorical device in the management of emotional intensity is the technique of defamiliarization. Isabel becomes a stranger to herself, while her daughter also is transformed into another person. Isabel’s first realization of the change in her own person is narrated in a way familiar to Allende’s readers—as magical realism. Just as Esteban Trueba shrank with age in *The House of the Spirits*, so Isabel notes that tragedy has shrunk her: “I reached five feet, where I remained until a month ago when I noted that the bathroom mirror seemed higher on the wall. ‘Oh, piffle, you’re not shrinking, it’s just that you’ve lost weight and you’re not wearing your heels,’ my mother consoled me, but I noticed she was observing me with a worried look” (24-25). These physical transformations—loss of weight, aging in her face,

shrinking—reflect a psychological defamiliarization as well; by the end of the story, Isabel herself has lost her identity:

I'm lost, I don't know who I am, I try to remember who I was once but I find only disguises, masks, projections, the confused images of a woman I can't recognize. Am I the feminist I thought I was, or the frivolous girl who appeared on television wearing nothing but ostrich feathers? The obsessive mother, the unfaithful wife, the fearless adventurer, or the cowardly woman? Am I the person who helped political fugitives find asylum or the one who ran away because she couldn't handle fear? . . . I've lost. (319)

A parallel process of distancing and *ostranenie* occurs with her daughter Paula, now unrecognized as “this girl who is slowly turning into an angel” (258). Allende learns to perform exercises of physical therapy on her daughter's body, a body which has been made strange by the progression of the vegetative state, and by the end of the narrative she struggles to accept this change: “I must get used to my daughter as she is and not remember her as the charming, happy girl she was; neither should I lose myself in pessimistic visions of the future but take each day as it comes, without expecting miracles” (270).

The sense of alienation that the narrator feels from her past life, her own identity, and her own daughter augments the isolation of her suffering. In the same way that Paula has been returned to a kind of prenatal state, Isabel must also be transformed—physically and spiritually—by this path not of her choosing; like Paula, she must cross mysterious and unknown thresholds, struggling and writing in order to emerge and to recover her identity on the other side.

The final aspect of the content which mediates the emotional level of the narration is the mystical thread which runs throughout the narrative. Allende, who has employed devices of magical realism in all of her narrations to this point, claims not to be fantasizing in this particular story; yet the ghosts and spirits which have accompanied her past protagonists now frequent the corridors of the hospital and the scenes of her dreams. Through this contact with and orientation towards another realm of existence,

Isabel is able to explore and express her own emotions. Regardless of whether or not she believes in the concrete existence of these shadows—and she does—they simultaneously serve as a vehicle for externalizing and communicating her emotions. Most vividly this occurs at the end of the story, when Paula is “allowed” to die, and her spirit joins with those of her maternal ancestors, with a kind of natural force, with an unnamed “goddess” to whom Isabel turns for help, when a kind of peace returns to the family. But in terms of controlling reality, the scene which most demonstrates the force of emotion over life and death is the above-mentioned episode of Paula’s cardiac arrest (“chapter” five). The doctors and the machines declare her dead; the room is cleared of most medical personnel; and Isabel and her mother approach Paula’s body and lay their hands upon it. They summon all of the life-forces they can conceive, and they do so in such a physical way that Paula’s husband Ernesto senses its impact from a distance of 50 kilometers. In fact, this moment of feminine communion does restore life to Paula, and her heart begins to beat again on its own.¹¹ This fusion of the too-real and the perhaps-real creates a powerful emotional climax:

Then I felt my mother’s hand in mine, pulling me forward, and we walked to our bedside and without a single tear we offered you the entire reservoir of our energy, all the health and strength of our most recondite genes from Basque sailors and indomitable American Indians, and in silence we invoked all the gods known and yet to be known, and the beneficent spirits of our ancestors, and the most formidable forces of life, to race to your rescue. . . . The air around your bed was frozen and time was suspended, but when the clock again began to mark the seconds, Death had lost. (93)

The psychic strength of this scene appears to break the male character of Ernesto (“defeated, kneeling in the chapel, he prayed only that your martyrdom would end and you would find rest” [93]), but serves only to fortify the three generations of women characters.

Through all of the devices mentioned above, Isabel Allende manages to sustain a high level of emotionalism and empathetic reader involvement in the story of Paula and, by extension, in the

history of the narrator. However, Allende manages other rhetorical devices with equal skill, to avert or attenuate the tidal wave of emotion that could result from the impact of such a story. The primary element of relief provided in the narration is the intercalation of episodes of Isabel's history, and that of her family. In fact, by the distribution of episodes one could say that Paula's history is in fact intercalated within the larger narrative of Allende history, primarily of Isabel's.

A count of pages reveals that almost exactly 25% of the narration is dedicated to Paula's illness and Isabel's response; the other 75% is comprised of Isabel's own history and that of her family. The disparity is particularly notable in the first two chapters of Part One, where less than 10% of the story deals with Paula's illness, and in the last two chapters of Part One, where approximately 90% of the narration deals with the overthrow of Chilean president (and Isabel's uncle) Salvador Allende. In the first instance, the story's outset, the emphasis is on personal memories as a refuge, during the time when the mother struggles most desperately to cope with the horror of her daughter's illness. In the second, we witness a phenomenon familiar from *The House of the Spirits*; when Isabel begins to narrate the *coup d'état* that destroyed her world, the narration acquires its own momentum and takes over her writing, drowning out the more mystical and emotional emphases of her typical literary creation.

These sections dedicated to Isabel's own memories and experiences provide respite from the intense emotionalism of the hospital segments, much as the storyteller Eva Luna utilized fiction to escape from the brutality of daily existence. Much as, in *The House of the Spirits*, the Chilean coup functions as a sobering and maturing moment for young Alba, in the *Paula* narrative after the climactic narration of the coup it is Allende herself who emerges "on the other side," more resigned to the long wait for her daughter's final phase of dying. This kind of conscious narrative arrangement reflects that we are not reading the unedited diary of a mother, but the crafted narration of a writer who is undergoing a personal tragedy, and struggling for a way to make

it make sense, through words and through a contextualization with the other significant events of her own life.

The telling of the memories, then, does not occur as stream of consciousness, but rather is artfully managed in terms of juxtapositions and literary connections. For example, at the end of one memory section in the first chapter, uncle Ramon promises to care for Isabel's mother and her family "forever" (19); this word closes the section, but the subsequent hospital section opens with the same word: "Forever. What is that, Paula? I have lost count of the days . . ." (19). At times the hospital events trigger memories, and at other times the memories trigger certain meditations or attitudes towards the horror of the present. In another technique familiar to readers of Allende's novels, sexual scenes are often purposefully juxtaposed to intense life-or-death situations. In the book's sixth chapter, the respirator is turned off, and Isabel waits anxiously to see if Paula takes a breath on her own (she does not). In the subsequent scene, Isabel yields to fatigue and exhaustion and collapses in the arms of her visiting husband Willie, and they make love; the narrator observes that "I . . . can only smile at the amazing power of desire that makes me shiver despite my sorrow, even push death from my mind" (111-12). While the physical aspect of making love is not described with all the detail of a typical Allende narrative, the emotion-laden aspect of relief and refuge is as strongly present in this chronicle of Isabel's life as it is in the lives of her literary creations.

Finally, an effective device for communicating extreme emotion without crossing a line into excessive sentimentalism is the placing of some of the strongest emotional passages not in her own narrative voice, but in the representations of Ernesto and of Paula herself. Words of hope, optimism, and love that might seem melodramatic from the standpoint of maternal love find more acceptable representation from the viewpoint of romantic love. Paula's husband Ernesto whispers love stories to Paula, insists that he cannot live without her and that they will always exist together, asserts that he can sense her presence and her feelings even in this vegetative state, and regularly reduces to tears all observers of his passion—nurses, other patients, family mem-

bers. While in many cases Allende-narrator controls her own emotional outpourings, she shows no such restraint in the depiction of Ernesto, whose obstinate and unrelenting love provides a continuous emotional and thematic foundation to the entire work.¹²

In the novel's final chapter, Ernesto is absent but is replaced by Paula's own voice, first through a dream and then through a letter that she had left, to be opened in the case of illness from the disease she so feared, and in which she begged to be freed from her body: "I do not want to remain trapped in my body. Freed from it, I will be closer to those I love, no matter if they are at the four corners of the planet. It is difficult to express the love I leave behind, the depths of the feelings that join me to Ernesto, to my parents, to my brother, to my grandparents" (322). While the letter is most likely not the fictional invention of Allende, its rhetorically strategic incorporation at this point in the text provides an effective narrative vehicle for this climax of emotion.¹³ Through the dream and the letter, the final chapter of the narration thus twice allows direct space for the voice which has been so audibly and painfully silent throughout, thus granting respite from the narrator's tale of her own suffering, and shifting the focus to Paula and to the cosmic drama of life and death.

In one of the episodes in the center of the narrative, Isabel in Argentina meets a fortune teller, who predicts that "One of your children will be known in many parts of the world" (167); when shown photographs, the seer points to Paula as the child who will become widely known. As she recalls this prognostication many years later, in the hospital, Allende prefers to cling to the hope that Paula still has a life to live, a destiny yet to be fulfilled. However, the inevitable end of the story provides an ironic response to the fortune teller's prediction; Paula's fame would not come through her life but through her death. Her mother's narrative skill, combined with the impassioned agony of this real-life nightmare, in fact through this story make Paula intimately known to millions of readers. Even in this work supposedly written without conscious attention to artistic form, the craft of Allende's

storytelling emerges as the communicative link to an understanding of her universe.

Notes

1 See Krich and Mora.

2 See also Solomon.

3 On a personal note, Paula was my friend and colleague at the University of Virginia; while this article is meant to be a study of Isabel Allende's narrative mechanisms, it is also intended as a tribute to Paula's memory.

4 There exist to date only a few articles focusing on *Paula*, most notably a combination interview/review by Barbara Mujica, and two articles focusing on the work's generic classification, by Verónica Cortínez, and by Catherine Perricone.

5 A recent edition of *Paula* released in Latin America is packaged with a smaller paperback, which contains some of these letters (reprinted with permission); the slim volume is not to be sold separately, but is meant as a companion volume to Isabel Allende's own "letter."

6 This is, I think, an erroneous reading of the text, for while the flashback segments are intended to provide emotional relief, the unrelenting thrust of the work is towards the tragedy of a mother at the bedside of her dying daughter. Ultimately, the book is a chronicle of loss, and an exploration of writing as one way to survive that loss.

7 The English edition used for this study (Harper Collins) deletes one of the original Spanish "chapter" divisions (the third "chapter" of Part Two should begin on page 245 of the English edition); thus Part Two contains only six demarcated divisions. My comments in this article adhere to Allende's original format.

8 In fact, the original title of the work was "Para Paula" ("For Paula") but the literary agents vetoed the title because of its distracting alliterative effect in Spanish.

9 Perricone notes that in a different sense, the mother-daughter dialogue is mirrored in Part Two, when the spirit of Paula appears to Isabel, pleading for her mother to release her from the emotional ties which keep her from leaving this existence.

10 This segment is quoted verbatim from Sayers Peden's translation of *Paula*; however, Sayers Peden inserts a sentence break before the section beginning "suddenly your blood pressure . . ." thus thwarting the effect of Allende's intentioned rhetorical acceleration. Therefore my quotation here follows the punctuation of the original Spanish text.

11 "Death laid its hands on you Monday, Paula. It came and pointed to you, but found itself face to face with your mother and grandmother and, for now, has backed off" (92).

12 This observation is not intended to imply that Allende altered the sincere expression of Ernesto's love for Paula, or that he felt more emotionally and intensely than did she; but in terms of the choice of narrative elements within this literary work, it is clear that Allende does not exercise the restraint over melodrama in the narrations attributed to him that she does in those acknowledged as her own.

13 Mujica infers that this letter is evidence of a "premonition" on the part of Paula; however, I was with Paula when she learned that she carried the genetic marker for porphyria, and I know that she lived with the fear of its onset for several years before it actually occurred. She had seen its effect on another family member, and was well aware of her vulnerability to it. Given such circumstances, and her character, it is not at all surprising that she would have prepared herself and her family for this tragedy.

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