

Frances and Maribel are watching TV. James is sitting in a wheelchair beside them. Suddenly there is a loud scream on the TV.

FRANCES

The worst is about to happen.

They continue to watch as more screams come from the TV.

FRANCES

There's nothing like technicolor-red blood dripping down a soldier's face. This is so exciting. The General arrives soon to save the day. He's going to win the war and defeat those little commie bastards.

MARIBEL

The General is fighting today?

FRANCES

Yes, of course the General is fighting. There's a war going on.

MARIBEL

But I thought he was...?

FRANCES

You thought what? I don't pay you to think. I pay you to clean. Of course the General is fighting. Risking his life for this country. Fighting for our freedom. Fighting so people like you can live in a free country and work. You should get down on your knees and thank the General.

Maribel runs to the TV and kisses the screen.

FRANCES

That's how I used to thank him. I'd get down on my knees.

(Pause.)

Everyone loves the General. The last honest-to-God American hero.

(Screaming at Maribel.)

Enough. Christ. Now there are smudges all over the screen.

Maribel wipes off the screen with her apron and goes back to the sofa beside Frances.

FRANCES

Did I tell you that I met the General during the war?

MARIBEL

Oh, yes. Many times. I just love this story.

FRANCES

I was a nurse tending the wounded on the battlefield. The General was brought in. He had been injured. I bandaged him. Nursed him back to health. We fell in love right then and there on the battlefield.

(She starts to tear up.)

The war years were good to us. We fought three more together. People loved us. Respected us. People cared. Not like today's wars. Everyone is so cynical. So goddamned cynical. Protesters, defectors, and hippies are saluted and praised. But not the real heroes like the General. They're spit on today. The General should have been rewarded for this. This family hasn't been properly rewarded for our contributions to the wars. The sacrifices we've made for this country. The soldiers I've bandaged.

James moans. Frances looks at him and then at her watch. She stands up and goes to James. She puts on a pair of rubber gloves, opens a pill bottle, and forces a pill down James' throat.

FRANCES

But, we will get the prize this time.

(She looks at James.)

Death brings prizes, doesn't it my dear? It's going to bring us the big one this time, isn't it?

MARIBEL

Oh, yes. I can't wait to die. It's going to be heavenly. Seeing Jesus at last. Walking on the streets of gold in silver high heels.

FRANCES

(Taking off the gloves.)

Jesus? Jesus seldom brings the gold. No. I was talking about...

(To James.)

Oh my God. Why didn't I think of this before? It's perfect. Mother has been inspired again. You'll see Jesus and find religion before you pass on. Not too much, but just enough to make you even more sympathetic. Oh, I smell success. Your death is going to be so successful. I just can't wait for you to die. Oh, the rewards are going to be so sweet.

A loud bombing sound is heard on the TV.

MARIBEL

Look! The General's tank is coming. Oh, please let him save us.

FRANCES

Of course the General will save us. The General always saves us. The General never lets us down. Not once in his career has he let us down.

(Pause.)

Did I ever tell you that the General once saved me from the enemy? A group of us had been captured. I can still see it and hear it. The blood gushing down. The screams. Some were starting to give up, but not me. I stayed strong. I fought back. I'm a fighter, you know. I outwitted those evil little men. I escaped into the jungle. That's where the General found me. Near death. We fell in love as he carried me to safety.

MARIBEL

I'm confused. I thought the last time you fell in love was in the Old West. That's what you told me yesterday.

FRANCES

Once again you have no idea what you're talking about because you never listen and you're always butting in.

MARIBEL

Oh, but I do understand. During the war in my country...

FRANCES

Must it always be about you? A little country war. So what! I'm talking about the big wars. The important ones. World wars, the Korean, the Civil. I know because I was there for all of them nursing fallen soldiers back to health.