

Juan García Larrondo

*LITTLE MARY
APPEARS
DROWNED
IN
A
BASKET*

Literal Translation from the Spanish by John Shanks

***Translator's note:** In the Spanish original, the parts of Little Mary and Nuria are written in a phonetic rendition of the version of Andalusian dialect spoken in and around the city of Cadiz. Possible equivalents for an English-speaking audience could be the dialect of a port city such as Glasgow, Newcastle, Liverpool or Dublin.*

FRAGMENT:

FIRST ACT

Little Mary...

A moonlit October night in a industrial dock in the south. The light reflects off the water on to the prow of the cargo boat "Al-Iskandariyah". Ropes, pulleys, bollards and other accoutrements appropriate to a port – somewhat depressed but with its own beauty. Enigmatic music. It is possible to make out the beam of a nearby lighthouse and to hear, in the background, the slapping waves of a plastic sea and a distant transmitter of a north African radio station.

A group of Arab sailors lie on their nets, talking. They appear outlined against the hull of the boat while we see the credits of what could be a film noir. From one side enters the grotesque figure of Little Mary, about 40 years old, short hair, dressed in tight clothes which have become discoloured with the passage of time. Her appearance is startling, and at the same time, amusing. Her expression is needy, scared and desperate. The sailors notice her and start to make jokes. Little Mary cleans her face and suggestively raises the hem of her dress. It is obvious that she is not a "professional". It is something else which drives her to offer herself. One of the sailors gets up and stands in front of her, provocatively, while his companions observe, jokingly, the courtship ritual. Little Mary approaches him, trembling. The sailor starts to rub his crotch then takes Little Mary's hand and places it over his cock, forcing her to massage it– she is at first reluctant but finally gives in. Little Mary, apparently wishing to get over with it as quickly as possible, unzips his fly and, with her hand inside his trousers, starts to masturbate him. The sailor shudders on the brink of orgasm but the woman takes her hand away. Aroused, he grasps Little Mary forcibly and drags her towards the boat. The music has increased in volume and is reminiscent of an traditional Arab rhythm. A porthole on the boat is illuminated. Meanwhile, the sailors who have remained on shore get up and, joking among themselves, board the ship. After a few seconds of tense silence, we hear the shrieks of Little Mary.....

LITTLE MARY

Ow! Hey you guys, what are you trying to do? No! No! (Laughter and slaps) One at a time, not three all at once! Get off me you bastard! Leave me alone! Help! (Angry voices in Arabic) Shit! No way, mister, I'm not going to suck it! (More laughter and slaps. Little Mary now has her mouth full) Ow! – let me go! Not in my mouth, for God's sake! Not in my mouth. (A heartrending cry in Arabic) Heeelp! (Two of the sailors come out buttoning up their trousers, pushing Little Mary in front of them towards the quay. One of them appears to have suffered an injury to his groin and his hands are bloodstained, as is the mouth of Little Mary who is hysterical and almost naked. The sailors argue amongst themselves, in Arabic, of course. The injured one furiously slaps her and, helped by another, throws her into the water. Little Mary screams. We hear her hit the water and then her drowning cries.

Help! (*Swallowing water*) Help me, for God's sake, I can't swim! (*Swallowing more water*) Please....get me out of her....(*Glubs*)

The sailors laugh, except for one of them, the third one, who appears anxious and bothered and is trying to persuade his companions to stop laughing and help the woman. Faced with no response from them and the increasingly feeble cries of Little Mary, he grabs a lifebelt and tries to throw it into the water. The injured sailor stops him and overwhelms him. At the same time he grabs a large basket full of dirty clothes and throws it into the water. The laughter continues. The third sailor is on the verge of tears. Suddenly there is a deathly silence.. The laughter stops. The sailors look down into the water which resumes its monotonous slapping. In the distance the hooter of a boat sounds. They look around apprehensively and nervously return to the inside of the boat. The third sailor picks up the handbag and papers belonging to Little Mary (fill in section)

For a moment, time stands still. A strange fuschia-coloured wind blows. There is the sound of heavenly music. The blue night sky changes colour. From the heavenly heights, LITTLE ANGELS descend, appearing like recently-painted plaster figurines. Amongst them is the VIRGIN MARY, a figure completely Baroque in appearance.....wearing a huge shining crown. On reaching the earth, exhausted by the weight of her jewellery, she sinks down exhausted on one of the piles of nets, removing her crown and mopping her brow with a handkerchief. The Little Angels watch her. She stops and glares at them.

VIRGIN MARY

(Imperiously) What the feck are you looking at then? What are you waiting for? Come on, get on with it, haul her out before she wrinkles up like a prune. (The Little Angels, terrified, put on their diving goggles and flippers, and, as ordered,, dive into the water) Holy Mother, what incompetence! (With a sudden expression of distaste) What a stench!

(She takes from beneath her robe an atomizer and sprays it into the air. The little angels, come out dripping water and dragging effortfully the large basket from which protrude only the feet of Little Mary, now deceased. The Virgin Mary replaces her crown. The little angels carry the basket to the Virgin Mary who approaches it with disgust and curiosity). Is she completely dead? (One of the little angels nods). Well then, let's get on with it....to work!

The little angels change the scenery. Gradually, all trace of the docks disappears and in its place appears the interior of a modest dwelling furnished in a style which is a mixture of the forties and the seventies. There is a radio on, a television, pornographic magazines scattered on the table, plastic flowers, coloured lamps and, almost as if floating in space, some old photographs and various groups of pictures bought in markets or car boot sales. On one side is a large picture of the Virgin Mary, in an ecstatic pose, showing the same actress who is playing the role. At her feet, some plaster cherubs, a sewing machine, a dried up canary on a branch and other objects of popular devotion. This corner should appear to be illuminated by a special light. Lying around is a bit of unfinished embroidery and a pair of large drawing room mirrors. On a "magnificent" sofa flecked with gold lies a telephone directory and, beside it, a little table with the telephone and a photo of Little Mary with her husband, John.

While the scenery is being changed, the following scene takes place. In the background, we may hear a bolero or a popular flamenco song with a relevant lyric.

VIRGIN MARY

(Approaching Little Mary) Dear child, what a state they've left you in! However....(looking at the clock) There's no time for introductions or explanations so....let's have the miracle right here! (Imposing music. Thunder and lightning. After a few moments, Little Mary's feet begin to move. The Virgin, exhausted, sits down on a bollard, just as a little angel is about to change it for an armchair. The little angel gestures to her to get up. The Virgin obeys irritably. She adjusts her crown.) I've had it up to here with angels! (Looks at Little Mary who is moving her feet energetically)

Well then, what are you waiting for, pet? (The basket shakes. The Virgin takes advantage of a momentary inattention by the angels to give the basket a virginal kick which sends it crashing to the ground. Faced with Little Mary's inability to get out, the Virgin helps her to extricate herself from the basket in which she is trapped. Finally, completely dishevelled and sweating, Little Mary emerges from the basket and throws up, unintentionally, over the Virgin's robe). Ugh! You idiot! Have you any idea what this little number cost? (Disgusted, takes out a packet of tissues and scrubs away at the stain) Right, that's it, I've had quite enough! Get up and walk! Come on! (Little Mary, zombified, obeys) That's a good girl...now....sit! (As she fails to do so, the Virgin pushes her and she falls back seated into the sofa. She passes a hand in front of her eyes, but Little Mary remains blank) Hey, you there! (A little angel appears) Bring me towels and some bicarbonate for this one...let's see if she recovers once she has brought up some wind. Oh....and while you are about it, bring me a French omelette – with all these miracles, I haven't had time for a bite. (The angel rushes off to obey) Just look at the state I'm in with all this carry on. (The phone rings. The Virgin, annoyed, decides to answer it)

Conceived-without-stain-of-sin – how can I help you? What's that? Just a moment while I take off my crown so I can hear you better. Right, that's better! That's right....yes, I can hear you fine now....The police? Ah, right....well she's not here just right at the moment. (Looking at Little Mary, now recovered) I really don't know. Me? Just a friend (Notices an angel who is standing, impertinently, in front of her. The Virgin looks at him with loathing) Yes, a friend from the missions....(Covering the mouthpiece) Get out of here. And where's my omelette? (Speaking into the phone again) And why would you want to know my name? I see, well in that case, I am....Sister....Sister... Sister Bette Davis!It most certainly is not a joke, now just you listen to me....(The angel comes in carrying the towels, the bicarbonate and the omelette. Little Mary observes without reacting. The Virgin snatches up the things irritably) And bring me some ketchup! No, not you, Deputy Chief Inspector, I'm sorry.....Who is coming? What's that about an Arab weeping? (Purses her lips wearily) Yes, of course....Well, I'm just about to heat up an omelette so really.....What? Who?.....Well, really...you see....yes bu...Oh, forget it! (Hangs up abruptly) By all the holy saints, what a ridiculous conversation! (Meantime, Little Mary has had the bicarbonate and is starting to come round) Here, take it, dry yourself off. (The Virgin sits down to eat. The two women look at each other. The Virgin tells her off, even with her mouth full. Come on, get moving, it's God talking to you!

Little Mary opens and closes her eyes. She looks puzzled but wonderingly at the Virgin, who is gesturing to her and at the same time wolfing down her food. She looks at

her more carefully and then checks her against the picture. She cannot believe her eyes. Then she sinks to her knees.

LITTLE MARY

Holy Mother! (*Belches*) Oh, my own Holy Virgin!

VIRGIN MARY

And about time, too!

LITTLE MARY

(*Feebly*) Some Arabs! Some Arabs threw me off the boat...and then...Mother of God, where am I? (*Recognises her own house*) In Hell by the look of things! On account of my sins! If I had only known! (*Weeping*) And who would ever have thought that Hell was going to be look like my own house! (*Terrified*) Oh God, nooooo! (*Beseechingly, to the Virgin*) Punish me some other way but, please, not trapped here for all eternity!

VIRGIN MARY

Oh, be quiet, don't be so tiresome! You're not in Hell, you're in your own home....

LITTLE MARY

(*Puzzled*) But...the Arabs...and the boat?

VIRGIN MARY

Just one of those passing moments!

LITTLE MARY

Hang on a minute...Holy Mother, am I losing my mind?

An angel appears with the ketchup and hands it to the Virgin

VIRGIN MARY

Now you bring me it?Have you quite finished? (*The Angel nods*) Very well then, you can all sit downstairs and wait for me as I am just about to leave.

LITTLE MARY

(*Indicating the angel*) And what's that?

VIRGIN MARY

That, my dear child, is one of Heaven's angels.

LITTLE MARY

(*Clutching the photo of herself and her husband, recognizing her things, gets up dazed*) Listen to me,..what is all this? Some kind of joke, is it? A TV programme? Let me just think...Who are you? What are you doing in my house? (*Glances all around her, nervously*)

VIRGIN MARY

(*Putting on her crown*) I should have thought that was fairly obvious, wouldn't you? I'm the Virgin Mary.

LITTLE MARY

(Disbelievingly) Right. (*The portrait of the Virgin is illuminated brightly*)

VIRGIN MARY

Calm down, little Mary. (*Little Mary pauses in front of the portrait of the Virgin and compares it with her visitor, baffled*) It's me all right. The selfsame one you have begged for help so many times – you are a bit of a bore, you know. I've come to save you and give you a chance.

LITTLE MARY

(*Still baffled*) Right, of course...just what I needed.

VIRGIN MARY

Don't be blasphemous. It's me right enough. If I'd thought, I'd have left off all the fancy stuff and made myself more comfortable.

LITTLE MARY

(*Bewildered*) This cannot be happening...but...Is it really you?

VIRGIN MARY

Of course it is! (*Strikes the same pose as in the picture*) I've worn pretty well, don't you think? How many times have you prayed for a miracle? Well, look around you, you've got your wish.

LITTLE MARY

(*Making the sign of the cross*) God, this is quite something!

VIRGIN MARY

(*Stands up, still chewing and brushing off crumbs*) I'll just check if you've got the hang of it now. Let's see...who are you?

LITTLE MARY

Me? (*Confused*) Well...I'm not sure...

VIRGIN MARY

Child! Don't you even know your own name?

LITTLE MARY

Of course...it's María del Carmen Vargas Hortelano.

VIRGIN MARY

Little Mary Vargas, for short, isn't that right? (*Little Mary nods*) You are 42 years old, unemployed and, a month ago, your husband John, left you after 20 years of lies and a marriage which has seen so much water under the bridge that it ended up drowning you. (*Little Mary is gradually getting a grip on herself*) You have a daughter who never phones you and your financial situation is lamentable. Taking all this together, what do you feel it means then? (*Little Mary can't even speak*) Frustration! Emptiness! (*Little Mary nods*) You have no hope and no will to live (*Woundingly*) Have you ever had any fun in bed? (*Little Mary tries vainly to recall*) You see? And obviously the result is that you are now desperate and that you go on the streets to seek affection down by the docks. ..(*Reprovingly*) That's what happens, isn't it? And now at the end, this is where I

come into the picture...I have come to revive you to give you one last chance. Not so that you can avenge yourself but so that you can forgive. So that you enter eternity with you heart filled up with love. On you feet now! (*Little Mary obeys like a schoolgirl*) Now on your knees! (*Maternally*) Here is where your road to Calvary ends. This hamper has been your cross, your deathbed in the waters of the docks. Little Mary, listen to me....You're dead! You turned up drowned in a basket! (*Little Mary appears to be on the point of fainting*) I absolutely forbid you to faint just now! (*Little Mary is fascinated*) Is that clear? Do you understand what I have told you?

LITTLE MARY

I...I don't know. Am I really dead? (*Shivers*)

VIRGIN MARY

Of course. What I am trying to make clear to you is that you have three days to sort out everything you left undone, to gain some understanding of those you hate and to depart in peace from this vale of tears. At the end of three days, precisely, you will rise up for the last time and you will come with me. Well, that's that...now once I have gone, you will remember absolutely nothing of what I have said to you. And there we are! (*She gets up wearily*) Right then....now where could those eunuchs have got to? The police will give you the third degree – they phoned, you know. It seems that one of the Arabs, in a fit of contrition, has told them everything andI can't imagine why I am bothering to tell you all this when you're not going to remember anything afterwards anyway. (*Threateningly*) What a way to carry on! Honestly, I am a chatterbox, aren't I? Right then! (*Laughs, Claps her hands and turns.*) Children! Where are those repellent cherubim?

LITTLE MARY

.....But

VIRGIN MARY

(*Leaving*) You can ask me about it tomorrow, OK? I simply can't manage it now...Goodbye then!

Little Mary looks on as the Virgin and the angels depart. A few moments later, she collapses unconscious on the sofa. Heavenly music. The television, the radio and a pair of lamps come on. The telephone rings a few times. Little Mary, begins to respond, painfully, as if she had suffered a severe beating. Wrecked, she sits on the sofa, right on top of the telephone directory. She grasps the photo of herself and her husband. First she clutches it to her passionately, then she tosses it aside with disdain. She makes herself more comfortable. Indeed she recalls nothing of what has gone before. There is an insistent knocking at the door.

LITTLE MARY

Where the feck can I have left that phonebook? (*Someone is trying to push the door open*) Yes, yes, I'm coming! (*She gets up dizzily, staggers and pulls over the radio*) Oh, for God's sake! (*Further shoving and pushing at the door*) I said I'm coming!

When the door opens, NURIA hurtles in like a rocket, seated on a wheelchair.

NURIA

And about time too! (*Quizzically*) What took you so long?

LITTLE MARY

Astounded, still holding the door open, stares at Nuria. And what's it to you? What are you doing here anyway? In any case, I am very busy, so if you don't mind....*(She pauses. Nuria does not budge. Finally Little Mary slams the door shut.)* It had to be you, didn't it!

NURIA

(As if it were nothing to do with her) What a state you're in! Just look at the face on you! Are you sick or something?

LITTLE MARY

Not at all. *(sarcastically)* I'm simply overwhelmed with delight to see you.

NURIA

Shut up, will you! I'm absolutely dead on my feet. Come on, give us a push and bring me a drink of water. *(She desperately lights up the butt of a joint)* I can't put up with it any more! I simply cannot stand sitting here all day! *(Little Mary goes to fetch the water. She returns and offers it to her disgustedly)* You're a miserable bitch, you know, love.

LITTLE MARY

Oh get on with it! And before you say anything, I'm warning you that I am not lending you a bean, OK?

NURIA

Shit, that's not why I'm here. *(Bursts into tears)* I've had my handbag stolen again and....I had six grams of coke in it to sell....

LITTLE MARY

(Exaggeratedly, with feigned sympathy) Oh you poor, poor thing! *(Snatches the glass of water from her)* To think life can be so cruel! And did you have your cards in it, and everything? *(Nuria nods, sobbing)* Good – with a bit of luck this time they'll put you away!

NURIA

I can't even bear to think about it. And it would have to be just when I was about to sell the coke to my mother in the bar so that I could pay off my debts to my brother, you know, Cheli, so that he doesn't keep beating me up.

LITTLE MARY

(Sitting down on the telephone directory again) Well, I've lost my bag as well, so we're even on that score. In fact, I've lost everything: my money, my sense of direction...I can't even remember my mother's phone number. Just great. Now, who could have taken that phone book?

NURIA

Your phonebook? That's funny, I'm sure I saw it on the way in.

LITTLE MARY

Don't be daft, how could you have seen it when I've spent the whole morning looking for it...

NURIA

To be honest, love, I don't know how you ever find anything in this mess. Just look at the place! And all these puddles of water! Mary, you know, you seem really strange! Frankly, you look like death warmed up! It does my head in just looking at you...

LITTLE MARY

Don't try to change the subject! It's true what they say, empty vessels make the most noise. I'm just not in the mood for any of it today, least of all, putting up with you and your nonsense. I've got quite enough trouble already.

Nuria starts thumbing through the porno mags

NURIA

(Making herself comfortable) Really? So what's been happening to you, then?

LITTLE MARY

(Sadly) Nothing much, just the usual. ..Finally, after two weeks, Johnny rings me, but not to ask me how I am or whether his little girl has phoned, oh no, nothing like that. He rings me to ask me to get all his things together as he's coming round to collect them. *(Weeping)* And that he's leaving for good....

NURIA

Oh, Mary, love. Life's a bitch all right....

LITTLE MARY

(Miserably) A bitch? You're the bitch! You think you can come round my house, drinking my water and sticking your nose into my business, you cow? Well, how about this then, for the first time in my life I went out on the streets like a tart. *(Nuria stares at her astounded)* And I was that close to ending up drowned on a beach. Don't ask me how because I haven't the faintest idea. I'm the one that's having the bad time, Nuria. I haven't got sixpence to buy a bite to eat...and now, when I am desperately trying to ring my mother to borrow some, I can't even remember her number and finally....finally, I can't think where the buggery bollocks I've put the phonebook. So just leave it out, will you Nuria, we know each other too well for all this!

NURIA

Calm down, Mary. I'm only concerned about you, pet.

LITTLE MARY

Oh don't mess me about! The reason you are here is because right now the police are probably searching your mother's bar and putting the screws on her so that she'll tell them where you are.

NURIA

That doesn't bother me at all. Let them knock her about. The thing that does bother me is that you could possibly imagine I was using you to hide from the police. If I really believed you thought that I would be out of here right now...

LITTLE MARY

Well, that's exactly what I do think! So, off you go...

NURIA

(Twists herself round, doubtfully) Perhaps I'll just stay a bit longer...I wouldn't want to leave you at a difficult time like this....you can count on me, you know. At least you can hop about when you want to....look at me, stuck in this chair for the rest of my life...

LITTLE MARY

Don't let it worry you – I'll be only too happy to chuck you down the stairs and put an end to your suffering!

The phone rings. Nuria snatches up the receiver. Little Mary grabs it from her, covering the mouthpiece.

LITTLE MARY

What do you think you're doing! Get out of here, you interfering bitch, this is none of your business! *(Speaks brusquely into the telephone)* Hello.... Yes...What for? No...mum, there's nothing wrong...yes,mum....Oh, really...well that is good, isn't it? and so I can just rot here, is that it? Right then....well for all I care you can get run down by a bus first thing tomorrow....What do you mean 'Don't be like that'? Listen, just drop dead! *(She hangs up pensively. Nuria looks at her astonished.)* I don't want anything from anyone. *(She gets up and goes through to the kitchen)*

NURIA

(Calling through) Was that your mum?

LITTLE MARY

(Sounds of rattling cutlery) Yes

NURIA

(Going through the drawers. She is helping herself to anything of value) Well you know, really, love, you wouldn't think it.

LITTLE MARY

(From the kitchen) Well, how would you feel if they told you that they were all going off on a trip but that you couldn't come because you wouldn't fit in the car!

NURIA

And don't you think they've said exactly the same to me, and more than once. Anyway, could you not have asked her for the money just the same?

LITTLE MARY

(Coming back in, drying her hands) God, you're right. Why the hell didn't I suck up to her? *(She collapses exhausted on the sofa)* I'm fed up with it all! *(Despairingly)* This time I've really done it....so this is how it all ends, eh! *(She suddenly realizes she is sitting on the phonebook)* And what the feck is this, then? *(She grabs it and starts to laugh, then to cry. Nuria, completely detached, starts to roll a joint)* Oh, Johnny, my own little Johnny, why did you leave me? *(Tearing pages out of the phonebook and throwing them around)* God almighty, so many people in the world and me so alone! I just can't go on! What did I ever do to deserve this? *(Little Mary kneels down, weeping, in front of the picture of the Virgin)* Holy Mother, marriage is one big lie! Look at my Johnny! First of all he starts coming in late, then sometimes he doesn't come in at all. It's more than a year since he said anything to me and when he finally does bring himself to say something it's to tell me that his life has been a big mistake and that he's going for good. And what did I do wrong, except to love him? It wouldn't even be so bad if he'd left me for another woman instead of for the waiter in the local disco! *(She pauses. Nuria is smoking. The lighting is atmospheric and the smoke creates an imposing, almost poetic, impression.)* My little Johnny! *(Whispering to the Virgin)* Perhaps he thought I didn't notice. But what did it matter to me if he went off with other people so long as he came back to me, even if it was only so I could feed him and do his laundry. Johnny...Johnny..every time I open my mouth it's your name that comes out, like a sigh. Johnny, my heart and soul, I can't go on without you, I can't get my breath, Johnny, your breath, there's no point to life any more. What could there be? Our girl's a woman now, my family's all gone, nobody tells me anything, nobody needs me. I even bore myself. Sometimes I ask myself, since I'm so completely useless, what the fuck was the point of being born? So that I could suffer more? Holy Mother of God, I know that you must be sick and tired of me asking you the same question day in and day out but, maybe you at least could tell me.....Have I got to put up with much more of this before I'm dead?

Do you know, I'm almost glad that my Johnny rang me, even though it was to tell me to pack up his things. It was such a long time since I'd heard his voice. *(Nuria too has started to cry. Little Mary gets up with the wedding photograph)* Johnny...you devil of hell. Come on then, come back, even if it is to kill me! Come on then, you bastard, I'm weary with missing you! Since you've gone I sleep with the window open so that I can get the very last drop of....come back...so that the night doesn't seem so long...come back, Johnny, Johnny....

She sits down with the photo over her stomach, her head falls forward and she drifts off to sleep. The doorbell rings. Little Mary jumps up to open it hopefully, but is immediately disappointed. It is VALERIE, who enters, fantastic and euphoric.

VALERIE

Well, hello there. Don't say one word more. My dear, dear friends. Today I have realized my dream!

NURIA

You've finally shagged a black girl in public?

VALERIE

No, I did that last Tuesday. Today my book "My Fanny First of All" has won the International Prize for Avant Garde Artistic Accomplishment.

Little Mary and Nuria stare at each other, unmoved. Perhaps so as not to appear ignorant, they exhibit delight in front of the extremely elegant VALERIE.

LITTLE MARY

(Not understanding) What won the prize...your fanny?

VALERIE

Noooo...my book. "My Fanny First of All"

NURIA

(Hypocritically) Oh that's marvelous, just marvelous! Long live our Valerie!

VALERIE

Yes, indeed, an international Arts prize, but you two wouldn't understand...Oh, I am all aflutter! I just found out and I've been round all the magazines and the radio station so that they can publish the news. *(Beside herself with delight)* I can already see my name in lights and me, turning down requests for interviews, making movies, earning insane amounts of money...

LITTLE MARY AND NURIA

Money?!

VALERIE

(Regretting having mentioned this) Well, yes, of course. But just the two million of the prize itself...oh and the book rights, of course, and the festivals.....

LITTLE MARY

(Suddenly very agreeable) But, won't you take a seat, Valerie?

VALERIE

Well, just for a moment.*(She sits down)* Oh, Mary my dear! Could you get me a little drink of water, please? I'm rather thirsty.....I think I actually have palpitations....

LITTLE MARY

(Excessively eager to please) A little drink of water?! Honey, when it's for a celebrity, you can have as much water as you like....

NURIA

Could you bring me some too!

LITTLE MARY

You can get your own! *(She goes out to get the water)*

NURIA

Bitch! But listen, I am so delighted to hear your news. I always knew you were going to go far. *(Insincere)* Look, I've come over all quivery with excitement. I think I'm getting palpitations too. ...

LITTLE MARY

(Coming back with the water. Unpleasantly to Nuria) The only thing that's quivering is your cunt, you money-grabbing bitch! *(All smiles again)* There you are, my lovely, and if you want anything more you know you only have to open your pretty little mouth to ask....

NURIA

(Attempting to outdo Little Mary in flattery)

Do you know, I was saying to my mother just yesterday what an amazing person you are and how lucky I am to have a friend like you....

VALERIE

(Divine) Oh thank you Nuria my dear! Give your mother a big kiss from me because she is such a lovely lovely person and it's ages since I saw her! Although, to be honest, I'm not sure that I actually know her....

LITTLE MARY

(Looks disgustedly at Nuria and sweetly at VALERIE) Would you care for a little more water or is there anything else you might like?

VALERIE

Many thanks, Mary, but no. You're very kind, too, you know. But I must say your face is a bit of a mess. You really will have to do something about it, my pet, you look positively jaundiced....

LITTLE MARY

Yes, I'm not at my best. But why should I trouble you with the boring details? It's just that I have a bit of a spasm here and terrible pains here high up in my stomach so that I can hardly breathe....*(VALERIE feigns attention but is not listening to her)*.... Well, you can see what I'm like, I don't even have the strength to.....

VALERIE

(Cutting right across the conversation of which she has heard not one word)

I must say I really am over the moon about the prize! And I want you both to share in my good fortune. *(Confidentially)* Do you remember that old house on the beach at Fuentebravia? *(They both nod)* Well, I'm going to buy it! Isn't that wonderful? And obviously, being so generous, I thought of you to help me get it ready and so on... Not you, Nuria, obviously. In your situation... *(Nuria is horrified)* But you, Mary, and your daughter, I thought of taking you on as maids. What would you reckon to that?

LITTLE MARY

I'm not sure I understand completely. *(Little Mary looks at Nuria who is bursting with envy)* Did you mean work for you, as servants?

VALERIE

Well, I wouldn't put it quite like that, although obviously, if you look at it that way, well then..but what I...

LITTLE MARY

(Combatively) Well I thank you from the bottom of my heart, but we all know that what you really want is a slave you can push around! Well, you can look for some other poor bugger to be your skivvy! Just leave me and my daughter out of it...

Valerie is dumbfounded. She does not know what to say.

NURIA

(Who has been thinking things over. Shrieks.) Well it's all one to me. *(Beseechingly, to VALERIE)* I would love to be your slave!

LITTLE MARY

Just look at her! What a disgrace! It's impossible to sink any lower!

NURIA

(To Little Mary) I couldn't care less what you think, you stupid cow. *(To VALERIE)* I, my dear Valerie, need the money and I would do anything to get it...

VALERIE

Oh, I quite understand that, but *(Smiles)* it's simply that it your situation, Nuria, it would be impossible...I mean that it would look bad if a drug-addicted cripple...I mean..don't take it personally, but I think people would talk.

NURIA

(Desperate) No! *(almost sobbing)* I'll...I'll give up the drugs *(Little Mary and VALERIE look at each other and smile, disbelievingly)* and..and....besides..*(She gets up from her wheelchair)*...I've never actually been paralysed as such, so that wouldn't be a problem...

Little Mary and VALERIE leap up astonished.

VALERIE

Wow! But...but...Nuria my dear....What a surprise!

LITTLE MARY

Holy Mother of God, how could I have been so blind! *(She heads towardsr her to slap her)* You cow! Faker!

NURIA

(nervously) I was....I was going to pay you back....for everything....

LITTLE MARY

So this was all just a pack of lies to make us feel sorry for you so that we would lend you money, wasn't it?

VALERIE

Definitely!

LITTLE MARY

(With growing fury) How could I have been so fucking stupid? My God! No, no...I deserve it, clearly! But that's all going to change! You little slut! You evil tramp! I'm going to shove that chair down your lying throat *(She chases her out)*

VALERIE

Mary, Mary, what are you doing? Leave her! She's not worth it...*(Motionless. She takes on a sadistic expression)* That's it, kill the bitch! Leave her crippled for real! *(Laughs)* Come on, let's finish her off!

At that moment, the lights go out.

A VOICE ANGELIC AND WONDROUS

Ladies and gentlemen. We pray you to excuse this interruption. With the intention of protecting your sensibilities and contrary to the depraved designs of the author, we have suspended public display of this scene. But don't worry, normal service will be resumed as soon as possible. Thank you.

There could be a little music here, there may or may not be an intermission of some minutes, but there is no avoiding the fact that here ends the First Act.

(CONTINUE...)

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