

THE COURT *puts ISABELLE's feet in the foot bath.*)

LADY OF THE COURT. How does this feel? Is the water warm enough for you?

ISABELLE. Yes, thank you. It's lovely.

LADY OF THE COURT. We'll leave your feet in there for a bit and let them soak.

ISABELLE. I'm not keepin' you from anything, am I?

LADY OF THE COURT. Oh please, I'd rather be with you than with anyone in this horrible court. Let's freshen our cups.

(Pouring.)

START

What may I call you?

ISABELLE. Isabelle would be fine.

LADY OF THE COURT. Please call me Nicole.

ISABELLE. All right.

LADY OF THE COURT. Do you have other daughters, Isabelle?

ISABELLE. No, just the sons. I had another girl before I had Joan, but the baby died.

LADY OF THE COURT. I'm so sorry.

ISABELLE. It happens. Every family loses a few. I know a woman who lost four of her children all in one year.

LADY OF THE COURT. How awful.

ISABELLE. She has one boy left but he was born with a hunchback and not much good for anything. Wouldn't you know he'd be the one to survive.

LADY OF THE COURT. You have to wonder about God's plan, don't you?

ISABELLE. You do. There's the LeBeques – wonderful people. They'd do anythin' for you. Good fun too. Nancy, the mother, could make ya laugh. Wicked good humor, but she was never mean. You could confide in her.

LADY OF THE COURT. How nice to have a friend like that.

ISABELLE. She's gone. The whole family got slaughtered one night by the English. They was killed in the most horrible way, from baby to grandmum – no mercy. No

family left to bury them. My husband had to see to that. He got together a shovelin' crew. I made the crosses. Eight in all.

LADY OF THE COURT. What a terrible, tragic thing.

ISABELLE. Yes. 'Twas.

LADY OF THE COURT. Isabelle, your daughter is going to save us.

ISABELLE. Oh. Well, we'll see.

LADY OF THE COURT. She is. She's going to turn this war around.

ISABELLE. That's what I'm told.

LADY OF THE COURT. This must be overwhelming for you.

ISABELLE. It is. Yes.

LADY OF THE COURT. I understand. I do. I'm a mother as well.

ISABELLE. Oh, how many children?

LADY OF THE COURT. Three girls.

ISABELLE. How nice to have so many daughters.

LADY OF THE COURT. Well...they're not like your Joan, they're all a bit spoiled, I'm afraid.

ISABELLE. You have to be firm with them. You can't give a child everything it wants, otherwise they think the world is theirs.

LADY OF THE COURT. You're so right. I try. But we're titled and the world is theirs in a sense. It's hard to tell them otherwise.

ISABELLE. Do you teach them their prayers?

LADY OF THE COURT. Oh yes. I take the girls to services every Sunday but they're still a little immature spiritually. They tend to drift during mass. But they're good girls. And very clever. My oldest two are musically gifted. Jeannette sings and her sister Mimi plays the lute.

ISABELLE. How lovely.

LADY OF THE COURT. And my youngest, Colette, is interested in textiles. She's only nine but she knows how to work a loom. She wove a shawl for me.

ISABELLE. How nice to have a daughter that makes things for you. Lucky you.

LADY OF THE COURT. Yes. But tell me more about Joan. What was she like as a little girl?

ISABELLE. Well, she had a mind of her own like all kiddies do. But she was more stubborn than most. She never backed down, y'know?

LADY OF THE COURT. Of course, that makes sense. And I'm sure she was quite charismatic as a child.

ISABELLE. Charismatic?

LADY OF THE COURT. You must have seen that there was something special about her.

ISABELLE. She's always been a bit different, yes.

LADY OF THE COURT. Tell me a story about her.

ISABELLE. A story. Can't think 'a one right now.

LADY OF THE COURT. Did she ever perform any miracles?

ISABELLE. Well, she once got some goats back in their pen. That's a miracle if ya know goats.

LADY OF THE COURT. So animals would come to her. They trusted her.

ISABELLE. I suppose. She's always been kind to them.

LADY OF THE COURT. Well you see, that's one of the signs. When Saint Margaret was a child, wild doves would land on her hands. And Saint Daria was friends with a lion.

ISABELLE. My daughter is no saint. She's not perfect, believe me. We've had our ups and downs.

LADY OF THE COURT. Well, who doesn't. I love my girls to death, but there are times when I'd like to smack them.

ISABELLE. Oh I've done that.

LADY OF THE COURT. Have you.

ISABELLE. Oh sure. You have to when they get too smart with you. A good smack and lots 'a chores keeps 'em in line.

LADY OF THE COURT. I'm sure that's what makes Joan so determined.

ISABELLE. No, she's never been one to back down.

LADY OF THE COURT. And that Joan has grown up in humble circumstances – the poor are so much closer to God than those born into wealth.

ISABELLE. We're not poor. My husband runs a flock of eighty sheep.

LADY OF THE COURT. I didn't mean street poor, I meant – like Jesus' family, humble but hardworking. Do you know what I'm saying?

ISABELLE. We do all right. Our kids never went hungry.

LADY OF THE COURT. I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to offend you.

ISABELLE. No, just had to set things straight. END

LADY OF THE COURT. What I was trying to say in my very stupid, clumsy way, is that I'm so in awe of you. To have gone through so much and to raise a daughter who is such gift to the world. It makes me ashamed that with all my privilege that I'm not doing better with my own daughters, to make them care about deeper things. Do you know what I'm saying?

ISABELLE. Well, there's women in my village who don't think I done such a good job. They think I raised a strange daughter.

LADY OF THE COURT. They're just small-minded.

ISABELLE. But my friend Nancy understood Joan. Nancy had a lively mind. She learned herself how to read a bit. She was goin' to teach me. And I wanted Joanie to learn.

LADY OF THE COURT. Oh, I can have my daughters' tutor teach Joan.

ISABELLE. Oh, you would? That'd be a wonderful thing. I'd love for her to be able to read.

LADY OF THE COURT. Listen, when she gets back from the war we'll have her stay with us at our country home. It's beautiful out there. She can live with us for a couple of months.

ISABELLE. Well, I don't wanna put you out.