

GOLONDRINA

SWALLOW

Aminta de Lara

Translated by Francine Jacome

To my sisters Irene and Beatriz, both part and present of
my soul forever...

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Characters:

Manuel Felipe López Iturbe

Claudia López

Carmen Elena López

The action takes place in an apartment located on Lecuna Avenue in the city of Caracas. Some of the furniture and ornaments look as though they belong in an apartment in the fancier neighborhoods of eastern Caracas. One window faces on the avenue. Towards the back of the set, Manuel Felipe lies slumped in an armchair holding a phone receiver in his hand, by his side, on the floor, a bottle of rum, a half empty glass and a pillow. The city has collapsed. Two huge demonstrations marching for and against the government have taken the streets. The demonstration marching against the government does so through Lecuna Avenue. We hear the roaring of the crowd. In the area where the audience sits, scenes of people down below in the street will be projected to create the feeling that they are part of the demonstration.

(above the sound being projected)

WOMAN'S VOICE:

Fatherland, wandering female, wounded female
 Female mother, female girl-child...

Land of dreams and detours
 Fleeting road left behind
 Brief moment, open geography, common point

Female of the moist womb
 Making children for destiny
 Downtrodden fatherland, earth, land of dreams and nightmare

Female always, living female
 Fatherland linked to paradise
 Murmured, used, relative of everyone and in everyone

Fatherland, female fatherland

Uncertain land of everyone, for everyone
Land of the possible and broken belongings

Female fatherland, place of the soul

Fatherland, female fatherland, emptiness and silence

Female fatherland
Earthly, vital, possible,
Bound, silenced,
Resurrected in the dream of those who tread upon her...

Fatherland closed-off road
Door and window
Dungeon
Blood,
Pavement,
And history repeated

Fatherland uncertain land
Refuge out to sea

Fatherland, our female fatherland who art on earth.....

Translated by James Cascaito

Scene I

Following the sound of a key unlocking the door, Carmen Elena rushes in, visibly upset. She is carrying a red flag, and wears a red beret and a scarf in the colors of the Venezuelan flag. Spotting the man slumped in the armchair; she calls him, leaving the door open behind her.

Carmen Elena:

(Leaning over the body of the man, trying to rouse him)

Dad! Dad! Wake up. What's wrong with you? Oh my God! What should I do? Dad! Please.

(Struggles to pull the receive out of Manuel Felipe's hand, then dials)

Hello, please. It's an emergency. I'm here at my father's house and he's not responding. I think I need a doctor or an ambulance, or something... I don't know who I should call... Civil Defense? Thanks... Wait while I write it down

(she searches through her purse for a pen, dumps everything out and finds one).

Wait a sec, I don't have anything to write on...

(She finds a piece of paper in her purse. Yes, go ahead. Thank you (dials again).

Civil Defense? Good morning. Look, I'm here at my father's apartment, and when I walked in I found him slumped in the chair, and he isn't moving... Well, no. He called me and said, in a sort of whispery voice, that he didn't feel well. That's why I came. I rushed over... Yes, I know all about the march; that's where I came from.... The firemen?... do you have the number?... Yeah, wait a minute, please... I'm sorry, it's just that I'm all flustered and I don't know what to do. My dad looks as though he's really ill and I'm here alone with him... The address? Avenida Lecuna... Yes, I know it's impossible. How could I possibly not know that; I was with the other march, and it's obvious that I side with the government.... Sir! Please, please help me!.... First aid? ... No, never... Mouth-to-mouth? No, not that either... O.K., tell me what to do and I'll do it.... His mouth?... *(she stares at her father. Just then we hear Claudia's voice from another floor inside the building)*

Claudia:

Carmen Elena? Where are you? I don't know the apartment number. Why did I ever let you talk me into...? CARMEN ELENA!

Carmen Elena:

Up here! Up here on the sixth!.
(*Into the phone*)

Excuse me Sir, it looks as though my sister has arrived. She's a doctor. She's almost here. As soon as she comes in, I'll put her on the phone.

Claudia:

Sixth floor. I'm on the sixth floor. Where on six?

Carmen Elena:

The door that's open.

Claudia:

(*Claudia enters, dressed in black, with a cap and a black flag*).

What happened here?... Carmen Elena, talk to me... Who is that man?... What are you doing here?... Carmen Elena answer me!

(*She goes over to Manuel Felipe's motionless body. It takes a few seconds for her to recognize her father*).

I'm leaving. How you dare call me for this. What are you doing here?

Carmen Elena:

Please. I don't know what to do. Help me!

(*Into the phone*)

No, Sir, not you. I was talking to my sister.

Claudia:

Help you? What are you doing here? What are you doing here?

Carmen Elena:

I didn't know who else to call.

(*Holding Claudia*)

Claudia:

Then why did you choose me? Let me go.

Carmen Elena:

No!

(Into the phone)

Excuse me, Sir. No, not you. Yes, she's already here. You want to talk to her?... Wait a sec.

(She hands the phone to Claudia)

Claudia:

I'm not talking to anyone.

Carmen Elena:

It's the man from Civil Defense. He wants to talk to you.

Claudia:

Why?

Carmen Elena:

(Into the phone)

Just a moment, please.

(To Claudia)

I told them that you're a doctor.

Claudia:

What?

Carmen Elena:

(Into the phone)

Here she is.

Claudia:

(Into the phone)

Who's speaking please?

Carmen Elena:

Civil Defense

Claudia:

(To Carmen Elena)

Shut up!

(Into the phone)

Hello. Yes, I'm a doctor... I understand... I know there is no way you can get here. Just a minute, please.

(First she looks at Manuel Felipe from several feet away; then she moves forward, checks his pulse and lifts his eyelids).

(Into the phone).

There's no need to send an ambulance; the man is dead.
Claudia López... 4.543.991... I know about these things.

Carmen Elena:
It can't be! Dad! Dad!
(She stands motionless in front of her father)

Claudia:
(Into the phone)
I know. It's impossible. I just got here and no cars are getting through.

Carmen Elena:
What are we going to do? What are we going to do?

Claudia:
(To Carmen Elena)
Calm down!
(Into the phone)
Excuse me a minute.
(To Carmen Elena).
They said they'll send an ambulance when the march is over. They need the address.

Carmen Elena:
I can't...

Claudia:
(Into the phone)
I apologize. I'll call back and give you all the information you need once the march is over... It's not proper procedure, I understand... I apologize again, but the thing is I don't know the address and my sister is all worked up... Yes, we're sisters, but I really don't think I'm under any obligation to tell you why I don't know the address... I found it by asking, and I suppose you could do the same thing... All I know is that there's a drugstore painted green on the corner. It's called *La Independiente* or something like that. I will repeat it again, I don't know the address.

Carmen Elena:
I know it

Claudia:
Sorry, again. My sister knows it. I'll put her on.

Carmen Elena:

Avenida Lecuna, between the corners of Marrón and Pelota. The building is called La Esmeralda, 6th floor, apartment 67... The telephone number?... Well, the number is... You want me to give you the phone number? The phone number is, give me a minute, it's 561-3422... Thank you.

(Hangs up the phone. looking at her father's body)

What should we do?

Claudia:

Good question. I have no idea.

Carmen Elena:

Should we pray?

Claudia:

What for? Better, why don't you start by explaining what on earth I'm doing here!

Carmen Elena:

I needed help.

Claudia:

You needed help. How about trying a neighbor?

Carmen Elena:

I don't know anyone in the building.

Claudia:

That would've been excessive.

Carmen Elena:

I'm sorry! You can leave if you want...

Claudia:

Now I can't leave. Did you forget the conversation a minute ago with Civil Defense? Ah?

Carmen Elena:

(almost whispering)

Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us...What comes next?

Claudia:
Pray for us sinners now and at the hour...

Carmen Elena:
No, that's the Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us....

Claudia:
Then I don't know.

Carmen Elena:
I'll have to start from the beginning: Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Deliver us from all evil and....

Claudia:
Pray for us sinners.

Carmen Elena:
No!

Claudia:
The part about our daily bread?

Carmen Elena:
Neither.
Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven... Deliver us from all evil and?

Claudia:
The part about the trespasses.

Carmen Elena:
No that one comes later.
Our Father who art in Heaven...

Claudia:
(Interrupting her)
How about praying something you really know?

Carmen Elena:
Such as?

Claudia:

I don't know...

Hail Mary full of grace. The Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy....

Carmen Elena:

Holy Mary mother of God, pray for us sinners now and in the hour of our death. Amen.

BOTH STAND IN SILENCE. WE HEAR THE SOUND OF RUNNING WATER AND SEE THE IMAGES OF THE CROWD CHANTING SLOGANS.