

It isn't funny *

They steal Daddy's prosthetic leg. And they think this is funny. A funny joke to play on Daddy. They laugh and trail it through the house into the yard waving it in the air and all around them until the neighborhood kids gather in a circle in our front yard. The little bastards. I am not proud, but I must say that the oldest, Whitey, has become quite a showman. Drumming up business, whipping the crowd into a frenzy. Still I am not proud though. Why should I be? *I am a veteran!* I shout at them from the upstairs window. *A veteran of your births!* pointing my finger and scowling. And even though this is true it only makes them laugh louder: I am reduced to a soundtrack, the bonus attraction of the day. Whitey, dressed in his grandfather's prized bowler, twirling Daddy's best cane, "*Step right up and touch a Gen-U-ine Wooden Leg! Handcrafted in Brazil of the finest woods and shipped to the United States for your viewing pleasure!*" Tapping the ankle with the cane. "*Just one quarter, one touch and a close-up look for twenty-five cents! One time only, don't miss out, folks!*" Watching the boy out there, I wonder where he got it from: the kids hopping up and down for a better look. Maria's people were all good-for-nothing layabouts - but maybe a distant uncle? A cousin? Ah, but Maria is a veteran of their births too, we both are, and I am left upstairs pining for the return of my leg. I can't bear it anymore though but I must, I must. Outside the children are lined up to stroke my firm calf in the sun, buffing my knee to a high shine, lodging their sticky fingers into my delicate ankle joint... It will never come clean! This is unbearable! Unthinkable for a veteran to have to watch, at any price! *Do you hear me, I yell to them, at any price?*

