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A VOID 2 A VOID

IDA DUNNIT and POLLY MORPHOUS: *Drag queens, elaborate make-up*

TEMPUS: *Stage manager (either gender, female preferred)*

Note: *Door of the set can be imaginary.*

(IDA and POLLY sit at mirror in a dressing room, as IDA finishes applying lipstick to POLLY.)

IDA

Quit flapping your yap!

POLLY

Aaargh-aaargh. But don't you ever wonder what it's all about?

IDA

No. What?

POLLY

This eternal, insistent, relentless dance we have with glamour. Don't you ever wonder, Ida, why we keep doing it?

IDA

(Ponders thoroughly) No. I don't.

POLLY

Just look at us.

(Tableau: They look through mirror into house.)

IDA

Fab-u-LOSA!

POLLY

Who are we really? We put on the makeup. We take it off. Put it on all over again. Then off it comes. On. Off. On. Off.

IDA

Like lamps – we're incandescent! ... Do you know your lines?

POLLY

Lines? We lip-synch.

IDA

Exactly, Polly! It's called lip-SYNCHing, not lip-flapping!

POLLY

I'm serious Ida.

IDA

Coulda fooled me.

POLLY

Is it some endless chase we're on here? Some elusive quest for meaning, identity? Is that what this is all about? This glamour, does it all stem from some deep-seated pathology, some neurotic sense of inadequacy compelling us time after time after time to obscure our nature underneath this mantle of rouge and mascara and lip gloss? To hide from the real us?

IDA

It's always us under the make-up. Wait I take that back.

POLLY

Then when we're made up, we begin to yearn for authenticity.

IDA

It's PART of us under the make-up. Just not the boring parts.

POLLY

So we discard this shroud of Lanvin and -- and -- and -- we present again a visage that's unvarnished, unadorned.

IDA

We get to be all that we can be. It's us plus!

POLLY

Then back as civilians there's all that discomfort, that uneasiness, that -- that -- that -- vulnerability resurfacing, and we feel this need to re-armor, to get back in mufti, to be someone else, to be other than our rotting, dying corporeal selves.

IDA

Mostly it just makes us look better.

POLLY

Who is the us, Ida? Who really? It's like we strain and we strive ceaselessly -- grasping, grasping in search of a moment of comfort, some island of being as sanctuary in order for us to escape the encroaching terror of the oceanic void, of the essential nothingness.

IDA

You are being so Eurotrash right now. This is no time for one of your existential crises. It's those courses isn't it?! I could tell that community college was gonna lead to no good. The minute I spotted your nose buried in that "*Post-Modern Deconstructuralism for Dummies*" Right then I knew we were in for a bumpy night. And headed nowheres beneficial. Why, Polly? Why couldn't you just enroll in something advantageous like Cosmetology or the Internet?

TEMPUS

Knock-knock!

IDA

(Sunnily) Entrez!

(TEMPUS enters wearing intercom headset. She carries two bouquets of flowers, one luscious, one anemic. She's eating a burrito. As the door opens Thelma Houston's "Don't Leave Me This Way" blares. It cuts off when she shuts the door.)

IDA *(continuing)*

(Hectoring) We could use a presence on the web. You know, in this modern world, if you don't have a web site and a credit card and a cell phone, you're a nobody. You might as well not even exist cause nobody's gonna find you. Am I right, Tempus?

TEMPUS

Right. Five, make that four and a half minutes. Bubbles is on her next to last number.

IDA

(Reaching for the flowers) Oh, pour moi?

TEMPUS

No. These ones go to Bubbles. This one's for you.

POLLY

Awww! So it's all worth it, after all.

IDA

Ohhh! They're from Jacques!

(POLLY silently mimics "Oh! They're from Jacques!")

IDA *(continued)*

(Reading) "Break a leg so I can kiss it better. Je t'adore."

POLLY

I'm going to throw up.

TEMPUS

(Suspiciously) All set? *(Takes a bite of the burrito)*

IDA

Fab-u-LOSA!!!

POLLY

(Lisping) Thuper. Don't you ever get tired of going down on burritos?

TEMPUS

Four minutes!

(TEMPUS exits. Another blast of Thelma.)

IDA

Bubbles's act needs a facelift – like her. It's so tired.

POLLY

Unlike...

IDA

(Singing in a morose, existentialist Marlene Dietrich style, trying to engage POLLY, maybe wrapping a boa around him.)

Hal-lo darkness... my old friend.

I've come to talk with you... again.

-- Everybody! --
 Beneath the halo... of a... street lamp
 I turn my collar... to the cold ... and damp.
 You know, you deciding to take a swan dive into some
 existential crisis is not going to be all that helpful
 right at this moment.

POLLY

Will you please stop calling it an existential crisis?
 Don't you ever step back and wonder who we are, what we're
 doing, why we do it?

IDA

For the love. We do it for the love.

POLLY

Who love? What love? Who exactly gets the love? And why?

IDA

"Why?" is not a question to be ask-ed when you got people
 who's showing you the love.

POLLY

Who do they love?

IDA

Me! ... Maybe you.

POLLY

Is it the masks, the cartoons we paint over our faces?

IDA

Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey! (*framing face*) THIS is not a
 cartoon. This is a masterpiece. I painted it myself.

POLLY

Maybe it's our "singing" they love. The music we pretend is
 coming out of our mouth? But no. Can't be that, 'cause it
 could be anyone dancing around flapping – excuse me, lip-
 SYNCHing. What they hear is the same record they always
 hear.

IDA

If you want to try some – I mean, we’ve talked about – Yeah, well, maybe it’s time, maybe it’s time for us to pick up a few of those karaoke tracks and try to do our own sing–

POLLY

Don’t you get it? It’s not about lip-synching or karaoke or even a symphony orchestra!

IDA

Oooo! I hear a symphony.

POLLY

Where’s the authenticity? How do we really know who we are? When you look at me, who do you see? I want us to – How do I know who I am? And how am I ever truly truly going to know, when there’s all these different versions of me?

IDA

Polly, you really, really, really need to get laid.

POLLY

That’s your answer for everything isn’t it? Sex!

IDA

Works for me.

POLLY

That’s right. Just deflect. Don’t ask questions. Don’t think about it now. We’ve got a show to do.

IDA

I ponder these things du temps-en-temp. Not usually two minutes before we have to dance into a spotlight in front of a room full of lushes who Bubbles has just brought way, way, way, WAY down, and try to get them to feel chipper again. But certainly. It’s natural to wonder about these things. Such as where do our God-given talents come from? Like how come I got the gift to be able to give such great head? Maybe in a previous lifetime I was Marie Antoinette and now I’m over-compensatiating to make sure that part of me is appreciated this time around. Makes you think. But ... they always say, don’t look a gift mouth in the whatever. But right now, this is not the time to pontificate.

POLLY

Not now, not later neither. Spend the time hunting for sex so you can feel better in the morning. Don't THINK so much.

IDA

Well my mother always said furrows belong on farms, not on foreheads.

POLLY

Don't you see, Ida? Don't you see what a treadmill this has turned into? Look at us. We've morphed into gerbils. Gerbils, and hamsters. *(He turns POLLY to face the mirror.)*

IDA

Well that's the best damn looking gerbil I ever saw.

POLLY

All we're doing is going through the motions. We make ourselves glamorous. We have sex. We eat. We crap. Ultimately, we're just little factories of excrement?

IDA

Flowers need to be fertilized.

POLLY

Glamour. Sex. Food. Crap. Glamour. Sex. Food. Crap. Over and over and over. Cradle to the grave.

IDA

Okay. Okay. I get it.

POLLY

Where's the causality? What is our context?

IDA

I get it. Just not now!

POLLY

Do you?

TEMPUS *(off)*

Two minutes!

IDA

(Sunnily) Merci!

POLLY

Am-scray!

(POLLY takes a handful of cold cream and smears the make-up off half his face. A mess. TEMPUS opens the door. Whitney Houston's "I will Always Love You" blasts. She enters, closes the door. Music stops.)

TEMPUS

All set? *(Surveys the mess, takes a bite of burrito)*

POLLY

Did you know, Tempus, that you're really a turd factory?

TEMPUS

That's not a good look for you.

IDA

Give us five, please, Tempus.

TEMPUS

You've got two.

IDA

Well tell Bubbles she'll have to do another number out of her vast repertoire.

POLLY

Yeah. Twist her arm.

TEMPUS

That's not in the show.

IDA

ADAPT or PERISH!

TEMPUS *(exiting, into headset)*

Don't let Bubbles come off. *(To Ida)* Do something! Fast! *(Stops at door, turns.)* Hey Scat Freak! *(Moons POLLY.)*

POLLY

I'll get you, my pretty, and your little dog too.

(TEMPUS opens door, blast, closes it. Silence)

IDA

We are artistes. We are lip-synch artistes. We go through the motions. That's what we do. And in this way, we illuminate the original. We are the enhancers. We embellish, we adorn, we amplify the universe. We are not factories of excrement. Entirely. People know things. They remember things. And we help them remember them different. Better. So what if someone else is doing the singing. We're doing something too. And they like us – no – they love us for it. So come on. If not now, when? If not you, who? (*No response.*) YOO-HOO! YOO-HOO! We are the objects of admiration and our public awaits.

POLLY

Do you believe that?

IDA

I have proof. (*She holds up her flowers.*)

POLLY

Is the love there when your face is naked, plain as a prairie?

IDA

A. My face is never a prairie. And second, I guess we'll find that out tomorrow morning. But I know that out there, tonight, I'm gonna make them love me.

POLLY

Whoever you are. You're giving them something they want – okay good – but what if there was no one there to see you all dolled up. Would you still act the same way, still do the same things? If a lip-synching drag queen falls in an empty theater, does she make a sound? And is it drag if she's the only one who sees it?

IDA

You're being too convoluted. You're giving me convulsions. If the theater's empty, you wouldn't find any drag queens there.

POLLY

Exactly my point. I hope – I hope it's not a hard lesson you're in for tomorrow morning.

IDA

(Dabbing her lips) I'm not worried. Besides. I'll still always put on make-up, regardless if there's someone there or not. Cause if I do, there will be. I heard about these monks, once. Buddhist like. They make these paintings out of sand. And they don't just throw something together. It takes them days and weeks, years maybe, to make this one drawing. And then you know what they do? They smoosh it all up and scrape it away, like it was never there. But they remember it, and they remember doing it. And they like doing it. So that's enough. They know it's never gonna last. ... Don't you like doing what we do?

POLLY

I like doing things with you.

IDA

You know what I like the best? I like it when we're on stage and singing - "singing" - and I look over and I see your face, your beautiful, beautiful face and you're all glowing and I look in your eyes and I think to myself, "Aren't we something? Aren't we really something, us two?" Je t'adore.

(IDA takes cold cream and smears half her face too.)

POLLY

Aw hell. Let's do it!

IDA

(Rolling her eyes: "That was work") Jesus! Well, we're really gonna give 'em a show they won't forget tonight. And then we'll send them home with our song and dance rattling around in their head, and they'll remember us for a while.

POLLY

Oh, yeah. They're gonna remember this look for a long, long time. And your theory about Marie Antoinette is the daffiest-

TEMPUS *(off)*

Faces please! Ready? Everything okay?

IDA & POLLY

Fab-u-LOSA!

IDA

And after the show, me and Jacques are gonna head back to his place, and on the way we're gonna drop you off at BlowBuddies.

POLLY

(Breathily, imitating Joan Crawford) Oh Jane. You wouldn't say that if I wasn't such a loveless, sexless, little nobody.

IDA

But ya are Blanche. Ya are an insignificant, microscopic little piece of turd in the vast inky darkness of the cosmos. And you're here for just one fleet flickering spark of time. So let's put on a show!

(IDA wheels POLLY to the exit on an office chair cum wheelchair, opens the door, Thelma Houston again blares "Don't Leave Me This Way".)

IDA & POLLY

Jesus, Bubbles!

(They exit, lights fade, music fades.)

END OF PLAY