

SUICIDE BLONDES

...a one-act play by Charles DeLong

(as loosely inspired by Jean-Paul Sartre's NO EXIT
and Bruce Jay Friedman's STEAMBATH)

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CAST OF CHARACTERS
(in order of speaking)

MARILYN - blonde #62 - iconically sensual siren, mid-30s.

MALE VOICE OVER PUBLIC ADDRESS SYSTEM - often mumbled and unintelligible.

INGER - blonde #70 - classic intelligent Swedish beauty with the appropriate accent, mid-30s.

SHAUNA - blonde #84 - early 20s, in-over-her-head midwestern girl; bipolar.

SAVANNAH - blonde #94 - mean-spirited, sarcastic; overbearing; late 30s.

MARGAUX - blonde #96 - almost regal; born into money, fame, and power; never had to earn it; eclipsed by her younger sister; 40s.

SETTING:

PLACE: Everywhere and nowhere - an almost bare stage, except for one throne-like chair at up center, a "take a number" machine, such as would be found at the deli counter of a supermarket, and a single free-standing door stage left.

TIME: All time and no time; past, present, and future combined.

As a quick overture and as the curtain call music, please use SUICIDE BLONDE by INXS (1990).

SUICIDE BLONDES is a simple unit set one-act play running approximately 40 minutes; it has 5 female characters and 1 male character; the male character is a voice-only character; he never appears on stage. The premise of the play is the afterlife of 5 blonde celebrities who, for whatever reasons, have chosen to end their own lives.

(As the lights come up, MARILYN is seen sitting in the throne-like chair at up center; she is dressed in a pink strapless gown with a white ermine shawl around her shoulders and with long white gloves (the Marilyn of "Diamonds Are a Girl's Best Friend"). She sings, all the while idolizing her treasure trove of jewels.)

MARILYN

"A kiss on the hand may be quite continental,
But diamonds are a girl's best friend.
A kiss may be grand, but it won't pay the
Rental on your humble flat,
Or help you at the automat."

(A muffled and mumbling MALE VOICE comes over the public address system; its words are indiscernible.)

MARILYN

I'm sorry, sir. I didn't quite get that. Would you be a doll and repeat?

(The muffled voice reiterates but is no more discernible than the first time.)

MARILYN

(Droll sarcasm.)

Yes, that was much better. Thank you, sweetie.
(She continues singing.)

"Men grow cold as girls grow old
And we all lose our charms in the end,
But square cut or pear shape, these rocks don't
Lose their shape.
Diamond's are a girl's best friend.

(The muffled male voice comes on again, still incomprehensible.)

MARILYN

With all due respect, it would be easier for me to respond if I knew what the hell you were saying. I assume you're speaking English. Although, frankly, that may not necessarily matter. I do speak five languages, you know. All fluently. More or less. American English. British English. Australian English...with a translator. South African English. And that English language that they speak in Texas, whatever that is. That's always been the hardest one for me.

(The muffled voice again.)

MARILYN

I still have no idea what you're saying, but I'll take what you've just said as a compliment. I'm certainly long overdue for one. You're not by any chance the President, are you? No, of course you're not. Johnny was always a much better orator than that. I could understand almost every word he said. He never muffled or mumbled. *(Sexually.)* Well, almost never.

(The muffled voice again.)

MARILYN

I should give you the name of my voice coach. She can work wonders. Simply by sticking marbles in your mouth. I accidentally swallowed one once. She will greatly improve your...(very dictated) pro-nun-ci-a-tion. Your dic-tion. Your ar-ti-cu-la-tion. Your e-nun-ci-a-tion. And your e-lo-cu-tion. Before working with her, I could barely speak one language, let alone five. I certainly couldn't say all those words. Now I love "t-i-o-n" words, but how the hell they get "shun" out of "t-i-o-n" is beyond me. English is a very hard language to learn. And I've done it five times over. My point being is that I'm not just a dumb blonde. Yes, I know. My image and my reputation. I give the people what they want. But we all know I'm not even a blonde at all. You must have seen my nude calendar spread. The carpet definitely does not match the drapes...so to speak. I am a bleached blonde...a bottle blonde...a peroxide blonde...a...suicide blonde. Get it? Self-dyed...suicide? Guess you had to be there. My name's Marilyn. What's yours? *(a pause)* Not speaking now at all, huh? Well, I guess that's for the best. Evidently you speak some sort

MARILYN (cont'd)

of dialect that I'm not *familiar* with. And I speak five languages. Did I mention that I speak five languages? Six really. If you count pig Latin. I learned that from all the pigs I've slept with. It's not easy trying to become a star. It gets even harder once you've made it. But why am I telling you this? You probably know all about me. I'm always in the tabloids. HOLLYWOOD CONFIDENTIAL. Except it isn't... confidential, that is. It seems like my life is *everybody's* business. Someday they'll probably even write a song about me. Penned by some flashy homosexual man with wild clothes and sequined glasses. And no, I do not mean Liberace.

(The muffled voice again.)

MARILYN

I give up. I'm not even going to try to figure out what you just said.

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

(Angry and emphatically)

WHAT IS YOUR NUMBER?!

MARILYN

Now *that* I understood. But there's no need to be so rude and impatient. Marilyn wasn't constructed in a day. I'm number 62. What number are we on now? How long do I have to wait?

(The male voice resumes its garbled talk.)

Don't I even get star-treatment? A preferential spot at the front of the line? At the very least, my body double should have to wait in my place until it's my turn. You *do* realize who I am, don't you? Not that I owe you any explanation. You haven't even shown the courtesy of identifying yourself. For all I know, you could be one of Senator McCarthy's henchmen from the HUAC, still hanging in there, still not giving up. Still trying to coerce me into telling you everything I know about Arthur. Well, Arthur and I have been divorced for almost a year now. And I already told you everything I know. Why won't you just let it rest? Perhaps you think now that we're divorced, I'll throw him to the wolves, that I'll become a spiteful, vindictive ex-wife, and

give you all the information you want, whether it's true or not. Well, to be honest, the thought *had* crossed my mind. But I'm not like that. My parents raised me differently. Of course, they also raised me not to pose nude for pin-up calendars, but a girl's got to make a living. Oh, by the way, as I'm sure you already know, my private parts down south were not visible in my calendar, so you're just going to have to believe me that I'm not a natural blonde. What natural blonde has *my* shade of platinum? And don't even get me started on all those cheap Marilyn knockoffs, those two-bit bitches. They're low-rent. A poor man's Marilyn. I'm the real deal. Any chance you could...cause them all to have...an accident? Never mind. I suppose that's hoping against hope. You still haven't told me what this number 62 is for. It's certainly not my age. If you reverse the numbers, it gives the age that I actually admit to, but thanks to HOLLYWOOD CONFIDENTIAL nobody believes that either. Is nothing sacred in this town anymore?

(Sound effect of SCREECHING TIRES, A WOMAN SCREAMING, and then A CAR CRASH. Afterwards, a decapitated woman's head with platinum blonde hair rolls across the floor and stops at MARILYN's feet; MARILYN looks down at it a moment.)

MARILYN

What the hell is that? Some kind of joke?

(The male voice mumbles. With trepidation, MARILYN kneels down and picks up the head.)

Oh, my God!

(To the male voice.)

I've got to give you credit. You work fast.

(To the head.)

Well, what can I say? You've never looked lovelier. Poor girl. She was always losing her head over one thing or another.

(She tosses the head off over her shoulder.)

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

Take a number.

MARILYN

What are you?! Blind, deaf, and dumb? I already have a number. I just told you. It's 62.

INGER

(Entering.)

I believe he means me. Ya, I'm certain of it.

(She takes a number.)

70.

MARILYN

70?! What the hell happened to 63 through 69?!

INGER

They were very turbulent years. But if anyone would know about "69", you would.

MARILYN

What is *that* supposed to mean? Who the hell is she?

INGER

I'm the proof that not all blondes necessarily have to be dumb.

MARILYN

Just because you've got an accent doesn't make you smart. With training, I could do...ten accents. All at the same time.

INGER

I'd pay good money to hear that.

MARILYN

Your bosoms aren't nearly big enough.

INGER

Only in your mind is that an insult.

MARILYN

(To the male voice)

Has 62 been called yet? Is it time for me to go?

(The male voice mumbles something again. To Inger.)

MARILYN (Cont'd)

Do you know what the hell he's saying?

INGER

Does it matter?

MARILYN

If we ever want to board this train, it does.

INGER

Ah! A metaphor. Maybe you're not so dumb after all.

MARILYN

Missy. Deary. You're a lovely person. With your classic, cultured beauty and all that crap. You remind me of friggin' Grace Kelly. But you are *one big pain in the ass*.

INGER

That's the nicest thing you've ever said to me.

(Offering her hand to shake)

Inger. A pleasure to make your acquaintance.

MARILYN

Inger?! What the hell kind of name is Inger?!

INGER

Svedish.

MARILYN

Oh. A foreigner. I should have known. So what's your last name...*Inger*? *Finger*? *Singer*? *Clinger*? *Malinger*?

INGER

Let's just stay on a first name basis.

MARILYN

Have it your way.

(Reluctantly dangling her hand out to INGER, as if to say, "kiss my ring".)

I'm...Marilyn.

INGER

(Bored.)

I know.

MARILYN

Of course you know. *Everyone* knows me.

INGER

(Aside, under her breath)

In the Biblical sense.

MARILYN

Excuse me?

INGER

I'm feeling very tense.

MARILYN

No doubt. You look like you've got a stick shoved up your ass.

INGER

At least in *my* case, it's only figurative.

MARILYN

I don't know what that means. But I have a feeling you just insulted me.

INGER

That's a good bet.

MARILYN

I really can't see myself calling you by that stupid, stupid name - *Inger*. I'll just refer to you as number 70.

INGER

How about if I move to the other side of the room? That way we don't have to refer to each other at all.

MARILYN

Fine by me. But I was here first. I've got dibs on the throne. I'm the most deserving of it, anyway. What exactly have you ever done?

INGER

I starred in a very successful television series for a number of years, playing a role originally created in the movie by Loretta Young.

MARILYN

Well, la de friggin' da. I'm a movie star. The *big* screen. I wouldn't be caught *dead* doing a TV show.

INGER

Irony. You're just full of literary devices, aren't you? But for your information, I've starred in movies, also...*number 62*. The big difference is *I* am actually an actress, not just a celebrity or a star.

MARILYN

Yeah? Well, who are they going to remember? Who will become immortal...iconic? When will you ever have a flamboyant homosexual man in sequins write a song about you?

INGER

What has Liberace got to do with this?

MARILYN

I'm not sure. It's all just candelabras in the wind.

INGER

(Changing the subject.)

Since you had brought her up, I assume you've heard about your...competition.

MARILYN

Of course I've heard. Her head's lying back *there* somewhere.

INGER

That's an urban legend. She was not decapitated.

MARILYN

That's going to come as quite a surprise to her severed neck. Though I suppose it could have happened later, at the mortuary, *after* the accident.

INGER

Post mortem.

MARILYN

Yeah, that too. Perhaps they were checking her for rabies.

INGER

I'm curious. Why isn't she here?

MARILYN

She doesn't qualify. This is a very exclusive club. Freak accidents don't make the *cut*. So to speak.

INGER

Did you actually just make a personal connection with me?

MARILYN

Don't let it go to your head.

INGER

You know there are those who have the theory that we were murdered, or in my case, that it was an *accidental* overdose. That it wasn't suicide.

MARILYN

What's your point?

INGER

Maybe we don't belong here either.

MARILYN

I went through that period of self-delusion for a while as well. You'll get over it.

INGER

Are there others?

MARILYN

They come and go. There's always going to be someone who can't handle the pressure. Of being a blonde. Eva Braun was here when I first arrived. Number 45. I quickly put her in her place. So! I'll bite. What was your "phenomenally wonderful and successful" TV show called? Perhaps I *accidentally* saw an episode or two.

INGER

THE FARMER'S DAUGHTER.

MARILYN

(She laughs hysterically.)

You've got to be friggin' kidding me!

INGER

It was a fine piece of family entertainment.

MARILYN

The farmer's daughter? It sounds like the setup for a dirty joke. All we need now is a traveling salesman.

INGER

Your whole life seems to be a dirty joke.

MARILYN

I did what I had to do.

INGER

Maybe we're not that different after all.

MARILYN

(Haughtily.)

You certainly have a high opinion of yourself.

(There is the sound of a RIFLE being fired once. INGER screams. MARILYN remains unflinching and blasé.)

MARILYN

Not again!

INGER

What was that?!!!

MARILYN

(She ponders a moment.)

A Remington Model 878, if I'm not mistaken.

INGER

Does that happen often?

MARILYN

Not as much as on the men's side.

INGER

I nearly jumped out of my skin!

MARILYN

Too late for that. That ship has sailed.

INGER

You know what I mean.

MARILYN

Knockers up, girls. I have a feeling we're about ready to get another visitor.

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

Take a number.

(SHAUNA enters, looking bewildered and frightened. She has blood on her forehead. Both INGER and MARILYN are surprisingly sympathetic to the new arrival, at first.)

INGER

The poor dear is so young.

MARILYN

She's a mere child. I hate this. It makes me want to cry.

INGER

(To SHAUNA.)

Are you all right, sweetheart?

SHAUNA

I don't know. No, I don't think I am.

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

I repeat. Take a number.

SHAUNA

Where do...? What does...?

INGER

Let me help you.

(She leads SHAUNA to the number machine. SHAUNA pulls a number tab.)

SHAUNA

84.

MARILYN

What the...? I really don't get their numbering system here. It's worse than at the DMV.

SHAUNA

May I sit down, please?

INGER

Of course, honey.

MARILYN

Don't even think about it. That's *my* throne.

INGER

Marilyn, show a little compassion.

MARILYN

Oh, all right. But I'm timing you.

(INGER leads SHAUNA to the throne; SHAUNA sits.)

MARILYN

And don't get blood all over it. What kind of heathen uses a rifle? That's so unladylike.

INGER

I don't think this is what she needs right now.

MARILYN

I'm sorry. But you're using my chair. It just brings out the worst in me.

INGER

What's your name, dear?

SHAUNA

Colleen. No...Shauna. Colleen. I don't know any more.

MARILYN

I used to have that same problem. But mine was much easier to resolve. What would you rather be called? Marilyn? Or Norma Jean? Norma Jean sounds like a frumpy brunette from the wrong side of the tracks.

INGER

And it so suits you.

MARILYN

You're lucky we've got company. Otherwise, I'd give you a huge piece of my mind.

INGER

Are you really sure you can spare it?

SHAUNA

May I have a drink, please?

INGER

I'll see what I can find.

MARILYN

Don't waste your time. There's no alcohol here.

INGER

Maybe she just wants water.

MARILYN

There's none of that, either. Where exactly do you think you are?

INGER

There has to be something.

MARILYN

It would seem.

SHAUNA

That's all right. I'm ok.

INGER

I'm not sure I am though. I didn't expect a suite at the Plaza, but I thought there would be a *few* amenities.

MARILYN

No, just me. The entertainment. Performing nightly in the Starlight Tiki Tiki Lounge.

(She sings.)

"We're having a heat wave, a tropical heat wave."

(SHAUNA stands, cheers, and applauds.)

Thank God *someone* here appreciates me.

SHAUNA

My parents were always big fans. We used to watch all your old movies every Saturday night on the Late Late Show. We didn't even care that you had no real talent. You lit up that screen better than anyone.

INGER

I couldn't have put it better myself. Thank you.

MARILYN

Great! Now it's two against one. But no matter. I've beaten worse odds than those before.

SHAUNA

Would you like your chair back? Your throne.

MARILYN

Her royal majesty accepts.

(She sits.)

Bow, subjects, bow.

INGER

I would say, "don't hold your breath," but given our current circumstance, that seems a rather pointless statement.

MARILYN

Everything out of your mouth is a pointless statement. If you were any more moot, you'd be mute.

(SHAUNA laughs.)

INGER

Don't encourage her. Why are you laughing?

SHAUNA

I have no idea. I didn't understand a word of that. It just seemed like a good place to insert a chuckle.

MARILYN

Soooo...Colleen...Shauna...Colleen. Tell us about yourself.

SHAUNA

Do I have to?

MARILYN

You got something better to do? Trust me, you ain't leavin' here for a while.

SHAUNA

What do you want to know?

MARILYN

What brings you here? To our neck of the woods.

SHAUNA

I'm not sure. I don't even know where I am. The last thing I remember was lying on the floor between my bed and the wall with a gun pointed at my head. I didn't even hear the shot fire.

INGER

We heard it.

MARILYN

It scared poor Inger here to death...so to speak. She was white as a ghost.

(She lightly chuckles.)

I'm here all week, folks. I got a million of 'em.

SHAUNA

Are you telling me that I'm dead?

MARILYN

A gunshot to the head? There's a pretty good chance.

SHAUNA

Is this...Hades?

MARILYN

I didn't think so at first.

(With a glance toward Inger.)

But it's beginning to turn out that way.

INGER

It's not hell. Why would any of us be in hell? We're celebrities. At worst, it's a...holding tank.

MARILYN

So what's your claim to fame, sweetie? How did you make it to the celebrity division?

SHAUNA

I'm a model. And an actress.

MARILYN

Yeah, aren't we all?

INGER

I'm an actress as well. I'm not sure exactly what Marilyn here calls herself. A Hollywood creation, perhaps. A 20th century Frankenstein. Made up of bits and pieces of every man's...and woman's...fantasies.

MARILYN

At least I arouse a fantasy.

SHAUNA

That was my job, too. To arouse. And to fulfill.

MARILYN

Oh! So you were in those beach party movies, huh?

SHAUNA

What?

INGER

Ignore her. She's just revealing her age.

SHAUNA

If you must know, I did adult films. Pornography.

INGER

But you're barely an adult yourself.

MARILYN

Stag movies?! Great! Now I'm going to have to have my throne fumigated.

SHAUNA

Adult films have progressed beyond that. They're no longer a hidden pastime in the basement of the firehouse. That was *your* generation.

MARILYN

Some things are best kept under wraps.

INGER

You weren't saying that when you were posing for that calendar. *Everything* seemed to be *un-wrapped*.

MARILYN

That's different. That wasn't pornography. That was...art.

INGER

Art? Art *must* have been the name of the photographer.

SHAUNA

Do you two fight like this *all* the time?

MARILYN

Too soon to tell. But I'm guessing yes.

SHAUNA

I shot myself to get away from this sort of thing.

MARILYN

And there's lesson number 1. Have you learned anything from it yet?

SHAUNA

What are you talking about?

MARILYN

Evidently no, you have not yet learned anything.

SHAUNA

I just got here. Give me some time.

MARILYN

There's plenty of that. And none of that.

SHAUNA

You're not making any sense.

INGER

I think I figured out what she means. Time is a terrestrial construct. It doesn't exist here.

MARILYN

Bingo. I don't know that I would have used those same hundred dollar words, but that about sums it up.

SHAUNA

So all we can do is wait?

MARILYN

'Fraid so.

SHAUNA

In that case, I want to go back. I need a do-over.

INGER

I'm fairly new here myself, but I get the impression those aren't an option.

MARILYN

It sticks in my throat to say this, but she's right. There is no going back from a gunshot to the temple. You sealed your destiny.

INGER

Fait accompli.

MARILYN

And so you have to spend eternity listening to that.

SHAUNA

What's the lesson I'm supposed to learn?

INGER

It's not possible to run away from our problems. We drag them right down with us.

MARILYN

Would you please stop saying things I agree with? It's beginning to make me question my sanity.

INGER

Then you explain it to her.

MARILYN

It's simple enough. It's like that old adage. "Out of the frying pan, into the fire." No pun intended.

SHAUNA

So this *could* be hell.

MARILYN

Every place *can* be hell. It depends on what you make of it.

SHAUNA

Do you regret the choice that *you* made?

MARILYN

Occasionally. But I prefer to follow the philosophy of James Dean - "Live fast. Die young. Leave a good-looking corpse."

INGER

We should all have that put on our headstones.

SHAUNA

Who's James Dean?

MARILYN

Somebody get her away from me. Now.

(The male voice mumbles something incomprehensible over the public address system.)

MARILYN

Oh, good. There you are. I thought you died.

SHAUNA

Who *is* that?

INGER

Hell if we know.

MARILYN

(To SHAUNA.)

You don't know *anyone*, do you?

SHAUNA

I've just arrived. I haven't been introduced around.

MARILYN

Number 70 and I are all there is. At least for now. Oh, and Mr. Mumbles. He shows up occasionally. Never in person. Just his booming voice. Most of the time, you can't even understand what he's saying. Typical man.

SHAUNA

Is this all there is? Just this one room?

MARILYN

Well, there's that door.

INGER

Who *knows* where that leads?

MARILYN

Evidently, you can't go through it till your number is called. Or should I say till your number is up.

INGER

Take a look around. There's not much to see.

(SHAUNA walks around the space, observing. After a moment, she gasps.)

SHAUNA

Do you know there's a disembodied head back here?

MARILYN

She's resting. Don't wake her. She needs her beauty sleep.

(There is the sound of another GUNSHOT. INGER and SHAUNA react. MARILYN remains stoic.)

MARILYN

Here we go again. What is this with the guns?! Back in my day, we knew how to commit suicide with finesse. No blood. No muss. No fuss. Maybe a little vomit.

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

Take a number.

MARILYN

A new arrival.

SAVANNAH

(Entering, also with blood on her head.)

I will take a fuckin' number when and if I'm fuckin' ready!!

MARILYN

A *feisty* new arrival. Do you kiss your grandmother with that mouth?

SAVANNAH

Don't even fuckin' start with me!

MARILYN

Don't worry.

(She demonstrates "hands off".)

INGER

Do you need some help?

SAVANNAH

No, I don't need some help.

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

Take a number.

SAVANNAH

Did you not hear me the first time?! I don't take orders from you...or anyone.

MARILYN

(Mockingly and overly dramatic.)

"I don't need you. I don't need anybody! I'm a star!!!"

SAVANNAH

You got that right, sister.

MARILYN

You're a cliché. And trust me. I know a cliché when I see one. I've had years of practice at it myself.

SAVANNAH

I don't have to stand here and take this. There are lots better places I could be.

MARILYN

Then by all means. Do us a favor. Leave. Depart. Skedaddle.

SAVANNAH

Can't be soon enough for me.

(She goes to the door stage left and attempts to open it. Immediately she is electrically shocked; she screams and is knocked to the floor.)

MARILYN

Oh, I'm sorry. Did I fail to mention that that door is booby-trapped? Yes, whenever it senses fake boobies, it goes high voltage. Judging by the distance you were thrown, clearly yours are double D fake.

SAVANNAH

There's no way you could possibly know that. My surgeon assured me that they'd look natural and would be virtually undetectable.

MARILYN

Undetectable? It looks like your surgeon built you a shelf for your tchotchkes. Back in my day, we were *all* natural. If the severed head back there had brought her lower portions with her, you could see first-hand. Not that she had anything on me, mind you.

SAVANNAH

Then how *do* I get out of here?

MARILYN

The same way as all the rest of us. You take a number and wait till you're called. Have you never been at a supermarket deli counter?

(MARILYN points to the number machine; reluctantly, SAVANNAH walks to it and takes a number.)

SAVANNAH

94. What's everyone else's number?

MARILYN

62.

INGER

70.

SHAUNA

84.

SAVANNAH

So what you're telling me is I've got a pretty long wait.

MARILYN

Not necessarily. They don't seem to be going in any numerical or logical order.

(She directs this last emphasis to the male voice.)

Eva Braun 45 was called well before Virginia Woolf 41. I'm assuming it's because Eva Braun had a lot more to answer for.

INGER

Virginia Woolf was here?

MARILYN

The powers that be really liked her book MRS. DALLOWAY, so they gave her a pass, despite the fact that she wasn't blonde. They wanted to add a literary element to the celebrity.

SHAUNA

Who's Virginia Woolf?

MARILYN

Leave. Leave quick. Leave immediately.

SAVANNAH

You stay right where you are, honey. Don't let them push you around. Don't I know you from someplace?

SHAUNA

I thought you looked familiar, too.

SAVANNAH

Isn't your name Shauna?

SHAUNA

Sometimes.

MARILYN

Let's not pick up that debate again.

SAVANNAH

You did some films for Platinum Pictures. Good stuff. I like your work.

SHAUNA

Thank you. But I'm sorry. I don't think I remember your name.

SAVANNAH

Why should you? I was just getting started and then you were gone. I hadn't achieved stardom yet. Savannah. Like in Georgia. I also did a couple movies for Platinum.

MARILYN

Oh, great! Just what we need! *Two glorified prostitutes.*

SAVANNAH

Don't go acting all high and mighty. The only difference between you and us is that we were honest about it. We did *on camera* the same things you did *off camera*. We *all* fucked our way to the top.

INGER

Speak for yourself. I made it through hard work and talent.

SAVANNAH

And yet we've all managed to end up in the same place. What are the odds?

MARILYN

How can you possibly compare my body of work to your...working body? I was in Hollywood spectaculars. My name was one of the biggest box office draws since Shirley Temple.

(Abruptly to SHAUNA.)

And yes, I know. "Who's Shirley Temple?"

SHAUNA

(Defensively.)

I know who Shirley Temple is. It's the name of a little doll my mother gave me for Christmas one year.

MARILYN

I give up.

SAVANNAH

What do you all do around here for fun?

MARILYN

I could entertain everyone. Sing and dance.

SAVANNAH

Quick! Where's my gun? Is it possible to kill yourself twice?

INGER

This is pretty much...it. Just standing around talking endlessly. And I do mean standing. Don't even attempt to sit in Miss Bombshell's throne there. She'll rip out what's left of your heart.

MARILYN

In this case, number 70 is telling the truth.

SAVANNAH

Where are all the men? I haven't seen a man since I arrived.

(Looking off as to address the male voice.)

And the only one I've heard from at all seems like a real dick. And not in the good way.

MARILYN

There are no men here. They have their own division. The eternities are very segregated.

SAVANNAH

That's disappointing. But as we all know...

(She sidles up to SHAUNA.)

I've always been able to make use of what's available.

(She kisses SHAUNA passionately.)

SHAUNA

(Pushing SAVANNAH away.)

What are you doing?!

SAVANNAH

Don't pretend like this is new territory for you. Your bi-coastal adventures are well documented. In at least 30 films.

SHAUNA

That was Shauna. I'm Colleen now. A wholesome midwestern cheerleader who always got straight A's.

SAVANNAH

Wow! I knew you were bi-coastal, but apparently you're also bipolar. If not a little multiple personality.

MARILYN

And there we have the real common thread.

INGER

Marilyn's right. Creative artists...of all varieties...have a much higher incidence of manic-depression than the population as a whole. Why do you think that is?

SAVANNAH

Our brains pull us in too many different directions all at the same time.

MARILYN

People...the world...pulls us in too many different directions all at the same time.

INGER

And we allow it to happen. We give the world permission. Then we suffer the consequences.

SHAUNA

I don't know about all of that. I just want to go home. To Minnesota. I just want to be Colleen again. And forget Shauna ever existed.

SAVANNAH

Why the hell would you want that? Shauna's your chance for immortality. Even years after your death, men everywhere are watching your films and fantasizing about what it would be like to be with you. Some may not know you died, but most do, and they *really* get off on it. You're fulfilling their fantasies of all types - including necrophilia. You're worth more money dead than you ever were alive.

INGER

(To SAVANNAH.)

You are a sick, sick creature. Don't you have an ounce of humanity left in you?

SAVANNAH

None of us do. I'm just not afraid to admit it.

MARILYN

Personally, I think you're *all* sick. I would have been much happier if I had been allowed to remain here by myself. Just me and a girl's best friend.

SAVANNAH

Ohhh, you brought your vibrator.

MARILYN

My diamonds.

SAVANNAH

Whatever floats your boat.

MARILYN

Maybe this *is* hell. How could it possibly get any worse?

(The sound of MARGAUX crying loudly is heard from offstage.)

SAVANNAH

You *had* to ask that question, didn't you?

(MARGAUX enters, still bawling her eyes out.)

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

Take a number.

MARGAUX

Someone get that for me. I don't have the strength.

(She sits in the throne as if she's right at home.)

SAVANNAH

Sure! We'll get right on that.

INGER

It's not going to kill us. We all need a little help now and then.

(She gets MARGAUX's number for her and hands it to her.)

You're 96.

MARILYN

Wear it proudly.

MARGAUX

(To INGER, drying the last of her tears.)

Thank you. I've always depended on the kindness of strangers.

MARILYN

I've heard those words before. But I doubt you're Tennessee Williams. He preferred boys but *drag* wasn't his thing.

MARGAUX

I adored Uncle Tennessee. Is he here?

MARILYN

No, he's not. Anatomically, he didn't make the cut. It's just us hens. The cocks are all roosting elsewhere.

MARGAUX

That's rather vulgar, don't you think?

SAVANNAH

If you think that's bad, you ain't seen nothin' yet.

MARGAUX

All right. With whom do I speak about getting out of here?

MARILYN

When you have the answer to that, let us know. But first, tell us *whom* the hell you are. You come waltzing in here, bawling your eyes out, then you act like you own the place. I'll thank you to get out of my throne.

MARGAUX

I don't see anyone's name on it. Least of all yours.

SAVANNAH

(She chuckles.)

She got you there.

INGER

No one will be harmed if she sits there awhile, Marilyn. Can't you see she's been through a great deal?

SHAUNA

So have I.

MARILYN

So have all of us. That doesn't mean that I have to relinquish my territory.

(She looks around at the others for a moment.)

Oh, what the hell. I need to stretch my legs anyway.

INGER

Thank you.

MARILYN

But I draw the line at letting porn actresses sit there. Who knows what diseases they might be carrying?

(To MARGAUX.)

I assume you're not also involved in pornography. Three in a row would just be too statistically improbable.

MARGAUX

Do I look like I would be? Give me credit for having *some* class.

SAVANNAH

We can take this out back right now, bitch!

MARGAUX

I'm not of your ilk. I don't make money by having sex, and I don't resolve conflicts with fisticuffs.

MARILYN

You might not be so bad after all.

MARGAUX

And I also don't need *your* approval.

MARILYN

I said *might* not be. That's hardly a Good Housekeeping seal.

INGER

Isn't this wonderful? We're all getting along so well. I should make some cappuccinos and bake us a few Danish. We'll have a darling little coffee klatch.

MARGAUX

Thank you. That would be nice.

SHAUNA

None for me, please. I don't drink coffee.

SAVANNAH

No, you just do cocaine. So I've heard. But that's ok. The person who told me was somebody *I* was doing cocaine with at the time.

MARILYN

Things were so much simpler in my day. What ever happened to our good *old-fashioned* drugs, like alcohol, amphetamines, and barbiturates? Those were the way to go.

INGER

But as Bob Dylan famously wrote: "The times they are a-changin'".

MARILYN

Perhaps. That doesn't mean we have to change with them.

(To MARGAUX.)

And you, Miss "My Poop Doesn't Stink", still have yet to tell us who you are. We know you must be somebody important...

(With a glance toward SHAUNA and SAVANNAH)

...relatively speaking, or otherwise you wouldn't be here.

MARGAUX

I'm a model. And an actress.

MARILYN

Is there somebody standing over on the other side coaching all of you to say that?

MARGAUX

But I was born into royalty. *Literary* royalty.

SAVANNAH

You're related to Jackie Collins?

MARGAUX

My grandfather authored some of the greatest novels of the twentieth century. A FAREWELL TO ARMS...THE SUN ALSO RISES...FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS...THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA. To name a few.

SAVANNAH

Sorry. Never heard of any of those.

MARGAUX

How is *that* possible? Did you even *attend* high school?

SAVANNAH

Of course I attended high school. Where do you think I learned about having sex?

SHAUNA

I know who you are. You were actually my idol. You're the reason I went to L.A. to become a model.

SAVANNAH

How about filling in the rest of us.

SHAUNA

You don't recognize her? It's Margaux, the face of BABE perfume. She was on the covers of COSMO, ELLE, VOGUE, even TIME.

MARILYN

Well, in that case, I *suppose* that has earned her a place down here. Just not on my throne.

MARGAUX

(Getting up.)

Be my guest. It's not very comfortable anyway. I don't have the padding and cushion that you've got back there.

MARILYN

(Sitting in the throne.)

True. Few of us are blessed that way.

SHAUNA

(To MARGAUX.)

I also loved your grandfather's works. I read everything of his I could get my hands on. I knew I could never write like that, but he inspired me. To journal. I wrote every day. Usually I was honest. Sometimes...when things got too hard...I made stuff up. I embellished. Just to make it seem like things were better than they were. I always thought his suicide was a tragic loss. Who knows what other masterpieces he could have written had he just hung in there?

INGER

We *all* died before reaching our prime.

MARILYN

The HELL we did!! I will not let all of you bring me down. I refuse to accept that my death was tragic. On the contrary, it was me finally taking the reins, taking total control over my life. Not letting everyone else dictate every damn move that I made. Don't you think I know that I was a joke? The latest punchline. No one ever really took me seriously. I had two, maybe three, more so-so years left in Hollywood, then I would have faded away, sunk into oblivion. A footnote in Hollywood history. I wasn't going to let that happen. I was going to make sure I was immortal, that people would not only remember me, but revere me...worship me. And on some level,

all of you were thinking exactly the same thing when you took your final bow. You can deny it all you want. But when life doesn't live up to our expectations, we begin to believe that death somehow will. I have no regrets. I timed it perfectly. And everyone prospered because of it. Even those bastards who put me on that path. Everyone wins! Until they don't.

(The man on the speaker begins to applaud, slowly at first, then gradually more rapidly.)

MARILYN

Thank you.

(She curtsies.)

Thank you.

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

Thank you, all of you, ladies. Line up for me, please.

(The five women form a straight line across the front of the stage, in no particular order.)

Turn, please. One at a time.

(Starting at one end, each woman in turns does a full 360, in character.)

I've almost made my decision. But I would like to hear from each one of you...briefly...one more time before I do so.

INGER

What is the question we're to respond to?

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

There is no question. You have total freedom. Stream of consciousness.

MARGAUX

I'd much rather have a question if I could. I can't organize my thoughts without one.

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

Try. Perhaps you'll surprise yourself. Your grandfather got you to read James Joyce.

MARGAUX

Just don't make me go first.

SAVANNAH

(Stepping forward.)

I'll go first.

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

Your offer is acceptable, Number 94. Proceed.

SAVANNAH

(She readies herself.)

This whole thing sucks! I don't know who the hell you think you are, but you're running a shithole down here. Or up here. Whatever the case may be. You don't let us know who the hell you are. You don't tell us where we are. Or why we're here. We're stuck in this "limbo", with no sense of time, not knowing when we're getting out, or if we're getting out. You seem to have no mercy! You disgust me!

(A loud BUZZER sounds.)

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

Your time is up.

SAVANNAH

Good. Because I have nothing left to say.

(She returns to her place in line.)

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

Next!

INGER

(Stepping forward.)

I'll go.

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

Number 70.

INGER

I really don't think I had the same mindset that Marilyn claims to have had. I don't know for sure what my reasons were, but I'm fairly certain they weren't hers. Honestly, I just simply couldn't handle the pressures anymore. There was an observation earlier that I think is very true. The common

INGER (Cont'd)

thread among us, whether diagnosed or not. Even Virginia Woolf suffered with it. We just couldn't keep our brains on an even keel. When you're rushing about like that, inevitably you're going to get lost.

(She returns to the line.)

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

Your buzzer hasn't rung. You may continue.

INGER

What I've said pretty much says it all.

(The BUZZER sounds.)

SHAUNA

May I be next...please?

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

Of course, Number 84.

SHAUNA

(Stepping forward from the line.)

I don't know much about it. I suppose I could be bipolar...manic depressive...whatever you want to call it. All I know is I wanted to be somebody. I wanted to be important. All my life people kept telling me how pretty I was and reminding me how popular I was. It seems like that should have been enough, but it wasn't. Part of me wanted to be like Margaux. No, not *like* Margaux. Part of me wanted to be Margaux. And the other part of me wanted to be her grandfather - Ernest. Did anyone ever tell me I could do either of those things? No, they just brushed them off. In their minds, nothing more than pipe dreams. A girl from a small town in Minnesota has got to set reasonable and attainable goals. Don't dare shoot for the stars. I never forgave everyone for that.

(The BUZZER sounds.)

Maybe this was my way of getting back at them.

(She steps back into line.)

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

Number 62?

MARILYN

Can't I count my previous gut-wrenching response? Do I have to go again?

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

I'll allow it, Number 62. That leaves just you, Number 96.

MARGAUX

I always knew this day would come. I suppose I can't put it off any longer.

(She steps forward from the line.)

First off, no one...I repeat...no one should ever, ever want to be me or even be *like* me. If you do, you clearly have no idea what you're asking for. Even *I* was never really me, at least not the "me" that the public saw. Just like all the rest of us, I was a fabrication. A Fabergé fabrication. Life has a way of snatching those things away from us. No sooner had my star risen to the heights, I was eclipsed by a younger sibling - Mariel. Not quite as pretty, but a hell of a lot more talented. And I hated her for it. I could have been a heroine in one of my grandfather's books. Except I was never heroic. Certainly not at the end. You all seem to justify your choices in one way or another. Despite what you may think of me, I'm not so presumptuous. It was a stupid choice. I will always regret it. I thought I'd be with my grandfather, a kindred spirit. I haven't even been allowed to see him. But I'm pretty sure he regrets his final act as well. It seems so romantic in the hypothetical realm. The reality is very different. I don't know what's on the other side of that door there, but I have a feeling that it's a confrontation with *stark* reality. Something that none of us were ever able to deal with in our previous lives. But perhaps we'll be forced to address in all its neon splendor. I almost hope for nothingness. At least that would mean rest. And that, my dears, is what my grandfather would have called merely "the tip of the iceberg". Shouldn't my buzzer have rung by now?

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

I was captivated by what you were saying.

MARGAUX

I suspected we weren't all getting the same amount of time.

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

No one ever does. And as it was already established: time is a construct.

MARILYN

That's true. He let Virginia Woolf go on for what seemed like an eternity. She put rocks in her pockets, walked into a river, and drowned herself. End of story. Somehow she turned that into a multi-volume tome. And the worst part - she wasn't even a blonde!

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

I've made my decision.

MARILYN

Get ready, girls. It's judgment day.

INGER

Is this a good thing or a bad thing?

MARILYN

No one knows. Once they go through that door, we never hear from them.

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

Number 94. Exit.

SAVANNAH

Like hell! I'm not going to get shocked by that thing again.

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

The booby-trap has been deactivated.

(SAVANNAH walks to the door, opens it extremely cautiously, looks out a moment, looks back at the others, then exits, closing the door behind her.)

MARILYN

One down. Four to go.

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

Number 84.

SHAUNA

This seems prejudicial. You got something against porn?

INGER

We don't know it's punishment. It could be the culmination of all you had ever hoped for. You won't know till you pass through that door.

(Once again frightened, SHAUNA crosses to the door and begins to open it.)

SHAUNA

I hate the unknown. There's nothing more terrifying.

(She walks through the door and closes it behind her.)

MARILYN

And then there were three.

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

Number 70.

(INGER gasps fearfully. She musters her courage, crosses to the door, and opens it.)

INGER

Sartre was right. Hell *is* other people.

(She walks through the door, closing it behind her.)

MARILYN

It looks like it's just you and me.

MARGAUX

Can't we put this off a little longer?

MARILYN

You had free choice all the way up till the time you downed all those pills. Unfortunately, we don't have the freedom to choose the consequences of our actions. At that point, it's out of our hands.

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

Number 96.

(MARILYN looks relieved; MARGAUX looks dejected. Without looking up or saying anything, MARGAUX goes through the door.)

MARILYN

Thank you.

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

For what?

MARILYN

Another tiny reprieve. I know it's just delaying the inevitable. But every bit helps.

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

How do you know that you're not the one I'm punishing? Through that door could be something wonderful and glorious.

MARILYN

Is it?

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

You'll find out eventually. Everyone's number comes up sooner or later.

MARILYN

Why do you keep holding off on mine?

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

I like your company. You amuse me.

MARILYN

Do I...entice you?

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

Do you really want to go there?

MARILYN

Just curious.

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

You need to get ready. More are on their way.

MARILYN

Does it ever stop?

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

If it did, we'd be out of business.

MARILYN

May I do one more thing before the flood gates open?

MALE VOICE ON SPEAKER

Of course.

MARILYN

Maestro. If you please.

(MUSIC starts. MARILYN begins singing.)

"I WANNA BE LOVED BY YOU.
YES, YOU AND NOBODY ELSE BUT YOU.
I WANNA BE LOVED BY YOU
A-LO-O-ONE. BOOP BOOP A DOOP."

(As MARILYN triumphantly sits in her throne, the lights fade to black.)

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