

~~VAL & LAURA watch. Finally, ESTER, exhausted, finishes.~~

~~ESTER~~

~~(out of breath)~~

~~And ... Acting!~~

~~You see? True art is a challenge both of the mind and the body. I master my instrument and use it to tell the story.~~

LAURA

So, how does jumping around like a gorilla help you as an understudy?

ESTER

It is the very spine of my character!

LAURA

A gorilla?

ESTER

I am always a gorilla!

LAURA

Whatever.

*LAURA begins to leave.*

ESTER

Oh, well! We'd love to see the *assistant* stage manager attempt something as difficult as acting.

*LAURA turns back, angry.*

LAURA

I help call a show! That's difficult! Acting is easy. They let anyone do it!

ESTER

Well, ahoy then! We'd love to see you attempt something from your script, while we watch you act you're big stupid foot right in to your big stupider mouth. En Guard!

*LAURA gets up on the chair, opens her script, and re-adjusts her head set. She begins to read the stage directions. VAL and ESTER are captivated.*

LAURA

“ESTER STEPS DOWN CENTER STAGE RIGHT LOOKING OUT TO THE AUDIENCE. STAND BY LIGHT QUE 27.

“Time. Life. That’s what happened. Passed me by, long ago, I suppose and I’ve been living a lie,”

LIGHT QUE 27 GO

“shoveling bullshit right along with all the other bullshit shovelers.”

LIGHT FADE SINGLE ON ESTER. VAL MOVES DOWN CENTER STAGE LEFT. STAND BY LIGHT QUE 28.

“And this is what my life has become. Devoted to my own cause and not to the cause bigger than myself.”

LIGHT CUE 28 GO. STAND BY LIGHT CUE 29.

“Art. That terrible whore. And now she has left me in the ditch where I await death. ”  
LIGHT CUE 29 GO.

*VAL claps, inspired.*

VAL

What’s that from?

LAURA

The second act.

ESTER

Is it?

LAURA

Acting is only one part of the show, a part anyone can do. Managing the show is far more difficult, especially when you’re forced to deal with actors acting like actors. The acting in this show is so simple deaf puppets using sign language could perform it!

*LAURA steps off the chair and tries to leave.*

VAL

That’s brilliant!

ESTER

That’s dreadful.

VAL

Oh, I wish we were doing that!

ESTER

Deaf puppets?! That doesn’t make any sense.

VAL

Of course, it does! Think about it! Deaf puppets implies several truths about our existence. One, we're all just dangling on strings controlled by fate or God or the universe, none of us having actual free will. Deafness expresses our inability to address the pain of life and our own mortality. And sign language for puppets would be almost impossible to understand which would further emphasize how the human race really is just a bunch of deaf, blind creatures incapable of truly understanding each other while we wait around to die! I mean, Beckett could hardly express it better!

ESTER

That's absurd.

VAL

Exactly.

*LAURA looks at VAL, impressed.*

LAURA

Smart observation. You graduate from Juilliard or something?

ESTER

Bah! What do you know about Juilliard?

LAURA

My cousin went to Juilliard.

ESTER

Nope. No. I don't think so. No one actually goes to Juilliard.

*VAL & ESTER share a laugh.*

LAURA

How would you possibly know that?

ESTER

Because I am an educator of theatre.

LAURA

You teach theatre?

VAL

Amongst other things.

LAURA

Sounds like someone doesn't have an agent.

ESTER

Yet! I am waiting for the right representation for me! Once I have an agent, it'll be smooth sailing from there on out!

I'll be working until I don't want to work any more! Oh yes! I won't even have to audition once I have an agent. They'll just make a call and I'm in! A guaranteed career! It's the Blue Ox to Easy Street on the sunny side, as they say.

LAURA

No one says that.

ESTER

I just said that.

VAL

Excuse me. How do I get an agent?

LAURA

Agents are everywhere.

*ESTER and VAL look around suspiciously.*

LAURA

Odds are you'll be pissing next to one in the bathroom.

ESTER

Ugh, so vulgar for a lady.

LAURA

The question is, would an agent want you?

*LAURA directs her gaze at VAL.*

LAURA

Well, this has been interesting. I just needed to check on that vest and let you know we're at intermission.

ESTER

Is the Director coming?

LAURA

No.

ESTER

But, maybe later?

LAURA

No.

VAL

Did the Director say anything about us?

LAURA

No. We're at five now.

*As LAURA exits Stage Left.*

ESTER

Thank you, five.

VAL

Thank you, five.

~~ESTER~~~~The nerve of that child. Coming back here to check on my vest! They're trying to get rid of me!~~~~VAL~~~~Is she right?~~~~ESTER~~~~About what?~~~~VAL~~~~Acting being easy and finding an agent. All that stuff.~~~~ESTER~~~~Don't you listen to her! Don't you listen to her for one moment! This town is full of people like that. Angry about their lot in life, so they come back stage and talk to true artists about their vests!~~~~VAL~~~~Huh?~~~~ESTER~~~~She is trying to get rid of us! I know it! Don't listen to her. She doesn't know a damn thing about the biz! Went to Juilliard, please, as if anyone ever has!~~