

LIP SYNC SUICIDE

Written by

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EXT. THE OLD FASHION THEATER BAR - DAY

The theater marquee reads: "AMATEUR NIGHT SOON, CASH PRIZE."

FINN MERRIWEATHER (22), pomade thick in his hair, rolls a cigarette from a silver case. His tank top and suspenders do not hide the tattoos that color his shoulders.

Choruses of costumed women revolve through the theater doors. Finn swaggers up to a nearby circle of sequined smokers.

FINN
(in a Boston accent)
Hey doll face. Sweetheart.

The women groan and push pass Finn back into the theater.

FINN (CONT'D)
Slow your roll sex kitten. One of
you beauties got a light?

Through a gap-tooted mouth, a buxom woman in cheetah-print exhales into Finn's face. She stomps out the cigarette with her heel. Finn clutches his chest and ogles after her.

FINN (CONT'D)
Awww. You wound me. But with a
wiggle like that...

Finn lights his own cigarette and studies a mural across the street: a 1920's ad of a man in a hat and three-piece suit.

FINN (CONT'D)
You won't ignore me for long,
though.

INT. THE OLD FASHION THEATER BAR - DAY

In an oversized vintage tweed vest and blazer, Finn squints into the dark of the empty club. He removes his fedora and smooths down his crooked side-part.

FINN
(in a British accent)
Pardon me. I am to interview with
the proprietress of this
establishment. Might you advise me
as to where she can be found?

MISS VERONICA (34), a Black drag queen, teeters on stilettos in full makeup and hot pink bouffant hair. She sashays out from behind the bar and extends a long-nailed hand.

MISS VERONICA
Praise to the goddesses. A
gentleman has finally walked
through my doors.

Finn bows and kisses her extended hand.

FINN
The honor is all mine, madam.

Miss Veronica fans herself and flutters her false eyelashes.

MISS VERONICA
Sugar, you sound like a gentleman,
but you're representing The Old
Fashion now.

She unbuttons Finn's oversize vest and pushes the jacket off
his shoulders.

MISS VERONICA (CONT'D)
I won't have you looking like a kid
playing dress up. Leave it to Miss
Veronica. You'll be the best
looking man in here before the
curtain goes up.

FINN
I am in your hands, madam.

INT. THE OLD FASHION THEATER BAR - NIGHT

Finn mixes drinks behind the bar. Miss Veronica slips the
newly-altered vest on him, finger-styles his hair, and rolls
his sleeves up. She stands back to admire her work. She
wiggles her brows and licks her lips. She walks to the stage.

A banner hangs above the stage: AMATEUR NIGHT. House lights
dim and the audience settles. A microphone SCREECHES.

MISS VERONICA (O.S.)
Welcome back for another chance at
the cash prize, Penelope Larimar.

PENELOPE LARIMAR (21), overflows in an out-dated strapless
cheetah dress. The dress' mermaid design inhibits her steps
as takes her props to center stage.

Audience members cough. Chairs SCOOT along the floor.

Penelope positions an easel under the spotlight. On it, she
places an enlarged photo of an orange cat. She closes her
eyes and takes a deep breath.

PENELOPE

Your love is my sunrise. Apricot
and gold. Ochre and tangerine. My
meowser. My puss. My kitty.

Behind the bar, Finn blinks. His mouth falls open.

PENELOPE (CONT'D)

Fearless and furry, you are my
secret keeper. Your whiskers tickle
to the core. My meowser. My puss.
My kitty.

Penelope puts on a cat ear headband. With her gap-toothed
mouth, she licks her hand and paws it across her brow.

Finn shades his eyes and grimaces.

PENELOPE (CONT'D)

You are ferocious. You roar at your
enemies ---

Penelope throws her arms open wide. She bumps the corner of
the poster. It and the easel crash to the floor.

PENELOPE (CONT'D)

--- Shit.

The audience GASPS and whispers. Penelope's eyes dart around.
Under the spotlight, she tries, cannot bend over to pick up
the props. Her chin trembles as the audience giggles.

Finn sighs at the scene. He jumps over the bar, leaps onto
the stage, and resets the props. Like a soldier, Finn stands
guard next to the easel. He nods his head at Penelope.

Penelope hikes up her dress and continues her monologue.

INT. THE OLD FASHION THEATER BAR - LATER

Audience members cry and give a standing ovation. Penelope
gestures her to Finn. The audience's praise grows louder.

INT. THE OLD FASHION THEATER BAR - NIGHT

Stage is dark. Seats are empty. Finn tidies up the bar.

MISS VERONICA

Well, Sugar, not too bad for your
first night. A fancy fella and a
fancy mixologist?

Finn smirks. Miss Veronica purses her lips.

MISS VERONICA (CONT'D)
What other talents are you hiding,
Gentle Man?

Finn sets three glasses on the bar: a coupe, a lowball, and a martini glass. He pours three drinks. Now in her everyday grunge, Penelope rests her elbows on the bar.

PENELOPE
I don't usually need rescuing on
stage. I made an exception for you
tonight.

Penelope winks at Finn and hugs Miss Veronica.

PENELOPE (CONT'D)
You looked like you were waiting
for your White Knight moment.

FINN
Indeed I was, Madam. I cannot thank
you enough for your excellent
timing.

MISS VERONICA
Perfect timing indeed! You finally
won the cash prize.

Finn hands the coupe to Miss Veronica.

FINN
Let us toast. Champagne for the
mistress. Sensual, elegant. Bubbles
always rising to the surface.

Finn hands the lowball to Penelope.

FINN (CONT'D)
An old fashion for my damsel.
Simple yet layered, educated. To be
savored. Sip. By. Sip.

Both women's eyes are wide. Finn arches a brow.

FINN (CONT'D)
Do I surprise you? Bartending isn't
only cosmos and pouring pints.

MISS VERONICA
Another hidden talent. What are you
toasting with tonight, Gentle Man?

He lifts the partially-full martini glass to the light.

FINN

Notice how you can see through the glass?

Both women nod. Finn adds splashes of ingredients. He tops it with an olive.

FINN (CONT'D)

So many things can be added to shape its taste. Yet the martini still appears transparent.

He lifts it to the light again. The cloudy drink swirls and settles into transparency.

PENELOPE

How do you take your martini?

Finn stares hard at Penelope. She blushes.

FINN

Dirty. Very dirty.

Miss Veronica clears her throat. Finn breaks eye contact with Penelope.

FINN (CONT'D)

I am British, after all. Nothing but scoundrels across the pond.

All three raise their glasses in a toast.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - NIGHT

On the empty sidewalk, moonlight shines on Finn and Penelope. She offers him a cigarette. Finn shakes his head.

FINN

I've never fancied tobacco.

PENELOPE

Thanks again for rescuing me.

FINN

My parents would disavow me if the manners of my upbringing allowed a lady to wither in the spotlight.

PENELOPE

Have you been in the states long?

FINN

Only just arrived. But mine is a boring tale. I want to hear about you.

Their steps weave into each other through the streets.

FINN (CONT'D)

It's not every day an audience wails about a departed pussycat.

Penelope playfully nudges Finn with her shoulder. He nudges back and takes her hand. They wander under flickering streetlights, as Penelope talks through the night.

EXT. DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

The sun peaks over the horizon. Finn and Penelope lounge on a park bench, her legs in his lap. Finn puts his fedora on Penelope's head as the kiss.

INT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

Finn and Penelope are the sole customers. They fondle hands and whisper with bowed heads. Penelope kisses his fingertips.

BOBBY (26), unshaven, in a waist apron, approaches with a pot of coffee. Finn angles away, hat low over his face.

BOBBY

Good morning early birds! Long time, no see. Coffee?

Penelope tilts her head and frowns. She flips over her coffee cup. Bobby pours. He gestures the pot of coffee toward Finn.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Finny-Boy?

Finn bolts up with his blazer and fedora. He laces his fingers through Penelope's and tugs her from the booth.

FINN

I want to cook you a gourmet breakfast. Let's go.

Penelope looks back and forth between the two men.

PENELOPE

Finny-Boy? What's going on? How do you two know each other?

Finn tries to squeeze pass. Bobby throws an arm over Finn's shoulder.

BOBBY

Me and Finny-Boy grew up right next door to each other.

The smile fades from Penelope's face. Finn's shoulders fall.

PENELOPE

I don't understand. Next door? But you're from England.

BOBBY

England! Bloody right, from across the pond.

Bobby slaps Finn on the back. He feigns a British impression to the kitchen. Finn pulls Penelope out the diner door.

EXT. DINER - CONTINUOUS

FINN

Let's go to my place for Eggs Benedict.

PENELOPE

What the hell is going on? You need to quit hiding behind that borrowed voice before Eggs Benedict.

Finn sighs and rubs the back of his neck.

FINN

(in a Boston accent)
A borrowed voice, huh? Lip sync suicide.

Penelope steps back. Her mouth and eyes are wide.

PENELOPE

Who are you?

Finn puts on his fedora and shrugs into the tweed blazer. He takes a silver cigarette case from his breast pocket.

FINN

I'm no one. No one you noticed before this borrowed voice, anyway.

He pulls papers from the case. He packs, rolls, and licks closed a cigarette. On the verge of tears, she studies him.

PENELOPE

That was you. Outside the theater.
The greasy creep with the come-ons.

FINN

Got a light, doll face?

Eyes to the ground, Penelope gives a snort of disgust and shakes her head. She slaps the lighter into Finn's hand.

FINN (CONT'D)

Ain't it silly, sweetheart? Who we
pretend to be just to be seen.

He lights his cigarette and tosses the lighter back to her. He takes a long drag.

FINN (CONT'D)

(in a British accent)

Perhaps the next time our path's
cross, you will be ready to see me.

He tips his hat and walks away. Alone on the sidewalk, Penelope watches after him.