



Antonin & his Double

A strange theatre sketch by Wulfie

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Damatis Personae:

Antonin..... Someone dressed and made up to look like Antonin Artaud as photographed in 1926...

The Double..... Someone else dressed and made up the same...

Scene: *Stage is set with two sofas, one on the left, one on the right, facing a coffee table stage centre bearing a bowl of fruit including green and dark grapes, a bowl of biscuits, a silver cigarette case and book of paper matches, bottles of water, two drink flasks - one dark, one light - a bowl of sugar, several cups and glasses.*

Antonin enters left, dressed and made up to look like Antonin Artaud as he appeared in a 1926 photo of him wearing a cap, scarf and military-style jacket or coat.

Antonin looks around the room, settles gaze on the coffee table and walks over to it. Antonin looks at the items on the table, picks a grape from the fruit bowl and eats it absent-mindedly. He selects a cup, pours coffee from the dark flask into it, adds sugar, sits down on the right hand sofa facing stage left. Antonin takes a mouthful of coffee and grimaces, the coffee clearly tastes awful. Antonin puts the cup down on the table, reaches for a bottle of water, wrenches the cap off and takes a swig from the bottle.

The Double enters left. The Double is similarly dressed and made up as Antonin Artaud wearing a cap, scarf and military-style jacket or coat. The Double

looks around the room, settles gaze on Antonin and grins menacingly. Antonin looks back at The Double with a look of stunned horror. Both remain silent.

The Double crosses to the coffee table, looks at the items on it, picks a grape from the fruit bowl and grins nastily at Antonin before eating it. The Double picks up a cup, pours coffee from the dark flask into it, adds sugar, sits down on the left sofa opposite Antonin and raises cup to lips. However, instead of sipping the coffee, The Double pauses and sniffs the coffee suspiciously a couple of times before dipping a finger into the liquid and tasting it. The Double grimaces, puts the cup down quickly and turns the dark flask round to reveal lettering that reads "Cheap coffee". The Double then turns the light flask around to reveal lettering that reads "Good, expensive coffee". The Double looks first at Antonin, then at the unfinished coffee and finally at the open bottle of water. The Double grins and shakes his head at Antonin, picks up a fresh cup, pours coffee from the good flask and takes a sip. It is clearly of the finest quality and much to The Double's liking. The Double drains the cup, pours another, drains it, starts to pour a third but the flask is now empty. The Double grins nastily at Antonin and shakes his head.

Antonin looks awkward, picks up the biscuit bowl and studies the contents before carefully selecting a pink wafer biscuit. Antonin places the bowl back on the table and sits back to eat the biscuit slowly. The Double immediately snatches the bowl, rummages in the contents, takes out a pink biscuit, shoves it into his/her mouth and chews roughly while continuing to rummage in the bowl, several more pink wafers are extracted and shoved into The Double's mouth. A few biscuits of other colours and shapes can be tossed aside during the rummaging. The Double finally ceases rummaging and puts the bowl back on the table with a contemptuous look at Antonin. Antonin picks up the bowl, looks into it and is clearly disappointed to see there are no more pink ones. The Double finishes chewing, grins nastily at Antonin, reaches into an inside pocket his coat and produces a whole packet of pink finger wafers which he proceeds to eat greedily. Once the packet is empty, The Double hands the wrapper to Antonin who takes it, looks at it sadly and places it on the table. The Double shrugs and finishes chewing loudly, watched by Antonin.

The Double looks around the table and picks up the fruit bowl, surveys its contents and then holds it out to Antonin with a grand gesture as if he is trying to be friendly after all. Antonin carefully selects a red grape and nods appreciatively at The Double. The Double grins nastily and proceeds to pick out all the red grapes, shoving them into his mouth as he goes, tossing aside the occasional green one. He hands the bowl back to Antonin as an afterthought and resumes chewing. Antonin does not even bother to look at the bowl and places it back on the table. The Double notices this,

leans forward, takes a solitary red grape, holds it up for Antonin to see, shrugs and eats it, grinning at Antonin.

There is a pause. Antonin reaches for a silver case on the table, takes out a cigarette, picks up the book of matches, tears off a match and goes to light the cigarette. However, The Double leans over the table and blows it out. Antonin lights another match, The Double blows it out. This continues until the matches are finished. Antonin sits back dejected but making a brave effort to remain calm. The Double grins nastily, selects a cigarette from the case, takes a smart cigarette lighter out of his pocket and lights up. The Double sits back and smokes the cigarette with clear enjoyment, blowing smoke at Antonin every time he exhales.

An electric bell rings.

Voice offstage: Positions please.

Antonin and The Double stand as seating area is darkened. A pool of light forms at the front of the stage. Antonin steps into it and assumes a dramatic position. The Double follows casually, stopping behind and slightly to the right of Antonin, close enough to the light pool to be visible but not fully lit. Antonin surveys the audience and breathes in, clearly preparing to launch into a big speech.

Antonin: *[With grand theatrical splendour]* I am Theatre...

The Double: *[Quickly steps forward, leans around to the right of Antonin. Speaks in common accent]* An' I'm its cruel double...

Blackout

Finis



Antonin Artaud photographed in 1926

Author's note: Although the characters Antonin and The Double are referred to as "he" throughout the text, there is no reason to suppose that they should be portrayed by male performers. In fact, a gender-fluid approach could be very interesting...