

Office Ladies

By

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## Cast of Characters

<u>Foumi:</u>	Ants
<u>Blanche:</u>	Numbers
<u>Marisabel:</u>	Water
<u>Midori:</u>	Time
<u>Rosie:</u>	Holidays
<u>Self:</u>	Putting everything together
<u>Her Father:</u>	A disembodied voice
<u>Ant#1, Ant#2, Ant#3:</u>	Huge ants that star in the hit Broadway musical, ANTS!

ACT I

Scene 1

*Silence. One spot comes up downstage a little off to one side. Self enters. This is a slide show. The first one reads "A PLAY." She exits. The music begins. She reenters. At regular intervals she progresses the slide show so that her next line of "dialogue" is revealed.*

SELF

*Slide 1.*

I do not know

*Slide 2.*

What is was like

*Slide 3*

Before the atomic bomb,

*Slide 4*

But I imagine it sounded

*Slide 5*

Something like this.

*The music changes so that it sounds like what the world sounded like before the atomic bomb. Self enjoys it, then a sudden switch back to the presentation music.*

*Slide 6*

I wasn't born yet,

*Slide 7*

But you probably weren't either

*Slide 8*

So how would you know

*Slide 9*

What it sounded like?

*Slide 10*

I sometimes think

*Slide 11*

That maybe was

*Slide 12*

The end of the world

(CONTINUED)

*Slide 13*  
And all of us

*Slide 14*  
Have just been pretending

*Slide 15*  
Ever since.

*Lights fade to black.*

Scene 2

*Blackout.*

*A cacophony of office sounds. followed by Foumi's up theme (the opening music). Foumi turns the radio on so we hear it. Then, lights up on each of the other 4 offices in succession. Each of their themes plays while they do a task, then onto the next office.*

*The Ladies clock in. Clocking in makes a huge ca-chunk! noise. Monday: Someone's got a case of the Mondays. On Mondays we all talk normal.*

FOUMI

You know we have just been having the hardest time with ants in our house lately.

MIDORI

Do you have any idea about what caused them?

FOUMI

We really don't know. We've tried just about everything to get rid of them. It seems like the more we do the more of them there are.

MIDORI

That sounds terrible!

FOUMI

Did you know that an ant queen can live for up to 30 years?

BLANCHE

30 years?!

FOUMI

Sometimes I think we'll never get rid of them!

(CONTINUED)

MARISABEL

You know, we had a problem with an ant infestation in our backyard once so we just flooded the whole yard. Worked like a charm.

FOUMI

But then your backyard was flooded.

MARISABEL

So?

FOUMI

Seems like a bigger problem than the ants.

MARISABEL

Well, I guess that depends on your perspective. I don't mind having everything be just a little bit wet. It's like a morning dew, only you make it with your hose.

FOUMI

They have the most interesting little societies.

ROSIE

Do you all have Columbus Day plans yet? I was thinking we could do a picnic.

MIDORI

Oh, look at that, it's only 2 o'clock. I thought it was much later.

BLANCHE

I think you mean 14 hundred hours.

MARISABEL

I saw a very interesting thing on PBS last night about water cooler culture. They were saying that when 2 or 3 employees gather together to get a drink of water they usually end up exchanging ideas that actually make the office more productive.

BLANCHE

That seems unlikely. Did they have any sort of statistics to back it up?

MARISABEL

Oh, I'm sure they did, but you know me--I've no head for numbers and figures.

BLANCHE

Hm.

MARISABEL

They also said that if you're looking to get ahead the water cooler can be a good place to meet up and network with other employees. As a matter of fact I'm a little thirsty right now.

ROSIE

I mean I know it's a little early because it's just now barely Canadian Thanksgiving, but getting ready for the holidays makes every day like...Columbus Day.

MIDORI

Every day when I get to work it feels like I'm late, but I'm always earlier than everyone else. I wonder what that is?

ROSIE

What?

MIDORI

I keep resetting my clocks and it doesn't do anything.

ROSIE

What are you saying about clocks?

MIDORI

Nothing. I'm just making conversation.

ROSIE

*Looks through a calendar*

Do you all know if we get Martin Luther King Day off this year and Presidents' Day? Or do we just get one? Or do we have to pick which one we get. That seems unfair, doesn't it?

*In unison all of the Office Ladies clock out. This should make the same ca-chunk! noise as clocking in.*

Scene 3

*Blackout. V.O., a man's voice: "This is a play about the atomic bomb."*

SELF

No, it isn't.

*Lights up on Self. She is looking around for the voice.*

(CONTINUED)

THE VOICE

In 1939 a concerted and focused effort began on the part of the United States government to construct a weapon the likes of which had hitherto never been seen.

SELF

You sound like my father.

(To the audience)

This play is about the thing you cannot come back from.

HER FATHER

This weapon to end the need for all weapons and therefore all wars was built by the finest minds of its time.

SELF

They didn't know, of course, what was going to happen. In a way how could they not know? But I think they thought that no one would ever actually drop it. They thought the bomb would be so destructive that no one would ever dare use it.

HER FATHER

In response to the knowledge that the American government was developing a nuclear weapons program the Russian government began to develop its own atomic bomb in 1943.

SELF

Even though the idea is that with one big bomb no one would ever have to use it, I guess that everyone wants to be the one who owns that one big bomb.

HER FATHER

It was Stalin's idea.

SELF

It's like how everyone wants to own the most beautiful thing in the room. It's sort of the same idea.

HER FATHER

Well, not actually his *idea*, but his...decision.

SELF

You know, I did something horrible once.

HER FATHER

The Soviet Atomic Bomb Project was part of the Ministry of Medium Machine Building.

SELF

And I mean I'm still not allowed back at the zoo, but I guess that's different, right? It's just one of those

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SELF (cont'd)  
things that you try to forget and then you just keep remembering it.

HER FATHER  
In early August of 1945 the United States dropped two nuclear bombs on two Japanese cities. The bombs, code named "Little Boy" and "Fat Man," were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki respectively.

SELF  
And the atomic bomb, of course, I mean, we've all been trying to forget that, am I right? As a culture, I mean, we've been trying to forget it. As an individual I honestly don't think about nuclear war more than like 2 or 3 times a day.

HER FATHER  
The devastation--

SELF  
And even then I'm not really thinking about nuclear war itself as much as I'm thinking of the aftermath of it. Or like the implications of it.  
(Pause)  
The world sounded different afterward.

HER FATHER  
This play is about the atomic bomb.

SELF  
Okay, well let's get on with it.

*Lights begin to fade to black. She looks back at the set, remembers something.*  
Oh wait.

*The lights stop fading.*  
One more thing: the play is also about other things too, but I think you'll pick them up as it goes along.

#### Scene 4

*Office noises. It is Tuesday. All of the Office Ladies are sitting at their desks. In unison they all clock in. We hear "Blanche's Theme (up version)."*

FOUMI  
(To BLANCHE)  
Do you have the IPPO number?



BLANCHE

(To FOUMI)

The IPPO isn't assigned a number.

FOUMI

Well this form is asking for an IPPO number.

BLANCHE

IPPO is designated by letter. Like IPPO AC, or IPPO CQ would be another example.

FOUMI

I'm just asking for what the form asks for!

BLANCHE

Which form?

FOUMI

Form 27H! The form that asks for the IPPO number!

BLANCHE

(Sighs)

It's asking for the IPP Zero number.

FOUMI

Huh? What on earth are you talking about?

BLANCHE

Not I-P-P-O. I-P-P-Zero.

FOUMI

Oh, for heaven's sake. Doesn't that seem silly to you? To have an I-P-P-O AND an I-P-P-Zero.

BLANCHE

No.

FOUMI

Really?

BLANCHE

Really.

ROSIE

Hey, how is your ant infestation?

FOUMI

Oh, you know what? I finally just decided to let them in the house. I mean if they want it that badly then as far as I'm concerned they can just come on in. It was easier than fighting them.

ROSIE

I know exactly what you mean. We're planning Christmas with my husband's family right now and it's just a complete nightmare.

MARISABEL

Oh, I hope it snows on Christmas this year. Last winter was so dry.

ROSIE

And I finally had to give up fighting with them and just said, "if you want be tacky and serve a Christmas turkey instead of a ham I'm not going to fight you on it. I'm just letting it go."

MIDORI

Mm hm. Christmas time is still so far away. When is the form 27H due? I feel like I just turned one in.

ROSIE

But just you wait until they see my New Year's Eve decorations!

MIDORI

Time moves slowly at work.

MARISABEL

Would you all like to hear a new joke about fish?

MIDORI

But then it's the same thing every day: when I get home the minutes just fly by. Before I can even check to see how much time has passed since I got home from work it's time to go to bed.

MARISABEL

So these two young fish are swimming along and they come across an old man fish and the old man fish says to them, "Hi boys! Isn't the water nice today?" and they sort of nod and then the old man fish swims off and then the one young fish turns to the other and says, "what the heck is water?"

MIDORI

And don't even get me started on my alarm clock!

MARISABEL

I didn't make that joke up. I just heard it somewhere.

MIDORI

Every morning, at the exact same time: BEEP! BEEP!  
BEEP!

(CONTINUED)

MARISABEL

But I do sometimes wish that I could breathe underwater.

ROSIE

There are twelve holidays in the American calendar than anyone actually cares about.

MIDORI

Bank holidays?

ROSIE

No. What kind of question is that?

MIDORI

Are you ladies ever afraid that while we are at work we're actually supposed to be somewhere else? Or some time else?

(Pause)

No, I guess you're right. That was a strange thing to say.

Scene 5

SELF

Fuck. Should we...?

*That ladies clock out now? The band in response starts to play some music so that she can do another bit.*

No, forget it. I'll do this other thing instead.

*She walks downstage right.*

SELF

See, downstage right is a powerful position onstage. Maybe because people read from left to right. I'm not sure.

HER FATHER

The Manhattan Project was a research and development program by the United States with the United Kingdom and Canada that produced the first atomic bomb during World War II. From 1942 to 1946, the project was under the direction of Major General Leslie Groves of the US Army Corps of Engineers.

SELF

You can understand how it happens. Things have a way of getting away from you sometimes. It happens bit by bit, by degrees.

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## HER FATHER

The project originated in August 1939. Prominent physicists Leó Szilárd and Eugene Wigner drafted the Einstein-Szilárd letter, which warned of the potential development of "extremely powerful bombs of a new type." It urged the United States to take steps to acquire stockpiles of uranium ore and accelerate the research of Enrico Fermi and others into nuclear chain reactions. Albert Einstein signed the letter and it was delivered to President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

## SELF

I imagine it was sort of like falling in love. That sounds bad, but I just mean that it happens a little bit at a time. Like the first time that I met him it was just a little spark because I made a funny joke and he didn't just laugh at it, he made another joke so you knew that he had really understood it. The first time you kiss it doesn't feel like the first time. It feels like you have kissed a thousand times before and have just forgotten and are finding each other again for the first time in a long time. When you talk to each other you love all of the same books and the same plays and the same jokes. And the whole thing about falling in love is that it makes you feel like you're not like other people, like you are more than human, but really the thing it does to you is makes you exactly like everyone else.

(Pause)

I could see his heart. Just as clearly as I could see his hands or his face or his jacket. He was so much like me that it made me think that maybe people aren't so unknowable after all--like he could actually see me. And I started parsing myself up and giving the best parts of me to him because he understood them so much better than anyone else ever has and the thing is--I looked better with him. I was better with him. He remembered small things I said to him. The world was brighter and more in focus. It was like my blood was electrified or like I had too much of it to be contained by my skin. I couldn't sleep at night because even the best dreams couldn't come close to what it was like to be with him in waking life. I started giving up other things to be with him, leaving parts of myself behind because nothing could compare to being in the room with him. And then he left me. Because that is what they do--they leave. It felt like someone had bored holes in the bottom of my feet and all of my blood had just spilled out and I couldn't feel my hands and I wasn't sure if they were mine. He gave back all of the parts of myself that I had given to him, but they were awkward and clunky and they didn't fit together properly any more, like I was a doll made up

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SELF (cont'd)

of a bunch of parts of different sized dolls. The world seems dimmer without him.

HER FATHER

Thirty four years prior, in 1905, Einstein had theorized that a large amount of energy could be released from a small amount of matter. This was a portion of his Special Theory of Relativity. This was expressed by the equation  $E=mc^2$  (energy = mass times the speed of light squared). In 1929, he publicly declared that if a war broke out he would "unconditionally refuse to do war service, direct or indirect... regardless of how the cause of the war should be judged."

**SELF**

And I think it was probably the same for them, right? Like they just did it step by step and at first it seemed exciting to figure this thing out because they were doing a thing that no one had ever done before, and then it got away from them and then it was too far gone to stop it and then they was no way to put the parts back together.

HER FATHER

The second after the bombs were dropped, right before they hit the ground. That is the moment you cannot come back from.

Scene 6

*Blackout. Same effects as before. Lights up on Wednesday. Woden's Day. Hump Day. "Midori's Theme (up version)" plays.*

MIDORI

It takes 27 days 7 hours and 43 minutes for the moon to revolve around the earth.

BLANCHE

That is so interesting!

MIDORI

Are you worried about the time?

ROSIE

Each holiday has a special place for itself in the calendar.

FOUMI

A place for every ant. And every ant in its place.

(CONTINUED)

ROSIE

It's important to be able to tell one thing from another thing, like don't confuse Cinco de Mayo and the Fourth of July.

FOUMI

I couldn't agree more. One time I went to eat this 100 Grand Bar that I had saved half of for myself as a treat. And I took a bite and it tasted incredibly strange so I ran to the bathroom to spit it out and a bunch of ants came out instead! I just spit out dozens of ants right into the sink.

ROSIE

That is disgusting.

FOUMI

They kind of had the same consistency as a 100 Grand Bar.

ROSIE

That's not the same thing at all. Why are you telling me this story?

FOUMI

I'm agreeing with you!

ROSIE

It doesn't sound like you're agreeing with me. It sounds like you're a crazy person.

FOUMI

That it's important to be able to tell the difference between things because the thing you think is a candy bar may just be a bunch of ants.

MIDORI

It's about time. It is about time. I think of the area around myself as a time zone.

ROSIE

One thing's for certain about the holidays: everyone has a lot of feelings about them.

MARISABEL

I don't like to open my eyes under the water in the bathtub because it makes them feel dry.

MIDORI

I make decisions based on what will happen in the subsequent moment. I decide what happens next based on what will happen next.

(Pause.)

(MORE)

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MIDORI (cont'd)

That is exhausting.

MARISABEL

I remember it was snowing.

ROSIE

Nothing's better than Christmas.

MIDORI

What about Christmas Eve?

FOUMI

One of the greatest things about ants is that they are willing to sacrifice themselves for the greater good. For example, there was this one researcher who put a bowl of honey in the center of a table and surrounded it by a moat.

MARISABEL

Everything feels safe when it snows.

MIDORI

To be perfectly honest, I'm getting a little worried about the time.

MARISABEL

During the last blizzard I learned a lesson. The snow taught me humility. The ice taught me grace.

FOUMI

Ants hate water, you see? So the ants climbed up the wall and across the ceiling and dropped down onto the honey table.

MIDORI

What comes before is always more engaging than what comes after. What comes after is only leftovers. Yesterday's day. Potential energy is the most interesting of all energies.

ROSIE

No one used to wish each other a happy Thanksgiving. You know what I'm going to start saying? "Crappy Thanksgiving." That way if they aren't really listening they won't even notice.

BLANCHE

Ocean water with a typical salinity of 35 parts per thousand freezes at -1.8 degrees Celsius, or 28.9 degrees Fahrenheit.

MARISABEL

You don't say!

BLANCHE

I'm sure you don't exactly understand what that means, but that's okay.

MARISABEL

I have been having watery dreams. Diluted. Half as potent as they used to be.

MIDORI

Did your dreams used to get more done?

MARISABEL

In terms of...?

MIDORI

Do you feel like when they were more potent they got more accomplished?

MARISABEL

I guess I just felt like I wasn't looking at them through water if that makes sense.

MIDORI

Not really.

ROSIE

If they aren't going to treat the holidays with the respect they deserve then there's just nothing I can do for them. I mean really celebrating the holidays properly is what separates us from other animals.

FOUMI

But then how were they going to get back? But you know what the ants did? Some of them sacrificed themselves so that the remaining ones could make a bridge out of their dead bodies. Made a little dead ant body bridge!

MARISABEL

I remember it snowed on the day of my mother's funeral. I do not know how many inches, and I do not care.

BLANCHE

How old was your mother when she died?

MARISABEL

54.

MIDORI

You can make decisions based on things that have happened in the past, what is happening right now, or what you anticipate will happen in the future.



BLANCHE

In Chinese numerology 54 means "not die" or "no death."

MARISABEL

I will be sure to convey that to my dead mother when next I see her.

MIDORI

I am about to make a mistake. And I don't know what it is so I don't know how to stop it.

BLANCHE

Then don't make a mistake.

MIDORI

That's easy for you to say, you've never made a mistake in your life.

BLANCHE

Midori averages 10 small mistakes a month and 4 big really bad decisions a year.

MIDORI

But who's counting, right?

BLANCHE

I'm always counting. You can count on me.

MIDORI

Oh my god.

ROSIE

28 shopping days until Christmas.

FOUMI

It's July.

ROSIE

28 shopping days until Labor Day.

MIDORI

You know what I would like to be able to do? I would like to be able to write out scripts for conversations ahead of time and then just hand them out and then have those conversations.

SELF

Me too! That's kind of what this was supposed to be for me.

BLANCHE

Haphazard change is change that is unplanned and uncontrolled and produces unpredictable results. It's also known as random change.

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*All the ladies clock out.*

Scene 7

*Lights up on Self.*

SELF

I have a lot secrets.

ROSIE

(Yelling from her cube.)  
No you don't.

SELF

Yes, I do! I have secrets like,  
(whispering to the audience)  
I have little tiny scabs all over me.  
(Yelling voice )  
Is that bad?

ROSIE

*Lights up on Rosie.*  
I don't know. How long has it been that way?

SELF

I guess forever. Starting now.

HER FATHER

(V.O.)  
This is a play about the atomic bomb.

SELF

It clearly isn't.

HER FATHER

(V.O.)  
This is a play about the thing you cannot come back  
from.

SELF

That's only maybe true.

HER FATHER

(V.O.)  
This was supposed to be a play about the atomic bomb.

ROSIE

You know, I have secrets too. I have secrets like,  
(whispering)  
In the winter you can make yourself a hot shake using  
oatmeal and bananas. I call this a hot oatmeal shake.

(CONTINUED)

HER FATHER

(V.O.)

In response to pressure--

SELF

Fine, You tell a secret.

HER FATHER

(V.O., whispering)

Nothing is more exciting to me than the sight of a mushroom cloud.

SELF

Is that true?

HER FATHER

A mushroom cloud is a distinctive pyrocumulus, or fire cloud, made of condensed water vapor or debris resulting from a very large explosion. They are most commonly associated with nuclear explosions.

SELF

You think the aftermath of an atomic bomb causes the most beautiful picture in the world?

HER FATHER

Mister Kirchen, You know what the kids are going to find in their stockings when they wake up Christmas Morning? 'Tomic bombs, hehehehehe.

FOUMI

Can I tell some secrets too? I've got some good ones about ants.

SELF

Um...

FOUMI

Like, here's one:

(Whispering)

Modern day ants evolved from prehistoric wasp-like insects and they are very, very good teachers.

HER FATHER

On August 6, 1945 three planes were sent to drop "Little Boy" over Hiroshima. Because of the large risk of civilian casualties and great financial cost involved in shooting down aircraft, the Japanese military policy was to generally avoid armed conflict with smaller formations of planes. They did not predict that such a large amount of destruction would be delivered by such a small squadron. Or such a small flight, rather, "squadron" refers to a larger number of

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HER FATHER (cont'd)

planes. At 8:15 the the gravity bomb, "Little Boy" was dropped from an altitude of 31,060 feet. It fell for 43 seconds to height of 1,968 feet above the city. Roughly 80,000 people were killed the day of the first bomb by either the blast itself or the attendant firestorm. Because of its proximity to downtown area the blast also succeeded in killing 90 percent of Hiroshima's doctors and 93 percent of its nurses, leaving few to deal with the multitude of injured civilians. Three days later a second "Fat Man" was dropped on Nagasaki, its secondary target. Though it relied on plutonium as opposed to uranium for its explosion, it also fell for 43 seconds before detonating. Immediate casualty estimates for "Fat Man" range from between 40 and 75,000 people. The pilots who delivered the bombs felt a great sense of loss the very second after the bombs were released, but it wasn't a guilt over what they had done it was that they missed their cargo. It is a feeling that they never fully recovered from and some of them reflected on it on their death beds.

SELF

(Pause, no response)

I have never been divorced, but I left my father and for me that was the same thing. For some people that is the same thing.

HER FATHER

Boom.

ROSIE

(Whispering)

A hot oatmeal shake makes an excellent treat on a cold December morning.

FOUMI

"Hot oatmeal shake" sounds like a dance.

MARISABEL

I have a secret, too. Mine is about water.

FOUMI

Ug. It's ALWAYS about water.

MARISABEL

(Whispering)

Did you know that water has a memory and that every drop of water can remember every single thing that's ever happened to it?

(CONTINUED)

SELF

This is all making me very very nervous!

*Self walks directly down center.*

Okay. When I first had this idea, not "me" as in me, but "me" as in the playwright, I wanted to talk about--you know how when you first figure out the thing you're good at? Like--uh...when I first--okay, the first time I ever wrote a play, like the first time I ever heard something I had written read aloud--the feeling I had-- it's just like I finally understood what I was supposed to be doing my entire life. And it just washed over me. And it didn't even feel like I was figuring out this thing, it felt like I already knew how to do it. Like it was a song that I heard when I was very young and now I was hearing it again for the first time in a long time. I felt that I belonged, that there was a place for me in the world. It was all I could talk about and all I could think about. It started whirling faster and faster. And for a while it seemed like the sky is stretched out in front of me forever, like...endless possibilities. At first it was thrilling, it was like running all of the time. All of the time. I couldn't keep up. And then I couldn't catch up with my breath and it felt like quicksand I couldn't escape and the more I tried to love theatre again, to remember why I loved it, the worse it got. And I couldn't believe in people any more because I didn't believe in plays any more...And then the thing I believed in so deeply, the thing that had made me fit somewhere in the world...it broke. I broke it. And now it just seems... pale and limp. And I feel very very old. That's the whole thing. That you can break things. I finally realized that the whole thing about plays is that we're just watching the actors slowly die onstage. And that's a problem for me because I've only ever done this one thing and I can't do anything else, and I don't want to do anything else. I just can't do this any more. And it feels like being buried alive, like I'm slowly suffocating.

FOUMI

(Yelling)

I come from ants like some people come from money.

*Pause.*

Yelling secrets!

SELF

I have been having a lot of trouble getting anything done lately. I have been sad and I've been unfocused because my father died.

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MARISABEL

No he didn't.

SELF

No, he didn't, but I did move out of his house and it hasn't really ever been the same between us since.

MARISABEL

That's not the same thing at all.

LIGHTS STAY UP

Scene 8

*Thor's Day. Lights up on the ladies. Same effects as before. Self watches this scene. "Rosie's Theme" plays.*

BLANCHE

The average ocean and sea water salinity is 35PPT or parts per thousand, also known as 3.5%. Our tears, the tears of humans, are small oceans with lower salinity concentration. Human tears are 9PPT.

MARISABEL

Like you would know.

BLANCHE

I do know.

MIDORI

My father is old before his time. When he eats ice cream his mouth has trouble forming around it as though he doesn't have any teeth. I see him like this. Old and needy.

MARISABEL

Going from gas to solid with no intermediate liquid phase is called sublimation. Frost is an example of sublimation.

BLANCHE

At what temperature does that happen?

MARISABEL

I don't know, Blanche, at what temperature does that happen?

BLANCHE

It varies. Considerably.

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MARISABEL

It doesn't matter.

BLANCHE

It does matter!

FOUMI

You think ants have holidays?

ROSIE

Who cares?

FOUMI

Uh...

ROSIE

I mean probably, but who cares?

FOUMI

I'll bet instead of Day of the Dead they have Day for Some Bread, or something like that. Or like all of the queen stuff. Like the queen's birthday. No. That's stupid, but I feel like if they find a big supply of food they probably celebrate, right?

ROSIE

It's not a holiday if you only do it once. That's the whole thing. The holidays mark time for us.

MIDORI

My days are less full than they have been in recent memory.

BLANCHE

The earth's core is almost 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit. Worthy performance is equal to the value of accomplishments divided by the costs of behavior.

MIDORI

One tip for running an efficient business is answering the phone before it rings.

*She tries to do this several times, but there is never anyone on the other end.*

FOUMI

In the winter ant activity slows down. Some larvae go into an inactive state. Sometimes the world is slower.

BLANCHE

Everyone talks about imaginary numbers like they are the most meaningful and profound of all mathematical objects.

ROSIE

The average Christmas tree needs 4 strands of white lights, 3 strands of bubble lights and 2 strands of blinky colored lights to function properly.

BLANCHE

Imaginary numbers actually have nothing at all to do with the imagination. Take the square root of negative 1, boom! imaginary number. Was that fun for you? No, it's incredibly boring because you don't even care about numbers.

ROSIE

And one angel on the top.

*All the ladies clock out!*

Scene 9

*Foumi's lights come up on her. She drags out a microphone like she's going to sing.*

*Foumi stands up to sing. Her down theme plays, she walks to the mic, waits for the part of her song when she would sing. It passes. She waits again, she starts to open her mouth, but nothing comes out. The band finally has played her whole theme and she hasn't started singing.*

FOUMI

I'm sorry. I'm not very comfortable singing in front of people, but I do have a lot of information about ants. They're very community oriented. There is a fungus called Cordyceps that can penetrate an ant's exoskeleton and take control of its host's personality. While the ant behavior appears the same to humans the other members of the colony are able to immediately recognize a difference. The infected ant is banished and excluded from the colony so when the fungus finally blooms and explodes through the host ant's skull it doesn't infect any other ants. It is a spectacular thing to watch and a horrible thing to experience.

FOUMI (cont'd)

(To self)

Should I...? I'm sorry. I made this awkward.

SELF

Fuck. Everything is awkward. Should we....? Uh....let's just do that ants musical, right? People like that. I think maybe we should switch things up a bit. Or I don't think I should switch things up a bit, but a lot of people seem to have a lot of opinions about how

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)



SELF (cont'd)  
 things should go. Or something. I guess this isn't very theatrical. Let's just do the ants thing. The musical thing.

***Self drags a chair over unceremoniously, and sits in it.***

*This is the Broadway show entitled "ANTS!" All of the Ants can be played by Office Ladies. It is a show produced for an audience of one, Self. All of the "informative" lines about ants should be read with a great deal of emotion as if they are confessing horrible, deep secrets or undying love. The show starts with a chorus line of human sized ants doing Rockette style kicks out onto the stage. Then they sing...*

FOUMI

Ants' exoskeletons are hard shells that protect their vulnerable innards.

ANT # 1

Couldn't have been too soft on the inside.

ANT # 2

Didn't I see you get squished?

ANT # 1

Musta been someone who looked like me.

ANTS # 2

It's hard to breathe without lungs.

*This song is over. Spoken dialogue sounds like this:*

ANT # 3

You could describe our coloring as shiny.

*Pointedly looks at ANT # 1*

Though some of us are less shiny than others.

ANT # 1

It's just the way--

ANT # 3

I feel the segmentation of our segments.

ANT # 2

We are three.

(CONTINUED)

ANT # 1

We are three.

ANT # 3

We are three. We are cut into thirds and that is how we know we are related to stingers.

FOUMI

Wasps!

ANT # 2

You can see it on us. In us.

ANT # 1

When a queen dies, which can sometimes take up to 30 years, she is rarely replaced. The colony dies within months of its queen.

ANT # 2

Work is divided according to what is most dangerous and who is most likely to die. Thus the oldest members of a colony, who are the closest to death, are sent to do the most dangerous tasks: foraging and fighting.

ANT # 3

It is related to proximity to death.

ANT # 1

The older. The oldest you get.

ANT # 3

The oldest we get the closest we are to dying.

ANT # 2

To not trying.

ANT # 3

To dying.

ANT # 1

Thus conscience doth make cowards of none of us.

FOUMI

I imagine it goes something like this.

*The singing begins again.*

ANT # 1

I was like you once.

ANT # 2 & ANT # 3

Teeny tiny holes.

*ANT # 2 & ANT # 3 push ANT # 1 away, she is no longer welcome. This results in a physical confrontation, after which ANT # 1 finally accepts that she is not welcome. This is heartbreaking.*

*The singing begins again.*

ANT # 1  
Alone.

ANT # 2  
We have to protect...

ANT # 1  
Alone.

*ANT # 1 suddenly turns into a zombie. She is wandering around the stage in her zombie state looking for something to attach herself to. She finds the most leaf-like object onstage. Maybe it is a leaf that was made for the purposes of this show, maybe it is an office chair, maybe it is different every night. She finds her beloved leaf and touches her head to it. Her head is now stuck to it as if with glue. Suddenly, a huge plant grows out of the middle of her skull. ANTS # 2 & 3 see this, but react as though they have seen it a million times before. They are still sad, but not shocked. Like a drug overdose, think of it as a drug overdose.*

## FOUMI

Ants can carry ten to fifty times their body weight. If you were that strong you could carry a car. Ants communicate mainly using chemicals, which they sense with their antennae. Ants from the same colony recognize one another by chemicals on their bodies.

ANT # 2  
Closest to, closest to the edge.

*This is a really good show, but Self seems unsatisfied with it.*

ANT # 3  
Not enough legs to stand on.

ANT # 2  
Not enough antennae to feel.

ANT # 3  
I could carry more weight than myself. I could carry us both if you died.

(CONTINUED)

*This is the end of the show. The Rockants make their bows and then leave the stage.*

SELF

In my head it just seemed so much...grander. This isn't how I pictured this at all. This part used to be my favorite part. In my head I think this was supposed to be somehow related to the atomic bomb, but that seems embarrassing now.

Scene 10

*Friday. Shit gets raw. Marisabel's up theme plays*

MARISABEL

Condensation.

MIDORI

Waiting rooms are a lost art.

BLANCHE

Antiselection is the tendency of people who have a greater-than-average likelihood of loss to seek healthcare coverage to a greater extent than the individuals who have an average or less-than-average likelihood of loss.

MARISABEL

The ocean is a lonesome place.

ROSIE

And then there's always the next holiday that you're supposed to get excited for. Like you go to the store to buy Halloween candy, right? And they wanna sell you those plastic Santas. It's like, hey buddy, it's candy corn season. Show some respect for that. One holiday at a time!

MIDORI

I prefer to think of daylight saving time as daylight earning time.

*It begins to snow in Marisabel's cube.*

MARISABEL

Snow is actually just a million tiny ice particles.

BLANCHE

How many?

MARISABEL

It doesn't matter how many.

(CONTINUED)

BLANCHE

How many?

MARISABEL

One million.

MARISABEL

There are three classical states of matter. In water these are manifested as ice, water and steam. Then there's plasma.

BLANCHE

Ice is one of the 15 crystalline forms of water.

MARISABEL

I am not certain yet how to make it unsnow.

*Marisabel does her water dance. It kills her.*

MIDORI

Every clock in the world is keeping a different time.

BLANCHE

A number a mathematical object used in counting and measuring. Numbers! Incorporation by reference.

BLANCHE (cont'd)

(Singing)

1, 2, 3, 4. Numbers galore.

I can compute any square root.

I know of Pi, it's a far cry

From an intimate type of digit.

It's so visceral, what's divisible.

I wish I was math and not flesh

Humans leave you, they deceive you.

Not like numerals, they are special jewels.

Fives and tens, lovely gems.

Values fixed, numbers mixed.

Any quantity, even "two" or "three"

Is beautiful to the learned skull.

You can count on numbers, numbers.

(CONTINUED)

FOUMI

The number of ants in any given colony is directly correlative to the willingness to share dreams of the closest humans. If the closest humans have a dream sharing index of 43 for example--which, as we all know, is a very high dream sharing index--

ROSIE

Yes, I would like to plan around the holidays, and, no, I don't think they're of inordinate interest to me, just regular level interest. Everyone enjoys a holiday.

FOUMI

In winter, in cold months, diapause. They pause their lives because the world is too terrible to withstand. In winter they stop living because life is too awful.

MIDORI

What goes through your head the 60 seconds before you die?

(Singing)

9 o'clock it's time for work

10 o'clock it's time for coffee

Noon o'clock--no I mean 12

12 is when the day splits open

3 o'clock it's time to water.

I forgot to spend some time with--

10 o'clock it's time for bed

6 o'clock the day starts over

All the time is not enough

No one knows what time it is.

I live inside a time zone.

It means I'm always alone.

Through my fingers goes each nanosecond

In pointless grains of sand my life is reckoned.

*Midori does her time dance. It kills her.*

(CONTINUED)

ROSIE

Can't we ever have one nice holiday all together? I thought it was going to be Thanksgiving this year, but then you all started in with your Thanksgiving Day secrets.

FOUMI

I felt a pain in my gut that I thought was from getting my heart broken. But when I checked, really, it was just an ant in my navel.

ROSIE

For every pound of turkey add one hour of cooking time.

ROSIE (cont'd)

(Singing)

Christmas comes with the season.

Leaves without any reason.

I wish it would stay. I wish it was mine.

Special days come on slowly.

Every day should be holy.

All other days they are grey and I hate them so.

Christmas comes with the season,

Leaves without any reason.

Ordinary days suck all the life out.

*Rosie's dance about holidays. It kills her.*

FOUMI

I cannot trust these ants any more. A line of them made its way up to my office. I think they will start wearing my clothes and answering my phone next. If you see something walking around that looks like me, make sure it doesn't have an exoskeleton.

*Foumi does an ants dance. It kills her.*

Scene 11

*Small spot on Self. Foumi's music transitions into Self's music. She sets up the screen. Stage hand sets up the overhead.*

(CONTINUED)

SELF

*Transparency 1*  
I tried to write a play

*Transparency 2*  
About the Atomic Bomb,

*Transparency 3*  
But it came out like this

*Transparency 4*  
Instead.

*Transparency 5*  
Maybe I get distracted

*Transparency 6*  
Easily.

*Transparency 7*  
Or maybe all of the words

*Transparency 8*  
In the whole entire world

*Transparency 9*  
Add up to mean nothing

*Transparency 10*  
When the bomb is dropped.

*Transparency 11*  
I'm not sure,

*Transparency 12*  
But I'll ask my dad,

*Transparency 13*  
And get back to you.

BLACKOUT. END OF PLAY.