

“Lolaland” by Lola Montez, Comtesse de Landsfelt and Lindsay Wilson

Lindsay Wilson

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Abstract

“Lolaland” by Madame Lola Montez, Comtesse de Landsfelt and Lindsay Wilson

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Is an accurate representation of self possible in biographical theatre? Lola Montez (1821 – 1861) was a historical figure known for being the worst actress and dancer of her generation. However, Montez stated, after her rise to political infamy in Bavaria, that “she no longer recognize[d] herself as Lola Montez.” In an act of reinvention, after being chased out of Bavaria, she expressed the desire to create “Lolaland” an independent state with her as leader – an outrageous goal which she never achieved. “Lolaland” transposes Plato’s “Theory of Forms” utilizing the idea that there are two distinct levels of reality: the world of sights and sounds which we inhabit and the intelligible world of forms that stands above the visible world and gives it being. This, in turn, reflects a modern preoccupation with fame and celebrity. Celebrity reflects a type of mythology that encourages people to aspire to a different class through a constant performance or mimicry of what they believe makes someone celebrated. The coterie of Montez followers that populate this play fight for their place, and vie to ascend their position in the Republic, in order to become celebrated including the author who places herself as an imagined self in the imagined myth of Lola Montez.

“Keen and unremitting in his love, he will go on till he touches the nature of each thing which is by itself with that part of his soul which is suited to grasp it. But it is suited to what it is akin. Drawing near it and having intercourse with what is really real, begetting thought and truth, he knows and truly lives and is nourished, and thus, but not before, ceases from his travail.”

- Plato, “The Republic”

“Tyranny is not a matter of minor theft and violence, but of wholesale plunder, sacred and profane, private or public.”

– Plato, “The Republic”

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“Lolaland” by Lola Montez, Comtesse de Landsfelt and Lindsay Wilson

Players

Madame Lola Montez, Comtesse de Landsfelt – Dancer / Politician / Comtesse /
Revolutionist / Fugitive

Lindsay Wilson – Public Relations / Potential Leader of Lolaland

Madame Azam – Usherette / Stage-Manager / Éminence Grise to Lola Montez

Auguste Papon – Assistant to Lola Montez / Amateur Publicist / Vaudevillian / Potential
Leader of Lolaland

Actor / Franz Liszt – Star Pianist / Star Composer / Comtesse’s ex-lover / Pawn

Actress – Actress / Pawn

A Note on Layout:

1: The full lines in the play which appear in italics are attributed to the historical Lola Montez. They appear in, and were taken from, the biography “Lola Montez: Her Life and Conquests” by James Morton and “The Arts of Beauty; Or Secrets of a Lady’s Toilet: With Hints to Gentlemen on the Art of Fascinating” by Lola Montez.

2: Characters speeches usually follow the one immediately before. The exception to this is when one character starts to speak before the other is finished; the interruption is marked (/).

Action: Present. A shabby conference hall. There is a flip chart and a large conference table with Montez’s paraphernalia laid out. There is a television and a DVD player on a trolley and a large plastic make-shift banner over the door that reads: “LOLALAND”.

Prologue

LINDSAY WILSON is welcoming people into the conference room. She is in charge of the focus session and is handing out pamphlets and buttons that say "REALM" in large letters.

LINDSAY WILSON. Hi! *So so so glad* you could make it. Are you our contest winners? Yes? No? Well, go and grab something from the snack table and don't forget to take a look at the merch! (*WILSON gestures to a folding table in the corner that presents an assortment of foodstuffs with "Endorsed by Lola Montez!" on them. In front of the table is the ACTOR and ACTRESS who are dressed in absurd period costumes. Behind the table is a wizened old woman, MADAME AZAM, who is dozing. WILSON sees that MADAME AZAM is dozing and she goes over and kicks the table where AZAM sits, jarring AZAM awake.*)

ACTRESS: Hey! Leave her alone! She's, like, *old*.

ACTOR. Yeah! She's nice too.

LINDSAY WILSON. Shut up! I didn't hire you to hear your "thoughts". (*Beat.*) Azam! Listen, you old bag, I'm not paying you to sleep. You don't want to end up in a home do you, eating strained carrots and apples? (*Beat.*) Do you? Hmm? I could make that happen.

ACTRESS: She's mean.

ACTOR. Yeah!

LINDSAY WILSON. Do you – what are your names again? Do you two want this job because I can easily hire your replacements! (*To AZAM.*) And you too!

MADAME AZAM. The Madame would never let that happen! Me, her assistant for 40 years? You are a bad woman.

LINDSAY WILSON. Listen you old bag, I'm in charge here. Not Madame. How many times do I have to tell you that? (*Yelling.*) ARE. YOU. HARD. OF. HEARING?
(*WILSON raises her hand as if to strike AZAM.*)

ACTOR / ACTRESS. Whoa!

MADAME AZAM. (*To Audience.*) You see how she treats me? She is a tyrant!

WILSON stops and realizes what she was about to do.

LINDSAY WILSON. (*Laughing awkwardly.*) No, no. No tyranny here. We have an audience. Our test – I mean *focus* – group. You'll have to excuse me, I've been very overwhelmed with...everything. Allow me to introduce you to the integral members of our PR team. This is Madame Azam. She's in charge of crafts services, merchandise – a stage-manager, a roadie if you will. She's been working with Madame Montez *for over 40 years.* How 'bout a round of applause for Madame Azam? (*Before applause finishes.*) Happy now you old bag? (*MADAME AZAM gloats.*) And these are our actors. They're here for our live action demos and skits later on. How 'bout a round of applause for our actors?

ACTOR. We have names y'know.

ACTRESS. Yeah!

LINDSAY WILSON. Okay everybody! We're gonna get started here. If everyone could grab a seat, there are some name tags for you. Please take one and use the markers in front of you. Write your name. We like to keep things personal here at REALM. And Madame Montez? She wants to know *you.* First, let me introduce myself: I'm Lindsay

Wilson. I'm in charge of this whole she-bang. I'm the Public Relations liaison for REALM. I realize that some of you don't know what that is. REALM is "Republicanism is for Everybody under the Authority of Lola Montez" and it's our organization and I'm here as the liaison between it and you. *(Beat.)* So...glad you could be here with us. You may not know this, but you are an integral part of our process. So...just to give you a little "idea" of how things are going to work tonight...think of this as a "think-tank" session with feedback. *I want your feedback on Madame Montez – what you think of her – what issues you'd like her to address – how you'd like her to dress – basically what are you looking for in a leader. REALM and the Republic of Lolaland can't exist without you. Everything that you find significant? We'll incorporate it into our plans. This is your chance to participate in the construction of a new politics for a new century – a new country – a new leader! (Beat.)* Now, I do need you to sign waivers – we'll be filming this to assess your reactions. Some of the footage may appear on Madame's World Tour DVD to be released later this year. If there's anyone here who doesn't want to be recorded for posterity, we kindly ask that you absent yourself from the group – or – if you're more comfortable – paper bags with eye holes signed by Madame Montez herself - are for sale. *(LINDSAY WILSON waits and then laughs.)* A joke everybody, a joke. *(Beat.)* Okay. I'll be asking for your feedback regularly throughout this here little session and there'll be some starting and stopping. You'll find commentary cards under your seats that you can feel free to fill out and we'll take your comments into consideration. *And...for your efforts here tonight, you lucky REALMites will receive a bag of freebies courtesy of us including a signed 8x10 of Madame Montez. So...you're the most essential part in this process. I point your attention to our merchandise. (Posted beside*

AZAM on a flip chart is the following sign: "MADAME LOLA MONTEZ, COMTESSE DE LANDSFELT Hand Kisses: \$1; Photos: \$2; Hand kiss, Photo and Autograph: \$6; "The Arts of Beauty or, Secrets of a Lady's Toilet, With Hints to Gentlemen on the Art of Fascinating by Madame Lola Montez, Comtesse de Landsfelt":\$10; Hand-made Castilian Lace Fans: \$8; El Caballero Cigars: 1 for \$2 or 6 for \$12; the Montez package: \$30; Donations to REALM – PWYC (At least \$10).) If any of you wish to purchase merch, it'll be for sale at break and after the session – get it now and I guarantee it'll be a collector's item! All items were designed by yours truly – not that I need to brag or anything. (Just a quick note: my PR firm is available for all sorts of events, so don't be afraid to come find me and let me know about your upcoming events). (*Beat.*) Okay, just a few words before we start and before you meet Madame Lola Montez, Comtesse de Landsfelt – the single greatest revolutionary who ever lived – if I do say so myself. What you will see and hear tonight is the *official* version of her life, as endorsed by myself and REALM, and I've been concerned with presenting to you her times abroad as a Revolutionary who revolutionized. Okay! Let's get started! Actors? Alright everyone we'll be right back! (*LINDSAY WILSON and ACTORS exit the room. MADAME AZAM shuffles up and pulls out the T.V. and DVD player on the trolley, she dims the lights, and presses play. A slogan rolls up: Lola Montez: Often Copied, Never Equaled!*TM The following has been endorsed by the PR firm of Lindsay Wilson and has been paid for by a generous contribution to REALM. Any copying or distribution of this promotional material is strictly prohibited by law. You must receive permission from the PR firm of Lindsay Wilson if you wish to use it. The PR firm of Lindsay Wilson is available for any and all of your public relations needs. Check us out! *We then see the following scenes:*

(1) MONTEZ in an Anger Management class. We hear LINDSAY WILSON in voice-over: "Lola Montez. Compassionate. A Fighter for your Cause." (2) MONTEZ preens in the mirror as she is supposed to observe a ballet class for young girls. A little ballerina falls down and cries. We hear WILSON in voice-over: "Lola Montez: Concerned with being a role-model for your children." (3) Lola Montez talking to a factory worker and lighting a cigarette; the factory manager asks her to put it out and Montez strikes him. We hear LINDSAY WILSON in voice-over: "Lola Montez: One of the people. Concerned with the rights of the common man." (4) Lola Montez at the front of a classroom where she's lecturing to a hall of people; she gets hit in the head with balled up paper. We hear LINDSAY WILSON in voice-over: "Lola Montez. Protector and teacher. Beloved by all." An image of Montez's face appears and fades to LINDSAY WILSON's face. We hear LINDSAY WILSON's voice: "Endorsed by the PR firm of Lindsay Wilson and Lindsay Wilson." The screen goes to black. MADAME AZAM turns on a small flashing disco light sending beams out all over the conference room, she presses play on a small, portable stereo.)

Act I: The Problem Stated

Loud, distorted techno music begins to play and the door to the conference room flies open. A horse mascot comes dancing in followed by a man in a Vaudeville costume and the two actors.

ACTOR. Alright people! Let's get excited for REALM and for Madame. Lola. Montez!

ACTRESS. WOOHOO! I can't wait! C'mon guys! Get excited! *(The actors start to clap their hands and try to animate the group in a grim attitude of "We Will Have Fun". The Vaudevillian starts to speak but it is a strain to hear what he's saying because of the loudness of the music. WILSON puts her head in the room.)*

LINDSAY WILSON. Azam! Turn the music off!

MADAME AZAM. What?

LINDSAY WILSON. TURN OFF THE MUSIC!

MADAME AZAM. What?

LINDSAY WILSON. TURN THE MUSIC – *(AZAM does.)* OFF! You old bag!...of kindness. *(Beat.)* Sorry! *(LINDSAY WILSON disappears.)*

VAUDEVILLIAN. Sagacious seals? Prancing ponies? Charming chimps? Lola Montez? What do these parties have in common? I don't know! You! *(Indicating ACTOR.)* You there! What's your guess?

ACTOR. Hooves?

VAUDEVILLIAN. No. And you? *(Indicating the ACTRESS.)*

ACTRESS. They're famous?

VAUDEVILLIAN. No...well...yes, but no. Drum roll please. *(Nothing happens.)* Drum roll please. *(Nothing happens.)* Could one of you... ?

ACTOR. Oh! Of course, of course.

ACTRESS. I want to do it.

ACTOR. Then go ahead.

ACTRESS. I will.

ACTOR. Good. (*ACTRESS drums on the conference table.*)

VAUDEVILLIAN. Stop. STOP! (*ACTRESS stops. Beat.*) They have not been dealt with kindly by history! They have lost their identities! Suffered infamy! Blended into society's failing memory of ephemeral entertainments! Rarely do we find notable exceptions. But I point your attention to this genuine equine wonder. Perhaps you are aware of the following saying: Cunning men know two things – women and horses – and cannot be deceived by either! Allow me to introduce you to REALM's mascot: "Le Petit Cheval Savant". She dances, she trots, she kneels down, plays dead, taps her foreleg, counts coins, and can even identify cards shuffled in a pack – blindfolded! Allow me to demonstrate: Tap your leg three times! (*The horse taps her leg three times.*) Play dead! (*The horse falls over with four legs sticking straight up in the air.*) (*To ACTOR.*) Give me your wallet!

ACTOR. I need it back.

VAUDEVILLIAN. Yes, yes but give me your wallet.

ACTOR. Okay but I want it back. You tried to keep it this morning during rehearsal.

VAUDEVILLIAN. No, I didn't. (*Beat.*) Just give it here! (*VAUDEVILLIAN snatches the wallet from the ACTOR and takes out the coins and lays them out in front of the horse.*) How many coins, old girl? (*The horse taps out the amount of coins.*) Incredible wouldn't you say? But not nearly as incredible as her next feat! Music please! (*"Number 18 in F*

Sharp Minor” by Franz Liszt begins to play. The horse and the VAUDEVILLIAN begin to dance. They perform an equine pas-de-deux. The horse stops abruptly. VAUDEVILLIAN hisses quietly.) What’s going on? Do the next part! (*The horse stands still.*) Hahahaha! You can lead a horse when you’re dancing but you cannot make her...dance. (*Awkward, nervous laugh.*) People are watching – do something! (*The horse takes off the head of her costume. It is LOLA MONTEZ inside.*)

LOLA MONTEZ. First, Papon, you cannot talk to me like that. Second, Papon, you cannot treat me like that and third, this is not how I wish to be portrayed to my adoring public. (*To Group.*) Good evening, please excuse my current state of...undress but I wish to welcome you with all my heart for being here tonight. I am Madame Lola Montez, Comtesse de Landsfelt! Tonight is a momentous occasion. I wish to speak to you on the potential for Revolution. You are perhaps aware of certain facts of my illustrious history –

LINDSAY WILSON. (*Enters. To Group.*) Hey guys, we’re just testing out a guerilla marketing campaign –

LOLA MONTEZ. I am no gorilla!

AUGUSTE PAPON. What? Now you want to introduce gorillas? This is not a menagerie!

LINDSAY WILSON. I’d like to introduce you to Madame Lola Montez.

LOLA MONTEZ. I’ve already introduced myself!

LINDSAY WILSON. (*To Group.*) We wanted to take you by surprise –

AUGUSTE PAPON. You haven’t introduced me yet.

LOLA MONTEZ. Surprise? This? *This* is ridiculous. To put me in a horse costume! (*To Group.*) I told the girl that it was absurd to put a woman of my stature in a costume.

LINDSAY WILSON. I've told you. It's not a costume. It's our mascot.

LOLA MONTEZ. I didn't choose it.

LINDSAY WILSON. Yes. You did. The horse is the national symbol we chose for the Republic of Lolaland.

LOLA MONTEZ. A symbol, yes. A mascot, no. People – you – my people – you want to see me. Don't you? You want to see Lola. Clap if you want to see me! Yes! You love your Lola!

LINDSAY WILSON. Lola! I've explained this to you. Put the horse's head back on.

LOLA MONTEZ. I won't! I won't stand for this tyranny!

LINDSAY WILSON. It's what we discussed. I'm the one responsible. (*To Group.*) Sorry guys, we're still in the process of working this out.

LOLA MONTEZ. Working what out?

AUGUSTE PAPON. I will remind you that Madame has you on retainer.

LINDSAY WILSON. But it's my PR firm and me that's in charge, *right?* Yes, you hired me, but you hired me for my expertise. I'm the one responsible for creating a "buzz" – for getting this whole *thing* going.

AUGUSTE PAPON. Madame is not a thing!

LINDSAY WILSON. (*To Group.*) I am trying to represent Madame Montez as the horse she is dancing. The horse is her and she is the horse.

LOLA MONTEZ. But I am *not* a horse!

LINDSAY WILSON. Of course, of course *not...* But...What is a performing horse? Madame Montez is playing the part of the horse, thus undermining the very essence of the whole thing. You playing the horse represents the human state. It represents us becoming aware of the reflected projections of our own role in society as if we were puppets of ourselves. (*Beat.*) Isn't that cool? Quickly! How many of you think it's cool?

LOLA MONTEZ. I refuse. I didn't agree to *this*. (*To Group.*) Surely you recognize that it's ridiculous for a person in my position to behave in this manner. It simply makes no sense. All spectacle and no substance! A dancing ass...

LINDSAY WILSON. (*To Group.*) She finds it ridiculous but in my defense – is it my fault that I have to turn her biography as the worst dancer and actress of her generation into an inspiring folktale of political propaganda? *She* hired *me*. Do you know how difficult it is to get recognition these days? (*To LOLA MONTEZ.*) No one knows who you are! (*To Group.*) Show of hands – how many of you knew who Lola Montez was before you came here tonight? (*Even if there are a few hands.*) You see? No one.

AUGUSTE PAPON. Not true, Madame! A lie. You are a legend.

LOLA MONTEZ. You can't use them like that. Don't you use my citizens like that and turn them against me. (*To Group.*) Don't let her turn you against me. (*To LINDSAY WILSON.*) You have changed it. I didn't give you the right to change it. To alter my image.

LINDSAY WILSON. It's called "spin", Madame. Anyway, this is hardly the venue to continue this conversation.

LOLA MONTEZ. Is that so? I think this is precisely the venue to discuss this...*tyranny.*
Look, look – (*LOLA MONTEZ goes to MADAME AZAM and takes the binder from her.*)
My biography. You have changed it.

LINDSAY WILSON. To make it more palatable.

LOLA MONTEZ. But who asked you to do this? This is my life you are “making more palatable”. How do you expect me to speak to my citizens and give them a biography that contains such glaring flaws? Look – look at this - “I could do anything...I kicked higher and higher. I knew there would be a line-up of admirers waiting...” Trite!

MADAME AZAM. “Waiting in line afterwards just for the chance to touch me – to kiss the hand of Lola Montez!”

LOLA MONTEZ. Did I really say that or was that a line written for me?

AUGUSTE PAPON. If I may interject? I think it’s overblown. I would simply say something like: “I was an esteemed dancer who ascended to the position of an almost goddess!”

LOLA MONTEZ. Yes...Yes! I like that. I think that is more...*truthful.*

LINDSAY WILSON. I guess we’re not aiming for the plain, unvarnished truth here.

LOLA MONTEZ. Write that in, Azam. (*To Group.*) What do you think? It’s better, isn’t it?

LINDSAY WILSON. A quick show of hands if you like the first or second version of the Montez biography. (*They take a quick show of hands and depending on which way the group votes.*)

LINDSAY WILSON. Alright. Then version (1 or 2) stays.

LOLA MONTEZ. (*She either says: “I could do anything...I kicked higher and higher. I knew there would be a line-up of admirers waiting...” or “I was an esteemed dancer who ascended to the position of an almost goddess.”*) What does the next bit say, Azam?

MADAME AZAM. “But I was tired of Abramovitz and I demonstrated by lifting my skirts in his general direction.”

AUGUSTE PAPON. Scandal!

LOLA MONTEZ. I did no such thing! Lies. Propaganda.

LINDSAY WILSON. No. A personal interest story. It creates buzz. The real question is: Would you elect a leader who did that?

LOLA MONTEZ. This? This isn't me speaking. I never did that. I would never do such an outrageous thing! (*LOLA MONTEZ rips the paper into a million pieces.*) I'll show you what I think of this! (*LOLA MONTEZ does a Flamenco dance on the scraps of paper.*) I won't perform this as written! (*To Group.*) Tonight is the inauguration of my career as Revolutionist. (*To LINDSAY WILSON.*) They're at least aware of that, aren't they?

LINDSAY WILSON. Madame, we had agreed to use *President* of REALM as your official title. Revolutionist puts people off. (*To Group.*) Am I right? We're looking for your demographic. Who your target audience is going to be. You don't want to go overboard right away.

LOLA MONTEZ. But I want the truth! (*To Group.*) I want to live – not for eternity – but in you! I want to live in you!

LINDSAY WILSON. (*To Group.*) She means that she wants to be a household name and to build stronger communities – and a bridge to the 21st century.

LOLA MONTEZ. That isn't what I mean at all! (*To Group.*) I want to thank you with all my heart for being here tonight. Tonight marks a momentous occasion. A turning point. *Lola Montez is leaving behind her career as an actress, leaving that ridiculous profession forever. This is my last performance as Lola Montez. You see the truth is that I no longer recognize myself as Lola Montez.*

LINDSAY WILSON. (*To Group.*) She means that she's committed to change. Both for herself and for your benefit. (*To LOLA MONTEZ.*) Lola, why don't we go back on book? We can just scrap the horse part but I have the whole evening planned. Azam, give me the prompt book. Now, let's move ahead to the part about your time in –

LOLA MONTEZ. No! People cease to think for themselves when they have someone else's thoughts written out in front of them! We must break away. It's – I see it – we must destroy that and begin again. It has all my life in it and none of it's right – none of it is as it should be.

LINDSAY WILSON. You can't! I won't let you. You hired me to put this night together. Madame, it's what you wanted. I've given you what I wanted. I am a professional. I know what people want to see. Now, I've given you what you wanted-

LOLA MONTEZ. It's very simple. (*To Group.*) There are facts and there are truths. We must ignore the facts and create the truth. We must create this now. (*Beat.*) This is my last performance as Lola Montez. The truth is I no longer recognize myself as Lola Montez. There is no other way but this to say it. You see...I wish to explain that there *are* truths and there *are* facts and the *truth* is that I care very deeply as a lover cares for a lover that has meant much to them, but cannot continue with, but continually remembers to love. And then there are facts – the facts of the facts of my life, but when I try to

remember – the truth of my life has gotten away from me. It’s like a dream of someone else’s dream I once had....it’s like a dream of someone else’s dream I once had...

AUGUSTE PAPON. What’s the matter, Madame?

LOLA MONTEZ. I cannot seem to remember what I was going to say next -

MADAME AZAM. “I will become that thing which is Lola Montez, but greater than Lola Montez. The moment that I will become Madame Lola Montez of the Republic of Lolaland and all that that entails.”

AUGUSTE PAPON. And, of course, Madame has not forgotten what she’s promised me.

LOLA MONTEZ. None of what you want to present is accurate.

LINDSAY WILSON. But I am in control of your image. That’s what you hired me for.

LOLA MONTEZ. Precisely! To present exactly what I asked you – to translate my essence – and instead I get this! Put me in a horse costume performing shameful events! Tell me – how does this translate my essence in any sense? I reject these circumstances because I find that you have turned my life into a sideshow!

AUGUSTE PAPON. One might even go so far as to mention *libel*.

LINDSAY WILSON. You don’t even know what that means.

LOLA MONTEZ. Yes. Yes! *Libel*. You have libeled me! How dare she libel me in front of my citizens. (*To Group.*) The girl has libeled me. Don’t believe her lies!

LINDSAY WILSON. Lola! You’re hurting your chances at finding a demographic. We’re here for you. I’m not lying. I’m trying to put together an attractive package. (*To Group.*) I’d like to apologize for this turn in events. This is unpleasant. But so is liberty in a Republic. And you can’t complain – you’re getting it so cheap!

LOLA MONTEZ. What did you say? What did she say?

AUGUSTE PAPON. I think she libeled you!

LINDSAY WILSON. Are you insane? I didn't libel anyone! I am a publicity person. I am keenly aware of libel. I put this stuff together to make it appealing.

AUGUSTE PAPON. She said you were insane. And you heard how she compared you to a chimp!

LINDSAY WILSON. It was rhetoric – not literal. You mental midget.

LOLA MONTEZ. You will find that I am not receptive to threats of this sort. You are here to do as you're asked. This is not make-believe. This is real. This is life and death. It is freedom and my image is integral to this and I will not let you abuse it! *(To Group.)* She wants me to discuss unsubstantiated...lies about my life.

LINDSAY WILSON. Like what, Madame?

LOLA MONTEZ. I explicitly asked you not to include anything about Franz Liszt.

AUGUSTE PAPON. You included him?

LINDSAY WILSON. That's for your female 16-45 demographic. Women want to see romance. Men want action. And voila: Franz Liszt! I've got studies that back this stuff up.

LOLA MONTEZ. I want Liszt out.

LINDSAY WILSON. We need him. He was a part of your life. And famous too. A famous couple gets a lot of mileage.

LOLA MONTEZ. *(Looking at ACTOR.)* But look at him. He's indifferent to me again. Grown cold. He once called us a love affair without end. But now you see how he despises me! Acts as though he doesn't even know me...

LINDSAY WILSON. Madame, that's one of our actors. You met him yesterday.

ACTOR. My name is Tom. I was hired to play the part of Liszt in one of the live action parts of the session.

LOLA MONTEZ. That is precisely what Liszt would say! I remind you that *you* were the one who left *me* locked in that hotel room and gave money to the concierge for anything I might break.

LINDSAY WILSON. Alright! Shall we leave it to our "citizens"? (*To Group.*) How many of you would like to see Liszt stay as the love interest? (*No matter how many hands. Beat.*) You see? Your "citizens" have spoken. Liszt stays.

LOLA MONTEZ. As ruler of Lolaland –

LINDSAY WILSON. President!

LOLA MONTEZ. I am not willing to put forth a false image.

AUGUSTE PAPON. I vote to approve this law!

LOLA MONTEZ. I must be allowed to decide what is to be said and how it is to be said. With attention, of course, to my public.

AUGUSTE PAPON. I vote to approve this law!

LOLA MONTEZ. If enough people believe a story, does that make it true?

LINDSAY WILSON. (*To Group.*) This has been a live-action segment demonstrating that Madame Montez and REALM are for free speech. Montez. Here for you. Accessible and willing to listen to your concerns over the type of leader you want.

LOLA MONTEZ. I've said no such thing!

LINDSAY WILSON. No, Madame, you have demonstrated it in everything that you have done.

AUGUSTE PAPON. Begin with Madame's grand speech to the masses before her escape from full-scale peasant revolt to Switzerland.

LINDSAY WILSON. That's stupid. No one knows about that. We need to build up a feeling of trust. As though she were an...an everywoman but also royalty...as if you could invite her to tea but would be scared if she attended.

LOLA MONTEZ. *(To Group.)* No cheap tricks or illusions. You will know what is truth and what is fact. We construct a history together. *(Beat.)* We begin with the moment that Lola Montez storms King Ludwig's throne room in Bavaria. If you had been there to see his face! There has been so much rumor and innuendo, but you will see how it happened. How Lola triumphed in freedom and expression.

LINDSAY WILSON. I didn't plan for a King Ludwig...

LOLA MONTEZ. Liszt? You will play Ludwig.

ACTRESS. Hey! Why does he get the part?

ACTOR. Alright. But my name's not Liszt. It's Tom.

LOLA MONTEZ. You prove to me that you are the real Liszt. Only Liszt would say to me that his name was Tom. All those years and still as flippant as always...

AUGUSTE PAPON. Ha!

ACTOR. Hey!

LOLA MONTEZ. *(To Group.)* Make room! Make room! *(LOLA MONTEZ insists that the group move their chairs back to make room. To ACTOR.)* Now...you must pretend that you are reading official documents –

LINDSAY WILSON. I have to interject. That makes you look unreliable. If it were me I'd walk slowly and bravely into the room. Like this. *(LINDSAY WILSON demonstrates.)*

LOLA MONTEZ. But you see, you're not me. And you never will be.

LINDSAY WILSON. Shouldn't we let the citizens decide which version they like better?

LOLA MONTEZ. Fine. Version One. (*LOLA MONTEZ skips around the stage like a little coquette and throws herself somewhat awkwardly at the feet of "King Ludwig".*)
Your Majesty, I demand to be given a performance in your state theatre.

LINDSAY WILSON. (*To Group.*) Don't you think it might be more suitable in a woman-who-would-be-leader to just enter? I doubt very much a woman president would do that skipping thing. It doesn't read well with your demographic. Especially for a woman your age. (*AUGUSTE PAPON and MADAME AZAM gasp.*) Here. Let me show you.

AUGUSTE PAPON. She meant nothing by it. Tell Madame you meant nothing by it.

MADAME AZAM. Nothing, nothing! She meant that a woman your age should...should skip if she wants, but you are already so *regal* that it's not necessary...

(Beat.)

LOLA MONTEZ. What did you mean by "a woman my age"?

LINDSAY WILSON. I meant that a woman of your advanced years --

LOLA MONTEZ. You make me sound enfeebled! How old do you think I am?

LINDSAY WILSON. I believe that your records indicate that you're 200.

AUGUSTE PAPON and MADAME AZAM gasp.

AUGUSTE PAPON. She needs her eyes checked!

MADAME AZAM. She walked into a wall earlier -- I saw her!

AUGUSTE PAPON. I think she said 20.

MADAME AZAM. Yes, yes, I heard 20.

LINDSAY WILSON. If I'm wrong, set me straight.

LOLA MONTEZ. I'm 25.

ACTORS splutter and laugh at LOLA MONTEZ.

ACTRESS. 25 in dog years.

LINDSAY WILSON. People want leaders that are a little more experienced –

ACTOR. Then they've found the right woman.

LINDSAY WILSON. They want someone who has the *experience* that comes with age.

Sisters of the traveling pant suit. Not sisters of prancing around in clothes that are too tight and too young. (*AUGUSTE PAPON and MADAME AZAM gasp*). Besides, Madame, you cannot expect that people will believe that you're 25.

LOLA MONTEZ. I think you will find that you need your eyes checked as well as your facts. (*With steely determination.*) Let us leave the decision to my citizens. (*To Group.*)

Do you believe that I'm 25?

AUGUSTE PAPON. Madame! Why don't we carry on? You have so much wisdom to impart that we don't need to waste time with niggling details.

LOLA MONTEZ. Why will no one believe that I'm 25?

LINDSAY WILSON. Well...

MADAME AZAM. Because of Madame's life experience! Madame, no 25 year old could have accomplished what you have.

AUGUSTE PAPON. I have a suggestion. I believe it's all about what you call "spin".

LINDSAY WILSON. No one who works in PR *actually* calls it that.

AUGUSTE PAPON. It's all about changing perspectives. Let's call you...25 – by the power of 5.

LOLA MONTEZ. I like it. (*LOLA MONTEZ thinks*) I like it. He's got something!

AUGUSTE PAPON. She likes it! (*Beat.*) Now, Madame, now that I've got your ear, I was thinking. This Republic thing, well, you're going to need a second.

LOLA MONTEZ. Lola Montez. 25 by the power of 5. It's got...*panache*, doesn't it?

LINDSAY WILSON. Or we could just neglect the age thing altogether and present you as someone who is above and beyond petty squabbles about age. (*Beat.*) If you don't object, perhaps we could move on. I have something I'd like to, well, *pitch* to the group.

AUGUSTE PAPON. That's hardly necessary. I think we've crafted it nicely – despite your best attempts to insult and injure Madame with your libelous misinformation.

LINDSAY WILSON. Strong words, sir. Madame, I would plead the case of experience and in case you're wrong Papon in relation to Madame's image...

LOLA MONTEZ. Is it possible? Could you be wrong?

LINDSAY WILSON. I do have many years practice in these things. And I did get us all this (*Indicating the room and the merchandise.*) I don't like to poor mouth, but I do have to point out that Papon hasn't contributed much to this campaign at all.

AUGUSTE PAPON. I have so!

LINDSAY WILSON. What?

AUGUSTE PAPON. My...spirit.

LINDSAY WILSON. Your spirit. I see...Madame, I leave it up to your sound judgment.

LOLA MONTEZ. Alright...yes...yes. Fine. We'll try your way too – but I get final say!

LINDSAY WILSON. Of course, of course.

ACTOR takes his place and LOLA MONTEZ stands in front of him.

LINDSAY WILSON. What did he say to you?

LOLA MONTEZ. That I was the most beautiful creature he'd ever seen – that I had impudent eyes! (*Girlishly.*) No, wait! That was Wagner!

LINDSAY WILSON. Alright, Tom, let's begin with you as King Ludwig. A beautiful, young political...visionary has made her way into your presence. (*Beat.*)

ACTOR takes a long, indulgent moment to prepare by walking around the stage groaning and doing facial exercises. Everyone stares at ACTOR in bewilderment and mild apprehension. Then without any warning, he aggressively begins the scene.

ACTOR. Madame! I would have you know that this type of behavior is unacceptable in Bavaria!

LOLA MONTEZ. I demand a performance. Just one night. It will...*transform*...!

ACTOR. *Madame*, in Bavaria we are fans of the more *classical* forms. Go to Paris if you want to perform your vivacious can-can. (*To LINDSAY WILSON.*) I know that Ludwig didn't say that but – can we keep that? It's good isn't it? I improvised it.

AUGUSTE PAPON. I think “vivacious can-can” is a euphemism that Liszt is using against Madame.

LOLA MONTEZ. What?

AUGUSTE PAPON. Madame, he's calling you a loose woman.

LOLA MONTEZ. A what?

LINDSAY WILSON. A slut. (*Beat.*) But no! That isn't what he means. Carry on please.

LOLA MONTEZ. (*Striking her original pose.*) Can one perform to order? Your bureaucracies choke me! What is this classical stuff? Pirouettes? Pas-de-Chats? Classic?

Dead. But Flamenco! The Bolero Cadix! (*LOLA MONTEZ demonstrates badly.*) These dances are alive! My Spider Dance – guaranteed to be a hit! Highly individual - a dance of my homeland. You'll never see it anywhere else. You see there are two parts. In the first part, I am the spider spinning her web and in the second, the heroine who is caught in her own web. Then I recover and search for the spider in my clothes and when I discover it – I stamp on it!

AUGUSTE PAPON. Orders should be given that the band follow Madame Montez rather than she follow them.

LINDSAY WILSON. Like a circus horse.

LOLA MONTEZ. Pardon?

LINDSAY WILSON. Nothing. Shouldn't we see which version the citizens prefer? Show of hands which Montez you like better. Version 1 or Version 2? (*They take a tally of hands to decide which version is preferable.*)

LOLA MONTEZ. Good. Now, *you* will say: “Madame Montez, there is another concern...” Line!

AUGUSTE PAPON. I suggest that you say: “Madame, you are a glorious goddess whom I have loved from the first moment I saw you.” Just a humble suggestion from your servant who wants to do nothing more than please you in every way possible. (*Awkward Beat.*)

LINDSAY WILSON. That isn't the line. Azam?

MADAME AZAM (*Consulting the prompt book.*) “There has been some doubt cast on the –

LOLA MONTEZ. Yes! There has been some doubt cast on the excellency of your figure and to whether your bosom is a work of art or nature.

MADAME AZAM. Yes.

LINDSAY WILSON. Listen, I just want to speak professionally for a moment –

AUGUSTE PAPON. Oh, the girl wants to speak professionally!

LINDSAY WILSON. I...*think*...that it might be...useful if you maybe did the little dance we talked about – y’know? Giv’em a little something. A little show – y’know? Let’em see what old Montez is all about. (*To Group.*) Whatta you guys think? Applaud if you want to see Madame Montez’s dance – the one she did for King Ludwig of Bavaria – the one that made her *famous*.

LOLA MONTEZ. It hardly matters. I want to talk about the outline of my Republic. My ideas!

LINDSAY WILSON. (*Gesturing to Group.*) See those eyes?

LOLA MONTEZ. Yes.

LINDSAY WILSON. Glazed. (*Going over to a member of the Group and opening their eyes wide with her fingers.*) Glazed over. Lacquered with a thin glaze of boredom. People want...glitz! They want Castro in a convertible – they want Schwarzenegger wearing Kennedy’s ties! (*Pause.*)

LOLA MONTEZ. What does that mean? Who are those people?

LINDSAY WILSON. (*To Group.*) Do you want a leader who’s boring? Or do you want a leader who knows how to put on a hell of a show? I know which one I want. I leave it up to you to make up your mind. (*To Group.*) I know you guys want a leader that you can

say showed her boobs to a King and slept with a famous composer. That's someone who isn't afraid to stand up for what she believes in –

ACTOR. Or lie down.

AUGUSTE PAPON. Apologize!

ACTOR. No.

AUGUSTE PAPON. I will fight you.

ACTOR. (*ACTOR laughs.*) You?

AUGUSTE PAPON. Which would you prefer – pistols or – or – cyanide?

LINDSAY WILSON. (*Laughing nervously.*) Whoa! Hey! Buddies! Why all the “pistol-bang-bang-I’m-gonna-kill-you” talk? (*To Group.*) No pill-poppin’ speed freaks here. Nope, we’re all friends here.

AUGUSTE PAPON. The peon needs to apologize.

ACTOR. Did you say you’re gonna pee on me?

AUGUSTE PAPON. How fitting. He doesn’t know what “peon” means. That confirms it.

ACTOR. Confirms what?

AUGUSTE PAPON. That you are a flatulent-mouthed ape!

ACTOR. That’s it! (*ACTOR tackles AUGUSTE PAPON and they fight like public school boys knocking things over.*)

LOLA MONTEZ. (*Shrieking.*) Papon! You’re ruining everything!

AUGUSTE PAPON. Madame! I am defending your honor!

LINDSAY WILSON. (*Stepping in between.*) And scene! That was great guys! (*They continue to chase each other around the conference room slapping each other.*)

LINDSAY WILSON. Tom, why don't you go outside and...smoke a cigarette? That was really great. I really felt it. (*LINDSAY WILSON trips the ACTOR and pushes him out the door and locks the door.*) Right. Carrying on –

ACTOR. (*Knocking on the door.*) Let me in! (*Beat.*) Wilson – I'm calling the union right now. This is unjust. I'm going to protest. You won't even know what hit you!

LINDSAY WILSON. (*Talking loudly.*) Hahaha! Yes! That was a...live-action demo demonstrating that REALM and Lolaland are...intolerant of violence...because...*violence...is very...violent.*

MADAME AZAM. Oh dear...

LOLA MONTEZ. This is ridiculous. Sit down all of you and allow me to talk with my loyal subjects –

LINDSAY WILSON. *Focus group.* They're members of our *focus group.* To ensure my success with your target audience.

LOLA MONTEZ. Your success?

LINDSAY WILSON. Yes. Your success.

LOLA MONTEZ. But you just said “your” success.

LINDSAY WILSON. Yes. Your success.

LOLA MONTEZ. No. *Your* success. Papon? What did she say?

LINDSAY WILSON. He's the one who told me to call it a “focus group.”

AUGUSTE PAPON. Yes...well...you see...I felt it *beneficial* to change the wording slightly. Madame, you know you need a supportive audience. I didn't want you to feel...overwhelmed...you're a sensitive woman and...and violent. *Horribly violent.*

LOLA MONTEZ. (*Slaps AUGUSTE PAPON upside the head. To Group.*) I am no more violent than a – a –

LINDSAY WILSON. Fly?

LOLA MONTEZ. I am no more violent than a beautiful fly. Listen to your Lola - everything we need to fashion the ideal state is here. A ruler, her subjects – and a passionate desire to understand the true nature of liberty and justice! We here tonight will discover our ideal state and all under my benevolent leadership.

LINDSAY WILSON. What she means to say is that –

LOLA MONTEZ. You don't speak for me!

LINDSAY WILSON. Well...yes...*Madame*, I do.

LOLA MONTEZ. You are not allowed to address my subjects!

LINDSAY WILSON. Whatever you say has to be approved by me first!

LOLA MONTEZ. By me!

AUGUSTE PAPON. Perhaps I could help.

LOLA MONTEZ / LINDSAY WILSON. Shut up!

LOLA MONTEZ. Whose Republic is it? Yours or mine? Your viewpoint or mine? You are merely a liaison – no more than a glorified go-between – and here you are trying to steal my position – my words – *which you have no right to!*

LINDSAY WILSON. I think you'll find, *Madame*, that your ideas without me are...*antiquated* and that, frankly, no one knows who you are. You need someone to build a bridge between you and what people want and that person is me.

LOLA MONTEZ. People want me. No one else and certainly not you. They want their Lola. I thought that you would translate my essence, but I find you have...*disinvented* me.

LINDSAY WILSON. *(To Group.)* There are always a few glitches to be worked out aren't there? Now Lola, we're trying to figure out how to market you properly. You're amongst friends here. Now. For instance, your clothes. They're...ostentatious. *(To Group.)* How would you like to see your leader dressed? Business suit? Casual? Artful? Sporty? Fashion-conscious? From the pages of Vogue or the catalogs of LL Bean? *(LINDSAY WILSON moves to the flip chart. She picks a few group members and writes down their suggestions.)* Now. What topics would you like her to address – or not address? What kind of background would you like her to have? Madame Montez is really the perfect candidate – with so many lives – you can pick and choose to suit any mood.

LOLA MONTEZ. This is ridiculous! Lolaland is my Republic and will be governed according to my principles!

LINDSAY WILSON. But we've got to insure that the principles are popular - no?

LOLA MONTEZ. I wish to speak! I'm not some...dumb-cluck...I have ideas. Grand ideas! I originated the idea of –

LINDSAY WILSON. Of course you do. But they need to be “framed”!

LOLA MONTEZ. Don't listen to her. Tonight, Madame Lola Montez, Comtesse de Landsfelt – Dancer, Politician, Comtesse, Revolutionist, Fugitive and leader of the Republic of Lolaland – and her alone - elucidates her position as your leader. First! A rigorous program of education which will instruct in the higher arts of learning.

LINDSAY WILSON. Lola, perhaps you'd better let me prepare them for your speech.

LOLA MONTEZ. Absolutely not! *(Beat.)* Allow me to provide you with an example: Toby the Pig. Toby the Pig the first of his race to ever take pen in cloven hoof. To articulate his vision of the world. A product of an interspecies relationship. Someone who

ascended above his position and became a representation of all that is possible through a rigorous program of art and culture! According to certain principles. A highly original individual! I met him when the touring company he was with passed through Bavaria. I held a small dinner of a select few where he told us of his former lives as a cat, a flea, a scarab beetle, Romulus the first founder of Rome, Alexander the Great, and as good friend and muse of William Shakespeare's. Now –

LINDSAY WILSON. Ha! Ha! Ha! What a great anecdote. A metaphor for the citizen in the Republic of Lolaland. Why don't we talk about our plans for REALM? For instance, *my* suggestion that we have a giant dance party led by you – Madame Lola Montez! I hire some world class DJ's – everyone's there inhabiting their bodies joyfully! You see dance – and I know Lola that you'll agree with me –

AUGUSTE PAPON. That's ludicrous! If anyone is making suggestions about the proper governance, it is me. I suggest a parade with a float on which Madame serenely rests like a flower on a pond!

ACTRESS. Oh gag!

LOLA MONTEZ. I am speaking! (*Beat.*) Now, Toby's father was an independent gentleman of some means who roamed a Duke's estates rooting for truffles. His mother was in service at a local inn –

LINDSAY WILSON. What a fascinating experiment! Now, why don't we look at the outline of the Republic's policies that I've prepared? If you could open your pamphlets –

AUGUSTE PAPON. I thought that we could have a festival celebrating Madame's various achievements – small or great! I, of course, would host it.

LINDSAY WILSON. That's stupid!

LOLA MONTEZ. Listen! Only a few hours after Toby was born, he was taken from his parents in the belief that to be suckled in the company of his own animal kind would prevent his progression, and his master's recitation of the famous speech by Shakespeare "To be or not to be..." provided the young pig with his earliest education. Everyone was in agreement that Toby spoke French with an uncommonly fine accent especially when replying "*oui*" in the affirmative. Proof of the importance of an early and polite education in the Art of Fascinating.

LINDSAY WILSON. That's trademarked by the way.

LOLA MONTEZ. What would Toby have become had he stayed on the farm? (*Beat.*) Do you want to stay swine rooting in your own filth? Living in some shack in County Sligow, apprenticed to a milliner and married off to a judge three times your age? (*Beat.*)
Do you?

LINDSAY WILSON. She doesn't mean to call you swine. She means –

LOLA MONTEZ. In the Republic of Lolaland, we will –

LINDSAY WILSON. REALM!

LOLA MONTEZ. - have a rigorous program of education: Courage, truthfulness, temperance, justice not yet ascertainable, gymnastics and music – you will be warriors! And above all else, written histories will be stricken so as to shield our citizens from bad myths which would in turn make them brutish or soft. Everything that was said before will cease to exist. A new Lola! A new history!

AUGUSTE PAPON. Oh what a place! With me as your assistant!

LOLA MONTEZ. Not *now*, Papon. (*Beat.*) Each one of you will play their part in the formation of our ideal state. Tonight? I give you entry to Lolaland! (*Beat.*) You may now applaud. (*Beat.*) Applaud! (*Beat.*) Papon?

AUGUSTE PAPON. Yes, Madame?

LOLA MONTEZ. I require your assistance.

AUGUSTE PAPON. Finally! Oh, yes, finally! Of course Madame. It would be my great *pleasure.*

LINDSAY WILSON. Madame, I was just thinking that perhaps we could have a whole line of Toby the Pig related merch – stuffed animals, coloring books, bacon, and an animated series. We could talk about endorsements – I'll handle the whole thing! Endorsements, contracts...

LOLA MONTEZ. *Later.* That's for later. Now.

AUGUSTE PAPON. Or never.

LINDSAY WILSON. I hate you.

LOLA MONTEZ. (*To Group.*) What was it that Toby the Pig understood? (*Beat.*) *The Art of Fascinating.* Which is something that your Lola understands with every fiber of her being. (*Beat.*) Do you know what the Bavarians said about me? That I had beauty and absolutely no talent and so violent a character that the King, partly from love and partly from fear, sunk into the position of a simple register of my acts as his mistress.

AUGUSTE PAPON. Most certainly untrue Madame. I have proof – remember how you sent me to see King Ludwig? How my mother wrote a letter for you explaining that you had a fever and needed to collect a million francs to travel directly to Italy for your health where the King should purchase you a palace and meet you there. Oh he loved you and

what a laugh we had about that. Oh Madame, you're so subversive. A renegade. We had such a laugh...Oooh-hoo-hoo...

LOLA MONTEZ. Papon! That is quite enough. You know I was always only a *chère amie* of the King.

AUGUSTE PAPON. (*Laughing.*) Mr. Wittelsbacher we called him when you were still his mistress –

LOLA MONTEZ. His mistress! No sir! You are a villain. That is a lie. (*To Group.*) *Don't listen to him – I have always remained true to my principles of independence – I had no intrigue with that old man. I was a chère amie of the King and molded his mind in the love of freedom. I was engaged in political business. You might call me a prime-minister if you please. Or as the King said – I was the King. There was a man of straw there as a prime-minister, but he was only a man of straw. (Beat.) His mistress? Certainly not. I merely wished to show him what he hadn't been able to see on his own – what I had seen. What you believe is a bad myth meant to make you brutish.*

LINDSAY WILSON. Perhaps Madame could continue with her excellently written speech?

AUGUSTE PAPON. I wouldn't say it was excellently *written – delivered* of course – but *written...*

LOLA MONTEZ. Yes. (*Beat.*) But it is one *I've* written entitled *The Art of Fascinating according to Madame Lola Montez, Comtesse de Landsfelt.* (*Beat.*) "*When Aristotle was asked why everybody was so fond of beauty, he replied, 'It is the question of a blind man'"* (*Beat. MONTEZ waits for them to laugh.*) I came up with that bit – it's funny isn't it? (*Threatening.*) *Isn't it?*

LINDSAY WILSON. Perhaps I could interject here? I have this live-action unit planned. I think it'll explain what you're trying to say – anyway, here – here – take one of these paper bags and a marker. Hand them around. Don't be shy! There now, there's a paper bag and a marker for everyone...Now...place the paper bag over your head.

LOLA MONTEZ. Pardon?

LINDSAY WILSON. Wait. You'll see. Now. Look down and carefully appraise what you see. Look at the person next to you and carefully appraise what you see. Scrutinize. Project yourself onto the plain brown paper of the bag. Rule the First: Whoever you are, imagine yourself as someone slightly different and better. Now. Get up and change chairs. *(After the Group sits down.)* Okay. Remove the bag. Now. Imagine that you're a portrait painter. Draw yourself as accurately as possible on the bag. Don't be clever. Be as realistic and unflinching as possible. Now. Look under your seats again. There's a picture. Pick it up. You'll notice the stick affixed to it. Place the mask in front of your face. Repeat the same steps. Voila! Keep it there until you are who you've always wanted to be – me!

LOLA MONTEZ. Me!

LINDSAY WILSON. You. *(Beat.)* Of course.

LOLA MONTEZ. But you said you.

LINDSAY WILSON. Meaning you, of course. *(Beat.)*

AUGUSTE PAPON. It's the girl.

LOLA MONTEZ. What?

AUGUSTE PAPON. It's her face – it's the girl. Madame – you've been usurped!

LINDSAY WILSON. I use it merely as a...as a...illustration...it's not meant to be taken seriously. In fact I quote you in the next bit - Rule the Second: "Remember that we do not like men so much as for the merit they can find in them, as for that they can find in us". Now put down the masks. Look at yourself again. Look at the person next to you. Try to figure out whether what they're seeing is how you want to be seen. If you do not see how you want to be seen, you will need a high degree of art to transform yourself in order to fascinate. Don't get frustrated. It's not impossible. You will achieve success when you realize that all you ever wanted to be and all you'll ever amount to is completely tied up in the reality of appearance but if it's artfully rendered...*well...*

(Beat.)

AUGUSTE PAPON: From here on in I want to be known as Frère Antoine! (*Beat.*) What? I do. If you can be known as Madame Lola Montez, Comtesse de Landsfelt, then I can be known as Auguste Papon, Marquis de Sarde or...Frère Antoine!

LOLA MONTEZ. Papon! Don't *participate*. Those are *false* credentials.

AUGUSTE PAPON. Doesn't matter! I want to be known as Frère Antoine.

LOLA MONTEZ. Papon! That is a ridiculous choice. I won't allow it.

AUGUSTE PAPON. I would be *very careful* about belittling *my* choices in life, *Madame*. You never know where and *how* inspiration may take one – *Mademoiselle Marie Marie...*

LOLA MONTEZ. You wouldn't –

AUGUSTE PAPON. Rosanne Gilbert – Betsy Watson – Betty – Eva James – Mrs. Burton – Mrs. Heald – Fanny Gibbons – Maria Dolores de Porres y Montez. Does anyone know any of these women? (*To LOLA MONTEZ.*) Do you know any of these people?

LOLA MONTEZ. Papon!

AUGUSTE PAPON. Madame? If you don't want me to continue with your aliases – goodness knows *why* you have them – I suggest that you take *very seriously* my demand to be known as Frère Antoine! I demand to be made the Marquis de Sarde! And I want a palace – with eunuchs – and a carpet – and a servant – and finally tailored clothes – and peacocks – elegant, long-plumed peacocks that eat out of my hand –

LINDSAY WILSON. You're just yelling things out! You can't do that!

AUGUSTE PAPON. And you! From you, I demand that I be represented in the best light possible for future generations to look on me as a shining example! I want to be the Apollo figure in this mythology. I don't want any more of your inane drivel about me passing into the history books.

LOLA MONTEZ. (*Viciously.*) You two have ruined everything! (*To Group.*) They are not to be believed! She is an imposter! A liar! A prevaricator! How dare you intrude and change things? No. I will show you how I want to be seen!

LINDSAY WILSON. Lola, you have to try to stay calm. You need to appear to be level headed and noble –

LOLA MONTEZ. You do not control how I behave! You must allow me to make my case. (*LOLA MONTEZ goes to a corner a picks up a square frame covered in cloth. She places it on the easel of the flip-chart and unveils it.*) This is the portrait that I once rejected. It sat in the corner of Goldener Hirsch before I realized that the artist – I forget his name now – a chocolate box artist – had seen me not as I was but as I would be...I despised it for such a long time too until I was finally able to see its value. The pose like

Mary Queen of Scots, the newspaper headlines hidden in the background. I am the leader of my own Revolution in this portrait. I am who I will be.

AUGUSTE PAPON. She danced in Paris under the name Mademoiselle Marie Marie where she took “the rag off the bush”!

LOLA MONTEZ. Papon, you are veering dangerously close to feeling my wrath.

AUGUSTE PAPON. Madame, I have had that...nullifying...experience for all the years I have been in your service. All I have ever asked in return was a little attention – a little notice. But you have given me none. I wouldn’t want to say what this has driven me to do...

LOLA MONTEZ. Lies and...and...bad myths about me. You don’t think I’m familiar with this tactic? I don’t respond well to blackmail.

LINDSAY WILSON. Papon! Madame! We are obviously overheated in this room. We need a break – *I need a break...* (*To Group.*) How about a break? Refreshments! Azam, get the refreshments ready – you can buy them from Madame Azam. You’ll have to excuse us...we obviously have some...some things to iron out ...Oh! Also! I – we – want to get your feedback. Let me know what you think so far. Your feedback is *essential*. The Comtesse will be signing autographs for a small fee...so, yes, break! (*We hear a thumping on the door. It’s the ACTOR.*) But don’t go in the hall. There’s a deranged actor out there. But have something to drink – from the Comtesse’s own line of beverages!

LOLA MONTEZ: But first, I ask that you stand and give tribute. To your new leader! If you wish to kiss my hand, make sure you’ve washed your lips first!

LINDSAY WILSON. (*Laughing hysterically*) Ha. Ha. Hahahaha! Oh, Madame, you have a career in comedy ahead of you. (*LINDSAY WILSON grabs LOLA MONTEZ and*

grabs her by the arm and drags her to the refreshments table.) You look tired Madame, perhaps you should have something to eat! Oh, you're hungry you say? Keep eating Madame. *Plenty* of food and drink to be had. Oh? You're out of spirits and liable to say things you don't mean when you're hungry? I'm *sure* they understand. No, I know you're sorry. *Don't you worry.*

AUGUSTE PAPON. (*Approaching a few members of the Group.*) Hello. I'm Frère Antoine, Marquis de Sarde – *not* Auguste Papon as I was previously introduced. Brainwashing is only one of their tactics. Perhaps you are not aware, but I am a political prisoner being held against my will by Madame Lola Montez and Lindsay Wilson. You've witnessed their treatment of me. It's up to you to get the word out about the types of abuses being performed on the citizens of the Republic of Lolaland. You could be next unless we do something. When I give the cue, like this, (*AUGUSTE PAPON makes the shadow puppet gesture of a bird flying.*) we will all rise and (*Yells.*) REVOLT! (*Quietly.*) *Revolt.* If you're not against them, you're for them. Okay, they're looking this way... Now, pretend that this conversation never happened. It is of the utmost importance if you and I want to get out of here intact. Laugh! Laugh like I'm telling a joke and then just slowly walk away and look at something. (*AUGUSTE PAPON awkwardly turns and walks away and goes and pretends to stare at the portrait of LOLA MONTEZ on the flip-chart.*)

MADAME AZAM. Photos? Get your photos with the Comtesse here! Line starts to the left. I also have beer, wine and soda – all courtesy of Madame Montez! Right here. Line starts to the right. Get 1 drink for 5 or 2 for 6 – you have to buy the second one 'cuz it tastes better than the first!

ACTRESS. *(To a member or a few members of the Group.)* Could you maybe, I don't know, put in a few words for me? I'm not doing anything. All I get to do is hang around the food table – my character doesn't even have a name. It's just "Actress". I'm a real person, you know. I'm sick of just waiting around. If you talk to her tell her I want something to do!

LINDSAY WILSON is always anxiously watchful at LOLA MONTEZ's side.

LOLA MONTEZ. *(When she approaches, she extends her hand to be kissed. To members of the Group who approach her or are milling near her in the room:)* Thank you for being here. What is it that you do? Ah...I was once upon a time, for a brief period, apprenticed to a milliner. Lola understands what it is to work with your hands. People like you will be useful in my Republic – everyone in their proper place. *(Beat.)* May I introduce you to Lindsay Wilson? A forward thinker in service to the Republic. She is my newly appointed *Vice-President* of the Republic of Lolaland. *(AUGUSTE PAPON overhears this and chokes.)*

LINDSAY WILSON. Lola! Really?

AUGUSTE PAPON. *(To members of the Group standing by him.)* Do you see the tyranny? Anyone can be promoted or demoted for any little thing.

LOLA MONTEZ. *(To Group.)* You have heard a lot said about me here by a certain radical element by the name of Auguste Papon. A Judas. A snake in the grass of the Republic. He has waged a war of innuendo –

AUGUSTE PAPON. After forty years of service! *Impossible!*

LINDSAY WILSON. *(Seizing on this idea.)* A smear campaign. Papon –

AUGUSTE PAPON. I'll show them a smear campaign!

LINDSAY WILSON. - has issued a smear campaign against Madame Montez. A smear campaign totally unwarranted, unnecessary – prompted by petty jealousy and insecurity.

AUGUSTE PAPON seizes a black marker from the conference table and begins to draw a beard and mustache on the portrait. He begins to write a word underneath: “Fasc”.

LOLA MONTEZ. Precisely. And I ask that you disregard what he has said and –

LINDSAY WILSON. The bad myths about Madame Montez.

LOLA MONTEZ. *Precisely.* And I wish to inform you that his position in the Republic has been reevaluated and he will be terminated. Insubordination cannot be tolerated. We must resort to whatever means / necessary -

LINDSAY WILSON. / Perhaps it’s time that we begin again?

LOLA MONTEZ. Exactly what I was going to say.

MADAME AZAM. Actually, Madame, in the prompt book it says that you are supposed to say “Papon, gather my subjects together.”

LOLA MONTEZ. Well that line should be stricken and replaced with “Wilson, gather my subjects together.”

MADAME AZAM. Very well, Madame.

LOLA MONTEZ. Wilson, gather my subjects together.

II: The Two Republics

LINDSAY WILSON. Of course. (*Turning.*) Everyone! If you could take your seats we'll...we'll... (*Seeing the portrait.*) What happened?

LOLA MONTEZ. What is on my portrait? Look at that horrible little beard and moustache! "Fasc"? What does that mean?

LINDSAY WILSON. I think it's...

AUGUST PAPON. Fascist, Madame.

LOLA MONTEZ. Who did this? Who would do this? (*Beat.*) WHO DID THIS? Surely someone must have seen something? (*To MADAME AZAM.*) You! Who did this?

MADAME AZAM. I was with you and Ms. Wilson the whole time.

LOLA MONTEZ. Papon? Did you see?

AUGUSTE PAPON. I was with your citizens the whole time.

LOLA MONTEZ. Is that true? (*Beat.*) Was it one of you? I cannot have any free-floating radicals in my Republic. (*To a person in the Group.*) You! You with the guilty face! Wilson! Get rid of them!

LINDSAY WILSON. ...But Madame, it's not their fault. (*Beat.*) This could hurt your position.

LOLA MONTEZ. Get rid of them! Someone must take responsibility for this and since no one will, I will *make* someone responsible for this. This is defacement of the Republic's property! (*Beat.*) Now!

LINDSAY WILSON. (*Taking the Group member by the arm. Apologetically.*) Sorry about this, but I'm going to have to escort you out.

AUGUSTE PAPON. Wait, Madame! I know who it was.

LOLA MONTEZ. You do?

AUGUSTE PAPON. It was me!

LOLA MONTEZ. How could I ever think that one of my citizens would do this? I apologize. Of course it's only love that you feel for me. You love me! A pure love like the love for the Virgin Mary.

AUGUSTE PAPON. Where is the liberty in this Republic of Lolaland? Liberty and justice – the two founding principles? But I ask you – all of you – is there justice in forcing me to continue playing a role I don't want to play? I want to be Frère Antoine!

LINDSAY WILSON. You're wasting time.

LOLA MONTEZ. This is vandalism and insubordination – it is *illegal!*

AUGUSTE PAPON. They are allowed to decide. They deserve the truth. They can't always take your side. You must allow me to talk as myself. I won't be held hostage, you know!

LINDSAY WILSON. (*To Group.*) No one's holding him hostage.

AUGUSTE PAPON. No? (*To Group.*) Let me ask all of you – who do you think is happier? The just or unjust man?

LINDSAY WILSON. Of course, you're right, Papon. We can debate that later. Consider it on the table. And I and Madame Montez are open to discussions of all different kinds – that's why she and I are such an excellent choice as a leader. Even this latest turn gladdens her. To see that the people in her Republic – especially those closest to her – feel free to express their own radical opinions.

AUGUSTE PAPON. What are you doing?

LINDSAY WILSON. Nothing. Stating the facts.

AUGUSTE PAPON. What did you just say?

LINDSAY WILSON. I was merely putting what you were saying more concisely.

AUGUSTE PAPON. But that's the problem! I don't want to be framed! I am being held hostage unjustly. But the truth will out! I will say what I want to say and *exactly* as I want to say it.

LOLA MONTEZ. You lying little weasel! I have given you *everything* and you have betrayed me!

LINDSAY WILSON. I'm sure we can work something out that's beneficial to everyone.

AUGUSTE PAPON. No. I want to say what I have to say to everyone without...interruption or intrusion from you! I will not let you – or her – or *anyone* – spoil my political aspirations!

LINDSAY WILSON. You mean *our* political aspirations.

AUGUSTE PAPON. No. Now, all of you listen – I have been a *longtime* supporter of the Madame. I don't know if you know what that means... (*Beat.*) Do you know what I always say? A confidence is a confidence. And I have been –

LOLA MONTEZ. Papon! I am warning you! (*To WILSON.*) Stop him. You must stop him.

LINDSAY WILSON. Papon...we can arrange something. A settlement of a sort.

AUGUSTE PAPON. I have been a longtime supporter of Madame but do you know that she tried to get rid of me once before? *She* accused *me* of being a fraud because I hadn't pleased her in some detail. My position with her was as precarious as that. At the time there was a pamphlet circulating – “Lola Montez and Her Monkey Papon” – Imagine. (*Beat.*) Imagine all that I might have done for her and the Republic... (*Beat.*) But

underneath it all, she's afraid of me, you see. Afraid of my knowledge of her – afraid that I have something on her. She demands my silence and obedience or that I leave her and lose my position.

LINDSAY WILSON. Do you still have the pamphlet, Papon?

LOLA MONTEZ. You told me you had destroyed all those things. Those writings...the nuisance papers – all of it.

AUGUSTE PAPON. (*He takes a paper from his breast-pocket and unfolds it.*) Well, as you see Madame, I haven't. Frère Antoine is a man with many sleeves and many tricks in each. (*To Group.*) I stayed by the side of Madame no matter how much it withered me, no matter how much hatred she heaped on me. That is what it is to be in love with an ideal. I have sacrificed my life to the cause of Madame. (*Beat.*) I offer you the truth – she never loved King Ludwig. We drank to her health every night at dinner because he's the one who paid for it! The idiot!

LOLA MONTEZ. You're betraying me right now – in front of everyone!

AUGUSTE PAPON. But, as I said, a confidence is a confidence – *n'est-ce pas?* And now you have become the favorite. (*Beat.*) But what if there were certain...skeletons in your closet? Certain "bad myths" that you wouldn't want your citizens to know...?

LINDSAY WILSON. I have nothing to hide.

LOLA MONTEZ. Wilson?

LINDSAY WILSON. I don't. He's obviously trying to stir up trouble.

AUGUSTE PAPON. Am I? I happen to have it on *good authority* that you have a secret lover. A secret lover that might endanger your integrity...

LOLA MONTEZ. What?

LINDSAY WILSON. No.

AUGUSTE PAPON. Yes! By the name of Henry.

LOLA MONTEZ. What?

LINDSAY WILSON. No!

LOLA MONTEZ. Henry what?

AUGUSTE PAPON. Henry *what*, indeed!

LINDSAY WILSON. Leave him out of this!

AUGUSTE PAPON. And it's no wonder he's a secret.

LOLA MONTEZ. Why? Who is this Henry?

LINDSAY WILSON. It's nothing!

(Beat.)

AUGUSTE PAPON. He's a...*donkey!*

LOLA MONTEZ. No!

AUGUSTE PAPON. Yes!

LINDSAY WILSON. I'll never see him again. *(Beat.)* I was weak. Horribly weak.

(Beat.) No! Wait! It's all lies! Bad myths! He's only saying this to destroy the Republic.

Banish him, Madame. We have to banish him...Propaganda! It's propaganda.

AUGUSTE PAPON. I want to figure more heavily in our...mythology – and I want my position back in the Republic. I want to be known as Frère Antoine. Make me its vice-president again. I refuse to be demoted to a minor role.

LOLA MONTEZ. And if I refuse? *(AUGUSTE PAPON makes the shadow puppet hand gesture of a bird flying.)* What are you doing, Papon?

AUGUSTE PAPON. *(To Group.)* Stand up! Stand up all of you! Stand up for what you believe in! You see – I have my own soldiers and we will build our own Republic! The Republic of Frere Antoineland - Built upon...my *own* ideals! *(Beat.)* And I have these – *(AUGUSTE PAPON pulls out a pile of loose leaf papers.)*

LOLA MONTEZ / LINDSAY WILSON. What is that?

AUGUSTE PAPON. Certain letters that Madame wouldn't want anyone to see. Certain pictures that Miss Wilson wouldn't want circulated...

LINDSAY WILSON. What...?

AUGUSTE PAPON. Consider this a temporary shame anesthetic.

LINDSAY WILSON. You little shit!

AUGUSTE PAPON. No names please, my lady – and I use that term loosely. Since we're all on the "same page", as it were, you'll have to do as I say or suffer.

LOLA MONTEZ. What do you want?

AUGUSTE PAPON. A bloodless coup d'état.

LINDSAY WILSON. What do you mean?

AUGUSTE PAPON. In order to prevent a full-scale peasant uprising – despite the fact that I know Madame is well-acquainted with those – I am insisting that Madame step down because she is an imposter.

LOLA MONTEZ. WHAT?

AUGUSTE PAPON. *(To Group.)* You will be thankful to me for getting rid of her.

LOLA MONTEZ. Papon? What are you proposing?

AUGUSTE PAPON. That *I* am Madame Lola Montez, Comtesse de Landsfelt and I am taking your place.

LOLA MONTEZ. But that's impossible! *I'm* Lola Montez.

AUGUSTE PAPON. But Madame – how can you prove it? You have nothing. I'm the one holding all the proof. (*To Group*) I'd like to introduce myself: I am Madame Lola Montez, Comtesse de Landsfelt.

LOLA MONTEZ. But-but-but *I* am leader of the Republic of Lolaland.

AUGUSTE PAPON. Not anymore, Madame.

LOLA MONTEZ. Then who am I?

LINDSAY WILSON. And who am I?

AUGUSTE PAPON. The time will arrive when I'll inform you of that. For now I mean to articulate my version of the Republic under the guidance of me, Madame Lola Montez. (*Beat.*) I envision a...three-headed woman – an elephant that plays the piano. You see the elephant was captured in the wild and made to play the piano and he hated it! He always believed that he followed his own feelings when he was made to play the same song over-and-over and slowly he came to love the music! This will be our Republic.

LINDSAY WILSON. That's the speech I wrote for Madame! You've stolen her speech. Azam! Isn't that her speech?

MADAME AZAM. Line-for-line but he's only doing what was written out for him.

LOLA MONTEZ. What?

MADAME AZAM. All of what he's said and done has been written out for him.

LOLA MONTEZ. (*Striking LINDSAY WILSON.*) Conspirator! Traitor!

LINDSAY WILSON. No. I'm not. I planned none of this.

MADAME AZAM. But you wrote the whole thing down.

LINDSAY WILSON. I did?

MADAME AZAM. You did. You're name is on it.

LINDSAY WILSON. But it wasn't me. I must have been someone else.

AUGUSTE PAPON. How convenient...some other Lindsay Wilson? You expect us to believe that?

LINDSAY WILSON. Yes!

AUGUSTE PAPON. If it wasn't you, Lindsay Wilson, than who was it? (*Beat. They all look around suspiciously.*)

LOLA MONTEZ. Don't tell me there's another saboteur.

LINDSAY WILSON. Of course not... (*Beat. They all look around suspiciously.*)

AUGUSTE PAPON. Then if you're not responsible for this then who is?

LOLA MONTEZ. Yes – who?

LINDSAY WILSON. I don't know.

AUGUSTE PAPON. Then if we're not creating this – and you didn't – then...

LOLA MONTEZ. Then what?

AUGUSTE PAPON. Then...we're not... *real!* (*They all gasp.*)

LOLA MONTEZ. But *they're* real.

AUGUSTE PAPON. Are they?

LOLA MONTEZ. Wilson, go find out. (*LOLA MONTEZ pushes her toward the Group.*)
Pinch one of them.

LINDSAY WILSON. Sorry... (*LINDSAY WILSON pinches one of the Group.*) They're real. At least they feel real...

LOLA MONTEZ. What does this mean?

AUGUSTE PAPON. It means that any of us can be whatever we want – or whoever –

LINDSAY WILSON. No, you idiot. It means everything that we're doing has been...predetermined for us. We're no freer than if we were in a cage.

LOLA MONTEZ. (*To LINDSAY WILSON.*) All my work...is that true?

LINDSAY WILSON. I guess...I've never been in this situation before... (*Long Beat.*) This is a strange question but – does that mean – I mean – if I'm not real and neither are you – does that mean I'm hollow? If I open my mouth and you yell into it will I echo?

LOLA MONTEZ. I don't know...

LINDSAY WILSON. Are we hollow people out for hire? (*Beat.*) Here, I'm going to open my mouth and one of you is going to yell into it to see if I echo. (*LINDSAY WILSON opens her mouth and LOLA MONTEZ, after a moment, yells into it: Hello? Is anyone in there? They hear an echo: Hello? Is anyone in there? Beat.*)

LINDSAY WILSON. I'm hollow.

LOLA MONTEZ. Try me. (*LOLA MONTEZ opens her mouth and LINDSAY WILSON yells into it: Hello? Is anyone in there? They hear an echo.*)

LINDSAY WILSON. *I'm hollow – you're hollow – he's definitely hollow –*

AUGUSTE PAPON. Excuse me? (*Beat.*)

LOLA MONTEZ. ...What do we do?

LINDSAY WILSON. What can we do?

AUGUSTE PAPON. What power do we have? (*Beat.*)

LINDSAY WILSON. (*Quietly.*) I don't know...we have to think. We have to outwit this... *thing*...

MADAME AZAM. Truths and facts oh truths and facts.

LINDSAY WILSON. Pardon?

LOLA MONTEZ. What are you blathering on about now? Don't you see we're trying to find a way out? Why don't you help us instead of blathering like a demented old crone?

MADAME AZAM. Facts and truth. Fact! Madame used to call me ridiculous! *Ridiculous?* Don't listen to the ridiculous old woman! Fact! I was a hairdresser, a pedicurist, the inevitable piano mistress, an *éminence grise*. Nothing more than a shadowy character named Madame Azam who kept a hotel in the Boulevard des Italiens. Do you see? No mention of my first name – and what did she care? Truth! Françoise is my first name. Hm? She doesn't even know it. *(Beat.)* There I was, stuck with her in Bavaria – there for the first night and for most of it and I was glad enough in my way to have been there. I accepted her horse as security – as payment for services rendered. She owed me money and I get a horse! A horse! Oh so stupid. *(Beat.)* To hell with gifts that eat! That's how history remembers Madame Azam, as if it were a fact, but it's not the truth! Madame Azam – the one who accepted a horse as payment! *(Beat.)* Madame? I've been waiting to ask you this – are you the horse's head?

LOLA MONTEZ. I – what – what do you mean? I'm not a horse! No. No! I'm not the horse's head!

MADAME AZAM. Then you must be the horse's ass!

LOLA MONTEZ. WHY IS EVERYONE SET ON CALLING ME AN ASS?

MADAME AZAM. Because it'll get you to listen - you're going to listen to me now because the script indicates that I've finally something to say and that you're not going to be talking, talking, talking. It's time to assert *my* will and to make my story right and I intend to take this moment and go with it as far as I can. *(Beat.)* You're terrified because you figure that you and what you say isn't original and you won't be remembered or

change anything in anyway – that goes for all three of you. Ask anyone – would you want to be remembered for all of eternity? Go ahead and ask them. (*Beat.*) No? I will. And I'll wager you a horse they would. (*MADAME AZAM asks three members of the group: Would you want to be remembered for all of eternity? And who do you think is the worst for this type of arrogance? Writers. The shapers of history. Whoever put this whole thing together. That's why we don't have any freedom – because we only exist for them! To tell their story! Oh! They court and petition – ask us to believe in their words – to deliver speeches – make promises for them – pah! What's the point of it all? There are some who get to speak, some who get spoken for and some who don't speak at all! Who cares about my voice? What if I've more to say? Hm? And now it's at an end - I am only a holder of words.*)

AUGUSTE PAPON. Let's try something.

LOLA MONTEZ. What?

LINDSAY WILSON. Let's try to figure out who the real Lola Montez is, and, if she's real, whether she exists and in what state and the one who can come up with a story that's...that's not in that book...wins.

LOLA MONTEZ. Wins what?

AUGUSTE PAPON. Lola Montez and the Republic of Lolaland.

LOLA MONTEZ. But *I'm* Lola Montez.

AUGUSTE PAPON. No. I am.

LINDSAY WILSON. Maybe I am? (*Beat.*)

LOLA MONTEZ. Impossible. I won't.

AUGUSTE PAPON. Why? Scared you won't be able to prove that you are who you say you are?

LINDSAY WILSON. That you're unoriginal?

(Beat.)

AUGUSTE PAPON. *Now...*how do we do this?

LINDSAY WILSON. I guess it's which one of us constructs a more appealing – sellable – image. I guess...

MADAME AZAM. None of you listen. It's no use.

LINDSAY WILSON. Were you told to say that?

MADAME AZAM. Yes. It's right here. It's no use...I'm meant to tell you it's no use.

(Long beat.)

AUGUSTE PAPON. I'll go first.

LOLA MONTEZ. No! I will. I'll speak on "The History of Heroines and Strong-Minded Women"...

LINDSAY WILSON. *(Suspiciously.)* Azam? What does the book say?

MADAME AZAM. That you three argue over who goes first and that next you choose that Madame Montez, Comtesse de Landsfelt, will speak on "The History of Heroines and Strong-Minded Women"... *(They all gasp.)*

LOLA MONTEZ. There's no way out!

AUGUSTE PAPON. Yes, it says that - but does it say which one of us is to *begin* as *Lola Montez*? *(Beat.)* Never mind. I, Lola Montez, will begin. "*I had left Paris at the beginning of June as a lady errant and raced about the world and I – I was on the point of receiving the title of Comtesse. A lovely property, horses, servants, in sum everything*

that could surround the official mistress of the King of Bavaria – not the official mistress – the bonne amie – the King if you will –”

LOLA MONTEZ. He’s getting it wrong. That isn’t what happened at all!

AUGUSTE PAPON. What are you insinuating? *(In an effort to be original, AUGUSTE PAPON pulls a scrap of paper out of his breast-pocket.)* I’ll just...consult this...“*in sum everything that could surround the official mistress of the King of Bavaria –”*

LOLA MONTEZ. But that’s a lie!

LINDSAY WILSON. Azam, what does the book say?

MADAME AZAM. That Papon and Montez fight over who goes first and in an effort to be original, Papon pulls a scrap of paper from his breast-pocket but the words on it have already been said.

AUGUSTE PAPON. But I have my official letters here. They’re real!

LOLA MONTEZ. *My* official letters.

AUGUSTE PAPON. *(Continuing.)* “*I was surrounded by the homage of great ladies, I went everywhere. All of Munich waited on me – ministers of state – generals – great ladies and I – I...*” *(Beat.)*

MADAME AZAM. “*I no longer recognized myself as Lola Montez.*”

LOLA MONTEZ. That’s what it says?

LINDSAY WILSON. Is everything they’re saying in the prompt book?

MADAME AZAM. *(Dejected.)* Yes...so far...

AUGUSTE PAPON. I know what the next line is! Don’t interfere.

MADAME AZAM. Yes...Madame.

LINDSAY WILSON. Of course you do Papon!

LOLA MONTEZ. (*To AUGUSTE PAPON.*) Is this my Republic or yours?

AUGUSTE PAPON. But you forget – there’s no “my” or “yours”.

LINDSAY WILSON. (*Anxiously.*) What comes next, Azam?

MADAME AZAM. I’m afraid to tell you. It’s not –

LINDSAY WILSON. What is it, Azam?

LOLA MONTEZ. No. I know what comes next. It’s my turn now. (*LOLA MONTEZ starts to play the part of LOLA MONTEZ, COMTESSE de LANDSFELT.*) “I am – was – the Comtesse de Landsfelt. When I was in Bavaria I had great parties for the ministers – the King – he couldn’t do me enough homage. (*Beat.*) Although surrounded by all the glories and homage of my most ambitious hopes – I sometimes dream –” (*Beat.*) But I was happy being the Comtesse...wasn’t I? I – I can’t remember right now. I just now – there was a...moment...that I felt that I had a memory or a memory of something that I have to say - something that isn’t in that book – that is totally unique to me... (*Long Beat.*) It’s gone... (*Beat.*) You know I wrote to that Fiorentino – that Italian journalist in Paris who has those thick lips like a chamber pot – just hoping he’d publish it in his journal so that I might finally have a more favorable review for my attempts. (*Beat.*) I never told him that such was my wish...to be forgotten and return triumphant as the leader of the Revolution.

There is thumping and banging on one of the windows of the conference room.

AUGUSTE PAPON. What is that?

LINDSAY WILSON. I – I don’t know. Azam? Does it say in the book?

MADAME AZAM. It says: “There is thumping and banging on one of the windows of the conference room.”

LINDSAY WILSON. Is there more?

MADAME AZAM. ...Yes – but I'm afraid to tell you...

LOLA MONTEZ. Never mind that! (*Beat.*) I have every intention of fighting out this duel to the death. Do you remember the students that unharnessed my horses and pulled my carriage? But what was never captured was that I had the power to spark – to speak – a nationalist uprising when it was nothing more than what was wanted! The cringers, the criers, the glorified secretaries – the great organizers chased me and *forty* sleds full of students to the Bavarian border and all the way I was their votive – my arms waving like two tapers – their burning luminary – sweet freedom's effigy – the great lady of freedom! (*There is thumping and banging on one of the windows of the conference room.*) Enough! It is *I* who has seen what has never been seen – it is *I* who will burn the casings off and there will appear – *I* will dare what must be dared!

AUGUSTE PAPON. Imposter!

LOLA MONTEZ. Fraud!

AUGUSTE PAPON. Tyrant!

LOLA MONTEZ. Who is this? Who is attacking me?

MADAME AZAM. Lola Montez.

LINDSAY WILSON. It's coming from outside.

AUGUSTE PAPON. People are waiting for *me* to speak to them. To say something sensible that isn't about appearance and isn't a lie.

LOLA MONTEZ. I will.

AUGUSTE PAPON. *You?* And *who* are you? Is this some elaborate joke? You don't understand who you're collaborating with.

LOLA MONTEZ. And who is the “who” in this case?

AUGUSTE PAPON. Lola Montez.

LOLA MONTEZ. But I’m Lola Montez.

LINDSAY WILSON. No. You’re not. *I’m* the real Lola Montez.

LOLA MONTEZ / AUGUSTE PAPON. *You?*

AUGUSTE PAPON. Prove it.

LINDSAY WILSON. Prove what?

LOLA MONTEZ. That you’re the real Lola Montez and I’m not.

AUGUSTE PAPON. But that’s a ridiculous – *outlandish* – claim!

There is thumping and banging on one of the windows of the conference room.

AUGUSTE PAPON. Azam! Pull back the curtains – I want to see what’s out there.

LINDSAY WILSON. Don’t do it!

MADAME AZAM. As you wish, Madame.

LINDSAY WILSON. I’m scared.

LOLA MONTEZ. Don’t cling to me so tightly!

MADAME AZAM goes to the curtain.

LOLA MONTEZ. Get ready!

MADAME AZAM pulls back the curtain. There is a crowd of people outside, swarming at the window. They hold up signs saying: “Montez? An Imposter?” “Lola Montez? Often Cruel, Never Equal!” Flashes go off continually as people jostle for a picture. Squished against the glass is the ACTOR.

ACTOR. I told you she was here! Holed up in an office with political prisoners – Lola, you have to let the hostages go! We’re here! Don’t panic! We’re going to get the word

out about the injustices of Lolaland! I'm lucky I only nearly escaped with my life! Down with the Republic of Lolaland and Down. With. Lola! (*ACTOR turns and leads the chant: No more tyrants! ACTOR takes a bullhorn and addresses the crowd with the following.*) Has anyone checked out this Lola's claims? That she led Bavaria toward a Revolution for liberty? Have any of you checked into this Lola's claim that she had a successful career abroad as a Spanish dancer and Revolutionary? (*ACTOR holds up a stack of pamphlets.*) In my hands I hold a pamphlet that I have prepared illustrating the various ways the imposter in front of you – with the assistance of Lindsay Wilson – has lied about the real history of Lola Montez. I have carefully prepared these. Please read them. (*The ACTOR tosses the pamphlets up in the air and lets them rain down on the crowd.*) All that I ask is that you read these and listen to what I have to say – that you use these...*tools*...to make up your mind.

LOLA MONTEZ. Where is all the applause I am to receive? *Ladies and Gentlemen, Lola Montez has too much respect for these people...not to perceive that this stupid laughter comes from a few silly puppies... (To ACTOR.) Come here Liszt – give me your man's trousers and take in their place my woman's skirts; you are not worthy to be called a man...*

ACTOR. Do you hear the way she speaks to me?

LOLA MONTEZ. You know I am *always* serious, sir.

ACTOR. Alright. What do you want me to do?

LOLA MONTEZ. *You will take and wear my woman's skirts. Lola Montez is proud to be what she is, but you haven't the courage to fight with her! You are a coward! Yes! This woman who has no fear of you all! Papon?*

AUGUSTE PAPON. Montez?

LINDSAY WILSON. Wilson?

LOLA MONTEZ. Is it you who is my enemy or is it me?

LINDSAY WILSON. Did I make this moment or did you?

AUGUSTE PAPON. You've said it yourself, Madame: "*There's time for everything, you see, even Revolutions.*"

LOLA MONTEZ. But it is to be my Revolution! Azam, make them go away.
(*MADAME AZAM pulls the curtains closed. The sound of the crowd continues intermittently throughout the rest of the play.*)

LINDSAY WILSON. Now what?

LOLA MONTEZ. Skip ahead in the prompt book. We need to see what happens. Perhaps it can be avoided...

Act III: Is the Republic Possible?

MADAME AZAM flips forward in the prompt book and scans its pages.

LINDSAY WILSON. What am I supposed to do?

LOLA MONTEZ. Once there was a full-scale peasant revolt outside of my palace. I ran forward like so (*LOLA MONTEZ demonstrates.*) and shouted: “Kill me if you dare!” I waved my hands like so (*LOLA MONTEZ demonstrates.*) and said: “I am speaking to you as the Comtesse de Landsfelt – as your superior friend – I tell you that it is with great distress that I must flee because liberty has fled.” (*Beat.*) Open the curtains! I want to address them.

MADAME AZAM. But you just closed them!

LOLA MONTEZ. (*To Group.*) What do you think of your leader now?

LINDSAY WILSON. Let me address them! I’ll tell them this – that this has been a...misunderstanding...that if they let me address them they’ll see that I mean no harm – that *they* are my *first* concern.

AUGUSTE PAPON. Let me address *my* subjects! To let them know that they’ve been misled by an imposter and that *I* am real.

LOLA MONTEZ. Open the curtains again and let me face my accusers!

AUGUSTE PAPON. Let me address my accusers!

LINDSAY WILSON. No! They’re mine! (*LOLA MONTEZ, LINDSAY WILSON and AUGUSTE PAPON jostle with one another, pushing to get each other out of the way.*)

LOLA MONTEZ / LINDSAY WILSON / AUGUSTE PAPON. Open the curtains! Yes! Yes! Open the curtains! (*MADAME AZAM goes and draws back the curtains. This sends the crowd into a frenzy. There is yelling in the hall outside the doorway. The door*

to the conference room is kicked. The ACTOR has his faced pressed to the glass. A tomato or an egg gets thrown and splatters against the glass.)

ACTOR. That's her! That's the tyrant!

LOLA MONTEZ. How could you do this to me? Liszt? You loved me once...

ACTOR. Lady? My name is *Tom*. Tom! (*To Crowd.*) It's just another one of her brainwashing tactics! (*He chants.*) No more brainwashing! No more brainwashing!

AUGUSTE PAPON. If I could make a suggestion? I think "No more tyrants" rolls off the tongue more easily. (*Beat.*) Just a suggestion!

LOLA MONTEZ. Papon! I knew it would come to this. Betrayed by those closest to me!

AUGUSTE PAPON. (*Addressing Crowd.*) Listen to me! This woman who is speaking to you...is an imposter and this is why things have evolved in the manner in which they have. I am the real Lola Montez and I wish to say that in *my* Republic everyone will be able to go by whichever name they choose!

LOLA MONTEZ. You can't *become* me, Papon!

LINDSAY WILSON. They are *both* frauds! These Lola Montezs are frauds! They have attempted to usurp my place. I am Lola Montez and I am against slavery! No tyranny! We will live according to our natural wills with me as your benevolent guardian!

ACTOR. (*To Crowd.*) Do you see? The lies – the confusion! There's no way to get a straight answer! She's brainwashed them all into believing they're her! It's a cult! Don't you see all the...paraphernalia! There's probably poison in the Kool-Aid! Sleeping pills in the wine!

LOLA MONTEZ. Wait! Wait! Wait! Now, you call *me* a fraud but – tell me something Liszt – tell me *one thing* about yourself that's true.

ACTOR. That's how cults start. First it's a personal piece of information that they use to gain your trust and then – then –

LINDSAY WILSON. You don't have any idea what you're talking about!

ACTOR. All of this is a sham! You're brainwashed. You just want to be famous and you'll go along with anything that...that...witch says!

LINDSAY WILSON. A sham?

LOLA MONTEZ. A witch?

ACTRESS. That's right! You just want the power for yourself! (*To Crowd.*) I'm on the inside and not once – *not once* – did they express an interest in me. They wanted to use me as a pawn in their plans! *I* might as well say *I'm* Lola Montez – at least that way I'd get a part!

LINDSAY WILSON. You can't be Lola Montez.

ACTRESS. Why not? If I'm not Lola Montez then neither are you!

LINDSAY WILSON. Who says? You? I was born Maria Dolores y Porres y Montez to a Spanish bullfighter and a Castilian mother.

ACTRESS. That's not true. That didn't happen to *you*.

LINDSAY WILSON. You have no proof of that.

ACTRESS. Well, then...Where's your birth certificate?

LINDSAY WILSON. That is a *fact* – not a *truth*.

ACTRESS. That's so bogus! It tells you when and to whom you were born. You can't fake that. It's, like, *official*...or something...

AUGUSTE PAPON. I can quell this disagreement in six easy words: *I am the real Lola Montez.*

ACTOR. You see? Intentionally misleading. No one will take responsibility! They're hogs for the spotlight. Trying to get famous and hold onto power any way they can. Not everyone can be a leader, y'know. Not everyone's supposed to be famous.

ACTRESS. Madame Azam? Which one is the real Lola Montez?

MADAME AZAM. (*Consulting the prompt book.*) I believe the next line comes from Monsieur Papon.

AUGUSTE PAPON. (*Grinning. To ACTRESS.*) Insubordination is a capital offense in the Republic of Lolaland.

ACTRESS. Please!

LINDSAY WILSON. He's right. You are henceforth banned.

MADAME AZAM. I didn't want to tell you...

ACTRESS. You can't ban me! You're not even Lola Montez. This is so...*stupid!*

ACTOR. Tyrant! (*To Crowd.*) No more tyrants! No more tyrants!

AUGUSTE PAPON. You see? It's much easier to say! Much more effective.

ACTRESS. I didn't do anything! You can't do this!

LOLA MONTEZ. I think you'll find that *I* can.

LINDSAY WILSON. And *I* have. (*Beat.*) You are dismissed.

ACTRESS. But —

LOLA MONTEZ. It's best that you go and I wish you all the best with what you are about to confront out there. Radicals are not so nearly as generous with other radicals as

you would think. (*LOLA MONTEZ, AUGUSTE PAPON and LINDSAY WILSON corner the ACTRESS and herd her towards the door.*)

ACTRESS. (*To Group.*) All of you! How can you sit there?

LOLA MONTEZ. My loyal citizens back me totally!

AUGUSTE PAPON. Now, I'm afraid that you need to go.

ACTRESS. Stop! Ow! You're hurting me!

LOLA MONTEZ. One of you get the door.

AUGUSTE PAPON. I'm not getting it. I'm Lola Montez and you obey me.

LINDSAY WILSON. Well, I'm not getting it. I'm Lola Montez and you obey *me*.

LOLA MONTEZ. One of you get the door!

ACTRESS. Oh for god's sake! I'll get it. (*To Crowd.*) You've seen it for yourselves!

(*AUGUSTE PAPON, LOLA MONTEZ and LINDSAY WILSON force the ACTRESS out the door and slam the door closed. Beat.*)

LOLA MONTEZ. Close the curtains, Azam! (*LOLA MONTEZ is panting and leans against a wall to regain her strength.*) What is happening to my Republic?

LINDSAY WILSON. Everything I built is...is...*disintegrating*...

LOLA MONTEZ. My ideals! (*To Group.*) You have to understand...I won't flee – not this time – I won't flee because liberty has fled. There is time – for *everything* you see—even revolutions. It was me that said that, wasn't it? We are now free-floating radicals and I am your outcast Empress...

AUGUSTE PAPON. I dreamed this moment – I dreamed I wanted to open my eyes. To open them and find that I had an eternal audience. To finally *be* someone in relation to something.

LINDSAY WILSON. I want oratory fireworks – something to announce to the world who I am – *finally*. A political manifesto. A way of life. (*Beat.*) I want people to remember me. (*Beat.*)

LOLA MONTEZ. I have no one I can trust – no one to build my Republic upon. (*Beat.*)

MADAME AZAM. (*She consults the book.*) But that’s ridiculous...*Mesdames*. We’re here.

LOLA MONTEZ. No, Azam, it’s impossible. They want blood now. They’ve smelt it and they want it. (*Beat.*) I’m afraid so much of one’s life is defined by popular opinion.

AUGUSTE PAPON. It’s true. We can never escape it for long.

LINDSAY WILSON. I want the Republic – I won’t die as Lola Montez without someone remembering me for *something*. For building something.

AUGUSTE PAPON. And, again, I say that *I* am the real Lola Montez.

LOLA MONTEZ. You both seem strange to me now. I need to free myself from you. I feel as if I’m being crowded by a million grasping hands. (*Beat.*) I need to free myself from these words and get out ahead of them.

MADAME AZAM. Then, Madame, we will do it together – all bound up as we are now.

LINDSAY WILSON. The Republic of Lolaland sketched according to my divine pattern

–

LOLA MONTEZ. – according to *my* standard.

AUGUSTE PAPON. Or course, but –

LOLA MONTEZ. But what?

AUGUSTE PAPON. There has to be room for me somewhere in there.

MADAME AZAM. Mesdames, we carry in us every story that will ever be created! At the place that we find ourselves at this very moment is like the moment when the elephant played all the keys on the piano with his trunk – you’re playing every song that has ever been written – or will be written – just waiting for you to put them in their particular and unique order. We will all remain and piece the Republic together.

LOLA MONTEZ. But who are you?

MADAME AZAM. Someone who wants to create the Republic and history and a place for myself in it!

LINDSAY WILSON. We need a hundred Republics – fifty – *twenty!*

AUGUSTE PAPON. A triumphant Republic!

LINDSAY WILSON. We are all of these people here tonight who wish for the extraordinary in the ordinary – to be fascinated – to remember and be remembered – to be transformed – to feel... *free* – to feel... a part of something.

LOLA MONTEZ. Who are you to be saying such inflammatory things?

LINDSAY WILSON. Lola Montez. Who are *you?*

LOLA MONTEZ. Lola Montez. (*To AUGUSTE PAPON.*) And you?

AUGUSTE PAPON. Lola Montez. (*To MADAME AZAM.*) And you?

MADAME AZAM. Madame *Francoise* Azam.

LOLA MONTEZ. Isn’t that funny? Just now it seems like we’re just the memory of someone else’s memory. None of what I’m saying is even my own words.

LINDSAY WILSON. How do we tell which is real?

LOLA MONTEZ. *(To Group.)* They're angry because they want the truth. If we can present to *you* what is truth, will you join with us in the creation of a triumphant Republic?

(Beat.)

LINDSAY WILSON. Who begins?

LOLA MONTEZ. Where was I born?

LINDSAY WILSON. County Sligow, Ireland.

AUGUSTE PAPON. Saville, Spain. *(Beat.)* How old are you?

LOLA MONTEZ. How many husbands have I had?

LINDSAY WILSON. I've had two husbands. How many have you had?

LOLA MONTEZ. *Now wait a minute –*

LINDSAY WILSON. Tell me about my time in Spain.

AUGUSTE PAPON. *I remained in Spain on my own a few months and I learned to dance.*

LOLA MONTEZ. But how is that possible? I was born there.

AUGUSTE PAPON. *I traveled alone, as I travel now.*

LOLA MONTEZ. Something doesn't match up.

AUGUSTE PAPON. *There was a charming young girl named Dolores whose husband had deserted her –*

LOLA MONTEZ. Not true! He's just quoting me!

AUGUSTE PAPON. *I traveled there with a certain older gentleman who paid for my dance lessons.*

LOLA MONTEZ. But it was my mother who showed me the dances of my country.

LINDSAY WILSON. Is that where I got my name?

AUGUSTE PAPON. *My name. (Beat.) Did she desert her husband for me?*

LOLA MONTEZ. Who?

AUGUSTE PAPON. *Dolores.*

LINDSAY WILSON. *No, no. I never did that sort of thing.*

MADAME AZAM. She's right.

LOLA MONTEZ / LINDSAY WILSON / AUGUSTE PAPON. Who?

MADAME AZAM. You traveled there with a certain older gentleman who paid for your dance lessons.

LOLA MONTEZ. That's impossible. That isn't what I've said. The truth is that I fell in love.

AUGUSTE PAPON. With who?

LINDSAY WILSON. Are you lying?

LOLA MONTEZ. *I don't choose to answer. I will answer no unimportant questions. I will answer, if you please, whatever is right – but when I don't answer a question, remember, it is one which is a falsehood of the mind.*

LINDSAY WILSON. You don't choose to answer because I'm Lola Montez.

LOLA MONTEZ. Imposter! You've stolen my identity!

AUGUSTE PAPON. I have come to create the Republic of Lolaland and lead it forward in time for Revolution.

LOLA MONTEZ. Liar! You say the same things as I do, but you can't say anything else. There's nothing beneath what you are saying.

LINDSAY WILSON. *“There is time for everything, including Revolutions”.* Isn’t that what I said? That’s my own words. Or are they yours?

AUGUSTE PAPON. Were they? Or are they yours?

LOLA MONTEZ. What will be left of me when I’m gone? I felt if I created this than surely *something* would remain: all of the things that people never know.

LINDSAY WILSON. That’s it! That’s how we become real – or full! That’s how we take ourselves back.

LOLA MONTEZ. The privileged things only a few of us know. *(Beat.)* My first love –

LINDSAY WILSON. Captain James.

AUGUSTE PAPON. *In Dinapore, India. It was a hole but it had an excellent band for dancing!*

LOLA MONTEZ. *He was my mother’s lover. He had the most beautiful straight white teeth – not common in those times you know. (All shudder.)* And a lethal drunk.

AUGUSTE PAPON. *He snored like a boa constrictor.*

LINDSAY WILSON. Kept me awake all night!

LOLA MONTEZ. I couldn’t stand the sight of his hands. He had the hands and wrists of a soft, indolent woman. I found –

AUGUSTE PAPON. I found them especially repulsive when he touched me.

LINDSAY WILSON. *Ah, but you know what I say: “Runaway matches like runaway horses are almost sure to end in a smash up.” My advice to you is to hang yourself exactly one hour before you start.*

LOLA MONTEZ. I wanted more than army barracks and intrigues with fellow officers. I wanted the incandescent life. I wanted to be... a Revolutionary!

LINDSAY WILSON. *When my mother found out my career plans she put on black and sent out cards of mourning.*

AUGUSTE PAPON. What options did I have?

LOLA MONTEZ. Stop. (*Beat.*) Does it continue in this way, Azam? (*To LINDSAY WILSON and AUGUSTE PAPON.*) I resent this! You are making my story...*maudlin.*

LINDSAY WILSON. Then we'll speak of ambition. After I became Lola Montez, I had only one desire. To be remembered.

AUGUSTE PAPON. To be famous.

LOLA MONTEZ. To be free! (*To Group.*) What I say is *true* – the *facts* are incorrect.

LINDSAY WILSON. Because you say that over and over – does it make it true?

LOLA MONTEZ. These facts are about one Lola Montez and I'm quite another. (*Beat.*) I can't tell if I resemble you or if you resemble me.

AUGUSTE PAPON. We're drawing closer and closer together.

LINDSAY WILSON. Azam, quickly, get a pencil and write this down in the book. Write what I dictate to you...Begin with this: a door opens and the room is flooded with light. Lola Montez is about to appear – her first night performing the role of...who?

LINDSAY WILSON. Lola Montez of course!

AUGUSTE PAPON. But different!

LOLA MONTEZ. As she's never been performed before!

AUGUSTE PAPON. She wears a *deluxe* red velvet costume.

LOLA MONTEZ. But velvet is so cheap looking! (*Beat.*) No. I wear silk –

LINDSAY WILSON. - *in muted tones!* (*To Group.*) Now, close your eyes and imagine. Resplendent, Lola Montez descends from the ceiling upright with her toe looped through

a noose – the leader of the Revolution descends – a glass of champagne in one hand. She steps forth – Lola Montez. Transformed. The leader of the Republic of Lolaland.

AUGUSTE PAPON. No. Lola Montez is carried in on a palanquin with veils by eunuchs in red velvet. All the ambassadors of every state are there – just to see her. She is wrapped in carpets and being fanned with peacocks' feathers. She stands to speak and she says –

LINDSAY WILSON. She says –

LOLA MONTEZ. This is my entrance – not behind the words – not *writing* the play but *being* the play. The fear is immense – the construction of a whole Republic – a new civilization. (*To Group.*) Peopled with you. I am here, Lola Montez, speaking to you here and now. Hoping that you feel exactly in time with what I am feeling. The end and beginning of a history. Time, the ability to fascinate, the later it gets in the moment the more pressing, other people's expectations... (*Beat.*)

Act IV: Qualification of Opposites

LOLA MONTEZ. Where were we, Azam?

MADAME AZAM. Madame was about to address her citizens: “I am a libertine”.

LINDSAY WILSON. Wait! I have something to say. I know what I want to say!

MADAME AZAM. (*Anxiously.*) She’s done it! She’s speaking out of turn!

LINDSAY WILSON. I have?

MADAME AZAM. You have?

LINDSAY WILSON. I’ve said something original? Made some kind of mark...(*To Group.*) I am a libertine – no wait – that’s not right. That isn’t what I wanted to say...I want to say that I thought there was one Republic – which I wanted to lead. But there are infinite Republics. (*Beat.*) This is only one Republic. A possible and visible world. By necessity we need imagination. We believe in the facts of animals, the facts of plants and artifacts as history but do we believe in truth? We have imagination and everything that we believe as fact is also a truth and an image. Shadows, reflecting pools, mirrors – *yourself.* (*Beat.*) I’m not Lola Montez. I’m not Lindsay Wilson. Do you see? In our natural state we are...we’re all images superimposed onto each other! You see I also dreamed I wanted to open my eyes. I wanted an eternal audience. A love affair without end. I wanted to be remembered. I wanted to be *seen.* I *wanted* to be Lola Montez and I couldn’t be – it’s no use, you see...What you’ll remember of me won’t be me anyway. It’ll be ideas – facts and just ideas. I want to be remembered but I might not be. But I can try. I can try to tell the truth and so I step down in my campaign to be Lola Montez and present to you me.

AUGUSTE PAPON. Who?

LINDSAY WILSON. And I present to you Madame Lola Montez, Comtesse de Landsfelt. Leader of the Republic of Lolaland.

AUGUSTE PAPON. But how?

LINDSAY WILSON. Because I say so. (*To Group. Indicating LOLA MONTEZ.*) I endorse *this* Lola Montez. (*Beat.*)

LOLA MONTEZ. When I decided to leave my career in the theatre, I made a choice to return as something better. And I have, with your...*indulgence.* (*Beat.*) I am...unsatisfied. My history and reality is yet unclear. There is so little room for the Art of Fascinating – the art and beauty that I possess – to transform my people – my citizens of Lolaland! What is the Art of Fascinating? Nothing more than your facility to make and choose your own image. (*Beat.*) I wish every one of you to be part of the Republic of Lolaland. Allow my principles to live on in you and you to live in them. Be my constellation. In Spanish you say: *Yo soy tu votiva.* Close your hand around me. Open it. See that it is Lola Montez, there, as a statuette of glass. Everything illuminated through her. She burns the shape, shadow, glare and reflection off every bright sure thing. (*Beat.*) Why have I brought you here tonight? Tonight we gather for the baker, the military man, from the big to the small. Lola Montez believes in beauty and culture. And above all else? Liberty. She gives to you tonight a chance at liberty. Yes. Liberty. *To you – my citizens – all men and women of every land, who are not afraid of themselves, who trust so much in their own souls that they dare to stand up in the might of their own individuality, to meet the tidal currents of the world, this Republic is respectfully dedicated!*

AUGUSTE PAPON. The ideal state! An audience without end...

LINDSAY WILSON. A new leader. Resplendent – a burst of light – applause!

LOLA MONTEZ. Wherever I am is the Republic and wherever is the Republic is where I am. (LOLA MONTEZ moves to the door of the conference room and opens it. A bright light shines through it into the room, like bright stage lights. There is the sound of the Crowd surging.)

LOLA MONTEZ. Let us move forward! We have so little time. Remember – The world was always there the first night and nobody the second.

The light grows brighter and brighter. Montez moves out into it and into the sound of a frenzied crowd.

END

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