

## What Happened to Daylight?

By

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On the eve of the Halloween Variety show, all was a fuss at the Liberty Theater. Audrey Long, aka Arty Choke, Astoria's Dapper Dan of drag was in utter shock. Arty stood at the open door to Daylight Cum's empty dressing room. Marco, the unofficial "Gayor" of Astoria and talented drag superstar, Daylight Cums, was missing. Marco hadn't shown up for dress rehearsal and Arty was worried. Normally, he wouldn't be so alarmed by Marco's absence but after finding Daylight's three-foot-tall Bride of Frankenstein wig laying in the middle of the floor, he knew it was foul play. *Daylight would NEVER leave her wig on the floor*, Arty thought. *Oh, and the note!* Last week Marco found a note pinned to the door of his dressing room that read -Your time is up! They assumed it was just a joke, but now Arty was concerned. He rallied the Q center gang and with the help of the Liberty staff, they searched the entire theater for Daylight but found nothing.

*I need to talk to Becky*, Arty thought. Becky Tonkin, sassy seamstress and owner of Shift, was Marco's roommate. She was well-connected in the city. If anyone could help, it would be her.

"Has anyone seen Becky?" Arty asked the group.

"I think she's at the Voodoo Lounge," someone in the back answered.

Arty hurried toward the back door of the theater and ran smack dab into campy drag extraordinaire, Ms. Ginger Vitus. She had just arrived, serving witchy realness for tonight's performance.

"Why are you in such a hurry?" she asked.

"I'm worried about Daylight. Have you seen her?"

"No. I'm not her keeper," she flipped her red hair back. "I need to rehearse." Ginger pushed past Arty and walked away.

*That was weird*, Arty thought as he pushed the back door open. The light rain caused him to squint as he pulled his red and black cape over his goatee that had taken hours to apply. He headed down 15<sup>th</sup>.

"Look, Mommy. It's Dracula," a child said as Arty ran past.

Out of breath, Arty stopped at the entrance of the Voodoo Lounge and found his mark, Becky Tonkin. "Nice cape, Drac," she said as she rested her gin and tonic on YES of the oversized Ouija table. Undeterred, Arty sat down next to Becky and grabbed her hand. "Whoa. What's the fuss, Gus?" Becky asked.

"It's Daylight. She's gone."

Becky rolled her eyes and shrugged. "Gone. She sure is," she joked.

"No, really. She's missing."

"She's not at the Liberty? Maybe she went home for something."

"Becky, she left her wig."

"So?"

"ON THE FLOOR!"

"Oh, something's terribly wrong." Becky knew that Marco would never leave his wig laying on the floor. He was a professional and would never disrespect the wig. Never. "I know just the person we need to see. Let's go." Becky downed her drink before they rushed out the door.

Sari, Marco's closest friend and the proud owner of Salon Verve' had the gift. She was psychic. If anyone could find Daylight, it was her. Becky and Arty rounded the corner of Godfather's Books and saw the illuminated letters of SV.

"Oh good, she's still there. C'mon." They rushed in like a gust of wind startling Sari who was cleaning up for the day.

"You guys scared the crap out of me."

"We need your help. Daylight's missing."

Sari knew by the look on both Becky and Arty's face that they were serious. She quickly locked the door and drew the curtains.

"What is she doing?" Arty whispered to Becky.

"Shh, you'll see."

Sari disappeared behind a curtain at the back of her shop. She returned wheeling a 1950s pink beehive stand-up hairdryer.

"What is she doing with that? Arty whispered again.

"Dude, chill. You'll see."

Sari motioned for Becky to help her. "Plug this in." The kitschy relic came to life with a vibrating hum. Becky took a couple steps back, making way for Sari. Sari looked nervous as she sat down and slowly pulled the dryer over the top of her head. She closed her eyes as the dryer sparked a few times. Becky and Arty backed away toward the door. Though there was no wind, Sari's hair flowed with a gentle breeze as she sat silently.

"Damn, this is some Back to the Future stuff going on here," Becky chuckled nervously.

The sparks grew, and smoke billowed from the headset as Sari began to convulse. Just as Becky thought to unplug the dryer from the wall, everything went still. Sari opened her eyes and took a gasping breath as she removed the dryer hood.

"What just happened?" Arty's eyes went wide.

"Sari's chair. She channels through it."

"She does psychic readings from a 1950s hair dryer?"

"Pretty much," Becky shrugged.

Sari gathered herself as she wheeled the dryer back to its proper spot.

"What did you see?" Arty asked.

"She's alive but in danger."

"Where?"

"I'm not quite sure, but it's damp and underground. I saw dripping water like a basement but not in a home. She's close. I could hear a faint voice say follow the glitter."

"Follow the glitter. What does that even mean?" Becky sighed.

"Arty, did you search the entire theater?" Sari asked.

"Yeah. We all did. She's not there."

"Does the Liberty have a basement?"

"I have no idea. I didn't see one."

"We need to go back." Sari flipped the door sign to closed.

The three of them rushed back to the Liberty Theater which now had a line of people waiting to get inside for the show. They hurried to Daylight's dressing room, finding the wig gone.

"Where did it go?" Arty asked.

"Look, there's glitter." Becky pointed to the floor where the wig was. A trail of sprinkling glitter led straight to the wall.

"That's weird. It stops here." Arty touched the wall. "Wait. Look. It's a trap door." They pulled the hatch of what looked to be a secret door. Cool air blew from the dank dungeinous underground of the Liberty Theater.

"Marco? Marco!" Sari yelled.

"Help, I'm down here." They climbed down into the dark abyss of the theater and found Daylight tied to a chair, dressed as a bride without her wig.

“Marco. Are you okay?”

“I was shanghaied!”

“Did Ginger do this to you? She wasn’t acting like herself today,” Arty said.

“No, probably just preshow jitters. It was Poison Waters from Portland. I knew that busted queen would come for me one day.”

They untied Daylight and climbed out of the trap door and headed toward the stage. They found Poison Waters practicing Daylight’s finale, *The Bride of Frankenstein*.

“Grrrr! That’s *my* wig,” Daylight yelled pointing across the stage at a surprised Poison Waters.

Poison threw the wig to the ground and ran for the exit. Just when Arty started to give chase, Daylight stopped her. “But she’s getting away.”

“Oh, she won’t get far. She dropped her bus pass when she tied me to the chair.”

“Gosh, Daylight. We thought you were dead.” Arty teared up.

“Hun, drag queens never die. Hand me my wig. We got a show to do!”

The End