

Scene One

To start: CARMEL is lying on her back on a small platform in a gallery in the BMOG Art Museum. A banner with the words **Plan on a lengthy stay** is hanging from the ceiling behind her. KT enters.

KT

Carmel, Carmel, a woman stopped by earlier. She said she was your sister. She stopped in front of the museum, yet not sister enough to step further in. Only a half-sister stays outside. Who searches for her sister with only one photograph? (*walks over to CARMEL. Kneels next to the platform*) So Bae, what have you fantasized about today? Sleigh bells not ringing? Private hallways going nowhere? Pillars of society turning away? Slamming doors? Windows shutting? Savior fantasies? Yet no one has moved for your freedom. Only a half-sister interested in appearances.

(*Earlier outside the museum. SAMSA enters clutching a photograph. She steals glances at her surroundings. She stops.*)

KT (cont'd)

Appearances met. She searched. Didn't find. Left to never come back. My Carmel still in her tower. (*a beat*) I want you to raise your right hand. (*a beat*) Raise it!

(*CARMEL raises her right hand slightly before letting it fall. KT walks over to SAMSA as she stands outside the museum. CARMEL sits up on the cot and begins painting a projection of light. KT stands and stares at SAMSA.*)

SAMSA

Hello. Oh. (*hesitates*) Ah. (*hesitates*) I'm Samsa Delarosa. Or Sam. (*extends hand*) Your choice.

(*KT refuses to shake hands.*)

SAMSA (cont'd)

Oh. (*pulls hand back*) You know, like, in what to call me.

(*KT is silent.*)

SAMSA (cont'd)

Sam? Or Samsa? (*waits*) Either one will work. (*a beat*) So, the reason? Um. The reason is I'm searching for my sister.

KT

By standing outside BMOG?

SAMSA

Well, yeah. I guess, I was waiting for someone to come outside to see what I'm up to and hey, like, you did. (*launches in*) Okay, she's tall, has dark hair. She's my half-sister; she really doesn't look like me . . . well, maybe a little in the height. And the eye color is similar. (*opens eyes wide*) Ochre brown. Or brown if you have no imagination. She's younger, a lot younger than me. By a decade. I have a photo. (*holds up photo*) Lovely, isn't she? Her name is Carmel. Cee for short. (*looks around*) It doesn't, I guess, look like she'd end up here. But I must ask, have you seen her?

KT

No.

SAMSA

I was told she might be at this address. I'm surprised it's a museum, you know?

KT

No.

SAMSA

So, she might have changed from the photograph. Recently dyed her hair, gained weight, added glasses like women do. Although, I can't imagine my sister---she's always been chic - never - stylishly confused. (*waits*) No? (*waits*) Say, I can bring other photos. Ones that might resemble her more, now. Maybe, a photo that'll strike your fancy and, you'll help. I have shoeboxes stuffed with them. (*holds up photograph*) I guess, this one is a little old.

KT

I can't help you.

SAMSA

Oh? (*a beat*) So, what's it like to work here?

KT

Like a home.

SAMSA

Really? To me it looks . . . (*stops*). Well, it certainly is captivating. Do you mind if I come back with the other photographs? I can't give up on one try, now can I?

KT

You'll be wasting your time.

SAMSA

It's never a waste to try. That's what my sister would say if she were here. (*mimics CARMEL'S voice*) Don't give up, Sam; bring more photos to the gentleman; bring recordings of my voice, the video of me sunning in the South; handwriting samples of my - well, it is! - Spidery script; the trophy I won for awesome congeniality; just make it Carmel, Carmel, Carmel.

(*KT starts to exit.*)

SAMSA (cont'd)

So, you'll see me again? And you'll talk to me?

(*KT shrugs and exits stage right. RICHARD enters stage left.*)

SAMSA (cont'd)

Oh, thank you. Thank you.

(*SAMSA walks by RICHARD, who is now standing in line at BMOG's outside ticket counter, before she exits. RITCHIE enters and stands next to the ticket booth. FREDERICKA enters and steps into the ticket booth. Carmel continues to paint.*)

RICHARD

(*searching*)

Somewhere I have a coupon.

FREDERICKA

I'm sorry, but the BMOG doesn't offer coupons.

RICHARD

Well, I printed one off BMOG's web site this morning. If only I could remember where I put it. (*digs through pockets*) You know how you put something you can't lose in a special place, so you won't forget where you put it, but then you forget the specific location of your secret place. Well, I believe, that has happened to me.

FREDERICKA

I'm sorry sir, but BMOG does not offer coupons to its patrons.

RICHARD

Maybe, you missed an email sent out about today's deal.

(*BILLY and BENNY enter to stand in line behind RICHARD. From the other side of the stage, KT enters to watch CARMEL paint the light.*)

FREDERICKA

No sir, I did not.

RICHARD

Or, maybe, upper management didn't communicate to its lower-level employees.

FREDERICKA

(curt)

As a front-line professional//

RICHARD

Yes, of course.

FREDERICKA

If I haven't been entirely professional//

RICHARD

No, of course//

FREDERICKA

Who interacts with patrons for at least eight hours a day. I would have been told by my supervisor if we are now using coupons. At the very least, a notice would have been tacked above my POS system. (*indicates*) All procedural changes are put in written form for front-end associates. Neatly typed, taped, and signed by my boss.

RICHARD

Maybe, she went home sick before she had a chance to tell you.

FREDERICKA

A change of this magnitude would have been announced weeks in advance.

RICHARD

Well, I'm not lying. A coupon was issued for two dollars off the entry price.

FREDERICKA

Grocery stores issue coupons, sir. Art museums do not.

RICHARD

What? I want to speak to – what's her name, your boss?

RITCHIE

Excuse me, sir, is there a problem?

RICHARD

No, not at all. (*to FREDERICKA*) Your supervisor, please.

FREDERICKA

May the patrons behind you buy their tickets?

(RICHARD looks behind and with a smile grimace,

nods to BILLY and BENNY.)

RICHARD

Sorry, folks.

FREDERICKA

I'm sure they're waiting to attend the lecture on A Computer and a Bucket with a Mouse and a Handle. Which (*looks at watch*) starts in about five minutes.

RICHARD

(whispers and stamps fists)

I was here first. Your supervisor. Now.

FREDERICKA

(dials phone)

Ms. Breeze, please. Tell her it is Fredericka Isabella at the Grand Entrance (*a beat*) Yes, thank you, I can wait. Please, sir, could step aside for a moment while we wait for Ms. Breeze to come to the phone?

RICHARD

(stamps fists)

No. (*glances behind and half waves to the others*) Sorry. (*To RITCHIE*) Why is this taking so long? Why aren't there more personnel to attend to us?

RITCHIE

The other front-end associate, Marguerite, is on break.

RICHARD

Inexcusable. Everyone is going to miss A Computer and a Bucket with a Mouse and a Handle gallery talk (*indicates FREDERICKA*) if she doesn't chaney along.

RITCHIE

Don't you mean chivy along? Chaney is a song sung by sailors to the rhythm of their movements, while working.

RICHARD

You're a security guard? Minimum wage? With no health care benefits?

(FREDERICKA aggressively waves at RICHARD to come forward.)

FREDERICKA

Ms. Breeze is on the phone. She says the BMOG does not have a coupon program.

RICHARD

Well, she's mistaken. Let me speak with her.

(FREDERICKA angrily turns her back on RICHARD, while quietly talking to Ms. Breeze

on the phone. RITCHIE subtly and quietly placates BILLY and BENNY while they wait. KT walks over to CARMEL who stops painting mid-brush stroke. SAMSA and RYKER enter.)

RYKER

You talked to him like we rehearsed?

SAMSA

Yes, I did exactly as we practiced.

RYKER

He took what you told him at face value?

SAMSA

Yes.

RYKER

He has no idea I'm involved?

SAMSA

Why would he?

RYKER

And the building she might be in?

SAMSA

To me, a very nondescript art museum. That unless it's pointed out, or if it didn't have those huge banners, it's as if it's not there. That one could walk past it a hundred times and not//

RYKER

So, no notable oddities?

SAMSA

Other than the guard calling it a home, no. Why if Carmel's there, if she is, makes no sense to me. Good God, with her big hair, big voice, big desires — frankly, endlessly vamping for bigger and bigger — not likely she ends up in that unremarkable museum on her own.

KT

(To CARMEL)

My gut feeling? This isn't working. Or you know people who know people who know people who know this isn't working.

(KT steps aside to guide the banner, Establish Rapport, drop from the ceiling before he exits, as SAMSA and RYKER continue to speak. CARMEL resumes painting.)

RYKER

Does her ending up there need to make sense?

SAMSA

Yes, it needs to make sense. So, next time, I'll buy a ticket to politely invite myself in and demand to know what that guard knows.

RYKER

Too aggressive. For now, you're the bewildered, not so bright older half-sister. You'll be so inefficient that every time he sees you he'll begin to trust you.

SAMSA

Well, what if she's there because she wants to be?

RYKER

(cross)

What? You just said it's not in her to end up there.

SAMSA

(not sorry)

Sorry.

(*RYKER and SAMSA exit. FREDERICKA turns around and hands RICHARD the phone.*)

RICHARD

(speaks into phone)

This is Mr. Terrier. (*a beat*) Yes, I've been told by your employee that you do not offer coupons. But I printed a coupon off the web site this morning. (*a beat*) Well, I misplaced it. (*a beat*) You're looking at the web site, right now? (*a beat*) What? All you see are driving directions and a daily gallery schedule, but no coupon? You are mistaken. I am a detailed man with an elephant-sized memory. I know what I saw//

RITCHIE

(to FREDERICKA)

How long do you think this is going to take?

(indicates BENNY and BILLY.)

They are getting a bit slap happy.

FREDERICKA

No idea.

(*The following lines are cut off right as they end*)

RICHARD

No, I did not//

FREDERICKA

Soon, I hope. Hey, I like your haircut//

RITCHIE

It allows for backcombing//

FREDERICKA

And upward puffing//

RICHARD

Mistake the BMOG's website for another//

FREDERICKA

So individually expressive//

RITCHIE

Thank you. (*stage whisper*) Sorry, about him.

(FREDERICKA *shrugs and smiles*.)

RICHARD

You'd agree there is only one BMOG? Otherwise, listen to me, the pride and privilege you take in working at this institution? Well, it's like licking a twenty-cent stamp thinking it's a forever one. (*a beat*) The point? You're asking me for my point? (*a slight beat*) Instead, I need to speak to your webmaster. (*a slight beat*) A consultation outsourced? Well then, let me talk to your boss. What's his name? (*a slight beat*) Her name. (*a slight beat*) Your supervisor wants to speak to you.

(*Hands phone to FREDERICKA*.)

I believe we are getting somewhere.

FREDERICKA

(*into phone*)

Yes, ma'am I entirely agree. Yes, I will. Always hammer the problem and not the person.

RICHARD

Exactly.

FREDERICKA

Thank you, Ms. Breeze.

(FREDERICKA *hangs up phone*)

RICHARD

So, you're going to take two dollars off my ticket.

FREDERICKA

So, you're indifferent to my feelings?

RICHARD

What?

RITCHIE

(to FREDERICKA)

I'm here if you need me.

(FREDERICKA nods.)

RICHARD

I'm not a troublemaker.

FREDERICKA

(to RICHARD)

You don't care that you've ruined my morning.

RICHARD

No, I don't. Please honor my coupon.

FREDERICKA

The one you don't have? Ms. Breeze asked that you purchase your admission ticket or step aside//

RICHARD

What? You're hammering me, not the problem//

FREDERICKA

And purchase it at full price.

(RICHARD and FREDERICKA continue to argue, but indistinctly and quietly. Lights lower on them and RITCHIE, BILLY and BENNY.)

(**Scene and light transition:** RYKER enters. He walks over to CARMEL and pulls up a swivel chair with wheels and sits across from her with his feet propped up on her cot. She continues to paint, while listening to him. KT enters and stands at a distance from them.)

RYKER

Leaving as a fable; vanishing as a metaphor. A young woman leaves. Did she mistake herself for somebody else? Her half-sister searches — asked by the woman's boyfriend — me. On one side is where she keeps herself, and on the other side is the half-sister and the boyfriend. No one knows this happened except for the security guard and the half-sister and boyfriend and certain gallery owners and art officials who promulgate//

RICHARD

(interrupts. yells to FREDERICKA)
You are hammering!

(RYKER and CARMEL do not respond)