

The Unintended Video

A ten-minute play

By

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*RECIPIENT OF THE HEIDEMAN AWARD FROM
ACTORS THEATRE OF LOUISVILLE*

[EXCERPT]

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SETTING: A park bench in a large Seattle park.

AT RISE: The sound of many birds swooping and cooing. As lights come up, we see a man, SAMUEL, seated on the bench with a bag of crumbs in his hand that he is throwing out to birds. We notice two things about SAMUEL. First, even though it is a chilly day, he is unusually covered up. He has a hat pulled low over his forehead, and a muffler around his neck and part of his chin. Second, most of the skin that is exposed is severely scarred. He is obviously a burn victim. He darts a few glances around him to make sure he's alone, and then he starts talking to the birds.

SAMUEL

All right, all right, don't push. There's plenty for everyone. You there! Leave that little one alone. You're always such a pig. No, no, no. That piece is for her! This piece is for you.

(He digs into his bag and tosses out a piece of bread. At this moment, a fashionably dressed woman, CLARISSA, enters. SAMUEL notices her and his posture immediately changes. He seems to close in on himself, as if closing ranks. CLARISSA looks around and then she spots SAMUEL. She freezes. She looks as if she doesn't know whether to stay or go. Finally she begins to walk toward SAMUEL.)

(When she arrives, she is quite nervous. SAMUEL does not look up at her.)

CLARISSA

(at last, speaking, awkwardly)

Hello.

(SAMUEL says nothing. He continues
throwing crumbs at the birds.)

CLARISSA

Excuse me?

(SAMUEL looks up at her briefly, then
goes back to feeding the birds.)

CLARISSA (CONT'D)

... You don't... recognize me, do you?

SAMUEL

(a beat, then gruffly)

Should I?

CLARISSA

Well, no... I mean, actually, I'm glad you don't. I... well,
I was here yesterday, in this park...

SAMUEL

Yeah?

CLARISSA

I'm the one who... took the video?

SAMUEL

(a beat)

I don't know what you're talking about.

CLARISSA

(very uncomfortable)

Oh God, I knew I shouldn't have come. It was probably all my
imagination.

SAMUEL

Look, lady. You got something to say? Spit it out or get
lost, okay?

CLARISSA

Oh, God. I... don't you remember? I was... walking down this
path here and... well I had my video camera on. I was with my
husband? And I took your picture.

SAMUEL

(he's remembering now, with rancor...)

Oh... yes... So that was you.

CLARISSA

Look I didn't mean...! We're on vacation here... my husband and I, from L.A. and--

SAMUEL

And you don't have enough freaks to take pictures of there?

CLARISSA

No! I mean... I didn't know when I took your picture you were... you had... I thought it was... charming.

SAMUEL

What?

CLARISSA

I'm saying this all wrong! What I mean is I saw you, all bundled up against the Seattle morning air, with hundreds of birds around you. Birds at your feet, on your arms, on your shoulders, it was amazing! Don't you... see? That's what I was taking the picture of... not what you... think. It was only once I put the video on the hotel T.V., where everything was in color, and took a closer look, especially during this part where I'd... zoomed in. It was only then that I... saw...

SAMUEL

The *real* me?

CLARISSA

(a beat)

Yes. And I saw something else, too. You were... looking right at us. At me. Taking that video. And you looked like...

SAMUEL

What?

CLARISSA

Like you wanted to kill me.

SAMUEL

Yes. Well, I probably did.

CLARISSA

So. That's why I'm here.

SAMUEL

So I can kill you?

CLARISSA

No! So I... can... explain!