

SAYEED/ SAYEEDA

Or

THE WILD CARD SECURITY SYSTEM

By

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Scene One

A young man and woman stand side by side in the lobby of a provincial airport somewhere in Africa. She is wearing a long, black Western-style dress with a black scarf loosely covering her head and fastened to one shoulder with a gold brooch. He is wearing a black Western-style casual sportcoat and black denim slacks with a light yellow shirt and no tie. They both carry attaché cases by one handle. A large lobby planter filled with several orchids and sprays of tropical leaves slightly obstructs their path as they step forward to speak in unison.

Sayeed & Sayeeda

Moving toward the airport through the yellow dust we think of the photos in textbooks or the photos in brochures. Landscapes like a light in the mind, like a religious picture beckoning salvation at the end of the airport corridors, at the far landing place, if we ever get there.

Sayeeda

Who put these jungle plants in the lobby? It's huge! Can you move this?

Sayeed, pushing the planter to one side

According to the tests, I have a high average.

Sayeeda

I know. My average is actually one point higher than your average.

Sayeed

Then help me move this plant. It's still blocking the corridor.

Sayeeda, as they both push the planter further aside

Although "average" can be deceptive in the individual instance. Let's just step around this plant. I think it's chained to the floor.

Sayeed, taking a slip of paper from behind the planter

Everything's chained down here. Everyone knows each throw of the dice is separate. People look at the totals. Nevertheless, they look at the totals.

Sayeeda

So: here we are at the airport and this particular flight has been suspended.

Sayeed

Inside the dice, inside the domino cube, this room shaken up and thrown down in the casino of the Gods...

Sayeeda

Gods? You believe in the gods? Krishna and Kali, the blue elephant god Ganesha and whatnot?

Sayeed

As a figure of speech. Yes, of course, I believe in them, as elements of the collective unconscious. Did you notice that wastebasket when we moved the plant?

Sayeeda

No. I don't see any wastebasket.

Sayeed

There was a list in the basket. This looks like a passenger list.

Sayeeda, reading the list

There seem to be only six people on this flight.

Sayed

Some must be delayed by the Situation.

Sayed & Sayeeda, in unison

Some must be delayed by the Situation. On the average, it must be a difficult Situation.
But we have no control over this Situation.

**Words indistinctly broadcast over a loudspeaker interrupt and continue,
punctuated by static.**

Sayeeda

O...listen! Do you hear the announcement?

Sayed

Translate. I hear but it's going too quickly.

Sayeeda

The flight is on.

Sayed

Is it?

Sayeeda

Listen!

**Loud bursts of static, punctuated by the word “gate”, are followed by a sudden
silence. A Security Guard steps quietly into the lobby behind them. They do not see
him. He takes their picture with a digital camera.**

Sayed

Yeah. The flight's on now. But will the same flight be on in fifteen minutes?

Sayeeda

Of course. They've got a schedule. The rest of the world has a schedule. Not like the
bazaar outside the gates here.

Sayed

Fool! You read those literary news magazines. Sure, the junk they print has a schedule.
It's got to have a subscription schedule. But, beyond that, nothing actually has a schedule.

Sayeeda

This plane has a schedule.

Sayed

It has no schedule. It has no actual schedule. It has what they say is the schedule.

Sayeeda

Right now, it's leaving on schedule. Come on. Pick up your luggage. I'm not going to
wait for you.

Sayed

I'm not waiting. I'm hesitating. “Waiting” implies that a person is waiting for something
specific or non-specific whereas “hesitating”, Sayeeda, does not imply any scheduled or
expected outcome—much less any idea that you would listen to what I am saying, might
check for some actual change of schedule...

Sayeeda, pulling his toward the flight gate

Will you come along? The flight's on schedule. Unless you want to drop off this flight
and live in the jungle doing translations for CEO's and tourists.

Sayeed, as they leave

All right. We will not lose the value of the ticket since this ticket was a group purchase and my family does expect me to write to them next week from some “civilized” location.

The Security Guard steps forward, checking the photos in the view screen of his camera.

Guard

You were thinking this would be a play somewhat like those deadly and melancholy dramas where clowns covered with soot and garbage are waiting by ash cans for two hours chatting about whatever rolls by down the alley. Absolutely not. Also, you have probably been told that there are only five or six plots possible for any dramatic construction. Beginning, middle and end or skipping around from K to A or Q to D and back to C. It’s not the plot so much as the texture, the taste or perfume of the event, rather than the sequence. My job is simply to take documentary photos and...

The Guard scoops a handful of receipts out of the trash basket behind the planter.

...keep an eye on the wrappers, receipts, and other evidence of whatever has happened, been eaten, consumed or ticketed.. I just watch. I watch and record. Sometimes I report.

A woman with short platinum blonde hair wearing slacks, a wide leather belt and a shirt patterned with angular sky scrapers and orchids emerges from behind or within the planter as the Security Guard disappears from sight. She is talking on a cell phone.

Orchid

I saw him. Don’t tell me I’m hallucinating. I saw the Officer in the copy place at about two in the morning. It was late but the night shift didn’t know how to print my file. So they were taking time. They were taking hours of time. He was aware of what I was doing. I think he took one of the sheets out of the wastebasket but luckily the print was smeared and anyway everything was unintelligible. It was printing in weird wing ding cipher. Got to go. It’s someone from the Office.

Sayeed, dressed in a white shirt and gray slacks and carrying a manila folder, approaches her impatiently.

Sayeed

Why would you think your stuff was so important?

Orchid

It’s not my stuff. I work. I’m not just always doing my own stuff. That’s something I was coding for a limited access website.

Sayeed, jotting on the outside of the folder

Limited access? Let me write you a few words in Arabic. Did your wing ding cipher look like this?

Orchid

Not exactly. It was written more neatly. Fewer dots and loops below the line.

Sayeed

Web Arabic! HTML in Arabic, or Sanskrit.

Sayeeda, dressed in a stylish black leather outfit with pastel silk blouse and carrying a small attaché case, has entered and stands behind them.

Orchid, coldly

Really? Sanskrit? It seems to me you refer everything back to your national origins.

Sayeeda

Everything does refer back to the Sanskrit, throughout World culture.

Orchid

Excuse me: but who is this?

Sayeed

My colleague, Sayeeda.

Orchid

O yes. I see. OK. You had an appointment. Are you a security guard?

Sayeeda

No. I don't...

Orchid

Do you have a uniform? Or is this plain clothes surveillance?

Sayeed

She's been bothered by security. In my country, we are always bothered by Security. And don't say that I am referring you back to my country. It is the issue of Security and my previous experiences with Security. Sayeeda! What is that outfit? It does look like a uniform. Did you forget your dress?

Sayeeda

I am a new person. I'll be working on Wall Street.

Orchid

Which broker?

Sayeeda

So! I don't feel comfortable telling her the name of the broker, Sayeed.

Orchid

That stuff that came out in weird wing ding letters...

Sayeed

Yeah.

Orchid

That was extra coding I was doing for an anonymous brokerage. So I... Someone from the brokerage may have followed me.

Sayeed

That's possible.

Sayeeda

Are you accusing me of following this woman? Because I would not follow her down the aisle of a bus. Never! Nowhere! She's a cookoo mess! A person like that might be dangerous.

Sayeed

She was working the night shift.

Orchid

Not ‘shift’! I was fitting the extra work for the brokerage into my regular night schedule.

Sayeeda

Schedule? You have a night schedule?

Sayeed

She believes she has a schedule.

Orchid

What is this? First, this dude in uniform pulls my trash out of the basket when that is legitimate trash from someone else’s mistake and then you guys start to trash my schedule when you don’t know anything about me. You don’t know anything about my life.

Orchid stalks offstage.

Sayeeda

That was your colleague or your girlfriend?

Sayeed

I don’t know. Someone who just walked by here. She looked familiar. You do not look as familiar, in your new outfit. You look...commercial...

Sayeeda

I am commercial. I’ll be working on Wall street.

Sayeed

That’s not what I meant.

Sayeeda, laughing uneasily

O, you mean walking around in a sari with a scarf over my head? I haven’t dressed traditional for years.

Sayeed

That’s not what I meant.

Sayeeda

O yes. I see. It was some comment on morals and fashion, You work for an international think tank, or what?

Sayeed, laughing

“Think tank!”

Sayeeda

International research organization..

Sayeed

O, no: computer data. That’s how I know the woman who saw the Security Guard. No international politics. Just business.

Sayeed & Sayeeda, in unison

So, moving toward the job we have a new name. We take new names to make checks easier to spell, easier to pronounce. Escaping, then, crazy politics into the day, the job, the train that is moving toward the station at this moment.

Sayeeda

Sometimes we still think alike and then we are strangers.

Sayeed

That girl who saw the Security Guard: she looked familiar. She wanted to talk about a computer file she said printed out in “wing ding” letters.

Sayeeda

It's a font. They call the type font "wing ding",

Sayed

I know that. I thought that the letters might actually have been Greek or Arabic.

Sayeeda

Or gibberish.

Sayed

Maybe equations from the data organization placed in the wrong file, or...

Sayeeda

I don't trust the equations. I think they're invented, made up to cover the facts, power labels on various pieces of partial reality.

Sayed

Like this dress you're wearing? A power label on the fact of your ass?

Sayeeda

Yes! And better! A better label than all of those numbers and letters, leading inward like a stairway into nowhere.

Sayed

Let's get this straight. Do you know the Security Officer who was watching that woman?

Sayeeda

No. I don't think so.

Sayed

Then why do you say "all of those numbers and letters" as if you had seen the spiral diagram?

Sayeeda

What spiral diagram? No one mentioned a spiral diagram.

Sayed

The spiral staircase leading downward by wing ding numbers into the heart of the atomic blast furnace.

Sayeeda

If you believe it's the blast furnace staircase then it is the blast furnace staircase. The equations mean nothing. You've got to learn the labels for the letters and numbers. That's why I'd rather connect those same letters and numbers to money, not atomic...

Sayed

O yes. Children's games...connect the dots...

Sayeeda

I did not say that. I said: I would rather connect mental systems to money and business.

Sayed

Do we have a choice?

Sayeeda

Yes. I think that there is a choice in how we adapt to the System.

Sayed

Do you?

The Security Guard has stepped into view as "the System" is mentioned. He has been videotaping the conversation. He frames them in a square between his fingers and they freeze in place as the Guard speaks of them as the subjects of his documentary.

Guard

The tone of what they have been saying, the texture, could be understood—don't you think?—even if the listener did not speak the language, even if the exact syllables sound like some forgotten code. Yet we find it is necessary at times to examine the printed word, the thrown away sales slip, forgotten brochures and out of date diaries.

It is necessary to attempt to understand these things exactly. Yet at four a.m. in the night's florescent lit corners even the most clearly-illuminated and carefully-written scraps of paper lack exact definition. Some would argue that this attempt to understand human communication is not necessary.. Yet, we must be aware even of the wing ding refuse.

As the Security Guard steps out of view behind the planter, Sayeeda begins speaking.

Sayeeda, rigidly formal

We have not discussed your plans.

Sayeed

My “plans”? The decoding of the spiral wing ding diagrams? Or the regular flow charts I work on here?

Sayeeda

What's the purpose of the flow charts?

Sayeed

Library research. Funding and matching, that sort of thing.

Sayeeda

Search engines. Any manual search engines?

Sayeed

Why? You want stock tips?

Sayeeda

I might pay for stock tips.

Sayeed

What? This's for your personal portfolio or for your job?

Sayeeda

No. Not personal I could arrange that he pays you for something.

{There is an awkward silence.}

If you would like some extra cash.

Sayeed

O? And so who is “he”? Your boyfriend? Your boss?

Sayeeda

He...I'm his protégé...at the bank.

Sayeed

No! Don't tell me! And“He” chose that new leather dress. All of the interns get a makeover, or what?

Sayeeda

Usually they revert back from the makeover in about six months. In my case, I decided to stay cool.

Sayeed

Cool? OK. The power outfit is cool?

Sayeeda

I think so.

Sayeed

It allows the breeze to blow up your skirt and through your brain, emerging at the top of your head as a mysterious aura. We know, of course, that you have an “aura” because you appear to be Indonesian, East Indian, Jordanian, Catatonic Hispanic or...

Sayeeda

Are you finished? You, with this colleague of yours to whom I was not introduced, someone you assume was working the night shift someplace in your company when she noticed a Security Officer. If I were with Security, I would watch you. I would watch both of you.

Sayeed

For what? For calling some foxy Arab chick “Hispanic” ? Evidence of Outer Space invasion? I think these “Security Guards” we sometimes see here may be evaluating us from a different dimension, subtly evaluating our activities.

Sayeeda

Why? Are you lapsing now into the Old Ways with invisible palaces filled with rainbow gods and demons? People starving to board the celestial chariots.? You want to go back to competitive starving?

Sayeed

No! What do the “celestial chariots” care about our activiti4es? I think it’s more like international investments, an international investment company.

Sayeeda

From another dimension? You’re sure it’s not from Catalonia?

Sayeed

No. It...they...control the international investments.

Sayeeda

You are lapsing into the Old Ways. Then, will you sit in the street with a bowl, waiting for the milk of the gods to pour into your cereal?

Sayeed

Not actually. What do you do on your job? Research investments?

Sayeeda

Exactly.

Sayeed

Then we are absolutely straight with each other We are the “research twins”. Library and Investment. Business library and Periodicals.

Sayeeda, with icy assertion

I interview clients. My research is not in the library. We make dynamic, future-oriented decisions.

The lights suddenly dim and the Security Guard is briefly visible, watching from behind the planter.

Sayeed

Was that a power flux?

Sayeeda

We're standing outside. I'm sure we were inside the lobby. Does it trouble you that my research is no longer library-oriented?

Sayeed

No! It troubles me that you did not notice the shift in the light then.

Sayeeda

When?

Sayeed

When the light shifted. I think that they understand how to shift the power or that their Understanding controls the shift in the power.

Sayeeda

Tell me: why does someone who can control the shift in the power need to spy on the part time help in the copy store, even if that messed up spiral file happened to be printed in Sanskrit?

Sayeed

Why does the teacher put one rotten apple and one rotten orange in front of the class and ask each student to choose between them?

Sayeeda

You are referring to the Colonial education system?

Sayeed, ignoring her remark

Why does the teacher do this? Because it's an experiment with the "Third Alternative". It's Advanced Testing. Of course, once inside the game, one picks only one or another of the rotten alternatives. One needs to go outside the game system in order to say "neither of these two rotten choices".

Sayeeda

But then one is inside the larger game. Is that what you're saying?

Sayeed

Yes. That's the Test. It has to do with limits. We do not see past what we regard as permissible limits.

Sayeeda

So you would say that one of my limits is to disregard the 'Old Ways' and not always be walking backwards with a sack of flour on my head and wearing a dress like a bedspread?

Sayeed

No! That limit is not limited to your limits. Does the woman who saw the Security Officer in the copy shop wear a burlap feed sack? You are too careful of your clothes, one way or the other. Only one way or the other. The problem is that you do not understand that these "Security Officers" come from another dimension in the modern day. Because there were horses in the year 400 B.C. in Delhi, does that mean there can be no similar horses in the city today?

Sayeeda

The painted ponies of the Juggernaut death coach, you mean? The killer slaves of the ancient Ganeesha?

Sayeed

Maybe. It may be something similar to that.

Sayeeda

I came here to tell you about my new job.

Sayed

Making future decisions. O, excuse me: futures decisions, stocks and finance.

Sayeeda

Yes.

Sayed

Then tell me: what do we do about these Security Officers at my firm? They seem to be watching the competition for any printouts in their particular language, which may be a version of ancient Arabic or Sanskrit. Or soime form of hieroglyphics.

There is an embarrassed silence.

Sayeeda

Occasionally, the printer at my new job will print out the accoiunting spreadsheets in wing ding font. But everyone knows that's because of the simple interface of systems. International and updated. The bank can't keep up with everyone's apples and oranges in the coding.

{Sayeeda laughs quickly and nervously.}

Is that what upset your colleague? Wing dings in the spreadsheets?

Sayed, looking over his shoulder nervously

Exactly. Just when you expect they might be standing in the shadows, they do not come in here, do they?

Sayeeda

Excuse me? You were expecting a Security Officer to appear here like magic when I said the word "wing dings"? We have not discussed your plans in any detail.

Sayed

You came here to find out my plans?

Sayeeda

No: I am worried that you have no plans.

Sayed

In contrast to your "schedule"?

Sayeeda

No! In contrast to your superstitious focus on these "demons".

Sayed

You think they may be demons?

Sayeeda

If they exist, they are demons. I came here to tell you about the job at the bank. I thought maybe I could offer you an opportunity.

The Security Guard suddenly moves in the shadows behind them.Sayeeda glances back over her shoulder and notices him.

Oh! Does this lobby close at five?

Sayed

We're not inside the building. Did you think the light shifted then? I didn't notice anything . It's control, you see. Something made you think of the schedule of the building. But you can't put your finger on it, can you?

Sayeeda

Is this why your girlfriend was angry? Because of the tight security system?

Sayed

I don't know her personally. She works somewhere around here. She was angry because she was bothered by security and it spooked her.

Sayeeda

Yes. It "spooked" her because you think ghosts control the world.

Sayed

No! Because the surfaces of things are not under her control.Or your control. The solid surface is the illusion. The shadows control us.

Sayeeda

No: not the shadows. The numbers. The totals. The averages and the balances. Those control us. Even when you pull against the regulations, you are still part of the statistical average.

Suddenly, there is a cracking and tearing sound from the ceiling above them. The Security Guard, dressed in an Usher's uniform with brass buttons and shoulder epaulets is standing in the aisle amid the audience, recording the incident.

Guard

Sorry to bother you. Sorry to interrupt the conversation. But there's been a crack in the structure.

Sayed & Sayeeda look overhead briefly as he points the camera toward the ceiling over their heads.

Sayeeda

Well, I've got to get back to the office.This was my lunch break, actually. Sorry to leave you with this problem.

Sayed

You're not leaving me with any problem.

Sayeeda

Then what's the problem overhead there? What's he doing here? Call me later.

Guard, as Sayeeda is leaving

Will you call her later?

Sayed

I have no copies or wrappers.

Guard

That's not the issue.

Sayed

Yes, of course. The issue is that you're here to repair the ceiling.

Guard

No. Not to repair it. To film it. We need to document the damage.

Sayed

Who are you? Do you work for the building? Do you also film the trash in the computer room?

Guard

If there is damage to the trash in the computer room, we film the damage to the trash in the computer room.

Sayed

Would this “damage estimate” be written in wing dings?

Guard, laughing

O, I’m not an angel, if that’s what you’re thinking. Some think that because of the TV coverage.

Sayed

You are a demon, then?

Guard

No. No demons here. I’m security from the insurance company.

Sayed

O. OK: fine. Do you have credentials?

Guard, flipping out a badge attached to his shirt pocket

Sure. I wear it inside my shirt pocket so I don’t lose it climbing over debris .

Sayed, reaching for the badge

I see. Would you mind if I made a photocopy of this...for my associates?

Guard

No copies of the badge. Somebody might counterfeit this and wear it to gain access. Which associate might do the impersonation? The stockbroker or the analyst?

Sayed

Analyst?

Guard

The systems analyst.

Sayed

O, yes. The gal with the wing dings. Both, as a matter of fact. They both might be interested in that badge of yours. Although I don’t actually know the analyst.

Guard

You know the analyst. Management has your conversation with the analyst on tape.

Sayed

Management? Whose management? The immigration authorities?

Guard

Management. You know what’s management.

Sayed

No. You know what’s management. I just work in the building. Why are you telling me this about “management”?

Guard

My field is insurance and security protection. I know where they put the cameras. Everything is under surveillance here.

Sayed, leaving

So, I will leave you to watch the cracks in the walls with those cameras.

The Guard sighs impatiently, turns off the camera and begins to fill out a report form which he has taken from a small case in his pocket. Orchid emerges unexpectedly from within the planter.

Orchid, as the Guard takes a quick photo

You! How did you know I report to work here?

Guard

This's a public room. Are you on the way to your office?

Orchid

The paper you took, with the wing dings. Do you have that?

Guard

Excuse me: I work for the insurance and security company. We collect all unusual artifacts. If your "wing ding" paper was unusual, I have probably collected it. But I don't remember noticing your paper.

Orchid

You took it out of the trash. Last night in the copy room.

Guard

Maybe so. It's my job to go through the trash for explosives.

Orchid

Is it?

Guard

Formulas which might be used for explosives.

Orchid

O. Were those letters some sort of formula?

Guard

We're not sure about that.

Orchid

It was a mistake. It was automatically printed by the computer.

Guard

We know that sometimes happens.

Orchid

So you have the computer room under surveillance?

Guard

Printouts. That's my area. I don't know about the entire computer setup.

Orchid

Someone said it was Sanskrit, that the computer was printing Sanskrit.

Guard

The mind will adapt from the printouts. People with no knowledge of Sanskrit assume the computer prints Sanskrit. People with no knowledge of mathematics will assume it prints mathematics..

Orchid

But people with some knowledge of wing dings...

Guard

Exactly! Assume it prints wing dings.

Orchid

What does it print?

Guard

Unintelligible gibberish.

Orchid

For someone who does not know the “gibberish” language.

Guard

If you think so. It’s probably encrypted , but that’s not my area of expertise. I just examine the premises for insurance and security purposes.

Orchid

OK. I’m late. I’ve got to catch the elevator. You know: I wondered if those people who may know the difference between Sanskrit and Wing Dings might also see you as “different” from the average security guard?

Guard

Thank you.

Orchid

For what?

Guard

It’s actually a compliment that you find me “different”.

Orchid

Is it? I’m late. Is it a compliment that I think you may be one of the Living Dead?

Guard

O yes. “Living”, that’s correct, but never “dead”. I don’t mean to frighten the residents, only to be helpful within my limitations.

Sayeeda strides confidently toward them through the audience, sporting the same black leather outfit but carrying a large brown paper envelope and wearing a large gold chain around her neck. A brightly-reflecting crystal prism is suspended from the chain..

Sayeeda

Excuse me. Is there a reception desk somewhere in the lobby? I need to leave off a contract for one of my associates..

Guard, as he quickly takes her picture

Impressive crystal. Is that actually your necklace or the firm’s new electronic security trigger?

Sayeeda

Is there a reception desk somewhere in the lobby here?

Guard

That’s not my job. I’m insurance and security protection only. No courier services. No masquerade costumes.

Sayeeda

Why are you filming this? There’s no accident here.

Guard

For security. In case you leave those documents somewhere in the lobby. We’d be liable if some vagrant picked up those documents.

Sayeeda

OK. All right. Is there a reception desk here? Or...I’ll just take the elevator. Don’t worry. I won’t be leaving this portfolio in the lobby. It’s an exclusive job opportunity.

Guard, grabbing Sayeeda's arm as she begins to leave
Miss, stop. Do you work here? I don't think you have a pass.

Sayeeda

That's why I asked about reception.

Guard

You are an exotic dancer looking for work here?

Sayeeda

What? No...I.. an investment counselor. This contract is for my colleague in the computer investment firm.

Guard

Where? Which firm? Have you looked at the directory?

Sayeeda

I don't know the name of the firm. But I might recognize the name if I could see the directory.

Guard

Why are you standing there in that leather outfit? Do you think that's a normal work outfit?

Sayeeda

Everyone here wears uniforms, don't they? This's not a uniform.

Guard

Originally, I suppose, you wore some type of jungle outfit.

Sayeeda

What? A jungle outfit? Traditional costume? Never. Do you think I want to spend the rest of my life as a walking drapery display?

Guard

Don't worry. Your life is short. You will have no time to change costume. Here: let me take the envelope.

Sayeeda

No. It has no address. I can't remember the name of the firm. But I will recognize my colleague.

Guard, taking the envelope

I have you both on tape. So I will recognize him when I see him. You will, of course, slip on the escalator in those ridiculous shoes and fall forward into the machinery. Not much I can do but comment.

Sayeeda

So comment. But you won't be talking to Sayeeda. I'm late. Don't worry: I've got a copy of the contract.

As Sayeeda rushes off to her appointment through the audience, the Guard films her exit.

Guard

You will, of course, slip on the escalator. But that's your choice. The dress, the shoes, the trendy research contract: these look OK. There is no reason for extra insurance because you look OK right here in the lobby.

Orchid rushes into the aisle just after Sayeeda has left, gesturing hysterically. The Guard carefully films her distress.

Orchid

That woman! That woman! We saw it from the window! Why are you taking my picture?

Guard

Because you are the witness. Tell us what you saw from the window.

Orchid

Someone fell off the escalator from the mezzanine bridge, right into the path of the Shopper's tramway

Guard

The Shopper's tramway?! Then there will be multiple witnesses.

The Guard hands Orchid the brown envelope he had taken from Sayeeda.

Here. Give this to Sayeed if you see him.

Orchid

Sayeed? The one who knows Sanskrit? That was his friend, wasn't it? The woman who fell into the tramway? Or...it's hard to tell from a distance. Models always look alike, don't they? The newest style of a dress hangs on whoever will buy it. So: back to work. I suppose I'll see this 'Sayeed' sometime again in the office...

Sayeed, suddenly coming in from the side to block Orchid's path.

Sayeeda! That was Sayeeda in the news! Caught in a freak escalator accident on the tramway! I should notify her family... You again! I thought this was the line for the elevator.

Orchid

The Security Guard gave me this envelope. I think it's for you.

Sayeed

This is from Sayeeda. But she's dead.

Orchid

I'm so terribly sorry.

Sayeed

O really? And what were you doing with this envelope?

Orchid

The insurance inspector...the one with the camera...

Sayeed

The one that you thought had you under surveillance?

Orchid

Yes. He gave me this envelope right before he went out to photograph the accident.

Sayeed

Before the accident?

Orchid

No. After the accident. He went to photograph the accident because there were multiple witnesses on the Shoppers' tramway.

Sayeed

Let's get this straight. He knew there would be an accident?

Orchid

No. Why do you say that? I told him about the accident. He was standing inside here.

Sayed

Give me the envelope. It may be a will or Last Testament of some sort I must be-fated to receive these strange documents. Or this's a plot to make me crazy..

Orchid

“Last Testament”...you mean: like the Wing Dings in Sanskrit?

Sayed

It's a job offer.

Orchid,laughing

Fated? What? To change jobs?

Sayed

This's from the dead. A job offer from the dead.

Orchid

From that security and insurance company? They are actually recruiting people to serve as the Living Dead in these buildings?

Sayed

No. That was a reference to my colleague Sayeeda, the one who fell into traffic from the escalator. I don't understand how that could happen.

Orchid

Not into traffic. Into the tramway. The Shopper's tramway crosses the lobby at the foot of the escalator above the mezzanine. If there was a stick or a piece of food on the steps, a sudden stop...

Sayed

I'm sorry. But that seems impossible.

Orchid

Since the accident here has already happened and been filmed for the news... You saw it on the news, didn't you?...It must be possible. Don't you think?

The Security Guard enters through the audience, glancing at the view window on his digital camera.

Orchid

Security here has everything recorded on his camera. Did you record the actual accident?

Sayed

I saw it on the news. I don't need to see it on his camera.

Guard

No. That was from a security camera in the lobby. Take a close up look at the scene of the fatality in this digital window.

Sayedda's ghost, pale and barefoot in a ripped leather outfit , and clutching a sheet draped around her body, limps slowly through the audience.

Sayedda's Ghost

I have a schedule. This was not on my schedule.

Sayed

In life, you had a schedule. Now that you're dead...

Sayedda's Ghost

I still have a schedule. We all have a schedule. The death was on my schedule. It is the tramway which was not on schedule. The cars should have automatically stopped below the escalator.

Guard

I have the documentation from the site of the accident. I'm sure there will be a Tramway investigation.

Orchid

Just the tramway? I would say this is something for "Unexplained Mysteries". If this woman was dead on the news then she's a ghost here. Or the news was wrong, which is always a possibility.

Guard, indicating Sayeeda's ghost, who watches impatiently with arms folded

O...that over there? The ghosts of the employees don't matter. They try to interfere. This is a job. She had a job. Someone else will fill her job.

Sayeed, holding up the brown envelope

You mean: this job? I don't want this job. As I told the woman originally, when she was living, I don't want a job with her investment company.

Orchid

Let me see that. Do you mind if I follow up on this application?

Sayeed

I...how could I mind? It's not my company.

Guard

Go ahead. That's not my business. It only becomes my business if it hits the trash baskets.

Sayeed, catching Orchid's arm as she starts to leave with the envelope

It looks like luck. But it might be a trick.

Guard

Everything's a trick.

Orchid

From your point of view.

Guard

From the point of view of the insurance and security company. But everyone gets partial compensation.

Sayeed, warily

Partial compensation...?

Guard

It's never full compensation. But you know that. You know there will never be full compensation.. Excuse me. I just got a Remote Order .

The Guard snaps his fingers and vanishes in a puff of smoke as Orchid stands alertly staring at Sayeed, having waved off the Guard's disappearance with a casual gesture.

Orchid

So, poof! It's a trick. I think it was a trick originally.

Sayeeda's Ghost

No! It's not a trick. I'm really dead.

Orchid

Yes, I know.

Sayed

Everything's a bit tricky here, as the security guard has admitted.

Orchid

Yeah, but I meant this portfolio. It's not a real job.

Sayed

I never thought it was real. What's the company? A black market front, or what? She wanted to bring me in to some off shore gang, or what?

Orchid, glancing at the forms

That's hard to tell. It's written like a satire. These can't be real project names.

Sayed, reading over her shoulder

O...yes, I see. "Project Deep Six", and so on.

Orchid

It's a casino!

Sayed

What?

Orchid

Can't you see what I mean? They're code names.

Sayed

Wing ding code?

Orchid

No, not that! It's supposed to look like a kid's game, like a casino, but actually it's deep strategy. Look at the names: "Project deep Six", "Project Eighty-Six", "Project Six Tall Doves"...

Sayed

Right out of old time gangster novels. Except: "Project Six Tall Doves". That sounds like a native American adventure game. You're right. It doesn't look straight. But that doesn't mean it's a casino.

Orchid

Maybe a Native American adventure casino, run by the insurance and security company.

Sayed

Financial securities.

Orchid

No. "Deep Six security". It's a hit list. This isn't a job portfolio. It's a casino hit list.

Sayed

No: a hit list from hell.

Orchid

But there is no hell.

Sayed

How can you say that? Your gangstra Guard over there just vanished in a puff of smoke.

Orchid

It's a trick

Sayed

No. The trick is that you think it's a trick. Like Sayeeda. The death was on her schedule, on the job schedule here but she didn't know what the words meant: "Deep Six", "Eighty-six"...

Orchid

Yes. The Wing Dings for "Death".

Sayeeda's Ghost, pointing with a flourish

Also the wing ding for “doves”. Six tall doves. They are the seven stars.

Sayeed, sarcastically

O yes. Six tall doves flew over the escalator and as the six became one, they were seven.

Sayeed laughs as Sayeeda's Ghost stands back angrily and Orchid moves nervously behind the planter.

You have come all the way back from Hell to point once again at this job application?

Sayeeda's Ghost

No! I was never in Hell. But where did we go when we traveled? Nowhere.

Orchid

OK, but if you are not actually dead you need to contact the security service. You need to tell the news outlets and notify the insurance company. Never mind. I'll do it. Here, let me take this folder.

With an abrupt double flourish, Orchid jerks away Sayeeda's ghostly draperies, takes the folder from Sayeed's incredulous hands and disappear in a puff of smoke behind the planter.

Sayeed

Where are we?

Sayeeda

At the airport, isn't it? I tripped coming down the escalator and then I must have taken the tramway back to the airport. Or...somehow I'm here but I don't remember arriving.

There is a short, mutual silence.

Sayeeda

Is anything wrong?

Sayeed

The escalator. I was waiting for someone to come back with a report of your accident on the escalator. It may even be on the news. We saw the documentation on the Security camera. You're dead, Sayeeda. You fell into the path of the tramway.

Sayeeda

It changes on the camera. The film on the news changes as it goes through the camera. I'm not dead but in one version possibly the escalator is running backwards.

Sayeed

Yes. That could cause an accident.

Sayeeda

It did not cause an accident.

Sayeed

Where's the security camera? I'd have to see the revision. Where is he? There's always a guard here watching except when we need to see the changes. We need to see the changes!!

There is an extended silence as both look around, waiting apprehensively.

Sayeed

Do you notice that everyone else has left this building?

Sayeeda

It's late or it's early. There was no one in the lobby.

Sayeed

If there was no accident, is there still a job portfolio?

Sayeeda

O, yes: of course. Did you get that folder I left for you?

Sayeed

Yes, but there seemed to be trick images in the project titles., images of death “The Eighty-Six Project”, “The Deep Six Project” and so forth. So I...my colleague seems to have walked away with that folder.

Sayeeda

I think we have a back up copy.

There is the loud sound of a collision, fire and ambulance sirens. The Security Guard enters through the audience, looking into the view screen of his digital camera.

Guard

There is absolutely no basis for your claim.

Sayeed

What claim?...That my colleague...

Guard, interrupting

No, not your colleague! The Orchid was an elemental who was never your colleague. You are Sayeeda?

Sayeeda

Yes.

Guard

Your insurance claim is absurd. It does not make sense. There was nothing on the escalator at that time but a bag of orchids.

Sayeed, looking into the camera view screen

Orchid! Where's Orchid?

Sayeeda, looking over his shoulder

It looks like quite a few orchids...in the bag and on the steps.

Sayeed

No...my colleague, Orchid...the one who took away the folder.

Guard

O. It's possible she was always an orchid or several orchids. We...ah...do not absolutely have a plan for the flowers. They just sometimes come and go here. In bags and pots. It is possible that your colleague was always a flower.

Sayeed & Sayeeda

O...or a florist, dressed as a florist. Not as a flower, as a florist.

Orchid, in flower costume, appears behind the planter.

Guard

I just process the film. I'm not responsible for any editing or costume changes..

Orchid, chanting

Sometimes the moving stairs go up
Sometimes the moving stairs go down

Sometimes the “up”s on the left hand side
Or the door’s on the right until half past five

Sometimes the moving stairs get stopped
Or the jungle’s on time in the condo clock

Wild card mark I thought on the wedge-shaped rock
But it’s the folded wings of a gypsy moth.

All join in the chant and exit, following Orchid. The Security Guard looks over the room and then follows, carrying the planter.

So tell me when the moving stairs go up
Tell me when the stairs go down

Tell me when the “up”s on the left hand side
Or the door’s on the right until half past five

Tell me when the moving stairs get stopped
Or the jungle’s on time in the condo clock

Wild card mark I thought on the wedge-shaped rock
But it’s the folded wings of a gypsy moth.

END