

# Carmen



Olivier van den Brandt



# *Carmen*

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Written : 2023

*The images used are generated.*



*\*The picture in the magazine*

## INTRODUCTION



### *The Article*

About a year ago, while skimming through pictures in an architecture magazine, I came across an article about a famous television writer named Carmen\*. The article featured a picture of Carmen with the title “Successful Writer Drives Architects Insane.” The curious title and the exhausted look in Carmen’s eyes caught my attention. So, on a rare occasion, I decided to read an article in a magazine:

The article explained how Carmen bought a Bauhaus mansion in Catalonia inspired by the Gropius House when she was 27. She seemed to have lived there without much issue, with rotating structures of family members, friends, and relations for around four years. Then, suddenly, one day in a fit of rage, she partially destroyed one part of the house and dismantled many of its features in the rest of it. (The article did not explain why.)

Carmen then invited a number of designers and architects to redesign the house, but nobody could figure out what it was she was searching for :

First, a modernist architect came who created a beautiful design in a style contrasting but complementing the previous Bauhaus arrangement. But when Carmen saw it, she chased him out of the room, shouting things at him that would give my grandmother a heart attack.

Then, architects of different styles and beliefs were allowed to each make alterations to the house. But each time during construction, Carmen would insist on a long list of last-minute changes, rendering any planned intention futile.

One day, even a well-respected feng shui expert came to see her. She ended up being a guest in Carmen's house for a few weeks. But instead of completing a design, the feng shui expert started advocating for nihilistic disorder right after her stay.

A few more artists and architects had sent her really wonderful and creative designs. But apparently nowadays, she replies just with a letter saying, "No thank you, Kindly, Carmen." This I found a bit rude, to be honest.

The article ended with the statement that Carmen still is looking for a redesign of her house.

The situation was fascinating to me; it was bizarre but inspiring. I guess I had some illusion of grandeur because back then, this challenge didn't seem that difficult to me. I've made some bizarre spaces myself before, after all, and I was sure I would understand her if I met her. So, I started sending emails, and to my surprise, after a long process, I actually received a letter with an invitation to come and meet with Carmen at her house in Catalonia.

*\*Carmen: When she was 24, she wrote the animated show, Blueprint, which placed a fantastical family of four in a colorful house by the sea. They were a family full of contradicting personalities and archetypes. Each episode was a self-contained story about specific parts of their relationships and ambitions, and the episodes all started exactly in the same way: them sitting around a perfectly square dinner table having breakfast. They would start discussing their curiosities or erupt into an argument that would drive the episode forward. Much of the episode would take place in and around the house, which has an undefined amount of rooms and decors to facilitate the story. The episodes would always end with them again sitting around the table, looking at each other in bewildered silence, with only traces of this episode's escapades left on their clothes and faces. By the next episode, these traces would also be gone. Carmen is now 36, and the 11th season of Blueprint just aired. The show is a great success. Nowadays the creation of the show is being funded by a big streaming network. The success has made Carmen wealthy, but it also means that she has lost a lot of creative control over her show.*



*\*The fictional house as appearing in the show blueprint.*



## *The way there.*

**I**t was an autumn day, and I was standing next to my rental car on a poorly paved road in the middle of a forest. I was scratching my head while looking for an address on Google Maps, Camí de Santa Maria 13... It said it was right here! However, I could see nothing but trees on both sides of the road. Earlier, a few hundred meters back, I had found address number 12, which looked like an office. It had a high fence around it, but I found no doorbell anywhere to ask for directions. Then, a little later, some way ahead of the road, I had found number 14, which was a farmhouse that looked to be in severe disrepair. There I found only curious cows to guide my way. I was starting to get a bit frustrated, and by now, I really needed to pee. I locked the car and went a bit into the forest to ‘stare at a tree.’

*‘Did I go to the wrong place? Did she give me a wrong address? Am I being tricked or being stupid? Come to think of it, I’ve never even spoken to Carmen...’*

While debating whether or not to give up and head back to my hotel, I noticed a small spot of grey in the distance between the green, brown, and orange colors of the forest. I didn’t register it at first, and it took a while to snap out of my disgruntled thoughts.

*‘Wait... grey? on a sunny day? There is no grey sky here now like back home. So what could it be? hmmm.... CONCRETE! It looks like concrete! That means there is a structure there!’*

I don’t think I have ever been this happy and excited to see such an ordinary and dull thing like a slab of

concrete. I quickly did a little shake dance and started rushing towards it through the trees. An onlooker might even have noticed a little excited skip in my step. The grey spot turned out to be further away than I thought, but still, it was getting bigger and bigger. I could now clearly spot the unmistakable texture of a plastered-concrete wall. Sometimes, there was even a flash of a window! I pushed through bushes and stepped over logs, and I'm sure I even relocated a spiderweb or two.

*'That must be it! Why else would there be concrete there? It looks like the trees might clear soon. I can see it now... Yes! A house! .. I think? I see windows.. I see a metal chimney, I see a puddle of water, I see two floors, I see potted plants, I see ... WOW?!'*

I slipped, tumbled down, and made a not-so-charming barrel roll before landing on my butt covered with dirt and leaves. The ground suddenly had sloped down, and I had missed a step being so focused on my destination. I was now sitting in a small natural ditch, and there were ants and insects all around. I found this moment rather funny, so before standing up and shaking off some of the leaves, I took a moment to look at the swarming ants making their way up my leg to the newly formed tear in my pants.

*'Oh well, there goes my nice outfit. Maybe this dirt and these leaves suit me better anyway.'*

In the morning, it had taken me a lot of time deciding what to wear for my meeting with Carmen. I was feeling insecure about how Carmen could perceive me. So I chose a really "architectural" outfit made out of well-ironed formal, but not too formal black and white clothes, maybe in the hope that this would give me a bit more credibility. Thinking back on it, this outfit

was a bit silly, so I guess, in a way, I was glad that this fall reverted me back to my more natural chaotic appearance.

I slowly and carefully climbed out of the ditch. For some reason, I was getting really nervous knowing now that I had found the house, I would soon actually stand eye to eye with this mystery woman, of whom I've only read a strange article. Someone who is known to the world through her characters, but someone of whom herself not much is known.

*'What will I even say to her? Will she take the lead in our interaction? Or should I, as a designer, take initiative by introducing a "method" by which to get to know her spatial needs?'*

I subconsciously closed my eyes while climbing and thinking about this. I could feel the floor leveling out again below my feet, and the light behind my eyelids became a little brighter. I took a deep breath and opened my eyes.



*\*My memory of my first impression of the house, (before i looked closer)*

## II

### *The Exterior*

I now stood right in front of it, Carmen's house! At first glance, it seemed like a normal, neatly square villa. It was rather large but not rudely huge, with sharp, mostly 90-degree angles. There was a window here and an elevation there, and the overall colors were grey, black, and white. Nothing too crazy. The concrete walls really stood out against the natural surroundings. If I didn't know any better, I would have believed the skeleton of this house was never constructed but has always stood here like plaster monoliths.

It was in the details of this house where I got lost. It started with a window. I noticed that it only covered about 30% of a perfectly square hole in the wall. Then, next to it, I saw a slab of concrete hanging from the wall providing cover for nothing in particular. These elements seemed perfectly confident about their existence and were at peace with the rest of the house, but they wouldn't tell me their purpose. Like how there was a heightened patio growing from the base of the house, but without any doors or stairs to get to it.

Then... there were the objects... From furniture to cutlery. From a bookcase to a newspaper. There were items lounging all around the area, items in places where I would never expect to meet them. It did not seem messy or disorganized, but more like a closely choreographed mathematical explosion. For example, there was a comfortable-looking padded chair that stood some distance away from the rest, totally lonely

against the elements, but it seemed to shrug its shoulders and proclaim: ‘Wind? Rain? Heat? Never heard of it, why don’t you go bother someone else with these trivial things’.

The last strange thing about this house was that there was no clear entrance, and there was... still... no path in sight! Nothing paved, bricked, no aligned gravel, pellets, planks, or sticks. There was not even a damned footprint anywhere to hint at a suggested movement.

So, I just walked forward, towards one of the open doors with a big window next to it. It felt the most inviting. There was shallow water on the ground, which would send an echo of my steps bouncing off against the objects around me. They seemed like little islands in a sea. I passed an oven, a mug filled with toothbrushes, and a bottle of vinegar. The door was pretty close now. Next: a tall lamp, a little filing cabinet, and a big painting of a cat. Suddenly, before I could take the next step, I was bombarded with the image of my own reflection. It came to me from the windows, the water, and metal pots and pans; it was all me, me, me! An entire audience of me focused on this one moment of me standing just in front of the door. In the window next to it, I could see the image of a man from head to toe. A rather bewildered and foolish-looking man wearing black and white clothing covered with dirt and leaves. His appearance invited me to lean in and look closer. To me, he looked either like a robber or like a lost animal that only just got turned into a person. I’m not even sure if he looked like me.

*‘What are you doing? What will she think of you sneaking into her house looking like that? This place is strange, and you don’t understand any of it. I know that you like that, but don’t forget that you are the one that is supposed to make sense of it all.’*

The man’s brown eyes changed to a sad expression. Wait... Brown? I have blue eyes! I slowly moved even closer to the window, and as I did, slowly the leaves and dirt started disappearing. My long auburn hair lost its curls and turned dark brown. My nose grew, and my lips became slightly thicker. My face became thinner, my eyebrows lowered, and my mustache disappeared. I was now wearing black shoes with thin heels, a pair of blue pantaloons, and a long-sleeved white shirt with breast pockets. My brown eyes were still staring at me but had turned into a more pleasant expression. Suddenly, my mouth opened in a big grin of shining white teeth!

I leapt back! Shocked and spooked. My heartbeat went wild for a moment, but as it recovered, I also recovered my senses... that was Carmen!! She was behind the window?

O: “Hello!? Carmen?!”

I intended to call this out with confidence, but it came out quite softly,

O: “Ehmm hello? I’m here to meet you about your house.”



*\*The painting of the cat, I later came to know this was one of her characters.*



### III

## *Carmen*

**T**here was a moment of relative silence. The sound of wind whistling through the building, a call of a bird, and then... the sound of footsteps. And there she was—Carmen. Standing in the doorframe, smiling at me.

**C:** “Welcome, Olivier. I am glad to see you here. Quick! Come in.”

She spoke in an unremarkable manner with an unremarkable accent. She stepped back from the doorframe and made a small beckoning motion. So, I stepped in. I was preparing to offer my hand for a shake, but instead, she gently grabbed me by the shoulders and offered another wide grin filled with shiny teeth.

**C:** “Ha! I haven’t had an unknown visitor in a while! You could have been anyone for all I knew before this very moment!”

She touched one of the leaves on my clothes and then let go of my shoulders.

**C:** “But I am glad to see that you are not a stranger.”

She walked further into a rather empty-looking room.

**C:** “Come! The day is ours! Who knows what it will become? How do you want to start?”

I automatically followed her walk, but I was still a bit disoriented, and the familiar tone with which she was speaking and the open question surprised me,

O: "Ehm... yeah... Maybe we can share something to drink? Like some coffee?"

Carmen's expression flashed to a disappointed tone for a split second before nodding and smiling.

C: "Good idea! First things first, I guess, huh? Let's go find a seat! But... if we are going to follow the proper sequence of things, a question for you: How did you like my garden?"

O: "Well... Was it even a garden? It was definitely... something. And to be honest, I didn't understand: why is there no path? No route? Your house felt like it appeared out of nowhere."

C: "Pff, garden, yard, lawn, patio, decor, however you want to call it, all the same to me. And yeah well... what did you expect there would be then? A red carpet and trumpets?"

O: "Well, I expected something! What if I wouldn't have found it?"

C: "Then for me, today would have been like any other. But look! You are here, aren't you?"

O: "Hmmm, sure. (I was not convinced) How will you go in and out then? Or your friends? Or how did this place even get here?"

Carmen grinned at me again, and I wasn't sure if she was teasing me or deadly serious.

C: "Oh, I know a path, and my friends know a path. I don't see any reason for anything more than that. And for your question about how this house got here? ... well... Who knows?"

She raised her eyebrows at me. Her statements were strange; everything felt strange. But something about the existence of a secret path and a mysterious way of transportation made me want to get to know Carmen well enough to a point where she would reveal these things to me. I smiled.

O: "Alright then."

We had arrived at a perfectly square wooden table. There were three wooden chairs sitting around it, and another one was lying broken nearby on the floor.

C: "Make yourself comfortable; I'll go get you your coffee."

I took a seat in one of the chairs while Carmen walked to the first closed door I had seen in this house yet. She stood still for a moment, her body language suddenly stiffening. Then she yanked the door open and threw herself inside in a motion that couldn't be called a walk nor a run.



*“My memory of the interior, (not necessarily accurate to the reality).”*



*\*Character from the show blueprint. N2*

## *In conversation*

I was back on my own again, and I could now take a moment to look around the space I was in. It was largely empty. I could see the holes in the wall with the incomplete windows that made the space partially feel like it was outside. There were, again, lots of black, grey, and white colors, and a lot of leaves and dirt on the floor. So I guess I camouflaged with the space. Suddenly, from the door Carmen disappeared, I could hear a lot of clamoring and banging. I wondered for a moment if I should go check out the sound, then decided to continue my observation instead. There were here, too, a lot of things on the floor, but it still did not seem messy to me. But this time they also did not have a mathematical atmosphere to them. They were like little moments of activity frozen in space, waiting for Carmen's return. The few bigger pieces of furniture in the space had the dirt cleaned in a small radius around them. To me, the way they were positioned almost felt intimidating.

Clang! Bang! Carmen poured out from the door; she immediately closed it and smiled at me awkwardly while leaning firmly against the closed door, almost as if to keep it shut.

C: "I don't have any milk and sugar, I hope you don't mind, but! I found some cookies and some apple juice."

O: "That sounds great thank you! I only drink coffee out of habit anyway. So with or without milk or sugar, it's fine."

C: "Aha! Well, in that case, let's leave the coffee behind."

Instead of giving the mug filled with coffee to me, she raised it in the air with both hands, walked a few steps, and carefully placed it on the floor. Then she came to me, sat with one leg on the table, and poured me some juice.

O: "Ehm, yeah, but... actually, I... Never mind, thank you."

I was feeling a little confused by Carmen, but the moment that followed was surprisingly enjoyable. The juice was great, and we didn't speak while tasting it. I started to feel relaxed. Carmen was looking at me with great curiosity, and I was looking at her and around me trying to place everything. I understood now what she meant with that the day was ours. In this moment I probably could have started to talk about anything, and Carmen would have gone along with it, which would have moved this situation somewhere. But I had to remind myself that I was here because of an architectural reason, so I should remember to make that the conversation. I leaned forward and broke the moment.

O: "Well then, Carmen, why am I here? What is happening here? Your house is unlike anything I have seen before. You feel as if you are one with it, but you want it to be different? It is beautiful, intentional, but chaotic at the same time. How do you feel about it? Is this place more like a palace or a prison? Because to me, it could be both equally." (I was quite pleased with how I worded myself)

C: "Ah yeah... my damned magnificent house? Well, I don't know. I love it. But more and more, it scares

me. You are not here to fix this for me; I don't think you can. But you seemed different somehow from the others, I've looked at your work, It looked both more curious and less exhaustingly competent as the rest of you rabble that try to contact me, So why not let you shake things up in here again."

Im sure if I should have felt insulted or complimented.

O: "You are scared? Why?"

Carmen leaned in closer,

C: "My house is haunted... or more specifically, my house is haunting me. It is my characters; they came to live in its architecture, changing it, tormenting me more and more as time goes by."

Maybe the appearance of this house had desensitized me a bit because I nodded and felt no reason not to believe her. Where normally my thoughts probably would always have ridiculed someone who sincerely used the word: haunted.

O: "Your characters? You mean the ones from your show?"

C: "Yes, them. They should be my friends; we always were like friends before. But when I feel them here, they are not kind. They rage, howl, and disorient me. But I don't understand. They are not evil. I never wrote them as evil. And they hate the house I created for them."

O: "I'm sorry. Do they... talk... to you? Where do they live? Is their house anything like yours?"

Carmen leaned back and laughed.

C: "No haha! They don't talk to me. I'm not crazy, you know... however..."





*\*Character from the show blueprint. N3*

Carmen made a guilty-looking grimace, but still with a comical undertone.

C: "...They do affect my perception, how I see, hear, smell, and feel. My emotion, my thoughts. I can feel their effect—an effect that makes things seem to be like them. I guess this is as much a presence as any physical person."

She paused.

C: "And no, their house and my house couldn't be more different. Mine is real. Theirs is not, and does not need to be. In their house, all that matters is the story and the actions that need to take place in it. Their house can just change itself to facilitate whatever is needed. The background is only an image, an unreal decor. The only real objects are the ones that will at some point have to be interacted with. Their house is an endless place for whatever it could be, but because of that in the end, it isn't really too much most of the time. My house, on the other hand, is painfully real. It is what it is, only able to change when something else changes it. But... in place of that, my house has endless details. Everything exists, probably even when I'm not looking at it."

O: "And now they are here? Why would they leave such an fantastical space to come to yours?"

C: "Well, I know why that is. I started wanting my house to be more like theirs, seeing it as my dream house. So it is only natural that they came to want some of mine. Them and I are both living in imperfection. I was just hoping our spaces could have met calmly. But it is escalating into chaos."

O: "Imperfections? What do you mean? You invented their house. And you live in your own. Can't you just

change things until they are to your liking? You are in control, aren't you?"

Carmen shook her head.

C: "No, I wish it was that easy. There is too much difference between the two spaces... fundamental differences. And I think my mind can't reconcile making the switch all the time anymore between living for me and writing for them. It can become living for them and writing for me."

O: "You cannot just recreate them? Giving them the ability to change?"

C: "Well, unfortunately, when I created the characters for the first season... I made a big mistake. I created a condition for them while creating a formula of episodes. Each episode was going to be an independent story about them. And so each time they were able to enjoy a wondrous space for a moment. But at the end of each episode, they would have to come right back to where it started. Never really being able to grow or change over time. Before I knew it, the show became popular, and a lot of people, opinions, and money intertwined itself with my show. I eventually lost power over the formula. Any changes to the constants of this formula were feared and seen as dangerous. Nowadays I am only able to write the episodes themselves, not the whole. So for my characters, this cycle of constants became an inevitable law of nature. Just like how for us, a law dictates that we all age and die eventually. A fact of life that not even a god can change anymore."

O: "So they torment you because they are trapped? Then you need to help them escape, no? Did you try?"

C: "I tried slowly, sneakily, changing them. But they have become part of me. As time went on, as much as I find myself struggling with old frustrations again and again, as much as they would inevitably revert back to their old patterns. They had eaten up the issues I have with the world. Or maybe I forced it on them? ... That I gave them everything I don't understand so I could be careless and happy..."

She thought about this for a moment, and then made a dismissive hand gesture.

C: "Oh well anyway... I concluded that by using logic, I am powerless to change things. They show themselves to me only in my house, so I will have to deal with them here first before I can see them as truly grown."

Carmen was no longer smiling at me, and her eyes had grown intensely tired, much like how she looked in the picture in the magazine. I now had a little bit more insight from where this look came from. It was an entire world of perception hiding behind them. But I still couldn't really imagine it and still didn't really know what was exactly so scary about it... Oh, what I wouldn't have given for the ability to perceive the world from Carmen's perspective for just a moment.

O: "I think I understand some of what you are talking about. But what about the fear? When and how do they become scary to you?"

Carmen looked over her shoulder at the closed door, exposing her teeth without smiling. Then she suddenly jumped up!

C: "Come, I'll show you!"



*\*How i imagined Carmen while alone in her house,  
(again does not depict reality)*



*\*Character from the show blueprint. N4*



*\*Character from the show blueprint. N5*

## *The Upstairs*

Carmen's eyes were again full of energy, and her smile was back. She moved to the door in a hurry. I, on the other hand, had been quite comfortable in my chair and had just poured myself another glass of apple juice.

O: "Wait!"

I stumbled on my feet and chugged my glass while Carmen stared at me with one eyebrow raised.

C: "Come on!"

I rushed to her. She opened the door and kind of pushed me through. Inside, there was a perfectly clean kitchen made with aluminum and stone. There was nothing here resembling the chaos of the rest of the house—no dirt, no leaves, no objects scattered about. I looked back at Carmen, expecting her to say something, but she just shook her head and kept gently pushing me forward. We went up a flight of stairs, across a narrow hallway filled with doors, into a small room. The walls were filled with planes of color, pictures, and paintings. There was a small bed on the floor, and there were a lot of notebooks, pens, and mugs scattered about. This room actually did look like a mess. Carmen immediately started talking.

C: My bedroom, this is where my discontent started. In the morning, when I'm still disoriented from my sleep, I would start thinking about them. How they have to start every episode anew again. I would look around the room, and I would feel them. It felt like



yesterday did not happen, and no matter what I would do today, tomorrow I would wake up exactly the same. Doomed for a meaningless repetition. The walls, the floor, the furniture—they were always the same. They knew only one form, and it would seek to guide my day each time in the same way. Telling me who I was, my archetype born from my archetypal home. I felt trapped in the routine of my home. In my mind, I started projecting the house of my characters over mine, and I would start changing the interior of the house to be more flexible. The fictional house was for me a symbol of freedom, so I was sure this would help. But instead of approaching the house, it was my characters themselves who became the walls, became the floor, became the furniture.”

Carmen stared at her bed. Her expression and her tone of voice was becoming angrier and angrier.

C: “I did not understand this. Why would they take such a personal interest in my house? I tried to get rid of them, I changed everything I could change, and I even destroyed things. It did not work... only recently I came to understand why:

In their world, they are the constant, and space for them can grow and change over time. For me, it is space that is the constant, and it is my body that does the growing and changing. Blessing me with a new wrinkle or a new bruise in the morning.”

Her voice went into a shout.

C: “Why can’t it be that when I change, my house changes with me?! Or why is it so that when I find stability, I am unable to timelessly be part of it? IS IT ALWAYS ONE OR THE OTHER?”

She stared at me, breathing wildly, almost like she was waiting for me to answer this for her. But I had no idea what to do with this barrage of words. I blinked slowly at her, then carefully put my hand on her arm and squeezed it once. Carmen's eyes were wild. I let go and went to sit on the bed. She let out a sigh and sat next to me.

O: "Yea.. That would be nice to know, wouldn't it? Space would make a lot more sense like that."

We both stared at the ceiling for a moment. There was one specific crack that my eyes couldn't help but follow.

O: "You know, I have a confession to make. I've never watched your show. Not one episode."

Carmen made a sound in between a squeak and a laugh.

C: "Wait! You are telling me you came all this way to meet me but never watched the show? Haha! That is great... Then please never watch it!"

O: "Pfff. You are making that difficult, you know. When I get home after this, it is going to be so hard to contain my curiosity... I now am dying to know what kind of places your characters would find themselves in. Can you tell me just a little bit about them?"

C: "You really want to know?"

O: "Yes."

C: "Alright then, I'll just tell you about their current situations. you will know them straight from the horse's mouth instead of from some silly show! Close your eyes."

I did.

*\*My memory of her kitchen*



*\*My imagination of her morning*

IIIIII

## *Them*

**C**: “There are four people and one cat that is perhaps two cats. Each of them has its own predicament.

There is a man who has concluded that he has solved life. Each question has an answer, and all he experiences fits neatly into his system. He is thruly wise and perhaps even right, but his system has come to affect him deeply. The system flows from his hands, involuntarily affecting the space around him, It is even slowly turning his own body into a perfect, rigid statue of his own intention.

Then there is a woman. She is kind and used to be cheerful, always paying attention to the details of things happening around her, seeing a lot of value in everything. However, she never found a greater purpose in life. Nowadays, I find her in an endless maze of small spaces and repetitive furniture. She is stopped in her movement at each step to stare at the details so much that even if there were others sharing this experience with her, she would not be able to notice their presence. For some reason, she mimics my body language, even though I feel I am nothing like her.

The man and the woman have two children together:

The oldest, a girl, is very intelligent and mischievous. She has often been the one to create chaos in the house that leads to the others having to come together to solve it. Lately, she has been suspiciously calm. Now, when I try to imagine her, she always appears standing next to objects and furniture from my own childhood. I don't know what she is planning to do with them, and it scares me.

Then, a boy, who is slightly younger, I am always forgetting him. He used to have an active role in the stories, but I can't really picture him anymore. There is nothing wrong with him, but I also feel nothing with him anymore. The only thing that he actively projects towards me is a great white emptiness.

Lastly, there is the cat and a half. It is not clear if it is one individual or two opposites. They are more like a shadow in both the show and my projections. They are completely flexible in all of their nature. They don't care much about the world but still interact with it with great amusement. I am glad that they are there. A glimpse of it is still a comfort to me."



*\*Some of the images Carmens words were showing me*

## *Mania*

I was listening to her descriptions, my eyes closed. I could see images of what these characters could be flashing in my thoughts, and I tried to overlap this with my memories of what I had seen of Carmen's house thus far. To my surprise, Carmen's chaos started to make sense to me. All the different perspectives that it had to be able to facilitate. The house matched with each character individually in a beautiful manner. But if I overlaid more than one, it clashed and fell apart.

O: "They are all on their own in their space, unable to meet?"

C: "Yes, they lost each other. These spaces, their spaces are constantly in conflict. With each other, and with mine. This is why my house can't possibly be just one thing anymore. I will need to accept in some way a form of pluralism."

I opened my eyes. Carmen was looking in my direction while resting her head against the wall; she looked surprisingly relaxed and content for just having talked about things that scared her. I stayed silent in thought for a while.

O: "...Pluralism?... a pathway for them to escape and meet each other again? Many spaces that can become one and then many again within your experience?"

C: "Yes, liberating them will probably liberate me too, in ways that I am not even aware of. My place, the place I find myself in day by day, will need to be open

enough to be able to anticipate any kind of situation, and anything I feel I want to happen. It needs that my mind and my space are as much like each other as possible. While still staying in reality.”

I was wide eyed staring at Carmen now. The images of her projected characters were spiraling out of control in my head, sometimes becoming a stable image, sometimes just a representation of a thought. Carmen looked like all of them to me. I slowly stood up from the bed...

This crazy house was not insanity! I started laughing like a madman. The building had come alive! Carmen had been successful in making me experience her reality for just a moment...

C: “What? WHAT??”

Carmen jumped up from the bed.

O: “I see it! The things you and your house try to be! I feel your fear; the known and the unknown! I know it’s there. But it’s so inexplicably exciting! Soon... I’m sure of it... We will know what to do!”

I was bouncing excited on my feet, and Carmen mimicked me. Behind her on the walls of the room, I could now see the man here, the girl there, and hints of the cats all around.

O: “Let’s have one more look around the house!”

I rushed to the door; it was now Carmen that had to snap out of her comfort to quickly follow me, curious and slightly confused. She came with me down the hall. The objects I came across, the holes in the walls, the dirt and the leaves were no longer just that to me. They seemed to be changing shape constantly, able to be anything based on my choice of perception.



I opened one of the doors. In there, I saw an almost completely destroyed room, the wall completely opened to the outside and there was rubble all over the floor. But it didn't faze me at all. Carmen started talking behind me.

C: "Yeah, uhm, this room is..."

O: "No need to explain!"

I closed the door again, and I rushed to open all the other doors, there was one with a bathtub placed on a high pedestal, the next room had some sofas in it placed upside down, there was one chair and one notebook placed carefully by the window.

O: "verry good!"

But then... the last door... Opening it felt like it happened in slow motion, and I sometimes wish I hadn't, and had enjoyed this feeling longer with Carmen.

C: "NO, WAIT!"

My euphoria collapsed instantly... I couldn't even enter this room if I wanted to, for it was filled to the brim with the corpses of objects and furniture. They were scratched, broken, rotten and infested with insects. There were so many copies of the same objects... I noticed around fifteen misformed and mistreated versions of the confident padded chair that I had seen outside. They looked like they had all died a horrific death... The scene looked so bloody, like a room filled with horrifically maimed and mutilated bodies.

I jumped back; shivers went all through my body, and my heartbeat went wild.

O: "What did you do?! You murdered them!"

C: "I... I..."

I slowly turned to Carmen... I was angry, and suddenly scared... For a moment, the image came to my mind where Carmen would stab me in the back and leave me too to rot in this room. Then I saw Carmen, and luckily this image faded away. Carmen looked terrified. Her eyes bouncing back and forth from the room and me; her body was so tensed that she seemed like a deer that would bolt away at any sudden sound or movement.

C: "I... I'm sorry... I didn't realize it had gotten this far... I just really wanted them to stay themselves. But they wouldn't stop changing... and then I didn't know what to do with them."

O: "So then you just replace them and forget about them??"

C: "I... I guess I pretend this room does not exist. I'm so sorry!"

A tear rolled down her cheek.

So here they were... The victims of Carmen's chaos... This scene saddened me. It was a harsh reminder of reality. It told me that wherever we would go from now on, the house and her characters could never only be positive.

O: "It's okay, Carmen; you just spooked me, that's all. I was just so happy because I thought for a moment that I completely understood you."

I smiled weakly.

O: "Let's go back downstairs."



*\*The last character from the show blueprint. N6*

## OUTRO



We walked back down the stairs in silence, past the clean kitchen, through the door. Towards the square table. We both stopped around the broken chair on the floor. We looked at each other for a moment, And then collected the pieces and placed them on the table.

I stayed the rest of the day with Carmen in her house, the mood lightened as we strayed away from talking about her house and her characters; we spoke about many things organically. It was a very pleasant time. I offered to cook some food in her kitchen, which she gladly accepted with an undertone of relief. When I came back to the table, Carmen had attempted to repair the chair with large amounts of tape. It did not look very stable, but she sat on it contently regardless.

We agreed that I would take a month to let this experience simmer. Then, I would come back again to visit her in her house. I would either present ideas so we could experiment with some forms of rearrangements for the house, or it would be just to see how Carmen's house had evolved over the weeks, and we would have another undefined day of possibilities.







