

Duty to Serve

By Betzabeth Gonzalez

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Committee:

Jeffrey Fracé

Scott Hafso

Cathy Madden

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University of Washington

Abstract

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Chair of the Supervisory Committee:
Jeffrey Fracé
School of Drama

Duty to Serve is a solo performance that explores how far a person's anxiety can spiral when their self-worth is tied to the identity of a perfect god. Through audience interaction, musical offerings, and ritual, the piece examines the cost of equating devotion with value. Set at a Good Samaritan Day event, the audience is cast as non-believers awaiting entertainment, food, and of course a humorous word from the pastor...when he eventually arrives. In the meantime, they get Carina Sirviente, the church's mousy secretary put in charge of organizing the event. Fighting through social anxiety and a need to please, Carina finds herself pulled in every direction trying to be a good representative of the Lord. Every mistake sends her into the Anxiety Fog where escape is reliant on giving a worthy offering to the Lord. With every attempt the offering's value must increase until she must choose between giving herself completely or suffering in the Anxiety Fog forever. In the end, Carina is freed by the genuine care of the audience, learning that she never needed this god to know her worth. Inspired by my experience as a Pentecostal Christian, this production reassures those stuck in this cycle that they can walk away, too.

Years before I enrolled in grad school, a friend of mine told me that I needed to write my story. Convinced that I didn't have anything to say worth writing, I rejected that notion every time. If I'm honest, I was too scared about opening up. Not surprisingly, most of the feedback I received while in graduate school was about my tendency to wear a mask. In every performance, I shied away from letting myself truly be seen through a character or used my technique to build a wall between me and the audience. Authenticity was terrifying. However, forming a wall between me and the audience defeats the reason I do this: to connect with the isolated. So, I used my solo show as a quest to finally shatter the wall and drop the mask. Using my history with religious trauma as a framing device, there was no hiding. In the years of my religious deconstruction, I read many memoirs by others who have gone through this process. Although useful in my healing, I could not help but feel more alone because all of the authors were white. Deconstructing from a religion is already isolating because you are ripping yourself away from a community you were raised in. Even though it was for my own good, the fact that I could not find a book by a woman of color was deeply disheartening. The closest I came to seeing anything like that came a couple of years later at a pre-show symposium for a play about the disaster of a Black gay man coming out to his Black Christian father.

The symposium featured photos and biographies of gay black bishops and reverends. I had never seen that before; I had only ever seen *white* progressive churches. Progressiveness in a church never felt attainable - just another privilege I couldn't have. Even though it was uplifting to see this in a symposium, it did not completely erase the isolation I felt. It was still about religious figures. *Duty to Serve* is my gift to other BIPOC people who walked away from evangelical religion. If I'm going to reach them, I can't hide behind technique or tricks. It was time to come out of hiding.

Preparing for Bridget Connors Drama 559 class, she suggested I read Pamela D. Hancock's *Mythic Mapping: Using Jungian Psychology to Discover the Myth of You*. (2023) The mission of this book is to develop a "system for self-analysis for those who have experienced trauma." The system included using a deity's story to help a person engage with their own story in mythic proportions. Because the journey included using archetypes in the way Connors has taught us, I was excited to look into it. Archetype work engages my physical, mental, and emotional work more intentionally and efficiently than most other processes. Through this acting process, my limits expand further than I could have imagined.

The process was simple: read through suggested goddesses' stories (although not limited to the ones provided), choose the one that you connected with, write out their stories in your own words, and then, using their outline and mythic proportions, write your own story as if you were a goddess. The plan was to take the material gathered from the writing prompts and create a solo show from that. I was confident that I could do this because of my experience creating a solo show using a myth back in our second quarter with Connors. However, this quickly proved to be a different type of beast. The goddess I chose was Obba Nani, the orisha from the Santeria religion, which originated in the West African Yoruba tradition. I was attracted to this (summarized) version of her story found in the podcast called *Our Roots: Only the Strongest Roots See the Light* by Joseph Baba Ifa. (2023)

Obba Nani was the perfect woman, the perfect warrior, the perfect mother, and the perfect wife. She was known as the prototype for women everywhere, and it was not a surprise when she married Chango, a powerful king. However, although she was perfect, she was not Chango's favorite. He would frequently return to his mistress, Oya. Obba Nani, determined to be a dutiful wife, asks Oya what she does that keeps her in the king's favor. Oya, being jealous of Obba Nani, tells her that Chango likes to eat his women, so she cuts up a piece of her ear and mixes it into his meal every day. Determined, Obba Nani goes above and beyond and cuts off her entire ear to feed the king. Chango is outraged because he has been made a cannibal and exiles Obba Nani to the woods. In the woods, Obba Nani goes into a blind rage, again being the perfect warrior, and kills everyone who comes her way. The only person who attempts to help her is her sister, Oshun. Following the advice of a religious leader, Oshun frees Obba Nani from her rage. Awakened, Obba Nani sees the destruction she has caused and removes herself from the woods and farther away from the kingdom. Instead, she finds refuge in the cemetery, where she finds healing and shares it by guiding lost souls to their graves.

The idea of a deity known as perfection being driven to self-mutilation because she was so devoted to her king and then punished for her dutifulness struck a chord with me. How often, in the past, was I driven to self-harm because my self-worth was determined by a holy masculine figure? Choosing her seemed obvious.

After writing out my summary of her story, I wrote mine, matching the style of the myth. The process was vague and murky. Whether it was my fear of authenticity or my inability to write mythically, I wasn't connecting with my own story. I decided to re-focus on Obba Nani's story and write out a River Story for her. This is another creation technique taught by Bridget Connors. In short, you write the journey of a character's life using micro vignettes. Each vignette represents a time period in the character's life. After an introduction of the character (I am ____, born ____), the vignettes include the following in any order:

1. Six words describing that time period
2. A song
3. A bit of dialogue
4. A section titled "For me this was a time..." followed by a short monologue or poem
5. Ending with a poem that begins with "Looking and listening back". A moment of reflection on this character's life.

The final vignette is the character stating who they are now, followed by either text from the source or more made-up material.

After writing and performing this river story for my class, I discovered that this really was a story about a woman discovering who she is for her own sake alone. This was a story about fighting to be free from what everyone says you should be and becoming who you are. The song I chose at this time was the spiritual, "Sometimes I feel like a motherless child." Connecting this song to the moment when Obba Nani was exiled, I imagined using this song to wail for the god's attention. It was my first step towards unmasking. This was a completely different sensation I was experiencing than all the acting I had done thus far. So, I knew I was heading in the right direction.

During this time of river story exploration, the PATP participated in the early stages of devising for Upstart Crow's play, *Antigone*. Immediately, I was intrigued by how quickly they discovered the sensory language of the play and the rituals surrounding that language. So much so that I began to incorporate it into my own work. Exploring Obba Nani's story, I pinpointed her serving the meal to her husband as an important turning point. Her need to win his favor was so high that she was willing to cut off her ear; she literally gave a piece of her body away. It also occurred to me how offering a meal is such a cultural ritual already, add the ear and it becomes a sacrifice. It raised the question: what happens when the offering is not enough? Influenced by

Adrienne Mackey's rehearsal process in *Omnia Breakroom*, I recorded an improvisation of preparing a meal, offering it, and being rejected. In the improvisation, naturally, the rejections became abusive, and the offerings became self-sacrificial. Watching the recording inspired new versions of the ritual and was the moment the perfect song came to mind: "I Give Myself Away" by William McDowell. This became a major part of the ritual. The lyrics I wanted to highlight were, "I give myself away so you can use me" and "My life is not my own, to you I belong, I give myself, I give myself to you." It suddenly struck me that without context these lyrics sound deeply concerning, which inspired the next discovery: this show needed to flip the loving devotion of Christian music on its head. This was my opportunity to interweave my story into Obba Nani's. What happens when the worship is not enough? How much of yourself are you willing to give away? This became a key question in the next few phases of my exploration.

After a couple of iterations of the river story, I wrote a script about a nondescript woman setting up a ritual in the woods to offer to a god. The hopes would be that the ritual would please the god enough to save her from the woods, but with every offering, he rejects her until she realizes that he wants her blood. She hesitates (or scolds him, depending on the iteration), and he ultimately leaves her to fend for herself. She has a breakdown and tries to win his favor back by slicing her body. When she calms down, she realizes what she has done, separates herself from the ritual circle, goes on a journey of self-healing, and comes back to feed herself the ritual meal first and then those around her. The idea was there, but there were still many unanswered questions. At every workshop session, the same questions were raised: why was this woman in the woods in the first place? What caused her to separate? How did she heal? Most importantly, why did she come back? Why is pleasing this god so important? No matter how I edited, the questions were still the same. I could not see the issues from an outside perspective. Because it was a mythological representation of lived experiences, it was difficult to see what was unclear. I decided to speak with Adrienne Mackey about rehearsal strategies that will help me move past this block.

Mackey directed our devised production of *Omnia Breakroom*; at the start of every rehearsal, Mackey brought specific writing prompts, movement explorations, or scene improvisations aiming to answer questions about the show. Afterwards, she gathered that material, added to the growing script, and we would rehearse and iterate from there. This process made rehearsals efficient and a breeding ground for creativity and play. I was no longer

experiencing this in my own process. My explorations were coming vague and muddled. I was overwhelmed by what to explore on any given day. In speaking with Mackey, I was reminded of the importance of coming in with one (at most two) specific problem to solve. A strategy to identify these issues was her notecard exercise, which laid out each major event of the play on note cards in chronological order, so one could see externally what needed more development. Each note card was color-coded to indicate whether an event was fully built, halfway built, or still needed to be built. For the first time in a while, I was able to zoom out and see the show as a whole and understand the feedback I was receiving.

It turns out I was fighting against my own show. Mackey warned that holding too tightly to initial ideas during the process can stagnate development. I was so adamant about this show being this heavy, dark, almost horrific commentary of religious trauma that I closed myself off to any other possibility. I closed off any possibility that this show could go in any direction because I was anxious about time, resources, and deadlines. I had to let that go. A few days before my conversation with Mackey, Jerik Fernandez questioned the role of the audience. Admittedly, I hadn't really thought about it. At this point, I had audience plants serving as side characters who provided the character with warmth, food, and bandages, but didn't have a purpose beyond that. When pressed, I realized that I wanted this show to assure those like me that they can walk away, too. Quickly, I was reminded that this was a universal message, and I sat with that. Once I allowed the wisdom of my peer and Mackey to absorb and continued with my exploration, my show completely changed. In one day, I wrote a completely different, nine-page script, and thus Carina Sirviente was born. This piece wasn't for scolding religious structures for harming us, but it was specifically showcasing the result of that harm: extreme anxiety and people pleasing. And, more importantly, providing a way out of the cycle.

Now that the piece was beginning to narrow in identity, I was able to experiment more specifically with the assistance of the notecard exercise. Seeing what needed structural molding, I could return to the improvisational creation of each moment. Using the Viewpoints concepts of Spatial relationship, Tempo, and Gesture, I refined my relationship with the audience and god. This is where I drew Carina's nervous energy from. I learned that she has extreme social anxiety and doesn't want to be the center of attention but is driven by her need to please God. The closer she got to the audience, the more anxious she became, and every time there was a problem that was amplified. Continuing to follow Mackey's examples, I created a list of all the ways Carina

could mess up on stage. From there, I performed each of those mistakes and improvised using real-time discoveries. With every experiment, the script came with more iterations. At one point, a whole new character named Jason was created to add an obstacle for Carina to hurdle over, and although he didn't make it to the final version, he helped me understand her situation, wants, and obstacles even more.

The biggest surprise came from the realization that my show required audience interaction. As a performer, I do not enjoy audience interaction. However, I was determined not to fight the needs of my show again, so I carried on. This is when I had to rely on the concepts learned in *Clown* with Bradley Wrenn, which actively encouraged me to unmask in front of the audience. *Clown* permitted me to be honest on stage, no matter what state I was in. I used this in my favor because I really, truly did not enjoy audience interaction, and I made that a character choice. In playing with that dynamic, I realized that Carina desperately wants to please the audience, and this is the result of needing to be "a good representation of god's light." The need to serve them went from endearing and humorous to unhealthy and worrisome. The last time Carina asks the audience if they need anything, it is a desperate plea for salvation from the Anxiety realm. Although I would not describe my piece as a clown show, it relied on clown fundamentals to carry me through the performance. I truly didn't know what to expect once I had the audience in front of me; they could respond any which way, even with structures that taught them how to behave with me. The level of listening and responding elevated; I was "finding the fun" and conducting the rhythm of each beat. Wrenn taught us to move on if the audience didn't respond to something and, more importantly, to find what the audience did enjoy and either stay in it or return to it. Direct interactions with the audience were brief, but because I decided to start the performance with no warning to the audience, I clung to these pieces of knowledge.

The last piece of feedback that ultimately clicked my script into place was the casting of the audience. A week before the showing, Carina was simply an audience development employee trying to save a pre-show event gone wrong; the show was *Godspell*. And, Minki Bai asked, "Why does God care about *Godspell*?" At the time, the script ended with Carina finding herself and beginning the event with ease. I did not want her to choose to stay in a church. Then Bai stated the obvious, "Well, why can't you have it at an event for non-believers? Then, she can leave." The most obvious answer was right there, and I had not seen it. This was one example of how repeated workshopping with my peers helped me get an outside understanding of my show.

I took that piece of feedback and edited the circumstances to be at a Good Samaritan Community Outreach Event, and everything came into place. Suddenly, her need for this event to be perfect because she was called by God to do so; she could not refuse the ways of the Lord. The stakes heightened because the goal is to save souls; if they leave unconverted, it is her fault, at least from her perspective.

With the deadline arriving, I finally had to stop messing with the script and focus solely on performance. Before we began tech, I asked Cathy Madden for feedback on my performance. The notes I received revealed to me that before this moment, I hadn't been using my training for performance, only the creation of the script. It was freeing to return to the mindset of an actor and apply what Madden had taught us about using the Alexander Technique to invite the audience in, especially as Carina was trying to get the audience to like her. In this session, Madden asked questions about how the Lord shifts the environment for Carina and about Carina's strategy for winning the audience's favor. Returning to the fundamentals liberated me to discover Carina as a human being and how she behaves according to different sensory stimuli. Madden also reminded me that I did not have to hide the unleashing of the red ribbon representing the blood because the audience already recognizes that none of this is real; they know that this is abstract and pretending that it is dampens the moment. Although it was a logistical solution, it also served as another reminder to stay open and authentic.

With further improvements, I would explore the range of Carina's physical life on stage. Although I tapped into some quirky mannerisms, I would love to explore her when she is trapped in the Anxiety realm. I'm curious what else I could learn about Carina's physicality when in distress and trying to escape. Vocally, Carina lives in a higher place when she is people pleasing, and it becomes fuller and resonant when she sings her song. At the end, her voice is much freer and grounded, no longer trying to be easy to digest. Her voice needed to follow the trajectory of the story, and now I'm wondering how well her body was a part of that. To develop this further, I would do a run of the show without words and see if I could tell this same story with actions.

I'm also curious about an unseen character, the Pastor. The Pastor was added as another obstacle for Carina and as a tactic for Carina to convince the audience to stay at this event. She swears that his stories are very funny and not all preachy. But, to me, there is something unexpectedly sinister and mysterious about him. He is not god but is regarded almost as highly as god. I'm curious about an extended version of the show that has his control over her as a

subplot while remaining unseen. It's an opportunity to explore how in evangelical churches serving the pastor becomes akin to serving god, adding a whole other level of anxiety inducing servitude. Currently, he adds stress by demanding that Carina work on another task in the middle of her assuring the audience and setting up the event. He is the tipping point that lands her in the Anxiety Realm for the first time. It would be interesting to explore.

I'm also curious about expanding my relationship with the audience in future iterations. Currently, the show ends with actors I planted in the audience coming out to help Carina out of the Anxiety Realm with no expectation of reward or offering. They teach Carina how to calm herself down and give her the courage to leave this church for good. I'm wondering about a version where there are no audience plants and real audience members are moved to show her this care. The question becomes, how do I, as a performer, influence that action? What is the container I would have to create that would make the audience feel safe enough to do so? How do I teach them this from the beginning? How do I do all of this while leaving space for surprises? To pursue those questions, workshopping using elements of devising experiments, and clowning would be my first step, as well as workshopping in front of a live audience. Learning what works can only really happen with a real audience.

The hardest challenge I overcame was directly in line with the reason I took on this subject matter: taking off the mask. The embarrassment that came from revealing a truth of my religious experience came as a surprise. This performance only reveals a fraction of my journey, and it was hard to showcase. The temptation to cover everything up was high, but I renewed the desire to continue forward. Before each performance, I reminded myself that someone out there needed to hear my story, my way. That thought helped me dive fully into the work. Because the story is so close to home, I followed a step-out routine after every show. In Bridget Connor's classes, we learned a process for leaving the character's circumstances and returning to ourselves. The most helpful step was removing the character's "mask" from our faces and placing it on a shelf behind us to pick up later. I added thanking my character, Carina, for helping tell the story. Although my goal was honesty, I didn't see the mask as opaque—my own truth and vulnerability still shone through the character's circumstances. Removing it post-performance grounded me in the present and reminded my body that I was back in my real life. The ritual became an act of love rather than a desperate removal. It was reverential and full of gratitude. Stepping out and thanking Carina deepened my care for her and strengthened my

commitment to telling this story well. Creating her also helped me love my past self—and the audience members who needed this story. In the end, the step-out routine gave me courage and renewed my sense of why. My reward came from audience members coming to me and stating that they felt seen. I could not ask for more than that.

In the end, my friend was right; *Duty to Serve* is proof that I have a story to tell. Rewinding to the first quarter of grad school, in Embodied History of Acting, the historical question was always what was the actor's objective? Not the Characters, but the Actors. My actor objective is encompassed in this haiku written for a Mission Statement assignment:

Can't hide anymore
There's a little girl out there
Who thinks she's alone

I know there's at least one audience member whose inner child peeked out from their hiding spot because their reality was recognized. The hope is then that they were encouraged to walk away from the cause of their harm.

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DUTY TO SERVE

Written and performed by Betzabeth Gonzalez

Carina walks into the space carrying a case of water bottles. She is muttering a part of 2 Corinthians 5:20 "We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us." She doesn't realize that audience members have already started to arrive as she is setting up until she looks up and is surprised by them.

CARINA: Oh, hello! Hi! I wasn't expecting anyone to be here so ear- (*checks watch*) on time! Wow, such a fantastic crowd. Thank you so much for coming to our Good Samaritan Outreach Event...uhh...here at Church of God, Center of Life we really believe in reaching out to serve the community - being representative of the good Lord - but in a fun way!

As you can see, we are running just a bit behind but do not worry we will begin the festivities in just a moment! My name is Carina Sirviente, and I will be your humble servant for tonight. If you need anything you can come to me! If you need to use the bathroom, there is a women's bathroom that way, a men's bathroom this way, and a gender-neutral single person bathroom just through those doors. We also ask that you please turn off your cell phones as it can distract from the fun! Emergency exits can be found in every hall. While you wait, please enjoy some complimentary water bottles!

Carina begins passing around the water bottles and welcoming the audience in. She's not super great at it, in fact, she's terrified of the whole thing. She's not really a people person but is trying her best despite the fear. She needs this audience to like her. She is clearly apologetic about the late start. Here are a series of things she says to the crowd.

CARINA: Thank you so much for coming! God Bless You. Please have a water bottle. God Bless You. Thank you for coming! Please have a water bottle.

Hi! How are you? That's great! Hi! How are you? That's great! God Bless. Hi! How are you? That's great! God Bless.

Thank you so much for your patience! Hi! How are you? Oh- can't forget you folks over here! Hi! How are you? Hi! God Bless You.

CARINA: Oh! I know, while I set up, I should tell you all what you're in for! Our Missionaries Ministry and I really wanted to create an event that will bring us closer to you! Which is why we are here in your space! Uhhh...So today there will be lots of fun family-oriented games, and raffles and of course a word from our - (*her phone rings.*)

Pastor! Can this wait, I'm in the middle of -no, you're right! I can do both because I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. What do you need?

Carina tries to both talk to the crowd and talk to her Pastor at the same time.

CARINA: There will be a word from our Pastor but don't worry it's not like a boring service it's

- Uhh, No Pastor, I haven't done that yet -

He's actually quite funny and loves to tell real, life stories -

Mhm, Mhmm- yes I can do that, too! -

And there's also going to be some really tasty snacks-

SNACKS! Oh, I have to-

Yes, Pastor I'm listening -

I'm sorry everyone I have to-

Pastor, I just really need to -

No, you're right I should go do that first-

Oh, no! Did you get water? I'll get that-

No, you're right sir, I should go do that first -

(She changes direction too fast and trips and drops her phone. It breaks.) Oh, no, no, no, no.

The Anxiety Fog is entering, trapping her in the center as she spirals. She panics.

CARINA: No,no, please no! Hello?

Oh my god, where am I?! Help! *(tries to escape but can't. The darkness is like a thick wall.)*

Oh God, Oh, God, Oh, God -Somebody help me! - Oh God!

God! That's it!

God help me! God almighty!

Lord of everything!

Prince of peace! Help me!

She repeats this until finally, a single light comes to her.

Her God is here.

CARINA: Oh, thank god. It's you!

Oh god, thank you! I knew you'd come for me.

Please forgive me for my shortcomings which led me to this place.

Please, get me out of here!

The Lord doesn't say or do anything. There is an expectation.

CARINA: (*Without suspicion*) Oh right! Of course! I need to give you something. Yes! Yes, absolutely. Thank you, Lord, for the opportunity.

Carina looks around for anything to offer up to the Lord. Unfortunately, all she has is a water bottle. She works with what she has and presents it to him.

CARINA: This is all I have for you.

The lord is not impressed and doesn't do anything.

CARINA: Of course! I can't just give you this! You need an offering that comes from me! Uhhh...

(She searches for the right song to offer to him. She thinks of one and tries to remember how it goes and then she finds it.)

From me....

This is all for you. Everything I am and have for you.

Carina begins to reverently sing her praise to the Lord and finds a way to ritualistically offer up the water bottle. It's earnest.

Here I am
Here I stand
My life is in your hands
You are all I'm longing to see
Your desires revealed in me
I give myself away
I give myself away
I give myself away
So you can use me

Carina finishes the song. She is so sure that the Lord is going to free her from this prison. The Lord approves and releases her from the darkness.

She exhales in relief - it's short lived when she sees the crowd again. As she speaks, she is running to get materials for the event.

CARINA: I'm so sorry everyone. Thank you for your patience; I just needed- it doesn't matter! Our Pastor is running late and so I'll be continuing this event. I'm so sorry for the delay on top of the delay. We strive for holy excellence but sometimes we fail. Once again, my name is Carina Sirviente and I'm here if you need anything. I'll just continue setting up -

As I was saying, there will be homemade snacks and appetizers made by our Missionaries Team and the Pastor!

Carina runs off and quickly re-enters carrying a giant folding table. Probably something that is more of a two-person job, but she can absolutely handle it! (The folding table is surprisingly difficult to unfold.)

CARINA: A great assortment of meats and cheeses and - Oh, I did this in the wrong order! I'm so dumb - the Missionaries Ministry really came together to cook you some great food! They stood up all night baking every single cracker from scratch!

As she is busy about trying to entertain the crowd and set up the table, she bumps into it, and it knocks over.

She can feel her panic spiking again and sees the darkness coming for her.

CARINA: No, no, no, no, please no. I can fix it! I can fix it! *(She tries but it's too late.)*

Why does this keep happening?

Please help me once again! I'm so sorry, Heavenly Father!

God?! Help me, Jesus please!

My Healer!

My Comforter!

Finally, the warm comforting light of the Lord has entered the space again. Promising release and favor.

CARINA: Thank you! You are always there for me when I need you.

You are perfect

Please help me overcome this again and

I shall be a representation of your light.

Without waiting for the answer, she begins setting up the ritual again and begins singing.

Here I am

Here I stand --

The Lord interrupts her. No, that's not enough this time. Oh, no. Carina doesn't have anything else to offer him. Except for -

CARINA: Uhh, I have this! *(She takes off her jacket and any jewelry she may be wearing)* It's truly all I have right now.

The Lord agrees, for right now. Carina is relieved he will take it and begins again. It's earnest again.

Here I am
Here I stand
My life is in your hands
You are all I'm longing to see
Your desires revealed in me
I give myself away
I give myself away
I give myself away
So you can use me

She finishes. We wait. Is he gonna let her go?

Carina tries not to sweat. He loves her after all. To show her submission and trust in him, she bows.

I give myself away
So you can use me

*The Lord releases her but not all the way.
Carina doesn't notice that the edges are still dark but it's enough.*

Carina is returned to the normal world again. She is weary and frightened. She's processing but she has to be better so she can't slow down. She looks up at the audience again. The smile is harder to plaster. It's heavier now.

CARINA: I'm so sorry everyone for disappointing you with the ongoing delays, and lack of service. I'm sorry for failing to serve you. Since we do not have snacks or water or anything is there anything else I can do for you?

She goes up and talks directly to audience members, basically pleading. It's pathetic. She's scared of going back.

CARINA: Do you need anything?
Do you need anything?
Do you need anything?
Do you need anything?
What would you like?
Yes! I can get that for you somehow!
Do you need anything? What do you want?
Please tell me what you want or else he's gonna send me to-
Please!

I'm here to be your humble servant. Please!

As this continues the dark realm creeps back, and she can see it is desperate to keep it back.

No! Please! I don't want to go back!

It doesn't matter. She's going back. In a snap - Carina is back in the darkness. Over wired and overstimulated. Does she even have it in her to sing again?

I can't be here. I'm sorry!

I keep failing you

I can't do it

No yes I can

Yes I Can

Allow Me Another Chance

But

I have nothing for you

What do you want?

I have nothing else to give you

He's about to leave.

Wait, wait, wait!

I have- here

She cuts her hair off for him.

I give you that

How's that?

This is frantic.

Here I am

Here I stand

My life is in your hands

You are all I'm longing to see-

Wait- what else do you want?!

I have done everything I could think to do to be your perfect servant

What else do you want--

I know what you want

Everything

You want everything
I'll give it to you
I'll give it to you

She picks up the scissors and begins to sing a new verse.

My life is not my own
To you I belong
I give myself
I give myself to you
My life is not my own
To you I belong
I give myself
I give myself to you

As she sings, she presents her wrists to the Lord.

This pleases him. Carina is about to make contact with skin when she stops. She actually can't do this.

CARINA: You really want this?
You really are gonna let me do this?!
How could you want more?
You promised peace!
This isn't it!

The Lord leaves her.

She is trapped. The darkness is tight around her. She cannot see through it. And the panic begins.

CARINA: No, no, no please! Come back! Help me! Please! Help me! I can do it! I can do it! I can do it!

She picks up the scissors again and begins to slice her skin as she sings a concoction of the earlier verses.

Here I am
Here I stand
My life is in your hands
My life is not my own
To you I belong
I give myself
I give myself to you
You are all I'm longing to see
Your desires revealed in me
I give myself away

I give myself away
I give myself away
I give myself away

He isn't coming back and the darkness and the fog and the loss all consume her.

Until PERSON A reaches their hand in and pulls her out.

She's not completely free but she has space now.

She pants. She looks at who saved her. It's an audience member.

CARINA: Oh, I see-God is in you! Thank you! *She falls on her knees and bows. She tries to perform the ritual to her new savior.*

Here I am
Here I stand
My life is in your hands
You are all I'm longing to see--

PERSON A stops her gently. No need to do all that. Bandages her wrists and gives her one last "you good?" look and walk away. The darkness fades a little bit.

PERSON B comes in and hands her a jacket to wear. The darkness shifts away even more. Carina sees this new kindness and once again tries to give them an offering.

CARINA: No, it's you! Here I am
Here I stand
My life is in your hands--

PERSON B, confused, stops her gently. Maybe, pats her back and walks away.

PERSON C enters and hands her a water bottle, maybe a snack.

The darkness releases even more. Carina tries to begin the ritual again, but PERSON C stops her before she gets the chance, instead encouraging her to drink her water and breathe. They give her a thumbs up before heading back to their seat.

Carina looks after them and is surprised and touched. She cries, for the first time. And it is freeing. She breathes in. It feels good. She enjoys the breath. She inhales for a few beats, and exhales for a few beats. This takes time. As she is breathing, the remaining fog dissipates. She drinks more water.

She can see clearly now. When she is ready, she stands up. Calmer than she has ever been. She sends a thankful glance to the 3 people who helped her and then looks around at everyone else. She really sees them this time.

CARINA: Thank you, truly thank you. You never needed any of this, and... I don't either. I'm going home.

She exits.

Black out.

THE END.

SONG CREDIT

“I Give Myself Away”

Lyrics and Music by William McDowell and Sam Hinn

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