

MoMa?

by

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Cast: MoMa?

Francesca da Rimini: Italian noblewoman of the 13th century. Age 17. Originally from Dante's Inferno which was inspiration for Rodin's The Kiss

Paolo Malatesta: Italian, brother-in-law of Francesca da Rimini. Age 18. Originally from Dante's Inferno which was inspiration for Rodin's The Kiss

Mona Lisa: Lisa Gheradini Italian wife of wealthy silk merchant Francesco del Giocondo, who sat for her portrait by Leonardo da Vinci between 1503

Place: An international art gallery

MoMa?

1.

(An international art gallery. PAOLO and FRANCESCA dressed in white body-suits are in the pose of August Rodin's The Kiss sculpture, they sit on a plinth. PAOLO hides a small book in his right hand. There is a bench with a newspaper under it. Lights fade)

FRANCESCA

Is it time?

PAOLO

I can't see with only one eye. There is something lodged against my inner thigh.
(The lights flicker)

FRANCESCA

That's it. The lights flickered. The gallery is officially closed.

(Lights up slowly. FRANCESCA disengages from PAOLO she stretches. Picks up the newspaper from under the bench. PAOLO removes an iPhone from his thigh, he places the book down)

It must be your lucky day someone left this.

PAOLO

Great I do enjoy reading the notable events, weather, sports, on paper.

(FRANCESCA hands PAOLO the newspaper. They sit together on the bench)

What is that?

PAOLO

(Shows FRANCESCA the iPhone that was lodged against his thigh the ring tone of a duck from an e-mail is heard. PAOLO shakes the iPhone)

I don't know. Sounds like a duck. Look there is a circle this end, shall I press it?

FRANCESCA

Let me.

(Presses button)

Whoa! There are stars and snow and numbers and words. It says "slide to unlock."

(FRANCESCA stands with the iPhone in one hand she begins to slide)

PAOLO

No Francesca, no. Here this is how you do it.

(Takes the iPhone and slides in an exaggerated manner.)

FRANCESCA

Did anything happen?

PAOLO

No.

(PAOLO places iPhone on bench and picks up the newspaper begins to read. The ring tone of the duck is heard)

FRANCESCA

Mona's is coming over soon. She will know what it is. Have you been eating garlic?

PAOLO

No.

(Cupping his hand to smell his breath)

Does my breath smell?

FRANCESCA

(Placing her arms lovingly around his neck. He continues to read)

Yes. But more fishy than garlicy.

PAOLO

Is it?

FRANCESCA

Did you sneak a visit to Dahli's last night?

PAOLO

No. He only has stale lumpy bread and blood urchin.

FRANCESCA

I know where you went. You didn't? You would not dare?

(PAOLO feigns innocence by immersing himself in the newspaper)

You took lobster from de Keems Still Life with Fruit and Ham.

PAOLO

Someone has to savor the food. I was hungry. I squeezed a little lemon over the top. Delizioso.

FRANCESCA

Paolo they will notice.

PAOLO

3.

I was ravenous. What was I supposed to indulge myself with? Cezannes apples? Most of them green and sour.

FRANCESCA

(Standing in front of PAOLO)

What am I going to do with you?

PAOLO

Kiss me.

(PAOLO stands and FRANCESCA kisses him)

PAOLO

I will never tire of your lips.

FRANCESCA

(Picks up the book and gives it to PAOLO. FRANCESCA sits on bench)

Read more of Lancelot and Guinevere. Please Paolo.

PAOLO

(Leafing through the book)

Where were we? Here we are. "Most noble Christian Queen, I beseech you, as you have ever been my special good lady, and I at all times your true poor knight."

FRANCESCA

Am I your special good true lady?

PAOLO

Of course. Am I your true poor knight?

FRANCESCA

Yes. Lancelot and Guinevere were so romantic. Like us, our destiny.

PAOLO

Until my brother.

FRANCESCA

We were not doing anything wrong. You were reading to me.

PAOLO

Francesca I have to be honest if I am to be a good true knight. You and I both know we were in the beginning of a kiss. An adulterous kiss. A sumptuous, splendid kiss. We had crossed that line. Once you kiss there is no turning back.

FRANCESCA

4.

The price was high. Death by my husband. He may have killed us. But not our love, our passion

(FRANCESCA goes and kisses PAOLO passionately. MONA enters. She has a gilt frame on her arm. The ring tone of a dog barking is heard.)

MONA

Buono sera. I hope I am not interrupting?

FRANCESCA

Ciao Mona. Great to see you.

(Looking at the frame)

Why did you bring that with you?

MONA

I will put it here, this way I can't lose it. Remind me later I don't want to forget it.

(She lays the frame by the plinth. The ring tone of a dog barking is heard.)

Is that a dog I hear?

(FRANCESCA moves towards MONA)

FRANCESCA.

That bark is coming from this, it was left on Paolo

(FRANCESCA gives MONA the iPhone)

MONA

I have seen many of these contraptions. The tourists are always pointing them at me, or pointing them at themselves and standing in front of me. It is frightful. I am sick of their attention. I believe I have heard them call these selfies. I don't know how they work. I am sure Leonardo would have been able to figure this box out, but it is beyond me.

(MONA places iPhone on bench. FRANCESCA kisses PAOLO on the cheek)

FRANCESCA

Sorry Paolo. The box is a mystery.

MONA

You and Paolo are so passionate. I am jealous. You have fluidity. All I do is stare.

(MONA stares at the audience)

5.

I stare at six million faces a year. Sometimes I want to distract them like this.

(MONA sticks her tongue out, turns to show FRANCESCA and PAOLO who laugh)

Leonardo should have painted more than a portrait. He was terrible at finishing his art. He took over four years to complete this.

(Points to her face)

FRANCESCA

Auguste called us “The knick-knack”

PAOLO

The “huge knick-knack.”

FRANCESCA

And to add insult to injury he produced two more of us.

MONA

He reproduced you?

FRANCESCA

One is in Paris and the other in London. The London couple have had a hard time they were accused of being scandalous and for years were housed in a stable or covered with a tarpaulin because they were considered erotic.

PAOLO

How times have changed. You are so celebrated Mona. Nat King Cole sings about you

(sings)

“Mona Lisa, Mona Lisa, Mona Lisa”

MONA

Oh please. I was unknown until I was kidnapped.

FRANCESCA

You were kidnapped?

MONA

By an employee at the Louvre. The worst was that I was taken on a Monday and no-one noticed I was missing until Tuesday at noon.

PAOLO

No.

FRANCESCA

6.

That is awful.

MONA

Through that robbery and the publicity, that is what brought me fame. A crime made me famous. And the villains didn't stop. I have had lunatics throw acid on me and rocks.

(Shows the back of her elbow)

See here this is where the rock hit right on my funny bone. I didn't laugh.

PAOLO

You have been in the wars. That is all in that is written in this thing,

(Indicating the newspaper)

wars. These wars are so complicated, I cannot comprehend how they began. They use these things called guns to kill one another.

MONA

I personally know about those guns. Because I am under a gun threat. Now I am in bullet proof glass. Do you know an old grandmother threw a tea cup at me?

FRANCESCA

A teacup?

(MONA laughs)

FRANCESCA

That is the price for being the ideal woman.

(The ring tone of the duck)

MONA

What is that?

FRANCESCA

The selfie. It will stop in a moment.

(The ring tone of the duck stops)

MONA

How strange. A duck sound coming from a box. As I was saying I want to be a real woman.

(Bends her head forward for FRANCESCA to examine)

Look I am losing my eyelashes and eyebrows.

FRANCESCA

They can easily be repaired.

MONA

Enough about me. Where are we going?

PAOLO

Renoir's beer garden.

FRANCESCA

We can drink and dance. You can flirt Mona.

(FRANCESCA and MONA dance together around the room,
laughing)

PAOLO

You two are incorrigible.

MONA

Me flirt? Never.

FRANCESCA

The garden is always fun, and you meet the most interesting people.

PAOLO

I have invited a friend. He has been a bit low of late. He is visiting from Norway. He is on loan like us. He is unattached. He is known as The Scream.

MONA

I have told you before I am not interested. You two are forever trying to fix me up.

PAOLA

I think you have a lot in common. He speaks a little Italian.

MONA

Bueno. It is exhausting speaking English all the time. Why is he called The Scream?

PAOLO

He wears a white mask.

MONA

I don't like scary things.

PAOLO

I will ask him to take it off. Underneath he is a very handsome man.

MONA

What is his name?

PAOLO

Unofficially he goes by Edvard.

MONA

Good looking you said?

FRANCESCA

Very. Like Paolo. You and Edvard have a lot in common.

MONA

We do?

PAOLO

He was kidnapped.

FRANCESCA

Twice. Once in Oslo from the National Gallery and then from his own building, the Munch Museum. The experience has made him apprehensive and anxious.

MONA

How awful. What is he doing here?

PAOLO

He is on his way to America. To a place called MoMa, he doesn't know where it is exactly. If I changed one syllable it would be your name Mona. I bet there is a town in America called Mona. You have been to America haven't you?

MONA

The last time I visited Jackie Kennedy made the arrangements and I travelled by ocean liner. I had a "swell" time as the Americans say.

(PAOLO returns to the bench to play with the i phone)

PAOLO

(Looking up)

Do you know they call America the USA? Edvard told me. I wanted to know because I am always coming across the word in this thing

(PAOLO picks up the newspaper)

There is a word I must ask Edvard tonight. It is UN always popping up in here and another one if I can remember is..... yes U S.....SR . I hope Edvard can explain them. He says they are shortened versions of longer words.

FRANCESCA

He is originally from Norway.

MONA

9.

I've never been to Norway. It is a romantic country. The fjords, the waterfalls, and the lushness of the landscapes I have seen in paintings. So romantic. I am jealous of your passion. It is inspirational. I yearn for what you have. Romance. I haven't been kissed in years.

FRANCESCA

I find that hard to believe. . Don't you know any man would want to kiss you?

(Whispering)

I have to warn you Edvard has the reputation of being a rogue.

MONA

There is a rogue in every man. Who he is now, that is what counts.

PAOLO

I have unlocked the box. Look at all the tiny pictures.

(PAOLO rises from the bench to show FRANCESCA and MONA the iPhone)

FRANCESCA

There is one with a tiny red heart. How fascinating.. The word health in small print underneath
There is a clock. What does that word say beneath the clock?

PAOLO

Clock.

MONA

(Examining the iPhone then handing it to PAOLO)

This appears to be Miro's work. He indulges himself with small items and is very child-like.

PAOLO

(Looking at the iPhone.)

That clock keeps real time. That is genius. E vite seems someone couldn't spell invite.
And app. What is app? Apothecary....Oh no that only has one p.

FRANCESCA

This is a game. We should all say a word and see if the selfie responds. It must start with app.
You go first Mona.

(PAOLO gives the iPhone to MONA)

MONA

(Loudly)

Appear..... Nothing happened.

(MONA passes iPhone to FRANCESCA)

10.

FRANCESCA

(Clapping her hands)

Applaud. That didn't work. I know what your word is Paolo. It is about food? Am I correct?

(FRANCESCA hands iPhone to PAOLO)

PAOLO

Appetite.

FRANCESCA

Yes, I knew it. Mona did you notice anything different about Keems Still Life of Fruit and Ham on your way over here?

MONA

I did actually. It looked like the lobster has been eaten.

FRANCESCA

It was. Paolo is always hungry.

MONA

No matter the restoration experts will put in another one. It happens all the time.

PAOLO

We should be off, before they run out of beer.

MONA

What are we waiting for?

FRANCESCA

Nothing.

(The ring tone of a duck. They leave iPhone on bench)

MONA

I think we should leave the quacking and the barking here. The noise is intrusive don't you agree? I intend to enjoy myself this evening. Una notte meravigliosa.

FRANCESCA

And maybe a kiss from a certain Norwegian.

(MONA, FRANCESCA and PAOLO exit arm in arm. The ring tone of the duck is heard.)

End of Play

