

Pieces of Whitey

by
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Character Breakdown:

Minimum required actors: 3 men, 3 women.
(You can certainly use more actors if you desire.)

There are lots of characters to distribute. Here is one scheme that works for six actors:

Man 1 will play: Fred, Voice, Assistant #1

Man 2 plays: Harold, Assistant #2, Jalen, Bob Smith, Shopper 1 and Shopper 4, Tyrone, Guest #2, Chip, Maxwell, Coffee Customer, Tom, Julon. Guy on stoop in "Fred's Brain." Cop.

Man 3 plays: David, Bill, Jim Hayman. Other guy on stoop in "Fred's Brain."

Woman 1 plays: Betty

Woman 2 plays: Amy, Megan, Dr. Hector, Elana Kowalski, Sherry, Vicki, Guest #1, Shopper 3, Neighbor, Martha, Barrista, Subway Rider, Jamie.

Woman 3 plays: Janice, Sally, Assistant #3, Courtney, Amelia, Guest #3, Fred's Brain, Tamika, Dr. Marks, Cynthia, Shopper 2, Cook, Kelly Snow, Video Clerk, Bartender.

Man 1 should be aged 20-40

Man 2 should be 20-40

Man 3 should be 30-55

Woman 1 should be 30-55.

Woman 2 should be 20-40

Woman 3 should be 20-40

The action of the play should be fast and as smooth as possible. In order for this to happen, settings should be established with the barest minimum of props and furniture. Scene cards or projected slides with scene titles can help a lot. Costumes need to be easy to change, and again, quickly representative.

Note to the actors: Sometimes in this script, white actors play black characters. Please do not add "black" dialect. If the character needs it, it's in the script already.

Last note (really). This play is intended for an all-white cast. There are, of course, some philosophical problems with this. So, if you want to produce the play with a racially mixed or all-black cast, that's fine, but if you do so then ALL (that includes white actors) the actors must wear white face. 7/6/05 15

1 OVER BOARD/ADJUSTMENT

SCENE: A theatre.

AT RISE: JANICE and DAVID are a middle aged couple watching a play. An actor, FRED, playing FREDERICK DOUGLASS is on stage. He's white. In fact, all the characters in this play are played by white actors.

FRED/FREDERICK DOUGLASS

What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy -- a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on the earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States, at this very hour.

(Lights down on Fred. Loud audience applause. Lights back up on Fred as he takes his curtain call and finally exits.)

(Janice applauds with the crowd. David folds his arms.)

JANICE

Honey.

DAVID

Don't applaud.

JANICE

I thought he did a good job.

DAVID

It's an outrage.

JANICE

I know.

DAVID

I'm going to talk to the producer.

JANICE

Let's just go home.

DAVID

We cannot let this just happen without saying something.

JANICE

I suppose you're right.

DAVID

Suppose? You suppose? Frederick Douglass should NOT be played by a white man! Frederick Douglass was a black man. (his voice rising) FREDERICK DOUGLASS WAS A BLACK MAN!

JANICE

Please don't make a scene.

DAVID

A scene? Look around you. Look around. What do you see?

JANICE

White people.

DAVID

Exactly. A whole bunch of white folks who just watched a white Frederick Douglass. We are the only black people here. They are not going to say anything about this. This is not a problem for them.

JANICE

Fine.

They stand up. HAROLD, at a desk, is wheeled on stage, phone at his ear. He's white.

HAROLD

(into phone) The earliest we can get them seats is in three weeks. Mary Stanley's bringing her entire school district.

Harold hangs up the phone.

HAROLD (cont'd)

Hello, can I help you?

DAVID

Um. Yes. We...

JANICE

We really enjoyed the show tonight.

HAROLD

Wonderful! Fred's great, isn't he?

JANICE

Very powerful.

HAROLD

He's a writer, too. Very talented. Is this your first time here?

JANICE

No. We've been subscribers for the past three seasons.

HAROLD

Oh. That's wonderful. I think this show will really help us. A small company like ours sometimes needs one good hit to reach a broader audience. And it's feeling like--

DAVID

Fred is white.

HAROLD

I realize that.

DAVID

Frederick Douglass was black.

HAROLD

I realize that.

DAVID

The entire cast was white. Sojourner Truth, Robert Smalls, David Walker, every freed slave and buffalo soldier. They were all blacks played by whites.

HAROLD

I understand that it's not historically accurate.

DAVID

Accurate? You just performed a play about the racial history of America and didn't use any black actors.

HAROLD

I can see why you'd be upset. They didn't seem black to you?

JANICE

They didn't look black to me.

HAROLD

But the audience seems to get past that. Maybe the actors could work harder to give the impression that they're black.

JANICE

Exactly how would you make them seem blacker?

HAROLD

I'm not sure. What do you think?

JANICE

David?

DAVID

(to Harold) Look, you have to understand that what you're doing is wrong.

HAROLD

Is it? Can a black man play Hamlet? Can a black woman play Cleopatra?

JANICE

Cleopatra was black.

HAROLD

Fine. Joan of Arc. Can she play Joan of Arc?

JANICE

Why not?

HAROLD

Exactly. It's not historically accurate, but you wouldn't deny a black actress a chance at the role. Neither would I.

DAVID

For Joan of Arc, the race of the actress is not relevant.

HAROLD

I hear what you're saying. We almost didn't do this play, because we thought people might object.

DAVID

This is more than an objection, it's--

HAROLD

Fine. But you have to understand--we're a small company. We don't have any black actors. Hell, I don't even know any black actors. Not a single one came to auditions. I talked to my friends from other companies.

HAROLD (cont'd)

We had a few leads, but they never panned out. Look, I'm part of the cause. We just commissioned a new play on race for the next season, something that will really get to the meat of the modern dilemma.

JANICE

From a black writer?

HAROLD

Well, we didn't know who we should... Fred's going to write it. Look, we're trying to be part of the discussion.

DAVID

Then work with real-live black people.

HAROLD

Of course. We will. We're trying. You're both interested, committed theatre-goers. And you're black. Maybe you can help.

JANICE

How?

HAROLD

Join our Board.

DAVID

He wants us to join the Board.

HAROLD

Be a part of the solution.

(David looks increasingly crazed. Maybe he wanders around the room and starts to shake a little.)

DAVID

Janice. He wants us to join the Board. He wants us to join the board.

DAVID (cont'd)

(overlapping the following)

The Board the board the board the board. We're off to join the board, we're off to join the board.

HAROLD

What did I say?

Janice tries to calm David.

JANICE

Do you know how many boards we've been asked to join? Poor David has apparently reached his limit.

HAROLD

I'm sorry. I meant well.

DAVID

Join the board. Join the board. What a great idea. I mean, that is a super duper fantastically GREAT IDEA! Let's join the board.

JANICE

Say goodnight, David.

DAVID

(to Harold) Goodnight! See you at the Board Meeting, Skippy.

Janice leads David off stage.

Harold watches them leave, then paces and thinks hard about what he's just seen. He exits and returns quickly with a large cardboard box.

HAROLD

(calling out)

Fred, Sally, Amy. Come out here please!

Sally, Amy, and Fred enter--they are actors after the performance, half out of their historical costumes.

FRED

What's up, Harold?

HAROLD

People just love the show. I know you've all memorized the reviews. But I've talked to a few audience members who have registered some confusion, objections, about the character portrayals. In terms of race--i.e. who is white, who is black. And I think I've found a way to address the problem.

Harold opens the box and takes out two black shirts.

HAROLD (cont'd)

From this point forward, all characters who are racially "black" will wear a corresponding black shirt.

He tries to hand the shirts to Fred and Sally.

FRED

You're kidding, right?

HAROLD

Just in the name of clarity.

SALLY

Why not have us perform in blackface?

HAROLD

That would be offensive, owing to our cultural and racial history. There's nothing offensive about a black shirt.

FRED

Harold, have you ever seen a black person?

HAROLD

I've seen a great many African-Americans, yes.

FRED

And what color are they?

HAROLD

Black. Well, brown.

FRED

Frederick Douglass was a black man, but he wasn't that dark. A deep, dark, rich brown.

HAROLD

Fine.

Harold produces a dark brown shirt from the box and hands it to Fred. Fred puts it on.

SALLY

Madame C.J. Walker was not even close to being that dark.

Harold finds a beige shirt, which Sally puts on.

AMY

What about the white characters?

HAROLD

What about them?

FRED

How do we know which ones are white?

HAROLD

We only have white actors. If you're not wearing a brown shirt, then you're a white character.

SALLY

So only the black characters have to wear shirts? Is that the message you want to send?

HAROLD

Fine.

Harold pulls out a white shirt and a brown shirt.

HAROLD (cont'd)

(to Amy) Whenever you're Harriet Beecher Stowe, wear this. When you're Rosa Parks, change into this.

AMY

Harriet was nowhere near this pale.

HAROLD

Fine.

Harold produces a shirt that's not so white. Amy puts it on. The shirts of Sally and Amy are not very different in hue.

FRED

Are you sure this is making things clearer?

Blackout.

NOTE: From this point forward, all actors will wear shirts or costume pieces (like vests or arm bands) that indicate the race of their characters.

2 I'M NOT RACIST, BUT...

(A brief dumbshow here: First we see Bill and Betty, white shirts, the happy white couple. They look offstage and are joined by daughter Megan, also in white. A happy white family. Jalen, in a black shirt, walks across the stage. He stops. Looks at us, glances at Megan. She crosses to Jalen. They exchange a look, smile, link hands, and exit. Bill and Betty watch them go, somewhat alarmed. They exit)

Fred and Amelia enter, both in white shirts. They link arms, much like Bill and Betty. Look offstage. Wait. But no offspring appears. They exit.

Then:

Lights up on Bill, Betty, Megan, Fred, all lined up in a row. Each wears a "white" shirt and a large name tag or sign. They address the audience directly.

FRED

I'm not racist, but--

BILL

I think blacks are a little lazy.

FRED

Bad drivers.

MEGAN

Can be so angry.

BETTY

Impoverished.

FRED

I'm not racist, but--

MEGAN

I think black people swear too much.

jump higher.

BILL

Black people

BETTY

think too much about racism.

BILL

let their kids run wild.

BETTY

Are loud.

FRED

I'm not racist, but--

MEGAN

I think black people don't like me.

FRED

I think--

MEGAN

Black men in fancy cars are drug dealers.

BETTY

Black people are more beautiful.

MEGAN

aren't as smart as whites.

BETTY

I don't know if blacks and whites should marry.

BILL

rude

BETTY

exotic looking

BILL

a little paranoid

FRED

Beautiful.

MEGAN

I'm not--

FRED

I'm not racist.

BETTY

I'm not--

MEGAN

racist--

BILL

But...

BETTY

(LIGHTS OUT.)

3 RENT-A-HOMEY

Betty's living room. She's a middle-aged woman, wearing a "white" shirt and conservative skirt. Nervously straightening up. The doorbell RINGS. She takes a deep breath, and opens the door. TYRONE, a young man in a "black" shirt and full gangsta rap regalia -- chains, doo rag, rings, timberland boots, baggy pants, hoodie sweatshirt -- stands there, holding a boom box.

TYRONE

Yo, this 17 Apple Lane?

BETTY

Hi, yes. You must be Tyrone.

TYRONE

Yeah. You Betty?

BETTY

Yes. Come in. Welcome. Have a seat. Would you like something to drink? Soda, beer, malt liquor?

TYRONE

Beer. Heineken, if you got it.

Betty gets him a beer from a tray.

TYRONE (cont'd)

Nice crib.

BETTY

Thanks.

An awkward silence. Betty produces a handful of cash.

BETTY (cont'd)

The man at Rent-a-Homey said I should pay you up front.

TYRONE

Yeah. Right. Thanks. Cool.

He takes the money. Both seem nervous.

TYRONE (cont'd)

So, what you want to do? You gon' have a party, and you need me to bring some class? Maybe you need me to give yo' man a few tips on how to whip his bitch ass into shape. Maybe you been watchin' B.E.T. and need Tyrone to translate for you. You need the down low on them punk ass niggas . A'ight. That's what Rent-a-Homey is all about. Bringin' a little clarity to your lily white world.

BETTY

That's great. Because I don't know much about black folks. And my daughter is marrying a black man, soon. And I don't know many black people. None, really. I see them on television, and when I drive past the bus stop, but I don't really interact with African Americans. I would if the opportunity arose, but it doesn't. When I heard about your service, I thought maybe this would help.

TYRONE

You want Tyrone to give you a comfort level with yo' new in-laws.

BETTY

That's one way to put it.

TYRONE

Well, here I am. Black ass motherfucka, here in your living room. (beat) BOO!

Betty just about jumps out of her chair. She catches her breath, then laughs. He laughs with her.

BETTY

Oh, good lord. Thank you. Okay. I needed that.

TYRONE

Motherfucking right.

BETTY

It's very kind of you to... I know this must be an awful chore for you. I'm sure you'd rather be... hanging with your homeboys.

TYRONE

Nah. S'a'ight.

BETTY

Have you been doing this long?

TYRONE

Nah... Not really. This is my first time, actually.

Betty produces a few pieces of paper.

BETTY

Well, I appreciate your patience. I have a list of questions--maybe it'll help me with the wedding planning to have a blacker perspective. Someone suggested that we play Public Enemy at the reception, but I'm just not sure. Oh, and what about drinks? Hennesey cognac, I suppose.

TYRONE

Betty.

BETTY

Yes.

TYRONE

I really can't... I have to go. Here's your money back.

He hands her the cash and stands to go.

BETTY

Oh, dear. I've offended you. I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to... This bodes so badly for the wedding.

TYRONE

No, it's me. I can't do this. You're trying hard, but the stuff you have in your head about black people... This just isn't me, all right. I'm not from the 'hood. I don't say motherfucker, and I sure as hell don't wear pants like these.

BETTY

You don't?

TYRONE

I'm a student at Northeastern. The guy said it was a good way to make some extra cash. I should have known better.

BETTY

You were very convincing.

TYRONE

Thanks. But this whole situation is so--

BETTY

Awkward?

Racist.
TYRONE

Oh, dear.
BETTY

You'll be fine.
TYRONE

I'm trying.
BETTY

I know.
TYRONE

BETTY
Please stay. I promise not to ask any more questions about
black people. Just stay and let us be in the same room
together. All right?

Okay.
TYRONE

Silence.

BETTY
Would you care for a piece of chocolate cake?

BLACKOUT.

4 MENU

Jamie, Fred, and Amelia sit at a desk in the office of an adoption agency. All wear "white" shirts. JAMIE thumbs through a file.

JAMIE

Fred and Amelia, thanks for coming in. I've been going over your application and it looks like everything is just about complete. So, Fred, you're playwright?

FRED

Yes. I've got something opening at the Center soon. A new play about race.

JAMIE

I'll have to come see it. Speaking of race, there's one part of your application that you didn't fill out.

AMELIA

We weren't sure what to put.

JAMIE

I know it can seem odd, but it's important that we have an idea of what race you're willing to adopt.

FRED

But doesn't that seem sort of...

JAMIE

We want to arrive at a good match for child and family. So you can check off whichever works for you: white, black, Hispanic, Native American, Eskimo, Asian, half-white half-black, half-white half-Hispanic, half-white half-Native American, half-white half-Eskimo, half-white half-Asian, half-black half-Hispanic, half-Hispanic half-Native American, half-black half-Asian, no more than quarter black, no more than three quarters Hispanic, mostly Asian mixed with a dash of black and a touch of Hispanic.

AMELIA

We're open to any of those. A healthy baby would be fine.

JAMIE

That'll certainly reduce your waiting time.

AMELIA

It will?

JAMIE

The wait for all-white infants is an easy two years. Black babies -- we can have one for you next week.

FRED

That seems pretty--

JAMIE

It'll affect the fee, too.

FRED

The fee?

JAMIE

The standard agency fee that we quoted you is for white babies, because they're harder to come by. Takes a lot more recruiting and effort on our part. But if you end up going half-Hispanic, half-black, that's three thousand less.

AMELIA

And all black?

JAMIE

Five or six thousand less. Supply and demand, you know.

FRED

I don't know if we're comfortable with...

JAMIE

You're welcome to pay more if you want. We are a non-profit.

FRED

Oh.

JAMIE

Why don't you take these forms with you and talk it over. Once you decide, get the signed papers back to me right away. There are a few prospects that might work out. Don't turn off your phone.

FRED

Okay.

AMELIA

Thanks.

Jamie escorts Fred and Amelia offstage.

5 ANATOMY LESSON

Bill, in a "white" shirt, is at his office desk, working.

From the wings, DR. HECTOR enters, wearing a white lab coat, stethoscope, and "white" shirt. She observes Bill for a moment, and then begins to speak to the audience. Bill does not seem to hear her.

DR. HECTOR

Today we will examine cranial impermeability in homo sapiens caucasus. Scientists have been stymied for years over the fact that despite overwhelming evidence, many Caucasian Americans are unable to recognize the existence of racial discrimination. Becker and Mortimer speculate that there is a narrowing of the cranium in the upper frontal lobes, but several studies contradict this assertion. Paulson and Feldman claim that the causes are purely social in nature.

An assistant comes on stage and pulls down a screen. A projected slide is shown of the cross section of a skull. Arrows point to a membrane and thickening bone.

DR. HECTOR (cont'd)

My own research points to the existence of an impermeable membrane that surrounds the inner casing of the skull, causing delayed neuron transfer and also a gradual thickening of the bone. Today's subject is one we've identified as a typical case. Bill, the subject, is a healthy, white male, age 51, college educated, mid-level corporate manager.

Bill looks up at the mention of his name.

DR. HECTOR (cont'd)

He lives in a white suburb, married to a white woman, social circle completely Caucasian. In other words, a white man from a white world. Would that seem fair, Bill?

BILL

Yeah, I guess so. Except that my daughter is planning to marry a black guy.

DR. HECTOR

Oh. Interesting. But you and he are not friends or acquaintances.

BILL

No.

DR. HECTOR

And you have never exchanged a meaningful conversation or even spent significant time together, have you?

BILL

No. Betty and I didn't meet him that long ago. I don't know much about him, really.

DR. HECTOR

Very good then. Despite the rare moment of interracial contact, Bill remains isolated in his white realm. (beat) We will now expose the subject to a variety of facts which have appeared in the newspapers.

Three assistants troop in from the wings and encircle Bill. All wear "white" shirts and lab coats. After each assistant's initial fact, their speeches should overlap, forming a sort of chorus. Dr. Hector stands to the side and conducts with her pen or pointer, encouraging more or less volume or tempo from each assistant.

ASSISTANT 1

In the year 2000, half a million Alabama residents voted to keep a ban on interracial marriage.

ASSISTANT 2

From 1934 to 1962, the Federal Government underwrote 120 billion dollars in new housing--98% of that money went to white people. Today, the median net worth for whites is ten times higher than for blacks.

ASSISTANT 3

The life expectancy for blacks is six years shorter than for whites.

ASSISTANT 1

A Sloan School study found that resumes with white-sounding names were fifty percent more likely to be called for an interview than those with black sounding names.

ASSISTANT 2

The unemployment rate for blacks is more than twice that of whites.

ASSISTANT 3

Black women are less often advised by doctors to undergo mammography than white women.

ASSISTANT 1

In 2004 tests, the Fair Housing Center found that half of black rental applicants in the Merrimack Valley were discriminated against.

ASSISTANT 2

In Boston, high income blacks are more likely to be denied a mortgage than low income whites.

ASSISTANT 3

Seventy five percent of drug users are white; people of color make up ninety percent of people convicted for drug offenses.

ASSISTANT 1

Black women are three times more likely to die while pregnant than white women.

ASSISTANT 2

A black person's average jail sentence is six months longer than a white person's sentence for the same crime.

ASSISTANT 3

Black infants die at a rate three times higher than white babies. The infant mortality rate for U.S. blacks is the highest in the industrialized world.

(Dr. Hector signals the assistants to stop. They exit. Bill looks very confused.)

DR. HECTOR

Excellent. Now, Bill... How do you feel?

BILL

All right, I guess.

DR. HECTOR

Very good. I appreciate your forbearance. That was quite a barrage of information.

BILL

Yeah. Pretty crazy. Hard to take it all in.

DR. HECTOR

I wonder if you have anything to say about race. Maybe you have a question or two.

BILL

Well, I was wondering...

DR. HECTOR

Please, go ahead. This is a very safe environment.

BILL

Those things they said... It's not really... People may not be nice, but all that discrimination, that's not how it's going to be for Megan and Jalen and their kids, right? I know it used to be a problem, but things aren't like that anymore.

DR. HECTOR

Excellent question, Bill. (to the audience) As you can see, the membrane in question is quite resilient. Not a single fact about race penetrated Bill's skull. It is my theory that the only way for information about racial inequality to reach the brain, is to puncture the membrane in question.

(Dr. Hector produces a power drill.
Bill looks alarmed.)

(CUT TO BLACK.)

6 LICENSE

An office with a desk and two chairs. Tamika (in a "black" shirt) sits behind the desk, doing some paperwork. Fred (in his "white" shirt) enters carrying a briefcase. He seems nervous.

TAMIKA

Can I help you?

FRED

I need to apply for my license.

TAMIKA

Have a seat. Application form?

Fred sits and hands Tamika his application.

TAMIKA (cont'd)

Mmm hm. You're white.

FRED

Yes, I am.

TAMIKA

So, you'll be looking for a provisional license.

FRED

Right. I guess so. Is that how it works?

TAMIKA

Until you pass the inspections.

FRED

Right.

TAMIKA

What sort of work will you be writing? Novel, short story, screenplay, stage play?

FRED

I'm actually working on two pieces. An historical screenplay and I've been commissioned to write a play. I think it'll be a satire.

TAMIKA

History's very good for beginners. Satire...

FRED

It might just be a one-act.

TAMIKA

I see. Are you a member of the Ku Klux Klan or Nazi party?

FRED

No.

TAMIKA

Republican party?

FRED

Hell no.

TAMIKA

Where did you grow up?

FRED

Upstate New York.

TAMIKA

Number of black people in your high school class?

FRED

Um. None. But my freshman roommate in college was black.

TAMIKA

So you've actually lived with a black person?

FRED

Yes.

TAMIKA

Very good. And are you in touch with him now, such that he might provide a reference?

FRED

Well, we sort of lost touch after...

TAMIKA

Do you currently have any black friends?

FRED

Um. There's a woman who lives across the street. We wave, we even chat-

TAMIKA

Last black person you had to your house for dinner?

FRED

Well, my wife's co-worker is engaged to a black man. He came over for a dinner party. It was a while ago, but he was definitely black.

TAMIKA

Okay. (beat) Please name a black filmmaker-

FRED

Spike-

TAMIKA

Besides Spike Lee.

FRED

Julie Dash. Oscar Micheaux.

TAMIKA

Interesting. Black playwright?

FRED

Oyamo. Suzan Lori-Parks. George C. Wolfe. Ed Bullins.

TAMIKA

Very good. Do you have any statement you'd like to make for the record, as to why you should be allowed to write a work of fiction containing black characters?

FRED

I know I don't have a lot of experience with black folks, but I'm interested in learning. My wife and I consider ourselves very liberal. We believe in affirmative action and civil rights for all people. I watched Eyes on the Prize, and read Cornel West and Henry Louis Gates and The Soul of Black Folks, and all of Dr. King's writings and the Autobiography of Malcom X, and watched the entire Roots mini-series three times. I've never used the N word, not even in my private thoughts. I promise to represent the black race in as fair, honest, and positive way possible. So help me God.

Tamika looks over the application for a while. Considers. Makes a few notes.

TAMIKA

Mr. White. You seem to be a writer with a sincere heart.

FRED

I am. I really am.

TAMIKA

But you are grossly underqualified to write any character of color, other than grotesque stereotypes.

FRED

I can do better than that.

TAMIKA

I'm willing to provide you with a provisional license--

FRED

You won't be sorry.

TAMIKA

With a few stipulations.

FRED

Whatever it takes.

TAMIKA

I'll need you to present a black friend, who is willing to testify as to your relationship. Also, your current neighborhood is... not exactly diverse.

FRED

We're looking for a new place, maybe--

TAMIKA

Maybe you should consider neighborhoods with a little racial diversity.

FRED

Right. Sure. We could do that.

Tamika stamps a paper and hands it to Fred.

TAMIKA

Take this down the hall to the bursar's office and pay your fee. Remember to come back with your friend.

FRED

Right. Thanks very much.

Fred exits.

TAMIKA

Next!

After a beat, Tamika exits.

End of scene.

7 HOW MANY DROPS?

(MEGAN, in a "white" shirt, and JALEN, in a "black" shirt, wait nervously in chairs facing a desk.)

MEGAN

Darren and Maya?

JALEN

Sure.

MEGAN

Phillip?

JALEN

Does he still make those animal noises?

MEGAN

Okay. No. How about Jasper and what's-her-name, with the glasses and the hair.

JALEN

How many guests are we at?

MEGAN

Oh, we'll have to cut it down.

JALEN

My Mom says we have to invite aunt Sheila.

DR. MARKS (in a "white" shirt), enters carrying some papers and sits behind a desk.)

DR. MARKS

Hi Megan and Jalen, sorry to keep you waiting.

MEGAN

It's no problem Dr. Marks. We really appreciate your help.

DR. MARKS

First off, I want to let you know the good news: neither of you are carriers for cystic fibrosis. Given your family histories, this was a big concern. And, Jalen, you do not have the same predisposition to colon cancer as your sister.

JALEN

What a relief.

DR. MARKS

I think it's great for engaged couples like yourselves to get a full genetic workup. Having children can be such an important part of a marriage. These days, we can offer so much more information before you even get started.

MEGAN

So we can have healthy children?

DR. MARKS

There's nothing in this report to the contrary. In other words, go forth and multiply.

JALEN

Can we see the reports?

DR. MARKS

Of course. Take a look and feel free to ask any questions.

(She hands them some papers. They scan them for a moment.)

MEGAN

What's this B factor?

DR. MARKS

It measures whether your feet are likely to develop bunions.

MEGAN

Ah. More good news.

JALEN

And this Factor N?

DR. MARKS

That's the Negroid Characteristic index. It's a modern test, that answers a nineteenth century question--how much black blood you have.

JALEN

But I thought--

DR. MARKS

It's not blood type, more of a genetic marker, really.

JALEN

But mine... my reading is zero.

DR. MARKS

That's correct.

JALEN
But I'm black.

DR. MARKS
Apparently not.

JALEN
Look at me.

DR. MARKS
You do have dark skin. Apparently you hold a tan very well. Some people would call you swarthy.

JALEN
My parents are both black.

DR. MARKS
Not as black as they seemed. They didn't pass any of it on to you.

JALEN
There has to be a mistake.

DR. MARKS
We double-checked the results, just in case you felt this way.

MEGAN
Maybe ours were switched.

JALEN
What do you mean?

MEGAN
It says here that I'm a third black.

DR. MARKS
That's correct.

MEGAN
But that's impossible. I mean, if you knew how white my parents are... There must have been a mistake.

DR. MARKS
I'm afraid our tests are extremely accurate. Your family history may be a bit more complex than you thought. I realize this news may be, well, a shock to you both. Some people adjust better than others. You'll be fine. Perhaps you'd like a minute alone?

MEGAN

That might be a good idea.

DR. MARKS

You'll be fine. Really.

DR. MARKS exits.

Megan and Jalen sit in silence.

Lights fade.

8 3-MINUTE FRIENDSHIP

(COURTNEY (in "white" shirt) holds a bell. There's a cafe table downstage with two chairs. People stand around, nervous, blacks with blacks, whites with whites. Sounds of more people than we see.)

COURTNEY

(very peppy)

Welcome to the Three-Minute Interracial Friendship Club! The rules are simple, you'll pair up at the tables to chat and get to know each other for three minutes. When the bell rings, you switch to another table. If you meet someone who you'd like to be friends with, just mark that person's name on your card. Tomorrow we'll e-mail everyone with potential matches. Remember, to keep things feeling safe, we don't exchange any personal information. First names only. If you're white, you'll have to wait in line, because we have a lot more white people than black folks. If you're black, just stay at your table, and we'll come to you. All right. Let's go, gang!

(Courtney rings the bell. Elana Kowalski, in "black" shirt sits at a cafe table and is joined by Fred, in a "white" shirt. There is awkward silence.)

FRED

Hi. I'm Fred.

ELANA

Elana.

(They shake hands.)

FRED

So... This is... You ever try this before?

ELANA

A couple times.

FRED

Oh, wow. So it works?

ELANA

No. Not yet.

FRED

Oh. It's good that you keep coming.

ELANA

I'm an optimist.

FRED

Sure. You'd have to be.

ELANA

To be black?

FRED

To keep coming.

ELANA

And I like to watch people squirm.

FRED

Right. (beat) How am I doing?

ELANA

Perfect so far.

FRED

Great. So should we... What do we talk about? What do you do for a living?

ELANA

I'm a nurse.

FRED

Oh. You like it?

ELANA

Sure. You?

FRED

I'm a writer. Playwright.

ELANA

Anything I've heard of?

FRED

Doubtful. Not because you're black. I know you may go to the theatre. Black people go to the theatre, I realize that. It's just that it's doubtful that anyone, black or white, would have heard of me... But I'm trying to reach a broader audience.

ELANA

Oh. Is this research for you? I'm not going to be a character in your play am I?

FRED

No. I just... I realized that my friends are almost all white.

ELANA

Almost?

FRED

Completely. Completely white. It's pathetic. And I recognize that says something about me, about how I live, and... I think that's wrong. So, here I am.

ELANA

That's it?

FRED

And I have a commission to write a play about race, and I need a license, and to do that I need to make a black friend.

ELANA

What do you have to offer, Fred? I already have lots of friends. No shortage. But Jerry just moved to California. He was white, so I figured I'd replace him with another white friend.

FRED

So you're trying to fill the slot?

ELANA

Exactly. Tell me about yourself. Do you know anything about anything? Can you cook? Are you married? Kids? Interesting stories? Are you funny? I've got twenty white people lined up over there who want to be my friend. Why should I pick you?

FRED

Um... I'm a decent cook, but not a gourmet chef or anything. I'm married, to Amelia. She's white, but very nice. No kids yet. We're thinking about moving to a neighborhood that's more diverse. I don't know many jokes or anything. I like to go to plays and movies, and I enjoy taking them apart afterwards with my friends. I love to ski--

ELANA

You like to ski? You actually said you like to ski.

FRED

Sure. It's expensive, so I don't go very often.

ELANA

My husband and I love skiing. We were at Waterville Valley just last week with the ski club.

FRED

I used to go there a lot.

ELANA

I like the instructors at the ski school. Very patient.

FRED

Waterville has good blue slopes. But I like to ski the bumps.

ELANA

My husband's a moguls skier. I do try them.

Ever been to Stowe?

ELANA

Only once, and it was twenty below. You know, there's something about you, Fred.

FRED

There is?

(Courtney RINGS the bell.)

COURTNEY

Okay, time to switch!

FRED

I guess that's it... Thanks, Elana.

ELANA

Goodbye, Fred.

(Fred exits and is replaced by CHIP (in a "white" shirt). Courtney rings the bell.)

CHIP

Say, how y'all t'day? You looking fine. Mmmm hm. Dig you braids. Can I touch 'em? M'be later. Makes me think of the whack pictures I got hangin' on the wall a ma crib.

BLACKOUT.

9 SCRIBBLES

Fred tries to get some writing done. It comes fitfully. He starts at his computer. Give up on that, goes to pen and paper. Mumbles to himself. Back to the computer. Back to the pen.

During the above actions, we hear the following dialogue.

VOICE

The Vice-President is black? Who did the vetting?

VOICE (cont'd)

It was Gilbert, sir.

VOICE (cont'd)

Can't we still be friends?

VOICE (cont'd)

It doesn't really work that away, Mary. If you can't tell me the truth about this, then I really...

VOICE (cont'd)

You knew we were going to have a black baby, Jim.

VOICE (cont'd)

Sure. But. Well. Do they lighten up with age?

VOICE (cont'd)

Just the opposite.

VOICE (cont'd)

Why do you always wear black?

VOICE (cont'd)

Because I'm in mourning for my life. And because I AM black.

VOICE (cont'd)

Eggplant?

VOICE (cont'd)

Rutabaga.

10 BREAKING THE NEWS

The stage is split in half--Betty is in her kitchen, and on the other half Bill and Jalen are watching television together.

(BETTY (in a "white" shirt) is at her kitchen counter, chopping vegetables. Megan enters (in "white" shirt), with a kente cloth shawl or hat.)

BETTY

Hi, Megan.

MEGAN

Hi, Mom. Need some help?

BETTY

No, I'm fine. But keep me company. If you really want to help, you can start the dishes. I'm already behind and we haven't eaten yet. Where's Jalen?

MEGAN

Watching the game with Dad.

Lights shift to Bill and Jalen

Jalen (in black shirt) and Bill watch television. Eating pretzels, drinking beer.

BILL

Get him! Get him! Look at all that time. Look at all... Drop it. Drop it! Ouch. That'll teach him.

JALEN

Yeah.

BILL

If they keep giving him that much time, it's going to be a long day.

JALEN

You gotta pressure the quarterback.

BILL

Exactly.

Back to Betty and Megan

BETTY

That's an interesting hat.

MEGAN

You like it?

BETTY

That's that cloth from Africa. Kenya cloth, or kensey, or...

MEGAN

Kente cloth.

BETTY

It's a different look. Did Jalen buy it for you?

MEGAN

No, I did. (beat) Mom, Jalen and I got the results from our genetic counselor.

Over to Bill and Jalen:

JALEN

Hey. Um, Mr. uh, I mean, Bill.

BILL

Hm?

JALEN

Megan and I... We got the results of our genetic testing back from the doctor.

BILL

And?

JALEN

Couldn't be healthier. No cystic fibrosis, no colon cancer. Not even bunions.

BILL

That's great. (back at the TV) Oh, oh, oh, tackle him! Tackle him! Come on you big bunch of... Oh, man. Even I knew they were going to run the ball that time.

Now to Betty and Megan:

BETTY

Is everything okay? You're cleared to have children?

MEGAN

We're perfectly healthy.

BETTY

Do you think you'll start right away? After the wedding, of course. You don't have to tell me if you don't want to. I know that's personal. It's nice to have some time together before the little ones come along, but then again, it's also nice to have them while you're young. Though God knows I was too young.

MEGAN

The testing turned up something that we need to talk about.

BETTY

I so hope you can have children of your own. Adoption is fine for some people. But it's so hard to know about the background of a stranger, and that's really what adoption ends up being... this big cloud of mystery.

MEGAN

Mom, I'm black.

Lights to Jalen/Bill:

JALEN

They also, ah... there's this new test. About how much black blood you have...

BILL

Really?

JALEN

Yeah. And... Well, it turns out that I'm not black after all.

BILL

What?

Back to Betty/Megan:

BETTY

What?

MEGAN

We got the results back, and the blood test showed that I'm thirty percent black.

BETTY

Oh, Megan. That's ridiculous.

MEGAN

They ran the test twice, just to be sure.

BETTY

But if you're black, then...

Over to Bill/Jalen:

JALEN

Not a drop of black blood in me.

BILL

Are they sure?

JALEN

Double-checked.

BILL

Wow. To think, all this time, I was... I had my... Well, you know. Who would have thought, just as white as the rest of us.

JALEN

Whiter.

And to Megan/Betty:

MEGAN

So are you and Dad. At least one of you.

BETTY

But I... How could I... I mean, just look at us. We live in Weston, your father drives a Saab. My parents were both white, my grandparents. Dad can't dance, and I can't carry a tune to save my life. Not that there's anything wrong with being... I mean, I still love you just the same. But to say that I'm... black. Will we have to move? I suppose it's cheaper to live in Roxbury anyway. Less of a commute for your father. Do you think they'll make me resign from the D.A.R.?

To Bill/Jalen:

BILL

Excuse me?

JALEN

Megan had the same test. (beat) She's a third black.

BILL

Megan?

JALEN

Yep.

BILL

Get out of here.

JALEN

Really. Some people just don't show their... well, it's more common than you think.

To Betty/Megan:

MEGAN

Mother, this is the twenty-first century, not the 1950s. You won't have to move. You won't need to stop going to the club.

BETTY

You're so sweet. Deluded, but sweet. How could this happen?

To Bill/Jalen:

BILL

Wow. A third... So... that means that Betty and I... We might, be, uh...

JALEN

Yeah.

To Betty/Megan:

MEGAN

You didn't have a wild night during the sixties, say about nine months before I was born?

BETTY

I had plenty of wild nights in the sixties, but the one that led to you, my dear, was with your father. And anyway, none were with a gentleman of color. Not that I remember anyway.

MEGAN

Maybe it was one of your plantation relatives.

BETTY

But I would know. There would have been whispers. Louder whispers.

BETTY (cont'd)

I mean, there were whispers, but it's been so long, and surely... But it might not even be me--it might be from your father.

Back to Bill and Jalen:

BILL

Huh.

They watch the game again.

Blackout.

11 STEERING

(A car. SHERRY (white), a Realtor, driving. Fred and Amelia (both white), are in the back seat looking out the windows.)

SHERRY

So... Amelia, Fred--what did you think of that one?

AMELIA

It was nice.

FRED

That little office nook would get great morning light.

AMELIA

The bedrooms are big. And I love all the trees.

SHERRY

It's a fantastic location. Close to schools and shopping.

FRED

We had a few concerns about the neighborhood.

SHERRY

Very safe. Excellent resale value.

AMELIA

It seems... Well...

FRED

Awfully white.

SHERRY

I don't understand.

AMELIA

We want a racially diverse neighborhood.

FRED

We already live somewhere that's all white.

SHERRY

And that's a problem?

FRED

It's not a healthy thing for us, or for our potential children.

AMELIA

All the houses you've shown us today have been lovely. But, when we look around, all we see are white people.

SHERRY

I hadn't noticed.

FRED

So we want to look in an area that's racially mixed. Blacks and whites living on the same block.

SHERRY

I don't know anything about that sort of thing.

AMELIA

You're a Realtor. Isn't that your job?

SHERRY

Look, you have to understand. It's against the law for me to discuss race with clients. And they send out people to test. Secretly. I could lose my license.

AMELIA

But we're not asking you to take us away from black people. We want to move there. If you don't know where a mixed neighborhood is, just take us to a black neighborhood.

SHERRY

I don't know where we would...

FRED

Turn right. Turn! I saw a black person in that car. Look, there he goes.

AMELIA

I see him. Don't lose him!

(Sherry steers the car to follow the black man.)

SHERRY

We can't just follow random black people.

FRED

Keep going. There he goes. Keep going. Stay with him!

SHERRY

I'm trying, but I--

FRED

Turn right!

AMELIA

I don't remember coming through this area.

SHERRY

Can you lock your doors please?

FRED

Hey, look, there's another black person. See? Taking out the trash.

AMELIA

These are nice houses. Let's look at something around here.

SHERRY

I don't have anything lined up in this neighborhood.

FRED

It looks promising.

SHERRY

You wouldn't be comfortable here.

FRED

Look at the kids on their bikes.

AMELIA

And all the big trees.

SHERRY

Right. But houses here stay on the market a long time. Not many buyers come to this neighborhood. We should turn around. I've got us lined up to see four more--

FRED

We want to look at something around here.

SHERRY

Maybe next time.

FRED

Pull over.

SHERRY

What?

FRED

Pull over. I'm going to ask that man if he knows of any place for sale.

She pulls the car over reluctantly.

SHERRY

This isn't the way I operate.

Fred and Amelia get out of the car.

AMELIA

Sir. Excuse us, sir.

Fred and Amelia exit. Sherry nervously gets out of the car.

SHERRY

Wait. Wait. Sir? Sir, here's my card.

Sherry exits after them.

End of scene.

12 PLAN B

Betty, Megan, and CYNTHIA (who is white) around a table strewn with catalogs and magazines.

CYNTHIA

Are you sure that you and Megan want to change the decorative theme for the wedding?

BETTY

It's just that, a few... a situation has come to light.

MEGAN

We found out that--

Betty cuts Megan off with a harsh look.

MEGAN (cont'd)

That I'm, ah... not sure about the whole pink and white theme. It feels too traditional. I was thinking about the colors of Africa. Red, Green, Black, and Yellow. The colors of liberation.

CYNTHIA

Oh, that's right. The groom is a black man.

MEGAN

Sort of.

BETTY

I still think pink and white could fit in there somewhere.

MEGAN

I think there will be more than enough pink and white in the faces of our family and friends.

CYNTHIA

We could have a red and yellow bouquet, with green accents. Roses and dahlias, perhaps?

MEGAN

Another concern is that there aren't many people of color being hired to put on this whole wedding. We were wondering--

CYNTHIA

Actually, as I recall quite a few people of color work at the Emperor.

MEGAN

Besides the busboys? Maybe we can find a black-owned caterer.

CYNTHIA

I don't know any black caterers.

MEGAN

They're out there.

BETTY

They might not want to come all the way out to Weston.

MEGAN

Mother, they would be well paid to come to Weston. Many of our guests and even my fiance are black and will be happy to come to our wedding, despite the overwhelming whiteness of their surroundings. I don't think--

BETTY

Overwhelming? Don't talk to me about overwhelming. Just because our family is getting blacker by the minute doesn't mean we suddenly have to change everything.

There a sudden beeping. Cynthia pushes a button on a pin or badge that's pinned to her jacket.

CYNTHIA

I'm sorry. We're going to have to change the subject.

MEGAN

Excuse me?

CYNTHIA

I have high blood pressure, and it turns out that I'm particularly sensitive to discussions about race. My doctor gave me this racial threshold badge. It measures how much exposure I have to racial issues and conflict. I get a certain number of minutes per week. I had no idea we'd be going in this direction. I watched that PBS special on slavery last night, and I used up most of this week's quota. I'm very sorry.

MEGAN

So that's it? End of discussion?

BETTY

Cynthia, can you give me the name of your doctor?

CYNTHIA

Let's set aside some time next week to handle these issues. I'll make sure I don't overdo. Now, why don't we look at some designs for the cake?

Cynthia produces a binder with various photos of cakes.

End of Scene.

13 THE RACE

Amy and Sally stand, listening to Fred and Harold. All are in "white" shirts. Sally wears running shorts and sneakers, Fred is dressed as a policeman.

HAROLD

Okay, let's try this scene on its feet.

FRED

Amy, wear this black vest. I'm going to tie your hands with this rope. Here is the backpack and the water bottle.

Amy puts on the vest, Fred ties up her hands loosely.

HAROLD

Everybody ready? Let's go.

Harold sits off to the side and watches the actors enact the following scene:

Sally runs around the stage in a big circle -- she's in a race.

Fred stands next to Amy, who now holds a loaded water bottle. There's a backpack at her feet.

Sally stops by Amy and opens her mouth. Amy gives Sally a squeeze of water. Sally continues running.

AMY

Set me free.

FRED

Never.

AMY

Set me free!

Sally runs past.

SALLY

We can lose the chains.

FRED
I don't think so.

SALLY
Off.

AMY
Off!

Fred removes Amy's bindings.

Amy takes her mark. Fred puts the heavy backpack on Amy.

AMY (cont'd)
What's this?

FRED
Baggage. On your mark, get set, go!

Amy runs but trips and falls. Fred starts to help her. Sally stops in her tracks.

SALLY
What the hell are you doing?

FRED
Helping.

SALLY
That is completely, utterly unfair. We are in a race. You can't help. There's no helping. No helping.

The actors stop their race.

AMY
Scene.

They all look at Harold.

HAROLD
Thank you. Nice job everyone. Sally, I loved the moment where you opened your mouth for the water. Be sure to look at her first. Make the contact. Amy, nice job where you tripped. I was totally convinced. And Fred... oh, my god, what a piece of crap.

FRED
Well, I think that maybe if I--

HAROLD

Instead of putting on a play, why don't we just buy some baseball bats, write "affirmative action" on them, and whack the audience over the head?

FRED

Maybe it was a little too direct.

HAROLD

Then, we could have the audience come up on stage and whip the black characters, so they can feel directly responsible for the legacy of slavery.

FRED

I'm sorry. I've been a little distracted. This whole potential baby thing and--

SALLY

Did you hear something from the adoption agency?

FRED

It might happen soon. There's a little boy who was born three weeks ago.

AMY

Oh, my god!

SALLY

Do you know anything about him?

FRED

Not much. He's healthy, has all his fingers and toes. And he's black.

AMY

Oh.

SALLY

Wow.

HAROLD

So... Was that the plan? To have a black baby? I mean, you and Amelia are...

SALLY

Pretty white.

FRED

We just said we're open to anything.

HAROLD

But what if... things don't work out?

FRED

No refunds, Harold.

SALLY

That'll really make for a big change.

FRED

Yeah. Plus, Amelia and I are moving.

SALLY

Really? Where to?

FRED

Roxbury.

Amy and Harold laugh.

AMY

No, really. Where?

FRED

I'm serious. We made an offer on a condo.

HAROLD

Aren't you a little white for--

FRED

There's not actually an admission standard.

AMY

But is Amelia going to feel...

FRED

Safe?

AMY

Yeah.

FRED

She'll be fine. We'll be fine.

HAROLD

Right. Okay. Exciting news. Let's get back to working on the play, shall we?

SALLY

I think my character should get to say more. I know I'm mostly indifferent to her suffering, but it doesn't have to be silent indifference. I think we should engage each other.

AMY

I kept wanting to say motherfucker.

HAROLD

Right. Okay, let's read through this one more time to see if we can inspire Fred to get us more pages before fatherhood permanently clouds his brain. Amy, this time feel free to insert ho, bitch, or motherfucker where ever you feel the urge.

LIGHTS TO BLACK.

14 IN THE BLOOD

At the blood lab. Bill and Betty sit in two chairs, waiting.

BETTY

Where are we going for dinner after this?

BILL

It's a surprise.

BETTY

Italian?

BILL

It's a surprise.

BETTY

Chinese?

BILL

You'll never guess.

BETTY

Himalayan? Nepalese? Columbian? Russian?

BILL

Don't worry. It'll be great.

NURSE ELANA KOWALSKI, in "black" shirt, under her nurse's uniform, enters with a tray of needles, syringes, and tubes.

Elana ties a rubber tube around Betty's arm just below her elbow.

ELANA

Hi. I'm Elana Kowalski. Thanks for your patience. Let's just get you started. You've got good veins. Should be no problem.

Elana takes a sample tube and inserts the needle into Betty's arm. Betty squirms a little.

ELANA (cont'd)

Is that all right?

BETTY

Very good.

ELANA

Should be done in no time.

ELANA (cont'd)

Thanks. Dr. Marks wants two tubes from each of you, so as soon as you fill the first, I'll put on the second.

BETTY

Why two tubes?

ELANA

She seemed to think that we'll have to run the test more than once. Just to be sure you feel confident in the results.

BILL

Is that pretty common?

ELANA

It depends on what the test is for. In your case, yes.

BILL

You know what we're here for?

ELANA

I do.

BILL

Have you had the test done?

BETTY

Bill, that's none of your business.

BILL

I'm just curious. I mean, you work here, you see people come in, and they think that they're one thing, but really they're something else altogether.

BETTY

Please just ignore him. He has no sense of boundaries.

She gets ready to do Bill's samples.

ELANA

(to Bill) Your turn.

She follows the same procedure with Bill.

BILL

Best puncture I've ever had.

BILL (cont'd)

To look at me, you'd think I'm white. But look at that blood.

ELANA

Pretty dark.

BILL

Exactly.

BETTY

Bill, your blood is the exact same color as mine and Nurse Kowalski's. It's just dark because it's from a vein.

BILL

I knew that.

ELANA

It'll just be another minute.

BILL

Our daughter is thirty percent black.

BETTY

Bill.

ELANA

Good for her. How's she taking it?

BETTY

Very well. Both she and her fiance were a little surprised, but they recovered well. It'll be a beautiful wedding.

ELANA

So it's still going forward?

BETTY

Of course.

ELANA

Sometimes people don't handle the news so well.

BILL

They're both young kids. Don't even think about stuff like that. People have changed, you know.

ELANA

Sure. (beat) I didn't get the test done. I like having to figure it out on my own.

BILL

Sure.

ELANA

(leaning forward conspiratorially) But Dr. Marks tested herself.

BETTY

Really?

ELANA

Seventy percent Chinese.

BILL

Son of a gun.

(Blackout.)

15 CHICKEN AT CHET'S

Chet's soul food restaurant. A COOK in a black shirt and chef's hat stands behind a counter.

Bill and Betty enter, a little cautiously. Betty has her eyes closed.

BILL

Okay, open your eyes.

BETTY

Bill, what is this place?

BILL

Chet's Soul Food. In Mattapan. I told you it would be a surprise.

BETTY

What are we doing here?

BILL

I've had a real hankering for some fried chicken and black eyed peas. There isn't anyplace like this in Weston.

BETTY

Bill. Bill. We are the only white people here.

BILL

Ah, but at least one of us isn't, right?

BETTY

They don't know that.

BILL

I've always wanted to come here. Come on.

He gets a tray and gets in line. She joins him, reluctantly. They get to the COOK.

COOK

What'll it be?

BILL

Fried chicken. Black-eyed peas. Corn bread. Macaroni and cheese. What are those?

COOK
Neck bones.

BETTY
It all looks lovely.

COOK
Thanks.

BILL
One of us is part-black.

COOK
Good for you.

BETTY
Bill.

BILL
I'll take some collard greens.

COOK
How 'bout you, Ma'am.

BETTY
I'll... I'll have the same.

The Cook gives them their food. Bill hands him money, they sit.

BETTY (cont'd)
This... This isn't... I'm not ready for this. Who are you? Are you the man I married? First you've got that music on the car stereo. And now this.

BILL
You know, ever since Megan started dating Jalen, I've been thinking about things. I do think about things, you know. Sure I was shocked that Megan's black. But since then, I've been examining my heart. Looking deep down inside my soul, asking, "Am I really black?" And I realized that I always wondered if there was something different about me, something that nobody else knew about, something lurking. A secret. Maybe the truth has been waiting to come out for all these years. What if there's a man inside me, pushing to get out, screaming, "Say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud!"

BETTY

(loud whisper) You? What makes you think it's you? There's nothing black about you.

BILL

There's nothing black about you.

BETTY

Well, there's something black about one of us. I have relatives from the South. The Deep South.

BILL

They never married blacks, just their cousins.

BETTY

You can have children without marriage, Bill.

BILL

My family is much more likely than yours. Look at my Uncle Vinny, he has a dark complexion. That whole side of the family.

BETTY

They're Italian.

BILL

That's what they claim.

BETTY

I really think it's me.

BILL

Definitely me.

BETTY

We'll know soon enough, won't we.

BILL

Okay. I'm ready. Tonight we eat fried chicken.

He digs in. She picks at her food.
End of scene.

INTERMISSION.