

IDENTITY CRISIS

By Peter Snoad

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IDENTITY CRISIS

CHARACTERS

(Requires 2F, 2M actors)

ALAN GUTHRIE, early 30's, white*

DAVID GUTHRIE, white, his identical twin brother*

MARCIA SILVERSTEIN, early 30's, white, Alan's fiancée

FRANKIE WHITE, early 30's, black, Alan's old college roommate**

SYLVIA SILVERSTEIN, 60's-70's, white, Marcia's Mom

MAX SILVERSTEIN, 60's-70's, Marcia's Dad**

*Played by the same actor

** A walk-on for an African American man in the last scene

SETTING

The living room of Alan's apartment in Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

TIME

2013

SET REQUIREMENTS

There is a single unit set.

ACT ONESCENE ONE

The living room of ALAN'S modest and somewhat funky apartment. The eclectic furnishings include a mirror. There are four doors leading off: one to the front door, one to the kitchen, one to the main bedroom and bathroom, and one to the spare room/study. A framed photograph of ALAN and FRANKIE in their college days stands on a side table. At rise, there is no one on stage. ALAN's cell phone rings. It's half-concealed beneath a pillow on the couch.

MARCIA

(Off)

Can you get that, honey?

The phone keeps ringing.

(Urgently)

Alan!

ALAN enters unhurriedly. He's naked from the waist up and barefoot. He sports a generous mustache or a goatee. One half of his face is covered with shaving cream. He looks around, finally locates the phone, checks the caller ID, and answers it.

ALAN

David! Where are you, man? I was just starting to...Shit, man, that sucks. So what time are you guys...?... Okay, well, take a cab straight to the restaurant....What? Oh man, really?...No, no, I understand, totally, it's just, you know, it's disappointing, I mean...Yeah, okay, yeah. See you soon. Bye.

As he puts down the phone, MARCIA enters. She wears a stunning evening outfit.

MARCIA

What do you think?

ALAN

It's great.

MARCIA

Great?

ALAN

It's hot.

MARCIA

You're just saying that.

ALAN

Are you kidding me? It is smokin'. Listen, lady, if you play your cards right...

MARCIA

Get dressed.

He exits to the bathroom. She checks her appearance in a mirror.

Who was that on the phone?

ALAN

(Off)

David. His flight was delayed, he only just got in.

MARCIA

They'll be late for the dinner.

ALAN

(Off)

He'll be there as soon as he can.

MARCIA

He? What do you mean?

(Beat.)

Alan?

ALAN enters, putting on a shirt.

ALAN

Geoffrey's not coming.

MARCIA

No! Why not?

ALAN

Matter of principle.

MARCIA

Oh God, not the whole heterosexual hegemony thing, I thought he was over that. We talked about it.

ALAN

Yeah, well, apparently he can't let it go.

MARCIA

So he's back to boycotting all straight weddings—

ALAN

—Until he and David can legally marry, too.

MARCIA

In Texas? Good luck. I mean, we're family!

ALAN

I know—

MARCIA

This is the twenty-first century.

ALAN

I think that's his point.

The doorbell rings. MARCIA glances at her watch.

MARCIA

Tie.

ALAN

Tie.

ALAN exits to the bedroom.

MARCIA

(Calling after him)
NOT THE KOALA BEARS!

(Towards the front door.)
Come in, Mom, it's open!

SYLVIA enters.

SYLVIA
Oh Marcia, honey, look at you, you look gorgeous! That is a great color on you. It brings out your eyes.

MARCIA
It does, doesn't it.

SYLVIA
And the earrings are perfect.

MARCIA
Thanks.

SYLVIA
Not the shoes.

MARCIA
I love these shoes.

SYLVIA
They're hump-me pumps.

MARCIA
Oh please.

SYLVIA
Marcia, you're a bride. Brides do not wear hump-me pumps, even at the rehearsal dinner. You need something elegant.

MARCIA
These are elegant.

SYLVIA
Hump-me pumps are not elegant.

MARCIA
Well, I like them, and I'm wearing them.

SYLVIA
Fine, if you want your Uncle Mordy grabbing your ass all evening. Where's Alan?

Dressing. MARCIA

SYLVIA
ALAN! WE'RE GOING TO BE LATE!

ALAN
(Off)
I'll be right there!

SYLVIA
If he's late tomorrow, I'll fry his balls and feed them to the crows.

MARCIA
Mom, will you please cool it?

ALAN enters wearing a suit and his koala bear tie.

MARCIA
Sweetheart.

ALAN
What?

MARCIA
The tie. I just said—

SYLVIA
It's adorable!

MARCIA
It's not right for the rehearsal dinner.

SYLVIA
It's a statement.

ALAN
I just like it.

SYLVIA
What's not to like, you cuddly little koala you. Let's go.

MARCIA
I'm sorry, it's not okay.

SYLVIA

You're wearing your hump-me pumps. He's wearing his fondle-me tie.

MARCIA

I HATE THAT TIE!

(Beat)

Okay, I don't hate it, it's just...It's not right for this evening, okay? I mean, why is that such a problem?

ALAN

It's not a problem. I'll change it.

SYLVIA

You have another tie?

ALAN

Sure.

MARCIA

Not the flying toasters.

ALAN

Okay, so the purple...whatever.

MARCIA

Paisley.

SYLVIA

With that shirt? Oi!

ALAN's cell phone rings. He answers it. MARCIA and SYLVIA bicker silently while ALAN talks on the phone.

ALAN

(Breezily)

Alan's Tie-Dye Emporium...Frankie! Hey dude, what's going on?...I know, man, it's crazy, I can't believe it's been so long...

MARCIA signals urgently that they have to go.

ALAN (CONT.)

Listen, man, we're kind of running late here, so, er...What?

SYLVIA exits. MARCIA indicates that she needs to interrupt him.

Frankie. Hold on a moment, okay?

MARCIA

We'll take Mom's car, you follow in ours.

ALAN

Sure.

MARCIA

Like, immediately?

ALAN

I'll be there.

MARCIA exits.

(Into the phone)

Listen, man, I really gotta go, we'll talk at the restaurant... What do you mean it can't wait?... Yeah, I'm alone... You're here? What do you mean ... you're outside?! No, no, no, stay there, I'll be right out... Frankie? Frankie! Shit!

He puts down the phone, and exits to the bedroom, tearing off his koala bear tie as he goes. The doorbell rings.

(Off)

It's open!

FRANKIE enters. He's dressed smartly, as if for the rehearsal dinner. ALAN re-enters, putting on his purple paisley tie. He doesn't recognize FRANKIE.

ALAN

Hi.

FRANKIE

Hey!

ALAN

I'm sorry, you are...?

FRANKIE

Oh man.

ALAN

Where's Frankie?

FRANKIE

I'm Frankie.

ALAN

I'm talking about Frankie White.

FRANKIE

I am Frankie White. Don't call the cops, man, okay?

ALAN

Why would I call the cops?

FRANKIE

Look at me.

ALAN

Are you a friend of his or...?

FRANKIE

(Grabbing and holding up the picture of them at graduation)
Alan. It's me, Frankie.

ALAN

You know what? I don't have time for this right now—

FRANKIE

Your old college roommate—

ALAN

(Calling in the direction of the front door)
FRANKIE!

FRANKIE

—And your best man.

ALAN

Where is he? Is he out there?

FRANKIE

“You just keep thinkin', Butch. That's what you're good at.”

ALAN

Okay, we are leaving right now.

FRANKIE
“Who are those guys?”

ALAN
Let’s go.

FRANKIE
“Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid”. Your all-time favorite movie.

ALAN
Is that right?

FRANKIE
That’s right.
(Beat.)

ALAN
The posse had an Indian tracker.

FRANKIE
Lord Baltimore.

ALAN
Who was the marshal with the white hat?

FRANKIE
Joe Lefors.

ALAN
Let me guess: Frankie also told you about the mole on my ass.

FRANKIE
Shaped like a mole, same color as a mole, just call me Mole-asses!
(Beat.)

ALAN
You’re Frankie’s cousin.

FRANKIE
No.

ALAN
Frankie had an uncle who married a black woman—

FRANKIE

Asian.

ALAN

No, she was black.

FRANKIE

Vietnamese. Speaking of cousins, how's Leslie doing?

ALAN

Leslie?

FRANKIE

Your cousin Leslie Fink, who hated her last name and wanted to change it.

ALAN

And?

FRANKIE

And we're swimming across Echo Lake and I say to you, why doesn't she just double her first name and make it Leslie Leslie? Like Major Major in "Catch 22". And you think that's the funniest damn thing you ever heard, and you are laughing and laughing and you swallow a bunch of water and suddenly you start to sink and you have this amazed look on your face, like, damn, I'm going to drown, on this beautiful summer's day here in Vermont, I am going to drown. And the only reason you don't is because I am there, as usual, to save your sorry pink ass.

ALAN

That's it, that's your first mistake right there!

FRANKIE

What?

ALAN

No way would Frankie remember that kind of detail.

FRANKIE

Because?

ALAN

You tell me.

FRANKIE

Oh you mean, because we were stoned out of our gourds.

ALAN

Were we?

FRANKIE

But that stuff you grew in Vermont, man, that Green Mountain Gold, it was primo, man. Clean and clear. I mean, you could remember anything about anything. Well, pretty much.

ALAN

Who the hell are you?

FRANKIE

And those buds, the perfume!

ALAN

Where is he?

FRANKIE

Those were the days, man, I mean—

ALAN

Where is Frankie?

FRANKIE

A little doobie, skinny-dip in the West River, hot fudge sundae at The Real Scoop.

ALAN

You better tell me where he is or I am calling the cops.

FRANKIE points to a scar just above his right eye.

FRANKIE

And your mark on me is indelible, man. Graduation party. That Zorro thing with the barbecue forks? Feel it.

(Beat.)

Feel the scar.

ALAN slowly crosses to FRANKIE. He's about to touch the scar but steps back.

ALAN

Oh my God.

FRANKIE

What?

ALAN

You know me, man, I'm up for anything but this...this is offensive.

FRANKIE

What is?

ALAN

You come to my wedding in black face? What the fuck are you doing, man?

FRANKIE

This is not black face.

ALAN

So what, you've just....turned black?

FRANKIE

Yes.

ALAN

You are now a black man.

FRANKIE

Yes.

(Beat. Rolling up a shirt sleeve, and extending his arm invitingly)
Rub it, see if it comes off.

ALAN hesitates, moves tentatively towards
FRANKIE, then backs off.

ALAN

(Gesticulating at what he thinks are hidden cameras)
Okay, people, where are you? Hell—oo! You've got the wrong guy. I hate reality TV, okay, I hate it with a passion, it's mindless moronic garbage. Okay? You got that? Why did Marcia do this to me? I mean, a roast is a roast, but this is like...This was your idea. Of course. Nice try, dude, but you have wasted your hard-earned money because I ain't playing.

FRANKIE taps his extended his arm. Reluctantly,
ALAN rubs his skin.

ALAN (CONT.)

No.

FRANKIE

Yes.

ALAN

You can't be white and become black!

FRANKIE

I'm not the only one.

ALAN

Oh right, it's happening all over.

FRANKIE

Across the country and around the world. Of course, the whole Obama thing kind of accelerated the process.

ALAN

Really?

FRANKIE

It's a perfectly natural and logical progression when you think about it. White folks have pretended to be black for years. Talking black, playing black music. Dancing black. You got any idea what you look like dancing black? I mean, I don't want to depress you right before your wedding, man, but it is sad, let me tell you, it is pitiful. And to think I did that shit myself! Man!

Pause.

ALAN

It really is you.

FRANKIE

Yes it is.

ALAN

And you are now black.

FRANKIE

Yes I am.

Pause.

ALAN

So, er...what are you up to these days? Still doing the software thing?

FRANKIE

Yup, I'm in biotech now. Start-up. Big risk, big money.

ALAN

Great, great. So how did they, er...?

FRANKIE

They were kind of surprised at first, but they're cool. We've got this transgender person in the office who'd made the change so that kinda helped.

ALAN

Female to male?

FRANKIE

Male to female.

ALAN

Huh. I can't deal with this.

FRANKIE

That's why I wanted to see you before the dinner, man. Give you some time to adjust—

ALAN

ADJUST! I'm getting married tomorrow and my best man, who's been white as long as I've known him, is now black?

FRANKIE

It doesn't have to be a problem.

ALAN

It's going to freak people out!

FRANKIE

But not because I'm black.

ALAN

No, because you're no longer white! You know what I mean.

FRANKIE

Hold it.

ALAN

What?

FRANKIE

(Taking ALAN's face between his hands)

Stay still.

ALAN

What? What is it?

FRANKIE

(Peering into his eyes)
Look directly in front of you.

ALAN

What are you doing?

FRANKIE

Don't move your eyes. It's started.

ALAN

Started? What's started?

FRANKIE

Your transition.

ALAN

Transition? What do you mean?

FRANKIE

You're becoming black.

ALAN

Don't mess with me, man.

FRANKIE

I'm serious. The little spots on your eyes.

ALAN examines his eyes in the mirror.

ALAN

Spots? What spots?

FRANKIE

It's the first sign.

ALAN

I don't see any spots.

FRANKIE

Tiny black spots around your iris.

ALAN

That could be anything, an infection, aging, you know, like those liver spots on your hands.

(Beat.)

Seriously?

FRANKIE

Seriously.

ALAN

How long?

FRANKIE

Until when?

ALAN

Until I'm black.

FRANKIE

You mean, until you have black skin?

ALAN

Yes!

FRANKIE

Okay, because I thought maybe you were talking about black identity. Which is a whole other dimension, man, I mean, it takes years, it's basically a lifetime project. And totally fascinating, it will blow your socks off, it has for me, and I'm barely out of diapers myself. The thing is, when you start out, you think you have some idea, right? I mean, you've read your Toni Morrison and your Walter Mosley and your Henry Louis Gates and you've watched all those documentaries on PBS, and you are totally

FRANKIE (CONT.)

down with Kanye West or whoever it is. Except it's nothing, man. You don't know shit, you are nowhere, you might as well be on Mars, and you feel soooo stupid. Like you want to crawl into a hole somewhere and never come out. But see, here's the thing, man, I can help you avoid a lot of that, I can help you prepare yourself—

ALAN

How long?

FRANKIE

Hard to say, it's a process.

ALAN

How long?!

FRANKIE

Anywhere from two hours to two weeks.

ALAN

I could be black in two hours?!

FRANKIE

Yes.

ALAN

This is not happening.

FRANKIE

It's happening.

ALAN

No, no way, no—

FRANKIE

Alan—

ALAN

I can't turn black now!

FRANKIE

I know, the timing is terrible.

ALAN

I'm getting married, man!

FRANKIE

Black people do marry. It has been known.

ALAN

What do I do? I mean, there's gotta be a way to, to, to... stop it or delay it or reschedule it or something, I mean, like, I don't know ...

FRANKIE

Take a pill?

ALAN

Don't give me shit, man, okay? I can not be black on my wedding day!

FRANKIE

Why not?

ALAN

Because.

FRANKIE

Because why?

ALAN

Because Max, my soon-to-be father-in-law, is a fucking racist, okay? That's not true. He's a real good guy, real generous, does a lot for the community. He's just kind of tribal, in that old school way, you know, like "People should stick with their own kind".

FRANKIE

He don't want no swamp nigger messin' with his little girl.

ALAN

Something like that.

FRANKIE

That's it?

ALAN

It is kind of a deal-breaker.

FRANKIE

You're kidding me. You're going to let some old racist dinosaur dictate—

ALAN's cell phone rings. It's MARCIA. He holds up his hand to silence FRANKIE, and takes the call.

ALAN

Hi babe....No, I'm still here, I started to feel kinda sick, well not sick exactly...No, no, no – no fever, just yukky, you know, so I thought I'd....Stress! Of course. I mean, what could possibly be more stressful than getting married.... I didn't mean that, I meant the excitement, the people, the...Babe, I'll be fine, really, I'll just chill here for a while and then join you guys for dessert, okay?...I will ...I promise...Love you, too.

(He ends the call.)

What the hell am I going to do?

FRANKIE

Like I said, it's a process.

ALAN

Which might take only two hours!

FRANKIE

Take it easy, man. Breathe.

ALAN

I'm breathing. I'm breathing.

FRANKIE

There is absolutely no need to panic.

ALAN

Just keep calm and turn black.

FRANKIE

Blackness is not a deficit to be overcome, man. It is something to honor and celebrate.

ALAN

Of course, man, of course, I didn't mean to....Oh God.

FRANKIE

It's going to be okay, it's going to be fine.

ALAN

How?

FRANKIE

Well, first we need to help you embrace and normalize your new reality.

ALAN

Normalize?

FRANKIE

To overcome the fear and the dread and the entitlement that's the white in you, and discover and affirm and nurture the self-actualizing black in you.

ALAN

Okay.

FRANKIE

And we got to get you started on an all-round strengthening program. Tune you up mentally, emotionally and physically.

ALAN

I need to be in shape to be black?

FRANKIE

You better believe it. White people are exhausting. Every day it's something, man, some shit. You always gotta be on your guard, protect yourself, relate. Deal. I mean, it's constant. Maybe you get used to it, I don't know, I'm still a newbie, but, man, by the end of the day, I feel like I've run a marathon.

ALAN

Seriously?

FRANKIE

It's a common condition among black folks.

ALAN

Condition?

FRANKIE

White People Fatigue Syndrome.

ALAN

Great. What else have I got to look forward to?

FRANKIE

A lot of positives, man, and I mean that sincerely. I love being black. I mean, it took me a while, you know, and I mean there's good and bad in everything, right, but I love it, I do. It's rich, it's deep, it's funny – black humor is funnier, man, it's way funnier. I cracked a rib laughing. Two ribs actually. It's been more dangerous for me than stop-and-frisk. Mostly, though, it's just the way folks are with one another. There's this thing you share, this...kinship. It's beautiful. And you want to know the icing on the cake?

ALAN

What?

FRANKIE

There has never been a better time to turn black.

ALAN

Is that right?

FRANKIE

We are now in an era of post-blackness.

ALAN

You mean after I've been black for a while—

FRANKIE

No, no, once you're black, you never go back. Everyone else who came to America got to be legally white at some point – the Poles, the Italians, the Irish, even the Chinese – but African Americans have been black for nearly five hundred years and that ain't never going to change. No, post-blackness is like, forget the old “keep it real” stuff. There are now a million ways to be authentically black. No limits! Endless possibilities!

ALAN

Cool.

FRANKIE

You can totally remake yourself, become a whole new post-white post-black you!

ALAN

Wow. Yeah. I mean, that sounds totally awesome, man.

FRANKIE

And it will be, man, it'll be a wild and wonderful trip.

ALAN

Except that....Okay, let me explain something to you, okay? I have to marry Marcia. I mean, I want to, I really do, I love her, she's amazing, and she wants to marry me and make babies, which is even more amazing. It's just that I can't screw this up. My whole future is wrapped up with her.

FRANKIE

Growing weed?

ALAN

No, man, I'm done with that.

FRANKIE

Really?

ALAN

Yeah. Commercially. Okay, you know I've always had this thing about organic produce being, like, only for rich people?

FRANKIE

Sure, you charged four hundred dollars an ounce.

ALAN

Veggies, man, I'm talking about veggies. If you're poor, you can't afford to buy organic anything and there's no store in your neighborhood that carries it anyway. All you got is a bunch of fast food joints that make you fat and diabetic. Which is totally unfair, because everyone should be able to eat healthy, right?

FRANKIE

Right.

ALAN

And farmers' markets are great, but they only reach a very small number of people. So get this: we are going to set up a marketing service for organic growers to get their stuff directly, at affordable prices, into Mom-and-Pop stores in poor neighborhoods. How cool is that.

FRANKIE

Who's we?

ALAN

Max and me.

FRANKIE

Max, the racist—?

ALAN

My future father-in-law. I mentioned it one day, we were just shooting the shit, and suddenly—boom!—he's all over it. He thinks it's brilliant, he thinks I'm a genius. He's setting up a new division of his wholesale produce company and putting me in charge.

FRANKIE

You?

ALAN

I know. This is it, man. I am so psyched! You know what this means to me, man? Have you any idea what this means to me? I can be socially useful.

FRANKIE

But not if you're black.

ALAN

Exactly! In this case, I'm not saying—

FRANKIE

No, no, of course not.

ALAN

Oh man, I want this so bad. I mean, look at the package. I have this gorgeous sexy woman who adores me, a father-in-law who wants to invest in me, and this whole organics-for-all thing? The stars are aligned, man. It's perfect.

FRANKIE

So go for it.

ALAN

Are you crazy? What if I'm walking down the aisle and I turn black?

FRANKIE

Oh yeah!

ALAN

Frankie!

FRANKIE

It'll make you a star on YouTube. Look, man, everything in life is a risk, and if you really truly love Marcia—

ALAN

No, no, you know me, I am not a lucky man.

FRANKIE

You've never been busted.

ALAN

Relationships. I always find a way to fuck 'em up.

FRANKIE

And how's she going to feel if you back out now?

ALAN

She'll understand.

FRANKIE

Or she'll think you care more about yourself than you do about her.
(Beat.)

ALAN

Oh man. What am I going to do?

FRANKIE

Well, it's not like you got a ton of choices. I mean, you either marry Marcia tomorrow or you don't.

ALAN
David.

FRANKIE
David?

ALAN
David!

FRANKIE
You're not thinking what I think you're thinking?

ALAN
Why not, man? He's my brother.

FRANKIE
That is crazy, man, that is totally insane—

ALAN
He'll do anything for me.

FRANKIE
Not this!

ALAN
David will do anything for me.

FRANKIE
Is he still white?

ALAN
Oh forever.

FRANKIE
It's a cop-out.

ALAN
No, no, no—

FRANKIE
It's a cop-out.

ALAN
It's the perfect solution. And you know something else, man? It'll be fun. We'll have a blast. It'll be like the old days.
(Fiddling with his mustache or goatee)

Of course, this'll have to come off. God, it's been years.

FRANKIE

You are one perverse sonofabitch, you know that?

ALAN

Oh, come on, man—

FRANKIE

No, no, think for a moment, okay? Think what you're asking me to do, never mind Marcia and David—

ALAN

We made a pact.

FRANKIE

What?

ALAN

Our sacred pact, man! You and me on top of Putney Mountain. You remember. The stones, the pile of stones we built, what do you call that, it's Celtic or Druid or something...

FRANKIE

A cairn.

ALAN

A cairn, right. And we did this ritual with the elderberry wine that Lavinia made, the quilter lady, it was undrinkable crap—we poured that over the cairn, and we chanted for like hours in the rain – I don't know what we said, we were totally ripped – but we swore we would always be there for each other, totally and forever until death do us part.

FRANKIE

I don't remember any of that.

ALAN

This is it, man, this is the time to honor our sacred pact! Please, man. I need you, man. I need your total unconditional and unqualified support for this project.

FRANKIE

Sure.

ALAN

Really?

FRANKIE

Marcia and David are never going to go for it anyway.

MARCIA enters. She's excited.

MARCIA

(To ALAN)

Sweetie, you are not going to believe this—

(To FRANKIE)

Hi.

FRANKIE

Hi.

ALAN

Babe, this is Frankie.

MARCIA

Your old college roommate and your best man. You do exist.

FRANKIE

I do.

ALAN

He does.

MARCIA

I'm Marcia. I'm so pleased to finally meet you.

It's awkward. MARCIA moves decisively and gives FRANKIE a kiss on the cheek.

FRANKIE

It's great to meet you, too.

MARCIA

(To ALAN)

How are you feeling, sweetie?

FRANKIE

Better.

MARCIA

Really?

ALAN

Yeah.

MARCIA

Are you sure? You're very pale.

ALAN

I am?

MARCIA

That is not a good thing.

ALAN

No. Generally speaking. But my energy is way better. I'm...I'm fine.

MARCIA

Good. I was worried about you. So. You guys have been seriously out of touch.

FRANKIE

It's been a few years.

MARCIA

Lots to catch up on.

FRANKIE

Yeah.

MARCIA

(To ALAN)

Honey, there's something I need to tell you before we go back to the restaurant.

FRANKIE

I can, er—

ALAN

No, no, stay. Please.

(To MARCIA)

I've got something to tell you, too.

MARCIA

What?

ALAN
 You first.

MARCIA
 No, no, go ahead.

ALAN
 Okay. Er....

MARCIA
 Has someone died?

ALAN
 What?

MARCIA
 You look so grim.

ALAN
 No, no, it's nothing like that, it's...well, it's....

MARCIA
 What? What is it?

ALAN
 Do you notice anything different about me?

MARCIA
 Like what?

ALAN
 My eyes?

MARCIA
 (Looking into his eyes)
 They look like always—gorgeous little pools of nutmeg brown.

ALAN
 And?

MARCIA
 Well, there are a couple of tiny little black spots in your left eye. They're in your right eye, too. Oh my God.

ALAN
 It's okay—

MARCIA
Your Grandma Bridget—

ALAN
(Overlapping)
It's not—

MARCIA
(Overlapping)
Had glaucoma at forty-five—

ALAN
I am not going blind.

MARCIA
But have you seen someone—?

ALAN
My eyes are fine, trust me.

MARCIA
Well, what is it then?

ALAN
I'm in the process of becoming black.

MARCIA
You're what?

ALAN
I'm turning black.
(Beat.)

MARCIA bursts out laughing.

MARCIA
That is so great! Oh my God, where did you get that, The Daily Show? What's-his-name, Larry something, the Senior Black Correspondent – well, he was, before he took over from Colbert – that guy kills me. Turning black! That is like so post-Obama.

FRANKIE
Yes it is.

ALAN

I'm serious.

MARCIA

(To FRANKIE)

You ever played poker with this guy?

ALAN

In two hours, I could be a black man.

MARCIA

My fantasy come true!

ALAN

It starts with the eyes, with the little black spots.

MARCIA

Whatever you guys have been smoking, I want some.

ALAN

I have never been so straight in my life.

(Beat.)

MARCIA

Hey, guys... You're serious. You're not serious?

They nod.

MARCIA (CONT.)

But it's impossible, physically, biologically....

ALAN

It happened to Frankie.

FRANKIE

It did.

ALAN

In college he was white, and now he's black.

MARCIA

And hey presto, I'm Puerto Rican.

ALAN

This is for real.

FRANKIE

I can show you photos.

MARCIA

I've seen them. Well, this one.

She picks up the framed picture from the side table.

You two at graduation. I knew it was you, Frankie, the moment I walked in the door, but then I thought, no, it can't be. Wait. I read about this in the National Inquirer, in the checkout line at CVS, and I was like, sure, that and "Bigfoot Kept Lumberjack as Love Slave." Wow. So when did you—?

FRANKIE

Fifteen months ago. The change can happen gradually—with me, it was two weeks.

ALAN

But it could be two hours.

MARCIA

Oh my God.

ALAN

Max would go ballistic.

MARCIA

You have no idea.

ALAN

What do you mean?

MARCIA

Frankie doesn't know Max, how extreme he can be.

ALAN

No worries, babe. If it happens after we're married, what's he gonna do? I'll be part of the tribe, the whole mishpocha. And anyway we have a plan.

FRANKIE

He has a plan.

ALAN

You're gonna love it.

FRANKIE

You're gonna hate it.

ALAN

It's brilliant and it's foolproof.

The lights fade.

ACT ONESCENE TWO

The same. Late that evening. DAVID, with a drink in his hand, is talking with MARCIA and FRANKIE.

DAVID

It's a Penn and Teller thing, right? Some kind of illusion.

FRANKIE

Race is an illusion.

DAVID

Touche! Come on, how's it done? Tell me. I can keep a secret.

FRANKIE

There's no secret.

DAVID

Well, something's going on. No one magically turns from white to black!

FRANKIE

I'm your living proof, man.

MARCIA

And Alan is next. Which is why—

DAVID

No.

MARCIA

David—

DAVID

Allow me to repeat myself. Again. It would be illegal, immoral, unethical, hypocritical – shall I go on?

MARCIA

No one will ever know.

DAVID

Oh please! I'm not Alan, Alan's not me.

MARCIA
You're identical twins.

DAVID
I'm gay, he's straight.

MARCIA
But you look the same.

FRANKIE
I still can't tell the difference. Not at first glance.

DAVID
(To FRANKIE)
Whereas I look at you after all these years...I'm sorry, you know me, Frankie dear, I'm a trusting sort, but seriously? This is for real?

FRANKIE
Yep.

DAVID
But how? How is it possible?

FRANKIE
Search me. All part of God's plan, I guess.

DAVID
And I thought God had no sense of humor.

FRANKIE
Oh, He's lovin' it. We are multiplying by the day.

DAVID
Really?

FRANKIE
It's a phenomenon.

MARCIA
It's everywhere.

DAVID
So how come I haven't heard of it?

FRANKIE

White folks don't like to talk about it too much.

DAVID

Even on Facebook and Twitter?

FRANKIE

Self-censorship. Same with the mainstream media. And the White House is working overtime to keep it under wraps.

DAVID

The White House? You mean Obama used to be...?

FRANKIE

Well, his mother was. No, no, for them it's a national security issue.

DAVID

Of course! It'll turn race relations on its head. How will you know who to discriminate against any more? I love it! The Blackening of America! And those Tea-Party people think Obama's just a socialist!

MARCIA

Yes, well, Obama aside—

DAVID

But on a personal level, it must be wild, right? I mean, you get to compare yourself with yourself in different colors!

MARCIA

David—

DAVID

I have friends who are bi—so greedy—but this is race, it's complex, it's multi-dimensional, it's... God, it is so juicy! Do you know Eric Lott's work?

FRANKIE

I don't believe so.

DAVID

He talks about the homoeroticism, anxiety, and sexual competitiveness that underly white fascination with the black body. Where does that leave you? Wow.

MARCIA

David!

DAVID

What?

MARCIA

We need to decide right now.

DAVID

I've decided.

MARCIA

Look, I totally understand your concerns, I do, and I'm sorry it's kind of out of the blue like this—

DAVID

No! Really? My flight is horrendous, the woman next to me smells like a baboon, my cab driver couldn't find a needle in a sewing kit, I miss the entire rehearsal dinner, even dessert, and here I am, barely in the door, and you ask me to impersonate my twin brother and marry you. Tomorrow.

MARCIA

I know—

DAVID

While random white people turn black. Talk about a bad movie. It's like "My Best Friend's Wedding" meets "Roots"! Get me rewrite. And a refill.

He hands his glass to FRANKIE who refills it.

MARCIA

David, believe me, if there was any other way—

DAVID

I'm turning black.

MARCIA

No, you're not.

DAVID

I am, too!

MARCIA

David—

DAVID

You said it's happening all over.

FRANKIE

Mostly to straight WASPY men.

MARCIA

Really?

FRANKIE

That's the pattern we're seeing. The more social privilege you have, the more likely you are to make the transition.

DAVID

There, you see, I'm ripe. I'm white, I'm male, I'm middle-class, I'm a homeowner. In the suburbs.

MARCIA

You're gay.

DAVID

So dock me five points. I'm not a woman, I'm not poor, I'm not disabled—

MARCIA grabs his cheeks and looks into eyes.

—What are you doing?

MARCIA

You are not turning black.

DAVID

It's happening inside, in here, I can feel it. I am already black identified. And if you think I'm lying you're racist.

(Beat. MARCIA isn't buying it. DAVID has another idea)

White face!

MARCIA

What?

DAVID

Put Alan in white face – lather him with clown make-up or sunblock or something, so if he turns black, he'll be all, you know, covered up.

(MARCIA is unmoved.)

DAVID (CONT.)

Why are you doing this? I mean, Alan—Alan is Alan, nothing would surprise me. But you are an evolved human being. You have a brain, a moral compass, scruples. Don't you?

(To FRANKIE)

Why is she doing this?

MARCIA

You know my Dad. If Alan turns black in public between now and the wedding, that's it, it'll be over. We might never see each other again.

DAVID

He's that evil and you're that weak?

MARCIA

No!

DAVID

But this is all about your Nazi racist father?

MARCIA

He's a very sweet and caring man—

DAVID

Hitler was kind to his dogs.

MARCIA

—Who happens to have a blind spot about race.

DAVID

This is insulting. This is beyond insulting.

MARCIA

It's not meant to be, you know that.

DAVID

Honey, deal with it. At least you and Alan can legally marry. Any place, any time.
(Beat.)

FRANKIE

Look, man—

MARCIA

Can you imagine life without Geoffrey?

DAVID

That is not fair.

MARCIA

You can't, you know you can't. When you first met Geoffrey—oh God, he is so hunkalicious, and he's gentle and sensitive and a good listener, and he does all this wonderful work with young people, but there is no way he'd be interested in a schlump like me. But he was. Because he knew. And you knew, even though it took you a while to believe it.

DAVID

I still don't sometimes.

MARCIA

Well, I know, too. I know about Alan, and he knows about me. When he first suggested this to me, I was like, what? You have got to be kidding me. You want me to marry your gay brother? I was insulted, and I was hurt. And not because it was you, and not because you're gay, but because he was asking me to marry someone else. How could he do that? And then I sat with it for a while, and I came to the conclusion that, okay, it may be crazy and weird and off-the-wall and illegal and irrational and pretty much indefensible on any grounds of any kind, but because I love him, and I want us to be together and have a family, it actually makes sense.

DAVID

To fake your own wedding? How can you be so desperate?

MARCIA

You mean, how can I be so certain.

(Beat.)

David, please. I need you to do this for me.

DAVID

Honey, you need a reality check. I mean, I'm a hopeless romantic, but this is ridiculous.

MARCIA

Think of it as a gift. Alan's your only brother, your only immediate family—

DAVID

Oh bring on the gypsy violins! In case you've forgotten, I am reformed. I have taken the pledge. I am no longer my brother's keeper. I will not rescue him, I will not enable him, I will not bail him out or lend him

DAVID (CONT.)

money or wipe his ass. Period. I am done with him, totally and absolutely done. Besides, Geoffrey would never forgive me.

MARCIA

Call him.

DAVID

What?

MARCIA

Call Geoffrey and ask him.

DAVID

No! He's probably asleep. And he needs his rest, he's taking his kids on a field trip first thing in the morning.

MARCIA

This is a unique situation.

DAVID

No shit.

MARCIA

Call him!

DAVID

All right, all right, Queen Bossyboots. I need some air anyway. It is stifling in here.

DAVID exits through the front door.

FRANKIE

(To MARCIA)

You okay?

MARCIA

I can't believe I'm doing this. It is so twisted.

FRANKIE

Well, you could just—

MARCIA

No. We have got to make this happen.

FRANKIE

Why?

MARCIA

Because we need to, we just...we need to.

ALAN enters from the bedroom in a robe.

ALAN
Well?

MARCIA
He's calling Geoffrey.

ALAN
Oh great. We are now officially fucked.

MARCIA
Don't say that. David's his own man. He'll come round.

ALAN
He should. I'd do it for him.

FRANKIE
You'd marry Geoffrey?

ALAN
Yeah.

MARCIA
You would not.

ALAN
I would, too, if the stakes were this high.

MARCIA starts to remove ALAN's robe.
What are you doing?

MARCIA
I want to take a look at you.

ALAN
Why?

MARCIA
Why do you think?

ALAN
But I'm not going out in public.

You may have to. FRANKIE

No, no, no— ALAN

Wait a minute. MARCIA

What? ALAN

This dark patch. MARCIA

It's a birthmark. ALAN

No, here. MARCIA

(Gesturing to a spot on ALAN's skin)
Frankie, what do you think? Is this it? Is this the start?

FRANKIE joins MARCIA to examine the spot.

ALAN
If it is, it's discrimination. Okay, so I'm white and straight and male, but I'm not a banker, I'm not some corporate asshole with a house in the Hamptons. I'm one of the ninety-nine percent. I mean, Jesus! I'm a good person. I think diversity is cool. And plurality—

Pluralism. FRANKIE

That, too. And I think racism sucks. ALAN

It doesn't matter what color you are. FRANKIE

Exactly! For the most part. ALAN

It's a bruise. FRANKIE

ALAN

Oh, thank you, Creator, thank you, Supreme Being. Bruises are beautiful. I love bruises. I love you!

MARCIA

Okay, so far so good, still whiter than white. Which is just as well because we may have to go with Plan B.

ALAN

What's Plan B?

MARCIA

I marry you.

ALAN

I thought that was Plan A.

MARCIA

Plan A is I marry David who's pretending to be you. Plan B is I marry you and we keep our fingers crossed.

ALAN

No! Are you kidding me? It's too risky!

MARCIA

But if David refuses—

ALAN

Plan B is not an option, it is not even on the fucking table, capice?

MARCIA

So what do you suggest?

ALAN

Plan C.

MARCIA

Which is?

ALAN

I don't know, but we gotta have one!

FRANKIE

“You just keep thinking, Butch. That's what you're good at.”

ALAN

That's it, that's exactly what I'm talking about! My man Frankie here will come up with Plan C.

MARCIA

You will?

FRANKIE

I'll do my best.

ALAN

And it better be good, man, because we are counting on you. I gotta lie down.

MARCIA

What is it?

ALAN

I don't feel good. It's just...I don't know, no, I do, I'm depressed.

MARCIA

Sweetheart, we're getting married tomorrow.

ALAN

Are we?

He exits to the bedroom.

FRANKIE

It's the change.

MARCIA

You mean...?

FRANKIE

Psychologically, it can do a number on you, even the anticipation of it. You feel you're losing your white identity, which is pretty intense, because it's not something you've really thought about before. And now I'm black? What does that mean? How do I do that? How do I be black?

FRANKIE (CONT.)

At the same time, you know one thing for sure: your life is going to get a whole lot tougher.

(Beat.)

There was this college professor in New York. He asked some of his white students: what would you need if you woke up one morning and discovered you were black?

MARCIA
What did they say?

FRANKIE
A million dollars a year. Each. For life.

MARCIA
Wow.

FRANKIE
Now that's reparations.

MARCIA
I wonder if I'll ever be black.

FRANKIE
Anything's possible.

MARCIA
I am female. I am Jewish.

FRANKIE
Yeah, you may have to wait a while.

DAVID enters.

MARCIA
So?

DAVID
What?

MARCIA
Did you speak to Geoffrey?

DAVID
Yes, I spoke to Geoffrey.

MARCIA
And?

DAVID
He thinks it's outrageous and subversive.

MARCIA

And?

DAVID

He wants me to do it.

MARCIA

YES!

She high-fives with FRANKIE and a reluctant DAVID.

ALAN

(Off, recorded)
What's going on?

MARCIA

David's going to marry me!

ALAN

(Off, recorded)
Way to go, bro!

DAVID

(To ALAN)
This is the last time, you hear me? No more knight in shining armor. From now on, you are on your own.

(To himself)
Although you won't be, because my wife will take care of you.

MARCIA

(To DAVID)
How come Geoffrey agreed?

DAVID

Black-Jewish-Gay solidarity.

FRANKIE

Amen!

MARCIA's cell phone rings. She glances at the caller ID, and reluctantly answers.

DAVID

What am I doing? This is insane.

MARCIA

Hi Mom....Mom....

FRANKIE

(To DAVID)

Don't worry, man, we'll be right there with you every step of the way—

MARCIA

Mom, it's very late—

MARCIA exits to the spare room to continue the call in private.

DAVID

I can't just transform myself into another person—

FRANKIE

You'll be fine, trust me.

DAVID

Easy for you to say. You're not a frazzled fag who has to convince a hundred wedding guests that he's really his straight brother so he can marry his girlfriend.

FRANKIE

No, I'm just a black guy who was white trying to convince my old white friends that it's cool, and my new black friends that I'm really black, even though half the time I still act white.

DAVID

Okay, you win. Just.

MARCIA enters.

MARCIA

My Mom's coming over. She'll be here any minute.

DAVID

I'll go get Alan.

He instinctively heads for the bedroom. MARCIA grabs him by the arm.

MARCIA

No! Pretend you're Alan.

DAVID

What?

MARCIA

It's a perfect chance to practice.

FRANKIE

That's right.

DAVID

But she knows I'll be at the wedding.

MARCIA

I told her you were sick and you couldn't come.

DAVID

I can't, I can't do this.

MARCIA

Yes, you can.

DAVID

No way, I need more time, I—

MARCIA

David, you can do this, I know you can. Just, I don't know...

FRANKIE

Straighten up?

DAVID

(To MARCIA)

You are paying for my extra therapy.

MARCIA

Done.

DAVID

Refill.

MARCIA picks up the liquor bottle to refill his glass. DAVID grabs the bottle from her hand.

MARCIA

(Grabbing it back)

David! Please!

The doorbell rings.

Oh God.

He wrestles the bottle away from her. She goes to answer the door. He takes a generous swig.

DAVID

How do I look?

FRANKIE takes the bottle from him and puts it to one side.

FRANKIE

Terrified.

DAVID

Really?

FRANKIE

I'm kidding. You look fine. You look like your brother.

DAVID

Oh, that is such a comfort.

He reaches for the bottle again. FRANKIE stops him, as MARCIA opens the door.

MARCIA

Hi Mom.

SYLVIA strides in.

SYLVIA

Hi hon, how's it going?

(To DAVID)

How's my cuddly little koala?

DAVID

Top of the mornin' and rarin' to go!

SYLVIA

It's midnight. You look like crap.

DAVID

Looks can be deceiving.

SYLVIA

You've shaved it off.

DAVID

Oh that, yes. New beginning, dawn of a new day, onwards into the sunset!
Sunrise.

Beat. SYLVIA is disconcerted by this odd remark.

MARCIA

Mom, this is Frankie White, Alan's best man.

SYLVIA

Pleased to meet you.

FRANKIE

You, too, I've heard so much—

SYLVIA

(To DAVID, ushering him towards the bedroom)

You should be in bed.

(To MARCIA)

Why is he not in bed?

DAVID

Really, I'm fine.

SYLVIA

You are marrying my daughter tomorrow.

DAVID

Don't remind me.

SYLVIA

What?

DAVID

How stressed I am. About the awesome responsibility of....

SYLVIA

So get to bed already. What's the matter with you?

MARCIA

(Blocking the way)

He wants to stay up a little longer, mother.

DAVID

Yes, mother, I do.

SYLVIA

Alan! Did you hear that? You've never called me mother before.

DAVID

But I've thought it. Often.

SYLVIA

You are so sweet. Isn't he sweet? I have to say, when Marcia first brought you home, I said to Max, this Alan Guthrie, he's easy on the eyes and he's charming, but he's short, his posture is terrible, and he's a farmer for God's sake—a farmer! So he has his Masters, but in hydroponics? I tell you, life is full of surprises. You never know what's going to happen next.

DAVID

That is so true.

SYLVIA

Oh you poor bubala, come on.

She starts pushing DAVID towards the bedroom.

MARCIA

Mother! I think David—Alan—can put himself to bed.

ALAN

(Off, from the bedroom, recorded)

What the fuck is going on out there?

DAVID

(Imitating him)

What the fuck is going on out there?

(To SYLVIA)

I can throw my voice.

MARCIA

Since he was five years old.

DAVID

Six. Let's not exaggerate.

SYLVIA
You did that at six?

DAVID
Well—

ALAN
(Off, recorded)
Well?

DAVID
Well? Not those exact words.

SYLVIA
Do that impersonation.

DAVID
Impersonation?

DAVID signals frantically to FRANKIE to go into the bedroom and silence ALAN.
FRANKIE exits to the bedroom.

SYLVIA
You know, the one you did for the kids at Hanukkah.

DAVID
Oh right, yes. Well, there were several—

MARCIA
Mom—

SYLVIA
Professor Snape from Harry Potter!

MARCIA
We should really call it a night.

DAVID
(Dead on)
Do you know what I think, Potter? I think that you are a liar and a cheat and that you deserve detention with me every Saturday until the end of term.

SYLVIA
Wonderful! Wonderful! You know, you could do something with that talent.

MARCIA

I'm sure he could—

SYLVIA

Give us another. How about, er—?

MARCIA

Mom! We need to get some sleep. All of us.

SYLVIA

You're right, hon, of course.

(To DAVID)

And you better be on your game tomorrow.

DAVID

Oh I will be.

MARCIA

She means your round of golf with Max in the morning.

SYLVIA

Eight thirty sharp. Don't be late. Good night.

She exits.

DAVID

(Horrified)

Golf?!

Blackout.