

TRANSITION

A short play

by

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TRANSITION

CHARACTERS

WALTER, a black man

ANDY, a white man

PLACE

A hotel room

TIME

The present

TRANSITION

A hotel room. WALTER, smartly dressed, is talking on his cell phone.

WALTER

You have got to be kidding me. It's that hard to find a good French translator in France? No, no, I agree, we need someone who... Exactly.

(There's a knock on the door.)

It's open!

ANDY enters. He doesn't recognize WALTER, who raises his hand in greeting. ANDY hovers uncertainly.

Okay... Fine, fine... And the German edition?

(To ANDY, in a familiar way, with his hand covering the phone)

I'll be right there, man.

(Back to the phone)

I'm sorry, what was that?... Excellent. Listen, I gotta go, I've got another meeting... Catch you later.

(Ending the call, then effusively)

Andy! How you doing, bro?!

He embraces ANDY, who is surprised and tries not to show it.

No grey hairs, no paunch, looking good! What's going on?

ANDY

Not too much.

WALTER

Same old, same old?

ANDY

Yeah.

WALTER

Great, great. You know, I saw you were registered for the conference, too, and I thought, you know, it's time. I mean, right? You and Ashley – I mean, hey, more power to you, know what I'm saying? She is one amazing woman and you are one lucky dude. But I miss you, man. I want to get back to where we were, you know. Yeah? Are we cool?

ANDY

Yeah, absolutely, I mean,...yeah.

WALTER

And I have something very important I want to share with you.

ANDY

Okay.

WALTER

You don't recognize me, do you?

ANDY

Sure, I do. Never forget a face. Except when I forget a face! You're the consultant from...er...Wait, wait, don't tell me. God...

WALTER

We worked together.

ANDY

We did.

WALTER

At Ventura.

ANDY

Ventura? Really?

WALTER

For three years.
(Beat.)

ANDY

Where's Walter?

WALTER

You don't need to call security.

ANDY

Okay. Where is he?

WALTER

I'm right here. Andy. Andy! Look at me. It's me, Walter.

ANDY

But you're...black.

WALTER

But I'm the same guy.

ANDY

Okay, look—

WALTER

I was white and now I'm black. I know it's hard to believe—

ANDY

This is Room 207, right?

WALTER

It is. Andy—

ANDY

My old friend, Walter White, left me a message asking me to stop by and see him—

WALTER

Leslie Lesley.

ANDY

What?

WALTER

It's August, hotter than hell, and we're swimming across Echo Lake, and I tell you about my cousin, Leslie Fink, who has always hated being a Fink, -- big surprise -- and she has officially changed her last name to Lesley. Which makes her Leslie Lesley, like Major Major in *Catch 22*, and you think that is the funniest damn thing you ever heard, and you are laughing so hard you swallow a bunch of water and suddenly you start to sink and you are flailing around with this look of panicked disbelief on your face, like, damn, I'm going to drown, on this beautiful summer's day in Vermont, I am going to die. And the only reason you don't is because I am there, as usual, to save your sorry pink ass.

(Beat.)

ANDY

What about the tattoo?

WALTER

Tattoo?

ANDY

On my ass. What's it look like?

WALTER

It's not a tattoo, it's a mole in the shape of a mole. Just call me Mister Moleasses!

(Slight pause)

ANDY

It's not possible.

WALTER

I'm living proof.

ANDY

But biologically, physiologically—

WALTER

It's happening all over, man. It's a phenomenon. Random white people are turning black.

ANDY

No.

WALTER

(Laughing)

And you thought Brexit was a nightmare! It started under Obama, but with Trump it's totally taken off. His worst Fake News ever! Of course – spoiler alert -- white folks are in serious denial. Self-censorship, non-disclosure agreements, all of that. I mean, they have never wanted to talk about what it means to be black—or brown or red or yellow for that matter—and now they really don't want to go there!

ANDY

Oh my God.

WALTER

What?

ANDY

You're in black face.

WALTER laughs.

You think that's funny? How could you possibly – ?

WALTER

(Rolling up one shirtsleeve, thrusting his arm out)

Rub it. See if it comes off.

(Beat)

Go on.

Reluctantly, ANDY rubs the skin of
WALTER's arm. He examines his finger.
Nothing.

Hey, man, it's cool, okay, it's a good thing. I like being black. And you
know what?

ANDY

What?

WALTER

You could be next!

ANDY

No way.

WALTER

You don't deserve it?

ANDY

No, I mean...well, maybe I do, I don't know—

WALTER

Hold on a second. Stay still.

(He examines ANDY's eyes.)

Yay!

ANDY

What?

WALTER

The little black dot on your cornea, that's the first sign. Brother, your
transition has begun!

ANDY ignores WALTER's high-five offer
and rushes to a wall mirror to check his
eyes. He sees the dot, too.

ANDY

That could be anything, inflammation, some kind of allergy—

WALTER

Nope.

ANDY

Glaucoma—

WALTER

Nope.

ANDY

This is not happening.

WALTER

It's happening.

ANDY

But why? I mean...

WALTER

Natural progression. White people have been acting black for years, talking black, playing black music pretending it's white. Dancing black. You got any idea what you look like dancing black? It's pathetic, man, let me tell you, it's embarrassing. And to think I did that shit when I was white!

ANDY

But I don't want to be black! No disrespect, I mean—

WALTER

Just think of it this way, man. We're only human. We all come from Africa anyway, and now we're all going back there, back to Mama. It's beautiful!

ANDY

When?

WALTER

When what?

ANDY

When will I actually... turn black?

WALTER

Oh okay, I thought maybe you were talking about black identity, because that is, like, a lifetime undertaking, man. And totally fascinating, it will blow your mind. Has for me, and I'm barely out of diapers myself! I mean, sure the racism shit is intense, unbelievable, but being black, man, it is so rich, you have no idea – well, of course you don't, but you think you do starting out, right? I mean, you've read your Toni Morrison and your Ta-Nehisi Coates and your Henry Louis Gates, and you've watched "Eyes on the Prize" and "Roots", and you are totally down with Kanye West or whoever it is—

ANDY

When!?

WALTER

It varies. Could be two months, two weeks, two hours—

ANDY

I could be black in two hours! But the conference, I'm on a panel.

WALTER

Black people do sit on panels.

ANDY

Can I, like, delay the process?

WALTER

Like take a white pill?

ANDY

Don't fuck with me, man, okay, I mean—

WALTER

Andy, the first thing you gotta realize is that you are no longer in control. Okay? You just got to give it up. Which is very hard for white folks.

ANDY

But what do I do, I mean....where do I start....?

WALTER

(Handing him a small book)

I said I had something important to give you.

ANDY

(Reading the title)

"Becoming Black: A Survival Guide".

WALTER

Hot off the presses.

ANDY

You wrote this?

WALTER

That's your autographed copy.

ANDY

Thanks. This is really something. How's it doing? I mean, is it...?

WALTER

Flying off the shelves.

ANDY

Great.

WALTER

I try not to think of it as panic buying.

ANDY

Right.

WALTER

I self-published to start with, and no one would touch it. And then I got a buzz going on social media, and a small publisher picked it up and since then, boom -- we've gone global. Europe, Canada, Australia. We've even got a Russian edition coming out.

ANDY

Wow. Congratulations. That's, er...that's real exciting.

WALTER

Read it and then we'll talk. Okay?

ANDY

Yeah. Okay. Wow.

(Beat.)

Is there stuff in here about how you, like, deal with family?

WALTER

You mean, when you turn black and they're still white?

ANDY

Yes.

WALTER

Chapter three.

ANDY

Great. God, my parents, I mean....and Ashley.

WALTER

You and Ashley. I gotta to admit, I was kind of surprised. I mean, we were never right for each other, but you guys – it didn't seem like a perfect match either.

ANDY

Actually, we're getting married.

WALTER

No kidding, congratulations! That is awesome, man.

ANDY

Yeah, well, I don't know, man, I mean this is going to freak her out.

WALTER

Trust me, Ashley will be totally cool with this.

ANDY

Really? Why?

WALTER

I saw her on the subway this morning.

ANDY

And?

WALTER

She's black now.

Blackout.

END OF PLAY.

