

Archive

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New Dramatists

Time: A hundred or more years from today in a future that's not expected. Around 4am.
Setting: The kitchen of a successful archivist.
Characters: Jeanine, the Archivist, mother of two sons. Black.
Rudy, her youngest son, college age.
Ronnie, her oldest son.
A White Man.

Scene One

A white man between 50 and 60 sits in a chair. He studies the audience.

WHITE MAN

Huh. I thought you had seen the last of us.

Rudy, a young black man, enters in sleep-wear. He turns on the lights to a well-appointed kitchen. He sees the white man sitting in his family's kitchen.

RUDY

What the fuck!

The white man shuffles off stage.

WHITE MAN

Sorry.

RUDY

What the fuck! What is wrong with me...Mama! Mama, I'm seeing white people again! Mama!

Scene Two

4am. Rudy, shivering, is wrapped in a white sheet sitting in the same chair where the White Man had been. He has the terrors. Jeanine, his mother, is pouring hot water into a tea pot. Ronnie, his brother, is studying him.

RONNIE

There are no more white people.

RUDY

What if they start coming back?

JEANINE

Drink your tea.

RONNIE

Like ghosts? Like an army of ghosts?

RUDY

Zombies. White zombies.

RONNIE

Mama, you have doctor friends at the university. Can't you get him some medicine that will knock these White People out of his head once and for all.

JEANINE

Honey, we are not telling anyone your brother sees white people. He will be whitelisted forever. Rudy, baby, you have a brilliant future ahead of you. You will outshine your mother. But first we have to get these...episodes under control.

RUDY

It was worse this time. It spoke. To me. In its white voice.

RONNIE

What? What does a white voice even sound like? You don't know.

RUDY

I do so, I heard white voices in the films Mama brought home from the archives when we were little.

JEANINE

You weren't supposed to see those.

RONNIE

You weren't supposed to take them out of the Archives.

JEANINE

There are no White People left in the world.

RUDY

I'm seeing the. Or their ghosts or holograms or astral projections or I'm going crazy. Mama, what would the ghost of a White Man want with me?

JEANINE

Shush. I should never have said the White Man would get ya when you were being a bad little boy. You're still traumatized. Now listen. There are no more White People. There is no White Man or White God. Never was a White God. Never. America had a White House once, but that was long long ago,

RUDY

Some days I dream I get shot in the back by a White Man.

JEANINE

Rudy, why ever would you dream a dream like that?

RUDY

Ronnie, do you ever have dreams like that?

RONNIE

Have you been watching White Porn on the Internet?

JEANINE

What's that? What's White Porn?

RONNIE

It's illegal, that's what it is.

JEANINE

What is it?

RONNIE

It leaves traces on your computer and browsing history. Have you, Rudy?

RUDY

Does it leave traces in your DNA too? Because I think I've got White Porn in my DNA.

JEANINE

What is this White Porn. I don't like it. I don't like it all.

RONNIE

Rudy, have you contaminated our computers? You can't wipe Whiteness off the hosery. Have you downloaded anything. I'm not going to timeout because you have a sick fetish.

RUDY

Fuck you, Sambo.

RONNIE

What's that mean? What did he just say?

JEANINE

It's a slur from the White Days. Listen, you two, none of this leaves this house. People can't find out. I want to retire from the Archives without a scandal. And let Rudy stay out of the cracker houses. That's right, if it takes racist language to make you see how serious this is...

RONNIE

People? You mean the Archivists...

JEANINE

Everything stays hushed. They will take parts of your brother's brain out to eliminate a reoccurrence. Do you understand.

RUDY

I don't want to see the White Man. I'm trying not to see the White Man.

RONNIE

I think you are. One and done. That's what it should have been, Mama.

JEANINE

Don't be mean to your baby brother.

RUDY

What if it never stops? And they never shut up? And...?

JEANINE

Shadows, that's all. You don't go around telling people you see shadows. They're just shadows. You get spooked, then say, oh, that's just a shadow. Learn to live with the condition and set it aside.

RUDY

Mama, do you ever...?

JEANINE

You live with it and don't say a word and succeed in your life. It's a condition. Like a rash. Or a cancer. Only more private. I will help you. But no one else. Drink your tea.

The White Man enters and pours himself a cup of tea. Only Rudy sees him.

RUDY

Why me?

RONNIE

Rudy, I know you're the sensitive different one and everything, but it's getting out of control. I don't think you're...balanced enough to play at ghosts and voodoo or whatever you're doing...are you hearing me?

RUDY

Uh-huh.

RONNIE

Rudy, I'm really worried about you. This would be a scandal for Mama. You get that, right?

RUDY

Uh huh.

RONNIE

Good. That's good. Seeing white people willy-nilly is just not helpful in any way.

RUDY

O god.

RONNIE

What?

RUDY

I'm seeing a White Man right now.

RONNIE

You calling me white? I'll beat the crap out of you.

RUDY

You're dead White Man. You're all dead. Go away. Look!

JEANINE

O baby. I'm sorry.

Jeanine exits.

Ronnie turns around. He doesn't see the White Man who is very much there.

RONNIE

This game's not funny. Don't we give you enough attention? You want me to get rid of the White Man for you? Scooby dooby doo doo voodoo pow pow. White Man be gone. Okay, he's all gone now, Rudy. Never to return. I performed the exorcism. You can go to bed.

RUDY

Do you believe it happened that way. Like the Archivists say.

RONNIE

The Great Self-Immolation? Yes. And it was over a hundred years ago. Almost two.

WHITE MAN

Ask your Mama.

RUDY

Why can't Ronnie see or hear you?

WHITE MAN

He doesn't want to. He doesn't believe in me.

RUDY

I don't believe in you.

WHITE MAN

Then why do you see me?

RUDY

Fuck you and your jellyfish face.

RONNIE

My what?

RUDY

What do you want, White Man?

RONNIE

Sit down, Rudy. Let the sleeping pill do its work.

RUDY

(*spitting out his tea:*) I can't sleep with a White Man hovering over me! Omigod, he wants me to be his clairvoyant or vessel or something.

The White Man sits at the table. Rudy steps away from the table.

WHITE MAN

I died in prison. That's all I know.

RUDY

You all died in prison. Once you all were locked up in there, something went wrong with your skin, something chemical, and you all started to self-combust, and then the rest of you went up in flames too. It's in the Archives! The Great Self-Immolation.

WHITE MAN

There's a name for it?

RUDY

Yeah, the shorter name for it is Justice.

RONNIE

Are you talking to your White Man right now?

RUDY

Yes. What do you want White Man?

WHITE MAN

Polly want a cracker.

RUDY

Get out of my house, White Man.

Ronnie picks up the table and starts banging it.

RONNIE

Stop it. Stop it, right now. There are no white ghosts. This is America.

The White man holds the table down. Ronnie stares at Rudy.

How are you doing that?

RUDY

I don't know! How am I doing this!

RONNIE

CUT THE WHITE CRAP. YOU HEAR ME.

Ronnie grabs Rudy. The White Man pulls Ronnie off Rudy.

WHIITE MAN

I'll whoop you...

RONNIE

What did you say to me?

RUDY

I didn't say anything. It wasn't me.

Jeanine enters with a locked box. Her sons stop fighting.

JEANINE

Have you ever looked in here, Rudy? When you were younger and snooping. Be honest.

Rudy shakes his head no. She places the box on the table, unlocks it and pulls out an archival photo of the white man.

Is this your White Man?

Rudy nods.

Sit down. The both of you. Okay. Okay. First. You have to understand. I'm an Archivist. Before I'm a woman, or a mother, or anything. I'm an Archivist. I believe – believed - in my calling. And I lived by my principles as an Archivist.

RONNIE

What did you do.

JEANINE

There was a crisis of faith for us about twenty-two years ago. Archivists. Scientists. Social Engineers. Politicians. Archivists had kept DNA of White People locked away in a sealed frozen vault. We kept this information from the public, because we wanted to keep it safe and secure for archival purposes only. But the Reactionaries took over the guild and decided everything must be destroyed. Nuked. Every strand in any petrie dish or frozen tube. There would be no organic Archive. I had devoted my life to studying the White Race. The Supremists. The Ragists. The Carbons. The Pink Fevers. I knew the worth of keeping the Archive alive. Hidden. But a part of humanity. A few of us met and decide to take action...

RONNIE

What did you do.

JEANINE

You were already born, Ronnie. And your father and I were no longer cohabitating.

RONNIE

Having sex.

JEANINE

They came in with the military and were destroying our lab and our libraries right in front of us and I grabbed a vial. I took DNA.

RONNIE

So you have a Petri dish in that box and you think by some voodoo it's making Rudy have hallucinations.

RUDY

That's not what she means by DNA.

RONNIE

What does she mean?

RUDY

Sperm. She stole sperm from the archive.

JEANINE

History is locked away in DNA. And one day we will unlock it to best help us. And as an archivist, I had a moral obligation.

RUDY

I am the spawn of a White Daddy!

JEANINE

You're my baby. You came from me. And archival sperm. Yes. But that doesn't make you white. It preserves DNA. History. That may be needed to save humanity one day.

RONNIE

Are you insane? Are you going to re-introduce cancer to humanity too?

JEANINE

Don't call your brother cancer. Whiteness has never been proved to be a disease.

RONNIE

My brother! There could be a million triggers in that DNA. Just waiting to go off.

JEANINE

You know it doesn't work that way. Don't be ignorant.

RONNIE

Ignorant? You believe in a voodoo genetics and I'm ignorant?

JEANINE

Don't call your brother voodoo genetics. He's your brother. We have to protect him.

RONNIE

It's too late. It's DNA. He's not seeing White People. He's seeing himself in the mirror. His reflection. He's turning White. More white every minute. Like delayed puberty.

JEANINE

We're just all going to sit down and breathe for a minute. Drink our tea and think on this together for a minute.

They all sit down at the table, including the White Man. Only Jeanine drinks tea.

I knew I would have to tell you one day. I just didn't know when.

RUDY

I have the whole history of the lost White Race living in my DNA?

JEANINE

There was a lot of good in the White Race. No one admits that today. Revisionism. Irrationalism everywhere. But there's a lot about them that shouldn't be lost, you shouldn't destroy archives or rewrite history out of fear.

RONNIE

Maybe you should.

RUDY

You want to destroy me?

JEANINE

No one wants to destroy you.

RUDY

Because I'll destroy myself? Because I got all this white in me? I'll burst into flames on my own. I'm going to Self-Immolate.

JEANINE

That's a myth. A myth from the Age of Riots. Revision.

RONNIE

Rudy's DNA can be traced back to the Whites in the Age of Riots? That's the worst age.

JEANINE

Enough, Ronnie. He's your brother.

They are quiet.

RUDY

Wow.

RONNIE

Yeah, wow.

JEANINE

You're still my baby, Rudy. You came from me, most of all.

RUDY

I have a mother, you mean. I'm not just an archive.

JEANINE

You'll always be my pride and joy. Both of you. You're my babies.

Ronnie is still too upset. He exits. Jeanine gives Rudy's a hand a squeeze and exits after Ronnie. Rudy and the White Man look at each other. The White Man drinks tea.

RUDY

What about you White Man? You want to destroy me?

WHITE MAN

We have a lot to talk about.

End of play.