

***Excerpt***

IDENTITY CRISIS

A farce

by

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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 fiancé

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

SYLVIA SILVERSTEIN, late 50's-60's, white, Marcia's Mom

MAX SILVERSTEIN, late 50's-60's, Marcia's Dad\*\*

*\*Played by the same actor*

*\*\* Played by the same actor*

*NOTE: Frankie/Max must be played by an actor of African heritage.*

SETTING

The living room of Alan's apartment in Boston, Massachusetts

TIME

The present

SET REQUIREMENTS

There is a single set.

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

The living room of Alan's modest apartment. The furnishings include a mirror on one wall. 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. At rise, there is no one on stage. A phone sits on a side table. It rings.

MARCIA

(Off)  
Can you get that?

ALAN

(Off)  
Not right now.

MARCIA

(Off)  
Honey, please!

ALAN dashes in. He has a mustache. He is naked from the waist up. One half of his face is covered in shaving cream. He grabs the phone.

ALAN

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

As he puts down the phone, MARCIA enters. She's wearing 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 steaming.  
(Advancing lecherously)  
Listen, lady, if you play your cards right...

MARCIA  
(Playfully pushing him away)  
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's delayed.

MARCIA  
Are they going to make it to the dinner?

ALAN  
(Off)  
He'll be a little late.

MARCIA  
He?

ALAN enters, putting on a shirt.

ALAN  
Michael's not coming.

MARCIA  
No! Why not?

ALAN

He's too conflicted.

MARCIA

I thought he'd worked through all that.

ALAN

He loves us dearly, but it's just too painful to see us tie the knot when they can't.

The doorbell rings. She 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

Look at you! You look gorgeous!

MARCIA

You look pretty good yourself.

SYLVIA

That is a great color on you.

MARCIA

You think?

SYLVIA

It brings out your eyes.

MARCIA

I thought so.

SYLVIA

And the earrings are perfect.

MARCIA

Thanks.

SYLVIA

Not the shoes.

MARCIA

What do you mean? I love these shoes.

SYLVIA

They're fuck-me shoes.

MARCIA

Don't do this.

SYLVIA

You're a bride. Brides do not wear fuck-me shoes.

MARCIA

Mom—

SYLVIA

Even at the rehearsal dinner. You need something elegant.

MARCIA

These are elegant.

SYLVIA

Fuck-me shoes are not elegant.

MARCIA

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

SYLVIA

Fine. If you want Uncle Morty grabbing your ass all evening. Where's Alan?

MARCIA

Dressing.

SYLVIA

(Yelling)  
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

Will you please cool it?

ALAN enters wearing a suit and his koala bear tie.

MARCIA

Sweetheart.

ALAN

What's wrong with it?

MARCIA

It's just—

SYLVIA

It's adorable!

ALAN

Thank you.

MARCIA

It's not right for the rehearsal dinner.

SYLVIA

It's a statement, the tie is a statement.

(To ALAN)  
Right?

ALAN

I just like it.

SYLVIA

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

MARCIA

I'm sorry, this is not okay.

SYLVIA

You're wearing your fuck-me shoes. He's wearing his fondle-me tie.

MARCIA

I hate that tie! Okay, I don't hate it, I like it, but not for this evening. Why is that such a problem?

ALAN

It's no problem. I'll change it.

SYLVIA

Do you have another tie?

MARCIA

The green paisley.

SYLVIA

With that suit? Oi!

The phone rings. ALAN answers it.

ALAN

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

MARCIA signals urgently that they have to go.

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

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

Frankie. Hold just 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)

Man, I really gotta go. We'll talk at the restaurant. What do you mean, it can't wait?... Yeah, everyone just left... You're here? Outside my apartment?... No, no, don't come in, I'm on my way out the door right now... Frankie?! Shit!

He puts down the phone, tears off his koala bear tie and exits to the bedroom. The doorbell rings.

(Off)

It's open!

FRANKIE enters. He's dressed formally, as if for the rehearsal dinner. ALAN re-enters putting on a green paisley tie.

Hi.

FRANKIE

Hi.

ALAN

Who are you?

FRANKIE

Oh man, this is disappointing.

ALAN

Excuse me?

FRANKIE

Not even a glimmer of recognition.

ALAN

Who are you?

FRANKIE

You really have no idea?

ALAN  
Where's Frankie?

FRANKIE  
I'm Frankie.

ALAN  
I was expecting Frankie White.

FRANKIE  
I am Frankie White.

ALAN  
That's cute, that's very cute. Where is he?

FRANKIE  
Don't call the cops, okay.

ALAN  
Why would I call the cops?

FRANKIE  
Look at me.

ALAN  
Are you a friend of his or...?

FRANKIE  
Alan, it's me. Frankie.

ALAN  
I'm sorry, I don't have time for this—

FRANKIE  
Your old college roommate. Your best man.

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

(To FRANKIE)  
Where is he? What's he doing 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

Let me guess. Frankie also told you that the mole on my ass looks like a mole.

FRANKIE

The posse had an Indian tracker.

ALAN

Lord Baltimore. Who was the marshal with the white hat?

FRANKIE

Joe Lefors.

(Beat.)

ALAN

You’re Frankie’s cousin.

FRANKIE

No.

ALAN

Frankie had an uncle who married a black woman, and—

FRANKIE

Asian.

ALAN

No, no, she was black.

FRANKIE

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

(Beat.)

Man, that was something. Remember how hot it was that day? There we were, swimming across Echo Lake, and you tell me about your cousin

FRANKIE (CONT.)

Leslie and her dilemma. Her last name is Fink, she hates it, always has, and she wants to change it. And the question is: to what? And I say, how about Leslie? And you say, what the hell you talking about, man, she's already called Leslie. And I say, well, if it's a name she likes, why not double it, make it her first and last name?

ALAN

You've done your homework, I'll say that.

FRANKIE

Leslie Leslie. Like Major Major in "Catch 22". Well, you think that is the funniest damn thing you've ever heard. You are laughing and laughing, and you swallow a bunch of water, and you start to choke, and suddenly you're sinking, you are going down. Down, down, down to that watery grave. And, once again, I am there to save your sorry pink ass.

ALAN

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

FRANKIE

What?

ALAN

No way would Frankie remember that kind of detail.

FRANKIE

Why not?

ALAN

Why not?! Because we were stoned out of our gourds!

FRANKIE

Yeah, but that stuff you grew in Vermont, man. It was so clean, so pure. You could remember anything. Well, almost anything.

ALAN

Who the fuck are you?

FRANKIE

Green Mountain Gold. Never smoked anything like it before or since. And the perfume of those buds? Man! I can smell it now.

ALAN

Where is Frankie?

FRANKIE

Those were the days, man.

ALAN

Where is he?

FRANKIE

Smoke a jay, got for a swim in the West River, then pig out at The Real Scoop. Their pistachio was, like, nectar, food of the gods.

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

Graduation party. That Zorro thing with the barbecue forks?

(Beat.)

Feel it.

(ALAN hesitates.)

Feel the scar.

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

ALAN

Oh my God.

FRANKIE

What?

ALAN

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

FRANKIE

What is?

ALAN

You come to my wedding in black face? What the fuck were you thinking?

FRANKIE

This is not black face.

ALAN

Oh right, so what, you've turned black?

FRANKIE

Yes.

ALAN

You have turned black? You are now a black man?

FRANKIE

Yes.

ALAN

Oh Christ—

FRANKIE

Rub it.

ALAN

What?

FRANKIE

See if the black comes off.

(ALAN hesitates)

I'm serious. Do it.

ALAN moves to rub his finger on  
FRANKIE's face. Abruptly, he backs off.

ALAN

(Gesticulating at what he thinks are hidden cameras)

Okay, where are you? Hell—oo! You know how much I hate you people? Reality TV sucks, okay? It's garbage. YOU ARE GARBAGE! Why did Marcia do this? I mean, a roast is a roast, but this...Or was it your idea, this little tableau?

FRANKIE rolls up a shirt sleeve, and  
extends his arm invitingly. ALAN stays  
where he is.

It's not possible.

Slowly, ALAN crosses to FRANKIE and  
touches his skin.

ALAN (CONT.)

You can't be white and become black.

FRANKIE

I'm not the only one.

ALAN

What do you mean?

FRANKIE

It's happening everywhere man. Across the country, around the world. 'Course, the whole Obama thing kind of accelerated the process.

ALAN

What are you talking about?

FRANKIE

It was only a matter of time. I mean, when you think about it. White folks have been talking black for years, playing black music. Dancing black. You got any idea what you look like dancing black? It is sad, man—I mean I don't want to depress you right before your wedding—but it is pitiful. And when I think I did that shit myself...

ALAN

It really is you.

FRANKIE

Yes.

ALAN

I don't believe this. This is just....

(Slight pause)

What are you up to? Are you still, like, doing software?

FRANKIE

Yeah.

ALAN

Same company?

FRANKIE

Survived the recession so far.

ALAN

Great. So, er...how did they react when—?

FRANKIE

It blew them away at first. But then we have this transgender guy in the office who's made the change so that helped.

ALAN

Male to female?

FRANKIE

Female to male.

ALAN

Right. Of course.

(Slight pause.)

I can't deal with this.

FRANKIE

That's why I wanted to see you before the rehearsal dinner, man. You need a little time to get used to it.

ALAN

Get used to it? I'm getting married tomorrow and my best man, who's been white as long as I've known him, is now black? What the fuck am I supposed to do with that?

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. Don't move your eyes.

ALAN  
What are you doing?

FRANKIE  
It's started.

ALAN  
Started? What's started?

FRANKIE  
The transition.

ALAN  
What do you mean?

FRANKIE  
You're becoming black.

ALAN  
Don't fuck with me, man.

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

ALAN  
Spots? What spots?

ALAN rushes to the mirror.

FRANKIE  
It's the first sign.

ALAN  
(Looking in the mirror)  
I don't see any spots.

FRANKIE  
Tiny black spots around your iris.

ALAN  
(Seeing them)  
That could be anything.

FRANKIE  
But it's not.

ALAN  
No, no way, this is just...  
(Beat.)  
Really?

FRANKIE  
Really.

ALAN  
How long?

FRANKIE  
Until when?

ALAN  
Until I'm black.

FRANKIE  
You mean, until you have black skin?

ALAN  
Yes!

FRANKIE  
I thought maybe you were talking about black identity. Because that is years, man, I mean, that is essentially a lifetime undertaking. And it's a challenge, let me tell you, totally fascinating—so far, I mean, what do I know, I'm barely out of diapers. The thing is, when you start out, you think you have some idea, you know. You've read your Walter Mosley and Henry Louis Gates, and you've watched all those documentaries on PBS, and you are totally down with Kanye West or whoever it is, you know. 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, I can help you avoid some of that—

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  
But 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  
Okay, so what do I do? I mean, there has to be some way to stop it or delay it or something, like, I don't know, I mean...

FRANKIE  
Take a pill?

ALAN  
Don't give me shit, man, okay? I cannot 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! That's not true, that's unfair. He's a real good guy, real generous, does a lot for the community. It's just that he's kind of tribal. He doesn't approve of...He thinks people should stick with their own kind.

FRANKIE

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

ALAN

I wouldn't put it quite like that but, yeah.

FRANKIE

That's it?

ALAN

It is kind of a deal-breaker.

FRANKIE

Is it?

ALAN's cell phone rings. He answers it.

ALAN

(To MARCIA, on the phone)

Hi honey...No, I'm still here, I don't feel so good. It's probably stress...No, no fever, just, er, you know... I think I need to chill for a while, play it safe. I'll join you guys for dessert.... Babe, I'll be okay, really. Go have a good time, give my apologies to everyone...I love you, too.

(He ends the call.)

What the fuck am I going to do?

FRANKIE

Like I said, it's a process.

ALAN

Which might take only two hours!

FRANKIE

It's a new reality, man. You gotta learn to own it and accept it.

ALAN

Accept it? Are you kidding?

FRANKIE

Alan. You got no choice. It's inevitable.

ALAN

No, no, that is death and taxes, that is not this. Anyway, I don't believe it, okay? I don't. I don't believe it.

FRANKIE

I know. This can't happen to white people. That's what I mean by process. Overcoming the fear and the dread and the entitlement that's the white in you, and discovering and nurturing and affirming the self-actualizing black in you. But that doesn't happen overnight, man. You gotta take it in stages. First, we work on changing the channels, get your mind and your body prepared and receptive. And to do that, we need to start with some simple relaxation exercises—

ALAN

You want me to do yoga?!

FRANKIE

And then we'll move on to some guided imagery.

ALAN

Listen, man, listen to me, okay? I am not going to be black. There is no reason in the world for me to be black. It will not happen. Period.

FRANKIE

That's what they all say.

ALAN

Well, thanks.

FRANKIE

Loss of control. It's very hard for white folks. It starts with denial and then there's anxiety, anger, panic—

ALAN

Oh God, I am so fucked.

FRANKIE

And despair. Don't worry, we'll work through all of it. I promise you.

ALAN

Frankie! You don't understand, this is not about... I have to marry Marcia, okay? I mean, I want to, 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 dope?

ALAN

No, no, man, I'm done with that.

FRANKIE

You're done with that?

ALAN

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

FRANKIE

Yeah. 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

Sure.

ALAN

And farmers' markets are great, but they only reach a very small number of people. So 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?