

COLOR ME KNOWN

Written by Aurora Watts-Esquibel

CAST

Rebecca Pena

Kayla Coleman

Emily Trias

Caroline Hunter

Bethany Eggleston

Present day.

CHARACTERS - in order of appearance

MS. BAKER (Beth): 26, U.S. history teacher, single, trying her best

EMMIE (Emily): 17, white, thinks she's rebellious, lots of opinions

KARA (Caroline): 18, white, know it all, wannabe Hollister model

PAT MARTINEZ (Emily): 62, Elena's great-aunt, wild, hispanic

ELENA MARTINEZ (Rebecca): 17, clique hopper, lots of unexpressed feelings, quick to fall for people, raised by mom and Aunt Pat, high school senior, half hispanic & white

JASMINE HAYES/ Jaz (Kayla): 17, solid sense of self, speaks bluntly, works hard & plays hard separately, high school senior, black

*Elena & Jasmine have known each other since middle school but have gotten closer the past couple years...are closest this year.

PROLOGUE

ALL

Are you listening?

ELENA

Am I listening?

*Silence. A poem in her head- audience is invited
in*

Too busy mourning my own silence- stuck inside my head.
Can't be bothered to listen- to the silence of black
and brown voices. Friends- Family- Faces, a different
beauty than mine- Hearts (same beat, different blood)-
People I love. People I see- with pain so deep it pains
me... And I cry when the mirror sees me- not belonging.

But I see you, I hear you - only to an extent. Forgive
me- for not listening.

Occasional invisibility inflating my balloon head.
White balloon head- Are you too filled with air, that
you cannot make out words from the sounds you hear?
Look at your face, favored race. If you were in another
body, wouldn't you want someone to listen, not just
hear?

1

Scene 1 - Cool Skool

1

At school with Jasmine and Elena.

*The whole class is white besides Jasmine -
surprise surprise. The class (attempts) to
discuss recent shootings and Jasmine feels very
silenced.*

MS. BAKER

(announcing as the students file in
noisily and she organizes herself)

Remember how we enter my room, class!

after students settle in

I hope you all have been working on your
projects...which are due tomorrow!

a short wave of panic surges through the room
We'll have a few minutes at the end of class for you to
talk with your partners...BUT before we start... I
thought it'd be beneficial if we take a few moments at

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MS. BAKER (cont'd)

the top of class to reflect a little bit on how we're all doing. I'm sure you've all been hearing the awful news recently, and *some* of it is unfortunately relevant to our unit on the Civil Rights Movement...history has a way of repeating itself.

(sigh)

How are we all dealing with these recent events?

KARA

You mean the shootings?

MS. BAKER

Yes, the shootings...how is everyone dealing with that? Yes, Emmie?

EMMIE

It's just like so awful and scary...but like how do both shootings relate to the Civil Rights movement? ...or each other?

MS. BAKER

Yes it's awful and scary. Would someone like to try answering Emmie's question?

KARA

Um yeah. Well I don't know about the mass shooting but the thing that happened with that guy Saturday obviously relates cause he was another blaaaafrican American that was killed...But that's all I can think of.

MS. BAKER

Um... ok yes... but can you all see some similarities in the way *police* have handled things back then versus now? Did you notice how the mass shooting by a Caucasian man was covered differently in the news than the incident with the African American man? What bias might be there?

EMMIE

Yeah it's crazy! I feel like...It's so weird to think about Like how much progress we've made since the Civil Rights movement, and yet all this racism stuff is such a problem again. The guy was just riding his bike and the police just *murdered* him for no reason.

KARA

Well I don't know if I would call it murder. They thought he had a weapon, they tried to de-escalate the situation, the guy didn't cooperate, so they had to defend themselves, it's like their policy....and the law. It's self defense.

MS. BAKER

Ok! I'm glad some of you are watching the news and forming opinions...let's also respect other people's opinions.

KARA

Yeah honestly... this has all been so weird for me 'cause my dad's a cop. And I know for a fact he goes out of his way to treat everyone with respect no matter what their race is... Some of his closest cop friends are black.

EMMIE

Well *that's* a little biased don't you think?

KARA

I mean do you really think they did what they did just because he was African American? They weren't *trying* to kill him.

EMMIE

But if they were really trying to "de-escalate" the situation, like you said, then why is he dead?

MS. BAKER

Alright, let's pause and let someone else jump in...

Jasmine's blood is boiling at this point, and she silently bolts out of the classroom. You can feel the tension in the room. Elena raises her hand.

MS. BAKER

Yes- Elena, you'd like to add something?

ELENA

Oh...uh... I was just gonna ask if I could go to the bathroom?

TEACHER

Sure, take the hall pass.

Elena gets the hell out

We should all remember to handle our business at lunch...

In the hallway

ELENA

Jasmine! Yo!

(searching for something to say quick!)

...are you still coming over tonight to work on our project?

JASMINE

(still walking and trying to avoid
talking)

Yep. 8 o'clock.

ELENA

Cool, I actually...uh what's going on? Are you okay?

JASMINE

(flustered)

Yeah, my bladder was just gonna explode.

ELENA

Liar.

JASMINE

What? Well, *something* was about to explode!

ELENA

Was it what that girl said? She is so irrelevant.

JASMINE

Yeah she should be

ELENA

Yeah... but it's not just blondie Mc-basic...

JASMINE

I mean yeah...but I am not gonna sit and listen to some ignorant ass barbies who think they're woke. And then continue to be invisible...

ELENA

I'm sorry, I hate that. I know that was weird for you /but you're *not* invisible.

JASMINE

/Weird- HA! Yeah that's exactly it. weird...

(losing her cool just a scratch)

I *am* invisible- did you hear them talk like I wasn't even fucking sitting right there?! Nobody even knows how hypocritical they are! Talking about racists are bad but they racist deep down and don't even know it! Even you! You didn't even say anything back there.

ELENA

(talking over each other)

Sorry. I was going to...

JASMINE

I just need a minute Elena, please.

ELENA

...okay. I'm just trying to be there for you.

JASMINE

Just stop trying, /I love you but...

ELENA

/and I wanna hear you out-

JASMINE

You hear, but are you really listening?

Jasmine turns to go to the bathroom. Elena is pretty hurt and confused, but this has made her think.

2

Scene 3- Tequila Blanco

2

Elena is at her great-aunt Pat's house after a family dinner, and they have a moment in the backyard while the rest of the fam is inside cleaning up.

PAT

(like a stage whisper)

Come take a shot with me, mijita. We don't have to tell your mama...

ELENA

Aunt Pat!!!

PAT

Come on, you're old enough! You know you're safe with your Tia- it'll be our secret

MOM

(offstage)

What secret? You are up to no good Tia!

PAT

Oh nothing mija!

(smiling mischievously...to Elena)

Eeeee, I don't know what she's talking about.

ELENA

Oh okay...

(awkward laugh)

PAT

(pouring all the girls shots)

You should ask *her* when she had her first shot with me...When she was in middle school, her and her friends used to sneak into the kitchen when my sister wasn't

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PAT (cont'd)

looking and I would sprinkle a little goodnight juice on their popsicles...

ELENA

What?! Tia, you're crazy.

PAT

I know! Your mama was too, believe it or not! She would always come back and ask me to sprinkle more....you know she loves you so much...

ELENA

I know.

PAT

Even though you came out looking like her gringo punkass ex-boyfriend

ELENA

Yeah...

PAT

Oh but still so beautiful mijita! You know we are family, and we wouldn't change anything...You have your mama's heart, and my crazy brain-- don't you forget that. Just because you have his blood doesn't mean --

ELENA

We should hurry, I think they're almost done cleaning up dinner...

PAT

Ok, ok here we go. I'll just give you a little one.

pouring two generous shots

ELENA

(laughing)

That's not little!

PAT

Whoops, guess my hand slipped- that's ok. You remember what I taught you? Por arrrrr

(Elena joins in)

ariba, por abajo, por centro, por ENTROOOOO!

(aaand shots are ingested)

Knock on the door. Elena forgot that Jasmine was suppose to come over to finish their history project.

ELENA

Oh crap! It's 8!

runs nervously to the door and opens it

ELENA

Hey Jaz-

JASMINE

Hey

ELENA

Sorry I totally spaced and lost track of time. We're still cleaning up dinner...

JASMINE

Oh it's cool.

ELENA

but come in! I was just hanging out with my aunt in the backyard.

JASMINE

(a little confused- didn't know her aunt lived there)

Oh, ok..cool

ELENA

Um, we can go to my room to work if you want?

JASMINE

Oh I don't care, we can stay in the backyard.

ELENA

Uh ok, just warning you my aunt's a little crazy!

JASMINE

Oh it'll be nothin' compared to my family.

they go outside to where Pat is sitting

ELENA

Hey auntie, this is my friend Jasmine. This is my Aunt Pat.

PAT

Jasmine! So good to meet you!

Gives Jasmine an uncomfortably big hug and a big sloppy kiss on the cheek

JASMINE

Oh hi! Good to meet you too!

PAT

Make yourself at home! Mijita, do you girls want some coke? We have extra food- Jasmine, have you ever had enchiladas?

JASMINE

Oh I'm good, thank you - I just ate at home.

ELENA

(a little embarrassed)

I think we should be good.

PAT

Oh, well let me get you girls some water at least! Or maybe some goodnight juice! (wink wink)

Pat goes into the house offstage

JASMINE

(taking all this in...what is goodnight juice?)

Uh..I really am good, she doesn't have to-

ELENA

Oh I know, I just let her. It's just what she does. I told you she was crazy!

JASMINE

Is she your real aunt?

ELENA

Yep. Well technically my mom's aunt, so my great aunt.

JASMINE

Oh

ELENA

What?

JASMINE

I'm confused...are you latina or something?

ELENA

Yeah... I thought you knew that. Well half I guess. My father was white, but he left right away and I never knew him...I look like him so...yeah

JASMINE

Oh wow you never told me any of that.

(CONTINUED)

ELENA

I thought I did...that's weird, I don't know. But yeah.

a tiny tense pause

Hey I also wanted to say sorry for today.

JASMINE

For?

ELENA

For making you upset and not... really listening.

JASMINE

Ok

ELENA

I guess I just assumed too much and thought we could talk about stuff since we've been really close the past year...and I'm not blind. I don't notice everything, but I do see a lot. Even if I don't say it.

JASMINE

Yeah... thanks El. I was just mad and needed some space I think. I can't really talk about that stuff with some friends. It's not personal. But thank you for noticing.

ELENA

(after a painful pause)

So are we cool?

JASMINE

Yeah.

ELENA

Can you tell me more about what was going on?

JASMINE

I just don't want to get into that right now. I talked with my fam, so I'm good. I'm sorry. Let's just work on our project for tomorrow.

ELENA

K.

some residue of tension is there, but they accept that this is as resolved as it will get right now

We see the two friends facing the audience on either side of the stage. They may alternate speaking sections of their letters to respond to one another.

ELENA

Do you see me?

JASMINE

Are you listening?

ELENA

(reading her letter)

Dear sweet friend,

Must I assert myself, label myself, and give a presentation of my history for you to believe that I see you? I wish you could recognize my eyes-more open than you may think. What can I do to show you that I see? I know the white-friend-mask you put on with me- and I understand why you need to put it on; yet after knowing me, I'm hurt that you would continue, because that mask does not appeal to me. In fact, I have a version of my own- it's different, custom-made, and we are not the same. But I see your pain, and though I know that I will never fully feel it- the fact that you are in pain, pains me. I know I must be sensitive, but this isn't a game- I actually, truly love you black friend, brown friend, in between friend - and if you believed that, wouldn't you see?

I can't expect you to take off the mask for me, and I can't expect you to understand where I'm coming from, but I also can't expect myself to not be hurt when you don't see me. I long for you to be you around me. When you're uncomfortable in front of me, I am uncomfortable around you. You are not protecting anyone here sweet friend- not between you and me. Don't disqualify me from having the ability to see you, only on the basis of my skin, clothes, language, and education- my ability is not on the surface, it's underneath- it's in my empty pockets and with my family- Which is how I see you calculate the image which is me, and decide to put up your protective performance wall. By doing this, you are helping me to remember what I'm made of, the picture I emit to the world. Thank you.

But don't stop there- I am not a stranger on the street. If I were, I would expect you to block me out like a big white piece of meat. But you know me deeper than the top layer- you are my friend- I just wonder if I am your friend. If I were, you would see.

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Why does it feel so much more difficult now? I didn't used to have to hide as much or fight as much just to be allowed to hang out with the real you.

I'm broken apart and I wonder if I should just let it go- but every time I try, it doesn't feel right. I betray myself and paint over my face with a lighter shade of white- so blinding that I feel like I'm suffocating, drowning some piece of me. You're telling me I have to own my whiteness and you, your coloredness- so yes, let's own it. But I refuse to let my soul be devoured by it. And I'm wondering how your soul is doing. Friend, would it be better if I never saw you? I love you.

JASMINE

(reading her letter, written by Shakota Johnson)

Dear Kind Friend,

I see you too. I know that you are there in all your kindness and beauty. I see that you are a magnificent exception to a very harsh rule that I follow for the sake of caution. The white mask that you saw me in the other day, every day, is not for hiding from you, but for my protection. This world knows an imposter when it sees one, yet I am somewhat safer when I wear it.

Unfortunately, I do not always know how to identify when I have exited a war zone. Especially when I have been fighting for so long. It's just that the wounds of rejection cost more than I am willing to pay sometimes. I do not wish to deceive you, but those calculations of skin color, education, wealth, and status lead to assumptions about us both...it seems that we are both discounted, but in very different ways.

Kind friend, I am sorry that you must endure the aftermath of the hurricanes, the custom-made storms for people who look like me. I move in and out of these storms each day I open the door to walk out into the world. There are few greater disasters than to have a hurricane follow you home. You'd be amazed at how much goes unspoken in the interactions between us that have to do with those typhoons. This is why I use words that may sting at times, not to cause you personal affliction, but to speak about the truth at large. I am sorry for the pain of reality, very sorry for us both. But we have no control over these storms. If we had things our way, the way of our King, it would not be so.

You're right, this used to be easier. Before our minds and hearts were bombarded with the pain of politics.

(MORE)

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JASMINE (cont'd)

Before politics became real people you share life with...before life became this complicated. The simpler days feel like centuries ago and I cannot tell if I am better or worse for what I know now. But I know you, and that has made me better. Kind friend, do you know how you defy my deepest doubts? Do you know how much you've taught me to trust? Do you know how much you've changed my life with your love? Do you know who you remind me of? I know Our Father is proud of you...you remind me of His Only Son.

As for me, I cannot promise a complete unveiling from that mask each day. This world has not given me many options for survival. I am working on it, but it will take time. I hope that you would continue to work with me, as there is so much to be done. Thank you for seeing me, for that is what we are designed to desire....to be seen and known. I love you.

Drop the mic! Lights out!