

**white iris.**

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**characters.**

<b>Arcoíris (Íris/Iris)</b>	<i>white latinx. poet. queer.</i>
<b>Chris</b>	<i>white. 'frisco boi. freelance DJ. queer.</i>
<b>Carmen</b>	<i>Iris' mom.</i>
<b>Connie</b>	<i>Iris' abuela. (may be played by the same player as Carmen.)</i>

**setting.**

*The play settings should stray as far from literal representations as possible, leaning into a suggestion of modern realism that quickly crumbles into complete absurdity. Transitions should be fluid as possible. The playing space should allow for this.*

**notes.**

*On considering white “passing,” it is not necessarily up to the director, casting director, producer, playwright or anyone, but primarily the actors **themselves** to identify as white passing. This kind of awareness is imperative to both the actors involved and the creative team.*

*Whiteness is not limited light hair, blue eyes or pale skin. Whiteness can be 1st-gen with a college degree, tongues that have been trained to cradle stiff anglo-consonants, Brown skin on anglo-bone structure, flat-ironed B/black hair, dressing “white,” etc..etc..*

*\*on gender. all characters are genderfluid, whether “presenting” or not. that said, this is a play about presenting, while racial dynamics are what want to be examined first; how for example, gender and sexuality plays between iris/kris, iris/carmen, kris/carmen, etc. are all revelanvant and must be considered and explored deeply in casting.*

*\*CHRIS's character was originally written with he/they pronouns as an initial but limited exploration on white-cis maleness, but please do update pronouns as needed to suit the actor.*

*This play is open to whiteface. Regarding the White Mask: think eyes the color of coolant, teeth pointed like gross little egg shells Make it gross. The celebration of whiteness is over.*

*A slash (/) indicates a point of overlap in dialogue. Text in [ brackets ] are included solely to clarify meaning/provide translation but are not intended to be spoken.*

*prologue. A pool of light. Iris, in a space that feels  
imagined and liminal, familiar and safe.*

**ÍRIS.**

“*Ay mija*, don't tell me it's another gringo!?”  
mama says for the tenth time in my life  
“What is it *con vos y esos* white boys?”  
she sighs, “just ‘cause you got a gringa's mask  
doesn't mean you have to match,” *Ay ma!*  
You don't know! *This one's different*  
*Besides...* when the lights go  
who's to say if their eyes are blue  
*o no?*

*scene 1. Iris' tiny SF apartment, halfway unpacked. We see piles of her books, picture frames and at the center of the wall a family heirloom: the dance mask of a Spanish king.*

*Lights up. Iris and Chris giggle on the bed, post- it could be the fourth time tonight— but let's be real, they're too high to count.*

**CHRIS.** Say it again.

**IRIS.** Ar-co-í-ris.

**CHRIS.** Arcoíris...

**IRIS.** Mhm.

**CHRIS.** Arcoíris... (*giggles*) Gosh, that's beautiful. Why don't you ever go by that?

**IRIS.** Are you kidding me? Walking into first grade, like "Excuse me, um Miss Karen, it's actually pronounced Arcoíris Mariposa de la Rosa Hecho de Canela Martinez Gomez!"

**CHRIS.** I don't know if I'm allowed to laugh at that.

**IRIS.** for real tho! Just too much trouble correcting white people-

**CHRIS.** Nah! Fuck them!

**IRIS.** Ugh, it's fine. Iris is easier. And my mom calls me Íris, so-

**CHRIS.** Íris?

**IRIS.** Yep.

**CHRIS.** Can I call you that?

**IRIS.** Sure, if you want.

**CHRIS.** Well, I mean do you *prefer* it?

**IRIS.** *Yeah.. I mean, whatever, it's fine./ I don't really care.*

**CHRIS.** *Yeah but— / Ok. (Beat. Iris smokes. The scene freezes.)*

**IRIS.** *Simply por usar mi lengua así... now that I'm his 'thing'  
Is it just me? Siento loca, but sometimes I swear, it's like  
there's conquista left in their speech. But they never hear it do they?  
I can't love what I fear; that maybe he just lusts for how I speak,  
has want for my mother's tongue to be his mamacita's sweet talk  
love how you roll-that-tongue-'makes-me-weak talk  
teach me how to speak that street talk, chulita— (The scene returns.)*

**CHRIS.** *sorry... That was stupid.*

**IRIS.** *What?*

**CHRIS.** *The way I said that, I was totally being That Stupid White Guy™ asking about your Ethnic™ name.*

**IRIS.** *Ahh, haha, it's fine. It's super foreign and hard to say / I get it, you don't wanna be like your forefathers, / the White Guilt™ is just too heavy to bear and you / wanna reverse the hundreds of years of colonization by getting my name right. It's cool.*

**CHRIS.** *Iris... / I know.. / C'mon, Iris, I was just trying to... Okay, see? That's not helpful.*

**IRIS.** *Helpful to what? To the cause of making the white man comfortable?*

**CHRIS.** *Are we seriously gonna-? You know that's not what I meant.*

**IRIS.** *What you may mean and what you say, as someone who is white, are two very different things when you spend as much time around you as I do.*

**CHRIS.** *I know, I know. I am fully aware of—*

**IRIS.** *Are you?*

**CHRIS.** *Ok, let me rephrase, do you think it is productive—?*

**IRIS.** What would *actually* be productive, Chris, is if you could, I dunno, *time travel* / back to the Spanish conquest and maybe ask Mister Conquistador Pedro de Alvarado to like stay away from my great- great- great- great- / great-grandmother. Otherwise I'm not really interested in the semantics of this conversation-

**CHRIS.** Oh god- / I got it. (*Burying their head*) / Alright, Iris, I feel sufficiently like shit now.

**IRIS.** Feeling like shit is a luxury. (*Beat, ouch.*) Hey. (*Nudging Chris up, it's tender.*) Chris... That was a little. . . -but you know I'm just giving you shit, right? Just like a lil baby shit. / Less than your people deserve / but... your fragility can be sooooo palpable babe! C'mon!

**CHRIS.** Uh-huh. / Ha! / Yeah, alright, alright.

**IRIS.** Hey. Look at me. It's cool. Call me Iris. Call me Íris. Call me whatever is the name that's closest to you. Yeah?

**CHRIS.** yea.

*Beat.*

*Iris kisses them—*

**IRIS.** Wait, Chris?

**CHRIS.** What?

**IRIS.** Am I pronouncing that right? / Is it Chris or is it *Krís*-?

**CHRIS.** Aughh!!

*scene 2. Carmen enters, silently judging the apartment, snooping through belongings and landing on Iris' phone.*

**CARMEN.** Uuuyy... Ese gringo? Ay dios. Where is he from?

**IRIS.** They. Ohio.

**CARMEN.** *Hijole!* So he's like, *really* white.

**IRIS.** Okay, mom.

**CARMEN.** I'm just saying, don't get carried away with the gringo like you always do...

**IRIS.** What do you mean like *I* always do?

**CARMEN.** You should never trust blue eyes! (*Bulging her eyes ridiculously*)

**IRIS.** What do you mean "*like I always do*"???

**CARMEN.** *Ay, calmate*, I'm just kidding, Íris!

**IRIS.** No one's laughing.

**CARMEN.** Well you're the one always dating white boys not me, so...

**IRIS.** What are you talking about?

**CARMEN.** Always!

**IRIS.** Okay, literally *not* always!

**CARMEN.** Since like elementary school!

**IRIS.** Elementary?! I wasn't dating in elementary, *cochina!*

**CARMEN.** *All I'm saying* is... Mira, you're all talk about Latino empowerment—

**IRIS.** Latinx.

**CARMEN.** No one says that nena, but okay— *explain to me*, how can you truly go around acting like some empowered “Latin-ex” when you’re dangling on the arm of some gringo?!

**IRIS.** You’re still assuming I only date men—

**CARMEN.** Okay, okay! OR gringa—*GRINGX!!*

**IRIS.** Oh my god.

**CARMEN.** What?

**IRIS.** Whatever.

**CARMEN.** ¡¿Qué?! You want me to congratulate you for dating a gringo like your abuelita? Start planning the wedding-

**IRIS.** No! I don’t *want* you congratulating me.

**CARMEN.** So what what?

**IRIS.** Stop going through my phone! And stop treating my love life like it’s your chisme to own.

**CARMEN.** Pues. . . okay. (*Beat.*) So what’s this thing you have tonight?

**IRIS.** What thing?

**CARMEN.** On facebook. A show?

**IRIS.** It’s a poetry reading.

**CARMEN.** We still have dinner with Grandma tonight, / you remembered right?

**IRIS.** *I know.* The open mic is at eight so I’ll just leave a little early.

**CARMEN.** Abuelita hasn’t seen you since Christmas, nena. And when was the last time you called her anyways? (*Iris shrugs.*) Ay Íris! It really doesn’t hurt to call every once in a while.

**IRIS.** Okay so I won’t go. (*Closing her notebook, as if to leave.*)

**CARMEN.** Nena . . . (*IRIS waits.*) Está bien. Go to your thing. Just wear something nice.

*scene 3. in the basement of a house party, music thumps from above. A toilet flushes. Iris enters very, very crossfaded. Chris runs in with a bag of shrooms.*

**CHRIS.** Babe! *(Offering the bag.)* Shrooms?

**IRIS.** I dunno. Maybe not.

**CHRIS.** No worries. *(Leaving the bag.)* I'm gonna go to the bathroom.

**IRIS.** Careful. It's wet in there! *(Beat. Iris eyes the shrooms.)* Ah fuck it. *(She eats one. The music swells and the room swirls. Abuela Connie appears behind Iris holding a platter of chicharrones.)*

**CONNIE.** ¡Hola nena!

**IRIS.** ¡¿Abuelita?!

**CONNIE.** ¿Quieres unas chicharrones?

**IRIS.** I don't eat meat... Grandma what are you doing here?!

**CONNIE.** Ay-ay-ay, no comes carne! That's righ', sorry nena! I forget! *(She sets down the plate and walks around.)* Is this your new house aqui?

**IRIS.** No. I think it's a Co-op? I don't really know whose house this is...

**CONNIE.** A si, un Co-oop. ¿Hay fiesta? *(She starts to dance.)* ¡Me gusta esta canción!

**IRIS.** Daddy Yankee? omg Grandma...

**CONNIE.** Jejeje! Si! Yankee! Baila conmigo nena! *(They dance joyously like two BFFs gossiping at a club.)* Íris, nena! I miss you, pero you don't call me! *(Iris can't hear.)* Nunca me llames, Íris! ¿Por qué no?

**IRIS.** I don't know... I get scared. *(Iris has stopped dancing, Connie continues.)*

**CONNIE.** Ay Dios mio! Why you afraid, haney?

**IRIS.** No se... I feel... God it's stupid. I'm sorry... Quieres hongos alucinógenos? *(She offers Abuelita Connie the bag of shrooms.)*

**CONNIE.** ¡Claro! *(She takes one.)* Chicharron mija?

**IRIS.** No, abuelita-

**CONNIE.** ¡Ay perdon, eres VEGETARIAN! *[pronounce: veh-heh-terry-ehn]* Sorry, I forget!

**IRIS.** No, no, no, no! You know what? It's a cheat day, dame los! *(Iris stuffs a handful of chicharrones in her mouth, howling in delight.)* You make the best chicharrones in the WORLD!

**CONNIE.** I know! ¡¡Jejeje!! *(They dance harder. Chris enters.)*

**CHRIS.** Hey!

**IRIS.** Babe! This is my grandma!

**CHRIS.** Yoooo! Hi grandma! Shrooms?

**CONNIE.** I already have some! Thank you!

**CHRIS.** Oh hella yea, shroomy-mama!      **IRIS.** Abuela, Chris: mi pareja. Chris, my grandma-

**CONNIE.** Mucho gusto, Chris. Call me Connie!

**CHRIS.** Al-right Connieeee!! You wanna come up and dance?!

**CONNIE.** Sure! I want to have minute with Íris first, si? *(She offers Chris the chicharrones.)*  
Take this to your friends! We come upstairs in un litto bit.

**CHRIS.** Dope! See you soon Íris. *(Exiting with a wink.)*

**CONNIE.** *Ujuju!!* Chris es muy guapo, Íris!

**IRIS.** Hahaha... yeah.

**CONNIE.** You know, they remind me of tu grandpa Danny. *[pronounced: Deh-ni]* *Canchito chulo!* I remember when I first meet Danny at the church. I see him outside, in the parking lot with un white motorcycle, the Harley Davinson he used to have. Do you remember this one? And when I first see Danny, I go “*Uyuyuy!*” he even have some muscles! *Juju!* He started walking over to me, y I thinking, “*Que ojos mas hermosos!*” Not like your abuelo Miguel. Alcoholico chuco. Si, I lucky to divorce from him, *because* when I marry Danny, I go back to Guatemala and show him: Ha! I do better than him! All my friends go “*Guau!* Connie marry a gringo, she prob’aly has lot of money now!” Y you know... grandpa doesn’t have ANY money, pero, *shhhh!* *jejeje!* Si nena, es much better to marry un gringo.

**IRIS.** I don’t think- *(The music starts to skip.)*

**CONNIE.** Y tus bebes! / With ojitos like Chris, *bellezas!* / Like little blue diamonds! Y piel blanco y pura! White, white, como una flor, *Íris!* / Como tu!

**IRIS.** I don’t want- / Grandma . . / No, abue- *(Nausea. Colors in the air distort.)*

**CONNIE.** You are so beautiful with Chris, *Íris!*

**IRIS.** But-

**CONNIE.** *(Red. Connie’s voice warps.)* Nena, be proud!

**IRIS.** No.

**CONNIE.** ¡Estás mejorando la raza, mija! *(Embracing Iris, a snake and her mouse)*

**IRIS.** GRANDMA WHAT THE FUCK!

**CONNIE.** Shh... nena.

**IRIS.** No don’t ... *(Iris faints. Lights fade out.)*

**CONNIE/CHRIS.** Hey, hey... relax, you’re okay.

**CHRIS.** Can you stand? *(Iris wobbles)* C’mon love, I got you, okay?

*scene 4. Next morning. Iris jolts up. Lights up on bedroom.*

**IRIS.** FUCK! *(Chris wakes up.)*

**CHRIS.** Woah, you okay?

**IRIS.** *(Holding her throat.)* Oww...

**CHRIS.** You want water? I got it. *(Exiting offstage.)* You threw up so much last night!

**IRIS.** *Really?* Jesus. My bad.

**CHRIS.** Nah it's my fault. We shoulda left early like you said. *(Enters.)* You okay?

**IRIS.** Ugh, sorry. Yeah, just had a weird fucken dream... *(A phone vibrates.)* Is that you? *(They look for phones.)*

**CHRIS.** Nope.

**IRIS.** Shit . . . Oh! Oh. *(Seeing the caller ID, she lets it ring out.)*

**CHRIS.** Who was that?

**IRIS.** My grandma. God I feel like shit.

**CHRIS.** Just call her back.. or don't? *(Burrito time: Chris exits.)* You want eggs?

**IRIS.** Sure... What's more fucked up? Ignoring your only living grandmother or...

**CHRIS.** *(Offstage.)* Or??

**IRIS.** Nope. That's it. There's literally nothing worse than ignoring your grandma.

**CHRIS.** I mean, I can think of a plethora of worse things.

**IRIS.** Sure. But like, she's family. There is literally nothing more than family.

**CHRIS.** Well, I mean just cause you're family doesn't mean, like, if you don't have a good relationship—

**IRIS.** No, no, it's not that. She's my grandma. I love her. But, just... Everytime she calls or I have to call I get weird. Whenever I'm talking to her my tongue just starts freezing up-

**CHRIS.** So maybe just tell her that?

**IRIS.** What?

**CHRIS.** About your tongue freezing up? Say you get nervous talking on the phone with her. Like cause your Spanish right? So—

**IRIS.** Okay, no. Do you know how stupid that sounds? That's literally first-world gringa problems, like, uuuu it's soOoOo hard being White.

**CHRIS.** If it's hard being White you're not doing it right! (*Iris rolls her eyes.*) Whaaat?

**IRIS.** Forget it. / You just don't get it.

**CHRIS.** Iris, I'm joking- / I'm never gonna get it. I'm just trying to help.

**IRIS.** I don't need your help. You're not my therapist and I sure as hell don't want you to White Saviour me out of my family problems. I don't answer her calls for the same reason I never learned Spanish-

**CHRIS.** You know Spanish-

**IRIS.** Not well. Not enough to speak like a normal person. I know Spanish for "Latinx" poetry-

**CHRIS.** Which is *beautiful*-

**IRIS.** But for who? White crowds? I mean that is who I'm writing for, even when I say it's for myself. Deep down. . . all I've ever wanted to be like you. White, like you. And even deeper down than that, I think it's because I'm a self-serving selfish asshole dumb..ass who will *never* know how to love. Herself or anybody else. And that's it. (*Beat.*) I think you should go.

*scene 5. Iris alone. A HUGE FART. Iris starts laughing. Hysterically. She rolls onto the floor howling. Carmen enters and the air of childhood falls around them. Iris is a young girl, Carmen prepares her for bed.*

**CARMEN.** *Callate, Iris! Shhh... the neighbors can hear us from upstairs! (Iris can't stop.) Iris!!*

**IRIS.** You farted!!!

**CARMEN.** *Y que? (Another fart. Another howl.)*

**IRIS.** Guacatelas!! Mami, it's so bad!! *(Choking.)* I can't breathe!! It's like SULPHUR, Mom!!

**CARMEN.** *(Barely containing herself too)* Shhh! Iris, please! Los dueños!

**IRIS.** I think they can smell it too! *(Cackling.)*

**CARMEN.** *Chht! Iris, no te voy a decir otra vez! I'm serious! Shh! (IRIS can't.) I'm counting to three: Uno... DOS! (Iris starts quieting down. They look at each other. Iris tries with all her might. She farts.) Ay! Cochina! (They howl uncontrollably. A phone rings. They quiet down. Carmen answers.)* Yes, yes, Mr. Hinkel, yes. You can hear us. I'm very sorry. Okay, it's very late. Yes, we are sorry, it is not very considerate of us. *(Rolling her eyes.)* Yes, yes. Okay Mr. Hinkel. Bye-bye. *(To Iris.)* Okay, nena, Mr. Hinkel "may consider calling the police department next time we get too rowdy." Okay? No más pedos. *(They giggle.)* Vamonos, time for bed.

**IRIS.** I'm not tired yet!

**CARMEN.** It's already ten, nena. You have to sleep.

**IRIS.** Who says?

**CARMEN.** Me says. C'mon.

**IRIS.** Mom, please...

**CARMEN.** Okay nena one more story *y te vas a dormir...* okay, what kind of story?

**IRIS.** A love story!

**CARMEN.** Ay dios... okay pues...  
Once, there was a pale-faced man  
with eyes more blue than lake Atitlan  
Death loved this pale-faced man  
loved him so deeply that she fell  
into the strands of his cornsilk hair  
*como una mosca loca derretida en miel*  
her irises grew like bullet holes  
sinking deep into sweet gold curls  
Death grew intoxicated with his skin  
the glow of warm bones within  
went leaching for riches forbidden from him  
until the day came when the pale-faced  
man knew death more than she ever had  
and he stole away with all that she owned  
except for one little thing he left alone:  
*la máscara* she wore to stop a heart's pace  
which turned into a mirror of the pale man's face.

*An eerie darkness slowly consumes the light  
around Carmen and from darkness a white mask  
emerges. The face, seemingly disembodied, looms  
behind Carmen, creeps towards her.*

*The face stops, directly behind Carmen,  
close enough to touch. Its presence is like a  
night terror. Carmen shudders.*

**IRIS.** *(Half-asleep)* It's nice mommy... *(Lights up. The mask hangs innocently on the wall)* It  
sounds nice...

**CARMEN.** *(Chuckles. She kisses her.)* Si. . . goodnight nena.

*CARMEN takes the mask down. Lights off.*

*End of play.*