

Black, No Face

By David H. Parker
(script sample + working title)

FADE IN:

We see: RADNEY, 20-ish, dark-skinned, & non-binary, sitting by themselves on a ledge/stoop. They are scribbling away on paper, occasionally murmuring something unintelligible.

At what feels like the right time, NYAH, 20-ish & richly dark-skinned, approaches with familiarity and a bag of lemons. This interaction isn't out of the ordinary; probably more comfortable than whatever their last conversations at home were, anyway. She vapes.

NYAH
Watermelon. Don't say shit about it.

RADNEY
Ain't *my* lungs holding on for dear life.

NYAH
That "dear life" ain't half bad, neither.

RADNEY
You trynna convince me, or ya lungs?

NYAH
You somehow worse than the authority figures in my life.

RADNEY
I love you, but I find that hard to believe.

NYAH notices RADNEY's work.

NYAH

I'm entering that shit, too!

RADNEY

Actually, that's good. If you do it, too, I might work a lil harder.

NYAH

That's weirdly big of you to say.

RADNEY

Nyah, I do not care. What am I afraid of?

NYAH

Me curbstomping your Little Bill booty at poetry. Show me your work, bro.

RADNEY

Bro?

NYAH

My bad, I know you hate that.

RADNEY

Not just hate it. It ain't me.

NYAH

What's the gender-neutral term for "bro?"

RADNEY

I don't know. Radney's fine. Or, like, anything else.

NYAH

I gotchu, brotina.

RADNEY

Please stop existing.

A beat. Non-confrontational.
They're smiling to themselves.

RADNEY

"Black, No Face."

NYAH

Nigga, what?

RADNEY

My poem. You said you wanted to hear it?

RADNEY

I kinda wrote it as a song, maybe. I don't know yet. Also, not every line is final. I'm still working through—

NYAH

Your audience sleep if this how long you gone take.

As RADNEY's recitation begins, we are transported again. RADNEY is affixed to the hood of a car that is cruising along a mountainside street. Birmingham's skyline lays sprawled in the background. The golden hour is upon them, and so is a liquid, effortless sense of peace.

RADNEY

"Black love has no face / It looks like strummin' on the concrete / Slow drummin' in the alley / Fists up at the rally / Frank Ocean in the valley / Looks like smilin' on the freeway / Windows down, sun raisin' / Got The Read replayin' / Makeup on and I'm faded—

NYAH

Hold up.

Snap back to reality. Again. NYAH caught lookin' sideways this time.

RADNEY

What's wrong with it?

NYAH

Nothin', but I've heard you do better. What's the point if there ain't some sorta message? "Fists up at the rally?" That's it? Listen, Nina didn't tap dance in Lagos for AMSAC for nothin'.

RADNEY

You even know what reference you're making? Nina Simone, Langston Hughes, and all them other folx were bein' used by

the CIA and had no clue. Pretty sure she died not knowing. Imagine almost twenty years after your death, people talkin' bout how you got played for forty.

NYAH

I just like seeing your tight lil curls smoke. But I do care that you stand for somethin', cuz I know you care bout everything.

RADNEY

I just don't want folx passin' on stuff I'm proud of because they don't wanna listen to whatever agenda they think I'm pushin'. It ain't me. That's why you don't catch me always on a corner or a stage trynna speak to whoever will listen. I can bring water to a rally, I can sling some sandwiches to folx experiencin' homelessness. But I ain't trynna be tokenized.

NYAH

I'm feelin' you. It ain't about comparin' oppressions, but it's gotta be said that... you only gotta work half as hard as Black women, especially trans women, out here to do anything. If I'm gon' be pushin' bout the Black female body and all the shit society do and has always done to ravage it, the least you can do is write a fire line if you ain't gone hold a sign. And you can still bebop on your lil car while you do it.

Another beat. This moment is sticky; RADNEY is inching through it. NYAH peels a lemon slice and eats it whole. The chilly autumn air must be setting in because she pulls her jacket in closer.

FADE OUT.

END OF SAMPLE

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