

THE GAME OF LIGHT

by Y York

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Acknowledgements

The play was originally commissioned by New City Theatre, John Kazanjian, artistic director, subsequently workshopped at The New Harmony Project, Andrew Tsau, artistic director, and ASK Theatre Projects, Mead K. Hunter, Director of Literary Programs. Thank you to the actors and directors who helped at those institutions, and to those who helped in my living room.

dedication page

for
Korina Layne-Jones

Characters

Antony: a white man, 28, from New York City. Also plays James, 10.

Janna: an African American woman, 40, from New York City. Also plays Annie, 8.

Setting

An office on the 33rd floor. Seattle.

The objects that appear in the play are present and visible from the beginning of the play. There are no scenery or costume changes or blackouts; there is only the wind. The designation of “scene” is for convenience.

(Scene i. The present. A single room, two-person office. The furniture is timeless and expensive. A closet. The technology (computer, fax) is in the background. A very bad wind storm is underway. Janna is on the phone when Antony rushes in, takes off his coat, hangs it in closet. They are immediately tense.)

ANTONY I'm sorry, I'm sorry—

JANNA Don't worry about it.

ANTONY There was a tree in the road—

JANNA The depositions aren't even here yet.

ANTONY Didn't Laurie send them?

JANNA I'm trying to find out. Machine. (hangs up)

ANTONY Did you leave a message?

JANNA At eight, eight fifteen, and a quarter to nine.

ANTONY Can we call the messenger service?

JANNA If she isn't in, she didn't call a messenger.

ANTONY If I don't have the depositions—

JANNA I know, Laurie knows, everybody knows— for Pete's sake, Antony.

ANTONY I'm sorry. Was I pushy?

JANNA ...Enthusiastic.

ANTONY I was pushy. I can't help it. Everything— everybody is so slow.

JANNA They call it laid back.

ANTONY I told her I'd come get them. Two blocks. It would have been so easy. Why couldn't she have just said, yes, come get them?

JANNA It would have seemed "pushy."

ANTONY Boy, this town. Nobody ever gives me a straight answer.

JANNA There's a city-ordinance against a straight answer.

ANTONY That explains it. When I was looking for an apartment, I saw one, I liked it, I said, when can I move in? "Move in? Oh, we didn't know you'd want to move in." I was speechless. I had answered an ad in the newspaper for an apartment. (rhetorical) What could they possibly have thought I was doing there?

JANNA Yeah, I thought it was a race thing.

ANTONY Oh. (brief pause) I didn't even think of that. Maybe you're right, maybe they didn't like me.

JANNA (joking) Maybe your car isn't fancy enough.

ANTONY No, my car is fancy enough. My car is embarrassingly fancy.

JANNA ... I don't know then.

ANTONY You're not like that. You say what you mean.

JANNA I'm an ex-New Yorker, too. It's in the blood.

ANTONY That's so funny— I never thought of myself as a New Yorker.

JANNA Yeah, the rest of the country never lets you forget it. Antony, your tie.

ANTONY I'm what?

JANNA Your tie, where's your tie? You have court—

ANTONY Oh! I have it. Right here. (from pocket) I ran out so fast—um...

JANNA And there was a tree in the road.

ANTONY There was a tree in the road.

JANNA I'm just kidding.

(brief pause)

ANTONY I gotta print the files before the hearing.

JANNA They're in your briefcase.

ANTONY In my—

JANNA You were on the phone when I left—

ANTONY Oh, I—

JANNA You said you wanted to work last night so I printed the files and put them in your briefcase.

ANTONY I did work. I make the calls at night because of the time difference. Isn't that how you do it?

JANNA I don't call. I fax. I don't like to talk to Pakár.

ANTONY Which one is he?

JANNA Victims' claims.

ANTONY He's on our side.

JANNA Too bad for our side.

ANTONY No, we're gonna win this. India is strong on the environment.

JANNA Now if they would just stop setting fire to their wives.

ANTONY ...They have a very progressive environmental policy.

JANNA Well, that's something I guess.

(Pause. Antony takes the printed files from his briefcase. He gets out a tattered old book and a framed photograph. He takes them to a shelf where there are already photos and an old microscope.)

ANTONY Can I..?

JANNA ...Oh, sure, go ahead.

ANTONY Just a couple of things.

JANNA Bring in whatever you like.

ANTONY No, I just like to keep these around. (Picks up a photograph.) These your kids?

JANNA Yeah. What time is the hearing?

ANTONY One thirty.

JANNA I'll take you through the depositions at lunch — they should be here by then.

ANTONY Great. How about Wild Basil, my treat.

JANNA Oh. No. When I go out I never get back on track.

ANTONY We should go out. Get some daylight.

JANNA Yeah, in this hurricane, it'll be delightful.

ANTONY I hate fluorescent lights.

JANNA (defensive) I get full-spectrum.

ANTONY The hallway is so dreary. Sam told me you're pretty sold on this building.

JANNA It was the best I could do on short notice.

ANTONY I'll bet we could find a better office.

JANNA We're not going to be here that long.

ANTONY It isn't safe.

JANNA It's safe.

ANTONY The stairwell doors lock behind you.

JANNA That's so fleeing robbers get trapped. A "safety feature."

ANTONY What if there's a fire?

JANNA I'll call a fire engine.

ANTONY How are we supposed to get out of the building?

JANNA We'll take the stairs, like the sign says.

ANTONY And be locked in.

JANNA Not at the bottom.

ANTONY Yes, I checked.

JANNA Jeez, Antony, talk to Maintenance. If I call now we'll have lunch by lunch time.

ANTONY They don't have anything I like.

JANNA It's just lunch. Get soup and a sandwich.

ANTONY What kind of sandwich?

JANNA I don't know, tuna fish.

ANTONY There's a boycott.

JANNA Get chicken.

ANTONY They won't be free range. (explanation) Free range. Peck peck in the dirt instead of kept in cages.

JANNA I know what free range is. I'm gonna get an avocado melt. Do you want one?

ANTONY BGH. The cheese.

JANNA What do you care? You've done all your growing.

ANTONY It's not about growing. It's about cruelty to cows.

JANNA Crueler than it already is?

ANTONY Yes, actually. Twenty-five percent crueler.

JANNA I didn't know we could calibrate cruelty now.

ANTONY (explanation) They're on the milking machine twenty five percent longer. They get all these infections and sores on their... (brief pause) I'm sorry.

JANNA About what?

ANTONY I didn't mean to talk about— I'm sorry.

JANNA (brief pause) Oh my God. You didn't mean to talk about cow udders in front of me?

ANTONY No, I did not.

JANNA Well, actually, it's okay to talk about cow udders in front of me. I actually didn't think you were making a reference or comparison to me or any other human female and a cow. You didn't mean to do that, did you?

ANTONY I did not.

(Brief pause.)

JANNA You shouldn't listen to Fitz, Antony.

ANTONY No, I know.

JANNA Not about me.

ANTONY He helped me out, Janna—

JANNA He wants an ally.

ANTONY Well, that may be true—

JANNA It is true.

ANTONY He seems like a perfectly nice man.

JANNA That's because he doesn't come up behind you—

ANTONY Janna—

JANNA —and push into your rear end—

ANTONY Please—

JANNA —with his penis perfectly erect.

ANTONY You don't know that! You don't. You can't always tell— he's a big man. He's a big sloppy Irishman with affectionate habits—

JANNA My God, you're quoting him!

ANTONY —It's cultural— and sometimes you can't tell— when it accidentally— it just feels like it, but it's a perfectly natural hang— and it's not... what you said. Erect.

JANNA Believe me, Antony, I don't come from a cold culture.

ANTONY No, I know, but...he's amazing— we worked side by side on the logging bill— until Sam switched me here—

JANNA What were you doing with the logging bill?

ANTONY Fitz wanted me to check some precedents.

JANNA Why?

ANTONY To see if they exist.

JANNA They exist.

ANTONY I know, I checked.

JANNA That pig. The logging bill is moot.

ANTONY No.

JANNA Yes. If it weren't I wouldn't be working on India.

ANTONY ...I don't get it.

JANNA It's my bill.

ANTONY Your name is not on it.

JANNA Why am I not surprised? "Check some precedents."

ANTONY ...I told him how impressive it was, he smiled.

JANNA Letting you think he wrote it. Logging is mine.

ANTONY I didn't figure you for a tree freak.

JANNA Fitz can be a tree freak, but I can't be a tree freak?

ANTONY You can be whatever kind of freak you want to be— I just didn't know.

JANNA Sam sold me on saving trees. That's how he got me. Didn't he sell you on something?

ANTONY He just said the magic word.

JANNA Which word was that?

ANTONY Fitz.

JANNA Sam did not promise you Fitz.

ANTONY No, he didn't. Fitz was on the personnel list.

JANNA Fitz is on borrowed time. He was on borrowed time when you came on.

ANTONY I know that, Janna. You— you have every reason to be annoyed with him. Your name should be on that bill—

JANNA Antony! I am not sitting here all by myself in this tiny office because I didn't get credit on some bill.

ANTONY I know—

JANNA No, I don't think you know. This isn't about who did what work, or some accidental reference to female anatomy, or female cow anatomy—

ANTONY No—

JANNA It was not an accident.

ANTONY No, I know. It's just a shame—

JANNA Yes, it is a shame!

ANTONY That he has to go. Is a shame.

JANNA Well, that is not exactly where I would place the shame.

ANTONY It's just...

JANNA What?

ANTONY He gives us credibility.

JANNA Who says that?

ANTONY Nobody has to say it; everybody knows it. He'd be making millions in the real world.

JANNA We'd all be cleaning up in the real world.

ANTONY He's why I could walk away from my salary.

JANNA It's a trade-off. You work here you get to make the world nicer. Nobody can call you a selfish little money-grabber. Think of it as giving back to the community.

ANTONY I was making almost a hundred thousand dollars—

JANNA Happens to the best of us.

ANTONY Everybody doesn't give up a hundred thousand dollars, but I could do it because I was going to get Fitz.

JANNA You sound just like GE, Tony; "I gave up CFCs, can't I keep my PCBs?"

ANTONY And why not give them some credit, too?

JANNA Who?

ANTONY Corporations are just like people. You have to give them strokes for their good behavior. They did give up CFC's.

JANNA Where do I send the thank you note?

ANTONY You don't have to be sarcastic.

JANNA Yes I do. At least for the four or five years it's going to take me to recover from "corporations are like people." Boy, Tony. You should have stayed on Wall Street.

ANTONY Maybe I should have.

JANNA Strokes for good behavior, I mean, gag me, boy.

(The sound of a loud crack, a terrifying gust of wind. They are shaken, scared.)

ANTONY What was that?

JANNA I believe that was the wind.

ANTONY Is the window open?

JANNA The window doesn't open.

ANTONY How did it get in here?

JANNA I don't know.

ANTONY Are you alright?

JANNA ...Just surprised.

(They both look around. Wind hums through the building.)

ANTONY Are you sure you don't want me to find us another office?

(She snorts a little laugh. Antony looks down at the storm blowing.)

JANNA I didn't mean to call you "boy."

ANTONY What?

JANNA I called you "boy."

ANTONY That's okay, just don't call me Tony. My father calls me Tony. (snorts a laugh) I sounded like him. I don't even think that way.

JANNA What way?

ANTONY The corporate way. God, I sounded just like my father.

(Janna looks out window, too.)

JANNA The depositions are probably sitting on Laurie's desk. Do you have your key to Pike Street?

ANTONY Sure.

JANNA You better get over there. I'll bet nobody went in.

ANTONY (Looking) God, maybe it is a hurricane. (brief pause) Let's get outta here. Let's both go.

JANNA Yeah. (She changes the answering machine.) Hello, you've reached the Pine Street extension office of EDE. It's ten AM Thursday. We're closing due to bad weather." In case my kids call.

(Janna gets her coat and briefcase.)

JANNA Aren't you coming?

ANTONY I'm going to try Laurie again. I'd hate to get there and find she'd already sent them. Hold the elevator for me.

JANNA Okay.

(Janna exits.)

ANTONY (he gets machine) Damn. (listening to message, then) Hello Sam. This is Antony on Thursday morning. There's seems to be a discrepancy— (sigh) Man, we gotta talk.

(Janna reenters.)

JANNA Is she there?

ANTONY Machine. What's up?

JANNA The elevator light is off. I don't think it's running.

ANTONY What—

(He dashes to the hallway.)

JANNA It's not running— Crazy man. (to phone) Come on, pick up. (machine) Swell. Hello maintenance. Phil if you get this, and you better get it, some of your tenants are trapped—

(The lights go out. The only light is from the window. Pale daylight.)

ANTONY (enters, distracted) Dark.

JANNA Hello? Oh swell. Anybody you want to call while we still got a dialtone?

ANTONY (holds his head) Oh no, oh no, oh no, oh no.

JANNA (to Antony) What?

(He continues oh no-ing in a low monotone. She hangs up the telephone.)

JANNA Antony? Antony stop saying oh no and tell me what's wrong.

ANTONY Hit me.

JANNA Hit—?

ANTONY Hit me, knock me out. Hit me and knock me out. (panting)

JANNA I'm sorry, but I seem to be missing a crucial piece of information here.

ANTONY I can't stand it. I can't stand it.

JANNA Are you sick? Is there some medicine? Nitroglycerine? Antony, talk to me.

(He crosses to a wall, loosening his shirt collar, moaning "no." A desperate person.)

JANNA What? What is it? (dials) Okay, okay. Take it easy, I'm calling 911. Answer. Come on, answer, pick up the phone. (The phone goes dead, she depresses the dialtone button several times.) Oh great. Oh, just great. (hangs up)

ANTONY (moaning) No no no no no no no. (continues)

(She watches him for a minute, then speaks slowly and distinctly with great calm.)

JANNA Okay, Son, come on, you gotta help me here. Just lift up your head. Come on, give it a try. (he tries) Okay, good. Okay, Antony, look in my face. Focus on my face. (He does) You're not breathing, son, that will not help.

(He breathes and looks away.)

JANNA No, look at me. (joking) You have to look and breathe at the same time. Come on. Look at me and breathe.

(He breathes and looks at her.)