

*Kodak Shirley*

by

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NORMAL

## CHARACTERS

WHITE ACTRESS	Pale complexion. Dark hair. Plays MADGE in the first scene and SHIRLEY in the last scene.
ACTRESS OF COLOR	Dark complexion. Whatever hair. Plays SHIRLEY in the first scene and MADGE in the last scene.

## SCENE 1: 2015

(SHIRLEY -- currently played by ACTRESS OF COLOR -- is perched and posed on a high chair, wearing a white fur stole and pearls, or their cheap equivalents. MADGE -- currently played by WHITE ACTRESS -- holds her smartphone, which, if possible and visible from the audience, should be displaying the picture from the title page of this script. With the lights, they pick up immediately mid-conversation.)

MADGE

But why Kodak *Shirley*? I understand that she was the standardized printing model for Kodak, but--

SHIRLEY

The original model's name was Shirley.

MADGE

Ohhh!

SHIRLEY

And I'm a /Shirley, so....

MADGE

Shirley. Okay. Got it. Awesome. I am so dense.

SHIRLEY

Oh please. Are my hands right? Her hands are / tricky.

MADGE

Your right hand should be more, like, framing your sternum.

(SHIRLEY does so. She is posed, as exactly as possible, like the woman in the photo.)

MADGE

Great. Kinda creepy.

(MADGE shows SHIRLEY the picture on the phone.)

SHIRLEY

Oh my god yeah.

MADGE

Awesome. Let me switch to the camera.

(MADGE fiddles with her phone to switch to the camera app.)

SHIRLEY

You didn't bring your camera?

MADGE

This is a camera.

SHIRLEY

A phone camera.

MADGE

It has eight megapixels.

SHIRLEY

And you didn't bring your tripod either?

MADGE

I didn't realize this was such a fancy thing.

SHIRLEY

That's not -- the whole reason I -- ugh.

(SHIRLEY puts her forehead in her hands. She calms herself.)

MADGE

Shirley?

SHIRLEY

Maybe my email could have been clearer.

MADGE

I thought we were just hanging out. Or going out.

SHIRLEY

Afterwards, but for now--

MADGE

I can go back to my place / and get the equipment.

SHIRLEY

(Being nicer.)

No no no. It's fine. Let's work with what we have.

(Beat.)

MADGE

Thanks for inviting me to do this. We should hang out more. You look really beautiful.

SHIRLEY

(Grumbly.)

Thank you, Madge.

MADGE

Jeez, don't take a compliment or anything.

SHIRLEY

(Ten percent less frowny.)

Beauty's not the point, but thank you.

MADGE

That was better. That was good.

(Takes a photo. Fake shutter noise.)

SHIRLEY

Did you take a picture of that?

MADGE

We'll take more, in the pose. It's just for testing. Look.

(MADGE shows her phone's screen to SHIRLEY.)

SHIRLEY

This is what I'm talking about. You can't even see my face.

MADGE

So we'll take more.

SHIRLEY

I'm all eyeballs.

MADGE

Let me adjust the settings, see if I can get it to be more friendly.

(MADGE fusses with her phone for a second.)

So how will your photo become the official Kodak calibration photo?

SHIRLEY

It won't.

MADGE

So why -- I'm just confused about what we're doing.

SHIRLEY

It's a project.

MADGE

An art project.

SHIRLEY

I'll write an essay about my experience as a woman of color coming up against the technology of capturing skin tone and pitch it to the Reader or something. Why are you being such a pill?

MADGE

That's sounds great! I was just curious about what the end game of what we're doing was. But that sounds super cool. You should totally do that.

SHIRLEY

What?

MADGE

It just isn't very collaborative.

SHIRLEY

I asked you to help me do this.

MADGE

That doesn't make it collaborative. Why did you even invite me?

SHIRLEY

You have that camera.

MADGE

Thanks.

SHIRLEY

You don't have to help me if you don't wanna.

MADGE

Fine. Go take a selfie.

(Beat.)

I just don't think it makes much sense. Kodak doesn't even exist, I think, or

at least they don't make Kodachrome film any more, so what does it matter. Like, your experience is totally valid and totally, yeah, that's racist that they only used white models, and it's cool that they called them Kodak Shirleys and your name is Shirley. That's an awesome gimmick if -- an awesome *hook* if you want to get published.

SHIRLEY

Right.

MADGE

But what's the point if it's this old technology thing that with digital photography probably isn't even true anymore--

SHIRLEY

(Overlapping.)

You saw me on your phone!

MADGE

--And I thought I was just helping you take a nice photo and we'd drink wine and have fun, not that this was going to be a whole thing.

SHIRLEY

Wow.

MADGE

I mean if we're really going to be equitable about it shouldn't it be a picture of both of us so like both skin tones are in it?

SHIRLEY

No. You're missing the --

(MADGE whips out her phone and gets in the selfie position, with SHIRLEY also in frame.)

What are you--

(Click. MADGE takes the selfie.)

MADGE

There. I took it.

(Beat.)

SHIRLEY

What the fuck, Madge?

MADGE

What?

SHIRLEY

You're missing the point entirely. Look at this photo. This Kodak Shirley photo from 1970, with the white model. It's iconic -- I mean it's not that famous, but it looks like an icon, a single person staring back, and it says normal at the bottom. And for decades this is what normal was, the model's sitting here, knowing that she's normal and that's fucked up, she's sitting alone and she's the whole deal. So I was trying to... Ugh!

MADGE

Right, so we're doing something different.

SHIRLEY

No, / am doing something different, and thought out, and purposeful, and you just come in and re-enact the same historical patterns of BS that have been going on forever.

(Beat.)

MADGE

Am not.

## SCENE 2: TRANSITION

(The lights shift. Maybe there's a sound cue underlining the transition from 2015 to 1970. The ACTRESS OF COLOR gets up from her perch and takes off her white fur stole. She gives it to the WHITE ACTRESS, who puts it on sits down on the perch with the pillows. The ACTRESS OF COLOR puts on a makeup apron and moves to the shadows.)

(The ACTRESS OF COLOR now plays a woman named MADGE, and the WHITE ACTRESS now plays a woman named SHIRLEY.)

## SCENE 3: 1970

(SHIRLEY, perched, gazes vacantly smiling out front, perfectly still. Silence. Her nose twitches. Silence.)

SHIRLEY

My nose itches.

(SHIRLEY lifts her hand as if to scratch her nose.)

MADGE  
Let me, Miss Shirley.

SHIRLEY  
Oh. Stupid.

MADGE  
You'll smear your make-up.  
(MADGE runs up to SHIRLEY, gets a q-tip out of one of the pockets of her utility apron and brings it to SHIRLEY's face.)

Where, exactly?

SHIRLEY  
(Raising her hand again to point.)

It's --

MADGE  
Just tell me.

SHIRLEY  
Sorry. The left side. Midway up from the nostril.

MADGE  
Thank you.  
(She scratches SHIRLEY's itch with the q-tip.)

Better?

SHIRLEY  
Better. Thank you *so* much.

MADGE  
(Trying to be nice.)

Sure!

SHIRLEY  
This has been the worst gig. One time, I did a McCurdy's catalogue shoot on a bridge, and it was cold, but at least we got to move around. This lighting guy has been setting up for hours.

MADGE  
That's his job.

SHIRLEY  
I know, and he's doing a lousy job at his job.

MADGE  
He knows what he's doing.

(beat.)  
Anything else? Water?

SHIRLEY  
Just stay here with me. I know that's weird.

MADGE  
It's fine. You're *my* job, so.

(Beat.)  
SHIRLEY  
(Referring to the makeup.)  
Let me do you.

MADGE  
No thank you, miss.

SHIRLEY  
I'm bored.

(beat.)  
Okay, I'm done. My makeup's done. Thank you very much, Madge. You can go now.

MADGE  
I should stay here, thank you.

SHIRLEY  
No, you're my assistant. You should go.

MADGE  
I'm the makeup girl.

SHIRLEY  
You're no fun. Why don't you go?

MADGE  
The producers asked me to...  
(Stops herself.)

SHIRLEY  
What? What'd they ask you?

MADGE  
Keep an eye on you, today. Make sure you stay subdued.

(Long beat.)

SHIRLEY

You are such a doll. You should be the model. What's your name?

MADGE

Madge.

SHIRLEY

Kodak Madge, Kodak model 1970!

MADGE

We should be quiet.

SHIRLEY

You mean "me." Me should be quiet. Here. Shhhh. Wear this.

(SHIRLEY gets up and quickly puts the white fur stole on madge.)

MADGE

Miss.

SHIRLEY

You look great! But that's *my* stole! You stole my stole. Get it?

MADGE

I get it.

SHIRLEY

They should take *your* picture. Make you the color calibration guide. That would be hilarious.

MADGE

Shirley, you are...

(Trying not to lose her temper.)

Miss, you are not normal.

SHIRLEY

Au contraire. I'm normal by definition. Or I will be, after this.

(SHIRLEY collapses back onto her perch. MADGE comes and gently replaces the stole.)

MADGE

What have you had today?

SHIRLEY

Barely anything.

(Beat. Suddenly contrite.)

Can I get that water now?

(MADGE goes offstage. SHIRLEY doesn't move.  
MADGE returns with a paper cup of water, and tries to  
feed it to SHIRLEY.)

MADGE

Here you go. Careful.

SHIRLEY

Oh, let me.

(SHIRLEY grabs the cup and angry-daintily drinks.  
She finishes the water and crushes the cup. She  
throws the cup on the floor. She points to her face  
with both hands, presenting it to MADGE.)

Any problems?

MADGE

No problems.

SHIRLEY

Thank you.

(Beat.)

Nobody lets me in on anything. You just go on these jobs and they tell you  
where to sit. And then my face will be somewhere forever, sitting there,  
looking happy, and I don't even -- I don't even have to be there.

MADGE

Well I for one feel very privileged to get to work on something like this, for  
a company like Kodak. Everybody's going to be saying, hey, look at  
Shirley...remind me your last name?

(SHIRLEY's about to say, but then --)

Ooh, they're ready. Smile for the camera; you're making history.

(SHIRLEY considers, then smiles stiffly. MADGE  
backs away. A shutter snaps, and...)

BLACKOUT