

A VERY DIFFERENT THANKSGIVING

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EXT. UNLIT ROAD - NIGHT

Cars flash past, headlamps briefly illuminating the asphalt and frequent potholes.

A lone figure, SAMUEL, 70s, white cane contrasting his dark skin, stands tall and taps his way along the sidewalk.

Rain starts to patter down, gently, then with increasing intensity.

A red sedan pulls up at Samuel's side.

BOB, 40s, bald, red faced in the jovial way, cracks open a window and shouts out.

BOB

Hey man, Thanksgiving's not a night
to be thumbing along the highway.

Samuel turns to the car as Bob clocks his cane.

BOB (cont'd)

Shit man, especially in your
condition.

Samuel waits.

BOB (cont'd)

Get in, I'll give you a lift.

Bob flings open the car door.

Samuel taps his cane until it reaches the car, feels for the doors edge...

BOB (cont'd)

Left a lit --

Samuel has the car door in his hand, and sweeps into the car with uncanny agility.

SAMUEL

Thank you, Mr?

Samuel's response has a tropical lilt to each word.

BOB

Bob, Bob Mercer.

Bob revs the engine and misses the smile on Samuel's lips.

INT. BOB'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Bob glances over at Samuel, takes in his pressed jeans, button down shirt, smart jacket and decent shoes.

The car shimmies a little as Bob makes his inspection.

SAMUEL

I'm not a hobo.

BOB

What, oh no sorry, I didn't think that, just you are out thumbing on Thanksgiving, and you are, er...

SAMUEL

Blind?

Bob nods, glad he didn't say something else.

BOB

Yes, exactly.

SAMUEL

I'm just traveling.

BOB

On Thanksgiving night?

SAMUEL

We celebrate it on a different date.

BOB

What, really?

Samuel nods.

SAMUEL

First Thursday of November.

BOB

Well what'd ya know, didn't know it be so early.

Bob's eyes light up, a smile cracks his face.

BOB (cont'd)

Say, the wife's cooking us up a feast, all the trimmings. Would you like to be our dinner guest?

Samuel pauses for a moment, deliberates.

BOB (cont'd)
 She's a great cook, might not be your
 normal sort of food but there will be
 plenty of it.

Samuel nods.

SAMUEL
 Yes, that could be interesting.

EXT. LARGE COLONIAL HOME - NIGHT

Bob's sedan pull up onto the drive.

Sign on mailbox reads 'Mercer Residence'.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Bob bustles in through the door, throws his keys onto a
 side-table.

Samuel follows him in, brushing rain from his jacket.

BOB
 Hun, got a surprise for you.

ALISON, 40s, rotund but dresses to disguise it, appears in
 the hallway, candle lighter in her hand.

Her face contorts into an uneasy mix of surprise and unease.

BOB (cont'd)
 Hun, this is Samuel I invited him to
 dinner.

She glances at Samuel, her prejudices take in his color, the
 cane, his dark glasses.

ALISON
 Oh, hell, why I didn't think to
 invite **anyone?**

Bob blushes.

BOB
 Samuel's traveling and I thought with
 all the food you make and...

SAMUEL
 I can leave if this is inconvenient?

Alison shoots a foul look at Bob, then pastes on a smile.

ALISON

No, no, surprise you may be but I won't have **any** visitor say they didn't get a real West Virginian welcome in my home.

SAMUEL

If you are sure?

Alison nods.

BOB

Sure as can be, can I take your coat?

Samuel shrugs out of his jacket and hands it towards Bob.

ALISON

Just through here Sam.

SAMUEL

Samuel.

ALISON

Sorry?

SAMUEL

Samuel. I prefer the full version, less Uncley.

Awkward silence.

BOB

Right you are Samuel, this way to the dining room.

INT. DINNING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Alison hustles over to the table and starts making room for an extra place.

Bob pulls a chair round to create a trio, one at the head of the table the other two opposite each other.

BOB

Here, Samuel, take a --

Samuel is already sitting at the head of the table.

BOB (cont'd)

Or there, yeah, that's fine too.

Samuel smooths the tablecloth.

ALISON
Hand in the kitchen husband?

Bob shuffles after her.

BOB
Be right back.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Alison turns on Bob before his feet are even in the room.

ALISON
Really!?

BOB
What? He was hitching on
Thanksgiving!

ALISON
But he's Bla --

SAMUEL (O.C.)
Could I get some water?

They spin to find Samuel has followed them.

ALISON
(flustered)
Yes, sure we'll bring some through.

Samuel returns to the dining room.

BOB
Shit, I hope his hearing is as bad as
his eyesight.

ALISON
You **know** what I mean, he's a
stranger.

BOB
He's a blind old man.

Exasperated, Alison hands him a glass of water.

ALISON
Take this through to **your** guest.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bob hands the glass over.

BOB
See, told you she makes to much.

He points to the spectacular spread of food on the table.

BOB (cont'd)
Shit, sorry.

SAMUEL
I will take your word for it.

Alison returns carrying a huge turkey.

BOB
That looks amazing hun.

She beams with pride, one of her best dishes.

SAMUEL
Smells good too.

Alison and Bob glance at each other nervously.

Samuel laughs as the tension dissipates.

SAMUEL (cont'd)
You'd probably better carve though.

Alison and Bob join in laughing as they set to carving and helping themselves to the banquet.

LATER

The table is cleared away and the trio look more relaxed, wine in hand, belts a notch looser.

BOB
Samuel here was saying that they
celebrate Thanksgiving on different
day.

ALISON
Really? That down in LA or somewhere
less traditional?

Samuel leans forward.

SAMUEL
Liberia.

Alison stiffens.

BOB
That in Wisconsin?

SAMUEL

Africa, though Wisconsin might have been better.

BOB

Wow, you have Thanksgiving there too?

SAMUEL

(nodding)

We do, but for other reasons.

BOB

Not the harvest?

SAMUEL

A celebration of our colonization.
When Liberia was formed.

Bob looks confused.

BOB

Sorry, didn't you already live there?

SAMUEL

No, we were born in America, the colonization was an encouraged one.

ALISON

You weren't slaves.

BOB

Alison!

SAMUEL

No, true, this was for the freed slaves, certain parties assumed we'd want to go **home**.

BOB

But you didn't?

SAMUEL

Very few did, most had been born in America, Africa wasn't home to us, why would it be?

BOB

Is that why you're here? Research into you ancestors?

SAMUEL

No, yours actually.

BOB

Mine?

Samuel looks to Alison.

SAMUEL

You kept his name?

ALISON

I'm proud of my birthright, he was more than just the ACS you know; hell, even Lincoln agreed with him.

BOB

I'm really lost now.

SAMUEL

The American Colonization Society thought that free black Americans should be **encouraged** to start new lives in Africa.

ALISON

It was different then.

SAMUEL

Was it?

ALISON

They went freely and were given provisions and things to start their new lives.

SAMUEL

They were given rum, iron posts, umbrellas and tobacco. They sound useful for building a new home?

Bob blushes but Alison bristles with indignation.

ALISON

They meant well.

SAMUEL

They only wanted black slaves in America, not black citizens.

BOB

That's a bit harsh.

SAMUEL

Within twenty years of the colonization sixty percent of them were already dead.

BOB
Well that's horrible, but --

ALISON
No, Bob, it was the right idea! It is
the right idea.

Silence.

BOB
Alison, you don't mean that?

ALISON
Don't I?

SAMUEL
She does.

He takes a carefully folded piece of paper from his
trousers.

BOB
What's that?

He hands over the paper.

SAMUEL
It's the address for the newly
registered www.ACS.com domain.

BOB
So?

Bob reads the paper, now in shock.

SAMUEL
Your address Bob. Or Alison's to be
more accurate.

Bob turns to Alison.

BOB
Tell me this isn't true. I mean I
indulged your MAGA and QAnon
bullshit, but this!?

ALISON
My ancestors were right, the country
wasn't big enough for us and the
Indians so we got rid of them, but we
freed the Blacks and now look.

BOB
Look at what? We have Bla--, friends
of colour, you want to send them back
too?

Alison nods emphatically.

ALISON
(voice rising)
We have other friends, **white** ones.

BOB
Jesus, Alison, have you heard
yourself?

Samuel 'ahems'.

SAMUEL
I think I should be on my way.

ALISON
(close to screaming)
Hang on, I've got some rum and an
umbrella you can take.

Bob stares dumbfounded at his wife, seeing her in very
different light.

Samuel rises.

SAMUEL
(to Bob)
Thanks you for your kindness. Some
people see more.

Samuel leaves the room, sounds of him in the hallway, jacket
sliding on.

Alison, face contorted in rage, looks at Bob.

ALISON
What the fuck are you looking at.

Bob shakes his head, gets up from his seat.

BOB
Samuel, hold up...

The creak of the front door pauses.

BOB (cont'd)
Need a lift?