



BETWEEN RIVERSIDE AND CRAZY

BY
STEPHEN ADLY GUIRGIS



DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.



BETWEEN RIVERSIDE AND CRAZY
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BETWEEN RIVERSIDE AND CRAZY was originally produced by Atlantic Theater Company (Neil Pepe, Artistic Director; Jeffery Lawson, Managing Director) in association with Scott Rudin, New York City, in July 2014. It was directed by Austin Pendleton; the set designer was Walt Spangler; the costume designer was Alexis Forte; the lighting designer was Keith Parham; the original music and sound design were by Ryan Rumery; and the stage manager was Kelly Ice. The cast was as follows:

OSWALDO Victor Almanzar
POPS Stephen McKinley Henderson
LULU Rosal Colón
JUNIOR Ray Anthony Thomas
DETECTIVE AUDREY O’CONNOR Elizabeth Canavan
LIEUTENANT CARO Michael Rispoli
CHURCH LADY Liza Colón-Zayas

BETWEEN RIVERSIDE AND CRAZY was subsequently produced by Second Stage Theatre (Carole Rothman, Artistic Director; Casey Reitz, Managing Director), New York City, in February 2015. It was directed by Austin Pendleton; the set designer was Walt Spangler; the costume designer was Alexis Forte; the lighting designer was Keith Parham; the original music and sound design were by Ryan Rumery; and the production stage manager was David Sugarman. The cast was as follows:

OSWALDO Victor Almanzar
POPS Stephen McKinley Henderson
LULU Rosal Colón
JUNIOR Ron Cephas Jones
DETECTIVE AUDREY O’CONNOR Elizabeth Canavan
LIEUTENANT CARO Michael Rispoli
CHURCH LADY Liza Colón-Zayas

CHARACTERS

OSWALDO

POPS

LULU

JUNIOR

DETECTIVE AUDREY O'CONNOR

LIEUTENANT CARO

CHURCH LADY

TIME and PLACE

Summer, recently. Walter “Pops” Washington’s pre-war apartment on Riverside Drive is a grand old railroad flat with chandeliers and a river view, but it’s seen better days since the death of Pops’ beloved wife just before Christmas. Once meticulously cared for, the place has devolved into a mix of beautiful fixtures, family mementos, and antique furniture competing for survival with dust, stains, garbage, leaks, and unattended junk. In the kitchen, the wallpaper peels. In the living room, the twin chaise lounge sofas are close to surrender, the scuffed hardwood floors sport small matching piles of ancient dog shit — and by the window a long-dead but still lit Christmas Tree maintains a stooping, drooped vigil. Still, the place retains its dignity and charm — and the comforting aroma of decades of pot roasts and chicken dinners lets us know we’re in a genuine old-school New York City family home. It’s a rent-controlled Palace ruled by a grieving despot King. It’s also prime Manhattan real estate that, if deregulated, would easily fetch ten times its current rent.

BETWEEN RIVERSIDE AND CRAZY

ACT ONE

Scene 1

Kitchen table. Saturday morning. Pops eats pie, sips whiskey, and drinks tea. He sits in his deceased wife's old wheelchair. The small kitchen table is beat-up, but the fork is polished silver, and his plate and teacup fine china. Pops tries very hard to ignore Oswaldo, who loudly chews almonds throughout —

OSWALDO. How's your pie? Good?

POPS. Fine.

OSWALDO. Yeah but — wanna try some of these fresh organic raw almonds from Whole Foods instead? Because my Caseworker over at the place, he a real ball breaker like how I told you, but ever since I took his suggestion and switched my breakfast to Almonds and Health Water instead of, you know — Ring Dings with Baloney and Fanta Grape —

POPS. — Oswaldo.

OSWALDO. — See: the Ring Dings and baloney and Fanta Grape, it turns out, that's what doctors and *People* magazine call "Emotional Eating" on my part — on account of I only ate that shit because those foods made me feel "safe and taken care of" back when I was a kid who was never "safe or taken care of." But now, I'm a adult, right? So I don't gotta eat like that no more, and I can take care of myself by getting all fit and diesel like how I'm doing from eating these almonds and making other healthful choices like

I been making. And so, I'm not trying to get all up in your business, but maybe that's also the reason you always be eating pie — because of, like, you got Emotionalisms — ya know?

POPS. Emotionalisms.

OSWALDO. I know — it sounded funny at first to me too — but Emotionalisms is real, and pie — don't take this wrong, but they say Pie is like poison.

POPS. Pie ain't like poison, Oswaldo — pie is like pie!

OSWALDO. I know, but they said —

POPS. Oh yeah, “They said”! “They” always saying something. Then later, they'll go and say something else that's inevitably completely ass-backwards from what they originally said! Happens all the time. For example, them almonds. Don't be surprised if we learn in the future that Almonds cause Cancer.

OSWALDO. Nah, they're good for you —

POPS. Yeah, they say that now — wait a while, see what they gonna say then. Now grab me that Cool Whip from out the fridge — Nestor didn't finish all my Cool Whip, did he?

OSWALDO. I'll check.

POPS. Motherfucker thinks I'm here to keep him in Cool Whip. *(Lulu enters. She's wearing very little.)*

LULU. Morning, Dad. *(Lulu kisses Pops' cheek; her body rubs up on him a little.)*

POPS. Morning, Lulu.

LULU. Morning, Oswaldo ... You got something on your face.

OSWALDO. What, where? *(Lulu rubs it off Oswaldo's face.)*

LULU. There. It's off.

POPS. Lulu, you don't get cold, dressed like that?

LULU. Oh I'm very warm-blooded — I can't even sleep with a sheet.

POPS. How about a little robe then, something?

LULU. In the summertime?!

OSWALDO. Cool Whip's gone —

LULU. Oh, was that yours, Dad?! *(Lulu bends over the fridge, exposing herself further as she searches —)*

POPS. Oh good Lord, “Full moon rising”! Lulu, mind your hind-quarters — please! *(Lulu retrieves some pudding.)*

LULU. Butterscotch swirl! Did you say something, Dad?

POPS. Nah, never mind. You walk the dog, Oswaldo?

LULU. Oh — I can go walk him right now, Dad!

POPS. Good. Thank you. Put some pants on though.

LULU. Oh I wouldn't go out like this, Dad! You want something from the store?

POPS. Just some cookies and juice for when that damn Church Lady come. Why she don't get the hint nobody wants her around here?

LULU. Dad! ... Oh, wait — Dad? I just realized I can't actually go to the store right now — when's the Church Lady coming?

POPS. Ah, don't worry about it. Just be home on time for supper. We having Shrimps and my special Veal you like.

LULU. Oh my God for real, Dad?!

POPS. Yes, now please, go walk the damn dog.

LULU. Oh — I'll walk him right now! Shrimps and Veal! (*Lulu kisses Pops on the cheek, rubs up against him a little, and exits.*)

POPS. ... Oswaldo?

OSWALDO. Yeah, Dad?

POPS. Why she call me "Dad" all the time? I ain't her dad.

OSWALDO. It's like, you know, she very fond of you. Like a term of respect. You ain't my dad either, but I still call you Dad.

POPS. She ain't right that girl.

OSWALDO. She a nice girl, Dad.

POPS. She may be nice, and she look good, but I fear the girl is retarded.

OSWALDO. ... Oh snap, hold up. This guy in the *Post*, I know him!

POPS. Let me see that ... Umm-hmm, just what I thought!

OSWALDO. What?

POPS. Oswaldo: three mornings out of five, you start up with "Oh I know this dude in the paper."

OSWALDO. But I know a lot of peoples —

POPS. — Yeah, but do you know any people who ain't criminals, Oswaldo?! Cuz it's never the guy who rescued the puppy that you know. Or the brother saved a baby from a burnin' building. But any motherfucker perpetrates a felony and ends up in the *New York Post* — that's always the motherfucker you know!

OSWALDO. I'm trying to meet new peoples, Dad. I joined the Facebook — Matchbox.com — you heard of them? From the computer?

POPS. Just don't bring none of your old compadres around here is all's I'm saying.

OSWALDO. You're right, no doubt. And, I mean — thank you — because I really appreciate you let me stay here, Dad. And I'm gonna start paying rent real soon —

POPS. You my son's friend and a guest in my home. Guests don't pay no rent.

OSWALDO. I just wanna help —

POPS. I don't need no help! Guests don't pay no rent — ya hear?! You a guest. Period.

OSWALDO. Yeah, I feel you on that, and thank you — but also, um, I mean, I been feeling something else for a while now, but not, like, revealing it? But I feel it, ya know? It's like, a feeling?

POPS. What feeling?

OSWALDO. Well. I mean truthfully: These morning times with you, in the kitchen here, just chilling, you and me, it's like most definitely my favorite part of the day.

POPS. Cuz you a morning person.

OSWALDO. Nah, but I ain't, that's the thing. Mornings and me, we don't agree — I mean historically. Even when I was locked up, they knew, don't communicate with me till after lunch. But here — I like mornings here — cuz, you know, cuz I enjoy spending time with you.

POPS. Well, me too —

OSWALDO. — Yeah but see, my feeling I was referring to before — is maybe you're just being nice to me cuz you feel like you got no choice, cuz, like, you know, you a gentleman — but, maybe in reality, you wish I wasn't here because I annoy you sometimes, which is why, like, you always just refer to me as, you know, a guest, and actually, my Caseworker, he think I proly annoy you all the times — and if that's the truth, I could leave like today, for real, cuz I respect you too much, Dad, to be annoying you in this your place of residence — I ain't down with dat, you know? So I wanna know whatchu think about that, I mean — if that's okay, I wanna know if my feelings about your feelings are the actual feelings that's happening, and also whatchu think about that, like, honestly, so — like — whatchu think about that?

POPS. — Hold up! You hear that?!

OSWALDO. What?

POPS. That scratching on some tin sound! That's the fuckin' dog messin' with some take-out again!

OSWALDO. I'll go get him.

POPS. That ain't the point! The point is: Lulu, she juss said she gonna take the fuckin' dog with her, right?!

OSWALDO. Yeah?

POPS. Then the fool leaves without the dog! What kinda sense is that?!

OSWALDO. I'll go see what the dog be up to.

POPS. Nah. Fuck that dog. Let him choke on a chicken wing. I don't know what Junior was thinking bringing that little sonuvabitch here.

OSWALDO. I think it's cuz someone told him to get you a dog.

POPS. For what?

OSWALDO. Cuz I mean after your wife passed.

POPS. Shit — I ain't a child need to be occupied by no dog. Especially that dog. You ever notice the way he look at you, that dog? He a little bad-intent motherfucker is what he is.

OSWALDO. He cute though.

POPS. Oh, he think he cute — vain little motherfucker. Now, do me a favor, check the fridge, I think I got me a sticky bun back behind the Heinz ketchup there. (*Junior enters, dragging in a very large box and holding a large manila envelope.*) Well, look who the mule kicked in!

JUNIOR. This was posted on the door, from the Landlord again.

POPS. Where you been at all night, Junior?

JUNIOR. I was here all night, just got in late and left early.

POPS. If you gonna be out all night, call.

JUNIOR. I wasn't out all night, Pop.

POPS. And how I'm supposed to know that if you don't call?

JUNIOR. But I wasn't out all night.

POPS. So you say.

JUNIOR. Oswaldo, did I come home last night and we played knock rummy and ordered Pay-Per-View with Lulu — or not?

OSWALDO. It's true, Dad. We ordered that Denzel movie that looks like it's good but it ain't?

POPS. Hope you left five-ninety-five plus tax on the cable box, Junior — “Pay-Per-View” don't mean I pay and you view.

JUNIOR. It's ten A.M., Pops, why you drinking?

POPS. Oswaldo wanted a drink, so I had one with him.

JUNIOR. Oswaldo's clean and sober, Pop — and why you using Momma's good china and the Sterling Silver — that's worth money!

POPS. Hear that, Oswaldo? He got the whole joint cased, appraised, and ready to move the moment I expire. Doncha'!

JUNIOR. Oswaldo, I thought you was heading up to the Bronx this morning?

OSWALDO. I was yeah, but then I thought maybe I'd maybe hold off on dat a while if dass okay?

JUNIOR. Right — so the phrase “Easy Does It — But Do It” — that means what to you?

OSWALDO. ... Means I should go to the Bronx and face my shit?

BETWEEN RIVERSIDE AND CRAZY

by Stephen Adly Guirgis

WINNER OF THE 2015 PULITZER PRIZE

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Ex-cop and recent widower Walter “Pops” Washington and his newly paroled son Junior have spent a lifetime living between Riverside and crazy. But now, the NYPD is demanding his signature to close an outstanding lawsuit, the landlord wants him out, the liquor store is closed — and the church won’t leave him alone. When the struggle to keep one of New York City’s last great rent-stabilized apartments collides with old wounds, sketchy new houseguests, and a final ultimatum, it seems that the old days may be dead and gone.

“... somewhere south of cozy and north of dangerous, west of sitcom and due east of tragedy ... a dizzying and exciting place to be. ... Blurring lines between the sacred and profane has always been a specialty of Mr. Guirgis ... fresh and startling ... RIVERSIDE traffics in paradoxes, which is to say it deals with the walking contradictions that are human beings. ... Mr. Guirgis has a splendid ear for these various languages of deception.”
—The New York Times

“You can’t always believe your eyes or ears during Stephen Adly Guirgis’ vivid group portrait, BETWEEN RIVERSIDE AND CRAZY. [Guirgis’] dialogue is believable and lived-in.”

—New York Daily News

“... wonderful ... a genuine original, one that deserves to be seen by anyone hungry for a smart, exuberantly funny urban dramedy with a spirit as shrewd and forgiving as its motor-mouth language is wild and lush.”

—Newsday

“[A] love/hate song to this impossible town and its outlandish citizenry. ... Everyone’s bound to be captivated by Guirgis’s loudmouthed locals ... [and] warm, rich dialect that comes right off the city streets.”

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“RIVERSIDE explores, with both street-smart, sometimes-profane wit and disarming tenderness, the different ways in which we cling to, reject and exploit faith. Never one to settle for simple answers or snarky observations, Guirgis portrays his characters, and their twisting journeys, with humor and compassion.”

—USA Today

Also by Stephen Adly Guirgis

JESUS HOPPED THE ‘A’ TRAIN
THE MOTHERFUCKER WITH

THE HAT

OUR LADY OF 121ST STREET

and others

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