

(Printed with the demonstration version of Fade In)

Nubia?

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First Draft

Contact information

Plotline:

Sam and her all-female team are currently working on a documentary about excavations done in Ancient Nubia and the controversy around old excavations and the media surrounding Pharaohs and their racial identity.

Characters:

- Sam, the director; is fascinated with the current pop culture conversations surrounding race and Pharaohs and decides to do a documentary with a diverse excavation team that will give her and her audience more insight into this controversial conversation.
- Georgie: has worked with Sam numerous times and is a major feminist and a proud supporter of the all men suck movement.
- Stephanie is a production assistant who is just trying to lay low.
- Richard or Dick, the lead on this project and the main contact person- plans on bringing in a group of good old boys, before Sam threatens to cancel the whole production and he somehow finds 3 other people who are “diverse” to contribute.
- Greg, Richard’s right hand. will never actually lead his own team because he is inherently racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, and everything else; says the worst stuff.
- Aya Salah is a young woman, but the men pronounce it On-ya; a POC woman whose parents immigrated from Old Nubia to America, who worked on this excavation; she is the most honest and dead on the inside.
- Jackson, the young man a couple of years younger than Aya, also worked on the excavation. Dick brings him on convinced that he is gay. He is not. He is in love with Aya.

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ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

WE OPEN on the director, Sam (39), sitting in a chair in front of the camera. We see Stephanie (23), standing off to the side with holding a large microphone above Sam's head. And we know that Georgie (37), is behind the camera.

SAM
Are you recording?

Georgie nods the camera yes

SAM
Good. Georgie ask me the question.

Georgie shakes the camera no.

SAM
Georgie! Ugh! Fine. Stephanie ask me the question.

STEPHANIE
I can't!

SAM
You can!

STEPHANIE
But I'm just a production assistant.

SAM
Yes. And I have an stubborn camera woman who refuses to have her own voice recorded. So that means its you.

STEPHANIE
Uhhhhh-

SAM
Do you know the question?

STEPHANIE
Yes.

SAM
Great! So ask me.

STEPHANIE

Okay! So, Samantha-

SAM

I only go by Sam. Never call me that again.

STEPHANIE

Okay Sam!

SAM

Now ask me the damn question!

STEPHANIE

Oh, right. Um...sorry. Why did you choose to do this documentary about Ancient Nubia and discovering the cultural, ethnic, and racial identities?

SAM

Well I found that an increasing number of the population, myself included, is confused about what the Pharaohs of Ancient Egypt looked like. As I know we are aware, but a lot of our history has been white washed. And it is important to me that we restore these great leaders true identities to them! Which is why I have asked a very diverse excavation team here today to talk about their discoveries with Ancient Nubia! How was that?

STEPHANIE

Great!

Georgie nods the camera yes.

SAM

Wonderful! Now how long before Richard and his team get here?

STEPHANIE

Any minute now!

SAM

Good! I am ready to be done with this project!

STEPHANIE

May I ask why?

Georgie shakes the camera no.

SAM

Working with someone like Richard can be hard.

STEPHANIE

What do you mean?

SAM

Well...

Georgie shakes the camera no.

STEPHANIE

Like he is a diva?

SAM

In some kind of sense. You know, I think I am going to take some time to my self before they get here. Stephanie come and get me when they show up. Okay?

STEPHANIE

Okay!

Sam walks offstage.

STEPHANIE

What does she mean about Richard?

GEORGIE

He's a straight, white, old man.

STEPHANIE

I still don't understand.

GEORGIE

Sam asked him to bring his diverse team so that why we could just get to know them a little before filming started. He brought four other white guys and claimed diversity because, one was 20, one was Italian, and one was from the south.

STEPHANIE

Oh.

GEORGIE

Yeah. Not to mention his right hand, Greg, is pretty awful.

STEPHANIE

What do you mean?

GEORGIE

You'll see.

Richard enters with Greg.

RICHARD

Ah, Geogrie! So glad to see you again!

GEORGIE

You too Richard/and how are you doing? Stephanie go get Sam.

RICHARD

Please call me-

GREG

George! How's it going. And Stephanie?

GEORGIE

I will only call you Richard and my name is Georgie, not George. Stephanie is underage, so leave her alone.

GREG

Coulda fooled me with how you dress.

RICHARD

No, I insist! Everyone calls me-

Stephanie enters with Sam

SAM

Richard! Greg! How are you both?

RICHARD

I'm/really doing great Samantha.

GREG

Good. I'm/doing good! Although

SAM

Please Richard call me Sam/I insist!

RICHARD

Well only if you call me*

GREG

Who is that Stephanie/girl?

SAM

I will never call you that, Richard!

GEORGIE

Greg, I told you Stephanie is underage.

RICHARD

*dick

STEPHANIE

No I'm/not.

RICHARD

Please Samantha, all of my friends call me/dick.

GREG

So you're not underage?

SAM
I will not be calling you that. It is unprofessional.

STEPHANIE
No I am not.

RICHARD
Well I will not be calling you Sam then.

GREG
Then how old are you?

SAM
Please, just call me Sam.

GEORGIE
Not old enough.

RICHARD
Why should I call you Sam, when you won't call me dick?

GREG
Come on. How old?

SAM
Well-

GEORGIE
Leave her alone.

RICHARD
Well, anyways who would do that to a girl?

STEPHANIE
Young.

SAM
What do you mean by that?

GREG
Young? That's all I get.

RICHARD
Name a girl Sam.

GEORGIE
Stop it Greg!

SAM
Huh?

STEPHANIE
Yeah. Just young.

RICHARD

Well it just feels really cruel to name a girl Sam. That's all Samantha.

GREG

Come on. You can tell daddy Greg how-

SAM

Oh my God! I changed my name! I legally changed my name to Sam! My birth certificate says Sam! My driver's license says Sam! Every single fucking legal document I own says Sam. So just call me Sam! Got it?

RICHARD

Okay. Sorry, Sam.

GREG

Man, woman on their period. So angry.

SAM

I'm going to take a smoke break.

RICHARD

But we just got here.

STEPHANIE

I think we should give her a minute.

GEORGIE

When does the rest of your team get here?

RICHARD

Oh they should be here any minute now.

GEORGIE

Good.

GREG

You must also be on your period.

GEORGIE

And you must be asking for a black eye the way you keep talking.

GREG

Bring it on little lady!

GEORGIE

I thought you men had a code about not hitting woman.

GREG

Good thing you're not a real woman.

Aya and Jackson enter.

GEORGIE

Really?

GREG

What real woman is named Georgie?

GEORGIE

Well this one you/asshole!

Georgie lunges at Greg, and knocks him down but before she has a chance too, Aya and Stephanie pull her off of him.

STEPHANIE

Geogrie you can't hit him. We could get sued! And that would piss off Sam even more!

GEORGIE

Just one hit! That's all I need to show him who the fuck the real girl is around here!

GREG

Keep that shit up-

AYA

And I will have to report you to HR again and you will be suspended.

GREG

Aya.

AYA

Greg.

JACKSON

Aya that was so incredible of you.

STEPHANIE

I'm so sorry, but who are you?

AYA

Oh, I'm Aya Salah. I worked on this exacation.

GEORGIE

And you didn't kill him.

AYA

Came pretty close a few times, but sadly no.

Huh.
GEORGIE

And I'm Jackson Smith.
JACKSON

Nice to meet you.
STEPHANIE

Richard I thought we said we wanted more diversity from your team?
GEORGIE

Oh yes, well, not that you can tell just by looking at him, but Jackson is gay.
RICHARD

I'm wh-
JACKSON

Yup he's gay. Been gay his whole life.
RICHARD

I always had a feeling.
GREG

Oh you've got to be fucking kidding me.
AYA

Really Richard? Really?
GEORGIE

What?
RICHARD

You expect us to believe that he is gay?
GEORGIE

Well yes. You know it's not politically correct to assume someone's sexuality.
RICHARD

Uh-huh.
GEORGIE

Sam enters.

Sorry that I needed to step out. It got to hot in here.
SAM

Hot flashes.
GREG

What?

AYA

GREG

You know period systems. You would get them all the time back when we-

AYA

If you say another word I will punch you again.

GREG

silence

AYA

Good.

SAM

Hi I'm sorry I don't think we've met. I'm Sam/and I'm the director of this project.

GREG

Samantha.

AYA

Hi I'm Aya. I was apart of the excavation team.

JACKSON

Did I tell you that you look pretty today Aya?

AYA

Yes. Four times.

JACKSON

Good. Just checking.

SAM

Was?

AYA

Oh, yes I-

RICHARD

And this is gay Jackson.

SAM

Gay Jackson?

RICHARD

Yes. He is gay. Right Jackson?

JACKSON

I..uh...I..ye...n...I-

GEORGIE

He's not gay.

RICHARD

Don't be ridiculous Geogrie of course he's gay! Right Jackson?

JACKSON

I...I....I-

SAM

Jackson are you gay, yes or no?

JACKSON

N...yes. Yes. Yes I am gay.

SAM

Okay then.

GEORGIE

What? It's obvious he's not gay!

SAM

We have no way to prove that so, as long as he says he's gay then there is nothing else we can do.

GEORGIE

You've got to be kidding me.

SAM

And I believe we are waiting on more person?

STEPHANIE

Uhhh...it looks like a Savannah?

RICHARD

Oh yes! My dear friend Sav! She should be here soon.

GREG

Sav? Who the hell is Sav?

RICHARD

You know? The other member of our excavation team?

GREG

No I don't know, I thought that Aya was the only pu-

AYA

Watch it Greg.

GREG

Child-bearing one on our team.

JACKSON

Yeah, I don't remember a Sav.

AYA

Sav...Sav...Sav...Do you mean Savannah the mues-

RICHARD

A valued member of our team!

JACKSON

Aya you are so intelligent.

GREG

Oh! Yeah! Valued team member.

GEORGIE

Yeah. Okay.

Richard gets a phone call.

RICHARD

Yes...Oh Sav, good to hear from you...yes...oh no...we were really counting on you Sav...well then see you soon...

Richard hangs up the phone.

SAM

I assume that was Savannah.

RICHARD

Ah! Yes! My good dear old friend, Sav!

GREG

I thought I was your oldest friend?

RICHARD

Of course you are! But Sav is right up there.

GREG

No she isn't! You don't even-

RICHARD

Anyways poor Sav has the flu and can't make it! How awful!

GEORGIE

Uh huh.

RICHARD

What a shame.

GEORGIE

Yeah. Real shame.

SAM
Georgie cut it out.

GEORGIE
What? Never mind.

SAM
Well anyways we should get started. So this is the diverse team you brought?

RICHARD
Yes! Aya is ethnically Nubian.

AYA
My parents are immigrants who moved from Nubia to America.

SAM
Oh.

RICHARD
Jackson is gay, right Jackson?

JACKSON
Yeah. Gay. So gay. Like so totally-

GEORGIE
We get it. You're gay.

RICHARD
And Greg over there is Italian.

GEORGIE
Is this a joke?

SAM
Italian?

GREG
Yes.

SAM
Like from Italy?

GREG
No. Well. I'm from Jersey. But my great great great uncle moved here from Sicily.

GEORGIE
Oh my God.

RICHARD
And I am a normal all American guy!

GEORGIE
Are we pranked right now?

SAM
Geogrie stop it!

GEORGIE
I'm so serious right now!

SAM
As am I! What about Savannah?

RICHARD
Who?

GEORGIE
This keeps getting better.

SAM
Savannah. The team member who just canceled?

RICHARD
Oh, yes! She is a woman.

AYA
He did not just say that.

GEORGIE
No he did.

RICHARD
Oh and she's deaf!

GEORGIE
Oh my God it got worse.

AYA
So much worse.

JACKSON
Aya I think I love you.

AYA
What did you say Jackson?

JACKSON
Aya I think you know her.

AYA
I do.

SAM
You had a deaf woman be a member of your excavation team?

RICHARD

Yes.

AYA

And he keeps going.

GEORGIE

I don't think he will ever come back from this one.

AYA

You'd be surprised.

GEORGIE

Really?

AYA

Yes. White straight men get away anything and everything. It's ridiculous.

GEORGIE

Eh. Same thing in film.

AYA

So I've heard. The difference is film is much more consumed world wide by the mass population. Archaeology isn't. So while the film and TV and even theater industries get to live out loud and proud on the internet. We are still in the dark ages. Most excavations are hard to fund. And even if they are funded, odds are its by a man or a male dominated team going to excavate. So a lot of the woman, people of color, LGBTQIA+, and the disabled comminutes suffer quietly.

GEORGIE

Damn. That must be tough.

AYA

It is. Imagine working with Greg everyday and constantly hearing his mouth.

GEORGIE

He'd be dead.

AYA

He got close a few times. But really. He's being pretty tame right now.

GEORGIE

You're kidding.

AYA

Wish I was.

GEORGIE

He says worse stuff.

AYA

You have to remember that we excavated a site in Old Nubia. Most people there do not speak English. And even then there were no recording equipment around to catch him in the act. We were decently isolated from anyone who would stop him.

GEORGIE

I'm so sorry.

AYA

Yeah. He's the worse. Although Richard is getting pretty high up there.

GEORGIE

You don't call him by his nickname?

AYA

Hell no. I nearly punched him the first time he told me to call him that and we never had that discussion again.

GEORGIE

Huh. So what's with Richard.

AYA

He's chasing fame. That's why we were here. Well at least me. Greg is his right hand and I am assuming that he tried to bring an all white male team, but Sam wasn't buying it was she?

GEORGIE

You catch on pretty quickly.

AYA

Yeah. So he brought me in, the youngest person on the team Jackson, so he could obviously manipulate him, and then there is Savannah.

GEORGIE

Who is Savannah?

AYA

She's a museum curator who specializes in all things ancient Nubia.

GEORGIE

Oh.

JACKSON

I knew you knew her. I know everything about you.

AYA

Yeah she is currently working on getting a lot of pieces back to Old Nubia for the museum collections over there.

GEORGIE

That's crazy.

AYA

Yeah. A lot of the countries around the Mediterranean don't actually have a lot of excavated items. They all have been moved to museums like the Smithsonian or the British Museum.

GEORGIE

That's horrible.

AYA

Yeah. But it's one of the best ways for the public to learn about excavations and the history behind ancient civilizations.

GEORGIE

Why?

AYA

I shouldn't say the best. I should say it's one of the easiest ways for the public to consume archaeology and what we find. What we find is important. And museums ensure that a general public can see it and learn from those civilizations. One only hopes that maybe someone will see an artifact and go home and do some digging around on Google.

GEORGIE

Really?

AYA

Yeah. Even though Google can bring up a lot of misinformation, it's a start. That's also why I am here today.

GEORGIE

Yeah. I would have never guessed you'd be one who wants to sit in front of a camera.

AYA

I really don't. But it is important to me that people hear us out and listen to what we find. Our line of work is important. No matter how messy the industry is. I just wish more people realized its importance.

GEORGIE

I wish more people understood too. Truthfully I did not know why this was such a big deal to Sam to do, but now, I get it.

AYA

Wanna hear something funny.

GEORGIE

Sure.

AYA

Savannah doesn't go by Sav.

GEORGIE

She doesn't?

AYA

Nope. But Richard kept calling her that so she cut contact with him.

GEORGIE

Then who was he on the phone with.

AYA

Probably her assistant.

GEORGIE

Really?

AYA

Yeah her assistant is also her translator.

GEORGIE

And how do you know Savannah so well?

AYA

Richard needed Savannah to look at a few of the first pieces that were originally found to help get funding to do a full excavation, and because she wouldn't talk to him, they hired me.

GEORGIE

You're kidding me.

AYA

Nope.

SAM

Okay then. Everyone sit in a chair and after Geogrie and Stephanie finish setting up we will start the interview. Sounds good?

Good to me. AYA

Great! RICHARD

Good for me good lookin. GREG

Oh my God. AYA

Yes. Good. Oh wait. I mean. Slay queen. JACKSON

Stop. GEORGIE

Seriously just stop Jackson. AYA

Sorry. JACKSON

Stephanie and Georgie finish
setting up the camera and sound.

Stephanie, are we ready? SAM

Yes ma'am! STEPHANIE

Good. Georgie? SAM

Geogrie nods the camera yes.

Great! So let's get started shall we? SAM

SCENE TWO

*We are in the same place where
we left off at in Scene 1, but
now we are starting the
interview portion.*

SAM
For starters I would like to thank you Richard Grey for
joining us today and for bringing along your team.

RICHARD

No thank you, Saman...Sam for having my team and I join you for this discussion.

AYA

Please remind me Sam what the topic is again?

SAM

Oh, the intersection of culture, ethnetic, and racial identities in Ancient Nubia.

AYA

Oh shit.

JACKSON

Uh oh.

GREG

Good! Because I have a lot of thoughts about this topic.

AYA

No you really don't Greg.

GREG

You don't tell me woman.

AYA

Keep it up while the cameras are going. Let the whole world find out exactly who you are!

GREG

silence

AYA

That's what I thought.

RICHARD

Yes. As you can see this topic is very...current and um... important to many archaeologist today.

SAM

I can...tell. So maybe let's start with generative question that seems to be plaguing the public right now. Is Cleopatra black?

AYA

silent

RICHARD

silent

JACKSON

silent

GREG

I am so glad you asked Sam. I have a lot thoughts surrounding this conversation. For starters Cleopatra was-

AYA

Say another word and you will not be able to speak for 6 to 8 weeks when I'm through with you.

GREG

silence

AYA

Good.

JACKSON

I think it is a shame that Cleopatra keeps getting deduced to her looks. We should be focusing on who she was and what she did, not what she looked like.

RICHARD

I agree with gay Jackson!

AYA

Oh my God. Anyways. This is a really great starting question. You see the Cleopatra racial conversation ties in a lot of Ancient Nubian Pheorhs and their own ethnic, cultural, and even racial identities.

GREG

It does?

AYA

What did I tell you about speaking?

GREG

silence

RICHARD

You are going to edit this footage, correct?

SAM

Most definitely.

RICHARD

Good.

AYA

As I was saying. A lot of people who are conflicted about this topic are not even aware of how large scale it is. And while I totally understand why my colleague, Jackson.

JACKSON

You amaze me.

AYA

Would assume that it is better to leave race out of conversations like these. It is important to talk about the politics and cultural significance of the racial identity of Pheorohs such as Cleopatra.

SAM

What do you mean?

AYA

Well-

RICHARD

Aya, if I may take over for you.

AYA

Sure. Go right ahead.

RICHARD

When following archaeology and race is it rather complicated.

AYA

To say the least.

RICHARD

For starters with both Ancient Nubia and Ancient Egypt there is a constant question surrounding what the culture was like and what cultures, countries, and ethnicities get to claim that they descend from members of those Ancient populations.

AYA

This especially gets tricky as we think about who were some of the first excavationist for these ancient populations: white western men. And they were not able to remove their basis when conducting these excavations, so a lot of the time they would assume that these populations had pale skin, due to the level of intelligence and how advanced they were. Because it was simply impossible for them to imagine to not be a white person who would have been able to do all that they did.

JACKSON

Aya is so smart and to add on to her point, this stuff plays a role in race science. Which is incredibly dangerous and prejudice science practice that is now becoming more increasingly unpopular.

RICHARD

You see race science wasn't actually real. A lot of men like Samuel Norton, would measure skulls and would claim that you could prove race by the size, shape, and look of a skull.

JACKSON

In case you haven't already picked up on, but this is extremely problematic. A lot of people were incorrectly racially typed, and even more so race is one of the hardest things to prove as an archaeologist.

SAM

So basically race is extremely hard to prove in archaeology, and race science was just making false claims to confirm their own ideas.

AYA

Yeah pretty much.

SAM

But you mentioned something about politics and how it affects countries now?

AYA

Yeah. So when looking at Pheorohs where we don't know what their ethnic heritage is or even their lineage, a lot of countries will fit over whether or not that Pheoroh is from their country or not.

SAM

Oh.

JACKSON

Yeah and then get more challenging for archaeologist. Because most of us just want to find out the truth. While a lot of other people are looking for confirmation bias.

SAM

Greg, you've been awfully silent. What do you think about all of this?

GREG

I believe in race science.

AYA

Here we go again.

RICHARD

Let me say his piece.

GREG

I think that Morton had it right and that we are able to tell one's race based off of their bone structure. The best bone for this is the skull.

AYA

But what he fails to know is the numerous amounts of studies and archaeologists that have come out and said that Morton was wrong.

GREG

I've looked at all the evidence and I believe in race science. Partly because, how will we ever figure out the race of people without it.

AYA

Maybe we don't need to know the race.

GREG

But race is a major part of identity and status and culture. How can you say that?

AYA

You talk about how important race is. But you forget to mention that the emphasis we put on race, may not have been the same for ancient civilizations. There is so much to unpack and understand about race and how a civilization treats it, but these are answers we will never have. And that's okay.

GREG

No it's not!

AYA

I wish people would understand that without actual photographs or verbatim text, race is something that is near impossible for archeology to figure out.

GREG

Near impossible, so there is still a chance.

AYA

If we have it on record!

SAM

Okay. How about we move on. What is the cultural or ethnic identity of Ancient Nubia?

AYA

That is a loaded question.

SAM

Really?

JACKSON

Yes.

SAM

Why?

RICHARD

Well you have to take into account where Ancient Nubia was and what it was exactly. Nubia is basically right below Egypt. Their neighborhoods. But at certain times, Nubia was apart of Egypt and the Egyptian Pharos were even Nubian.

AYA

They are best known as the 'black Pharos'.

SAM

Wait. So we do know the racial identity of the Pharos.

GREG

Some of them. Not all. It just depends on which ones we have been able to find the bodies of and excavate and also what we know from record.

SAM

What is record?

JACKSON

Record is written, drawing, or photograph that gives us a first account of what was going on. A great example of record would be the cave paintings from Neolithic times. Or scrolls from Ancient Egyptian or Ancient Greek or Ancient Roman times.

GREG

Anyways. Figuring out cultural and ethnic identity is best done through migration patterns, which can be figured out in a lot of different ways, but one of the best ones being excavation of graves.

AYA

The excavation of graves is one of best finds an archaeologist could ask for. A grave gives you a lot to work with and lot of insight to a civilization. From what they value, how hard it is to be an immigrant, to social status and wealth, and even gender stances.

SAM

Wow.

RICHARD

During this last excavation we were taking a look at 24 unites within this tomb chamber. All varying between middle class and upper class elites. We took out the bodies and had them tested to see when their bones were alive.

JACKSON

And interestingly enough we did not find any correlation between Egyptian colonialism in Nubia and how it might have affected the birth of the Napatan State. Instead we found that the Egyptians and Nubians worked together to create a culture and community where they could not only coexist but also interchangeably mingle and marry.

SAM

Wow.

AYA

So to answer your question in simple terms, towards the end of the Egyptian Pharaohs reign, during New Kingdom, a lot of Egyptians fled to Nubia and the two different people found a way to make it work and lived together, pretty peacefully.

SAM

This is all really fascinating.

RICHARD

Thank you. My team did really well. We all worked extremely hard on this so I am glad that you are interested.

SAM

I really had no idea what I was getting into with this project, but I am glad that I got involved!

JACKSON

Do you have any other questions for us?

SAM

No. Not right now. I think we will call it good for today and I will schedule a time to do this again with you all. I really need to go and do some more research before we continue.

AYA

Okay then I'm out guys. Thanks for having us Sam.

JACKSON

Me too! I'm coming with you Aya.

Aya and Jackson exit.

GEORGIE

You know he's in love with her?

SAM

Oh everyone knows.

GREG

Well goodbye ladies. And Stephanie how old are you again?

STEPHANIE
Too young. Like illegally young

GREG
Never mind.

Greg exits.

RICHARD
Thanks for having us Sam. You have no idea how much it means to us to be able to share our work with the world.

SAM
Of course! I am glad I learned something new! I'll be in touch.

Richard exits.

STEPHANIE
That was a shit show right?

SAM
Oh 100%!

GEORGIE
That was the hardest set I have ever worked on.

SAM
Really rough start.

GEORGIE
Really really rough start.

SAM
But somehow worth it.

GEORGIE
I agree.

STEPHANIE
Huh. Good to know. Are all sets like this?

GEORGIE
In some ways.

SAM
But not in others.

STEPHANIE
Huh. Okay.

Blackout. Curtain.

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