

WHITE
by Stephen Gnojewski

Cast of Characters

LADY

MADAME

MISTRESS

Setting

An outdoor gazebo of an exclusive country club.

Time

Now

SETTING: A white-washed gazebo with a table set for afternoon tea. A white, porcelain tea set and an assortment of powdered cakes and pastries are elegantly arranged upon a white tablecloth that drapes to the floor and spreads across the entire stage.

AT RISE: LADY, MISTRESS and MADAME are seated at the table. LADY, the eldest, is seated in the center. She is distinguished by a towering white bouffant and the fur of a dead, white animal draped around her neck. She wields an animated, white fan. MISTRESS is seated to the right of LADY and twirls a white-laced parasol. She is slightly younger than her companions and therefore finds it entirely appropriate to wear white ribbons and bows in her curly, white hair. MADAME, by far the largest of the three, sits directly across from MISTRESS. She flaunts a gaudy, white hat with white feathers and frequently indulges in the pastries. All three women wear white gloves, white pearls, and powdered white faces. All three women are very old and very ugly.

MADAME

Oooo...

MISTRESS

Ohhhh...

LADY

Oh my dear.

(Slight Pause.)

LADY

Well, I never...

MISTRESS

Heaven forbid...

LADY

I would never be caught dead...

MADAME

Never.

MISTRESS

Never.

MADAME

No.

No. MISTRESS

Never. LADY

(All three chuckle to themselves.)

Well, ever since her operation... MADAME

How distressing... MISTRESS

How unfortunate... LADY

Ever since her operation she's never been quite the – MADAME

Never. LADY

Never. MISTRESS

No. MADAME

No. MISTRESS

Never. LADY

(Slight Pause.)

Such a pity... LADY

A pity... MISTRESS

A poor... MADAME

Poor...

MISTRESS

Pity.

LADY

(All three chuckle to themselves.)

More tea?

LADY

Why certainly.

MISTRESS

If you insist.

MADAME

(LADY pours MISTRESS and MADAME a cup of tea.
MADAME samples a pastry.)

Still the same. After all these years.

LADY

Like yesterday.

MADAME

Only yesterday.

MISTRESS

When we were...

MADAME

When we were...

MISTRESS

Yes.

LADY

(Fanning in euphoria.)

And do you recall all of those colorful characters?

MADAME

Why, who could forget the farmer?

MISTRESS

The farmer.

And his silver-haired wife. MADAME

The charcoal stallion. MISTRESS

And the blue-eyed Shepherd boy. LADY

The blue-eyed Shepherd boy! MISTRESS & MADAME

(All three chuckle to themselves.)

And that amber valley. LADY

With its purple summit. MISTRESS

Just slightly kissed with the blush from an amethyst mist. LADY

And the clouds changing from scarlet to gold. MADAME

From saffron to sapphire. MISTRESS

Paradise. LADY

(Slight pause.)

Oh, those checkered years. LADY

Like yesterday. MADAME

Only yesterday. MISTRESS

(All three sigh.)

Cream? LADY

Why certainly. MADAME

If you insist. MISTRESS

(LADY pours some cream into MISTRESS'S and MADAME'S
teacups. They stir.)

Oooo...Ohhh...Oh, my dear. Don't look now... LADY

(MISTRESS and MADAME both look.)

...but the Governor's daughter... LADY

The Governor's daughter? MISTRESS

The Governor's daughter has just arrived. LADY

Where? MADAME

(Discreetly whispering.)
Across from the Reverend...and that very young man. LADY

How glamorous... MISTRESS
(Looking at the Governor's daughter.)

How curious... MADAME
(Looking at the Minister and the very young man.)

(Slight pause.)

Sugar? LADY

MADAME

Why certainly.

MISTRESS

If you insist.

(LADY spoons some sugar into MADAME'S and MISTRESS'S
teacups. They stir.)

LADY

Now of course, this is strictly between us...

MADAME

Well, of course.

MISTRESS

Of course.

MADAME

Most certainly.

MISTRESS

Of course.

(LADY powders her nose. MADAME eats another pastry.)

LADY

But it seems the Governor's daughter has recently been engaged.

MISTRESS

Engaged?

MADAME

How enchanting!

MISTRESS

How romantic!

LADY

It seems the Governor's daughter has recently been engaged to a Gentleman...

MADAME

A Gentleman.

...a Gentleman of color.	LADY
Of color?	MISTRESS
Oooo...	MADAME
Ohhh...	MISTRESS
Oh my dear.	MADAME
(Slight pause.)	
Not that there is anything wrong with that.	LADY
Nothing.	MISTRESS
Never.	MADAME
No.	MISTRESS
No.	MADAME
Never.	LADY
(Slight pause.)	
But the family.	LADY
The family.	MISTRESS
The distinguished family.	MADAME

An invitation...	LADY
An open invitation.	MISTRESS
To controversy.	LADY
To scandal.	MADAME
(Slight pause.)	
Such a pity.	LADY
A pity.	MISTRESS
A poor.	MADAME
Poor.	MISTRESS
Pity.	LADY
(MADAME and MISTRESS both take a sip of tea. LADY fans herself.)	
Love and marriage: A challenging combination.	LADY
True.	MADAME
Love is blind.	MISTRESS
And marriage mute.	LADY
(All three chuckle to themselves.)	

Like yesterday.

MADAME

Only yesterday.

MISTRESS

(Madame devours another pastry.)

MADAME

(With her mouth full.)

At the risk of appearing impolite...

LADY

Well, I never...

MISTRESS

Heaven forbid.

(MADAME quickly chews and swallows.)

MADAME

At the risk of appearing impolite, I have a rather sensitive matter to address.

LADY

How delicious.

MISTRESS

How delightful.

MADAME

(To LADY.)

It seems that your husband...

LADY

My husband.

MADAME

Your wealthy husband has recently been seen...

LADY

Seen?

MADAME

Spotted...

Spotted?	MISTRESS
..about the town.	MADAME
(LADY stops fanning. She continues in a casual manner that becomes increasingly faster and more frantic.)	
Well, of course.	LADY
Of course.	MISTRESS
Most certainly.	LADY
Of course.	MISTRESS
My husband...	LADY
Her husband...	MISTRESS
is always seen...	LADY
Always.	MISTRESS
...about the town.	LADY
(Slight pause.)	
Yes, of course.	MADAME
Of course.	MISTRESS
Most certainly.	LADY

MADAME

Of course. But on this particular occasion your husband was seen in the company...

MISTRESS

In the company?

MADAME

In the rather *affectionate* company...of another woman.

MISTRESS

Another woman?

MADAME

A woman, shall we say, of loose morals.

MISTRESS

Loose morals?

MADAME

A woman of loose morals.

LADY

Shall we say?

(Pause. LADY closes her fan with a flourish.)

Ridiculous! I simply refuse to listen to such rubbish? Why the nerve, the gall... Come, Mistress, let us not spoil this pleasant afternoon discussing such filth and debauchery. Let us quit this scene and retire to more suitable surroundings. Good day, Madame. I trust you will find someone else to entertain your offensive insults.

(MISTRESS doesn't move.)

Mistress. Surely, you don't wish to indulge in such shameless gossip?

MISTRESS

(To MADAME.)

Have you proof?

MADAME

Proof?

MISTRESS

Evidence. You claim...you accuse her husband, her respectable husband of a filthy infidelity, a grievous sin. So I ask you, good Madame, have you any proof?

MADAME

(Leaning into the table.)

Why, the proof, my dear, is quite simple really. As simple as black and white.

(Producing a white envelope.)

Black and white photos, that is.

LADY

Well, I never. My husband would never be caught dead—

MADAME

Never?

LADY

Never.

MISTRESS

No.

MADAME

No?

LADY

Never.

(Slight pause.)

MISTRESS

I should like to see these photos.

MADAME

Why, of course, of course, most certainly, of course. It was never my intention to keep them private.

(MADAME hands the envelope to MISTRESS. MISTRESS flips through the photos.)

MISTRESS

(Nearly fainting.)

Ooo...Ohhh...Oh my dear...!

LADY

Mistress, Mistress, master yourself. You seem somewhat pale.

MISTRESS

Pale?

MADAME

As if you had seen a ghost.

MISTRESS

A ghost?

LADY

(Fanning MISTRESS.)

Perhaps some tea...

MISTRESS

Some tea?

LADY

Perhaps a cup of tea will bring some color back to your cheeks.

MISTRESS

Some color? Some tea? Yes, some tea. Another cup of tea.

(LADY pours MISTRESS another cup of tea. MISTRESS takes a sip of tea.)

MADAME

Forgive me, if my photos seem a bit crude, but you see, I am still, how shall I say, developing my technique. All I am asking for is a little assistance really, a generous contribution, if you will, so that I might continue with my artistic ambitions.

LADY

Do not deceive yourself, Madame. I am not so green—

MADAME

Why, green, my favorite color.

MISTRESS

A green-eyed...!!

LADY

Silence. Both of you.

(Slight Pause.)

MADAME

I beg your pardon, but my silence must be earned.

MISTRESS

Why, you wicked, wicked...

MADAME

Whore? Now isn't that the pot calling the kettle black?

MISTRESS

Oh, on the contrary, Madame, it is you who are black. Void of all virtue.

LADY

Perhaps I could interest you in another cup of tea, Madame?

MADAME

No, thank you. I do believe I have already overstayed my welcome.

LADY

(Grabbing her wrist tightly.)

Nonsense. We can't have you leaving so hastily. Not when you have been so kind as to have enlightened our rather monotonous afternoon. One more cup. Just one more cup of tea, and I shall address your most indecent proposal.

MADAME

All right, if you insist, just one more cup, but then I really must bid you both a fond farewell.

LADY

Well, of course, of course, most certainly, of course.

MISTRESS

My dear, Lady, you mustn't. You mustn't let her soil our reputations.

LADY

(To MISTRESS.)

Do you think that I will be poisoned with such lies?

(To MADAME.)

That I will be bullied by your blackmail?

(LADY pours MADAME another cup of tea.)

All the lies. All the little lies I learned when I was just a child. After church. After chores. While my brothers went hunting in the woods. Sugar?

MADAME

Please.

(LADY spoons some sugar into MADAME'S teacup.)

LADY

At sewing lessons. On my mother's lap. The stitches, the stories...the secrets those women wove. Cream?

MADAME

Please.

(LADY pours some cream into MADAME'S teacup.)

LADY

And so I practiced the patterns patiently. Patching, crisscrossing, overlapping. Until the truth...I had forgotten where the thread of truth began.

(The lights gradually increase in intensity. LADY offers MADAME her teacup.)

MADAME

Thank you. You are much too generous.

(MADAME takes a large gulp of tea.)

LADY

Oh, on the contrary. For you shall never see a single cent of my family's fortune. Not one copper cent.

MADAME

Never?

LADY

Never.

MISTRESS

(Raspy.)

No.

LADY

Because between the lies...

MADAME

Yes?

LADY

Layer after layer...

MISTRESS

(Desperately clutching her throat.)

No.

LADY

Underneath it all.

MADAME

Yes.

LADY

Empty.

(Poisoned, MISTRESS collapses in her chair. MADAME looks in her teacup. Blinding, white light.)

MADAME

Empty.

(Blinding, white light. Blackout.)

END OF PLAY