

An excerpt from

SHEDDING LIGHT

a play by Rich Orloff

Characters

MARCIE SCHEINMAN, 50, Jewish

RAY FOSTER, just shy of 50, African-American

Setting

The living room of an apartment on the 29th floor of a condominium building on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. December 22, 1999.

It's almost 5 p.m. on December 22, 1999. RAY, a fifty year-old, black cable repairman, has just arrived at the Manhattan high-rise apartment of MARCIE, a Jewish woman about the same age. Shortly after Ray began his repairs, an explosion down the block plunged the building into darkness. Ray helped Marcie light candles around the apartment, and Marcie has offered him a beer.

RAY

To your health.

MARCIE

L'chiam.

RAY

That, too.

(They click bottles and drink.)

No offense, but I don't get light beer. Seems to me, if you're gonna have the beer, have the beer.

MARCIE

And when you're Jewish, you think,
half the calories, half the guilt.

RAY

Uh-huh.

MARCIE

And then you feel so good about that,
you celebrate with a piece of cheesecake.

RAY

Sounds like you've got everything worked out.

MARCIE

If only. So you like being a cable repairman?

RAY

Beats being at a desk all day.

MARCIE

I hear cable repairman get hit on a lot.

RAY

Well –

MARCIE

Not that I'm – I mean I *am* –

Marcie holds up her left hand and points to her wedding ring.

RAY

I know.

MARCIE

I'm just curious.

RAY

Everybody is.

MARCIE

So do many women hit on you?

RAY

Not as many as I thought when I took the job.

MARCIE

And what happens when they do?

RAY

I tell them I don't care how sexy they are;
they're not getting free HBO.

MARCIE

And that stops them?

RAY

Usually.

MARCIE

And the other times?

RAY

Well, I do my best to follow
the Ten Commandments.

MARCIE

All ten?

RAY

Yep.

MARCIE

That's something.

RAY

You sound surprised.

MARCIE

Most men I know pat themselves on the
back if they observe eight out of ten.

RAY

Well, I'm no saint, but I'm trying to be ten-for-ten.

MARCIE

Me, too. Of course, nobody's ever
asked me to break any of them, so
it's not that big an accomplishment.

RAY

Trust me, they're easy to break if you want to.

MARCIE

Really? How many have you broken?

RAY

I've never counted.

MARCIE

So do you go to church?

RAY

Uh-huh.

MARCIE

How often?

RAY

Every Sunday, usually once during the week.

MARCIE

Wow.

RAY

You're surprised again?

MARCIE

Well, you know, on the eleven o'clock
"Murders, Rapes and Five-Alarm Fires" show,
they never lead off with, "And today,
thousands of black men went to church."

RAY

Maybe it's not news.

MARCIE

It would be to some people.

RAY

Do you get all your images of black people
from the eleven o'clock news?

MARCIE

Of course not. I also read. Toni Morrison,
Maya Angelou, James Baldwin. Did you
read *The Fire Next Time*?

RAY

No.

MARCIE

You should. It's a great book.

RAY

What's it about?

MARCIE

Being black.

RAY

I think I know a little about that.

MARCIE

It's very power—

RAY

If you don't mind me asking,
do you *know* any black people?

MARCIE

You mean, in person?

RAY

Uh-huh.

MARCIE

Well, we just moved here about eight months ago.

RAY

From where?

MARCIE

Scarsdale.

RAY

There are no blacks in Scarsdale?

MARCIE

Not on my street. Not that I would've mind-

RAY

Hey, I -

MARCIE

I do have a couple of black neighbors here,
but I haven't gotten to know them yet.

RAY

Uh-huh.

MARCIE

I give to lots of charities which help minorities -

RAY

Look, I -

MARCIE

What do you want me to do? Next time
I'm at the health club, I should go up to
a black person and say, "Hi, I don't know
any black people. Let's have lunch."

RAY

I'm not trying to make you feel guilty.

MARCIE

You don't have to. It's genetic...
Do you think I'm a racist?

RAY

I don't know you, ma'am.

MARCIE

I mean, it's not like I never have racist thoughts, I assume everyone does, black and white. But I like to think I'm decent.

RAY

I'm sure you –

MARCIE

For three years in a row, I was in charge of my temple food drive. We sent food to black churches.

RAY

Did you take the food there?

MARCIE

No, they always came and picked it up. So do you know any Jews?

RAY

Not really.

MARCIE

And do you feel guilty about it?

RAY

Nope.

MARCIE

Can you teach me how to do that?
