

White Noise

By

Emilly Custódio

CHARACTERS:

REPORTER 1 – 30 years-old, male.

REPORTER 2 – 30 years-old, female.

JIMMY – 12 years-old

TEDDY – 12 years-old

JIM – 30 years-old

VICTORIA – 35 years-old/53 years-old.

OFFICER DAVIS – 40 years-old

KEVIN – 40 years-old.

OBSERVATION: As the listener experiences the play, their own listening device must simulate the radio the characters have found in the story, delivering the impression that even when the object is turned off, it is always listening to what the characters are saying.

PROLOGUE.

SFX. DOOR OPENING. STEPS.

53 YEAR-OLD VICTORIA ENTERS THE ROOM

WITH JIM.

VICTORIA: I never had the heart to change anything.

SFX. LOW STEPS.

JIM IS PACING AROUND IN THE ROOM

LOOKING AT TEDDY'S STUFF.

JIM: It's like we never left.

VICTORIA: I'm glad you came to visit us, Jim.

JIM: Yeah. (BEAT) Me too.

VICTORIA: How's New York?

JIM: It's alright. (BEAT) I'm lecturing at NYU.

VICTORIA: Your mother told me. Congratulations.

JIM: Thank you.

VICTORIA: And what about –

SFX. PHONE RINGING.

Oh, this is work. I need to get it. Is it OK if I leave you alone
for a few minutes?

JIM: Sure.

VICTORIA: Really?

JIM: Yes, Victoria. (SOFT LAUGH) I'll be alright. I could use the time
alone.

VICTORIA: OK. (ANSWERS PHONE) Hello?

VICTORIA LEAVES.

SFX. STEPS AND DOOR CLOSING BEHIND

HER.

JIM SIGHS AND SITS ON THE BED, PICKING UP

THE RADIO.

SFX. RADIO TUNING.

IT PLAYS A FRACTION OF THE SONG

'WATERMELON SUGAR' BY HARRY STYLES.

SFX. RADIO TUNING.

REPORTER 2: (D) As the Black Lives Matter protests continue, it is important to remember there is still a pandemic going on and we have to stay safe, so wear your masks, folks –

SFX. RADIO TUNING.

REPORTER 1: (D) After 141 days since their last game, the NBA returns tonight at Salt Lake City! Utah Jazz vs New Orleans Pelicans, who do you think is gonna win?

SFX. RADIO TUNING.

SFX. WHITE NOISE. FADES UNDER BUT
CONTINUES.

JIMMY: (D) (LOW) How old is this?

TEDDY: (D) (LOW) I have no idea...

JIM: (CLOSE) Hello?

SFX. WHITE NOISE.

TITLES.

SCENE 1.

SFX. WHITE NOISE.

SFX. RADIO TUNING.

IT PLAYS A FRACTION OF THE SONG 'I'M JUST
A KID' BY SIMPLE PLAN.

SFX. RADIO TUNING.

REPORTER 1: Brazil is the champion of the 2002 FIFA world cup!

SFX. RADIO TUNING.

REPORTER 2: As the long period of drought continues this summer, you
can never stress enough how important it is to save on water...

SFX. RADIO TUNING.

SFX. WHITE NOISE. STOPS AFTER A FEW
SECONDS AS IF SOMEONE TURNED THE
DEVICE OFF.

JIMMY: I think these are the only stations that work...

TEDDY: That's not possible...

TEDDY TURNS THE RADIO ON AGAIN.

SFX. WHITE NOISE

JIM: (D) (LOW) Hello?

TEDDY: Did you hear that?

JIMMY: No?

TEDDY: Someone was saying hello!

JIMMY: Maybe it's a ghost.

TEDDY: Ha-ha, very funny. (BEAT) Hold on...

SFX. RADIO TUNING. TEDDY BEGINS TO
CHANGE THE STATIONS AGAIN UNTIL HE
FINDS THE RIGHT CHANNEL.

JIM: (D) Hello?

SFX. THUNDER.

TEDDY: There it is! (CLOSE) Hello? Can you hear me?

JIMMY: Sweet! Let me try!

SFX. A DOOR OPENING.

TEDDY TURNS THE RADIO OFF.

VICTORIA: Alright boys, time to say goodbye.

TEDDY: But mom! It's still early!

VICTORIA: Jimmy's mom already called for him. Besides, you have to go to bed early today, mister. We leave first thing in the morning.

TEDDY: Fine...

VICTORIA: Goodnight Jimmy.

JIMMY: Goodnight, Mrs. Parker.

SFX. DOOR CLOSING

JIMMY: So, midnight in the tree house?

TEDDY: Yes! I promise.

JIMMY: Cool! I'll see you there!

TEDDY: I'll see you!

SCENE 2.

SFX. LOUD THUNDERS AND LIGHTS

FLICKERING. FADES UNDER BUT CONTINUES

THROUGHTOUT THE SCENE.

SFX. WHITE NOISE.

TEDDY: (LOW) What the hell?

JIM: (D) Hello?

TEDDY: (CLOSE) Who is this?

JIM: (D) Jim, who's there?

TEDDY: Jimmy?

JIM: (D) What?

TEDDY: How did you get through this transmission?

JIM: (D) I – who are you?

TEDDY: It's Teddy, man.

JIM: (D) Teddy?

TEDDY: Yeah!

PAUSE.

(CLOSE) (SUSPICIOUS) You're not Jimmy.

JIM: (D) Where did you find this radio?

TEDDY: In my mother's attic.

JIM: (LOW) (D) It's not possible...

TEDDY: What's not possible? (BEAT) Who are you?

JIM: (D) What day is it?

TEDDY: What? You don't know what day it is?

JIM: (D) Just answer me.

TEDDY: Can't you look at a calendar, man?

JIM: (D) Please!

TEDDY: (SIGHS) It's 1st of July.

JIM: (D) What... (BEAT) What year?

TEDDY: You don't know the year?

JIM: (D) Just tell me!

TEDDY: 2002, Jeez.

JIM: (LOW) (D) Oh my god...

TEDDY: Who are you?

PAUSE.

(CLOSE) Is this a prank? Did Jimmy put you up to this?

JIM: (D) Teddy, what time is it?

TEDDY: I'm guessing you don't have a watch either...

JIM: (D) Please.

TEDDY: (SIGHS) It's almost midnight.

JIM: (D) Teddy, you have to pay attention to what I'm about to say!

TEDDY: Is this gonna take long? I have someplace I need to be...

JIM: (D) You can't go to the treehouse!

TEDDY: (CLOSE) (LOW) What?! How do you know about that?

JIM: (D) At midnight! Don't go to the treehouse, Teddy!

TEDDY: (LOW) God, keep it down! My mom's in the other room... (CLOSE) Why not? How do you know about this?

(BEAT) And who are you?

JIM: (D) It's Jimmy!

TEDDY: (LOW) Yeah, right.

JIM: (D) I'm serious! But I'm not your Jimmy... I mean I am, but...

PAUSE.

Listen, today is July 1st.

TEDDY: I know. I just told you that.

JIM: (D) Yeah, but it's 2020!

TEDDY: Nice try.

JIM: (D) It's true!

TEDDY: You're joking. I need to go.

JIM: (D) How would I know about the tree-house?!

TEDDY: I don't know! (CLOSE) Why don't you want me to go to there?

JIM: (D) I can't tell you that.

TEDDY: Then I'm going!

JIM: (D) No!

TEDDY: Tell me why!

JIM: (D) Because you're gonna die!

PAUSE.

HEAVY-BREATHING. JIM'S CRYING.

There will be a fire. You can't go, Teddy.

TEDDY: (CLOSE) How do you know that?

JIM: (D) Because I was there! You saved me! Teddy...

PAUSE.

TEDDY: (OFF) Jimmy, are you there? Over!

JIM: (D) It won't work... I won't hear the walkie-talkie.

TEDDY: (OFF) Jimmy, answer me dude, it's important! Over!

JIM: (D) Teddy...

TEDDY: (LOW) It's midnight already... (CLOSE) I have to go!

JIM: (D) No! Teddy! Don't go! Don't try to save me!

TEDDY: I'm not saving you. I'm saving Jimmy.

JIM: (D) No!

TEDDY PUTS THE RADIO ON HIS BACKPACK.

SFX. ZIPPER AND DOOR CLOSING.

SCENE 3.

SFX. LOUD THUNDERS AND HOWLING WINDS.

FADES UNDER BUT CONTINUES THROUGHTOUT

THE SCENE.

JIM: (D) Teddy! Teddy!

PAUSE.

SFX. ZIPPER OPENING.

TEDDY: (CLOSE) I can see Jimmy up there! He's fine!

THE RADIO CONNECTION STARTS BREAKING.

There's nothing...

SFX. A VERY LOUD THUNDER AND FIRE.

JIMMY: (OFF) Somebody help me!

JIM: (D) No! Don't go Teddy!

TEDDY: I'm coming Jimmy!

JIM: (D) No!

TEDDY DROPS THE RADIO ON THE GROUND.

SFX. WHITE NOISE. FADES UNDER BUT
CONTINUES THROUGHOUT THE FOLLOWING
DIALOGUE.

TEDDY: (OFF) Are you OK? Are you hurt?

JIMMY: (COUGHS) (OFF) I'm fine.

TEDDY: (OFF) Stay here! I'll be right back!

JIMMY: (OFF) Where are you going?

TEDDY: (OFF) I'll be right back!

TEDDY PICKS UP THE RADIO AFTER A WHILE.

WHITE NOISE STOPS.

SFX. RAIN. FADES UNDER BUT CONTINUES.

TEDDY: (CLOSE) Hello? I got him out!

JIM: (D) What?

TEDDY: (CLOSE) Yes! Don't worry, everything is-

SFX. LOUD THUNDER.

SILENCE.

SCENE 4.

TV IN THE BACKGROUND.

REPORTER 2: (D) Good morning, folks. Today we start the day with the unfortunate news that a boy – Teddy Parker – passed away in the middle of the night, struck by a lightning, after saving his friend from a treehouse on fire. The other boy, James Baker, seems to be doing well considering it all. It's strange to wonder where all that unexpected weather came from...

SFX. TV BEING SWITCHED OFF.

SFX. DOOR BELL. DOOR OPENING.

VICTORIA SNIFFLES AND CLEARS HER
THROAT.

OFFICER DAVIS: Victoria Parker?

VICTORIA: Yes?

OFFICER DAVIS: I'm officer –

VICTORIA: Davis. I know.

OFFICER DAVIS: If I can't stress this enough... I'm so sorry for your
loss.

VICTORIA: Thank you. (BEAT) Can I help you with something?

OFFICER DAVIS: I believe this is Teddy's backpack?

PAUSE.

They found it amongst the debris of the tree house.

VICTORIA: (SHE TRIES TO KEEP A STIFF UPPER LIP) It is.

(SIGHS) Thank you.

OFFICER DAVIS: One more thing.

PAUSE.

SFX. LOW WHITE NOISE

We also found this. It was near the place where we
found... Teddy.

VICTORIA: A radio?

OFFICER DAVIS: You don't recognize it?

VICTORIA: I do. (BEAT) Sorry it's been a long day. I haven't slept...

(SNIFFLES) I'm sorry.

OFFICER DAVIS: I can't even imagine what you're going through.

VICTORIA: Teddy and Jimmy were playing with it yesterday. (BEAT)

How is he by the way?

OFFICER DAVIS: He left the hospital this morning. He only had minor

bruises.

VICTORIA: I didn't even have a chance to check on him.

OFFICER DAVIS: Jimmy said if it weren't for Teddy he wouldn't have been

able to leave the tree house. He was trapped. (BEAT)

Your son was a hero.

VICTORIA: I just hope Jimmy is not blaming himself.

OFFICER DAVIS: It's very common in situations like this. It's called

survivor's guilt –

VICTORIA: I know. (BEAT) I mean, I studied psychology in college.

OFFICER DAVIS: I think Jimmy could really use a visit from you.

VICTORIA: I'm going to see him. Talk to him. Teddy would have

wanted that.

PAUSE.

OFFICER DAVIS: I heard you and your husband were moving. It might be good for the two of you. A fresh start.

VICTORIA: I don't even know anymore. (BEAT) Teddy always loved living here. He was so angry we were moving.

OFFICER DAVIS: Well, a fresh start can come from anywhere really. It all depends on you.

PAUSE.

OFFICER DAVIS: Very well. (BEAT) I need to go.

VICTORIA: Of course. (BEAT) Thank you, Officer Davis.

OFFICER DAVIS: Don't need to thank me.

PAUSE.

TAKES A CARD FROM HIS POCKET

AND HANDS IT TO VICTORIA.

If you and your family need anything, please do not hesitate to call me.

VICTORIA: We will. Don't worry.

OFFICER DAVIS: Goodbye Mrs. Parker.

VICTORIA: Goodbye Officer Davis. I hope you have a good day.

SFX. DOOR CLOSING.

VICTORIA SOBS.

SFX. STEPS.

SFX. DOOR OPENING.

VICTORIA ENTERS TEDDY'S ROOM AND SITS

ON THE BED, PLACING THE RADIO ON THE

NIGHTSTAND.

VICTORIA CRIES.

SFX. WHITE NOISE. FADES UNDER BUT

CONTINUES.

JIM: (D) (LOW) I'm sorry...

VICTORIA: Hello?

VICTORIA PICKS UP THE RADIO.

VICTORIA: (CLOSE) Anybody there?

JIM SOBS.

VICTORIA: (CLOSE) Hello?

WHITE NOISE STOPS.

VICTORIA: (LOW) What...?

SFX. DOOR BELL IN THE BACKGROUND.

KEVIN: (OFF) Honey, your mother is here!

VICTORIA: I'm coming!

VICTORIA SNIFFS AND CLEANS HER FACE
AND THROAT, PUTTING HERSELF BACK
TOGETHER.

VICTORIA GETS UP.

SFX. STEPS.

SFX. DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING.

VICTORIA: (OFF) Mom!

VICTORIA STARTS SOBBING AGAIN.

SFX. WHITE NOISE.

SCENE 5

SFX. WHITE NOISE.

SFX. LOUD THUNDER AND RAIN.

JIM IS CRYING.

53 YEAR-OLD VICTORIA KNOCKS ON THE
DOOR.

VICTORIA: (OFF) Jim?

SFX. DOOR OPENING.

VICTORIA: Did you sleep here in Teddy's room?

VICTORIA SITS NEXT TO HIM ON THE BED.

JIM: (SOBBING) I never apologized...

VICTORIA: What do you mean?

JIM: I never apologized for Teddy's death.

VICTORIA: It was not your fault, Jim.

SFX. THUNDER.

JIM: (LOW) I did this.

VICTORIA: Jimmy, listen to me. (BEAT) You did not cause Teddy's death.

JIM: (LOW) He died because of me.

VICTORIA: Jimmy...

SFX. THUNDER.

JIM: I'm so sorry.

JIM BREAKS DOWN CRYING.

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VICTORIA: Jim, let's go to the kitchen, get you some water?

JIM: OK...

VICTORIA TAKES THE RADIO FROM JIM'S
HAND AND PUTS IT ON THE NIGHTSTAND.

VICTORIA AND JIM GET UP.

SFX. DOOR OPENING AND CLOSING.

SFX. LOUD THUNDER.

VICTORIA: (OFF) God, where did this weather came from? The thunder storms woke me up in the middle of the night. Didn't they wake you?

JIM: (OFF) Yeah... (BEAT) They frightened me.

SFX. STEPS FADING.

SFX. WHITE NOISE.

THE END.

RESPONSIVE CRITICAL UNDERSTANDING

White Noise is a science fiction audio drama about the paradoxes of time travel. According to Hand and Traynor (2011), “Horror and science fiction have always had a special position in radio drama because of their ability to exploit the simultaneous scope and intimacy of the form.” When we were still outlining our projects, one of the questions our lecturer encouraged us to ask ourselves was: *Why is our story right for radio?* That is when I had the idea: If I’m going to write a script for radio, why not use the radio as part of the story?

“There is a peculiar dichotomy in audio drama between its *constraints* and its *limitlessness*.” (Hand and Traynor, 2011). I knew I wanted to write a story that exploited the limits of audio drama. I found it difficult at first to free myself from the ‘visual’ box, so I began listening to audio plays such as *The Bright Sessions* by Lauren Shippen (2015) and, according to Hand and Traynor (2011), Britain’s first specific radio play *A Comedy of Danger* by Richard Hughes (1924).

I had two main challenges writing *White Noise*. The first one was how I was going to approach the time travel element without any plot holes and mistakes. According to Marshall (2020), the fiction of time travel can all too easily stumble over the potentially infinite convolutions and paradoxes inherent in the subject matter. I tried to keep it simple and straight to the point: the radio connects past and present and the only way Jim’s able to prevent Teddy’s death is by trying to convince his friend that he’s telling the truth when he says he’s from the future. Callahan (2020) writes: “The time travel technology has limitations, which creates conflict for the characters. Since the author spells out these limits, readers know the characters must work within that set of rules.”

The second challenge was on relationship and character development. On its first drafts, Jimmy and Teddy's friendship seemed shallow, and with that, Teddy's death wasn't causing that much impact on the readers. "In any story, personal stakes are a must: who or what does the protagonist stand to lose?" (Callahan, 2020). I was advised by classmates and tutor to add more scenes where the two of them interact together so we'd see and understand the reason why Teddy risked his own life to save his friend, and also, why Jim in the future blames himself so much for Teddy's death to the point where he tries to change the situation when an opportunity is presented to him.

Originally, *White Noise* would end in a time-loop where the first scene with Jimmy and Teddy in 2002 would repeat itself, only this time it would be in Jim's perspective in 2020. However, the loop wasn't clear enough for most readers and it wasn't carrying an emotional baggage. So, I took a creative risk and transformed my last scene in a prologue and wrote another ending scene, where Jim talks to Victoria after realizing what he did, and as they exit, they comment on the weather, leaving a bitter-sweet, emotional and contemplating ending to the audience.

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