

RYCE (WITH A Y)

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A 10-Minute Sci-Fi Comedy Fantasy

By Conrad A. Panganiban

Developed for Contemporary Asian Theatre Scene's 2024  
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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

ERNESTO GARCIA: 20-30s. He/Him/His. Filipino American. Co-creator of Ryce (with a Y) the scientifically created Rice Alternative.

NANA ISHIGAWA: 20-30s. She/Her/Hers. Japanese American. Co-creator of Ryce (with a Y) and fiancé of Ernesto. Nana is short for Nanako.

ETHEREALS: The chorus of VINH, LAWAN, and CHARIYA. They are protectors of the memory, recipes, and culture of Rice. Sent by the Rice Gods to stop ERNESTO and NANA from going on Shark Tank and mass producing their Rice Alternative - Ryce (with a Y).

VINH: Any age. He/Him/His. Asian American. Rice Superpower: Throwing Super Sticky rice.

CHARIYA: Any age. She/Her/Hers. Asian American. Badass. Rice Superpower: Multi-Grain Exploding Rice Bomb.

LAWAN: Any age. She/Her/Hers. Asian American. Rice Superpower: The Congee Super Power Punch.

Lights up on the Ryce with a Y Lab. NANA ISHIGAWA, 20s Japanese American in a lab coat is sitting at a table with 2 bowls of cooked rice in front of her. Standing behind her is her fiancé and fellow scientist, ERNESTO GARCIA, 20s Filipino American, also in a lab coat.

ERNESTO

Give it a good inhale, Nana.

NANA picks up each bowl and does.

NANA

Smells like 100 percent Jasmine Rice.

ERNESTO

Now, the true test.

ERNESTO takes out a pair of chopsticks and hands it to NANA. NANA pierces the chopsticks into each bowl and takes a taste of both, carefully analyzing each chew.

NANA picks up one of the bowls.

NANA

This one is the real Rice.

ERNESTO

Final answer?

NANA

Wait.

NANA picks up the OTHER bowl and takes another bite.

NANA

Nope. This is the one!

ERNESTO

Nice try, but they're BOTH ours!

NANA gets up and gives ERNESTO a big hug!

NANA

Oh my God! You did it, Ernesto! Your dad would be so proud!  
Ryce with a Y tastes, feels, and smells exactly like real rice! And it's so good!

ERNESTO

*We* did it.  
And don't forget, Ryce with a Y is also good for you! By cloning a single grain of rice, we're able to reduce the amount of carbs by 93%, use half the water to cook it in half the time, and costs nothing to harvest because, well, there's nothing to harvest.

NANA

And cook it in our portable USB-Powered Ryce with a Y cooker to ANY serving size and KA-CHING! We're in the money!

ERNESTO

I hope so.

NANA

That was a great pitch by the way.

ERNESTO

Thanks. I need all the practice I can get.  
Can you believe that we get to pitch Ryce with a Y on Shark Tank tomorrow?  
See, I've also been practicing using my convincing eyes.

NANA

Those aren't convincing. They're scared.

ERNESTO

Well... that might be because of this...

ERNESTO gets down on one knee and pulls out a ring box from his lab coat.

ERNESTO

Nanako Ishigawa. From the first time I became your lab partner in Mr. Lo's Microbiology class, I always knew that one day I'd ask you to be the burner to my Bunsen. Your soy to my sauce. Will you-?

Suddenly, through a dense fog, The  
 ETHEREALS of VINH, CHARIYA, and  
 LAWAN dressed in different colored robes  
 appear.

NANA

YOU. DID. NOT! You also got a Flash Mob for this engagement!?

ERNESTO

I have no idea who those people are!

ETHEREALS

You have upset the Balance of Life  
 The Balance of Earth and Grain  
 Exploiting the inequity between Science and Nature

VINH

I am Vinh.

CHARIYA

I am Chariya.

LAWAN

I'm Lawan.

ETHEREALS

And we are... The Ethereals

CHARIYA

Protectors,

LAWAN

Advocates,

VINH

and Nurturers of Earth's Most Precious Grain

ETHEREALS

Sent from the Rice Gods... to Stop You.

The ETHEREALS move into a fighting posture.

NANA

I don't know what kind of Flash Mob are you, but you can't just break in here, tell us to  
 stop making something that will save lives, and most importantly--mess up my proposal!

LAWAN

Did you ever think about who you'll be hurting with your invention?

VINH

The lives you'll be ruining?

CHARIYA

The land you'll be changing?

ERNESTO

No. We'll be creating something that has 93% less carbs, using half the water to-

LAWAN

We heard your pitch.

ETHEREALS

And we're not going to allow you to go on that television show.

CHARIYA

Your invention will put farmers from around the world out of work.

VINH

Turn rice plantations into waste lands.

LAWAN

And it will kill memories-

CHARIYA

Traditions-

VINH

Customs-

ETHEREALS

And Cultures.

ERNESTO

But it's just Ryce.

NANA

With a Y.

CHARIYA

What does it mean when you don't finish eating the rice from a bowl?

NANA

Duh! It means that your future spouse will have just as many blemishes on his face.

ERNESTO

Hey! I moisturize!

VINH

And what happens when you don't bring rice into a new home?

ERNESTO

My dad said that it's bad luck. Like we won't have enough food to last the year.

LAWAN

And what will happen when rice is thrown at a wedding couple?

NANA

I don't think that's allowed anymore... because of birds and bird flu?

VINH

Thrown rice at a wedding will mean that the your lives will bear fruit.

LAWAN

That your legacy will carry on-

CHARIYA

That your ancestors will still be here long after their physical manifestations are-

ETHEREALS

Gone.

Like how those superstitions are passed on from generation to generation.

ERNESTO

All because of Rice?

ETHEREALS

With an 'I'.

NANA

You might think that you're cool with your fancy clothes, ability to speak in unison, and god-like warnings, but we didn't spend the last five years and max out eleven credit cards to stop us from changing our destiny!

ERNESTO

And from going on Shark Tank!

The ETHEREALS again assume their fighting positions.

NANA

Bring it!

NANA and ERNESTO get in their fighting positions.

Rave music starts and lights flash as each of the sides BEGIN TO FIGHT!

VINH

Super Sticky Rice Power Activate!

VINH throws sticky rice at Ernesto who catches it and takes a bite.

ERNESTO

(talks like there's something really sticky in his mouth)

Not as good as Ryce with a Y!

CHARIYA takes out a rice measuring cup.

CHARIYA

Multi-Grain Exploding Rice Bomb Activate!

NANA uses her quick reflexes to grab each grain of flying rice in her hands and puts them into her lab coat.

NANA

Gonna save this for later.

As LAWAN takes out her Rice Paddle, ERNESTO takes out a Fork and Spoon, and NANA takes out a pair of Chopsticks.

It's a SHOWDOWN! They twirl around each other striking and counter-striking while VINH and CHARIYA get into positions behind them with raised fists in the air.



By the Power of the Rice Gods-

ETHEREALS

STEAM!

VINH

VINH punches the ground.

FRIED!

CHARIYA

CHARIYA punches the ground.

CONGEE!!!

LAWAN

LAWAN punches the ground and everyone bounces up and crashes to the lab floor.

Nana, are you okay?

ERNESTO

Is that all you've got?

NANA

ALL get to their feet brushing themselves off.

We can go all day.

ETHEREALS

Once again, they ALL get back into fighting positions, except for ERNESTO.

I won't.

ERNESTO

NANA

Fine by me. I can take them all by my self!

ERNESTO

No, Nana.

I won't because I know you won't stop fighting and they won't stop fighting... and all we'll have left is a lab full of rice that will take forever to clean. And if you've ever spilled uncooked rice all over the floor, you'd know how long that would take.

ALL nods their heads in knowing agreement.

VINH

Why do you want to mass produce your invention?

LAWAN

Even though it goes against nature-

CHARIYA

Tradition-

ETHEREALS

And Culture?

ERNESTO

My dad bought me my first science kit for my 10th birthday.

It was one of those kits where you could make things fizz,  
or boil over,  
or make soap.

It was the gift that showed me that by being able to mix different elements,  
of who you are,  
of your imagination and curiosity,  
that you can create things that could make other kids go  
“Oooo” or “Ahhhh” or say, “Oh Dangggggggg!”

And even though they made fun of the adobo, bitter melon, and rice I’d bring to school  
for lunch,

I couldn’t wait til 5th period when I would show them what I learned from  
That science kit my dad bought me  
That made me feel like I belonged.  
That I was cool...

and smart

To show that I was normal.

And if I could invent something that could save lives,

If I could give other people the chance to live a longer life with their own fathers...  
or mothers...

or aunts and uncles.

Something I wished I could have with my dad after he passed away because of Diabetes  
and Heart Disease.

But, inventing Ryce with a Y was my chance to do just that... for others. And that’s  
something I won’t stop making. So if you have to hit me with another round of Steamed  
Fried Congee again, I’m not going anywhere.

NANA takes Ernesto's hand.

NANA

I'm not going anywhere either.

The ETHEREALS look at each other.

LAWAN

Huddle?

VINH and CHARIYA nod, "Yes" and they get into a huddle.

NANA

That was really beautiful... and convincing.

ERNESTO

Told you, it's in the eyes.

The ETHEREALS break their huddle.

ETHEREALS

We have spoken with the Rice Gods and they would like to make you an offer.

VINH

You share the science of making your low-carb rice-

LAWAN

for them to recreate and send 15% into existing crops-

CHARIYA

for farmers around the world to harvest and sell.

ERNESTO

Do we get to pick which farmers?

CHARIYA

What difference does it make?

NANA

We'd like to know that we're not only helping with others' health, but that we're also helping small farmers compete with the big rice corporations.

LAWAN

I'm not sure if we can-

CHARIYA  
But our contract with CalRose-

ERNESTO  
Then we're out.

VINH  
Wait, you can't do that-

NANA  
And also make it 35% of the grains into the rice crops-

ERNESTO  
Plus, increase that output by 2% every year for twenty years.

CHARIYA  
Don't you know how to negotiate?

ERNESTO  
Of course we do.  
We watch Shark Tank.  
So, do we have a deal?

The ETHEREALS look at each other.

ETHEREALS  
How do you spell your Rice?

ALL extend their hands to shake.

BLACKOUT.

END OF PLAY