

THE FAMILY MEETIN'

"A PLAY IN ONE ACT"

"by"

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Cast of Characters

<u>Michael</u> :	brother focused on keeping family grounded
<u>June</u> :	the prodigal son/brother
<u>Leonard</u> :	Michael's brother and business partner
<u>Belinda</u> :	Leonard's high maintenance wife
<u>Regina</u> :	the opinionated sister
<u>Torrence</u> :	Regina's husband
<u>Bennie</u> :	older brother
<u>Carol</u> :	lovable sister with an attitude
<u>Mom</u> :	the matriarch of the family
<u>Mikey</u> :	Michael's son
<u>Craig</u> :	Regina's son
<u>Damien</u> :	family friend
<u>Lisa</u> :	Leonard's daughter
<u>Ebony</u> :	Michael's daughter

Scene

The scene takes place in the enclosed porch and the living room.

Time

The present.

Act IScene 1

SETTING: The living room of MOM's house. She's putting away the vacuum cleaner. She begins dusting and fluffing pillows on the sofa while humming. She straightens her pictures of Jesus, Martin Luther King and her late husband.

AT THE RISE: The doorbell rings and the entire family files into the house. Some are talking and some on the phone. Those carrying food place them on the table. They're now scrambling for their favorite seats.

MICHAEL

Can I have everyone's attention please?

(MICHAEL makes eye contact with all then continues)

We're here for the first ever family meeting.

(moans and groans)

MIKEY

Family meeting? Man, I thought we were here to get our grub on.

(Animated, MIKEY gives CRAIG and DAMIEN high fives.)

CRAIG

(disinterested)

I hope this isn't long. I'm tired and got to get my beauty rest.

LISA

Then you're going to be sleeping a long damn time.
 (LISA and EBONY burst into
 laughter)

DAMIEN

Ain't that something white people do? Why we always
 trying to imitate them? Why can't we just be
 ourselves.

TORRENCE

Do you even know who you are?
 (TORRENCE waits for response)

MICHAEL

(aggravated)
 The meeting is to let everyone know we're now all
 accountable to the family for our actions.

EBONY

(nervously raises hand)
 Can I ask a question?

MICHAEL

Of course, you can.

EBONY

Does that include all the adults, too?
 (takes two steps back)

LEONARD

Yes, even the grownups.

EBONY

(stands and places her hands
 on hips)
 Can we say what we want? Cause I don't like everything
 y'all do, *either*.
 (EBONY ducks behind LISA)

LISA

(moves away from EBONY)
 Get from behind me Satan.

REGINA

(animated, takes off shoe
and aims it at EBONY)

Who she talking too? Hold her so I can hit her 'side
her head.

(EBONY playfully tries to
stay out of REGINA'S line of
fire)

LEONARD

You can say what you want *with* respect. And they'll be
no repercussions or grudges afterwards from anyone.

(everyone looks at REGINA)

REGINA

(nonchalant)

What? I think it's a great idea!

(pauses)

Just as long as I don't have to talk about me. But
I've got plenty of advice though being a woman of the
world.

(REGINA flips her wrist, hair
and then sticks her nose in
the air)

CAROL

(walks over to REGINA)

Hussy, you're going to comment on everyone else's
stuff but

not address your crap? Is that's fair, Mom?

(CAROL places hands hips)

Well, Mom!

MOM

Sho ain't, praise the Lord.

REGINA

But if I don't want to talk about me no one can make
me.

Right Mom?

MOM

Sho can't, praise the Lord.

(MOM stare at the TV which is off)

CAROL

Mom, you can't be on both sides. Regina, you ain't nothing but a little tramp.

REGINA

Well you're the one who taught me how to...

CAROL

Watch it! Don't forget those suggestions made your usband very happy.

(winking)

Right Torrence!

TORRENCE

I sure am Carol. Right snookems, honey bumpkins?

(TORRENCE grabs REGINA affectionately)

REGINA

Shut up Torrence.

TORRENCE

Honey, you just went to church Sunday and now you're telling me to shut up? Baby, baby, where did our love go?

(TORRENCE mimics the Supremes dance steps)

REGINA

It's Saturday and worn off. I'll get a refill when I go back on Sunday.

(REGINA rolls her eyes and whips her head)

TORRENCE

Last time whipped your head like that your wig flew across the room and you couldn't find it. I almost killed it the next morning thinking it was a giant tarantula.

(stomping on the floor, everyone laughs)

MICHAEL

(Impatiently)

Anyway, we also want to also address how we can help our African American Community.

TORRENCE

Some want to help but feel they need to belong to a large organization. But we need to start in our own neighborhoods.

(TORRENCE points around the room)

REGINA

But first we must get control of our own families and households.

BELINDA

(stands and strikes a pose)

I agree. We're always the blaming teachers, policemen and other authority figures our children's dilemmas.

(switches pose)

It's our total responsibility as their parents for their development and education.

(straightens pearls and jackets)

CAROL

(confused and bewildered)

What the hell did she say?

LISA

She said we gotta raise our own kids.

CAROL

(sarcastically)

Then why didn't she just say that instead of yada, yada, yada, yada stuff.

(pauses, smiles and gives Belinda a hug)

I love your outfit girl. You really look good in it.

BELINDA

(swaying her hips)

I can work the front and the back. It's the sides that give me problems.

(BELINDA and CAROL laugh)

CAROL

I know that's right.

(BELINDA AND CAROL laugh)

REGINA

It doesn't help not having both parents around. A lot of kids are being raised by their grandparents.

MOM

Some of the parents are the problem too. They know they sending bad ass children out into the world.

MICHAEL

You're right about that, Mom.

TORRENCE

Some of those kids are even fighting the parents.

MOM

Y'all knew better 'cause I'd pick up a stick and knock you in your big head.

(points then swings bat like Babe Ruth)

REGINA

(concerned)

And when the teacher brings it to the parent's attention, they're ready to beat up the poor teachers.

LEONARD

Back in the day, the village raised the children. The teacher, neighbor, hell, even the milk man could discipline You. Poor, Dad, he never knew why he was beating us.

(smiling)

He just followed Mom's instructions.

MICHAEL

That's the beauty of this family format. We can all help each other out. Then we can help our community.

CAROL

(smelling the lingering
aroma of food)

So what's the topic for today? I still haven't had a
chance to eat.

MICHAEL

The topic was the start of the family meeting.

REGINA

Eat a dog biscuit and shut up.

CAROL

Give me your sandwich.
(breaks in half)
What you got in that cup?

REGINA

It's mineral water.

CAROL

I've never seen pink mineral water.

REGINA

Just mind your business and be quiet, we can discuss
this
after the meeting like ladies.
(crosses her legs, sips
drink with her pinky
extended)

MOM

She's puttin' the devil's slop in the temple of the
Lord. That's why you have all those aches and pains.

REGINA

It's never the wine, Mom.
(playfully)
Want some?

MOM

Don't nothing unholy go into my body.

REGINA

That's your problem. I'm going to smoke a cigarette
after
this.

MOM

I rebuke you in the name of JESUS!

MICHAEL

Okay, thanks for coming. This concludes the initial family meeting. See you next week

(FADE OUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT 1SCENE 2

SETTING: On the front porch at MOM's house.

AT THE RISE: REGINA, CAROL and BELINDA are sitting in 4 white chairs. CAROL passes REGINA wine and she opens it. BELINDA passes the glasses and REGINA fills them.

BELINDA

(glass in hand)

Do you think it's appropriate to drink in front of your Mom's house on a Sunday?

REGINA

She can have some too. She probably got her buzz on at Communion.

CAROL

(holier-than-thou)

Girl don't you play around with the Lord. That's blasphemy, you know.

(looks up to the sky and moves out of lightning strike range)

Lord just make sure that you strike the right one.

REGINA

You're more than welcome to remove yourself from the premises at any time. After all, we don't want to offend.

(snobbishly raising her nose then smells her underarm)

BELINDA

But we're supposed to be ladies.
(sashays across the stage)

REGINA and CAROL

(simultaneously)

So you saying we ain't no damn ladies.

(striking gansta poses)

BELINDA

(backpedaling and extending arms)

Of course, you're ladies. Look, let's just enjoy our drinks and the nice summer breeze. Do you have a napkin so I don't get a ring on the step?

CAROL

Oh you're a bogue ass. Nobody cares about a ring on the steps. Plus, the ants will drink it.

(blankly stares into the sky)

I wonder what a drunk ant looks like?

REGINA

(teasing)

Like you!

(staggers across the stage)

Sike, I'm just playing girl.

(inquisitively)

What do you all think about these meetings?

BELINDA

I like the whole family concept and involvement in the neighborhood. We must especially concentrate on our African American Males. They're participating in their own genocide.

CAROL

What'd she say?

REGINA

Our black men are killing themselves.

CAROL

Huh...Why didn't she just say that?

REGINA

I don't know. That girl at the corner has eight boys with eight different daddies.

(counting her fingers)

BELINDA

And she's a baby herself. I see her sucking her own thumb sometimes. She's probably sharing their Similac and pacifiers too.

CAROL

We can't forget our African American Princesses, either.

REGINA

We've got to be better role models for our girls, too. They're emulating what they see us do in our relationships.

BELINDA

I know Smokey said *You Better Shop Around* but the good man shelf is about empty. Thank God I got mine.

CAROL

Yeah, but sometimes I don't need a relationship. I just need the Magic Stick.

REGINA

I know that's right.
(starts gyrating on the stage)

BELINDA

(profoundly)
I used to focus on the elite package. A six-figure individual on the fast track. But they left after getting what they wanted.

REGINA

(laughing)
I knew a brother on food stamps that did the same thing the first of every month.
(smiling, shakes head)
Two 40 ounces, 18 skrimps, and some cheese fries and it would be on. What's today's date? I'm just playin'.

CAROL

(camly)
That's why you've got to diversify your manfolio. I got one on food stamps, SSI, a job and a pension. Get that thug money too 'cause that's tax free.

BELINDA

Girl you are so crazy!

REGINA

So, you were looking for filet mignon and ended up with my brother, a rump roast? How did that happen?

BELINDA

No...well.....yes.

REGINA

Please explain this to me. Do I need to get my boots?

BELINDA

(bashfully)

I met him through a relative. I would've never selected him on my own. But he turned out to be a nice guy.

(pulls out compact and refreshes
lipstick)

We talked for a few months, then went out on a couple of dates. I told him the lifestyle I wanted to live and how I expected to be treated.

CAROL

Bogusly? Is that a lifestyle?

BELINDA

Anyway, he told me that he'd do the best he could within his means. I was only supposed to be a couple of dinners. A girl gotta eat, right?

REGINA

And then?

BELINDA

The rest is history.

CAROL

Do you ever feel like you settled?

BELINDA

(earnestly)

Financially, yes. But he treats me like a queen and

respects me and supports my dreams and aspirations.

REGINA

(contemplating)

But how do you make up the monetary difference? It's gotta affect your pockets at some point.

(strutting across the stage
and high stepping)

Cause ain't nothing stopping me from getting a new pair of shoes. You can call me a bitch if you want o but whatever...

(snaps finger and struts
across the stage)

BELINDA

It does, but we talk about most financial decisions before they're made.

CAROL

What do you mean, most?

BELINDA

Some things, *like my money*, are on a need to know basis.

REGINA

Excuse me, but aren't we supposed to be acknowledging the men for the family meeting concept.

BELINDA

We are.

CAROL

But don't forget it's always all about us.

REGINA

Can we ever get together and not bash men?

CAROL, REGINA, BELINDA

Hell No!

REGINA

Look, let's pick this up at the next gathering.

BELINDA

Okay, so we'll have a follow up meeting to their meeting.

CAROL

I got to go.

BELINDA

Wait a minute. I saw the brothers do this.

(pauses)

I want to pour some wine out to the men for starting the family meeting.

(about to pour out the wine)

CAROL

(crazed)

Girl don't be wasting the wine. Can't you just spit or pea or something, damn?

REGINA

Shut up Carol.

(They hug and exit the stage.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT 1

SCENE 3

SETTING: Family meeting at Mom's house

AT THE RISE: The entire family is present discussing everything from current events to politics to what the neighbors are doing. The meeting is called to order.

LEONARD

(mimicking talk show announcer)

MIKEY and CRAIG, come have a seat. You two are the first contestants for the family is right. Damien, get a chair and sit along with them.

MIKEY

(surprised)

Why we being put us on the spot like that?

CRAIG

Yeah, other people got stuff going on, too. Why you putting pressure on us?

(angrily walks over to the chair)

DAMIEN

(confused)

No disrespect Uncle Leonard, but why do I have to sit up there?

MICHAEL

Because you're always over one of our houses, eating our food, using our electricity or sleeping over. If you can do that then you fall under our responsibility too.

LEONARD

You all seem to be in a state of limbo since graduating. What are your plans for the future?

MICHAEL

You're not boys anymore. You're men and it's time to act like it.

TORRENCE

Are you going to college, the Armed Forces, getting a job? You need some type of plan and we're going to help you make one.

MIKEY

(carefree)

I'd thought we'd get a chance to chill before making a life decision of that magnitude.

(boastfully)

You like that phrase don't you. You know we're going to eventually do something. Y'all raised us so you know what we're made of.

(pops collar)

LEONARD

You've been chilling for nineteen years with the free air conditioning, heat; free food, allowance, clothing and vacations just to name a few. It's time to step up to the plate.

EBONY

(very sassy)

But aren't the parents *supposed* to support the kids until they get on their feet. After all, we didn't ask to come here.

(moves to the sofa)

MICHAEL

Yeah but you're *definitely* asking to leave here with that attitude, young lady.

(ala Jackie Gleason)

Pow, straight to the moon!

BELINDA

Well a parent's job is to lead by example and give direction and guidance along the road of life. We're not to be your primary providers for the rest of your lives.

(checks her makeup)

CAROL

(frustrated)
What the hell did she say?

LISA

It's time for them to support themselves.

CAROL

(adjusting her wig)
Then why the hell didn't she say that?
(looks down at BELINDA'S feet)
I like your shoes girl.
(walks over, takes one off and
tries it on. Pulls three socks
out of her pocketbook so shoe will
fit)

Damn, is this a size 15? I could stamp out a forest
fire with this mug.

MICHAEL

(with sincerity)
So tell us, what are you plans for the future and how
will you obtain these goals?

CRAIG

(clears his throat)
I'm doing me. I don't want to be part of the white
man's system and change my identity. I'm going to be
my own man.
(pounds his chest)

REGINA

(smirks then pats CAROL on
the shoulder)
Living at your Mama's house?
(REGINA and CAROL laugh)

CRAIG

(with arrogance)
I'm moving out. You won't have to worry about me
living in your house or eating your food anymore.

REGINA

(gleefully)
That's great. Where you going?

TORRENCE
(backing his thang up)
Honey, we can get that pole in the middle of the..

REGINA
Shut up Torrence.

CRAIG
(self-assuredly)
I'm moving to Grandma's basement.

REGINA
Are you paying her? Cause you made it seem like you were doing us a favor with free rent and food.

CRAIG
I don't have to pay cause Grandma, she understands me.

TORRENCE
Do you plan to get a job?

MIKEY
We all getting jobs but not at Mikey D's. I ain't no slave and won't be serving anybody.

BELINDA
You're taking serving way out of context in this instance.

LEONARD
There's nothing wrong with working at McDonald's. The objective is to have money coming in to support yourself.

CAROL
Then look for another job with better money and benefits. But you've got to start somewhere.

MIKEY
We getting put out if we're not working?
(pauses)

Then I'm going into the Armed Forces.

MOM

Hurray for the Red, White, and Blue!

MICHAEL

We just want you all to have a written plan and pursue it. Dates and deadlines make you accountable.

BELINDA

And we'll review it every month to see where you are in your process.

TORRENECE

(adjusting his pants purposely)

One more thing. You won't be able to get a job dressed like that.

DAMIEN

(defiantly)

Here we go again conforming to society. I like my pants and my braids. If they don't like how then too bad.

BENNIE

(firmly)

Do you carry a baseball bat to play basketball or a hockey stick to play football?

CRAIG

(jokingly)

In this neighborhood, you do.

DAMIEN

Yeah...pretty much.

(laughs and high fives with
MIKEY and CRAIG)

BENNIE

You know what I mean. Wear the right outfit for the right occasion.

CAROL

Damn. He talks... So you want to purposely fail and become a negative statistic or a part of the system?

DAMIEN

(perplexed)
What system is that?

CAROL
The unemployment or penal system.

MIKEY
So now we're criminals?

REGINA
No one's calling you criminals. We just want you to get with the program. It's time to become productive members of society.

MIKEY
I don't mean any disrespect but how come Uncle June lived here for twenty years before getting a job.

REGINA
You're exaggerating.

DAMIEN
Ain't he supposed to represent too?

CRAIG
(with bravado)
That's right. I wouldn't exactly call him an example of a strong Black man.

CAROL
We did. The meeting didn't include everyone back then. But we're talking about you guys right now so shut up and listen.

BENNIE
He had other issues which you're all aware of. But look at him now thanks to prayer and God.

CRAIG
(smugly)
Well if God can do anything, I should be able to pray to him right now and he get me a gig, right? As a matter of fact, I should just pray for the cash.

(pulls pants pockets inside
out)

MOM

Boy don't you ever test God. You won't have to worry
about the lightning bolts cause I'll slap the taste put
your mouth.

CRAIG

Sorry Grandma.

MICHAEL

(pacing back and forth)

The next meeting is in two weeks. Bring your individual
plans back with you.

TORRENCE

You should've also have applied for a couple of jobs by
then.

MICHAEL

(proudly)

Meeting adjourned.

MIKEY

Yo, Craig and Damien. I know a place that has some job
openings. Let's check it out Monday. In the meantime, let's
go to my house and get our Xbox on.

(CRAIG, MIKE, and DAMIEN,
exit after goodbyes)

REGINA

Here we go with that damn Xbox again.

MOM

Alright, I'll be praying for you devils.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT 1

SCENE 4

SETTING: Job interview at a local business.

AT THE RISE: CRAIG, DAMIEN, and MIKEY enter the office. They're dressed in white tee shirts, baggy jeans and Timberlands. MIKEY and CRAIG take a seat and DAMIEN approaches the white receptionist who pushes the silent alarm to alert security.

DAMIEN

Yo, what up? We're here to apply for the job openings. I know you got at least one of those jawns open, right?

RECEPTIONIST

(pushes button for the security guard)

Jawn? What's a jawn? A piece of fruit, clothing, drugs, what? I don't know what you're speaking of?

(MIKEY approaches the desk with a stroll)

He means a job lady. You had a like 10 jobs listed on the Internet. Are they all gone already?

RECEPTIONIST

(still looking for security, pushes alarm again)

These jobs aren't for you. There's a Man Power office down the street. You're dressed for it.

DAMIEN
(aggressively)

What do you mean by that?

RECEPTIONIST
You look like you're dressed for manual labor and we provide office and customer service jobs for our clients.

CRAIG
Why you dissing us? You trying to say we're not light enough for your jobs? You don't accept no brothers?

RECEPTIONIST
(pretentiously)
It's not your race. Your attire isn't appropriate for our clientele.

MIKEY
Look lady, I graduated in the top ten percentage of my high school class. I called you yesterday and there were plenty of jobs available.

RECEPTIONIST
(with attitude)
Then you should know how to dress for an interview. You're not the young man I spoke with yesterday.

MIKEY
(baffled)
Yo, how can you say it wasn't me?

RECEPTIONIST
(firmly)
The young man used Standard English and addressed me properly and was very polite and courteous. If that was you, what happened?

CRAIG
(shocked)
All man, you talking White behind our backs?

RECEPTIONIST
(takes a B-Boy stand)

Yo, why it got to be talking white?

CRAIG

Look lady, don't talk down to me. If you ain't gonna let us fill out an application just shut up.

RECEPTIONIST

(reaches for her pocketbook)

I've seen the videos. Don't you try to push up on a hoe or I'll blast you with my Mac 10 fool.

DAMIEN

Craig, that's not kool man. Don't disrespect any woman like that, man. Miss, please accept our apology.

CRAIG

You right dog! I'm so sorry Miss.

DAMIEN

(pacing back and forth)

Damn G. You were the last person that I thought would sell out to the man.

CRAIG

(angrily)

All that crap you talked to us about being true to our Blackness. How long have you been doing this?

MIKEY

I would've been in a shirt and tie if you both hadn't come. You usually turning me down when I ask about going job hunting.

CRAIG

(confused)

But why did you front? We your boys man, your family.

MIKEY

I didn't want to lose my street cred. Plus, the young boys look up to us.

DAMIEN

Peer pressure is a bitch, man. Wondering what I friends will think.

MIKEY

Yeah, but they ain't working. That should've been our first red flag.

DAMIEN

Neither are we dog.

CRAIG

I've been looking jobs and keep getting turned down. Man I'm ready to sling dope at this point.

DAMIEN

That's not an option for any of us.

CRAIG

You right, dawg

MIKEY

Yo, I'm getting ready to cut my braids too!

CRAIG

No! No! Not the braids. I'd feel like Samson after Delilah cut his hair.

DAMIEN

Yeah, but it'll increase your chances of getting a job. Then you'll be able to take your girl out for a movie and dinner instead of showing videos at your Mom's.

(CRAIG, MIKEY, AND DAMIEN burst into laughter)

MIKEY

What my homies gonna say? And the sistas like the thug in me.

DAMIEN

I'm sure they'll prefer money in your pockets instead of them paying or going Dutch.

MIKEY

Tru dat!

RECEPTIONIST

You seem like some nice guys. So come back correctly
and I'll see what I can do for you.

CRAIG

You'd do that for us after how I acted?

RECEPTIONIST

(sincerely)

Yes, I will. Now there are some prejudice folks out
there, but don't judge all of us on the behavior of a
few assholes.

MIKEY

We'll be back tomorrow morning, dressed for success.

RECEPTIONIST

(removes rubber band from hair.
Takes off blouse and wearing a
tank top. Removes skirt and
sporting short denim jeans. Takes
off heels and puts on biker boots.
Tosses hair and grabs motorcycle
helmet)

Well it's 5:02 and time for a girl to bounce. I'll get
back at you tomorrow.

CRAIG

Yo, what happened?

RECEPTIONIST

I'm on my time now. Peace

DAMIEN

We'll leave with you.

(A Barney Fief type security
guard finally shows up. He
stumbles, rops baton and trips)

What the problem is?

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT 1

SCENE 5

SETTING: On the front steps at MOM's house.

AT THE RISE: ADRIAN, the next-door neighbor is sitting on the steps mumbling. He places hands over his face and then shakes his head. He reaches for his 40-ounce beer and guzzles. LEONARD, MICHAEL, and TORRENCE all walk up the steps.

TORRENCE

(sympathetic)

Damn! You've got that, I'm ready to jump in front of traffic because my wife is getting on my damn nerves, look.

LEONARD

(shaking his head)

I bet you the cavemen had that same look. But they jumped in front of dinosaurs or off cliffs.

MICHAEL

I don't have to worry about it anymore. But I'm here for a brother.

(pounds chest)

I'm here for you.

LEONARD

What's wrong dog?

ADRIAN

(furiously)

Man, I can't seem to do anything right per her.

(paces back and forth)

And she complains about everything I do. And she hates all my friends.

TORRENCE

Well what did you do?

ADRIAN

Why did I have to do something?

LEONARD

You've done something whether you did or not. That's in the Husband Book, page 101, paragraph 2.

ADRIAN

Can I get a copy?

TORRENCE

No, physical copies. If women got their hands on it, they'd try to change it.

MICHAEL

So what did you do?

ADRIAN

Hanging out with the boys. She thinks they're all dogs. Man, they've been my homies since grade school.

LEONARD

What time did you get home?

ADRIAN

About five thirty.

TORRENCE

In the morning? And you're still walking and talking? Can you urinate?

(pulls up trousers a couple
of times and looks at crouch)

You ain't a couple of pounds lighter are you?

ADRIAN

(smugly)

But I was in before the sun came up. I got my groove on with my boys.

MICHAEL

Try sleeping with your groove. Get your groove to fix you something to eat or wash your clothes. Get your freak on with your groove, bro.

LEONARD

Do these *friends* always meet you on payday and you do most of the spending, every single week?

ADRIAN

Well...yes

MICHAEL

And does somebody always need to borrow money? They'll pay you back when they get it from their girl.

TORRENCE

No, no, they're going to pay you back after their mother pays them for painting her bedroom or mowing her lawn.

ADRIAN

(confused)

So what's your point? They're my boys! That's how we roll!

TORRENCE

(without doubt)

They're punking you.

ADRIAN

What do you mean, punking me?

TORRENCE

Leonard, can you pull out the playbook?

LEONARD

(opens imaginary book)

They're calling you henpecked and you're not a shot caller anymore. They remind you of your glory days when you were a player.

TORRENCE

Break it down, my brother! Break it down!

MICHAEL

They say you worked hard for your money and nobody can tell you how to spend it.

LEONARD

Preach on! Preach on!

TORRENCE

And if you were a real man you'd stay out if you wanted to. Who the hell does she think she is? She's trying to break up the Brotherhood.

MICHAEL

You buy all the drinks, food and entertainment.

LEONARD

And when the money is gone they suddenly leave. Now you must explain to your wife how the same thing happened, again.

MICHAEL

Then you try to flip the script and get an attitude with her. They're going home to bed alone or to Momma's basement.

ADRIAN

How did you know? It's like you all were right there.

MICHAEL

We've been there.

TORRENCE

(sincerely)

You're no longer obligated to someone you shared Grape *Now and Laters* with or played Hot Wheels back in the eighth grade.

MICHAEL

As you get older, you must re-evaluate people, friendships and priorities.

TORRENCE

Your wife thought she married a man, not a boy. It's time to grow up. You've got to step up to the plate.

LEONARD

So, what are your friends about? What are they into?

ADRIAN

They got their side hustles going on.

MICHAEL

Side hustle?

ADRIAN

They're doing their own thing.

LEONARD

Well if you can't report it to Uncle Sam...*IJS*

TORRENCE

And you don't see why your wife is pissed off.

ADRIAN

But what about how I feel? What about what I want to do?

MICHAEL

It's about both of you now.

LEONARD

See, if you do this right, you'll be in a space where you both can be happy. Maybe not at the same time. But it's about give and take.

ADRIAN

I'd better go apologize.

TORRENCE

You better go kiss her damn feet.

LEONARD

Look, we got to get ready for this family meeting. Come to our next council meeting.

(MIKE, LEONARD, AND TORRENCE
give ADRIAN a pound an enter
house for the meeting)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

ACT 1

SCENE 6

SETTING: Meeting at Mom's house.

AT THE RISE: LEONARD, MICHAEL, TORRENCE, and BENNIE are already sitting in their places in the living room. REGINA and BELINDA enter from the kitchen. CAROL enters the room from outside. She is followed by MIKEY, DAMIEN, and CRAIG sporting their new haircuts. LISA and EBONY have just finished jogging and MOM comes down the stairs last.

MOM

(humbly)

Since I love y'all I'm going to tell you now.

(picks up her Martin Luther King fan)

Whatever you do, don't go in that bathroom. You'd better go to the Sunoco, Shop Rite or find a porta potty.

(adjusting her panties from the back)

I think I passed old Satan through my bowels and down the drain. I rebuked him in the name of Jesus.

(terrible scent reaches the living room and everyone reacts)

CAROL

There goes my appetite, the neighborhood and the ozone layer.

REGINA

Yeah, but did you spray?

MOM

This is my house girl; you don't tell me what to do.

CAROL

Yeah, but did you spray?

LEONARD

(notices the boys cut their
hair, does Fred Sanford routine)
Hey Elizabeth, I'm coming home to join you honey.
They've cut their hair and gone from boys to men.
(continues to stagger back
and forth)

MOM

They do look nice cause they take after me.

EBONY

They look corny to me. They look like the guys they
tease and call chumps.

LISA

Let's hope they get jobs so they can treat us.

MICHAEL

Since most of us are here, let's get started. You guys
do look great. Give us an update.

MIKEY

We were all hired after going back to the interview
dressed and speaking properly.

DAMIEN

Yeah. We first went dressed in our gear. She wouldn't
interview us and told us the same thing you did.

CRAIG

She was kind enough to give us another chance and we
all got hired the next day. I couldn't believe it.
(smiles)

I guess you old folks do know something besides how to
put your dentures in.

DAMIEN

(excited)

So, my five-year plan is to take advantage of their tuition package. We'll only have to pay for our books. I want to get an Associate's Degree first then plan from there.

MIKEY

I plan to have an apartment soon then car and house over ten years.

CRAIG

Me too.

(popping collar)

What do y'all think?

REGINA

I think you're headed in the right direction. But include paying some renting too. The smallest utility bill will do.

TORRENCE

(animated)

Since Craig will be moving can I put a pole in the living room now, honey?

REGINA

Shut up TORRENCE!

BELINDA

(calculating)

What's your major? When will you start?

MIKEY

Aunt Belinda, can we get started first? Y'all not going to sweat us are you?

(ENIRE CAST)

Yes!

MIKEY

(shrugging his shoulders)

Boy that was a dumb question.

(JUNE slithers into the meeting and takes a seat. He's very jitterish)

BELINDA

You need to start researching schools, your major, whether you're going to a community college or out of state...

CAROL

What she say?

LISA

They need to get a game plan together ASAP.

CRAIG

Can we just enjoy this accomplishment first?

REGINA

No!

CRAIG

(tentatively, faces REGINA)

Anyway, I'm not sure about going to college right away. I may wait another year.

TORRENCE

That's wonderful. But you're still moving out and my pole is going up.

MICHAEL

(sets up a chair in the middle of the floor)

Okay, well that concludes that portion of the meeting. June, will you please take this seat.

JUNE

(slowly approaches the chair then sits)

Is this another interrogation?

MICHAEL

No, we only want an update on your drug situation.

JUNE

Are you asking or telling me? Because I can just walk out.

CAROL

We know you can but we're hoping you don't. We just want to know how you're doing.

JUNE

Could've asked me that over the phone.

TORRENCE

Yeah, but we haven't seen you in a while. You're looking good though.

JUNE

And I ain't hurting nobody or asking anyone for anything, anymore.

REGINA

What about your quality of life, health, kids, grandkids?

JUNE

I was living on the streets and now have my own place. I'd say my quality of life has improved. Is it being ashamed of me that bothers you?

TORRENCE

Back in the day, yes.

(walks over and places hands
on shoulders)

But it was five years before we even believed the rumors we heard on the streets.

CAROL

With our acceptance came some shame. But now we're coming at you with love.

LEONARD

We don't care what people think. We just want you to reach your full potential.

MICHAEL

You've made some strides but we feel you can do even more.

That's why we're here.

JUNE

Who are you to judge me?

CAROL

You're still taking this the wrong way.

JUNE

Then how should I take it?

BELINDA

With love.

REGINA

We won't give up on you. But we won't go down with you, either.

JUNE

(frustrated)

I'm doing the best I can.

CRAIG

You don't come around anymore. Mikey and I were taking bets that you wouldn't even show up today.

JUNE

Because I'm tired of being under the microscope. It's pressure I don't need from everyone.

DAMIEN

We still want to respect you Unk. Just give us something to work with.

REGINA

You still haven't said how you're doing?

JUNE

You mean *am I still getting high.*

BELINDA

Are you?

JUNE

(sincerely)

The demons still call me. In the middle of the day, the workplace or even in church. I must fight for my sanity every single moment.

MICHAEL

It seems you're using mind over matter to get by.

JUNE

(shaking his head)

That doesn't work with this monster. Think of your favorite food and multiple the cravings by 1,000,000.

TORRENCE

(puzzled)

How do you get through the cravings?

JUNE

By holding on and prayer.

LISA

Do you miss it?

JUNE

Yes.

LISA

Do you want it right now?

JUNE

Yes, but I'm here. That's the blessing.

CAROL

(curiously)

Don't they have meetings you can attend.

JUNE

They didn't work for me. By the time I finished listening, I wanted to get high again. So it's gotta be me and God.

MICHAEL

Please include us, too. We want to help.

MIKEY

Unk, plenty of families cut their people off. But not us.

LISA

What about your kids and grandkids?

JUNE

We've been talking. I've got a lot of work to do to earn their trust again.

BELINDA

That's wonderful news.

CRAIG

I'm just glad you showed, Unk. I expect to see you at the next meeting.

JUNE

I'll be here, Nephew.

REGINA

We can all help free you.

MOM

Naw, baby. Only Jesus can free you if you're willing. But you must give up your heart and soul to follow him. Let HIM handle it, and you'll find peace.

JUNE, MICHEAL, TORRENCE

(song)

*Free at last,
I know,
Love has come, my way,
And for the first time in my life,
I'm not alone, I'm not alone,*

*I once was blind, now I see
I have you LORD JESUS, deep inside of me,
And now when trouble comes my way,
There's no need for me to fret,
I simply drop down on my knees,
And ask my LORD to just,*

*Shine his light on me,
So that I'm able to see,
Yes that's the way his love goes*

*He's always by, your side,
In the LORD JESUS, you can confide,
He'll never turn HIS back on you,
If you trip and fall,
HE's not like any mortal man,
HE wants you to stand tall,
And spread HIS precious word,
To make sure that it's heard,
Yes that's the way HIS love goes,*

*For I knew that, one day I'd be free again,
Free from the burdens, that I thought I carried alone,
For so long,
And LORD, Oh everyone needs LORD,
I wish everyone could feel,
How it feels, to be free.....*

(FADE TO BLACK

(END OF SCENE)