

ASSISTED LIVING  
(WORKING TITLE)

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EXT. AIKEN, SOUTH CAROLINA -- MIDDAY

Dust twirls in the air outside an OLD SHACK. Windows busted. Paint chipped away. Weeds the length of trees. Nailed to the side of the antebellum house is a splintering sheet of plywood with the handwritten words, "Off Da Chain BBQ & Mo". If not for the handful of CARS parked on the dirt lot, you'd think this hole-in-the-wall was exactly that... a *hole in the wall*.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Langston Reginald Black. You haven't chewed once. You're eating too fast.

INT. OFF DA CHAIN BBQ AND MO -- CONTINUOUS

Inside is no better. Probably worse. It's dark, smoky and has a greasy feel to it. Those here sit on benches and eat off picnic tables that haven't been wiped in days. Surely it's not the atmosphere that draws people to this restaurant, it's the 'off da chain bbq and mo'.

**CLAUDETTE BLACK**(60's) sits at one of these tables. She's black and attractive. By no means has she let herself go mentally or physically. **LANGSTON BLACK**(60's), the man sitting across from Claudette, often compares his wife to a gem with sharp edges.

CLAUDETTE

Five minutes haven't passed and look at ya. Already down to your last rib.

Claudette watches as Langston grabs the last rib from his paper plate. His fingers are covered in barbecue sauce.

Langston pauses. Looks up at Claudette on his last leg of patience.

LANGSTON

For once would you quit timing me and leave me be. All I ask is to eat in peace, one time. One time!

Claudette shakes her head, relents.

CLAUDETTE

Go on. Go ahead and give yourself diverticulitis.

LANGSTON

I will thank you very much!  
Diverticulitis.  
(contemplates)  
Sounds complex.

Langston dips the rib in an extra side of barbecue sauce. He brings the succulent rib to his mouth, wildly rips the meat from the bone. Langston's eyes close as he savors the flavor. All sound fades as we lose Langston to some afar off utopia.

Claudette is mouthing words. Calling out to Langston. Speaking animatedly with her hands, but we hear nothing.

Suddenly, ALL sound floods back in.

CLAUDETTE (O.S.)

Langston! Do you hear me talking to you?

Langston has a dreamy smile on his face. Finally his eyes open. He's back. Satisfied yet again.

LANGSTON

Mmmm, Mmmm, Mmmm. They just don't know.

CLAUDETTE

They who?

Langston turns over his shoulder. Calls out.

LANGSTON

Ey Yuut!

YUUT

I heard my name. Somebody call my name??

We meet **YUUT**(40's) through a small short order window. Yuut's black, bald and in the back kitchen cooking with some serious flames. You don't get more Southern than Yuut. Which is his real name by the way. Pronounced... Y-o-o-t.

Langston raises his arm.

LANGSTON

Right here.

YUUT

Ah, yessir, Mr. Black!

LANGSTON

Yuut, how long have Claudette and I  
been comin' here?

Yuut works the math. Pauses from cooking.

YUUT

Well now let's see. Cousin Darby  
just turned 42 last week. My sista  
Bethel's gunna be 50 come this  
January. Kennedy, well I know we  
lost Kennedy in 73' because I ain't  
never in my life cried for a white  
man like I did for that man. My  
goodness.

(beat)

Wait, I take that back. I cried  
when what's his face felt the need  
to change himself from a he to a  
she. I keep forgetting his name.

MALE VOICE FROM THE KITCHEN (O.S.)

You talking about Bruce Jenner?

YUUT

Yeah! That's him. I cried a river  
when that man lost his damn mind.

Langston and Claudette look at each other as if to say 'wow'.

YUUT (CONT'D)

So what's 73' til now? How many  
years dun passed?

MALE VOICE FROM THE KITCHEN (O.S.)

42 years.

YUUT

42 years. That's how long it's  
been.

LANGSTON

Yuut, Kennedy died in 63'.

YUUT

You sure about that?

LANGSTON

Pretty sure.

YUUT

Well I'll be damned. Has it been  
that long?

CLAUDETTE

Uh-uh. It certainly has not. Yuut, Langston and I came here for the first time together. We didn't know each other in 63'.

LANGSTON

Damn right we didn't! Pappa was a rolling STONE back then.

Claudette purses her lips. Folds her arms.

LANGSTON (CONT'D)

(off Claudette's glare)

But all that's changed now dear.

Langston cleans the bone. Licks his fingers. Returns to his love affair with the rib.

Meanwhile, Yuut notices disappointment on Claudette's face as she prods at the unremarkable SALAD on her plate.

YUUT

Mrs. Black, how you doing over there with that salad?

Claudette forks salad into her mouth.

CLAUDETTE

(mumbles)

Just fine. Thank you.

That's a lie. Claudette wants ribs. But her Deal-A-Meal card on the table calls for salad today.

Yuut shakes his head, grins. Continues cooking.

INT/EXT. RESTAURANT -- LATER DAY

It's bright out. Feels like we just left a casino. Claudette holds a pair of crutches and the door for Langston who limps out laughing. His foot wrapped tight in a cast.

LANGSTON

(re: to Yuut)

Stay out of trouble now.

We hear Yuut's raspy laugh in the bg.

YUUT (O.S)

Oh, you know me.

LANGSTON

Alright brotha.

CLAUDETTE

Bye Yuut.

Langston loosens the belt around his burgeoning belly.  
 Claudette eyes him loathingly.

LANGSTON  
 Woman if you don't quit it.

CLAUDETTE  
 Quit what?

LANGSTON  
 Analyzing me.

CLAUDETTE  
 I am not.

LANGSTON  
 Yes, you are. Now pass me them  
 crutches.

Claudette passes over the crutches. A beat.

CLAUDETTE  
 So what if I am, huh?

Langston scoffs, shakes his head.

LANGSTON  
 I knew it. You can't help yourself.

Langston fits the crutches under his armpits and walks toward  
 the car. Claudette trails behind.

CLAUDETTE  
 It's just you used to be so lean.

LANGSTON  
 And you used to not be so mean.  
 Remember that?

CLAUDETTE  
 Uh-uh.

LANGSTON  
 Mhmm. Of course you don't.  
 Amnesia's convenient when you need  
 it.

Suddenly Langston stops. Turns back to Claudette.

LANGSTON (CONT'D)  
 Y'know, where's all this...  
 (mockingly)  
 ..."you used to be so lean" crap  
 coming from anyway?  
 (MORE)

LANGSTON (CONT'D)

You didn't have much to say the other night when all THIS...

(contours his body)

...put you to sleep like Riddick Bowe did Tyson. The only time you complain is after we leave here. Ain't my fault you listen to them dumb cards.

EXT. A LARGE HOME SOMEWHERE OUT WEST -- DAY

A Châteauesque home. Flowing fountains. Hedged bushes. A long winding driveway ending at a multi-car garage.

INT. HOME -- CONTINUOUS

An extremely elegant home. Vaulted ceilings. Ornate trimming. Imported furniture. No cookie cutter, here. We're talking custom designed down to the doorknobs.

INT. DEN -- CONTINUOUS

We meet **DESMOND BLACK**(late 30's), the son of Langston and Claudette, sitting back on an expensive leather sofa. Desmond carries himself professionally. Legs crossed. Bespectacled. He's cut from a different cloth.

Desmond flips through a BROCHURE. On front panel we see a image of a beautiful resort community with the caption, "The Orchard. An Assisted Living Community For The Young At Heart."

**VANESSA BLACK**, a charming, first-lady type, enters into the den and finishes garnishing the coffee table with hors d'oeuvre's and bottles of Evian water.

The doorbell rings. Desmond sets down the brochure.

DESMOND

That must be them.

VANESSA

I'll get it.

DESMOND

You sure?

VANESSA

Yes.

DESMOND

Thank you dear.

Vanessa goes to answer the door.

A STATELY FRONT DOOR OPENS TO:

a family of four looking awfully tired. Their economic hardship instantly felt.

VANESSA  
Hey! Ya'll made it. Come on in.

The family steps into the home.

VESTIBULE -- CONTINUOUS

Vanessa smiles and squats down before **JACKSON**(4) and **WHITNEY**(5), two little children hypnotized by the enormity of the home.

VANESSA  
(re: to Whitney)  
And who are you?

Whitney giggles.

WHITNEY  
Aunt Vanessa, it's me.

VANESSA  
(re: to Jackson)  
Have we met before?

Jackson laughs.

JACKSON  
Yes! It's me, Jackson.

VANESSA  
It can't be. I'm looking at two imposters!  
(looking around)  
Where's Whitney? Where's my little Jackson?

WHITNEY/JACKSON  
We're right here!

Vanessa tickles the children. They laugh out loud.

VANESSA  
Come here you two. I want big hugs.

Vanessa opens her arms. The children enter her embrace.

VANESSA (CONT'D)  
(re: to parents)  
My goodness. What are ya'll feeding  
these kids?

ERICK  
Way too much. I keep telling Maya  
that there are race horses that eat  
less.

MAYA  
The kids need to eat.

Erick slightly shakes his head. Vanessa straightens up.

VANESSA  
The kids need to eat, Erick.

Vanessa smiles. Erick returns a pained one.

ERICK  
Yeah, I suppose they do.

VANESSA  
How are you Erick?

ERICK  
Oh, I'm okay I guess.

**ERICK**(30's) is Maya's gentle, good-looking husband. He is soft spoken almost to a fault. But despite all, Erick's inability to hold down a steady job has impacted his confidence.

MAYA  
Sorry it took us so long.

VANESSA  
Was there a lot of traffic?

Erick nudges Maya but she continues speaking.

MAYA  
No. The car kept overheating. Would  
you believe we had to stop every  
half-hour to let it cool down.

VANESSA  
You're kidding?

TRANSITION TO:

EXT. INTERSTATE - FLASHBACK -- HOURS EARLIER

Cars and trucks blur by a SMOKING VEHICLE on the shoulder of the road. The hood is open. Erick is bent over the engine.

INT. SMOKING VEHICLE -- CONTINUOUS

We see Maya in the passengers seat. Whitney and Jackson ride in the back.

WHITNEY

Mom are we there yet?

Maya sighs frustration.

BACK TO:

INT. HOME -- CONTINUOUS

VANESSA

I'm so sorry. Well what matters most is that you are here.

Desmond enters the frame. We see he POCKETS THE BROCHURE.

DESMOND

No man!

Everyone turns to Desmond

DESMOND (CONT'D)

Black nor white, Jew nor Gentile,  
Protestant or Catholic, should ever  
have to experience the butt  
whooping my Warriors put on the  
Suns the other day. My goodness, 45  
points!

Desmond puts his hand on Erick's shoulder. Erick shakes his head, smiles.

DESMOND (CONT'D)

Erick, my brotha. I say this from  
the depths of my heart... Ya'll  
suck.

The children laugh.

VANESSA

Desmond!

ERICK

No, no. He's right. I'll admit we couldn't throw a rock in the ocean. It was ugly.

DESMOND

Indeed it was.

ERICK

But it's still early in the season.

DESMOND

An optimist, huh? Alright.

Desmond shakes Erick's hand. Pulls him in for a manly hug.

DESMOND (CONT'D)

Everything good brotha?

ERICK

Yeah...

DESMOND

Yeah?

ERICK

Mhmm...

DESMOND

You sure now? Because I'm under a new insurance policy and they allow a one time add on of any family member affected by emotional trauma. Just say the word.

MAYA

Alright that's enough you two.

Desmond jokingly taps Erick on the back. He then turns to Maya. Hugs and kisses her on the cheek.

DESMOND

Hey Maya.

MAYA

Hey Des.

EXT. INTERSTATE - SOUTH CAROLINA -- LATER DAY

An SUV speeds pass a road marker that reads: Saluda 40 miles.

INT. SUV - MOVING -- LATER DAY

Claudette drives. Follows the navigation systems route when a LOUD, ANUS SPLITTING FART is heard.

Langston is jerked from his slumber by his own flatus.

LANGSTON  
What we hit??

CLAUDETTE  
Huh?

Langston puts his hands together, looks up, carries a tune.

LANGSTON  
Jeesuusss, take the wheel.

CLAUDETTE  
We didn't hit anything you fool.  
Just you passing gas. Smokin' me  
out.

Langston grimaces, grabs his stomach.

CLAUDETTE (CONT'D)  
Don't feel so good do you?

LANGSTON  
When's the next exit?

CLAUDETTE  
Just passed it.

LANGSTON  
Whaddya mean we just passed it?!

Beads of sweat develop on Langston's forehead.

LANGSTON (CONT'D)  
Oh lord.

CLAUDETTE  
You didn't take your probiotics  
today, did you?

Langston's stomach gurgles something evil. He's glistening.

LANGSTON  
(re: spoken to stomach)  
Not yet. I'm not ready.

CLAUDETTE  
Not ready for what? You're supposed  
to take them every morning.

LANGSTON  
Pull over.

CLAUDETTE  
What?

LANGSTON  
Damn it woman pull over!

EXT. ROADSIDE -- CONTINUOUS

Dust surges behind the SUV as it pulls off the road.

INT. SUV -- CONTINUOUS

Langston opens the door. Mumbles to himself. His facial  
expression twisted as he hops out of the car. Wedges the  
crutches under his armpits and speeds off into the forest.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GUEST ROOM -- DESMOND AND VANESSA'S HOME -- LATER DAY

There's a longing in Vanessa who plays with Whitney and  
Jackson.

INT. DEN -- CONTINUOUS

Erick sits beside a quiet Maya. He sips on Evian and eats up  
most of the hors d'oeuvre's.

Desmond sits across, disturbed. Looking at his luxury watch  
every five minutes.

DESMOND  
This is ridiculous. Only Dante  
would still be late even after I  
urged he be here on time. He's  
doing this out of spite. I know it.

Erick leans in toward Maya.

ERICK  
(low voice)  
I keep forgetting, where's Dante  
live again?

MAYA  
LA.

ERICK

Ooh. I heard LA traffic is no joke.

DESMOND

There's no excuse.

The doorbell rings. Desmond gets up. Sighs annoyance.

THE FRONT DOOR OPENS TO:

a large, athletic black man in a black jacket and denim jeans. He dons a goatee with a little stubble on his cheeks. Finally, the 37-year old **DANTE** has arrived.

DANTE

Sorry I'm late. Church ran a lil' long this morning.

DESMOND

Church? It's Saturday, Dante.

DANTE

Oh, I didn't tell you? We're Seven-day Adventist now. Sundays' weren't working well with my schedule. Had to hit em with the change of direction, ya feel me.

DESMOND

It's seventh.

DANTE

What??

DESMOND

Seventh-day Adventist. Not Seven. You really should know the correct name of your denomination.

A beat. Dante rushes in towards Desmond.

DANTE

What??

Desmond cowers back.

DANTE (CONT'D)

You mocking me?

Desmond is silent...

DANTE (CONT'D)

Huh?

...he's frozen in fear.

DANTE (CONT'D)  
I'm talking to you lil Des!

Dante gets right up in the face of Desmond.

DESMOND  
I was just correcting you.

DANTE  
Did I ask to be corrected?

Dante glares at Desmond who takes a deep swallow.

DESMOND  
No.

DANTE  
That's right. I didn't. Now get  
outta my way.

Dante bumps into Desmond's shoulder in passing...

DANTE (CONT'D)  
Boi...

...shakes his head as he disappears into the home.

Desmond adjusts his shirt. Once-overs his surroundings,  
catches the PRYING WIDE-EYES OF A WHITE COUPLE across the  
street.

Desmond puts on a BIG SMILE, waves neighborly-like.

INT. DEN -- MOMENTS LATER

Maya jumps up upon seeing her brother enter into the den.

MAYA  
Dante!

DANTE  
Yo yo Maya Ang-ge-luuu!

Maya hits Dante playfully against the chest. They hug.

Desmond enters the den with a sour look on his face.

DANTE (CONT'D)  
(re: off Desmond entering)  
Almost forgot...  
(mocking, shakes Maya's  
hand)  
(MORE)

DANTE (CONT'D)  
 Hello lovely sister. It's truly an honor to see you once again. I assume life's been kind to you, has it not?

Maya laughs.

MAYA  
 Why are you talking like that?

Dante rolls his eyes. Tilts his head in Desmond's direction.

DANTE  
 When in Rome, right?

DESMOND  
 This isn't Rome.

DANTE  
 And you ain't black, bruh.

Dante glimpses the coffee table and the crumbs on the tray.

DANTE (CONT'D)  
 Looks like the party started without me.

Erick's cheeks are puffed out.

ERICK  
 (mumbles)  
 My bad Dante.

DESMOND  
 That's what happens when you're late.

DANTE  
 (re: to Maya)  
 There's no way he's one of us...

Maya grins.

MAYA  
 Quit it.  
 (looks around, wonders)  
 Hey where's...

DANTE  
 ...They're with their mom.

DESMOND  
 Since we are all finally here I think it's time we get started.

Everyone takes a seat. Dante squeezes between Erick and Maya.

DANTE  
Scoot over.

...tries to sit as far away from Desmond as possible.

DESMOND  
Now, does anyone have any idea why  
I called you all here?

Dante looks around. Decides to raise his hand.

DESMOND (CONT'D)  
(sighs)  
Yes, Dante.

DANTE  
Guilt.

DESMOND  
Excuse me?

DANTE  
It finally got to you.

DESMOND  
Sorry, I don't follow.. What guilt?

DANTE  
C'mon D.  
(looks around)  
Ya'll believe this dude.  
(beat)  
You can only keep a secret for so  
long. But I'm happy for you. It  
takes a big man to come clean and  
admit he's homosexual.

DESMOND  
What?!!

Erick spits out his water. Maya's eyes grow wide.

DANTE  
(re: to Erick and Maya)  
Wait a minute, ya'll didn't know?

DESMOND  
I'm not gay! I have a wife.

DANTE  
But no kids, though. Which means,  
ya'll ain't...

MAYA

...does this have anything to do  
with mom and dad?

Desmond shakes his head in disbelief.

DESMOND

...Thank you Maya... and yes it  
does. I've brought you all here...

Dante raises his hand and cuts off Desmond.

DANTE

Wait. Wait. Wait. Uh-uh. No one  
brought us here!  
(re: to Erick)  
Don't know about ya'll, but I put  
the three dollar unleaded gas in my  
tank.

ERICK

It's two ninety five out in AZ, but  
I'm with you.

DESMOND

Called! Okay! I called you all  
here. Good lord... I've called you  
all here because as you know mom  
and dad are getting up in age and  
I've been thinking a lot about  
moving them out of Saluda.

CUT TO:

A white picket sign reads, "Welcome to Saluda."

LANGSTON (O.S.)

I'm back, baby!

INT. SUV - MOVING THROUGH SALUDA COUNTY - SC -- DAY

Langston has his head out the window like a dog. His eyes  
squinting in the breeze.

EXT. SALUDA COUNTY -- CONTINUOUS

Situated among sloping hills fitted for growing crops, Saluda  
County is a historic, zebra town where BLACKS, WHITES and  
SWAYING CONFEDERATE FLAGS coexist. Most folks here know each  
other.

The SUV rolls through town. Langston admires the Town Clock,  
the Historic Theater and...

LANGSTON

Ey Vaughn! Vaughn! It's been three weeks man. Don't think I forgot!

We glimpse **VAUGHN**. A black war vet, a thread away from being shirt-tail poor, parked on the sidewalk before the Town Courthouse. 30% of the folks here ride the poverty line.

LANGSTON (CONT'D)

Quit yelling out the window.

INT. SUV -- CONTINUOUS

Langston rolls up the window.

LANGSTON

Buster still owes me two dollars.

CLAUDETTE

Two dollars? Now you know that man ain't got a pot to piss in.

LANGSTON

Ain't my fault.

CLAUDETTE

What's getting two dollars back gonna do?

LANGSTON

It's about principle.

CLAUDETTE

Principle? Ha! You should be ashamed of yourself. If you had an IOTA of principle you'd know that man deserves a lot more than two dollars.

BACK TO:

INT. DEN - "CLOSE ON THE WIDE EYES OF DANTE"

DANTE

Bruh, is you crazy??

PULL BACK to see Maya and the everyone else.

MAYA

I don't know. Maybe mom and that's a stretch, but dad... No way!

DANTE

Pop ain't goin nowhere. Bet that!

MAYA

Dad's only loved two things in his entire life, Saluda and Yuut's ribs.

Dante throws his hands up in the air after realizing...

DANTE

Forgot all about Yuut. Ha! Ya'll, remember the time the kitchen caught fire...

CUT TO:

EXT. DIRT LOT - OFF DA CHAIN BBQ AND MO - FLASHBACK -- DAY

Sirens roll in the distant. Patrons covered in soot, cough while their eyes take in the burning restaurant.

CLAUDETTE

Langston!

DANTE

Pop! C'mon Pop!

DESMOND

C'mon dad! Get out of there!

MAYA

Daddy!

YUUT

Mr. Black, let it go!

Suddenly, the front door opens. Smoke billows. Langston comes rushing out with a RACK OF RIBS safely secured in his bosom.

BACK TO:

INT. DEN -- CONTINUOUS

Dante shakes his head, reminisces.

ERICK

Took pop and Yuut two years to get that place running again.

MAYA

Des, I just don't think the west is ready for dad or mom.

DANTE

Better yet, mom and dad ain't ready for the west. It's fast out here.

(MORE)

DANTE (CONT'D)  
 (re: to Desmond)  
 Bruh, I'm telling you, pop ain't  
 leaving. And mom goes where pop  
 goes.

Desmond crosses his arms, sighs. Turns to Erick.

DESMOND  
 What do you think Erick?

ERICK  
 What do I think?

Erick emits a deep breath.

ERICK (CONT'D)  
 Well, I don't know. I mean, to me  
 this seems to be more of an  
 "immediate" family decision. I'm  
 really just a third party.

DANTE  
 Na, you ain't no third party E. If  
 anything you're as much apart of  
 this family as Des is.

Desmond shakes his head, gestures for Erick to continue.

ERICK  
 Well I know the kids will certainly  
 love having their grandparents  
 closer. But I gotta stand with Maya  
 and Dante on this one. I don't  
 think Mr. Black's gonna leave the  
 south.

Dante smiles. Shakes hands with Erick.

DANTE  
 Thank you.  
 (re: to Desmond)  
 Bruh, pops is like Brooks from  
 Shawshank.

DANTE (PRE-LAP) (CONT'D)  
 He's institutionalized.

EXT. HOME - RURAL SALUDA -- LATER DAY

Slow push passed weeping willows toward a WOOD FRAME HOUSE of  
 the Civil War era. A long porch with rocking chairs. Shutters  
 perilously hanging onto windows. Brick pilings compensate for  
 the antebellum home's list.

Even portions of the roof are exposed down to it's skeleton. Yet despite all this, there's a special beauty in it's decay.

Crows scatter as WE HEAR -- CAR DOORS CLOSE. Widen to see Claudette and Langston just now getting home.

LANGSTON

*G#D D@&%\$&T!*

CLAUDETTE

Langston!

LANGSTON

What??

CLAUDETTE

Your language. What's gotten into you?

LANGSTON

Can't you see I'm dealing with something here?

Claudette watches Langston limp toward the house bow legged.

CLAUDETTE

That's what your crutches are for.

Langston grumbles under his breath. Motions with his hand that he doesn't need the crutches or the...

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON a bottle of MAXIMUM STRENGTH DESITIN.

LANGSTON (PRE-LAP)

(annoyed, sotto voce)

...damn rash came on quick...

Widen to see we're in:

INT. BATHROOM - HOME -- MOMENTS LATER

Langston holds the bottle of Desitin as he reads the instructions on how to treat "adult" diaper rash.

LANGSTON

(reads out loud)

If rash persists for more than 6 days seek professional help?? Damn!

(shakes head)

Six days! Ain't gonna have no butt left in six days.

Langston feeds some of the cream onto his hand.

LANGSTON (CONT'D)  
 (sotto voce)  
 Can't believe this...  
 (re: yells out)  
 Woman this is all your fault!

INT. KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Claudette pulls a GALLON OF MILK from the fridge. She closes the door and we see a WASHER AND DRYER also in the kitchen.

CLAUDETTE  
 (yells out)  
 What's that?

We INTERCUT between LANGSTON in the bathroom and CLAUDETTE making coffee.

LANGSTON  
 I said this is all your fault!  
 (sotto voce)  
 Taking the damn napkins out da car.

Langston applies the cream to his butt. It stings. He winces.

LANGSTON (CONT'D)  
 Ah! SHI -- !!

BACK TO THE DEN - DESMOND'S HOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

MAYA  
 Since we're all here how about we just call mom and dad and see what they think...

DANTE  
 Before we do that though, I'm curious how all this is gonna be paid for? Cause I ain't got it.

DESMOND  
 And I'm not asking any of you for monetary help. Whatever the cost, I'm going to pay for it.

DANTE  
 Word?

MAYA  
 Seriously?

DANTE

You're telling me I ain't got to  
come outta pocket for anything?

Desmond shakes his head.

DESMOND

The financial burden will fall  
solely on me.

DANTE

Shoot. Let's give em a call. Can't  
hurt.

INT. KITCHEN -- CONTINUOUS

Claudette sits enjoying her CUP OF COFFEE when the phone  
rings.

CLAUDETTE

(re: yells out)  
I'll get it.

Claudette gets up, takes her coffee with her into the...

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Claudette answers the yellow, single-line Rotary phone.

CLAUDETTE

Hello?

CUT TO:

INT. DEN - DESMOND AND VANESSA'S HOME -- LATER

The ADULTS and WHITNEY gather around DESMOND'S IPHONE which  
is center stage on the coffee table.

DESMOND

Mom?

At times we INTERCUT between the GROUP and CLAUDETTE.

CLAUDETTE

Desmond baby, is that you?

DESMOND

Yes mom. It's me. Maya, Erick and  
the kids are here, too.

CLAUDETTE (O.S.)

Oh wow.

DANTE  
 (re: to Desmond)  
 So I'm invisible now?

DESMOND  
 ... Dante's here, too mom.

DANTE  
 Hey mama!

CLAUDETTE (O.S.)  
 Dante! My big sugar. How are you?

Mama always brings out a smile in Dante.

DANTE  
 I'm alright mama.

CLAUDETTE (O.S.)  
 Alright? Boy now don't you go  
 forgetting the ety... the ety...

DESMOND  
 Mom you mean to say etymology?

CLAUDETTE  
 Did I ask you Desmond? Always  
 butting in.  
 (re: Dante)  
 Dante baby, don't forget what your  
 name means.

Dante's Achilles heel is without a doubt his emotional life.

DANTE  
 ... Yes mama.

WHITNEY  
 Hey grandma!

CLAUDETTE (O.S.)  
 Whitney? Is that you?

WHITNEY  
 Uh-huh.

CLAUDETTE (O.S.)  
 Sweetie, you sound so big!

WHITNEY  
 That's cause in thirty eight days  
 I'll be six grandma.

CLAUDETTE  
Six! My Lord where does the time  
go?

MAYA  
Hey mom!

CLAUDETTE  
(concern in her voice)  
Maya?

MAYA  
Yes mom, it's me.

CLAUDETTE  
What's going on? What's wrong?

Maya looks around the room, wondering.

MAYA  
Nothing. Nothing I'm fine mama.

CLAUDETTE  
You sure?

MAYA  
Yeah...

CLAUDETTE  
Where's Jackson?

MAYA  
He's sleep. You know how cranky he  
gets when I wake him up.

CLAUDETTE  
Well who's running the show? You or  
the children?

Erick sneaks in a word...

ERICK  
The children.

...receives one of Maya's evil eyes.

CLAUDETTE  
Is that Erick I hear?

Erick glances at Maya before moving closer to the phone.

ERICK  
How you doing Mrs. Black?

CLAUDETTE

I'd be doing real good if I could figure out why my boys didn't come to be as good looking as you.

Erick smiles.

LANGSTON (O.S.)

I sho did my part.

We see Langston limp into the living room with his butt arched up high.

LANGSTON (CONT'D)

You need to be asking yourself if you did yours.

CLAUDETTE

Why are walking like a crippled giraffe?

LANGSTON

Gimme the phone.

Langston snatches the phone from Claudette.

LANGSTON (CONT'D)

Erick, listen here...

Maya

Daddy!

DESMOND

Hey dad!

DANTE

What up pop!

ERICK

Mr. Black!

LANGSTON

(confused)

What? What's going on here? Ya'll got me on speaker phone?

MAYA

Yeah dad. We're all over at Desmond's.

LANGSTON

(re: Claudette)

You must have it in for me, huh?

CLAUDETTE

What are you talking about?

LANGSTON

(re: to Claudette)

I'll tell you what I'm talking about. First you take all the napkins out da damn car without telling me and now this. You know good and well how I feel about being on speaker phone...

MAYA

Dad, it was my idea...

LANGSTON

(re: to Claudette)

Woman do you have any idea what my ass feels like right now? I got one of your five pound dumbbells wedged in between so air can get to it.

Dante and Vanessa try not to laugh. Erick thrums his fingers together and Maya covers Whitney's ears.

Desmond shakes his head, leans in toward the phone.

DESMOND

Dad... Dad...

LANGSTON

What?

DESMOND

This entire get together was actually my idea...

LANGSTON

Your idea?

DESMOND

Yes.

LANGSTON

(beat)

Well should I be concerned? Is everything alright, son?

DESMOND

Yeah. Yeah, everything's good. Things are good...

Desmond hesitates. Maya and Dante motion him to go on.

DESMOND (CONT'D)  
But uh... well... you see...

LANGSTON  
C'mon Ron Harper, spit it out.

DESMOND  
Well, the main reason why we called  
is to see how you and mom felt  
about possibly moving out this way.

An impasse. The screen splits. We see the children's  
expressions. They wait on pins and needles for their fathers  
response. Meanwhile Langston's shocked at what he just heard.

CUT TO BLACK.

TO BE CONTINUED.