

*ANENZINGA: An urban remastering of a greek tragedy*

**CHARACTERS**

**Anenzinga** bka **Ann** (government name: Antigone), daughter/sister of OG (government name: Oedipus, former king)

**Izzy** (government name: Ismene), daughter/sister of OG

**Rita** (government name: Eurydice), Cleavon's queen

**Cleavon** (government name: Creon), King

**HeyMon** (government name: Haemon), spent one week too long in Jamaica, son of Cleavon

**Mrs. Ethel Mae Brown** (government name: Teiresias)

**Sean**, a corner boy (government name: Sentry)

**Missy**, the messenger, they/them pronouns

**Church Choir Group** bka **CCG** (government name: Chorus)

**Choir Director** (government name: Choragos)

**HONORABLE MENTIONS**

**Eddie** (government name: Eteocles), brother of Ann and Izzy

**Paul** (government name: Polyneices), brother of Ann and Izzy

**SETTING:** By Cleavon dem palace the day after the war

**NOTES:**

- If you're offended by profanity, don't read the fucqin play
- (*Italicized parenthetical information=stage directions*)
- A lot of the dialogue is phonetically written. Breathe and work through it. You might have to try it a couple of times. It WILL make sense.....eventually.
- The f-word is dealt with usually with an f-u-q spelling, just because, so don't ask
- "Nibba" is purposely used. Do NOT use nigga, niggah, nigger, or any form with g's in it
- Casting: The Royals are from the African diaspora (African American, African Caribbean, you get the point). The Royals are Anenzinga, Izzy, Cleavon, and Rita. For MEMBa, think diva, think nosey neighbor from down the street that knows everybody's business, think formerly known as somebody's gospel choir director. Missy uses they/them pronouns. It's not difficult. The rest of the cast is left up to the casting director, but, I mean, make choices that make sense, people.
- / at the end of a line means there's a cut off by the person with the next line
- - at the end of a word or truncated word is a character cutting off that word
- ... as a line is just the character staring blankly and having nothing to say, but that thing should happen; it should be acknowledged.

## SCENE 1

ANN: Izzy, you heard what happened?

IZZY: Naw. I just know our brothers dead.

ANN: I knew it! (*Conspiratorially, like in a hush hush tone*) That's why I called you. We got ta rise up.

IZZY: ...

ANN: Omigod. You really don't know NOTHIN' 'bout what happened?!? Look. After the war, Cleavon buried Eddie, but left Paul out to rot because Paul was on the other side fighting against him. Cleavon said he ain' NEVAH gon let Paul be buried right. He don' care what NOBODY say. AND, he said that if anybody TRIES to mourn him, he's gon' kill 'em dead. Now, here's where we come in. 'cause they're our brothers, right? We HAVE to mourn them. They BOTH deserve to be buried. So what you gon' do?

IZZY: ...

ANN: Um. Hello? Are you in or out?

IZZY: ...

ANN: (*Annoyed AF*) I'M. FINNA. BURY. MY. BROTHER. HEFFA. What you gon' do?

IZZY: Din you just say, Cleavon gon' kill people dead if they mourn him? Bih, I'm trying to stay alive.

ANN: He's OUR. BRUHHHHTHHHHERRRRR.

IZZY: "GET KILLED DEAAAAAADDDDD."

ANN: (*Fed TF up*) Fuhget you and fuhget Cleavon, too. I'ma do what I'm gon' do.

IZZY: Listen. OG Daddy-Brother dead. Mama dead. Our brothers dead. I'm not ready to get deaded. Plus. We're women. What we gon' do against all them men?

ANN: Fine. (*Rolls her eyes*) Weak ass. I don't WANT you to come with me, but remember this: it goes against all that is holy to NOT bury Paul the right way. I ain' gettin' caught on the wrong side of the gods. You do you. Boo.

IZZY: I mean...the gods are cool, but what about the LAWS? (*she think she smart, but nope*)

ANN: Whatever. THAT'S what you on? All of a sudden, we think the laws were written to protect US? Girl, bye.

IZZY: I mean...okayden. Bye. Get dead or don't. I won't tell nobody what you doin', though.

ANN: I give zero fuqs if you tell. YOU the one everybody gon' be looking at sideways when they find out you knew all along.

IZZY: You can't do it anyway. You're not strong enough.

ANN: Bih, please. Get out my face. In the immortal words of Simba, "I laugh in the face of danger. Hahahahaha!"

*(They leave.)*

CCG: Here comes the sun/son.

CHOIR DIRECTOR: *(telling us what had happened)* Paul came up in here on one hunnid.

CCG: *(testifyin' and verifyin')* He did, but...oop. He wasn't ready for what Thebes had to offer.

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Because GAWD don't like ugly!

CCG: So woo wap da bam, him and all his boys got deaded.

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Let the choir sang! *(It's about to be a whole-ass whoop! And then, beat)* Wayment. Here come Cleavon. *(whole-ass attitude)* What HE want?

CLEAVON: Y'all. We won, and by we, I mean "I." **I** won because now that both of OG's sons are dead, I'm the next in line, so. See how that works? Now, I know some of you have doubts. I get it. So here's my campaign speech in a nutshell: I hate cowards and people who do not put America, I mean Thebes, first. If you put your friendship priorities over the priorities of the nation, you suck, too. I like friends. I have the best friends, but I will kill 'em dead if they get in my way—*(quick recover)* the way of the nation's best interests.

That said...Now that I'm king. I get to make the rules, so here they go: Eddie, a true patriot, will be buried with full honors. Paul, that summummabitch who TRIED it with me? will be left to the dogs. Not na'anh one ah y'all bet touch him, pray over him, cry, look at him with pity, NOTHING. Ya heard? Traitors gets nothing from me.

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Dude. I mean, if you say so. We just the choir.

CLEAVON: Yeah. You right. *(feelin' the power)* Do what I said do.

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Okay, but one thing. Can you get the young folx, a xennial or somebody, to go out and carry that message? Our knees hurt. They don't call us boomers for nothin'. Boom! Knees gone bad.

CLEAVON: Omigod. (*Fed TF up*) I'm not really asking you to do nothin' but SANG about it every chance you get. I got Sean and the sentries, er...scratch that, the other corner boys, to go 'round and warn folx. They gon' be my look out, too. Geezus.

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Then what you want US to do?

CLEAVON: Just don't be a sanctuary city, I mean, a safe haven for people who are not abiding by my new law.

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Well, shit. Didn't you say you were gonna dead people who break the law? We ain't crazy!

CLEAVON: I DID say that. Yes I did. But sometimes people come around with money to make you help them, and you know that old saying, "Money talks. Bullsh—" (*a corner boy enters*)

SEAN: Okay (*fake breathing harder than is really necessary, but he gets an Oscar for this shit*). Listen. I'm not gon' say I'm breathin' this hard because I ran ALL THEE WAY HERE even though every time I STOPPED running? I thought about going back to where I came from because I didn't want to be the one to tell you, so Don't Shoot The Messenger (*giggles, amused with himself*). See what I did there? (*awkward pause because ain't NOBODY laughing*) Anywho...back to what I was sayin'. I was runnin' here. Runnin' hard. And I kept sayin' to myself, "Self? Dafuq is you doin'?" You KNOW this news is gon' set Cleavon ALL THE WAY OFF." But THEN I said to myself, "Self? But what if somebody ELSE tells Cleavon the news FIRST? Den you REALLY gon' be in trouble." So I listened to my second self, and here I am to tell you the news because you know what erbody say, "It's gon' be what it's gone be," so YOU know. Here I am.

CLEAVON: (*'bout ready to slap the taste out of Sean's mouth for taking so damn long*) Nibba! WHAT???

SEAN: First. Lemme be crystal clear. I ain' DO it. I ain' SEE who did it. So you can't dead me over what somebody else did, right? I mean. Right?

CLEAVON: Dude. I'm about ta slap the---(*breathes, 'cause he needs to know what TF*) WHAT are you TALMBOUT?!

SEAN: Shit. How do I put this?

CLEAVON: If you don't spit it out...

SEAN: Alrightalrightalright. Shit. Whew! Gimme a second. This shit hard. 'Cause YOU scary. (*pause for just that moment before Cleavon slaps the shit out of him, and then*) That dude Paul? The one you said nobody bet not touch-him-pray-over-him-cry-look-at-him-with-pity-NOTHING-Ya-heard? That du--/

CLEAVON: /Yes YES. WHAAAAAAAAAAAAAT?

SEAN: Somebody sprinkled DUST on his dead ass kinda like they was trying to BURY him! Then they ghosted.

CLEAVON: WHO?

SEAN: Dude. (*one time for the slow folx*): I started OUT sayin' I ain' know. Don't ask me. There are NO signs. We was just mindin' our own business when one of my boys peeped it. And THAT's when shit got HOT 'cause errbody thought that errbody else did it.

(*CLEAVON is at the HEIGHT of pissedivity, but Sean is too caught up in telling his story to notice.*)

SEAN: So DEN, right? We was finna come to blows about it, but pretty much errbody had PROOF that they ain' do it, so since ain' none of US do it, we came to the realization that SOMEbody had to come tell YOU. Shit got real quiet then 'cause, again, YOU scary AF and ain' nobody wanna tell you, so we played a game of craps an' I lost. So, here I am.

CHOIR DIRECTOR: (*creeps in with the church finger raised*) Um... You know, 'Von... GAWD don't like ugly.

CLEAVON: Shut-the-fuq-up. GAWD? You think Gawd loves a TRAITOR? You crazier than you look. Nope. This is the work of my haters. They been in the shadows bribing people. I TOLD y'all. Money talks!

(*to Sean*): Listen. Find this dude, and I mean QUICK, or DEATH is gon' be the GOOD thing that happens to you. (*to the Choir Director, on the low*): And don't call me 'Von again. It ain't Kinglike.

SEAN: Um. A word?

CLEAVON: Why aren't you GONE yet?? You are a nagging little/

SEAN: /Am I the nag or is your CONSCIENCE the nag?

CLEAVON: All of a sudden, you smart now?

SEAN: Listen, it's not what I SAID, it's what you DID that's naggin' you. I'm just sayin'.

CLEAVON: Shut-the-fuq-up dude.

SEAN: I mean, for real. Think about it. What you expect when YOU make yourself the judge and your judgement is wrong?

CLEAVON: Ohhhhh, SOMEbody was listening in literature class. Doing the whole play on words thing? Well, I'm done playing with you, boy. Get me the man who disobeyed my orders. (*He goes into his palace.*)

SEAN: (mimicking Cleavon) “Get me the man. Get me the man.” Whatever. I’m out. Fuq that dude. (He leaves.)

CCG: Nothing is more wondrous than man. We were told to sing all this stuff about men being great, but what happens when them dummies tempt the gods? Nothing good. THAT’s what.

END SCENE 1

## SCENE 2

(Sean, the corner boy, comes in with Ann)

CHOIR DIRECTOR: What the actual... Dude. You KNOW that's OG's daughter, Anenzinga, right?

SEAN: (*shrugs*) Look. I'on care WHO she is. SHE did it. We SAW her trying to bury dude. Where's Cleavon?

(*Cleavon is CLEARLY coming out of the palace.*)

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Um. I KNOW you see him coming out the damn palace.

CLEAVON: Why are you back here? I told you to get the man who disobeyed my orders.

SEAN: Listen, to-be-AHness, I actually said to myself, "Self? Fuq that dude. I ain comin' back. He scary AF," but then lo and behold I walk up on THIS. Looky here looky here. I fount her. Yup, she/her/hers pronouns. SHE did it and I wanted to be the one to tell you, so here I am. With her. Ask her. And now I'm done. Peace.

CLEAVON: But this is Anenzinga. WTAF? Where is the man who dusted Paul's ass against my orders?

SEAN: Omigod. Do you EV.ER. LISS.SENN. SHE did it!

CLEAVON: ('bout ta bust a blood vessel) You say WHAT nah?

SEAN: Seent it with my own eyes. Now, again, buhbye.

CLEAVON: Nope. You gon' hafta give me more than that. I need ALL the T.

SEAN: Oh, NOW I'm not a nag. NOW alluvasudden you wanna hear my voice. (*Cleavon gives him the look.*) Aight den. Bet. Wanna hear about it? Here it go. First off, after you got all hahSTYLE and threatened to dead errbody, we hurried up back and dusted the dust OFF Paul so we could, y'know, "unbury" him. Side note: Dude STANK! So that's why we posted up upwind of his ass so we ain' have to smell him. Then a dust storm kicked up--of course, because duh, we're in the middle of a fucqin desert—so we had to close our eyes for a sec, then when it was over and we opened our eyes, THIS chick is standin' there. And—now, I'm gon' use my literary skills again and give you this extended simile—just like a mother bird sings a shrill trill off key when she finds her babies have been stripped from her nest, so did THIS one cry a mournful cry when she saw we had dusted the dust off his ass. But, like she ain' know what the law is, she went BACK and sprinkled MO' dust on his ass. DASS how we know it was her. Caught her red handed! She ain' even try to deny it when we walked up on her.

Which, you know, was cool. And also, a lil bit creepy, but whatever. So, here I am. Trying to save my own skin by sellin' her out, but whatever. It is what it is.

CLEAVON: Ann. On OG nem. You did this??

ANN: Yup.

CLEAVON: *(to SEAN)* getdafuqouttahere. *(Sean gets the fuq outta there.)*  
*(to ANENZINGA)* I know you heard the new law I made.

ANN: I mean, you had the CCG singing it all over the place. How could I NOT?

CLEAVON: And you....what, exactly?

ANN: Did what I had to do. *(clears her throat; in her best speech and debate voice)*: You are not the gods. You dared to defy rules the gods bade us follow. Those rules are eternal and immortal *(quick pause, thinks to herself "was that redundant?" Shakes it off)*. Th- They were here before you and they will be here after you. *(thinks: "Yeah, immortal, eternal, really close to redundant. Whatever. I continue.")* I fear what it would mean for my soul if I did not do the RIGHTEOUS thing and obey the rules of the gods, which you, sir, are NOT, and I am not here for your shit, so *(end of speech and debate voice because she just can not)*.

Look, I know I'm gon' die. One way or another. Eventually. At some point. But to quote the sage Claude McKay, "If we must die, O let us nobly die," so I did what was RIGHT by my brother and by what the gods say we are SUPPOSED to do.

You might think I'm crazy, but remember when you point the finger at somebody, you got three more crazy ass fingers pointing back at you!

CHOIR DIRECTOR: *(in a tizzy)* LAWD, the girl is JUST like her Daddy-Brother. Bullheaded!

CLEAVON: You done bumped yo' head and cut it to the white meat. You dare to A) DEFY MY LAW and 2) be a WOMAN talking to a MAN like that? What the what?! *(to the guards)*: AY! Go get her sistah. I'ma bout to settle this shit RIGHT NAH. I don't care if you are my kin. *(aside)*: even though I ain't quite worked out how that all works...

ANN: *(bored with this overreactive POS)* Dude. What ELSE do you want other than ME dead?

CLEAVON: Nuthin.

ANN: Then DO it.

*(wait for it)*

*(low growl)* Nibba.

*(pause for the cause, but nah. Cleavon ain't got shit. She just pulled his card.)*

You doin' all that runnin' off at the mouth. People should be singin' my praises because they KNOW what I did was RIGHT, but Noooooooo. Everybody is scared of YO crazy ass. Well not me. Not today.

CLEAVON: Bih, please. Nobody here STAN for you.



ANN: On the low, they do. *(beat)* You'll see.

CLEAVON: *(takes it in; did it just get cold in here? it rattles him a bit; he tries to put on his gangsta)* ....WHATEVA. THEY not guilty. YOU ARE. So THERE!

ANN: Sorrynotsorry. I did the right thing.

CLEAVON: *(coming up with something good, but...not; blurts it out)* Eddie was your brother, too!

ANN: O.....Kaaaaayyyy..... *(gives the "your point?" stank face)*

CLEAVON: You'on think he's insulted that you honor Paul?

ANN: *(whispers, because Cleavon is trippin')* Ummmm....Eddie's dead. So, no. *(I would NOT be mad if Curtis Mayfield's Freddie's Dead played under this.)*

CLEAVON: I HEARD that. And he WOULD be insulted because YOU are honoring a TRAITOR!!!! Haha!! *(victoriously, but....is it?)*

ANN: Paul was Eddie's brother. Traitor or not. And the dead are supposed to be honored the RIGHT way. The GODS said so. How many times...UGH! *(gettin' fed up with this dude)*

CLEAVON: If you're bad, you don't get the same treatment.

ANN: And who are YOU to determine bad from good? So you the GODS translator now?

CLEAVON: Bad is bad. Even when you're /dead

ANN: /Well I'm gonna be on the side of RIGHT, like /I said.

CLEAVON: /Then you're gonna DIE "RIGHT" – RIGHT in the pits of /HELL!!!

CHOIR DIRECTOR: /ooh-ooh, chile, here come Izzy! She crine.

*(Izzy enters, crying her lil eyes out)*

CLEAVON: Et tu, Izzy. *(aside):* I learned that in Shakespeare class. *(back to Izzy):* Were you in on this?

IZZY: If she said I was.

ANN: Aw, HELL NAW. You not finna take some credit and look all brave.

IZZY: But, like, I get it now, so I'm here for you. I'm...your...ally?

ANN: Nope. Nope-nope-nope-nope-nope-nope-nope. To be an ally, you can't just talk the talk. You have to walk the walk. And you din. So nope.

IZZY: No, but really. I'm on your side, sister.

ANN: MY crime. MY death. You can't have it.

IZZY: But what us gon' do when you're gone??

ANN: Ask Mister over there. He's "strong enough" to help you figure this out (*cracking up laughing because she pictures Mister from the Color Purple, used her sister's words against her, AND because she just wants to cackle at this sad heffa*)

IZZY: (full blown pout tantrum) Why are you laughing at me???

(*ANN abruptly cuts off laughter; dead ass serious; dead ass.*)

IZZY: What can I do?

ANN: Look. Save yourself. This dude finna kill me. I'm good with that.

CLEAVON: Awwwww. Looky here. One little chicky done lost her mind. The other one never had one.

IZZY: (*pleading-crying-lashing out*) Sometimes when people are hurting they do dumb things, Cleavon! (*THAT'LL tell him. Oy.*)

CLEAVON: Clearly. 'cause you just pleaded guilty to a crime you didn't commit. Dummy.

IZZY: But but, I can't live without my sister! (*full on tantrum*)

CLEAVON: Yeah....that's a little too little too late. Ya feel me? Yo' sistah 'bout to get got.

IZZY: (*The ringer*) But she's HeyMon's BRIDE!!!

CLEAVON: (*she THOUGHT; Cleavon yawns loudly*) Other fish in the sea. Other fields to plow. More where that came from....You get the picture.

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Wait. Whet? You really plan on taking HeyMon's bride away from him? Dude. Seriously?

CLEAVON: Pssshhh. NO. Duh. (Everybody breathes a sigh of relief, and then): DEATH is gonna take her away from him. Keep up.

CHOIR DIRECTOR: (in a whole-ass tizzy) So you really gonna dead her?!? (*starts fanning and pacing*)

CLEAVON: (SO flustered RN) OH my—What the--? Fucqing MORONS.

(to the guards) Take them outta here, but WATCH them because errbody get smart and devious when they know death is knocking at the door.

**PLAY BREAK: LET THE CHOIR SANG bka ODE from Scene 2**

CCG: (tambourines, organs, and drum set in place; the choir brings a whole-ass whoop! There are doves flying, incense burning, and praise dancing):

WELLLLLLLLLL! I said, WELLLLLLLLLLLLLL!

Oh, but you bet not piss off the gods!

I said, WELLLLLL (*think, if Luther Vandross or Patti LaBelle got ahold of this “Well” in concert, how long would it go on? That’s it.*)! You bet not piss off the gods!!!!

(*praise break right quick because somebody got caught up in the WELL*)

‘Cause listen to Miss Celie, she tryna tell you somethin’

Til you do right by the gods errthing you THANK ‘bout gon’ crumble

They’ll make your house RUMBLE

You bet not STUMBLE

OG’s house been full o’ sadness

Til ya’ girl Ann stopped the madness

Then her brother died and she couldn’t take it

Broke the law ‘cause she could not wake him (her brother, that is)

WHYYYY is Cleavon this THICK? (*full stop, this shit is dramatic*)

Dear Zeus, this dude is SICK! (*full stop, again. Dramatic AF*)

He thinks he can’t get GOT!

The gods will forget this. NOT! (*full stop because, y’know*)

(*musical interlude and quick ball change to finish*)

Oh, you betta watch out

You betta not pout

You betta stop now

‘cause Oh boy oh wow

This little scheme will get you in the END!

WELLLLLLLLL!

END SCENE 2

### SCENE 3

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Oh, snap. Here come HeyMon. You think he mad at you for what you did, 'Von, uh, I mean, Cleavon? King. Cleavon.

CLEAVON: We 'bout ta find out. *(to HeyMon)*: Son, you mad, bro, or we good?

HEYMON: We good. You my dad. These bitches ain't loyal.

CLEAVON: Ay!!!! *(Big hug and slaps on backs; long ass bro ritual)* That's my nibba even if you don't get no bigger. This is what a dad hopes for: a loyal son. Fuhget that chick.

You weren't gon' love her long anyway. Shit grow old. She woulda been a handful. She can go straight to hell. You know she the ONLY—listen to that again—the ONLY muffoccur with the bal-, um, ovaries to defy my orders? I mean. The audacity. The unmitigated GALL. The cojones on this chick! Check that....you know what I mean.

So, you know I gotta do this, right? I can't be seen as weak. I gotta get her dead 'cause that's what I said I was gon' do. And you know she gon' try that "but we family" shit. I ain' hearin' it.

Nope. I said in my campaign speech *(cue the patriotic music)* "I make the rules," and she broke them, so she gotta get dead. No traitors! See, only a person who knows how to FOLLOW the rules can MAKE the rules. THEY are the ones you can depend on. Like, like...SOLDIERS. Yeah, like soldiers.

People who DON'T follow the rules send everything to shit. SHIT, I tell you!

THAT's why we have rules. So we don't. have. SHIT.

CHOIR DIRECTOR: *(overly impressed with Cleavon's lil speech)* Dzaaaaaaaaammmmm. That was good, Dzaddy!

HEYMON: Pops. I ain' bout ta be the one to tell you you wrong, BUT... *(HUGE ASS BREATH. This is NOT gonna be easy.)* I been eavesdroppin' on other folx conversations, and *(another breath; whoo lawd! This is...okay, here goes)* THEY say you wrong--they just don't wanna tell you because you scary AF. AND, AND they say that this is the stupidest shit they have ever HEARD. How you gon' DEAD this girl for wantin' to give her brother a PROPER BURIAL. It's in the GODS' HANDBOOK!!!!!! She was doing the RIGHT THING!!!!!! WTF is wron-- *(whoa, whoa, whoa, too far; he pulls himself back)*

I mean... *(ALL the way back \*ahem\*)* that's what THEY sayin'. *(Cleavon is NOT happy; HeyMon tries to make this right)* Trust and believe, all I want is for YOU to be happy. But youshouldbewillingtolistentoo. I'm just sayin'. You think you have all the answers and you turn out to be wrong? It's gon' hurt you in the long run. *(Cleavon is REALLY not happy)*

I mean, isn't it better to be safe than sorry?

Look at all the shit in nature that bends to reason to keep themselves safe. Trees that BEND when the floods come, stay ALIVE. Trees that don't, get dead. Ships that keep their sails too tight? OVER they go. A little slack, they on track! *(Cleavon is about to bust a blood vessel, but HeyMon is ALSO OVER THIS SHIT)* Okay, y'know what? Get over yourself, my dude. I know I'm a millennial, but sit down, Boomer, before you hurt yourself. I know you a manly man

and believe in mansplaining, but listen, sometimes, just sometimes, we can learn from other people. There. I'm done. Fuq!

CHOIR DIRECTOR: (*swooning*) Dzaaaaaaaaaammmmm. 'Von, you should listen to the boy. (*Cleavon gives him the look*) Oop! And, um, and Hey-HeyMon, baby, you should listen to your daddy.

CLEAVON: (*ignoring Choir Director; straight to HeyMon*) YOU want ME to listen to YOU? (*Channeling his best Papa Pope*): YOU are a BOY. I am a man. Don't you forget it.

HEYMON: You right, you right....(*pause, fiddles with his mustache—real or not*), IF I'm wrong, but if I'm right, why would you care about my age?

CLEAVON: So (*trying to make this make sense in his brain*)....you, you on the side of a TRAITOR?

HEYMON: Nope. I hate traitors.

CLEAVON: So, ya girl not a traitor?

HEYMON: Like I said, that's what THEY sayin'.

CLEAVON: So, I'm supposed to listen to "them." "They" think they know better than me. Nope. I make the rules. (*full on tantrum*) I make the ruuuuuuuules!!!

HEYMON: Who sounds like a BOY NOW?

CLEAVON: MY voice. MY rules.

HEYMON: You sound stupid.

CLEAVON: (*Damn. checkmate; change tactics*) And YOU a sellout. To a WOMAN.

HEYMON: Oh, so YOU a woman NOW? 'cause I'm only worried about YOU, so....

CLEAVON: You not THAT worried. You tryin' ta diss me. IN PUBLIC!

HEYMON: And YOU! YOU are publicly going against the GODS' HANDBOOK!!! How many times.... UGH! (*He. CAN. NOT.*)

CLEAVON: Soundin' like a female. You just wanna plead her case.

HEYMON: Actually. To-be-AHness. I'm trying to plead YOURS. FOOL.

CLEAVON: Look. You ain' gon' marry her. Not while she got breath in her body.

HEYMON: Aight den. Kill her, but you'll be killing someone ELSE, too.

CLEAVON: That a threat, boy?

HEYMON: Nah. Dass a "iss gon' be what iss gon' be."

CLEAVON: Watch ya tone with me, boy.

HEYMON: I am. Otherwise I woulda called yo' ass a sick-ass bastard.

CLEAVON: You'on know the half. *(to the servants)*: Bring them bitches out here. He gon' WATCH her die.

HEYMON: Nope. No. Nooo. No way. Unh unh. Not happenin'. Like I said, sick-ass bastard. Fuq wrong witchu? I'm out. *(He leaves, cussin' under his breath, THIS muffuccor.)*

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Aw shit. He mad! That's bad.

CLEAVON: Whateva. He mad. Not gon' save these heffas' lives, though. Trust and believe.

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Wait. Bofum??? My dude. SERIOUSLY?

CLEAVON: You right. My bad. Izzy just dumb, but she ain' DO nothin'.

CHOIR DIRECTOR: *(cautiously, with church finger raised)* Ummmm...what about... Annnnn?

CLEAVON: I'll turn her into a flea and then I'll put her in a box, and then I'll put that box inside another .... Wait. Wrong show. Rewind. *(something's wrong? shakes it off; with a kingly bravado—whatever the fuq that means)*: I'ma lock her ass in a vault in the middle of bumfuq. I'ma leave her with some food so it won't look like I left her to die. And then she gon' have to call on her GAWDS to save her since she so stuck on listenin' to THEM and not ME. Maybe they save her; maybe they don't.

### **PLAY BREAK: LET THE CHOIR SANG bka ODE from Scene 3**

CCG: *(cue the greatest love song music ever made to score underneath; the CCG golden couple dances a pas de deux)*

Oh, love. Look what you've done to us!

This girl done came and struck up such a fuss.

Oh, oh, loooove. These humans in such a mess.

Father and son done squared up chest to chest.

What us gone do?

We do need you.

Oh, looooooooooove. *(Music flourishes)*

END OF SCENE 3

#### SCENE 4

*(This whole section should be done a la James Brown throwing off the red cape but this is opposite day.)*

CHOIR DIRECTOR: (full blown sob and holla) Ooh, child, I can't TAKE it! I can't watch this girl be sent off to the vault in bumfuq! Dis tew much!!! *(takes the cape off of Ann)*

*(“Here comes the bride” plays in the background because Cleavon got a fuqqed up sense of humor)*

ANN: Oh, no. *(puts the cape on herself)* Y'all gon' watch 'cause you KNOW it's bogus. I'm dead woman walking up in here. (beat) And turn that music off! Sick-ass bastard.

CCG: Never seen no shit like *(take the cape off)*  
Never seen no shit, shit like this  
She's healthy, she's not wounded  
How. Can. She. Be. Walking. To. Her. Death? *(Hum and sway because they feelin' it)*

ANN: It's like my girl, Na--government name: Niobe. All alone. *(cape on)* Turned into stone. Now all we hear is her crying streams of tears. *(CCG does spoken word finger snaps until...)*

CCG: *(SCRATCH the record; Wayment; church fingers raised; rip the cape off)* Did this heffa just compare herself to a goddess???? *(lots of gossip chatter, disapproval, and then)*: But if you wanna make that comparison, then shouldn't you be feelin' like a badass? Like a GODDESS? Go on witchyo god self, den.

ANN: Ah, y'all got jokes. *(to the audience)*: Ay, y'all see this?? NO pity. NONE. Bet. *(cape on)*

CCG: Look *(cape off)*, YOU didn't follow the rules. Now you go to the vault in bumfuq. This MIGHT have something to do with OG, y'know? Sins of the father type thing?

ANN: GatDAMmit! I KNEW it. Daddy-brother and Ma. THAT nasty shit done came back to haunt us all. *(cape on with dramatic flair)* All my life, I had ta fight. Now, they bout to kill me dead! WHY???????? *(oh yes, lean in to Sophia and Nettie)*

CCG: *(mid WHY? Cape off)* Baby, YOU did this to yourSELF.

ANN: You right. You right. I should go. Take me away. *(cape on)* Take me to the place where there is no love, just hate; no joy, just pain; no music, just silence; no justice, no pe-/

CLEAVON: (fed TF up!) /OH! FOR THE LOVE OF...You've had your five minutes of fame. *(to the servants)*: Get her ass outta here! *(but the servants ain't moving fast enough)*

ANN: OH! This is the big one! You hear that Persephone? I'm comin' to join ya! And errbody gon' be there—'cept Izzy—mama, daddy-brother, brother-brothers, especially Paul 'cause I made sure he was done right.

(*break from the dramatic to make a point*): And lemme just say that if I'm wrong, I guess I'll find out in the afterlife, but if I'm right—like I know I am—(*cue the dramatic*) I want a thousand deaths visited upon THAT muffoccur!! (*points to Cleavon*)

CHOIR DIRECTOR: (*gasp! A little light headed.*) Oh, dew geetus! NO! Not CLEAVON.

CLEAVON: (*unfazed*) Yeah, she good and crazy. No wonder the guards tryna hold out from takin' her to the vault.

ANN: (*hand up to her ear; sniffs the air—but....why?*) Ohhhhhhhh, you hear that? Death calls for you, son.

CLEAVON: Nope. Pick up the phone. It's for YOU.

ANN: (*to the audience*): Y'all see me, right? Daughter-sister of a king 'bout ta straight up be led to my death. You gon' see who's right. Watch. You gon' see. I'll give you a hint. It's me. I'M right, but okay. (*to the guards*): Whatchyall waitin' on? We out. (*They leave*)

#### **PLAY BREAK: LET THE CHOIR SING bka ODE from Scene 4**

CCG: You just ordinary people  
Look at all these other folx  
You just ordinary people  
Even the gods been known to roast

(*finger snaps, four corners and jazz hands*)  
Ya got Danae and Dryas and  
Cleopatra (not THAT one)  
All locked up and pent up  
Right before they gave up  
The ghost

END SCENE 4



## SCENE 5

[Enter Mrs. Ethel Mae Brown—a cappella singer, activist, advisor (MEMBa, for short), former member of the CCG who broke off to do her own thang, being led in by one of her back up singers; MEMBa sings most of her words because she's extra like that; she uses all types of songs because she likes to show her range]

MEMBa: Here I am Clea-von (*backup singer: signed sealed delivered*). I'm here!

CLEAVON: (*smacks lips, rolls eyes*) WhatCHU want?

MEMBa: (*in her best 'Yoncé voice*) LISS-SENNNNNNNN!

CLEAVON: ...

MEMBa: (*switch, showing off her Reggae vibe*) Three little birds perched on my doorstep, singin' sad songs, their melodies sad and blue. This is my message to you ooh ooh. (*backup singer: You betta start worryin'. Bout that thing.*)

(*switch*) That thing, that thing, thaaaat thiiiiing (*she gets caught up in her Lauryn Hill swing; Cleavon clears his throat*).

(*spoken*): Right. The birds.

(*switch*) Everybirdy was kung fu fightin' (*backup singer: doo-da-da-doo-doo-doo-doo HAH!*). Them birds was fast as lightnin'. (*backup singer: YAH!*) So then I went and I did the rites thing (*backup singer: doo-da-da-doo-doo-doo-doo-doo HAH!*) And what I saw was kinda frightening (*backup singer: YAH!*)

(*interrupts herself and speaks this part*): Well, I didn't SEE it see it. My back up singer told me 'bout it, and Cleavon...you in danger, boy.

(*back to 'Yoncé voice*): To the left, to the left. Everything you do gon' go to the left. Ev'rything she did was done right by the gods. On the war field you left her bruh. Now the dogs and birds gonna get him. Now the gods are fin-na come get YOU.

(*switch, y'all know nothing 'bout that Otis Redding*) But you were a fool. Playing the gods. Everybody makes a mistake sometimes.

(*switch*) Sign of the times mess with yo' mind. Come on fo' it's too late. Let Paul in th'ground, get Annie, yes? Maybe? We'll stop this hate. If you agree. (*Come through your Purple Majesty!*)

CLEAVON: FOOL. THAT's what you come here with?? ErrDAY I got somebody tryna tell me my fortune. Now, here you come tryna tell me I'm WRONG and need to change my mind or else???? Nope. I don't care if the gods themselves send a flock of birds to drag Paul's stankin' ass into the sky, what I'm NOT gon' do is give in. You just tryna pull a get-rich-quick scheme on me. Tryna SCARE me into doin' the right thing. PAY you to change my fate. Whateva, Sis. Sang yo way right back to where you came from.

MEMBa: (*gets into her own Five Heartbeats dance stance*) Is there a heart? Is there a heart in the house tonight? (*backup singer stands up: STAND UP!*)

CLEAVON: Ye gods. What now??

MEMBa: (*switch, she was in the boys band mood, so why not some O'Jays*) For the love of money. Oh, don't let money change ya! 'cause (*switch to shout out Mary Jane Girls*) what I got is better than money.

CLEAVON: If you say so. Look, I'on mean no harm but/

MEMBa: (*stops singin' 'cause she 'bout ta knock a knot in his head*) Then why you call me a ho?

CLEAVON: (utterly confused; this old broad is bonkers) I ain' call you a ho!

MEMBa: You said I'm sellin' my shit for money.

CLEAVON: ALL Y'ALL SO-CALLED ADVISORS BE TRINE TA GIT ME: Lemme read ya palm. Look into this ball. Pull this card right here. What's yo' sign? It's too much!

MEMBa: AND ALL Y'ALL SO-CALLED MEN THANK YOU KNOW EVERYTHANG: no you not really sick. Well actually feminism is.... There's no such thing as privilege. Reverse sexism...

CLEAVON: Watch what you say to me MEMBa. I'm the king.

MEMBa: And??? Boy, who MADE you king? I changed your smelly ass diapers. You betta go'on somewhere. You betta memba where you came from.

CLEAVON: Say what you gotta say and begone.

MEMBa: You know what? Fuhget it. You'on wanna hear what I gotta say. You ain' ready.

CLEAVON: I know I'm ready for you to bounce, so. Spit it!

MEMBa: (*conjuring up her James Brown*): Payback is a thing you 'bout ta see. You left that brother for all to see. Your boy's gone, gone gods know where. He might got dead, but you don't care.

(*switch, a la Whitney Houston*) Spare your life? They'll take you for all you are. And all that you have will be forgotten real soon. You don't wanna send that girl to her deathbed. You don't wanna keep that boy that's not buried. They will come for you no matter the hour. Take heed what I say and don't look so dour.

(*switch, Big Luther*) But your house is not a home, when you climb the stairs and turn the key, oh she's not there, still in love with you.

(*spoken*) Back up! Take me home because (*switch, YASS Nina*) my words are sound, though my manner is tough, I read every nibba I see, 'cause I've had 'bout enough; Von's awfully bitter these days 'cause he 'bout ta be hazed. What do they call me? They call meeeee.... MEMBaaaaaaa!

*(They exit through sparkle haze)*

CHOIR DIRECTOR: (stunned) I meeeeeeeaaaannnnnn. *(pause, squeaks this out)*: She ain' nevah lied?

CLEAVON. Shit. I know. Shit. Do I give in? Or suffer because I'm tryna prove a point?

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Look. 'Von. Go get that girl out that damn vault in bumfuq, and bury Paul the right way.

CLEAVON: But...

CHOIR DIRECTOR: 'Von! Do it fo' it's too late, nah. The gods don't play.

CLEAVON: *(pouting)* Okaaaaaay. *(Snaps his fingers)*

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Nope. I see you bout ta hand it off to the servants. You got ta do this yo'SELF.

CLEAVON: Okay okay! *(to the servants)*: Get something to dig with. I gotta go get this girl and bury her damn brother. Guess I gotta get right with the gods. *(He leaves)*

*(PRAISE BREAK to "Can you feel a brand new day" a la The Wiz. The CCG and CHOIR DIRECTOR cut the damn fool for a whole three minutes 'cause Cleavon done came to his senses.)*

*(They exit; enter Missy, the Messenger, they/them pronouns)*

MISSY: Hey y'all. I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but y'know, sometimes good things happen to bad people and bad things happen to...well, you get the picture. I mean, look at Cleavon. Successful fella, right? Wins battles. Sires children. Makes wife happy.... I mean, til today, but let's put a pin in that for now. Because NOW, he pretty much has nothing, y'know? Like...nuuuuuuuuuutthhhhhiiiiiiiiinnnnnnng. And when you're bereft of EVERYTHING? Are you really even alive anymore? He's pretty much a zombie at this point. He can live in that fancy palace, but with whom? For what?

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Listen, Miss/

MISSY: /Friend.

CHOIR DIRECTOR: What?

MISSY: I mean... my name is Missy, but how would you know that? So I assumed you were about to call me Miss. And nope to that, so just address me as Friend.

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Okay.... Friend.... Dafuq is you talmbout?

MISSY: Cleavon sees dead people. All around him. And it's his fault.

CHOIR DIRECTOR: What's his fault? Who dead? Speak into the mic gir-, uh, sorry, friend. Cat got ya tongue???

MISSY: HeyMon is dead. Killed himself.

CHOIR DIRECTOR: MEMBa ain' lie! (*starts fanning and pacing and ululating*)

MISSY: (has to talk over all this foolishness) BUT FRIEND, THAT'S NOT THE END OF THE MESSAGE AND (*Choir Director shuts all the way the fuq up and runs over for the rest of the gossip*) ....and I'm not an advisor like MEMBa, so you will have to take from this what you will.

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Okay! Spill it. (*beat, no! what the hell?*) Aw damn. Not NOW. Here come Rita. You thank she know sum?

(*Enter Rita, sad and pitiful, and all woe is me*)

RITA: I was minding my own business when I heard a voice I had never heard before. And so I came right there to listen for a while. And there they were, this young friend. Singing clear and sad. Strumming my pain/

MISSY: I don't mean to kill you softly, Queen, but...I will speak truth plainly. I went with Cleavon to get Paul's body, and we...I mean, he.... I mean (*this is hard*)....I....I mean Paul's body was (*truth, just tell the truth*)...Paul's body was destroyed. The dogs and the vultures tore him to pieces, BUT the King and I did the best we could with the burial ritual and all.

Then we left there to, like, go to the vault in bumfuq to get Ann? We, I mean, the King sent a servant to run ahead of us because the king was a little tired, but before the servant could get all the way there, he said he heard, like, all this screaming and crying, so he ran back to us to tell us. By the time King Cleavon made it close to the vault, he knew the voice. It... it was HeyMon. Cleavon tore off running to the vault. When we looked inside, we saw Ann lying in the corner. She had hanged herself. And HeyMon was there, hugging her and crying and blaming Cleavon.

Cleavon tried to, like, approach him? But HeyMon spat at him and then pulled his sword on him. He went running for Cleavon but Cleavon sidestepped him. And then, without pause, it seems like another idea came to his head, and he drove the sword into his own side and died, but like, not before he pulled his true love Ann into his arms. So, married in death, yeah?

(*Rita is about to fall out; she leaves without saying a word*)

CHOIR DIRECTOR: (THAT shit's creepy AF) Ummmmmmmm.....She jus' left without saying anything. Anybody else find that creepy AF?

MISSY: Yeah, kinda. BUT, she's the queen. Probably can't mourn in public.

CHOIR DIRECTOR: I meeeaaaannnn...Maaaayyy beeeee, but that shit was too quick and too silent. So that means too scary to me.

MISSY: I'll go check on her. (*They go into the Palace*)

(*Here comes Cleavon, carrying HeyMon's body*)

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Look! Look! They 'e go! He got HeyMon. I TOLD him he was gon' get got. I TOLD him. (*breaks into sobs, fanning, and pacing*)

CLEAVON: Shut up. I know this my fault. Shut up. (*to HeyMon's body*): I shoulda listened, son. I shoulda listened. You din deserve this.

CHOIR DIRECTOR: (wailing and testifying) Shoulda listened! You learned too late! Too late, geetus. Too late.

CLEAVON: This is the worst pain I evah felt. On OG nem. I ain' nevah felt this bad.

(*Welp! Wait for it because HEEEEEEEEEEERE's MISSY!*)

MISSY: Um, King? This is probably like the absolute WORST time to tell you this, but. (beat) Maybe you should come inside? There's.....there's something you need to see.

CLEAVON: WHAT? Just TELL me. It can't be worse than this!

(*wanna bet?*)

MISSY: Queen Rita is dead.

CLEAVON: Come ON!!!! Can I get a BREAK here?? Missy, friend, tell me you lyin'. This CAN'T be true. Death on death on death?

(*Missy opens the door and points to Rita's lifeless body*)

CLEAVON: (FULL ON CRY/TANTRUM/GRIEF STRICKEN MOMENT) Whoa LAWD!!!! BOFUM!!! BO. FUM?????? WHY??????

MISSY: So, like, she stood there? And she stabbed herself. And when she screamed from the pain of the knife, she cried from the pain of losing both of her sons, and then, like, in her last breath, she (*puts their head down and whispers*) cursed....you.

CLEAVON: AW HELL NAW. Rita's a WITCH. SHE cursed me? (*panic because this ish just got as real as it's gon' get*) Where's a sword? Somebody knock me out. Punch me or sum. Come on stop playin'! (*He is really trying to cause himself harm; iss a whole-ass run around trying to get somebody to off him; it's exhausting*)

MISSY: And....she cursed you for BOTH of the boys.

CLEAVON: (*tired of fighting himself and his fate; iss pretty much a done deal*) Of COURSE she did. Shit. She SHOULDA. Y'all can take me out. Get it over with. Kill me. Let me kill myself. Shit. I'm done. (*plops down, sweating profusely, wet with tears and fear and sorrow*)

CHOIR DIRECTOR: Oh, 'Von, death will happen in its own time. Trust and believe. Come on. Let's go on in. (*Cleavon goes into the Palace; the Choir Director addresses the audience*): You can't find yo' happy if you don't listen to people talkin' sense, so listen to ya elders and ya advisors and ya spirit, chirren. All that big talk y'all doin' ain' gon' get you nothin' in the long run. (*Exits a la Aunt Esther*): Oh Gloray!!

END