

VIV IS FOR VENGEANCE

A Parody
Inspired by Euripides' *Medea*
& *The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air*

SETTING:

The set of THE FRESH PRINCE OF BEL-AIR, circa season three. A spiral staircase. Lush shrubberies. A couch. Perhaps, there are hints that this is a television set: lighting instruments, cameras, a craft service table may be visible.

THE YEAR:

1993.

CHARACTERS:

Geoffrey

Viv

Carlton

Ashley

Hillary

Uncle Phil

Jazz

The Chorus (A Supremes style trio)

NOTE: Choral sections are sung, when italicized. All music is created by Lindsey Hope Pearlman & Robin Holloway, with the exception of *Tears of Sorrow* by The Primettes and *Forever* by The Marvelettes.

Prologue.

GEOFFREY

Oh, dear! I don't know if this story's entirely true; I only wish that it may not be so.
 If only my beloved mistress had never set foot in this house!
 How I wish this cursed mansion had never been built at all!
 If only she had simply ignored the call of Bel Air.
 For then would my own mistress whom we now know as "Vivian", or dare I say, "Aunt Viv" would never have left the East Coast, her soul ablaze with adoration for Master William, her entire being lured by the lifestyle of the rich and the famous.

No. Now our family bonds are loosened, the tenderest ties are weakened. Now that Master William's star has risen, he no longer wishes to endure Viv's callous severity - he is the prince, after all, and what he says, goes.

For now that Master William has betrayed his very own Aunt Vivian, conspiring to exile her and replace her with a brand new auntie, who knows what catastrophe shall befall us! And such a rounder, fluffier, lighter and yet heavier auntie no less. While my own Vivian, our heroine, the helpless abolished matriarch, overtaken by rage, threatens the peace of the entire lot. I'm certain that at this very moment she lies fasting, yielding her body to grief, wasting away in tears that she will not rear her own newborn son, Nicky, in our fourth season. She never lifts her face from the ground, bemoaning the loss of her reputation, her dignity, her very identity.

And now, she hates her children and feels no joy at seeing them; I fear she may contrive towards some unnatural behavior, for her mood is dangerous to say the least. I know her well, perhaps more intimately than any others in this wretched house, and I dread she will find some violent calamity even more awful than her own expulsion. Her wrath, madness even, is not to be underestimated. For this is the story all about how all our lives got flipped and turned upside down. But oh! Here come the Banks children fresh from the mall. Little do they sense their mother's trials, for the ignorant soul of clownish youth is no friend to sorrow.

Scene 1.

CARLTON, HILLARY, and ASHLEY enter, toting baby NICKY in a baby carrier, and arms full of shopping bags.

HILLARY

(giggling) Here Geoffrey, hold this. *(passes the baby carrier)* Ugch, I have sooo many amazing designer options for Demi & Bruce's party tonight, I have no idea how I'm going to choose just one. Life is so unfair!

CARLTON

Don't talk to me about fairness, Hillary. You weren't the one schlepping around a baby carrier at the mall! It completely ruined my chances with any actual babes.

ASHLEY

Well, I thought it was kind of fun-- Baby Nicky's very first shopping spree. Look Geoffrey, we even picked out this cute new outfit for him.

She reveals the outfit.

HILLARY

It would look way cuter on me, but they didn't have it in my size.

ASHLEY

Geoffrey, where's Mom & Dad? I want to show them the new boombox we got for the pool house.

She produces an enormous 90s boombox- 'WHOOMP THERE IT IS' plays, and all 3 Banks children erupt in a coordinated dance.

Geoffrey clicks off the music.

GEOFFREY

You may wish to keep your volume to a minimum, children. Your mother is rather under the weather this afternoon. She's not quite herself.

CARLTON

Uh oh. She hasn't gotten in to the frozen pizzas again, has she? You know what microwaveable cheese can do to her mood.

ASHLEY

Yea, remember Will's birthday party last year?

All shudder.

GEOFFREY

No, I'm afraid her current mania is not dairy induced, this time.

HILLARY

Well, I hope she calms down soon. When Mom gets upset my hair goes all flat.

GEOFFREY

Well, gird yourselves. I fear this situation will decline before it improves.

VIV (*offstage*)

WILL!

GEOFFREY

Why don't you children go upstairs and stay out of your mother's way for a while.

VIV

WILL!

GEOFFREY

At least until she sorts herself out.

HILLARY

Sounds like she's facing the classic dilemma of Yves Saint Laurent versus Chanel. Oh wait, that's my problem (*giggles*).

GEOFFREY

Run along now, children.

ASHLEY

Sounds like Will is in some serious trouble.

GEOFFREY

We're all in serious trouble, I'm afraid.

VIV (*offstage*)

A wretched suffering woman I! Oh would that I could die!

CARLTON (*exiting*)

Hey, that sounds just like Euripides! My favorite!

Children exeunt.

GEOFFREY

Such sweet, stupid youth. What a pity. You know, I'm glad to be this family's supporting character as opposed to the star of this charade- I can humbly serve without sacrificing who I really am beneath my tuxedo-ed exterior. The pursuit of stardom is most superficial. I've never been more content with my own life's lot. Simplicity above all. But oh dear, I hear my mistress approach. I'd better make myself scarce, I don't want to step in to her line of fire just yet.

He exits.

Scene 2.

VIV

Oh, me! Oh, me!

As she enters, there is a recorded applause.

No! No! Please. I beseech you, do not applaud this travesty! This house is a monument to pain, a shrine to betrayal! Cheer not for the house that Will built!

Banishment! Exile! Is there any fate more cruel? I'm cast out, now- another woman shall sleep in my bed, rear my own children, cook in my kitchen. A light skinned woman no less- apple cheeks, big eyes, breezing through the living room, laughing, smiling, wearing my silk scarf? No.

This, I cannot abide. This I cannot allow any longer. This pain of losing one's family, one's place; this pain is too great for just one woman to feel. I cannot carry this pain baby to term all by myself. I need the wombs of all of you women out there. I need your bellies to become round with sorrow. I need you to feel agony's kick from within.

A chorus appears - three women dressed as The Supremes. Viv sings with the chorus.

CHORUS

Oh me! Oh!

Shoo be do wop shoo bop bop shoo bop

Shoo be do wop shoo bop bop shoo bop

Shoo be do wop shoo bop bop shoo bop

Shoo be do wop shoo bop bop shoo bop

CHORUS

Tears of sorrow

Cry for tomorrow

VIV

I'll just have to cry again

So I'll wait til then

CHORUS

Go on my happiness

Go on, and I guess

VIV

I'll just have to be alone

CHORUS

Til you come back home

VIV

*Tears of sorrow
Cry for tomorrow
Cry again
Oh, tears of sorrow!*

CHORUS

*Tears of sorrow
Cry for tomorrow
I'll just have to cry again
So why should I wait til then?
Tears of sorrow*

VIV (CONT.)

Thank you, thank you. I always wanted to be on Broadway, you know. I could have made it, too. Ladies, I have the same dream every night - isn't that strange? I dream that I am in the original Broadway cast of *CATS*. Yes! That crown jewel in the pantheon of the theatre- and me. There I am. I dream that I'm waiting in the wings to go on as a dancer, and I'm dressed in a silver lycra unitard and I'm covered in fur. Make up is feline divine. All of a sudden, the stage manager turns to me and says, "You there! Vivian Banks! Grisabella just fell off the stage into the orchestra pit! She can't go on!"

And then they toss me out into the limelight- the theatre is packed- and I hear the caress of the violin's bow against violin string, and that lilting melody carries me up towards the heavens, (*Sings*) "Memory... all alone in the moonlight... I can smile at the old days... I was beautiful then." Yes. I was beautiful then, in my dream. Now look at me! Haggard, full of hatred. A pulsating blackhead on the lily white skin of this Bel-Air mausoleum! For heaven's sake, I have a PhD! I designed the Black History curriculum at my children's school! I sheltered Will in his time of need, and this is how my ungrateful nephew repays me!

If only we hadn't fallen victim to a predator none of us saw coming. A wolf in sheep's clothing; if sheep wore Air Jordans. We've all been seduced. Seduced by stupidity. A stupidity so stupid it could only go by one name. Will.

UNCLE PHIL (*from offstage*)

Will!

VIV

Oh, my beloved husband Phillip! He will save me from this cruel fate!