

Like Fine Wine

By Prince Duren

CHARACTERS

CALEB "SAX" SANDERS - 50, is the head of the Sanders household. He was once upon a time a great jazz musician. When fatherhood unexpectedly came into the picture, he had to choose between that or his music. He is a cab driver and has worked hard over the years. His vibrant musical side has been buried for many years. He has forced himself to forget about the past, but he continues to wonder what could have been.

REGINA SANDERS - 45, is the wife of Caleb. She has grown to appreciate being a housewife. She looks forward to growing old with Caleb, but somewhere inside wonders if that's all she's good for. She looks good physically for a woman in her forties, but her housewife responsibilities have caused her to spend less time on her own maintenance.

SYLVESTER "SLY" ROBINSON - 49, is the former best friend and jazz partner of Caleb. Sly is all about the music and doesn't see anything take precedents before it. Since Caleb's departure, he fell onto hard times. Because of his smooth talking nature and talents, he had gotten gigs here and there. He believes his key to success rest solely on the horn of Caleb. His on and off again love interest is Dedra.

DEDRA JONES - 45, is a real estate who prides herself in saying what she thinks. She is the very best friend of Regina. With all of her brash comments, her one weakness is Sly. She knows he's the only man who doesn't have to say a word in order for her to melt.

MARIE SANDERS - 25, is the oldest child of Caleb and Regina. She is a single mother who works for Wal-Mart. She desperately wants to show her parents that she's capable of being responsible.

BRANDON SANDERS - 21 is the youngest child of Caleb and Regina. He is a talent but struggling actor trying to catch his big break. He lives with his parents. Brandon is the younger more vibrant version of his father.

MALE VOICE OFF STAGE

SYNOPSIS

Like Fine Wine is a story about dreams that never die. Caleb "Sax" Sanders, a blue collar cab driver from Memphis, was once on the brink of breaking into the business as a famous jazz musician. Life threw him a curveball and he was forced to put his dreams on hold. An old friend visits him on his 50th birthday and sees a once renowned musician a shell of his former self. Is it too late for Caleb to pursue his once deferred dream? Or will he be content with memories and what-ifs? Like Fine Wine, dreams only get better with time.

SCENE BREAKDOWN

Act 1 Scene 1: Caleb's Home
Act 1 Scene 2: Caleb's Home
Act 1 Scene 3: Outside of Caleb's Home
Act 1 Scene 4: Jazz Nightclub
Act 1 Scene 5: Caleb's Home
Act 1 Scene 6: Caleb's Home
Act 1 Scene 7: Caleb's Home
Act 1 Scene 8: Caleb's Home
Act 2 Scene 1: Backstage/Dressing Room of a Jazz Nightclub
Act 2 Scene 2: Caleb's Home
Act 2 Scene 3: Caleb's Home
Act 2 Scene 4: Caleb's Home
Act 2 Scene 5: Caleb's Home.

TIME

Present

PLACE

Memphis, TN

ACT 1 SCENE 8

Later that same night. Caleb in his pajamas sits with his saxophone. After a moment, Brandon enters.

BRANDON

'Sup Pop.

CALEB

Hey, son. How you doing?

BRANDON

I'm cool.

CALEB

If you don't mind me asking, what did you decide?

BRANDON

I don't know. On one hand, I wanna be there for Joanne, but--

CALEB

You don't wanna look back years later and say what if.

BRANDON

It's like this. I gotta decide by next week or they move on to the next guy. And Pop, word gon' get out quick about me turning down this role. I don't want that label.

CALEB

It's a tough decision.

BRANDON

We rehearse here for six weeks. Then up to Chicago for a four week run. From there we go to Cali. Then New York. I'm looking at being away from home for at least six months. Even longer because this show is popular. What would you do?

CALEB

Me?

BRANDON

Yeah, if you had to choose between following your dreams or staying home and being a father, what would you do?

CALEB

I can't answer that son.

BRANDON

Come on, Pop. I need to know.

CALEB

What I would do and what you *should* do are two different things.

BRANDON

That's why I'm asking you because I don't know what I should do.

Beat.

CALEB

You want me to be honest?

BRANDON

Please.

CALEB

I'd follow my dreams.

BRANDON

Really?

CALEB

The last thing you want to do is hold her responsible for stopping what could've been from happening.

BRANDON

Right. Cause I don't wanna resent her for it.

CALEB

Second chances at your dreams don't come often. Sometimes you gotta grab that first chance and worry about the rest later.

Brandon grabs the contract and signs it.

BRANDON

There it is. Now my kid will have an even better life. I'm heading to bed. Good night, Pop.

CALEB

Good night, son.

Brandon exits. Caleb sits and admires every piece of his horn. He decides to play. His song is both soulful and soothing. Regina enters and watches. When Caleb finishes playing, he stares at the saxophone.

REGINA

You're going, aren't you?

CALEB

What?

REGINA

I know you're going.

CALEB

I didn't say I was.

REGINA

You don't have to. I can see it in your eyes. You want to do this.

CALEB

And why not Gina? What's wrong with me chasing that dream again?

REGINA

You're fifty, Caleb.

CALEB

So what. A man's dreams should never die. Long as he got breath in his body. He should pursue them.

REGINA

Sometimes dreams are meant to be just that, dreams. Life and reality don't always work with dreams, Caleb.

CALEB

I wouldn't expect you to understand.

REGINA

You don't think I understand? Caleb, I remember what this music did to you. It almost destroyed our marriage. You traveling all times of the night. Playing in the most God-forsaken places. And not to mention, the women gawking all over you all. Making side comments to me. Rolling their eyes. You think I enjoyed fighting with me after you stopped playing?

CALEB

All you had to do was let me play a gig here and there. Just feel somewhat alive but instead you thought of every reason why I shouldn't. After awhile, I just gave up fighting for it.

REGINA

Our babies needed food. The rent was past due. I got tired of getting shut off notices. Responsibilities are what we had to focus on and music wasn't helping. I didn't make you stay. The door was always there for you to leave at anytime.

CALEB

But, you knew I wouldn't. Look, just because you gave up on your dreams to become a...nevermind.

REGINA

A what?

CALEB

Forget it.

REGINA

Say it. A what? A wife? A mother? I didn't give up on my dreams to become those things. My responsibilities became primary and my dreams were secondary.

CALEB

And you okay with that?

REGINA

I'm at peace with it. What do you want from me?

CALEB

Support. Act like you give a damn. Let me know you think I can do it.

REGINA

Is that what you want?

CALEB

Don't give it to me because I asked you to. Give it to me because you want to.

REGINA

You're good Caleb. I've never seen someone stop doing something for over twenty-five years, all of a sudden pick it back up, and is better than they were before they stopped. You've always been gifted, but your priorities have never been where they should've been. But a part of you still holds me responsible for you not making it.

CALEB

That's not true. I should've found way to do both. Had I listened to Sly-

REGINA

You would've convinced me to get the abortion. (*Beat.*) Caleb, be honest with yourself. Because I got pregnant, you felt it cost you a shot.

CALEB

I took care of my family. That's what a man's supposed to do--

REGINA

Damnit Caleb. Tell the truth.

Beat.

CALEB

I could've been great. All time maybe. Wasn't nothing I couldn't make that horn do. Gimme any song any and I'd make my horn sing to the high heavens. Part of me believed that God blessed me with this gift so I could play him a song to sleep to. Me and Sly used to say they "gon' remember us even after we was dead and gone". Said folks would be asking whose gon' be the next Sax Sanders. But they wasn't gon' find one. Cause I was a one of kind. Playing notes that the average so-called musician wouldn't dream of combining. All I wanted was a shot. Just one shot to show that I belong. To show that I could hold my own with anybody. I wanted to be in front of a respectable audience. Folks that mattered. The movers and shakers. The decision makers. Folks who could put me on Carson. And from there anything was possible. I ain't wanna play for the same crowds all my life. Them wanna bes on Beale or them instrument players in Birdland. I wanted something like the Copa. Like they had in New York. That's what I wanted. It's where I belong. I wasn't made to be no cab driver. A low class chauffeur.

Taking folks here and there and having to beg for a tip. Like a dollar or two would hurt them. When I chased them punks who stiffed me, I ain't even make it across the street. I just grabbed my knees. I'm getting old Gina. With the time I got left, let me enjoy it for once in my life. This might not work out. Them folks could see two old men and boo us right off the stage. But, I'd rather be booed off the stage than never taking one to get booed in the first place.

Beat.

REGINA

I guess there's my answer.

CALEB

Will you at least see me off?

REGINA

What about your job?

CALEB

If this is going to work, I gotta be all in. I called Mack and told him I quit.

REGINA

I see. And what if it doesn't work?

CALEB

I can't think about that.

REGINA

What will you be thinking about?

CALEB

Making up for lost time.

She exits.

LIGHTS FADE.

END OF ACT ONE.