

The Plan
(A ten-minute play)

By

Michael W. Kramer

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Cast of Characters

Characters: All are white males of considerable importance.

Owen: A Texas oilman, owner of the largest independent oil company and major player in the stock of other companies. He clearly does not have the education to match his economic status.

Phil: A political broker from a major city, the man behind successful campaigns for President of the United States. A cigar would be an appropriate prop, along with a Chicago dialect.

Steve: The successful owner of the largest brewery in the nation and owner of sports franchises in baseball, the most popular sport of the day, as well as football, the up and coming sport. What he lacks in education, he makes up for in ancestry.

Larry: A highly successful corporate lawyer who also runs the state bar association.

Mark: The chief executive of the large media conglomerate, he is clearly the most articulate and thoughtful of the group.

Synopsis: Sometime in the early 1960s a group of self-important white men meet to develop a plan to keep “them” in their place. Knowing that it will be impossible to keep all of “them” down, they create The Plan that will keep most of “them” down by giving “them” false dreams of athletic and financial success.

Sample Dialogue from the beginning of:

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MARK:

Before we start some ground rules. First, we all deny this conversation ever took place.

(The others express agreement.)

MARK:

And we don't use the names we grew up calling them.

OWEN:

And what the hell we suppose to call 'em?

MARK:

We'll do what you just did. Refer to "them," or "they."

STEVE:

Well, alright, them. They're the problem and the question is what are we gonna do about 'em? Time was they wouldn't come to my neighborhood. They knew where they belonged. And everybody was happy in their own neighborhood. But do you know what two of 'em did last weekend? Walked into O'Malley's Pub, O'Malley's Pub, as if they'd be welcome. They don't know their place anymore.

PHIL:

They used to be grateful if I arranged it so they could register to vote. You'd think that would be enough. Now one of them actually thinks I should appoint him ward boss. One of them, ward boss. They don't know the first thing about politics.

OWEN:

I remember my daddy told me that they should be grateful for a job. He'd fire 'em if they so much as stepped out of line. That how it use to be, how it still outta be. Now they think I ought to promote 'em to foreman.

LARRY:

We can all tell stories about the good old days when they knew their place, but the problem is they're starting to get ahead. First, one of your team owners gives that Jackie fellow a chance to play in the Major Leagues. What was wrong with their own league and their own fans? It's only been about fifteen years and now look at all of them playing.

STEVE:

Don't forget it was one of your fancy lawyer friends who got the Supreme Court to rule that separate was not equal. Well, who cares if it's equal? It's natural. It's right. Look what's happened in less than ten years since that happened.

PHIL:

They're enrolling to become lawyers, doctors. Before long it won't just be tokens. It'll be hundreds of them, maybe thousands of 'em tryin' to give civil rights to the rest of 'em. And marching on Washington and sit ins and protesting.

LARRY:

We need a solution. And we need it fast.

OWEN:

I say we just block 'em out at every chance. It may not help much, but damn it, that's all we can do. Block em at every chance. Don't hire them. Don't promote them. And don't let them marry your daughter.

STEVE:

Oh, our daughters are safe. They can't afford our universities. They might be gettin' into the state university or local college, but they can't afford ours.

LARRY:

This isn't just about protecting our daughters. It's about protecting a way of life, what we grew up with, the natural order of things. It's about protecting our futures.

MARK:

And trying to "block em" at every chance is not going to work. The courts would be all over us. We need something subtle, even subversive.

PHIL:

And we need it fast because if they can't get ahead themselves, then they want to make sure their kids do. They want 'em to go to college, to have better jobs, nicer homes. They're practically like us.

OWEN:

Don't you ever say they're practically like us! They are not like us. They don't look like us. They don't act like us. They don't even smell like us. It's too bad John Wilkes Booth didn't get to Lincoln before he signed the emancipation (*mispronounced*) proclamation. If he had, we wouldn't be discussing this problem.

MARK:

Emancipation.

OWEN:

What?

MARK:

It's the emancipation proclamation, not the emanciation proclamation.

OWEN:

Whatever the hell it's called, it gave 'em rights. And they've been wantin' more ever since.

STEVE:

And your lawyer friends keep making sure they get more of them.

PHIL:

Stop arguing. We've got to concentrate on them, not us. It's like Mark said, we got to come up with a plan, a sneaky one.

OWEN:

Hell, I don't know. Ship 'em all back where they came from.

PHIL:

That's not sneaky. Use that brain God gave you. Think.

MARK:

I've been thinking about this for a long time. I've got an idea, but it's going to sound outrageous at first.