

WE OWN EVERYTHING
A 10-minute play
By Shawntai Brown
48 Hours in Detroit

Characters

AUNTIE JUNE - A black woman in her late 30s to 40s

LIL BUG - A black queer woman in her 20s

JALEN - A black man in his 20s

Synopsis: Three cousins argue over the rights to their late uncle's classic car and their ever-changing city.

Setting: Detroit, present day. We are in a 1973 interior of Chevy Impala. Next to the Impala is the interior of Bronx Bar, a dimly-lit bar with 1970s décor.

(At rise JALEN is in the Impala. LIL BUG enters and reacts to the prettiness of the car, jumping in. JALEN greets LIL BUG with a hug.)

JALEN

Lil Bug! What up doe, cousin?

LIL BUG

What up doe, Jalen! Not the best of occasions. I've been digging in photo album all day, getting the slideshow together for the funeral. This car is what's up. Rest in peace, Uncle Eddie. What a gem he left us. Whew! 1973, white body, convertible Impala. The man had taste! Check this out. (Pulling a photo out and showing JALEN.) Here's Uncle Eddie in this thing in 1975.

JALEN

Wow, why is he at Assembly of God Church?

LIL BUG

My mom said that was back when we first met her sister, Auntie Gladys, at their single's retreat. Apparently, he met her and didn't step foot back into that church.

JALEN

Naw. Bronx Bar, that was his church. You know his holy trinity.

JALEN/LIL BUG

The cars, the cognac, and the Holy Spirit of the coochie.

JALEN

I can't believe Uncle Eddie left me this car. We should ride down Woodward with this thang all night! Stunt on everyone thinking they sweet in a Prius!

LIL BUG

You mean he left us this car to stunt in. We should pick up Auntie June first. You know she came in from Ann Arbor for the funeral. Her Airbnb is right here in Midtown.

JALEN

I'm sorry, what's Midtown? You sound like one of the Detroit imports.

LIL BUG

Imports?

JALEN

Yeah. You been living around Wayne State's campus so long, you sound like one of the new Detroiters.

LIL BUG

Here you go. I can see you on your combative tip. Pull over and let me drive.

JALEN

Naw. Uncle Eddie left me with the keys. I drove him to his last doctor's appointment. He didn't come out the hospital after that. I can't believe he's gone, Lil Bug.

LIL BUG

I can't believe Uncle Eddie just decided to up and leave the earth like this.

JALEN

Decided? Tumors make all the decisions around here. First great grandma. Then my dad. And now the tumors got Uncle Eddie. Them tumors worse than foreclosures.

LIL BUG

When have you known Uncle Eddie to succumb to anything? That man survived the '67 when they burnt down his furniture store and he still insisted on dragging a couch out while the building was burning during the riot.

LIL BUG

Rebellion you mean.

JALEN

Uncle Eddie told me black people got mad and said they wasn't taking it no more. That's what we should do now. Take our city back.

LIL BUG

Calm, down. Uncle Eddie didn't even have his story straight on that. Let him tell it, he was at his store when it happened. Let him tell it another day, he was at the bar the police raided.

JALEN

And both are true! Shit, the way these Detroit imports might tell it, we gotta' make our own histories.

LIL BUG

What you can make is a left. Auntie June's Airbnb is over off Hancock.

JALEN

I know where I'm going. This corridor I know. Spin me 'round blindfolded any street off Cass, I'll find my way home.

LIL BUG

Is that why you just missed your turn?

JALEN

That was on purpose. I'm taking the scenic route. Don't tell me how to drive my car.

LIL BUG

Your car? Uncle Eddie left this to us. All three of us.

JALEN

. But who's driving it right now?

LIL BUG

Just because you in it, don't make it yours. See, that's why we need to talk tonight. Sort out how we are going to share this car. Turn left again. I'm texting Auntie June.

JALEN

I'm gonna' call her Big June Bug and see what happens.

LIL BUG

Go ahead. I want to see what happens with that.

(JALEN pulls to a stop. AUNTIE JUNE enters gets into the car, blowing her nose and wiping tears. LIL BUG hugs her.)

LIL BUG

How you doing, Auntie June?

AUNTIE JUNE

I've been on a pendulum swing from laughter to tears all day.

JALEN

We here for you, Big June Bug.

(AUNTIE JUNE snaps out of sadness and pops JALEN on the back of his head.)

AUNTIE JUNE

That's Auntie June to you.

JALEN

How you don't want to be called Big June Bug?

(Another smack is delivered.)

JALEN

That's your name. You can't just go around renaming things. This is the Corridor, and you Big June Bug.

(Another smack.)

AUNTIE JUNE

Your hair is only going to lessen the impact of these smacks upside your head for so long.

JALEN

Since you actually my cousin, and I'm grown now.

LIL BUG

Grown in body, not in mind.

JALEN

I'm grown now, college kid. When can I stop calling you Auntie, Big- Auntie June?

AUNTIE JUNE

You break the tradition of the ancestors if you want to, Jalen, but call me Big June Bug again and we'll have to bury you with Uncle Eddie. And why does it smell like marijuana in my Uncle's car?

JALEN

It's legal, it's in my pocket. I haven't even smoked it yet.
And it's my car now.

AUNTIE JUNE

Actually, I'm the oldest of the nieces and nephews. It's my car.
And I say we are not going to disrespect a classic like this.
Uncle Eddie kept this 73' Impala in pristine condition. He's not
going to appreciate you clouding it up with your low-quality,
non-medical grade weed. Lil Bug, pop the glove box.

LIL BUG

Why?

AUNTIE JUNE

Because Uncle Eddie always kept a bottle of Cognac in his glove
box. If we are going to be reckless, we are going to do it
respectfully in his tradition.

*(LIL BUG opens the glove box and pulls out the liquor bottle.
She holds it for everyone to tap.)*

LIL BUG

For Uncle Eddie.

AUNTIE JUNE/JALEN

For Uncle Eddie.

*(LIL BUG pours a little out of the window for Uncle Eddie and
then passes the bottle around. Auntie June goes to hand it to
JALEN.)*

JALEN

I'm the driver. It will be just my luck, the police catch a
black man with a bottle to his mouth in an classic they are all
envious of. We in white people land now.

AUNTIE JUNE

White people land? We are still in Detroit, aren't we? It's
always been a few whites.

LIL BUG

Yeah, but this is new Detroit, Auntie June. Things have changed
since you've been in Ann Arbor.

AUNTIE JUNE

That I can see. I have never seen so many open businesses in this area. No one but Uncle Eddie and his friends used to come down here when I was just getting grown enough to tag along with him. ... Here's Uncle Eddie's favorite bar.

LIL BUG/AUNTIE JUNE/JALEN
The Bronx!

AUNTIE JUNE
Park right here! Come on, let's get this game going. Let me show ya'll why I'm still your Auntie. You gonna' respect your elder today!

(They get out of the car and enter the Bronx Bar.)

AUNTIE JUNE
Wow! This place has barely changed. The outdoor seating is a nice touch. Look at the lamps, Same one's from the 70s, I bet. Same posters and pictures. The wood panel walls in the back. Wow.

LIL BUG
Still got the painting of the naked woman over the bar. She helped me find myself.

AUNTIE JUNE
And that damn fish. Uncle Eddie swore he caught one that big in the Detroit River. I believed him until I was about 15. Come on first rounds on me. Lil Bug, I know you are strapped with college costs, and I figure you are broke, per usual, Jalen.

JALEN
Actually, I'm not broke. Or I won't be broke soon. And that's why Uncle Eddie left me this car. I have to drive all the way to Canton five days a week to work at IKEA. You know how many busses that is?

AUNTIE JUNE
Get a job in the city. That's all the news talks about every day is how many jobs Gilbert is bringing to this city.

JALEN
Let me put your Ann Arbor address on my resume and maybe I can qualify for one of them. Those jobs are earmarked for Detroit imports. They want young people, but my zip code translates to "not skilled." Uncle Eddie changed my future when he dropped the keys in my hand.

(AUNTIE JUNE grabs shots and a glass of wine.)

LIL BUG

Once again, Jalen, Uncle Eddie did not leave the car to you. He left it to us. And I especially need it.

JALEN

You just want to drive out to Gross Pointe to see your bougie ass girlfriend. That's not a priority.

LIL BUG

If you had a bougie ass girlfriend, or any woman at all, she'd be a priority.

AUNTIE JUNE

Neither one of you are going to keep this car. Ya'll don't make enough money to even cover the. insurance.

LIL BUG

If you let us use your address we would be able to afford insurance.

AUNTIE JUNE

We will use my Ann Arbor address because I'm keeping this car. I am the only one who will actually protect this classic. Do you know the cost of upkeep to make sure this car appreciates in value? The resale of this could really help one of you out one day.

JALEN

Resale. Naw. We can't sell Uncle Eddie's car. It's full of too many memories.

LIL BUG

We need to settle this the Uncle Eddie way. A game of pool. We can play cut-throat. I call 6-10.

JALEN

You always calling the middle numbers.

LIL BUG

Because you can never seem to pocket them.

AUNTIE JUNE

I call 1 through 5. Uncle Eddie's balls. He taught me to play cut-throat.

JALEN

He taught us all to play. This is Uncle Eddie's pool table, let him tell it! *(Yelling to other patrons.)* Hey, white people! This pool table belongs to my Uncle Eddie! Way before your time here. Property of a real one, and don't ya'll forget it.

LIL BUG

Can you stop? I might have a classmate in here.

JALEN

Should have known I was going to have to code switch for Lil and Big Bug.

(LIL BUG and AUNTIE JUNE point their pool sticks at JALEN, threatening him.)

AUNTIE JUNE

I'll show you a code switch. Don't get an Uncle Eddie style ass whoopin' in here, Jalen. Watch the table, Lil Bug. And white people have always been here. I'll buy the second round of drinks.

JALEN

You can buy all of the drinks. I don't get my first check until next week.

AUNTIE JUNE

How did I know?

(AUNTIE JUNE grabs drinks. She returns and shoots the first shot. She continues making winning shots throughout the conversation to LIL BUG and JALEN's amazement.)

AUNTIE JUNE

They sure didn't give the pool table much room, I might knock someone out coming out of the bathroom. Some things have changed, however. It's far more been bleached in here than I remember.

JALEN

I told you we are in White People Land now. Put some J-Dilla on the Jukebox. Make sure people remember where they are.

LIL BUG

Uncle Eddie taught me about J-Dilla. First time I got a girl's number was in that car with playing Slum Village. (Singing.)
Real love, true love, tainted love.

JALEN

And once she realized the car wasn't yours, she probably dropped you.

LIL BUG

She dropped me real quick. I was just excited to have the whip for the day. Uncle Eddie taught me how to drive in that car when I was nine. He let me steer while he controlled the brakes. Made me feel like somebody. The day I could touch the pedal, you couldn't tell me nothing!

AUNTIE JUNE

Awe. He did that for me, too, Lil Bug! And, I had my first kiss in that car. Uncle Eddie let my boyfriend take me to prom in it. Except, Uncle Eddie insisted I drive, which pissed my date off. He wasn't complaining after that kiss, though.

JALEN

I learned how to change a tire on that car.

AUNTIE JUNE

Didn't we all. Uncle Eddie made sure of that!

JALEN

But you want to sell the joint?

AUNTIE JUNE

That's a conversation for a later date. For now, by the looks of these pool balls, I'm keeping the car.

LIL BUG

The hell you are!

JALEN

You can't just claim something. You want to claim something, take this city back. All they want is brunch spots and pop-up shops.

LIL BUG

He's been on this all night. I like brunch! And I like that it's actually people down here in Midtown. Makes my Wayne State days a little more eventful.

JALEN

Midtown. This is the Corridor. And, there have always been people down here. Don't forget that.

LIL BUG

I'm just saying. It's nice to have a little change.

AUNTIE JUNE

A lot of change. I remember when this place used to have the street walkers in neon clothes stopping in for Charlene to pour them the heavy drinks to get them through the night. This crowd doesn't know anything about that. Detroit is looking more and more like Ann Arbor every day, and maybe that's not completely terrible.

JALEN

You can go back home to A2 with all of that.

(AUNTIE JUNE makes the winning shot.)

AUNTIE JUNE

I will, with Uncle Eddie's Impala. Winner takes the car. Only balls left on the table are mine!

LIL BUG

Really, no one should own the car. He left it to all of us. Who owns anything anyway? This city doesn't belong to anyone.

JALEN

It belongs to black people.

AUNTIE JUNE

It belongs to whomever has the money. Wide open for the right one with the paper of green. And, that's game. Who is your auntie?! Huh? I can't hear you!

JALEN

Ok. Fine. You got it for now, Auntie June. But I really need to get to work and make this paper. So, you gonna' let me drive it for now, right?

LIL BUG

And I just need it the occasional weekend to get out to Gross Pointe.

AUNTIE JUNE

This car was Grandpa Clarence's before Uncle Eddie's. No one person owns it. But I have the paycheck to take care of thing. You know I'm going to take care of my little cousins. But, there will be rules on how the car is cared for, limits on the miles we add to it, and especially on the speeds driven.

LIL BUG

*(To Jalen.)*Rematch! Rack 'em up!

(Lights go out.)