

VERNON

MICHAEL (CONT'D)
You're a tired queen.

#1

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INT. COOKIES' APARTMENT - DAY

Cookie lounges in her apartment watching WENDY WILLIAMS when she hears a knock at the door.

JAMAL V.O.
It's Jamal.

She hurries over and opens the door, so pleased to see Jamal standing in her doorway. He stares at her, determined.

JAMAL
I'm not going to do this to get back at Dad or to inspire the world or for my poor cousins in Philly.
(Then)
But I'll do it for you.

She smiles. Deeply touched.

JAMAL (CONT'D)
But I want to do it as me.

COOKIE
Good. I love it. Lucious Lyon's son is not only a genius, but he's a faggot too. We'll make the gay angle all about Lucious not accepting you, and the talent all about you. That'll drive your father crazy.

We see a tiny smile form on Jamal's face. He loves it.

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INT. LUCIOUS OFFICE - EMPIRE ENT - DAY

Still pensive, Lucious sits across from Vernon. He stares off into space as Vernon takes out a manila envelope.

EMPIRE

START

→ VERNON
So we were able to find out--
(Then)
You okay?

Lucious snaps out of his daze.

LUCIOUS
Yeah, I'm good. What do you got?

1/3

MORE →

VERNON

56.

Vernon opens up the envelope and takes out photographs of Bunkie at a poker table in Shyne's club, drinking with Shyne, at a strip club, car shopping at a Range Rover dealership.

7 VERNON

It looks like Bunkie has gotten close with Shyne Johnson.

LUCIOUS

I know him. The Bronx.

7 VERNON

Card clubs, girls, drugs. And he's dangerous. This isn't a great time to get shaken down by a gangsta who has no problem taking people out.

(Then)

Suggestions?

Lucious looks at the photographs, then looks Vernon in the eye, unable to hide his rage.

LUCIOUS

I'll think of something.

STOP!

Andre comes into the room, Lucious smoothly hides the photos.

ANDRE

We're ready.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - EMPIRE ENT - DAY

A beaming Cookie sits at the conference table surrounded by LAWYERS. Lucious sits across the table, more amused than angry at her. A LAWYER, 50's, explains to Cookie:

LAWYER

In exchange for the pre-negotiated salary, a stipend for housing and control over Jamal Lyon's career, you are signing away your rights to ever disclose you were the original investor in Empire Entertainment. If you violate the non-disclosure agreement, the deal is void.

COOKIE

I know, I know. You're paying me off to shut my fat ass up.

LUCIOUS

That's right, Cookie.

EMPIRE

2/3

MORE
→

VERNON

57.

She smiles at Lucious, he smiles back. A trace of their old chemistry starting to come back.

INT. OFFICE - EMPIRE ENT - CONTINUOUS

In an office that's connected to the conference room, Andre and Vernon watch Cookie sign the documents through a window.

START

7 VERNON
You got one tough mother.

#2

ANDRE
I know.

Vernon leans in and whispers to Andre...

7 VERNON
I know your dad wants it to be Hakeem, but you're the only one that can truly run this company.

Andre is surprised, but Vernon gives him a paternal smile.

7 VERNON (CONT'D)
I'm a firm believer intelligence and hard work are more important than being able to rap. You deserve to fly this plane.

Andre stares at him for a beat, processing. Then -

ANDRE
You're right, I do deserve it and I'm going to take it.

7 VERNON
And I'll do everything I can to help you. I hope you'll remember me when you're in the pilot seat.

Andre smiles at him with charm.

ANDRE
How could I forget you, Uncle Vernon?

STOP!

EXT. WAREHOUSES - BRONX - NIGHT

An angry Lucious and Bunkie meet again in the warehouse district. Bunkie is looking at the surveillance photos of him with Shyne. He smirks, doesn't seem to care.

3/3

EMPIRE