

TRIBE

by Greg Vovos
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TRIBE

by Greg Vovos

dedicated to Jacob Grey Wykes, my godson, born April 6, 1998

CHARACTERS

MOM: The Manager of the family. Her biggest talent is holding the ship together.

DAD: The General Manager. He wheels and deals. He doesn't go anywhere without a pouch of Big League Chew.

JOEY: The best brother on the block. He's a fast mover.

JAKE: The fans. He's a baby who can be crazy when he wants to be. Best if played by an adult.

SETTING

The kitchen of the Tribe. Time of day is up to the director, but it's early spring nonetheless.

SYNOPSIS

Mom and Dad try to sign their son to a five-year contract extension with the family.

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Lights up as Mom feeds Jake. Dad paces, his cellular phone pressed to his ear; he waits on hold.

MOM

Good Boy. You sure make Mommy proud.

DAD

Are you sure Turny didn't call me?

MOM

You should be talking to your son. It's always business with you.

DAD

It's always about this family. The Tribe family. *(Into phone)* Oh, he did, did he? Tell him I'm sorry, I didn't get the message. I'll call him later then.

Dad hangs up the phone.

Why didn't you tell me he stopped by?

MOM

Do you know what day today is?

DAD

I'm trying to build a Championship Family here, Skipperina. A Dynasty. And I'd appreciate some help.

MOM

It's our Anniversary.

The stereo blares from upstairs.

DAD

Why does Joey have to play that music so damn loud?

MOM

We can't trade Joey. You have to offer him more.

DAD

We have to be honest here. We can't afford him.

MOM

He is the best Brother in the game. We need him. At least, give him the private entrance to the basement.

DAD

No way. I refuse to run our family like that. We are a team. No one gets special treatment. Either he is with us or he isn't. We're not like the Black Sox. If they want their family to run amok, fine. But the Tribe doesn't work that way.

MOM

We can't be trading up and down the block all the time. That's what makes the Tribe the Tribe. You're right. We're not like those hillbilly Black Sox. We don't lose our children to Free Agency.

DAD

We just did with Ricky. And if we're not careful, the same thing will happen with Joey. He saw what Ricky got. He's gonna want more.

MOM

Where did I go wrong with Ricky?

DAD

Stop blaming yourself. You did everything a mother could do with him. We all did.

MOM

I know. It's just that--

DAD

He left us for the Black Sox because we wouldn't buy him a '65 Mustang. Bottom Line. And he ran over your garden when he sped out of here. Punk.

MOM

How could he do that to his family? To his mother?

DAD

And if Joey chooses not to sign with his family, then I have to trade him for another son. *(Yelling upstairs)* Joey, get down here. Joey! Your mom and dad need to talk to you. *(The stereo gets louder.)* Turn that racket down and get down here, Young Man. That boy's gonna be the death of me. I'm telling you.

MOM

He's the best Bush Trimmer on the block. He's just--

DAD

I know what he's just. JOEY! NOW!

MOM

Come on, Honey. Listen to your father.

DAD

Either he accepts the offer today, or I start dealing, Skipperina. That's that.

Joey enters quickly, dressed to go out on the town.

Where do you think you're going?

JOEY

Out.

DAD

You didn't take out the trash today. Or sweep out the garage.

MOM

Sit down, Joey. Eat something before you leave.

JOEY

Mom, I'll eat later--. *(Joey musses up Jake's hair)* What's up, Jakey?

DAD

Sit down, Joey.

JOEY

Look, I got a date.

DAD

With your Agent?

MOM

Do as your father says, Joey. I'll make you a sandwich.

JOEY

I don't want to eat.

MOM

Look at you. You're skin and bones.

DAD

Look, Son. We can't afford to keep you on the payroll with your demands. Nintendo, new tires for the car, refurbishing a basement, three million dollars. These things don't come cheap.

JOEY

Don't forget the dog.

DAD

NO DOGS ON MY TEAM. You know that.

JOEY

If I went to the Stinkees right now, there'd be no curfew, I'd have a convertible, I'd get a dog, 10 more million dollars--

DAD

Well, excuse us for not having enough money to buy your love.

MOM

Boys, sit down and drink your orange juice. We have an entire year to sign a contract.

JOEY

Mom's right. I'll see you guys later tonight...or tomorrow.

DAD

Can't you see what you're doing to your mother? Isn't it bad enough that she lost another son a week ago to Free Agency? Now you're turning your back on--

JOEY

That was your fault. You could've found the money.

MOM

How, Joey? How do we pay you, him, your cousins, uncles, Godfather, your two younger brothers and your adopted brother, Matt? How is your father supposed to find money for all these people with you asking for so much? He's working three jobs already.

JOEY

If you expect me to move from the middle child to the older brother then you should pay me as such. Either you believe in me to take this family on my shoulders or you don't.

MOM

What about your little brother Jake? He's your biggest fan. He loves you, respects you--

DAD

Looks up to you.

MOM

What's he gonna do when you leave this family? Who's he gonna look up to?

JOEY

You know I love the little tyke. But this is business, and sooner or later, he's gonna have to learn that.

MOM

But he's just a baby?!?!?

JOEY

In this family, you have to learn to grow up fast.

MOM

Two sons in one week. I carried you for nine months.

DAD

Tell you what. You're eighteen now. You're a man. You sign with us and no more curfew for you.

JOEY

It's not enough.

DAD

Okay, even though they drive me crazy, as a gesture of good will, I'll even throw in the dog.

JOEY

You know what I want.

DAD

We can't afford it.

JOEY

Bullshit. You just wanna win the Father of the Year Award again. You don't care about this family.

DAD

You think I haven't been offered money to become the father of a new family? Well, I have. But I've turned them all down. Because I'm committed to this family. The Tribe. Right now you are on the best family on the block. Look: We lost Ricky's muscle but we replaced him with Matt--who by the way is Aces in a crisis situation--AND we signed him for five years. Everyone in the family, except for you, are signed through the millennium. What other family can say that, huh? Certainly not the Stinkees! We need you, Son. We need you to stay with us. We were so close last year. You know it. You felt it. Tasted it. And now you crave it. If you don't sign with us and go on to test the free waters for another family, well, you might get your money, but will you win it all? I'm only doing what's best for the family.

JOEY

Look, I have a year left on my contract with this family. And I'll play it out.

MOM

We can't have you out there if you're not going to give a hundred percent.

JOEY

I'll give 110 percent. It's my final year of the contract. Gotta be a bodacious Big Bro so the other families give me more money than what I'm asking for now.

DAD

Imagine, Son, five more years in a family that loves you. The money we can't pay you will be returned tenfold with all the commercial deals you could land, because you are on a winning family. A Championship Family.

MOM

That's right.

JOEY

I can't sign. My agent said--. Well, it's a matter of principle.

DAD

You walk out of this house now, without signing this contract then don't bother coming back here ever again.

MOM

Your father doesn't mean that, Joey.

DAD

The hell I don't. The Tomahawks are willing to give me Vengeance for you straight up.

JOEY

You wanna trade Vengeance for me? Pfffff, what a joke.

DAD

Then sign with us.

JOEY

You're gonna trade the best Bush Trimmer this neighborhood has ever seen for a high school dropout? If you lose me, then our yard goes to pot, and The Tribe will be lucky to even make the playoffs.

DAD

Where's your memory, Joey? If I recall, it was Vengeance who dealt the fatal blow against us in The Family Championship last year when you got caught taking your brother to a movie that he was too young to see.

MOM

Don't bring that up again.

JOEY

Don't blame me! Blame her.

MOM

I did not give you the green light!

JOEY

Well, you didn't stop me neither.

DAD

The only blame your mother deserves for that fiasco is the fact that she doesn't discipline you enough.

JOEY

Whatever. If you wanna trade me for Vengeance, go ahead. The rest of the family will have your head on a platter for it. Especially, little Jake. He's my craziest fan, you know.

Jake does something crazy.

DAD

You underestimate your fans. Besides, I'm thinking that by midseason, your younger brother, Baby Bull, will be able to pick up where you left off. He's coming along nicely. Lotta potential that kid.

JOEY

Do what you gotta do, Pops.

DAD

Championship Families don't come cheap, Son. And one day when you're a father, you'll learn that.

MOM

We'll refurbish the basement if you stay. Give you your own private entrance.

DAD

No we won't.

MOM

What other choice do we have?

DAD

That is not your decision to make. You decide what we eat, how we dress for church and what kind of television is appropriate. I decide who stays, who goes, and who makes what.

MOM

One day mothers like me will be respected and we'll get to make these decisions too.

JAKE

Joey no go.

MOM

Oh my...Jake spoke. His first words. Did you hear him?

DAD

Incredible.

MOM

I love you, Honey. Say "MaMa." Oh, you're growing up so fast. If you go, Joey, who's going to teach Jake how to throw his first baseball?

JAKE
Balls! Balls! Balls!

JOEY
Vengeance. He's Big Brother now, right?

DAD
Okay, I'll throw in the basement.

JOEY
Really?

We hear a car horn.

That's my agent. Let me discuss it with her.

MOM
What do you see in that girl? She's "agent" to every other person on this block.

Car horn.

JOEY
Don't talk about her like that. I'm not telling you again.

MOM
I'm sorry but it's true.

JOEY
And you wonder why I wanna leave this family? You'll never be Mother of the Year. You're way too old fashioned.

MOM
What?

DAD
You just crossed the line, Young Man. Too bad too, 'cause the way I understand it, Mrs. Tomahawk doesn't iron her children's underwear the way Skipperina here does.

JOEY
So I won't wear underwear anymore. Big whip. I'm gonna make you guys pay for disrespecting me. You can count on that.

JAKE

Make you pay!!!! Make you pay!!!

DAD

Nice.

JOEY

Take care, Little Buddy.

JAKE

Take care, Lil Buddy.

Joey leaves. Dad starts dialing the phone.

MOM

How could you let him leave like that? *(No response.)* Hang up that phone.

DAD

Turny. Mr. Tribe here....You got yourself a deal.

He hangs up the phone.

MOM

It's a bad trade.

DAD

If we don't trade Joey now, we risk getting nothing in return. Just like Ricky. All those years you spent changing diapers and standing up to reporters, and driving him to rehab, meant nothing. The same thing will happen with Joey. Is that what you want?

MOM

One would think the Father of the Year could come up with a better deal than Kid Vengeance for Joey Tribe. I love Joey. There's no changing that. I can't just love someone else.

DAD

Turny also threw Marquis Vader into the deal.

MOM

Vader? Really? Now that girl can cook, pitch, fix cars, AND she's great with kids. This Family can definitely use that. With her leadership, I just might win Mother of the Year.

DAD

That's right, Honey. Happy Anniversary.

Lights fade to black.

END OF PLAY