

WINNER: BEST DRAMA, 2004, Christians in Theatre Arts sketch contest

Beneath the Smiles

By Michael Leathers

CAST: 2 males

Edgar: Older deacon, 60s, preparing for a men's meeting at his home.

Jared: Deacon-in-training, late 20s to early 30s, mentored by Edgar.

RUN TIME: 8 minutes

PROPS

- Four to six folding chairs
- Frilly apron
- Casserole dish
- Corn chips
- Plastic grocery bag
- Carton of dip
- Napkins
- Plastic cups
- Small bowls for snacks
- Popcorn, chips, pretzels in bowls
- Two-liter soda bottles
- Ice bucket
- Ice

STORY

Edgar is preparing for a men's night-out at his home when Jared, a younger deacon, arrives early. Jared soon confesses that he was uncomfortable when a black family visited the church. Recalling the racism he learned as a child, Edgar tries to help Jared see his own prejudices.

THEMES

Racism. Partiality. Unity. Mentoring. Parenting.

Beneath the Smiles

(We're in EDGAR's living room with a couch, coffee table and chair. He's getting ready to host a gathering with men from his church. The table has serving bowls with chips and pretzels, plastic cups, two-liter soda bottles, an ice bucket and napkins. A doorbell rings)

EDGAR (offstage)

Just a minute.

(The doorbell rings again -- twice. EDGAR hurries on stage, coming from his kitchen. He's wearing a frilly apron over his dress shirt and pants)

EDGAR (cont'd)

I said I'm comin'.

(EDGAR opens the door. JARED strides in, carrying a casserole dish. A plastic grocery bag dangles from his arm)

JARED

Don't you look pretty?

EDGAR

Didn't want to get my clothes dirty while I was finishin' up. Don't know where Anne put my barbecuin' apron.

JARED

The one that says "Kiss The Cook"? Hardly the kind of thing I'd wear before our men's meeting starts. So where's Anne?

EDGAR

Women's meeting up at church. ... I thought I told you not to make anything.

JARED

What kind of junior deacon doesn't prepare something when his assigned mentor throws a party?

EDGAR

Your wife made this, didn't she?

JARED

I'll try not to be offended. I personally slaved over this.

EDGAR

Oh, yeah? And what's that?

JARED

(Lifts the lid)

Frito's Corn Chips. Scoop size.

EDGAR

(Taking the dish)

How thoughtful.

JARED

(Removes a store-bought container of dip out of the grocery bag)

And I even whipped up a batch of French-onion dip.

EDGAR

I'll get a serving bowl.

JARED

Now I know that apron's messing with your head. This stuff is its own serving bowl.

(JARED crunches the dip carton into the chips in the casserole dish)

JARED (cont'd)

Now isn't that a lovely presentation?

EDGAR

Martha Stewart would be proud.

JARED

So how many guys you expecting tonight?

EDGAR

Dunno. Maybe a dozen. Mostly guys from church 'cept for George Hannon, that fella I work with. You remember him, don't you?

JARED

The guy who visited last month, right? Brought his family. Couple of kids.

EDGAR

That's him. Well, he's comin'.

JARED

S'that right?

EDGAR

Y'know, I've worked with George for going on ten years and never invited him to church.

JARED

I'm surprised they came.

EDGAR

Why's that?

JARED

Couples like that with older kids, usually they're already involved in a church.

EDGAR

He's not much older than you.

JARED

But his kids are older. He's more settled. Deeper roots.

EDGAR

George told me they tried some churches not long after they moved here. None of 'em felt right.

JARED

Gotta go where you're comfortable. How soon till those wings are done? They smell good.

EDGAR

Is that why you're early? For first crack at the wings?

JARED

I only wanted to help and learn a little more from my mentor. Of course, if you need someone to taste-test a wing or two ...

EDGAR

Six more months, and you'll be rid of me.

JARED

I'm counting the days. I can only take so much of this forced labor.

EDGAR

What're you babbling about?

JARED

C'mon, Ed. You and every other deacon paired up with one of us new guys got us running all sorts of errands. It's some racket you older guys got.

EDGAR

I only asked if ... Hold on. Who you callin' old?

JARED

I don't know. Maybe the guy who once thought a cell phone was a perk given to prison inmates.

END OF SAMPLE

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