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One-on-One

A Riveting New Play Inspired by Actual Events

by

Edward J. Walsh & Robert Thomas Noll

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CHARACTERS
HIRAM: African-American, 40s.
ADULT TONY: 40s.
YANKS: Tony's driver, 50s.
EDDIE (SHINS) SHINSKI: 17-18.
YOUNG TONY: 17-18.
YOUNG SUNNY: African-American (aka Hiram); 17.
Note: HIRAM and YOUNG SUNNY could be played by a single actor.

SETTING
An Inner-city Street & Neighborhood Basketball Court

SCENES
Scene 1: City Street; Present.
Scene 2: Basketball court; Present.
Scene 3: Basketball court; Present and Past.
Scene 4: Basketball court; Past.
Scene 5: Basketball court; Present.
Scene 6: Basketball court; Past.
Scene 7: Basketball court; Present and past.
Scene 8: Basketball court; Past.
Scene 9: Basketball court; Present.
Scene 10: Basketball court; Past.
Scene 11: Basketball court; Present.
Scene 12: Basketball court; Past.
Scene 13: Basketball court; Present
Scene 14: City Street; Present
Scene 15: Basketball court; Present

STAGING NOTE
During scenes that deal with the past, ADULT TONY and YANKS may be observers of the action. The passing back and forth of the basketball is at the discretion of the director.
PRODUCTION HISTORY

PREMIERE PRODUCTION:

“One-on-One” had its first production at The Ensemble Theatre (Celeste Cosentino, Artistic Director) in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, March 7-10, 2013 under the direction of Skip Corris, with the following cast:

Scott Miesse....................... Shins
Vern Morrison........................ Yanks
Aaron D. Elersich................... Adult Tony
J’Vaugh T. Briscoe................... Hiram
David Holland....................... Sunny
Devin Schleimer..................... Young Tony

O’NEILL NATIONAL PLAYWRIGHTS CONFERENCE:

In the spring of 2011, “One-on-One” was selected as a semifinalist.

FIRST PUBLIC READING:

“One-on-One” had its first staged reading at John Carroll University in University Heights, Ohio, in July 2010, under the direction of former Abbey Theatre and Great Lakes Theatre artistic director Vincent Dowling. After directing a reading of the play at the University, Vincent had the following to say about the play: “It is not only a very timely play, a gripping play, it is also a play about relationships and lack of relationships between black and white boys and men. The audience, including me, was riveted, moved, impressed, entertained and gripped. I am enthusiastic about the play’s future and importance. I recommend this play enthusiastically and confidently.”

SECOND PUBLIC READING:

“One-on-One” had its second staged reading at Judson Manor in Cleveland, Ohio, for an audience of 100 people in March 2012. Again, the response was overwhelmingly positive: both audience and the actors expressing their love for the play.

AUTHORS STATEMENT:

Can a universal tale of tragedy and redemption take place within the confines of a neighborhood basketball court? In ONE-ON-ONE, the lives of three young men unfold, each taking sudden, dramatic turns. The play is based, in part, on real incidents that occurred in a Cleveland, Ohio, neighborhood during the 1970s. We wrote this play determined to faithfully confront the issues it raises. In a changing neighborhood, prejudice and racism can stir up fear, hate, even violence. But there is also the possibility of understanding, kindness, and friendship. We could have pulled some punches, but we refused to do so. Instead, we kept the play honest and the characters real. We constantly reminded ourselves along the way that we wanted a work that reflected not only the harsh realities of dashed dreams and hopes, but also the better instincts of human nature. We wanted that not only for ourselves but also for an audience of people young or old.
One-on-One
by Edward J. Walsh & Robert Thomas Noll

SCENE 1

SCENE: A city street; the present.

AT RISE: In darkness HEAR city sounds; horns beeping, cars zooming by, etc. Offstage, HIRAM raps.

HIRAM
(Off-stage rapping) Shoot, shoot, shoot, gotta get my pump and get it up. Shoot, shoot, shoot, take it to the floor and score. Shins, let's see who wins.

HIRAM enters. He is a street person. He wears old basketball shoes. HIRAM, with a cast on his arm, is pushing a shopping cart, which has a couple license plates hanging from it. Cart contains newspapers, an umbrella, an alarm clock and a bottle of tea. He moves to a trash can.

HIRAM, Continued
(Looks up) What's that? You think there might be somethin' in the trash? Okay, okay, I'll have a look. (Muttering) Could be. We'll see. Might be worth takin' the time, to look for somethin' that could be mine.

HIRAM goes through trash can pulling out a few objects and tosses them on the ground.

HIRAM, Continued
(Looks up) No, you wrong. Nothin' here. How come I'm listenin' to you? You wrong as often as right, Mr. Know-it-all. What? You want to know 'bout the pump? You ask a lot of questions.

HIRAM pulls out reward poster from his pocket.

HIRAM, Continued
You see this? We gonna get us a pump. We gonna get us one. You hear me? We gonna get things fixed up. Talkin' so much my mouth gone dry, answerin' all your questions is why. Just wait a minute while I get me, a drink of this here sweetened tea.

Pulls out bottle of tea, takes a drink and holds up poster again.
HIRAM, Continued

Found this stuck to a telephone pole. See, it says "Reward." Says to call this number. I called, I did. Told the man I seen somethin'. "What did you see?" he says. I seen a car. A car and lots more. "Let's meet," he says. "Alright," I says. "I'll tell you where." I told the man what I want for a reward. Money? No, not that. I told the man I need a pump. That's what I told him. A pump. I'm on my way, cause the man wants to know what I have to say. My arm? Doin' okay. This cast here good for writin' on when you don't have no paper. See, I got the man's name. Tony, that's his name. Told him he'd know me cause a cast on my arm. Them Corner Boys shouldn't have broke it. They want my basketball. They always lookin' to steal it from me. But I got a hide-away place, and I ain't tellin' no one where that ball is hid. So them Corner Boys, they swearin' at me and slappin' at me. But I ain't tellin', and then they bust my arm and they steal my pump. Wanna get me a good steel hand-pump. Somethin' with weight. I need it cause air's leavin' my ball like breath from a dyin' man. Say, you don't see them Corner Boys anywhere around here, do you? No? You sure bout that? You ain't got the best track record when it comes to bein' right. (Reaches into trash can) Hey, wait just a minute. (Takes out a shoe box and opens it) Lookee here. Somebody throwed away a pair of tennis shoes better than the ones I'm wearin'. Better take 'em with me an' try 'em on. (Looks up) Okay, you right. Was somethin' worthwhile in this here trash can. I admits it. (Looks at his alarm clock) Can't stay here jawin' though. Got to get goin', got a man to meet to get me my pump. (Rapping again as exit) Shoot, shoot, shoot, take it to the floor and score. Shins, let's see who wins.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

SCENE 2

SCENE: A beat-up basketball court; the present. Benches and entrances Stage Right and Left. A trash can sits to one side.

AT RISE: SHINS in a bloody T-shirt lies motionless on the court unseen by ADULT TONY and YANKS. ADULT TONY and YANKS enter. ADULT TONY wears slacks, a sports jacket and under the jacket a white T-shirt. YANKS wears a team sideline jacket and appears very vigilant throughout. YANKS carries a steel hand-pump.

ADULT TONY

Jesus, look at this place. It's not the way it was, not anymore. Used to be something special, not a shithole. The fence. The court. The baskets. The City put it all up in a couple weeks during the spring. Next thing you know, we're all down here playin' shirts and skins, and takin' winners. All summer, right through the fall 'til it snowed, it was like that. But Shins, he paid no attention to the weather. When the Assumption High gym was closed he'd be down here even if it was so frigging cold your eyes ached and your ears went numb. "Shins," that's what we called Eddie Shinski.
YANKS
Never was one for basketball myself, Boss.

ADULT TONY
I told you, don't call me Boss.

YANKS
I always call Sal Boss.

ADULT TONY
Sal's still the Boss.

YANKS
Yeah, but he said tonight you...

ADULT TONY
Tonight, or any other night, I ain't the boss. Sal is.

YANKS
Yeah, whatever you say.

ADULT TONY
Sal's gonna get past this bullshit.

YANKS
Just gonna take a little time, is all.

ADULT TONY
He'll get past it. He will.

ADULT TONY makes a call on his cellphone.

YANKS
The Feds got it in for Sal, almost personal-like.

ADULT TONY
He's gonna be OK.

YANKS
They won't find nobody would say a word against him.

ADULT TONY
They must think they can find somebody, or something. Otherwise, why subpoenas?

YANKS
They're dreamin'. Ain't nobody goin' to testify against Sal.
ADULT TONY
(Into cellphone) Sal, we're here. No sign of him yet. But we're early. Yeah, Yanks got my back.

YANKS
(Mutters) Some fuckin' place to have a meeting.

ADULT TONY
(Into cellphone) I don't know that this guy is dangerous. Nuts maybe, but dangerous? I don't know. Yeah, I had him checked out with the cops. Couldn't believe I knew him when. It's the same guy. If he knows anything I'll find out. We'll keep you posted. Talk to you later. (Ends call and puts back cellphone)

YANKS
Who's this guy we're gonna meet?

ADULT TONY
Hiram, Hiram Coleman.

YANKS
Hiram? Name don't mean nothin' to me, should it?

ADULT TONY
Used to call himself Sunny. Sunny with a "U."

YANKS
Like the sunshine?

ADULT TONY
Yeah, like the sunshine.

YANKS
Why's the name Sunny ring some kind of bell?

ADULT TONY
Probably cause you know some guys named Sonny.

YANKS
Yeah, I do. But not spelled with no "U."

ADULT TONY
Well, that's how he spells it. Or used to.

YANKS
You remember him pretty good?

ADULT TONY
Yeah, cause of some things that happened when me and him and Shins were kids.
YANKS
Hey, was he the one who started all the trouble in this neighborhood and got sent to jail?

ADULT TONY
Yeah, you could say that.

YANKS
I remember. You was livin' here then. So was Sal.

ADULT TONY
Yeah, over on East Lockwood. Top of a double, with an upstairs porch.

YANKS
I picked Sal up there a couple times. More than a couple.

ADULT TONY
Shins lived the other side of the street, way down the other end.

YANKS
How'd you and this Shins ever get mixed up with a tizzuna like that anyway?

ADULT TONY
Right here. This is where me and Shins met up with Sunny.

YANKS
You spent a lot of time here?

ADULT TONY
Yeah, but Shins practically lived here. He'd even be down here in the winter and bring a shovel to clear the snow.

YANKS
Like I said, never was one for basketball myself.

ADULT TONY
Nobody else was crazy enough to come down here on days like that to play ball — except me. Oh, I didn't give that much of a rat's ass about playin' in the winter. But you see, Shins and me were best friends. We grew up together. Hell, we was joined at the hip back then. We went everywhere together. Did everything together. So when he came down to the court, rain or shine, I'd come down with him. And if I didn't, I'd come find him here.

YANKS
Boxing, that was my game. Woulda stayed at it if Sal hadn't talked me into comin' with the union. Nine fights, eight wins, four by knockouts. I could see when a guy was gonna throw a right hand by reading his eyes. Then I'd counter with a big left hook.

YANKS throws a couple air punches.
ADULT TONY
Must have spent half my life down here.

YANKS
Except in my last fight, this Puerto Rican kid put me on the canvas for good in the third round. I saw in his eyes he was gonna throw his right, but I never saw the punch comin'. All of a sudden it's lights out. Next thing I know, Sal's slappin' me awake in the corner. "You're done," he says. "You got hands that hit hard but move slow," he says. "It ain't a winning combination," he says.

ADULT TONY
No, this ain't the way I remember it. No way.

YANKS
I hated quittin', but he was probably right.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

SCENE 3

SCENE: Basketball court; present and past.

AT RISE: SHINS rises and faces audience. He glances down at his own blood-stained T-shirt.

SHINS
(To Audience) You'd think I was some broad havin' my period or somethin', with all this blood. Don't let it scare you. I'm over it. Have been for a long time. Nothin' hurts.

YOUNG TONY enters with basketball.

SHINS
(Continuing, to Audience) Tony's right. We was practically joined at the hip, him and me. We met in the seventh grade at Saint Ag's -- that's Saint Agnes. He had moved down from the Hill. The Hill, that was what we called Little Italy. There was Tony, his big brother, Sal, his Mom and his Grandmother. His nonnina is what he called his grandmother. Tony was always slippin' some Sicilian word like that into the conversation. "Speak freakin' American," I'd tell him.

YOUNG TONY passes ball to SHINS.

YOUNG TONY
Heads up, gumba!
(To Audience) Gumba! There, see what I mean? We hit it off right away, Tony and me, for two reasons, I think. One, Tony's old man got run over by a switch engine working down in the Collinwood Yards when Tony was still a baby. My old man just up and disappeared. Ma said she would never talk about him, for good or bad, and she never did. So, maybe the reasons were different, but neither me or Tony had an old man at home.

SHINS passes basketball to YOUNG TONY.

YOUNG TONY

(To Audience) Another reason we hit it off was basketball. Soon as I showed up at St. Ag's, we was a two-man wrecking crew. The two of us were good, real good, and coaches from the high schools started coming around to have a look at us. If they hadn't, there was no way we could afford Assumption High. But the coach at Assumption did a little fixin' so tuition could be paid, and there was even a little money on the side for cafeteria meals.

YOUNG TONY passes basketball to SHINS.

(Continuing) Back at you.

SHINS

(To Audience) Our junior year we was both starters. Our senior year, we clinched a spot for the Final Four. We beat Collinwood, and that meant we were going up against East High for the City Championship. East High was all-black. They had height, speed and a street-style of ball. We beat 'em twice in regular season, but not by much. The second time, we weren't five minutes into it when Tony threw an elbow that laid out one of their guards. The kid was helped off the court doubled over. Tony got thrown out of the game. All hell broke loose. Shit started flyin' out of the stands. When the final buzzer rang we ran to the locker room, grabbed our stuff and ran right to the bus. Coach was afraid there'd be a riot. (To YOUNG TONY) Hey, look alive!

SHINS passes basketball to YOUNG TONY.

YOUNG TONY

(To Audience) If you'll excuse a little bragging, yours truly got an honorable mention to the All-City First Team. Shins, though, was named to the starting five on the All-City First Team.

SHINS

(To Audience) Anyways, the day before we were going to play East High for the City Championship, we had a practice down at Central Arena. Tony missed it.

ADULT TONY

(To Audience) I had my reasons.
SHINS
*(To Audience)* It's like, I couldn't believe it. I kept lookin' for him to come running on the court, but a whole two hours goes by, and no Tony. Well, to get down to it, Coach threw Tony off the team that day. Called Tony's house and told him he was finished. Next day, Tony sat in the stands, watchin' the game.

YOUNG TONY
*(To Audience)* I hated sittin' there, but I owed that much to the team.

*YOUNG TONY passes basketball back to SHINS.*

SHINS
*(To Audience)* The clock runs down to 30 seconds with us two points down. I take the last shot for us -- a jumper from 20 or so feet. The ball rims in and out, East High rebounds, and that's that. They are City Champs. *(Looks at YOUNG TONY)* For a while I was really pissed at you. Why did you miss the friggin' practice?

*SHINS sharply passes basketball to YOUNG TONY.*

YOUNG TONY
*(To SHINS)* Couldn't make it. Stop asking me.

SHINS
I'll stop when you tell me why.

ADULT TONY
I had my reasons.

SHINS
What reasons?

YOUNG TONY
Let's just shoot a game of Horse.

SHINS
Don't make no sense to me. This was it, the Championship game. Everything was on the line.

YOUNG TONY
I did what I did.

SHINS
Just give me a reason.

YOUNG TONY
Told you, I was sick.
SHINS
Yeah, and I've got a monkey coming out of my ass.

YOUNG TONY
Came on sudden.

SHINS
Don't give me that. I've seen you play when you were throwing up in a bucket and had a 102 temperature.

YOUNG TONY
I would have been there if I could.

SHINS
Missing the practice. It don't make sense. Why?

YOUNG TONY
You ever goin' to stop asking me?

SHINS
No. You knew Coach. You knew he'd kick your ass off the team.

YOUNG TONY
I knew.

SHINS
So?

ADULT TONY
It was the best of two bad choices.

SHINS
Two bad choices?

YOUNG TONY
Two real bad choices.

SHINS
Tell me what the hell you're talking about.

YOUNG TONY
You got to promise you'll never say nothin' to nobody.

SHINS
I promise.
YOUNG TONY

Swear on your mother's soul.

SHINS

I swear.

YOUNG TONY

On your mother's soul?

SHINS

On my mother's soul.

ADULT TONY

I did it cause of Sal.

SHINS

What's your brother got to do with it?

YOUNG TONY

He needed my help.

SHINS

What kind of help?

YOUNG TONY

You won't never say anythin'?

SHINS

I swear it.

YOUNG TONY

He got over his head with the gamblin'.

SHINS

What's that got to do with you? You're broke as me.

YOUNG TONY

He had money on our game.

SHINS

Yeah, so?

YOUNG TONY

So he needed me to do something.

SHINS

Do what?
YOUNG TONY

To help.

SHINS

Like what?

YOUNG TONY

Shave points.

SHINS

Shave points on a friggin' high school game?

YOUNG TONY

It was the city championship game. You don't know, there's big money there.

SHINS

How could he ask you somethin' like that?

YOUNG TONY

You don't know these bookies.

SHINS

What's there to know?

YOUNG TONY

Sal was into them for some big money. He needed a winner.

SHINS

So he asked you to shave points?

YOUNG TONY

Yeah, he asked.

SHINS

What kind of a fuckin' brother is that?

YOUNG TONY

Don't you be judgin' Sal. He's always looked out for me.

SHINS

By askin' you to keep the score down?

YOUNG TONY

He hated askin'.

SHINS

So why did he?
Sal was in trouble, in big trouble.

SHINS

With you, we could have beat East.

ADULT TONY

I couldn't shave points, but I knew what would happen if I didn't show up for practice.

SHINS

Coach would throw you off the team.

YOUNG TONY

Yeah, that's what I figured.

SHINS

So you wanted to be thrown off?

YOUNG TONY

Hell no! But I told Sal I couldn't shave points. What I could do was make sure I wasn't on the floor for the game. He thought about it. He was okay with that.

SHINS

Sure. It probably cost us ten points. Maybe more. And how many rebounds?

YOUNG TONY

It wasn't easy for me, Shins. No way.

SHINS

You would have made the difference.

YOUNG TONY

Maybe. Anyways, I was able to get Sal out of a jam.

SHINS

And you off the team.

YOUNG TONY

Sal's blood, Shins. Consanguineo.

SHINS

What a thing to ask.

YOUNG TONY

He's blood. You understand?
SHINS
I don't know what to say, Tony. I don't know.

YOUNG TONY
You ain't got to say nothin'.

SHINS
No, I guess I don't.

YOUNG TONY
You swore not to tell.

SHINS
Yeah, I swore.

YOUNG TONY
I'm holding you to that. On your mother's soul.

SHINS
On my mother's soul.

YOUNG TONY
Don't ever bring that up again -- ever. Let's play.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

SCENE 4

SCENE: Basketball court; the past.

AT RISE: SHINS enters, and YOUNG TONY passes basketball to him. SHINS and YOUNG TONY begin to pass ball back and forth.

YOUNG TONY
Ain't seen you around for a couple days.

SHINS
Had somethin' I had to do.

YOUNG TONY
Heard a rumor.

SHINS
What did you hear?
YOUNG TONY
Heard you were visiting Belmont. Heard they invited you down to look at their campus.

SHINS
Where'd you hear that?

YOUNG TONY
Saw your Mom at the drugstore. She told me.

SHINS
Yeah, that's where I was.

YOUNG TONY
How come you didn't tell me you was goin' down there?

SHINS
I don't know. Guess I thought it wasn't worth talkin' about.

YOUNG TONY
So, what's it like?

SHINS
Man, it's like a resort or somethin' down there. The field house has a gym triple the size of ours and weight rooms and handball courts and pool big as a damn lake.

YOUNG TONY
Coach gonna give you a recommendation?

SHINS
Coach says he signed the letter and sent it off.

YOUNG TONY
Next thing you know I'll be readin' bout you in the sports pages.

SHINS
They've recruited some awful good ball players.

YOUNG TONY
You'll match up with the best of them.

SHINS
You'll have to come down for a game.

YOUNG TONY
What, in my new Cadillac?
SHINS
Take a Greyhound. It don't cost that much.

YOUNG TONY
I ain't ridin' no rattley-ass bus to see you do in college what I seen you do here for free.

SHINS
Come on. I'll introduce you to some girls.

YOUNG TONY
Since when do I need you to fix me up?

SHINS
They'll be a little higher class than what you're used to. The kind that shave their armpits, wear underpants and read books. Bring you up in the world.

YOUNG TONY
I like the girls in the neighborhood just fine, thanks.

SHINS
Serious. I'd like you to come down for a game.

Yeah, we'll see how things work out.

YOUNG TONY
You give any thought to college?

SHINS
Now and then.

YOUNG TONY
You could still get into Moncrief. Try out for the team. Maybe get a scholarship.

SHINS
Yeah, and ask Coach for a letter of recommendation. He'd sign that in a minute, wouldn't he?

SHINS
You'd be a walk-on. No need for a letter from Coach.

YOUNG TONY
But what if they asked Coach about me?

SHINS
Coach ain't such a bad guy.
YOUNG TONY
I'm the one he kicked off the team, remember?

SHINS
You could talk to him. Smooth things over.

YOUNG TONY
I ain't talkin' to Coach about nothin'. And I don't much like the idea of going to Moncrief, either. It's a junior college. Our CYO team coulda whipped their ass. Anyways, I got Sal.

SHINS
Sal's offered you something?

YOUNG TONY
Says he's got something in mind.

SHINS
Well, think about things.

YOUNG TONY
About what things?

SHINS
About Moncrief, and talkin' to Coach.

YOUNG TONY
Man, you are a broken fuckin' record.

YOUNG SUNNY enters. He's an African-American, carrying a basketball that shows a bit of wear and tear. The basketball has his name in large letters on it: SUNNY. YOUNG SUNNY dribbles the ball near an imaginary basket Down Stage, ignoring SHINS and YOUNG TONY. The two of them stop and stare.

YOUNG TONY
Well, can you beat that? Look what crossed over East 1-2-5.

SHINS
Where'd he come from?

YOUNG TONY
Africa maybe?

SHINS
What's he doin' here?
Brung a basketball with him.

I guess he thinks he's gonna play.

Let's send him back where he come from.

Hey, don't do nothin' crazy.

How about we just kick his ass a little and head him back home?

Come on, I don't want the two of us should jump the kid.

Hey, don't worry, I can do what needs to be done myself.

Look, let me take care of this, okay? I'll take him to the basket a few times and teach him what's what.

So you want me to watch you do your stuff on this kid?

Unless you want to play him.

I ain't playing with the likes of him.

So I'll do it and send him packin'.

I don't know.

Come on. Let me do this and I'll fix you up with Mary Jane Ackerman.

I hear she puts out.
SHINS
That's what I hear, too.

YOUNG TONY
What makes you think you can fix me up?

SHINS
She thinks you're hot.

YOUNG TONY
How do you know that?

SHINS
She told my Mom.

YOUNG TONY
When?

SHINS
When she came into the drugstore one day my Mom was workin'.

YOUNG TONY
She told your Mom I was hot?

SHINS
Well, she didn't say “hot.” She said “cute.”

YOUNG TONY
Man, you lie like a fuckin' rug. You must want to take this kid to the basket real bad.

What do you say?

YOUNG TONY
I say if there's a chance of getting these hands on Mary Jane Ackerman's round ones, I'll take it.

SHINS
I'll see what I can do.

YOUNG TONY
Okay, he's yours.

SHINS
You watch. (To YOUNG SUNNY) Hey! (No answer) Hey, you! (No answer) Hey, you with the basketball.
YOUNG SUNNY turns to face SHINS.

YOUNG SUNNY

Yeah, I hear ya.

SHINS

You lookin' to play?

YOUNG SUNNY

Can't think of no better reason to be here.

SHINS

See you brought your own ball.

YOUNG SUNNY

Just in case nobody was of a mind to play with me.

SHINS

Now, why would that be?

YOUNG SUNNY

Cause I'm new in the neighborhood?

YOUNG TONY

You lose your way?

YOUNG SUNNY

No, just heard there were some good ball players down here.

YOUNG TONY

You heard that right.

YOUNG SUNNY

Guess you be two of the good ones?

YOUNG TONY

You could say that. My pal's one of the best. He's goin' to college on a basketball scholarship.

SHINS

My buddy here knows how to play the game, too.

YOUNG TONY

He's got a full ride.

SHINS

Enough about me. (To SUNNY) You wanna play a game of One-on-one?
'Gainst you?

Yeah, me.

(Considering) Maybe.

Tell you what, though, let's make it interesting.

How's that?

If I win, you take your basketball and black ass home and don't come back here.

And if I win, you gonna let me stay here, is that it?

Tell you what, if you win, I give you my basketball and (Holds it out for YOUNG SUNNY to see) I take yours. You got to admit, mine's a better ball.

Why you wanna do somethin' like that?

Cause I don't intend to lose.

One-on-one?

One-on-one. Just one game.

(Nods in direction of YOUNG TONY) What about him?

What about me?

You takin' winners?
Winners? You ain't no winner.

That a "no"?

Be a cold day in hell when I play with the likes of you.

You already had your cold day.

What are you sayin'?

It's come back to me.

What has?

We mixed it up.

When?

You and me. I was laid out and you was thrown out.

East High?

Yeah, East High. You were the one put me on the floor with a good, hard elbow.

I know who you are.

When I gets your elbow out of my ribs, I'll give it back to you.

Fancy-ass shooting guard.

Got me a free ride to the hospital, you did.
YOUNG TONY
That's what you get for showboatin'.

YOUNG SUNNY
Did the whole x-ray business while I was there.

YOUNG TONY
You and that behind-the-back passing shit.

YOUNG SUNNY
Never was so glad to hear a ref's whistle.

YOUNG TONY
We can pick up where we left off.

SHINS
Easy, Tony.

YOUNG SUNNY
Ain't here to settle old business.

YOUNG TONY
Why are you here, anyway?

YOUNG SUNNY
(Motions to SHINS) To play this man a game of One-on-one.

SHINS
You weren't on the floor when we played East again for the city championship. Don't think I even remember you dressed for the game.

YOUNG SUNNY
You're right about that. Neither was your friend with the elbows.

YOUNG TONY
Hey, that's none of your business!

YOUNG TONY steps forward.

YOUNG SUNNY
Hey man, just makin' talk. I don't want no trouble.

SHINS
How come?
YOUNG SUNNY

How come I don't want trouble?

SHINS

No, how come you didn't play?

YOUNG SUNNY

Just say it wasn't my day.

SHINS

Ain't much of an answer.

YOUNG SUNNY

Wasn't much of a day.

SHINS

You ready to go one-on-one?

YOUNG SUNNY

Ready, but I don't wanna have to be lookin' out behind me for Mr. Elbows here.

YOUNG TONY

Listen, you wise ass...

SHINS

Tony, it's okay.

YOUNG TONY

Yeah, well...

SHINS

Tony's gonna be parked on that bench, right there.

YOUNG SUNNY

Got your word?

SHINS

Yeah, you got it.

YOUNG SUNNY

(Nods at YOUNG TONY) And his?

SHINS

Tony?

YOUNG TONY

Yeah, I'll sit it out.
YOUNG TONY heads for bench.

YOUNG SUNNY
Okay, if I lose I leaves. But if I win I get your ball and you get mine. That right?

SHINS
Yeah, that's the deal.

Whose outs?

SHINS
I don't remember your name. You tell me, and I'll let you take the ball out.

YOUNG SUNNY
Sunny. My name is Sunny. With a "U." Just like it says here on this ball.

SHINS
Okay, Sunny. Your outs.

Which ball?

SHINS
Use mine.

YOUNG SUNNY takes Shin's basketball.

What's your name?

SHINS
Shins. Everybody calls me Shins.

Like in "shin bone"?

SHINS
Yeah, like in shin bone.

YOUNG SUNNY
Hope you ain't a sore loser, Shins.

SHINS
I don't mean to lose, Sunny.
YOUNG SUNNY
Okay, Shins, let's see who wins.

*YOUNG SUNNY takes ball and starts to dribble as if driving toward basket. LIGHTS CHANGE.*

SCENE 5

SCENE: Basketball court; the present.

AT RISE: ADULT TONY talking to YANKS.

ADULT TONY
The black kid couldn't miss. I mean, mingia, he was dead on. The ball was like one of those smart bombs and went right to the hoop. Anyways, Sunny won the first game. Oh, yeah, they played a couple more since Shins couldn't let him get away without tryin' his best to beat him. But there was no beatin' Sunny that day. And Shins, like he said, traded basketballs.

YANKS
Kept his word, huh?

ADULT TONY
Yeah, like always. Kept his word.

YANKS
And you and the black kid?

ADULT TONY
I kept my word, too. I stayed out of it.

YANKS
Maybe you should have popped him one.

*YANKS throws a couple air punches.*

ADULT TONY
Maybe.

YANKS
A good left hook could have settled things right then and there.

ADULT TONY
You like to keep things simple, don't you, Yanks?

YANKS
Why make it complicated?
ADULT TONY
Well, it got complicated. Things changed that afternoon. On the court. In the neighborhood. And between Shins and me.

YANKS
How's that?

ADULT TONY
This kid Sunny kept comin' back. Then other black players started comin' around. Guys from East High and Glenville, who wanted to play against the white kids. Test 'em out, I guess. Word got around, so's white players from Heights High and Shaw started coming down to the court to give 'em their shot. Got to admit, there was some terrific ballplayers on both sides. As far as the neighborhood goes, we was seein' more blacks than we'd seen in our lifetimes, practically. They was headin' for the court. Not everybody liked it, not one bit. I didn't much like it. Sal, he friggin' hated it.

YANKS
Yeah, Sal never was one for mixin' the races.

ADULT TONY
I was workin' at Tommy G's clearing tables and parking cars, not seein' as much of Shins. Not playin' much ball, either.

YANKS
Doin' your own thing, huh?

ADULT TONY
Didn't much matter to Shins. The black kid was showin' up almost every day.

YANKS
You shoulda settled it when you could with a good left hook.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

SCENE 6
SCENE: Basketball court; the past.

AT RISE: YOUNG SUNNY comes rushing headlong into the basketball court, breathless. He hunches down to the ground, gasping for breath, leaning on the basketball he won from SHINS. SHINS, surprised, stares at him.

SHINS
Hey, man, what's the rush? Goin' to a fire?
YOUNG SUNNY shakes his head "no" without answering. SHINS approaches closer.

(Continuing) What's wrong?

YOUNG SUNNY

Just need to catch my breath.

SHINS

What? Did you run all the way here?

YOUNG SUNNY

Just about.

SHINS

You trainin' for cross-country?

YOUNG SUNNY

Ain't no country to cross in my neighborhood.

SHINS

What's that?

SHINS points at back of YOUNG SUNNY's T-shirt.

YOUNG SUNNY

What's what?

SHINS

On the back of your shirt. It looks like blood.

YOUNG SUNNY

Must have scratched myself runnin' into some tree branch or something.

SHINS

Take this.

SHINS hands YOUNG SUNNY a handkerchief.

YOUNG SUNNY

This here better not have no snot on it.

SHINS

It's the clean one, from the left pocket. I keep the dirty one in the right pocket.
YOUNG SUNNY
*(Holding kerchief to back of neck) Both goin' to be dirty now.*

SHINS
You keep it.

YOUNG SUNNY
My Momma sees a bloody handkerchief, she'll have me in the emergency room quick as a lick.

SHINS
Just toss it then. She worries about you, your Momma does?

YOUNG SUNNY
Only from the time she wakes up to when she falls asleep.

And your Old Man?

YOUNG SUNNY
Don't be seein' much of him.

SHINS
He up and leave?

YOUNG SUNNY
In a way.

What way's that?

YOUNG SUNNY
Got hisself sick, my Momma says, not takin' his pills.

But you see him sometimes?

YOUNG SUNNY
He come by now and again. Don't stay long enough but to drink some hot tea with honey in it. Always ask for tea with honey in it. Drinks it down, then he gone.

SHINS
Sorry.

YOUNG SUNNY
Shit, don't be. Ain't like we havin' these father-son heart-to-hearts. Momma, she try to hide it but she scared of that man. Sorry for him, too. Never say nothin' gainst him, though.
I know someone just like that.

Who's that?

Just someone like your Momma, who don't say nothin' even though she could.

She say he can't help it, what happened. She say a fallen angel grabbed hold of him.

A fallen angel?

That’s what she says. An angel who grabbed hold of somethin' before fallen into the pit and that somethin' happen to be my Daddy. Only that angel not strong enough to pull my Daddy all the way out. She say we can't blame Daddy for his troubles.

You mind if I tell this person I know what your Momma says?

No mindin' here. But me, I say he hot-wired wrong, and angels got nothin' to do with it.

How long you been runnin' backwards?

Runnin' backwards? What you sayin'?

That cut. What happened? Either you was runnin' backwards or that branch had to reach around and slap you on the back of the neck. Neither seems likely.

For a white boy, you pretty smart.

What ain't you tellin' me?

Just run into a little messin' on my way here.

Messin'? What messin'?
Some white boys.

Was Tony one of them?

No, he wasn't.

Who were they?

Don't know, but then I didn't wait around for introducin'.

What happened?

Nothin' much.

Okay, so tell me about nothin' much.

What's it matter?

You ashamed?

Shamed! About what?

About runnin' from these guys.

When the odds is three to one – no matter if they is white, black, or peppermint striped – ain't no shame in running the other direction.

So these three white guys jumped you?

I saw 'em sittin' on a bench smoking cigarettes. Didn't think they'd be donatin' to the NAACP. One of them turned my way. Then all three jumps up. We was off to the races.
SHINS

How'd you get cut?

YOUNG SUNNY

One of 'em had a pretty good arm. Make somebody a real good outfielder. I was way out ahead, but he still bounced a lil' ol' rock off the back of my neck.

SHINS

They gave up?

YOUNG SUNNY

Sure enough. You ain't seen but three of my five gears. They gave up 'cept for some fancy name-calling.

SHINS

They gotta know you were headin' here.

YOUNG SUNNY

Yeah, I guess me carryin' a basketball might give 'em a clue.

You sure Tony wasn't one of 'em?

YOUNG SUNNY

No, he wasn't. Wasn't your friend Tony's style. If he's comin' after me, he's comin' all by himself.

SHINS

Maybe you ought to take off.

YOUNG SUNNY

No, I come to shoot some hoops, and that's what I'm goin' to do.

SHINS

All right, what's the game? Horse? Twenty-one? One-on-one?

YOUNG SUNNY

(Remains on ground) Gotta get my wind back first.

Whenever you're ready.

YOUNG SUNNY

Don't think you has to stay.

SHINS

You telling me I should take off?
I ain't telling you to stay or to leave.

Nobody's chasin' me off this court.

It could get messy, you bein' a white boy playin' with me.

So let it get messy.

Don't think you're lookin' out for me.

I ain't lookin' out for you.

What you call it then?

What do I call what?

Stickin' by to baby-sit the nigger.

(Dribbles ball, exasperated) What the hell kind of thing is that to say? Huh? What the hell is that to say?

Ain't that what you call me when we ain't here on this court? Ain't it?

(Pauses to consider) Yeah, I used the word a few times. All I can say is I'm sorry I did.

Damn! You coulda lied. Told me it never crossed them thin lips of yours. Why you gotta be so damn honest?

I got a lot of respect for you, Sunny, comin' on down here the way you did.

First time here you and your friend looked at me like I come from planet Neptune.
SHINS
Why'd you come, anyways? Why'd you risk gettin' your ass kicked?

YOUNG SUNNY
Truth is, I turned left when I should'a turned right.

SHINS
Serious, I wouldn't cross 1-2-5 to go into your neighborhood. Why go blockbusting basketball courts when you got plenty on your side of 1-2-5?

YOUNG SUNNY
Wasn't blockbusting nothin'.

SHINS
So why'd you come here?

YOUNG SUNNY
Man, you ask more questions than the neighborhood police.

SHINS
Why?

YOUNG SUNNY
I come to play some basketball. That's all. Just to play some ball.

SHINS
You could just as well be playin' against good players from East High or from Glenville or John Hay. Why come down here, where somebody might punch you out soon as look at you? I just want to know why you are either so damn stupid ... or so damn gutsy.

YOUNG SUNNY
Hell, man, let's just play ball.

SHINS
(Sits down) Ain't movin' unless you tell me.

YOUNG SUNNY
You doin' some kinda white boy sit-in?

SHINS
Serious, I'd like to know.

YOUNG SUNNY
Why don't you tell me somethin' I don't know about you? Then maybe I tell you somethin' you wanna know.
SHINS
You mean like somethin' personal?

YOUNG SUNNY
Sure enough, but don't be tellin' me your shoe size or favorite ice cream. I mean somethin' you don't want most people – including me – to know.

SHINS
That person I told you about?

YOUNG SUNNY
What person?

SHINS
The one who, like your Momma, won't never say anything bad against someone.

YOUNG SUNNY
Yeah, I remember you makin' mention.

SHINS
That's my Mom. My old man left us so long ago I don't remember nothin' bout him. Not the color of his hair, his eyes, whether he was tall or short or a fuckin' midget. Don't know why he left. Maybe he took one look at me and headed for the door.

YOUNG SUNNY
You ugly, but not that ugly.

SHINS
So why do you come down here?

YOUNG SUNNY
Maybe you are that ugly.

SHINS
You trying to do a Jackie Robinson?

YOUNG SUNNY
You just don't let things rest, do you?

SHINS
Been called a broken record by some. Keep repeatin' til I get an answer.

YOUNG SUNNY
Yeah, man, well, here's your answer. I got a heart murmur.

SHINS
A heart murmur?
YOUNG SUNNY
Yeah, somethin' don't seem to sound quite right.

SHINS
You seen a doctor?

YOUNG SUNNY
You think I do my own physical?

SHINS
What'd the doc say?

YOUNG SUNNY
It started after your friend Tony put his elbow into me. That sent me to the team doctor. The team doctor tells me my heart is murmuring. He says I can't play no more 'til they know what's what, which could be somethin' or could be nothin'. So the school tells me to sit it out. My season was over. That's why you didn't see me in the playoff game.

SHINS
So is it somethin' or nothin'?

YOUNG SUNNY
Nobody knows. Not yet. Couple of docs listen to me breathe and lookin' at me every which way, and askin' all kinds of questions.

SHINS
What you doin' playing on this court then? You shouldn't be down here. At least not til they find out what's wrong, know what I mean? (Rises)

YOUNG SUNNY
That's why I'm here – to play. My Momma scared to death for me, and she got all the eyes in the neighborhood watchin' out for my comin' and goin'. Anybody sees me on the court – or even close to one – they report me to Momma. So I made a cross-my-fingers promise to her. Told her she didn't have to worry bout me playin' ball in the neighborhood no more.

SHINS
So you come down here instead?

YOUNG SUNNY
Figured nobody from my hood goin' to be hangin' with folks in this neighborhood.

SHINS
Guess you're keepin' your promise to your Mom, sort of.

YOUNG SUNNY
She a lot happier believin' I don't got no game right now.
SHINS
What about the basketball you won from me?

YOUNG SUNNY
Been thinkin' you'd like havin' it back.

SHINS
Oh, no. You won that ball fair and square.

YOUNG SUNNY
Ever you want a chance to win it back, you just say the word.

SHINS
What? Lose it twice? Ain't interested. But don't your Mom wonder what you're doin' bringin' a basketball home, even if it's a different one?

YOUNG SUNNY
This ball don't come home with me. I got a place in this here park where I tuck it away safe and sound.

SHINS
You ought to just stop playin' for a while, Sunny. Once they fix you up, you can play again.

YOUNG SUNNY
What if they don't fix me up?

SHINS
There'll be other things.

YOUNG SUNNY
Yeah, like bein' an astronaut, maybe. Or doin' brain surgery.

SHINS
Ah, come on, man. You're a smart guy.

YOUNG SUNNY
What you be doin' if you didn't have no scholarship?

SHINS
Lookin' for a job, I guess.

YOUNG SUNNY
Well, that's what lies down the road if the docs give me bad news. Recruiters be runnin' the other way, and I end up servin' burgers at the drive-through window.

SHINS
For a player as good as...
YOUNG SUNNY
A player as good as me? Won't matter if the docs say I'm a heart attack waitin' to happen.

SHINS
There's other ...

YOUNG SUNNY
No, there's not. I'm here to keep my game sharp. Can't do that standin' around talkin' to you.
(Pause) Let's play.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

SCENE 7

SCENE: Basketball court; present and past.

AT RISE: SHINS, with basketball, turns to Audience.

SHINS
(To Audience) I felt for Sunny. He kept comin' down, we kept playin'. Wasn't seein' too much of Tony. Then late one day Tony shows up from work and it don't go so well.

YOUNG TONY
Hey, college boy, down here kind of late, ain't you?

SHINS
(To SHINS) Yeah, well, there's enough light yet. You just get off work?

YOUNG TONY
Yeah. Parked a brand-new Cadillac DeVille tonight at Tommy G's. Smelled like the inside of a wallet. You workin', or just playin' with yourself down here?

SHINS
Working at the drugstore, whenever old man Wasserman needs me.

YOUNG TONY
Guess it's nice havin' a basketball scholarship, huh? Takes care of havin' to worry 'bout makin' money, I mean.

SHINS
I'm workin', Tony. I'd work more if I could find somethin' else.

YOUNG TONY
Well, don't take on anything with heavy liftin'. Might interfere with your game.
SHINS
You ever talk to Coach?

YOUNG TONY
What for?

SHINS
You know what for.

YOUNG TONY
Hey, Sal's got a spot for me down at the Hall.

SHINS
I talked to Coach about you.

YOUNG TONY
Talked to him about what?

SHINS
About writing you a letter of recommendation.

YOUNG TONY
He throw you out of his office?

SHINS
No, he said he'd consider it.

YOUNG TONY
What's the catch?

SHINS
Nothin' much.

YOUNG TONY
So what do I gotta do?

SHINS
Apologize personal—face-to-face.

YOUNG TONY
So I apologize and he's gonna consider vouching for me?

SHINS
It'll clear the air.
YOUNG TONY
No, what it will do is put my future in Coach's hands. Fuck'im! And you can tell him that for me.

SHINS
Jesus, Tony...

YOUNG TONY
I'll make my own mind up about my future.

SHINS
You could still go for a walk-on at Moncrief.

YOUNG TONY
Ain't interested.

SHINS
You're a good ballplayer, Tony. You could start for a junior college, maybe even get yourself a scholarship.

YOUNG TONY
You think so?

SHINS
You don't know unless you try.

YOUNG TONY
Unlike you, I ain't had no letters of interest come to my house. And no coaches come to shake hands and talk nice to my Mom, either.

SHINS
So? Just show up and try out.

YOUNG TONY
Don't know why I missed out. Guess my stats weren't impressive enough. Not like yours.

SHINS
Nobody is going to care what those were once they see you on the floor playin'.

YOUNG TONY
Course, it's tough to score points when you play with an all-star.

SHINS
I know how good you are.

YOUNG TONY
Near season's end, Coach had me in and out so much I was startin' to feel like the sixth man.
SHINS
He was just lettin' you rest. We needed your muscle and inside shooting.

YOUNG TONY
Coach made me feel like the bouncer. Just sent me in to mix it up with the nastiest black players.

SHINS
The best black players, not the nastiest.

YOUNG TONY
You know what Coach told me? He told me he didn't care if I fouled out, just so's I did my best to protect you.

SHINS
I don't remember him ever sayin' anything like that.

YOUNG TONY
He said it to me, not to you.

SHINS
I can take care of myself.

YOUNG TONY
Yeah, well, it looks like you're goin' to have to from now on.

SHINS
What's your problem?

YOUNG TONY
Problem? Guess I'm just tired of hearin' you tell me what I should and shouldn't be doin'.

SHINS
Okay, do what you want. I got nothin' more to say on the subject.

SHINS passes basketball to YOUNG TONY, who catches and looks at it.

YOUNG TONY
You ever gonna get your own ball back?

SHINS
Not if I keep playin' One-on-one with Sunny.

YOUNG TONY
Hey, look how he spells his name: S-U-N-N-Y. Dumb ass can't even spell his own name.
SHINS
No, that's how it's spelled. His Momma said he had a "sunny" disposition right from the time he was born.

YOUNG TONY
Dumb name for someone who's black.

SHINS
His real name is Hiram.

YOUNG TONY
Hiram? What kind of name is that?

SHINS
I don't know, it's his name.

YOUNG TONY
No wonder he calls himself Sunny.

SHINS
Says it's from the Bible. Says Hiram was some kind of king who helped build a temple.

YOUNG TONY
I say this tizzuna's got a screw loose.

SHINS
A screw loose? What do you mean?

YOUNG TONY
I seen your friend doin' something a little strange.

SHINS
What?

YOUNG TONY
I seen him talkin' to the trees.

YOUNG TONY passes basketball to SHINS.

SHINS
You been sipping that dago red your brother keeps on the back stairs?

YOUNG TONY
I'm not kiddin', he was talkin' to the trees.

SHINS
Were they talkin' back?
YOUNG TONY

I seen him. Walkin' back to 1-2-5, he was talkin' to the trees. Friendly-like. Saying stuff.

SHINS

Like what stuff?

YOUNG TONY

Somethin' about angels. I couldn't make any sense out of it.

SHINS

Hey, maybe he does talk to himself—so what? Sometimes I do that. Bet you do, too.

YOUNG TONY

No, he was talkin' to the trees! You keep hangin' with the likes of him, you'll be talkin' to the telephone poles. Maybe you already are.

SHINS

What's with you, anyway?

YOUNG TONY

Nothin', except I ain't heard from my best friend lately. He's too busy playin' one-on-one with Little Black Sambo.

SHINS

Let me tell you somethin', Sunny's makin' a better player out of me. He gets me to step it up.

And I don't?

SHINS

I didn't say that.

YOUNG TONY

All of a sudden, I'm sittin' on the bench. Is that it?

SHINS

He plays a different kind of game, that's all. Anyways, working at Tommy G's, you ain't been around.

YOUNG TONY

No, I ain't. I'm busy makin' a livin'.

SHINS

I need that scholarship. I got to be good enough to keep it. Without it, I can't go to college.

YOUNG TONY

Listen, College Boy, you wouldn't have been All-City if it weren't for Tony here.
SHINS
You got a pretty big opinion of yourself, Tony.

YOUNG TONY
Think so?

SHINS
Told you before, I can take care of myself.

YOUNG TONY
I would have scored more if I wasn't always lookin' out for you.

SHINS
You should have taken your outside shots.

YOUNG TONY
Take my outside shots?

SHINS
Instead of passin' the ball off.

YOUNG TONY
I wasn't passin' it off.

SHINS
Yeah, you were. You got a "scared" outside shot, Tony. It leaves your hand scared, cause you're scared.

YOUNG TONY
I ain't scared of nothin'.

SHINS
Yeah, you are. You are scared of missin' your outside shot, scared of going to college, and scared Sal might not like it if you did.

YOUNG TONY
Leave my brother out of this.

SHINS
You always going to do what Sal wants?

YOUNG TONY
Listen to the College Boy, giving lectures.

SHINS
Gettin' yourself thrown off the team like that 'cause he wanted points shaved.
I told you to never bring that up.

You know how you're going to end up? You're going to be his errand boy at the union hall.

Sal's got plans for me.

All because you're scared of what Big Brother might think.

Shut the fuck up!

YOUNG TONY pushes SHINS.

Don't push me.

(Puts up his hands and motions him close) Come on... come on...

You can be a real asshole.

I said, "come on."

I ain't gonna fight unless you hit me first, Tony.

If I hit you first, there won't be no fight.

Do yourself a favor. Start thinkin' about what you want, not what Sal wants. I got better things to do than argue with you.

SHINS takes his basketball and exits.

(Shouting out) Come on, I'll bust you one. You hear that, College Boy? Do you? Fungool!

LIGHTS CHANGE.
SCENE 8

SCENE: Basketball court; past.

AT RISE: SHINS dribbling ball. He stops dribbling as YOUNG SUNNY enters with basketball.

SHINS
Hey, haven't seen you around lately. Where you been?

YOUNG SUNNY
Here and there.

SHINS
Thought you might have signed on with the Globetrotters or somethin'.

YOUNG SUNNY
No, but I was considerin' an offer from the Knicks.

SHINS
Make it a no-cut contract first year. That's my advice.

YOUNG SUNNY
That what your college offered you?

SHINS
No, but I do get to work in the cafeteria washin' dishes.

YOUNG SUNNY
You drive some kind of hard bargain.

SHINS
Yeah, well, in return I get to eat for free, plus a small paycheck for hours worked.

YOUNG SUNNY
Shoulda had me negotiate for you. They'd a threwed in a new car and four season tickets, courtside. Team's any good, you could turn them tickets into cash.

SHINS
Not sure the NCAA would like that.

YOUNG SUNNY
Shit, whose gonna tell 'em? A brother I know got hisself a car, two new suits and four season tickets. Good seats, too.

SHINS
Somebody finds out, he's out of there. I wouldn't take the chance.
YOUNG SUNNY
You wouldn't?

SHINS
Not worth it. You'd get kicked out of school and have a black mark against you.

YOUNG SUNNY
Why they call it a black mark? Why not a white mark? Huh? Why not?

SHINS
Whatever you want to call it, you'd probably never get another scholarship. Why risk it?

YOUNG SUNNY
Could be it wouldn't matter. Maybe he moves on to the NBA, signs a contract for a million or two. Maybe he got hisself a beautiful wife, a Cadillac in the driveway and one of them foreign cars, a Lamborghini or somethin', in the garage. He ain't got a college degree, but you think he cares?

SHINS
Odds of makin' it in the NBA for most guys is a million-no, a zillion-to one.

YOUNG SUNNY
So you don't think about it?

SHINS
I'm a one-foot-in-front-of-the other kind of guy. I'm lookin' at what's right in front of me, and that's keepin' the scholarship and gettin' a degree.

YOUNG SUNNY
Got to admit, I do think about graduatin' college. I get a degree an' my Momma is the proudest lady in the neighborhood. I get that piece of paper first and then the N.B.A. will come callin'.

SHINS
Look, do yourself a favor and get the docs to tell you what's what with that heart murmur.

YOUNG SUNNY
Knicks would be my first choice. Then the Celtics. How you think I'd look in green?

SHINS
Like a chocolate bar in a green wrapper.

YOUNG SUNNY
You ain't bein' encouragin' bout this.

SHINS
Don't mean to be.
YOUNG SUNNY
Third choice is Utah Jazz. Play for them Mormons and all their wives. You think anybody in Utah really listens to jazz?

SHINS
Don't be daydreamin', Sunny. At least not til you know what's goin' on with the murmur.

YOUNG SUNNY
Oh, I know what's goin' on.

SHINS
You got word?

YOUNG SUNNY
Yeah, I got word.

SHINS
You okay?

YOUNG SUNNY
Docs say I be just fine. Murmur don't be nothin' but my heart whisperin' sweet nothin's. Not worth thinkin' twice about.

SHINS grabs YOUNG SUNNY by the hand and pulls him to his feet.

SHINS
Fantastic! I mean, fuckin' fantastic. (Starts jumping up and down) Man, here I am feelin' bad for you, and you are pullin' my chain. Fantastic!

YOUNG SUNNY
So I ain't been 'round cause some college recruiters tryin' to sign a future NBA All-Star, namely me.

SHINS
They know you got a clean bill of health?

YOUNG SUNNY
Oh, they know, all right. Don't know how they know, but they know.

SHINS
So where you goin' to go? Which school?

YOUNG SUNNY
Ain't finally decided yet, but am leanin' toward Northwest University.
SHINS
We'd be in the same conference!

YOUNG SUNNY
I swear to you right here, I goin' take it easy on you when we plays. And, if you need extra tickets, they yours-half price.

SHINS
I got all your moves down now. I'll take 'em away before you make 'em. People be thinkin' I'm readin' your mind.

YOUNG SUNNY
I ain't showed you but half my moves.

SHINS
I got what's left of the summer to get the other half.

YOUNG SUNNY
You ain't gonna see those til you facin' off 'gainst Northwest.

SHINS
Showboat like you won't be able to hold off through the summer.

YOUNG SUNNY
When they happen, they happen so fast you won't know what you seen.

SHINS
(Serious) Your Momma, she's got to be one happy lady.

YOUNG SUNNY
Smilin' from sunup to sundown, and thankin' the Lord every other breath. She been doin' more prayin' than thinkin' the last couple months.

SHINS
Who knows, mighta done some good.

YOUNG SUNNY
Told her about you.

SHINS
About me?

YOUNG SUNNY
Figured I'd best be comin' clean, more or less.

SHINS
What'd you say?
YOUNG SUNNY
Just how some white boy been helpin' me keep from goin' crazy.

SHINS
You tell 'bout us playin' ball down here?

YOUNG SUNNY
Some, not all.

SHINS
Man, I bet she ain't real fond of me for that.

YOUNG SUNNY
The way I tell it, you like a Kennedy in tennis shoes. Momma love the Kennedys. John F.'s picture on the wall, right next to Martin Luther King and Jesus.

SHINS
That's some threesome.

YOUNG SUNNY
You a candidate for the next picture. Fact is, she appreciate what you done.

SHINS
Done? I ain't done nothin' but play ball with you. One-on-one, mostly. And most times I lost.

YOUNG SUNNY
My Momma hears what's goin' on around 1-2-5. She know not everyone be welcomin' me like you done.

SHINS
You done for me, too. Made me better. Man, I hate admittin' that.

YOUNG SUNNY
She want to meet you.

SHINS
She wants what?

YOUNG SUNNY
She want you to come have supper with us. On a Sunday. After church.

SHINS
(Haltingly) I, I don't even know where you live.

YOUNG SUNNY
We got what you call an address.
SHINS
For supper?

YOUNG SUNNY
I could meet you here, walk you there.

SHINS
Yeah, well...

YOUNG SUNNY
She say you a good young man, and we owe you something.

SHINS
On a Sunday?

YOUNG SUNNY
Fried chicken be on the menu. And ribs. Momma always orders them for special times.

SHINS
Lots of Sundays I got work at the drugstore. In the afternoons, usually.

YOUNG SUNNY
On a Sunday when you don't got work.

SHIN
I'd have to check, you know.

YOUNG SUNNY
Collared greens be on the menu, sweet potatoes, too. And chitlins. You ever have chitlins? Deep-fried, dipped in hot mustard, they somethin' special. Got to admit, though, they what you call an acquired taste.

SHINS
Store's been gettin' pretty busy. Old man Wasserman, he don't much like givin' time off when he needs me.

YOUNG SUNNY
(Thoughtful) Course, maybe you too busy right now, with the drugstore and all.

SHINS
Yeah, it's a busy time.

YOUNG SUNNY
Well, you let me know if'n it's too busy.
SHINS
Wouldn't want to get old man Wasserman on my case. Fired a guy for takin' extra time off when he needed him.

YOUNG SUNNY
No, man, wouldn't want you to lose your job.

SHINS
And my Mom, she works there behind the counter. What would happen if he fired me? Could be hard feelings all around, you know? Could cause her trouble.

YOUNG SUNNY
Wouldn't want to cause nobody no trouble.

SHINS
So there's a lot needs thinkin' about.

YOUNG SUNNY
I just tell my Momma you got a lot goin' on.

SHINS
Yeah, it's a bad time to be makin' plans.

YOUNG SUNNY
She understand.

SHINS
A real bad time.

YOUNG SUNNY
She will.

SHINS
She will?

YOUNG SUNNY
Oh, yeah. You let me know if you find any time.

SHINS
Yeah, if I do.

YOUNG SUNNY
(Pause) Hey, man, how 'bout some one-on-one?

LIGHTS CHANGE.
SCENE 9

SCENE: Basketball court; present.

AT RISE: ADULT TONY talking to YANKS.

ADULT TONY
I felt bad about what happened between Shins and me.

YANKS
Weren't your fault.

ADULT TONY
I thought about callin' him. I just thought about it, though. Then one day I decided the hell with it. Shins was my asshole buddy, you know? I had made a few bucks parking cars at Tommy G's restaurant. I decided to invest some of that money in our friendship.

YANKS
Funny you talkin' about Tommy G and his restaurant here.

ADULT TONY
Yeah, funny.

YANKS
Of all places...

ADULT TONY
Tommy G, he was an alright guy.

YANKS
Yeah, he sure was. Always good for a touch, if you needed it.

ADULT TONY
Sal's not gonna rest 'til he finds whoever did it.

YANKS
You think this Sunny or Hiram or whatever he calls himself seen anything?

ADULT TONY
Says he saw somethin' down here. Could be.

YANKS
Where'd they find Tommy G's body?

ADULT TONY
*Points* Right over there, against the fence, or what's left of it.
YANKS
You saw him?

ADULT TONY
No. Sal sent me down as soon as he heard. But Tommy G was already zipped up in a body bag by the time I got here.

YANKS
And nobody saw nothin'?

ADULT TONY
If they did, nobody's sayin'. Except maybe our guy Hiram.

YANKS
Where is he, anyways?

ADULT TONY
It's a couple minutes yet.

YANKS
And if he's a no-show?

ADULT TONY
If he don't show, we go find him.

YANKS
You even know what he looks like?

ADULT TONY
No, haven't seen him since we was kids. But we know he's a street bum, and we know his name. And he told me he's got a cast on his arm.

YANKS
Waste of time, if you ask me.

ADULT TONY
Nobody's askin' you, Yanks.

YANKS
Whatever you say.

ADULT TONY
No, not what I say. What Sal says.

LIGHTS CHANGE.
SCENE 10

SCENE: Basketball court; past.

AT RISE: YOUNG TONY with new basketball, puts it on ground and sits on it, waiting. Within seconds, SHINS comes on court and dribbles his basketball. He immediately sees YOUNG TONY, who rises and picks up ball he was sitting on.

YOUNG TONY

Took you long enough to get here.

SHINS

What's it to you?

YOUNG TONY

It's Sunday. Sundays you're usually down here right after Mass.

SHINS

Got busy with somethin'.

YOUNG TONY

What, you praying extra hard to get laid?

SHINS

I always do, don't you?

YOUNG TONY

Serious. Why you late?

SHINS

My Ma had one of them spells again.

YOUNG TONY

Them dizzy spells?

SHINS

Yeah.

YOUNG TONY

She okay?

SHINS

Yeah, I gave her the pills and candy and got her settled.

YOUNG TONY

How's she goin' to get along without you?
She keeps askin’ me the same thing.

She havin’ second thoughts about you goin’ off to college?

Every day, but then the next minute she tells me it’s the best thing.

It is, you know.

I know.

What are you gonna study?

You won’t laugh?

Why would I laugh?

I’d like to go to law school and join the FBI.

Mingia, you wanna be arrestin’ people?

The bad guys, yeah.

Guess a college education could get you that, huh?

Not just me, anybody.

You tell me things like this, and it gets me thinkin’.

Serious?

For a couple minutes.
SHINS
You could go for a walk-on at Moncrief.

YOUNG TONY
Yeah, but Sal...

SHINS
I know, I know. He's findin' you a spot at the Union Hall.

YOUNG TONY
Lots of guys would give their right arm. To tell the truth, I'd feel I was lettin' Sal down. I think he's countin' on me, you know what I mean?

SHINS
You go down to that Union Hall, I'll be readin' about you in the papers.

YOUNG TONY
No, Sal says things are gonna' change for the better. Him and some other young guys will be showing old-timers like Big Angie the exit door in a couple years. They're gonna clean 'em out.

SHINS
Big Angie, the guy I read about in the newspapers?

YOUNG TONY
Yeah, the head guy. The big cheese. Numero uno.

SHINS
And your brother's gonna take his place?

YOUNG TONY
If things work out.

SHINS
You could always join up with Sal later, after you get a degree.

YOUNG TONY
Man, I didn't come down here to talk about my future prospects. I got you somethin'.

SHINS
Got me what?

*YOUNG TONY holds new basketball toward SHINS, then tosses it at him. SHINS drops Sunny's ball, catches new ball.*

YOUNG TONY
A new basketball.
SHINS
You're kidding.

YOUNG TONY
No, not kidding. Sorry about givin' you shit.

SHINS
Can you afford this?

YOUNG TONY
I'm makin' big money at Tommy G's.

SHINS
(Kiddingly) You sure you didn't steal it?

YOUNG TONY
I paid cold hard cash out of my pocket.

SHINS
You were ready to smack me the other day, and now you give me this.

YOUNG TONY
You can take a free swing if you want. *(Points at his jaw)*

SHINS
You can be an asshole.

YOUNG TONY
Sometimes.

SHINS
You don't have to give me this.

YOUNG TONY
Yeah, I do, it's no cash back.

SHINS
I'll take a rain check on that free swing.

YOUNG TONY
What about the Tizzuna's basketball?

SHINS
Guess I don't need it.

YOUNG TONY
How 'bout you give it to me and I'll give it to my nonnina.
YOUNG TONY picks up Sunny's basketball.

SHINS

What for?

YOUNG TONY

So she can use it to put a curse on him.

SHINS

I'll give it, but none of your friggin' Sicilian curses.

YOUNG TONY

Just a little one.

SHINS

None.

YOUNG TONY

Okay, okay.

SHINS

One-on-one?

YOUNG TONY

I got to go.

SHINS

Already?

YOUNG TONY

Got cars to park.

SHINS

On a Sunday morning?

YOUNG TONY

Brunch at Tommy G's place. It's big.

SHINS

Sal waitin' for you there?

YOUNG TONY

Yeah, he's with Big Angie, probably dealin' the last few hands of Scopone.

SHINS

What the hell is Scopone? Sounds like a soup or somethin'.
YOUNG TONY
You're never gonna make it as a Sicilian. It's a card game, man. Four players, two against two.

SHINS
Playin' with Angie, Numero uno?

YOUNG TONY
Yeah, the Number One guy – for now.

SHINS
You didn't have to give me this.

YOUNG TONY
Yeah, I did.

SHINS
Thanks.

YOUNG TONY
Keep prayin', maybe you'll get laid.

SHINS
Or at least cop a feel.

YOUNG TONY
Oh, yeah, about that Mary Jane Ackerman?

SHINS
You went out with her?

YOUNG SUNNY
Yeah, and I got news for you.

SHINS
What's that?

YOUNG TONY
Her round ones must come from Wasserman's Drug Store. Gotta run.

*YOUNG TONY taking Sunny's basketball, exits. LIGHTS CHANGE.*
SCENE 11

SCENE: Basketball court; present.

AT RISE: ADULT TONY talking to YANKS.

ADULT TONY
While I was parkin' those cars, I kept thinkin' about what Shins had said -- about me tryin' out for a walk-on at Moncrief. Maybe he had somethin' there. I knew I wasn't no all-star, but I played hard and was tough on defense. When I mentioned it to Sal he just looked at me and said I would have to make up my mind soon. That spot was goin' to open up any day.

YANKS
Lot of guys woulda given their left nut for that spot.

ADULT TONY
For a while there, I wasn't sure what to do.

YANKS
There was even some pressure brought, but Sal wouldn't budge.

That right?

YANKS
Yeah, that's right.

ADULT TONY
I never knew about the pressure on Sal.

YANKS
Don't say I said nothin'.

ADULT TONY
No, I won't. Sal told me there'd be some nice perks. A car. Some travel.

YANKS
I mean "big" pressure. From some important types.

ADULT TONY
Sometimes I'd just sit behind the wheel of one of them cars I parked, and stare out the windshield, wonderin' what I should do.

YANKS
Sal, he didn't budge. For nobody.
ADULT TONY
I couldn't help wonder if I could play college ball. If I was good enough.

YANKS
One way or another, he wanted you.

ADULT TONY
While I was thinkin' about all that, some business started in the neighborhood between blacks and whites. Not the ballplayers, but what I call stoo gatz. Little pricks lookin' for trouble. Blacks calling themselves the Corner Boys jumpin' whites, whites jumpin' blacks. Kids I'm talkin' about. You didn't want to be caught at the wrong place, or the wrong time, whether you was black or white. That's where I made my mistake.

LIGHTS CHANGE.

SCENE 12

SCENE: Basketball court; past.

AT RISE: SHINS dribbles basketball. YOUNG TONY enters with left arm in sling and holding Sunny's basketball.

SHINS
Hey, what you doin' down here?

YOUNG TONY
I can't stick around the house. I'm going stir crazy.

SHINS
What's the doc say about your arm?

YOUNG TONY
It's okay. I'm healin' up.

SHINS
You're lookin' better. Jeeze, you looked like you were ready for last rites when I stopped over.

YOUNG TONY
Well, the doc said I lost a lot of blood. The knife went pretty deep. Lucky it didn't hit no vein or nothin'.

SHINS
You shouldn't have been down here by yourself.

YOUNG TONY
Look who's talkin'.
SHINS
Why was you down here anyway?

YOUNG TONY
I was thinkin’ about what you said.

SHINS
About what?

Young TONY
A walk-on at Moncrief. Figured I’d sharpen up my outside shot.

SHINS
Why didn’t you call me? Stop by? I woul-da come down here.

YOUNG TONY
Didn’t think I was gonna need backup.

SHINS
You shoulda called.

YOUNG TONY
Shoulda, woulda, coulda but I didn’t.

SHINS
I’da watched your back.

YOUNG TONY
Never figured on gettin’ it here on the court.

SHINS
What if they cut an artery or somethin”? What if, huh?

YOUNG TONY
Hey, what is this? I get stabbed and you’re pissed off.

SHINS
Next time, you call me.

YOUNG TONY
Yeah.

SHINS
Ain’t nobody should be down here alone right now.

YOUNG TONY
Listen to you. What you doin’ down here by yourself?
SHINS
Just waitin' to see if Sunny shows up.

YOUNG TONY
You two still integratin' the neighborhood? Next thing I know, you'll be invitin' him over for dinner. Or he'll be invitin' you over for chitlins or somethin'. What the hell is chitlins, anyways?

SHINS
I'm likely to find out.

YOUNG TONY
What are you talkin' about?

SHINS
I got an invite. I'm gonna be goin' to Sunny's for a Sunday supper.

YOUNG TONY
When's this gonna happen?

SHINS
I gotta accept the invitation, then he can tell me when.

YOUNG TONY
So you ain't accepted yet?

SHINS
I will soon as I see him.

YOUNG TONY
You crazy? You're gonna cross 1-2-5?

SHINS
Sunny will be with me.

YOUNG TONY
With or without him, it's a bad idea. Askin' for fuckin' trouble.

SHINS pulls out Saint Christopher medal from around his neck.

SHINS
Countin' on Saint Christopher to keep us safe.

YOUNG TONY
Don't be crossin' over to that neighborhood, Shins. There's nothin' but trouble on the other side.
SHINS
There's nothing but trouble on this side, either.

YOUNG TONY
Nothin's the same.

SHINS
Everybody's on edge.

Young TONY
Figure I'd give the tizzuna's ball back to you. Them black kids didn't even bother to steal it. Piece of shit didn't bring me nothin' but bad luck. Here.

YOUNG TONY hands SHINS Sunny's basketball.

SHINS
What am I supposed to do with it?

YOUNG TONY
Why don't you give it back to your pal Sunny? And the bad luck that goes with it?

SHINS
He don't need bad luck right now. Things are goin' good for him.

What's that mean?

YOUNG TONY
Got himself a scholarship.

SHINS
No kiddin'.

YOUNG TONY
No kiddin'. Northwest. A full ride.

SHINS
You two will be playin' against each other.

Yeah, we will.

YOUNG TONY
Funny how things work out.
SHINS
Yeah, funny.

YOUNG TONY
For a while I was considerin' what you said about a walk-on.

SHINS
And?

YOUNG TONY
I made up my mind. I'm goin' with Sal.

SHINS
So you're not takin' a shot at Moncrief?

YOUNG TONY
Not with this arm. *(Raises his arm inside sling)* Doc said it may not ever be right. Somethin' about the nerves.

SHINS
Jesus. You see them before?

YOUNG TONY
No. Never seen 'em.

SHINS
What, did they just come walkin' on the court?

YOUNG TONY
Yeah, before I even knew it. This one really short bastard, shoulders almost touchin' his ears, he was the ringleader. Came up and leaned into me right about here. *(Points to court)* Says to me, "We gonna need a basketball. How 'bout you lend us yours?" I could feel the other three come up around me. So I says, real nice, "Sure, I'll lend it to you." Then I smile, take the ball in my two hands and throw it hard as I could in the punk-ass kid's face. I saw a cloud of blood pop out of his nose before I went down.

SHINS
Jeez. Tony, maybe if you hadn't done that...

YOUNG TONY
They were settin' me up. How about I lend them my basketball? I do that, next it's, "You got any money? You got any cigarettes?" You don't know what. Next thing you're sucking dick.

SHINS
They coulda killed you.
YOUNG TONY
I was bleedin' bad. They probably thought I was dyin'. So they panicked and run.

SHINS
I'm just sayin' if you hadn't hurt the punk ass maybe nothin' would have happened. Getting knifed, I mean.

YOUNG TONY
Well, it ain't goin' to happen again.

SHINS
No, the whole neighborhood is lookin' out. And the cops, they're comin' down here a couple times a day, even at night.

YOUNG TONY
The cops! Great, they pull up for five minutes and then hurry back to the doughnut shop. I mean it ain't goin' to happen again cause I'm ready for it. I got the ultimate equalizer.

YOUNG TONY pulls revolver from sling.

YOUNG TONY
(Continuing) Anybody fucks with me, bang, they're dead.

SHINS
Where'd you get that?

YOUNG TONY
Sal. Says any of 'em try anythin' like that again, use it.

SHINS
Jeez, Tony, I don't know.

YOUNG TONY
Don't know what?

SHINS
About carryin' a gun.

YOUNG TONY
Not a gun, a piece. And don't you go saying nothin'.

SHINS
Nobody around here carries a gun.

YOUNG TONY
A piece. And nobody else around here has 18 stitches in his arm cause he was jumped by four black punks.
SHINS
Let me see that.

YOUNG TONY
Okay, have a look.

*YOUNG TONY hands revolver to SHINS.*

SHINS
You know how to shoot this thing?

YOUNG TONY
Sal showed me how.

SHINS
You actually fired it?

YOUNG TONY
No, but he showed me how.

SHINS
Is it loaded?

YOUNG TONY
You bet it's loaded.

SHINS
Don't let the cops catch you with this.

YOUNG TONY
Do you think I'm stupid?

SHINS
How's it work, anyways?

YOUNG TONY
All's you do is cock the hammer back, aim it, and pull the trigger.

SHINS
Pull it back like this...?

*SHINS cocks the hammer.*

YOUNG TONY
Jeez, be careful with that thing.
SHINS takes aim.

SHINS
Then you just aim it and pull the trigger?

YOUNG TONY
Give me that fuckin' thing.

SHINS
Hey, I'm just askin'.

YOUNG TONY
(Reaching for revolver) Give it here.

SHINS swings and points revolver at sky, pretending to fire off two shots.

SHINS
Bam! Bam!

YOUNG TONY
(Grabs at SHIN's arm) Stop screwin' around.

SHINS
Bam! Bam!

YOUNG TONY
(Yanks at SHIN's arm) Goddamn it!

SHINS
(Levels revolver at YOUNG TONY) F.B.I! You're under arrest for missing another outside shot!

YOUNG TONY
(Raises arms) Whoa! Don't point that thing at me.

SHINS
You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say or do may be used against you in a court of law.

YOUNG TONY
Stop fuckin' around.

SHINS
(Point revolver to ground) Ah, I'm just screwin' with you, that's all.
YOUNG TONY
(Grabs at SHIN's arm) Sal says you don't aim it unless you're gonna use it.

SHINS
(As he pulls back arm) I'm just pullin' your short hairs.

YOUNG TONY
(Yanks at SHIN's wrist) Goddamn it. Give it here!

SFX: HEAR SINGLE GUNSHOT

YOUNG TONY
(Continuing) Fuck!

Revolver is in YOUNG TONY's hand.

SHINS
(Clutches stomach) Tony!

YOUNG TONY
Oh, fuck!

SHINS
(Crumpled to court) Tony!

YOUNG TONY
(Leans over SHINS) Oh, Jesus!

SHINS
I'm hurt.

YOUNG TONY
Jesus. I'll get help. It'll be okay. I'll get help.

SHINS
Don't leave me here.

YOUNG TONY
You got to stay here. Stay quiet.

SHINS
Help me up.

YOUNG TONY
(Rises) You don't move. Understand? I'll get help.
YOUNG TONY begins to exit court. YOUNG TONY stops, realizes he has revolver in his hand. He puts it in sling.

YOUNG TONY, Continued
I told you to stop fuckin' around. I told you, didn't I?

YOUNG TONY moves to exit court. Stops again. He looks at two basketballs. He retrieves the good ball, leaving behind the one imprinted with "Sunny."

YOUNG TONY
(Continuing) I'm gonna get help. Don't move. I'm gonna get help. Jesus!

YOUNG TONY makes sign of cross and runs off court with basketball. LIGHTS CHANGE.

SCENE 13

SCENE: Basketball court; present.

AT RISE: ADULT TONY talking to YANKS.

ADULT TONY
I ran for the pay phone in the park and called Sal. I told him what happened. Told him I left the black kid's basketball behind and took the one I gave to Shins.

YANKS
Yeah, that was good thinkin'.

ADULT TONY
Thinkin'? I wasn't thinkin'. All I knew is the ball I gave Shins was sittin' there and I had to take it. And I left the black kid's ball behind.

YANKS
You set him up.

ADULT TONY
No, it was no set up. It was a reflex.

YANKS
Yeah, like throwin' a right hand when a guy drops his left. That's instinct, that is.

ADULT TONY
Is that what it was, Yanks, instinct?
YANKS
Reactin' to a situation without thinkin' about it, that's what you was doin'.

ADULT TONY
Sal said he'd call the ambulance. All he wanted me to do was wipe the revolver clean and throw it in the bushes. He'd pick me up under the bridge at Five Points. "What about Shins?" I said. He said the ambulance guys would know what to do. I did what Sal wanted. I told Shins to stop fuckin' around. I told him.

YANKS
Yeah, he should have listened.

ADULT TONY
Wasn't till I headed for Five Points I realized there was some blood spots on my shirt.

Splatter.

ADULT TONY
Sal threw me in the shower when we got to Tommy G's. When I got out there was fresh clothes sittin' where the old ones had been.

YANKS
The blood. You don’t want no blood around, even back then. You always burn or bury the clothes.

ADULT TONY
Shins didn’t make it. Them cops, they found him before the ambulance got there. He bled to death on this court.

YANKS
You did what you could.

ADULT TONY
Sal said Tommy G would swear I got to the restaurant at 10 that morning, and started parking cars. And he said the smartest thing I did was leave that Sunny's basketball on the court. *(Raises both hands as if they hold a revolver and points at sky)* Bam! Bam! What the fuck was Shins thinkin’?

YANKS
He shouldn’t have screwed with the gun.

ADULT TONY
The cops came around to talk to me, and it all went like Sal said. Somebody said they saw a white kid in the park with a basketball, so I said that was me, all right. Shot a few baskets and left, cause I had to go to work. Nobody asked what the hell a kid with his arm in a sling was doin' shootin' baskets.
YANKS
White kid, white neighborhood, white cops. Who'd ask?

ADULT TONY
The cops found Sunny's basketball with his name on it and picked him up. Later, they found the revolver in the bushes. When I first knew they had him, I figured they'd let him go. But, it didn't turn out that way.

YANKS
How come?

ADULT TONY
Cause somebody said they saw a black kid in the park early that morning.

That kid Sunny?

ADULT TONY
Just a black kid. But that was good enough. Sunny wasn't 18, but they tried him like he was an adult.

YANKS
You was following his case.

ADULT TONY
Yeah, sure I was. He got sent up for—I don't know how many years. Would still be there 'cept the Civil Liberty guys got the conviction overturned. Took a while, though, maybe five, six years.

YANKS
Must have gone nuts while he was locked up.

ADULT TONY
Must have. Or maybe after livin' on the street like he has.

YANKS
Guy would have been better off stayin' locked up.

ADULT TONY
For somethin' he didn't do? I don't think so, Yanks. I don't think so.

LIGHTS CHANGE.
SCENE 14

SCENE: City street; the present.


HIRAM, Offstage
Shoot, shoot, shoot, gotta get my pump and get it up. Shoot, shoot, shoot, take it to the floor and score. Shins, let's see who wins.

HIRAM enters pushing his shopping cart. He stops in front of trash can and begins to look into it.

HIRAM
(Continuing) Them Corner Boys shouldn't have messed with me. They shouldn't have stole my pump. No, they shouldn't. (Continues while reaching into trash can) They probably sold the pump, is what they did. Or maybe traded for some weed. No matter. We're gonna meet a man and then get us a new pump. Brand new.

HIRAM takes object wrapped in trash bag from trash can. Unwraps and removes a basketball and talks to it.

HIRAM
(Continuing) Knew they wouldn't find you here. Them Corner Boys think they so smart. Now who's the smart one? Gonna get us a new pump and we be ready to go one-on-one with anyone. (Looks up) What's that? How we gonna get a pump? I told you. Cause we got somethin' the man wants to know bad. Real bad. (Takes poster from cart) Got to do with this man who was killed, a Mister Tommy G. We know somethin' and it's gonna get us what we need. A hint? Okay, I give you a hint. I see this Tommy G. brought to the court, but in no shape to play no sport. They don't see me stand and stare, when Tommy G. is shot right there.

HIRAM places basketball and poster in cart and takes a swig of tea from bottle.

HIRAM
(Continuing) Damn! This tea gone bitter and flat, gotta find where more honey is at. We'll go get us some, after we done with one-on-one.

HIRAM starts to exit.

HIRAM
(Continuing) Shoot, shoot, shoot, ain't a handgun but a man-gun. Shoot, shoot, shoot, I can outgun and outrun anyone. Shins, let's see who wins.

HIRAM exits. LIGHTS CHANGE.
SCENE 15

SCENE: Basketball court; the present.

AT RISE: ADULT TONY talking to YANKS.

YANKS
Funny place for Tommy G to end up, huh? I mean, for a bettin’ man like him.

ADULT TONY
Yeah, a basketball court in the ghetto.

YANKS
Last bet he laid down, it was on a basketball game.

You sure it was his last?

ADULT TONY
Guess I don't really know it was his last. It was the last I knew about.

Hope it was a winner.

He sure loved the action.

ADULT TONY
Yeah, that he did.

YANKS
Him and Sal, two of a kind that way. Likin' the action.

ADULT TONY
Maybe the action's what got Tommy G. here.

YANKS
Two slugs in the back of the head. Isn't that what the cops told you?

Yeah, two, neat as button holes.

YANKS
Well, it don't leave you gaspin' for air that way.

I don't know. Don't it?
YANKS

Had to be professional.

ADULT TONY

The cops think so.

YANKS

Yeah, it's got all the earmarks.

ADULT TONY

But why do Tommy G here?

YANKS

Ain't the first time somebody's been done here. Middle of the night, who's goin' to be around? And even if they are, who's goin' to talk to the cops? Fuck, everybody here is deaf, dumb and blind.

ADULT TONY

Our man says he was here.

YANKS

So he says.

ADULT TONY

Gotta see what he has to say.

YANKS

If that's what Sal wants, that's what we'll do.

ADULT TONY

You look a little edgy.

YANKS

Yeah, this ain't a neighborhood where the welcome wagon calls.

ADULT TONY

You want to go back and wait in the car?

YANKS

And leave you here alone?

ADULT TONY

I can take care of myself.

YANKS

(Pulls pistol from jacket) Not without one of these, you can't.
ADULT TONY
Put it away. He sees that, he'll be scared off.

YANKS
(Slips pistol back in to jacket pocket) You ought to think about carryin'.

ADULT TONY
Last time I carried, I lost my best friend. I swore I wouldn't carry again.

YANKS
This neighborhood, you might want to make an exception.

You sound like Sal.

YANKS
He worries some of the places you gotta go.

I can take care of myself.

YANKS
He gave you a piece, brand new, with a pearl grip, didn't he?

Yeah. I gave it back.

YANKS
You coulda gave it to me.

ADULT TONY
You already got an arsenal at home. Why'd you want another pistol?

YANKS
Why's a carpenter want another tool?

ADULT TONY
Give me that pump you're holdin'. He should be comin' along.

YANKS
(Hands pump to ADULT TONY) What's the guy want a friggin' hand pump for?

ADULT TONY
Don't know, don't care. Says it's what he wants for a reward.

He's probably tryin' to hustle us.
ADULT TONY
You worried you're wastin' your time?

YANKS
I just don't like bein' conned, by a street bum or anybody else.

ADULT TONY
How about you letting me decide that?

YANKS
If he's angling, I'll break his fuckin' legs.

ADULT TONY
Don't be so anxious.

HIRAM, Offstage
Shoot, shoot, shoot, takin' my game downtown, shoot, shoot, shoot, ready for a showdown.

HIRAM enters

HIRAM
(Continues) Shins, let's see who wins.

ADULT TONY
Hiram?

HIRAM
Shoot, shoot, shoot, know who I am? Shoot, shoot, shoot, they call me Hiram.

YANKS
(To ADULT TONY) How do we know he is who he says he is?

ADULT TONY
He's here at the right time, right place, got a cast on his arm. Must be him.

YANKS

HIRAM
Got to get me a pump.

ADULT TONY
I'm Tony. How you doin', Hiram? I remember you. You remember me?

HIRAM
Can't say I do. Can't say I don't. You seen Shins?

ADULT TONY
What you talkin' about?
HIRAM
Gonna play Shins. We'll see who wins.

ADULT TONY
You come down here to play Shins?

HIRAM
I be here most every day. Waitin' on Shins to play.

ADULT TONY
Why would you think he's gonna show up?

HIRAM
Shins say, don't stay. Come back another day, cause we got a game to play.

YANKS
This guy's fuckin' nuts.

HIRAM
(Points to YANKS) You didn't say you was bringin' company.

ADULT TONY
I didn't think of it 'til later.

HIRAM
Them Corner Boys stole my pump.

ADULT TONY
You told me. When you called. Remember?

HIRAM
(Raises cast) Them boys broke my arm, too.

ADULT TONY
Yeah, you said.

HIRAM
You bring the pump?

ADULT TONY
(Holds up pump) Said I would. Brand-new, just like we talked about.

HIRAM reaches for pump, but ADULT TONY pulls away.

ADULT TONY
(Continuing) Hey, first you got to tell me what you seen. Then you get the pump.
HIRAM
Can't slam-dunk if I ain't got a pump.

ADULT TONY
No, I guess you can't.

HIRAM
Shin's comin' down so we can play us a game, playin' alone just ain't the same.

ADULT TONY
You miss him, huh?

HIRAM
Yeah, but gotta get me a pump cause the basketball's dyin', it needs new air, and I ain't lyin'.

YANKS
This mulignon *(Pronounced “mool-ee-YAH-no)* is off his rocker.

ADULT TONY
Shut up, Yanks.

YANKS
Comin' down here to play basketball with some dead kid.

ADULT TONY
I said knock it off. What do you got, Hiram? What is it you want to tell me?

HIRAM
*(Points to YANKS)* Thought I saw that man before, now I know it's him for sure. He's the one that did what was done.

ADULT TONY
What are you tellin' me?

HIRAM
He's the one that shot the gun.

ADULT TONY
Yanks did?

HIRAM
Dragged that man out of the car, it was him, no other. Laid the man down right here. Bang! Bang! He one dead mother.

ADULT TONY
What the hell are you sayin'?
YaNKS
He's crazy, Tony. Can't you see that?

ADULT TONY
Why should I believe you?

HIRAM takes shoe box from cart and removes found basketball shoes.

HIRAM

HIRAM shows cast with license number to ADULT TONY.

ADULT TONY
It's the license number of a car from the hall, Yanks. The car you drive.

YANKS
So he saw my car when he was comin' here and took the license down.

ADULT TONY
How'd he know what you're driving?

YANKS
Hell, I don't know. Maybe he was hidin' his ass in the bushes, watchin' for us.

ADULT TONY
He's comin' from the opposite direction, pushin' a cart.

YANKS
He's got a screw loose, for Christ sakes. You believe some crazy man with a screw loose?

ADULT TONY
He's got the plate number, Yanks. Of the car you drive.

YANKS
Bullshit. This is bullshit.

HIRAM
Seen Tommy G on his knees, back of the head, bang, bang, he dead.

ADULT TONY
Is it?

YANKS
Yeah, just bullshit!
HIRAM
One man has a hand gun, there's no where's to run. Other man on his knees, saying please, please.

YANKS
(To HIRAM) Shut the fuck up. You hear me. Shut the fuck up!

HIRAM
Please, please.

HIRAM takes found basketball shoes and sits down on bench and starts to put them on.

ADULT TONY
Sal's gonna want to know what he has to say. He's gonna want to know.

YANKS
What, you're gonna call Sal?

YANKS pulls the pistol from his pocket.

ADULT TONY
You gonna shoot me, Yanks?

YANKS
No, I'm gonna take out this here piece of crap.

ADULT TONY
(Takes out cellphone) Sal will wanta know what happened here. He'll wanta know.

YANKS
Wake up, Tony. Sal knows what happened here.

ADULT TONY
You're lying.

YANKS
He knows, Tony. He knows.

ADULT TONY
You did it, didn't you?

YANKS
And he knows what's gonna happen. Now go back to the car.

ADULT TONY
Sal and Tommy G, they was friends. Good friends.
YANKS

Tommy G was my friend, too.

ADULT TONY

And you killed him.

YANKS

I do what I'm told, Tony. Just like you.

ADULT TONY

Why Tommy G?

YANKS

I don't know why. Maybe the Feds had him. Maybe he was gonna rat.

ADULT TONY

You don't gotta pull the trigger on Hiram, Yanks. You said it yourself. He's crazy, a screwball. Who's gonna believe him?

YANKS

You believe him, don't you? Anyways, Sal told me what I got to do if this tizzuna knew anything.

ADULT TONY

He talks in fuckin' nursery rhymes for Christ sake.

YANKS

Sal's the boss, Tony.

ADULT TONY

Look, you could just tell Sal you offed this guy. I'd back you up.

YANKS

You tryin' to set me up for the same trip as Tommy G just made?

ADULT TONY

No, Yanks.

YANKS

You're arguing for this street bum's life like his lawyer. What's he to you? Go back to the car, Tony.

YANKS turns toward HIRAM, but ADULT TONY steps between them and raises pump.
YANKS

(Continuing) What the fuck are you doin'? (Points pistol at ADULT TONY) I could kill you, Tony. Get outa my way.

ADULT TONY

Go ahead, Yanks, pull the trigger. You want to go back and tell Sal how you had to shoot his little brother?

ADULT TONY raises the pump in a threatening gesture.

YANKS

What the fuck is wrong with you? You nuts?

ADULT TONY

You want to take that chance with Sal, Yanks? Do you?

YANKS

You're out of your mind.

ADULT TONY

I'm Sal's blood, Yanks. His brother. Fratello di sangue.

YANKS

Yeah, and what's he gonna do when he finds out you stopped me from doin' business here?

ADULT TONY

You put a slug or two in me, you're dead as Tommy G.

YANKS

You think so?

ADULT TONY

You're in one hell of a spot, Yanks. Get rid of me and Hiram, then try to explain it to Sal. Explain how you took me and some street guy out. Or you could just get out of here. Take off in that hunk of machinery you drive and go as fast and far as you can. What'll it be, Yanks? Which gives you the better odds?

This is Not the End of the Play

Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes