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Product Code A0529-F

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 threw 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 exits)* 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.

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!

SHINS

(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.

YOUNG TONY

(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.

Swear on your mother's soul. YOUNG TONY

I swear. SHINS

On your mother's soul? YOUNG TONY

On my mother's soul. SHINS

I did it cause of Sal. ADULT TONY

What's your brother got to do with it? SHINS

He needed my help. YOUNG TONY

What kind of help? SHINS

You won't never say anythin'? YOUNG TONY

I swear it. SHINS

He got over his head with the gamblin'. YOUNG TONY

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

He had money on our game. YOUNG TONY

Yeah, so? SHINS

So he needed me to do something. YOUNG TONY

Do what? SHINS

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?

YOUNG TONY

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.

YOUNG TONY

Yeah, we'll see how things work out.

SHINS

You give any thought to college?

YOUNG TONY

Now and then.

SHINS

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

YOUNG TONY

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?

YOUNG TONY

Brung a basketball with him.

SHINS

I guess he thinks he's gonna play.

YOUNG TONY

Let's send him back where he come from.

SHINS

Hey, don't do nothin' crazy.

YOUNG TONY

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

SHINS

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

YOUNG TONY

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

SHINS

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

YOUNG TONY

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

SHINS

Unless you want to play him.

YOUNG TONY

I ain't playing with the likes of him.

SHINS

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

YOUNG TONY

I don't know.

SHINS

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

YOUNG TONY

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.

SHINS

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?

YOUNG SUNNY
'Gainst you?

SHINS
Yeah, me.

YOUNG SUNNY
(*Considering*) Maybe.

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

YOUNG SUNNY
How's that?

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

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

SHINS
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.

YOUNG SUNNY
Why you wanna do somethin' like that?

SHINS
Cause I don't intend to lose.

YOUNG SUNNY
One-on-one?

SHINS
One-on-one. Just one game.

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

YOUNG TONY
What about me?

YOUNG SUNNY
You takin' winners?

YOUNG TONY
Winners? You ain't no winner.

YOUNG SUNNY
That a "no"?

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

YOUNG SUNNY
You already had your cold day.

YOUNG TONY
What are you sayin'?

YOUNG SUNNY
It's come back to me.

YOUNG TONY
What has?

YOUNG SUNNY
We mixed it up.

YOUNG TONY
When?

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

YOUNG TONY
East High?

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

YOUNG TONY
I know who you are.

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

YOUNG TONY
Fancy-ass shooting guard.

YOUNG SUNNY
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?

How come I don't want trouble?
YOUNG SUNNY

No, how come you didn't play?
SHINS

Just say it wasn't my day.
YOUNG SUNNY

Ain't much of an answer.
SHINS

Wasn't much of a day.
YOUNG SUNNY

You ready to go one-on-one?
SHINS

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

Listen, you wise ass...
YOUNG TONY

Tony, it's okay.
SHINS

Yeah, well...
YOUNG TONY

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

Got your word?
YOUNG SUNNY

Yeah, you got it.
SHINS

(Nods at YOUNG TONY) And his?
YOUNG SUNNY

Tony?
SHINS

Yeah, I'll sit it out.
YOUNG TONY

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.

YOUNG SUNNY

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.

YOUNG SUNNY

Which ball?

SHINS

Use mine.

YOUNG SUNNY takes Shin's basketball.

YOUNG SUNNY

What's your name?

SHINS

Shins. Everybody calls me Shins.

YOUNG SUNNY

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.

SHINS

(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.

SHINS

And your Old Man?

YOUNG SUNNY

Don't be seein' much of him.

SHINS

He up and leave?

YOUNG SUNNY

In a way.

SHINS

What way's that?

YOUNG SUNNY

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

SHINS

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.

SHINS

I know someone just like that.

YOUNG SUNNY

Who's that?

SHINS

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

YOUNG SUNNY

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

SHINS

A fallen angel?

YOUNG SUNNY

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.

SHINS

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

YOUNG SUNNY

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

SHINS

How long you been runnin' backwards?

YOUNG SUNNY

Runnin' backwards? What you sayin'?

SHINS

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.

YOUNG SUNNY

For a white boy, you pretty smart.

SHINS

What ain't you tellin' me?

YOUNG SUNNY

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

SHINS

Messin'? What messin'?

Some white boys.
YOUNG SUNNY

Was Tony one of them?
SHINS

No, he wasn't.
YOUNG SUNNY

Who were they?
SHINS

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

What happened?
SHINS

Nothin' much.
YOUNG SUNNY

Okay, so tell me about nothin' much.
SHINS

What's it matter?
YOUNG SUNNY

You ashamed?
SHINS

Shamed! About what?
YOUNG SUNNY

About runnin' from these guys.
SHINS

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.
YOUNG SUNNY

So these three white guys jumped you?
SHINS

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.
YOUNG SUNNY

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.

SHINS

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.

SHINS

Whenever you're ready.

YOUNG SUNNY

Don't think you has to stay.

SHINS

You telling me I should take off?

YOUNG SUNNY

I ain't telling you to stay or to leave.

SHINS

Nobody's chasin' me off this court.

YOUNG SUNNY

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

SHINS

So let it get messy.

YOUNG SUNNY

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

SHINS

I ain't lookin' out for you.

YOUNG SUNNY

What you call it then?

SHINS

What do I call what?

YOUNG SUNNY

Stickin' by to baby-sit the nigger.

SHINS

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

YOUNG SUNNY

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

SHINS

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

YOUNG SUNNY

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

SHINS

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

YOUNG SUNNY

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.

YOUNG TONY

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.

YOUNG TONY

I told you to never bring that up.

SHINS

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

YOUNG TONY

Sal's got plans for me.

SHINS

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

YOUNG TONY

Shut the fuck up!

YOUNG TONY pushes SHINS.

SHINS

Don't push me.

YOUNG TONY

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

SHINS

You can be a real asshole.

YOUNG TONY

I said, "come on."

SHINS

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

YOUNG TONY

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

SHINS

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.

YOUNG TONY

(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 throwed 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?

SHINS

She keeps askin' me the same thing.

YOUNG TONY

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

SHINS

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

YOUNG TONY

It is, you know.

SHINS

I know.

YOUNG TONY

What are you gonna study?

SHINS

You won't laugh?

YOUNG TONY

Why would I laugh?

SHINS

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

YOUNG TONY

Mingia, you wanna be arrestin' people?

SHINS

The bad guys, yeah.

YOUNG TONY

Guess a college education could get you that, huh?

SHINS

Not just me, anybody.

YOUNG TONY

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

SHINS

Serious?

YOUNG TONY

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.

ADULT TONY

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 woulda 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.

YOUNG TONY

What's that mean?

SHINS

Got himself a scholarship.

YOUNG TONY

No kiddin'.

SHINS

No kiddin'. Northwest. A full ride.

YOUNG TONY

You two will be playin' against each other.

SHINS

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

(Points 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

(Crumples 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.

YANKS

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.

YANKS

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.

AT RISE: HEAR city sounds. Horns beeping. Cars zooming by; HIRAM, Offstage, rapping.

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.

ADULT TONY

You sure it was his last?

YANKS

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

ADULT TONY

Hope it was a winner.

YANKS

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?

ADULT TONY

Yeah, two, neat as button holes.

YANKS

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

ADULT TONY

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.

ADULT TONY

You sound like Sal.

YANKS

He worries some of the places you gotta go.

ADULT TONY

I can take care of myself.

YANKS

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

ADULT TONY

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.

YANKS

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.

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

Oh, he's the one. Seen it done. Right here. Bang. Bang. Two shots real fast. Got the number, wrote it on my cast.

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