

OLYMPIC COMICS

A New Play

By Frederick Feirstein

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CHARACTERS

BOBBY GORDON – an advertising executive, late forties

CHERI GORDON – a schoolteacher, late forties

JASON – their son, eighteen

FRAN – CHERI'S mother, in her seventies

NICK -- BOBBY'S boss and friend, late forties

PAUL -- NICK'S son, JASON'S best friend

LAPHONSE-- twenty-four, African American

EDDIE QUINT – a.k.a. Ahmed, twenty, white trash

A single set with five areas, minimal props.

BOBBY and CHERI'S living room NICK'S office desk, a park basketball hoop, a storefront sign OLYMPIC COMICS, and FRAN'S fine table and chairs.

The Present
Two Acts

ACT I

Scene 1

BOBBY and CHERI'S apartment.

BOBBY narrates to the audience.

As he does, we hear in the background animated talking, laughter, the sizzling of a barbecue, the popping of fireworks.

BOBBY

It's 4 o'clock and you're not home, you haven't called. To distract myself I'm dubbing comments onto the DVD we've made of our home movies. When you're away in college and missing us, watch this, beginning with our best days in the Berkshires.

It's July 4th of The New Millennium when the whole world has been celebrating what promises to be exciting change – with optimism, confidence ... naiveté. You are eight and I am forty. I'm barbecuing burgers and swordfish for our best friends Nick, Mary, and your buddy Paul. You are up on the hill shaking the camera! The four of us are sipping white wine admiring our two dozen fruit trees – peach, pear, plum. Look, there are the Disney families of deer that nibble our garden.

Sounds of fire engines unsettles BOBBY. The sounds stop. He is relieved and continues.

Now it is Winter. The pine trees are heavy with fresh snow. It is so clear you can see into Vermont. Mom is making lunch. You are reading your comics in front of the fireplace. I'm working up a campaign that will win me my second Clio. Mom calls "Ready, boys!" I push back from the computer. But you're lost in Batman and Robin which have become our nicknames.

CHERI groggily enters in her nightgown.

CHERI

We had such a great time making love. Why are you out here?

BOBBY

You fell asleep.

CHERI

You could have touched my soft spot and woken me up.

BOBBY

I did but you kept on snoring.

CHERI

(slaps his arm)

I don't snore!

She reaches to touch his genitals. He pulls back. She looks at him quizzically.

BOBBY

I'm worried. Jason always calls by 2 the latest.

CHERI

I'm sure he met a girl at the club and is on his way home.

BOBBY

By subway. They've just uncovered a plot to blow up the subways.

CHERI

Then they stopped it.

BOBBY

Will you wake up? We're on Red Alert.

CHERI

He has enough money for cab fare.

BOBBY

If he uses it. What if she lives in Brooklyn?

Indistinct sound of a fire chief talking through a bullhorn.

CHERI

Bobby, what are you going to do when he's in Maine?

BOBBY

Maine isn't Manhattan. He'll be safe there.

CHERI

You're so funny. We wanted him to go out of town, but now you can't let Robin fly out of the nest.

BOBBY

I'm doing it.

CHERI

(laughs)

Very slowly.

BOBBY

Most parents feel like me when their only child leaves home. They have affairs, they get divorced, they adopt a Chinese girl.

CHERI

I'm upset, very, but I'm also looking forward to our reading the Kama Sutra while he's reading Milton.

He closes the windows and puts on the air conditioner.

CHERI (cont'd)

It's cool. What are you doing?

BOBBY

Shutting out the smoke.

CHERI

There's no smoke. It's a false alarm. They're leaving.

BOBBY

But I'm still taking Jason to school! "Should we listen to the firemen, boss, or run down the stairs? We can't think." "Listen to the firemen." Twenty people!

CHERI

Say your mantra: "I did what most people did. I did what most people did."

BOBBY

Where the hell is Jason?

JASON enters.

JASON

Sorry, kids, there was an emergency on the subway. Then I couldn't get a cab.

BOBBY

We're just relieved you're home.

JASON

I tried to call but my cell phone was out.

CHERI

You forgot to charge it.

JASON

(lightly)

No, someone forgot to pay the bill.

CHERI

Actually I didn't forget. I was going to take care of it tomorrow.

BOBBY

Tomorrow quickly becomes yesterday.

CHERI

Stop ganging up on me.

BOBBY

Did you guys do a lot of drinking?

JASON

Actually we were a little too sober. No one thinks they will get a job after college, except for a few computer nerds. So why go?

CHERI

Let's not start that again. By the time you're finished, the economy will come back.

JASON

You were convinced if you waited long enough the stock market would come back ...

(referring to himself and the children's game)

Shutup, Mr. Mouth.

BOBBY

Did you meet anyone at the club?

JASON

I did. But then Nick came onto her and she walked away...

CHERI

Nick! What was he doing there?

JASON

He claimed he was there because Mary wanted Paul home.

CHERI

What do you mean “he claimed?”

JASON

That was his cover story.

CHERI

For what? He has no real interest in Paul.

JASON

But he has in college girls. Paul’s told me that when Dad’s out of the office, he spreads Catherine out on his desk. Instead of spread sheets.

CHERI

Jason!

BOBBY

What happened next? Did Paul haul him out of there?

JASON

Paul was so pissed he went off with a guy. Nick got furious. I tried to calm him down but he took it out on me – the girl, the guy. He grabbed me by the collar and twisted it hard.

BOBBY

Damn it. What did you do?

JASON

All I did was loosen his grip and say, “Don’t be Nick The Prick.” Anyone else I would have punched out.

CHERI

Great. Instead of looking for new clients, he’s looking for what? Sexual adoptees?

(to BOBBY)

If you don’t get him moving quickly we’ll go up in smoke.

JASON

How can he move when Cat pulls his pants around his knees?

BOBBY

He's right. She's paralyzing him. She's convinced him to play the youth market as if kids still had money.

CHERI

And he's listening.

JASON

With her tongue in his ear.

CHERI

Jason, I'm your mother!

JASON

And this is the 21st Century.

BOBBY

I keep telling him that what we need are not her dumb strategies but to play on the fear of aging in baby boomers: Wrinkle creams, Yoga mats, treadmills. That market is huge. But all he takes in comes through a straw up his nose.

CHERI

We have to enlist Mary.

BOBBY

Mary has terminal cancer. The fear of losing her is driving Nick back to adolescence.

Fade out.

Scene 2

NICK'S office. NICK is sitting at his desk, scrolling down an e-mail.

BOBBY
(enters)

I smell pot in here.

NICK

I'm worried.

BOBBY
You were preparing to talk about last night?

NICK
No, guy, that was personal.

• BOBBY
• Personal? Do I have to tell you, "Don't touch my kid?"
•

• NICK
• Forget it.
•

• BOBBY
• You choked him.
•

• NICK
He cursed me out.
•

• BOBBY
• For good reason. What were you doing at that club? And don't give me that nonsense about Jason keeping Paul out. He's been *out* for a year and you hate it.
•

• NICK
• I was taking a break from nursing Mary.
•

• BOBBY
• Isn't Catherine enough of a break?
•

• NICK
• Wait a minute. You have this backwards. In here I'm *your* boss. I don't have to account to you.
•

• BOBBY
• You do, whenever you think with your lower head not your upper.
•

•

•

NICK

• Today I'm thinking all too clearly. Look, big guy. I asked you in here not to discuss personal problems but business.

•

•

BOBBY

(suspicious)

Go on.

•

•

•

NICK

It's difficult, but I wanted to talk to you about – to use the word – you being too personal with clients. Even seductive.

•

•

BOBBY

(laughs)

• The Peccadillo King is calling me “seductive”?

•

•

NICK'

(indicates e-mail)

•

Read this.

BOBBY glances at it.

NICK (cont'd)

You want a piece of ass, okay. But coming on to Sarah Licht?

BOBBY

Are you crazy? She's sixty years old!

NICK

She's a cougar.

BOBBY

You're a cougar.

NICK

Take a page from my book.

BOBBY

With Sarah Licht it's the obituary page.

NICK

I'm dying and you killed another account.

BOBBY

How did I “kill” Licht’s account?

NICK

Instead of selling her, you were commiserating;

BOBBY

Of course. She was leaning on my shoulder and after a few shots she began telling me how her husband said he was having a heart attack and wanted to go to the emergency room..But she laughed that it was just a stomach ache. Then out of guilt she lost everything in the market.

NICK

And you took her hands and told her your *spiel* about how out of guilt about 9/11 you blew yourself away in the Market. “He looked deep into my eyes and told me how his wife held out for one more split and he went wild and lost everything on margin.” Wild!

BOBBY

She was wild with drugs and booze. She told me she takes Celexa for depression, Klonopin for panic, Seroquel to go to sleep. She got so manicky I couldn’t get a word in edgewise. At the end she was taking mouthfuls of God knows with one hand and downing Scotch with the other.

NICK

What she wrote – look at it – is “After dinner I realized that when he told me about the market he has no judgment and will lose the little I have left to advertise.”

BOBBY

Caring for her feelings is a lack of judgment?

NICK

These days no one really feels.

BOBBY

That’s great copy. You ought to pitch it to Blackberry.

NICK

As far as Licht is concerned, “His manner told me he was pitching me as a *woman* because he’s angry at his wife.”

BOBBY

Who typed that nonsense in, you or Catherine?

NICK

Leave Catherine out of this. She’s producing.

BOBBY

Between her legs.

NICK

She's bringing in new clients, guy, but all you're doing is losing the little business we have left.

BOBBY

Because all you're giving me are dying companies,

NICK

And you're not reviving them.

BOBBY

Are you talking about me or Mary?

NICK

That's vicious.

BOBBY

You're vicious. And I'm angry. Mary is dying, and instead of helping her fight for more days of survival, you're stepping out!

NICK

We're talking about my business surviving. This is a Mom and Pop shop and I'm deep in the red. If you want to commiserate, you would step out of here.

BOBBY

Quit? You're high.

NICK

I'm very low because I'm serious.

BOBBY

You set up this cockamamie ruse about Sarah Licht as a reason to tell me I'm fired? After thirty years of friendship? Next you'll tell me, "guy," it's not personal, just dollars and common sense.

NICK

No, I'm just talking temporary. Till we turn this around.

BOBBY

You and a twenty-four-year old?

NICK

Twenty-seven and not fucking up.

BOBBY

Just fucking you and, from the way she wiggles her ass, probably your male clients too.

NICK

I'm sorry to bench you, old friend, but you're just not scoring. So I'm temporarily taking back my ball.

*Thumping sound of basketball hitting pavement
as we fade out NICK'S office.*

Scene 3

A basketball hoop, suggesting a city park.

*JASON and PAUL are playing basketball, one on one.
their book bags are off to the side. Paul is flagging.*

***In this game and the ensuing one the plays and score
of course will vary from night to night, the trash-talking***

adjustable.

The games also can be indicated by projections.

PAUL

I'm tired, Jay.

JASON

Shoot. Coach cancelled practice.

PAUL

(straightens his glasses)

I'm still beat up. We were out late last night.

JASON drives and scores.

JASON

8-2

PAUL

Don't you care that LaPhonse and Eddie might show up?

JASON

They don't own this park.

PAUL

Right now it's their place of business.

JASON

(laughs)

"Business!"

PAUL

Like it or not, they've got the power.

JASON

To do what?

PAUL

To end our lives as we know it.

JASON

How? By playing basketball?

PAUL

By using it as a cover to rob us.

We won't let them.

JASON

Everyone lets them.

PAUL

JASON drives on PAUL and scores.

PAUL holds the ball as LAPHONSE and EDDIE enter.

EDDIE is wearing a baseball cap with a crescent and a star on it.

Did you hear Eddie Quint's changed his name to Ahmed? His brother's become a Muslim Fundamentalist in prison.

PAUL

It looks like you JewYorkers want to play.

EDDIE

We're playing one on one.

JASON

Scared?

EDDIE

Of what? Muslim wanna-bees can't jump. Or sting.

JASON

What do you want to bet you can't beat a convert?

EDDIE

Convert? We'll bet our "honor" against yours.

JASON

How much you got, four-eyes?

EDDIE

(to PAUL)

PAUL, frightened, fumbles in his pocket.

JASON stops his hand. But PAUL pulls out a twenty and hands it to EDDIE.

EDDIE (cont'd)

Faggot.

*EDDIE sticks his chin up at JASON.
JASON pulls out his empty back pocket and grins.*

EDDIE (cont'd)

You're going to bet your Rolex.

JASON

It's not a Rolex, and you're not playing for it.

EDDIE grabs JASON'S sweatshirt's top and twists it.

EDDIE

You don't say no to Ahmed, Kike.

JASON wrestles EDDIE'S hand off as he did NICK'S.

JASON

Really, Raghead.

*EDDIE slaps JASON'S face. JASON is about to slap
EDDIE back. LAPHONSE stays his hand.*

LAPHONSE

"Kike,"" Raghead." Take this to the court.

EDDIE

Yeah, sue me in court.

LAPHONSE

(to EDDIE)

Shut up schmuck.

EDDIE looks at LAPHONSE with fire in his eyes.

*LAPHONSE laughs but has a killer look that frightens
PAUL.*

LAPHONSE (cont'd)

Game time!

JASON

(to LAPHONSE)

Wait a minute. I heard, you play only for money.

LAPHONSE

Times are hard. My cash customers keep disappearing.

LAPHONSE indicates for JASON to put his watch in EDDIE'S cap. JASON hesitates.

LAPHONSE throws him a menacing look and JASON reluctantly complies.

JASON

So you're robbing us. Without the pretext of basketball. You're a real pro.

LAPHONSE

The pros are all business.

JASON

(gutsy like BOBBY)

What are you putting up against that watch?

LAPHONSE

If you win, we'll give it back.

EDDIE glares at LAPHONSE and spits on the floor.

JASON

And if we lose, do you up the stakes?

LAPHONSE

You give, we take.

The game starts.

LAPHONSE in-bounds the ball to EDDIE.

JASON is a very good player but LAPHONSE is superb. EDDIE and PAUL are mediocre.

EDDIE drives hard on PAUL, knocks him down and scores.

EDDIE

(laughs)

“Muslims can't jump? Or sting?!”

JASON flings the ball to PAUL as he gets up.

JASON

Let's show some fire, Paul.

EDDIE

Fire? You're blowing smoke, kike. He was up all night fucking his mother.

PAUL

(mounts courage)

What did you say?

EDDIE

You deaf, motherfucker?

JASON

His mother is sick!

EDDIE

Of what, cock?

JASON slams ball down, ready to fight EDDIE.

LAPHONSE

Please don't try that man, you're not in his league.

JASON

What league? His mother is dying...

LAPHONSE

(to JASON)

He was just trash-talking.

*JASON is startled by the soft spot in LAPHONSE.
But then LAPHONSE drives on JASON and scores.*

EDDIE

Yeah, talking to trash.

EDDIE bounces the ball off PAUL'S chest.

EDDIE (cont'd)

Outta bounds.

EDDIE passes the ball to LAPHONSE who passes it

to back to EDDIE driving.

EDDIE (cont'd)

(to PAUL)

Maybe *I'm* fucking your mother. Maybe that's why I can score and you can't.

JASON smacks the ball out of EDDIE'S hands and scores.

LAPHONSE

The kid can play.

JASON takes the ball out. EDDIE steals it from PAUL and passes it hard to LAPHONSE who drives and scores.

EDDIE

(to LAPHONSE)

Strut your stuff.

*JASON drives on LAPHONSE but LAPHONSE steals the ball and makes an easy layup
EDDIE hoots in triumph and puts JASON'S watch on.*

LAPHONSE (cont'd)

Put it back. We ain't done yet.

*EDDIE reluctantly puts the watch back in the cap.
LAPHONSE passes the ball to EDDIE.*

EDDIE

(dribbling, to PAUL)

Once we're done I'm going to wear his watch, and you're going to watch me play with your Mama! On her death bed!

*EDDIE drives on PAUL and knocks him down hard.
PAUL makes a fist.*

PAUL

That's enough!

EDDIE

You don't have the balls, faggot.

JASON

He's got the balls to fuck you up – your ass.

EDDIE

(to LAPHONSE who is incredulous and laughs)

What did he say?

PAUL

That you're just a hard guy. I've *had* plenty of them.

EDDIE

You know what we do to homos?

PAUL

Shut your mouth, you're giving me a hardon.

EDDIE punches PAUL in the head, knocking him almost unconscious.

EDDIE

Assholes like you are girls because you're scared to do women.

JASON

(recklessly to EDDIE)

The next kid you do that to just might do you.

(picks up a groggy PAUL)

Let's go to the emergency room.

PAUL

(mumbles)

I just want to go home.

Fade out

Scene 4

*The apartment. BOBBY is watching his glory days on
“the screen.”*

ANNOUNCER’S VOICE

Bobby Gordon on the line. Bingo!. He’s now three points short of Lenny Rosenthal’s record. Nick the mascot fakes stealing the ball on the in-bounds pass, But Gordon actually does. Now he takes Hudson into the post. Bang! North Carolina is down a point. The NCAA tournament is on the line.

Ten seconds left. Nick the mascot in his rooster uniform is crowing, the crowd is screaming. Brown steals the ball. Maxon sets the pick. Gordon pops! Oh, my! Fifty-four points for Bobby Gordon. The crowd is shouting MVP, MVP. And he is. 54 points, nine assists, three steals Incredible!.

CHERI

What are you doing home?

BOBBY

I was nixed by Nick.

CHERI

You’re joking. Over last night?

BOBBY

I don't know if this was a fiction Catherine made up, but Nick claims I'm being "seductive" with clients.

CHERI

What! Nick would seduce a piece of meat off his plate.

BOBBY

I think coke has gone to his head. I'm not kidding.

CHERI

How are we going to manage?

BOBBY

We'll manage. I'll free-lance till something turns up.

CHERI

I'm scared.

BOBBY

Don't be scared We're resilient.

(lightly)

Fearless. I put on the DVD of me playing, not only to wipe off Nick's slime but to reassure both of us. What are you thinking?

CHERI

This was a long time coming. Nick's always been jealous of our marriage... Poor betrayed Mary.

BOBBY

He's never forgotten that you warned her when we were in college.

CHERI

Did he give you "a golden parachute?"

BOBBY

He didn't even give me a watch. The time of day. Where you going?

CHERI

To Mary's. To tell her in person what happened.

BOBBY

What's the point? She's in the same position I'm in. Discarded. For a bimbo. I don't want her hurt anymore.

CHERI

She can't do anything for herself but she will for us.

CHERI, wordless with anger, exits.

BOBBY pours himself a drink. JASON enters.

JASON

Dad, why are you home? ... Oh, God, why didn't I keep my mouth shut?

BOBBY

That had nothing to do with it.

JASON

I knew it. Paul told me his parents had a fight when he got home, and you got in the middle.

BOBBY

In the middle of a muddle. How was your day?

JASON

My day?

BOBBY

Tell me, it'll cheer me up.

JASON

It won't. I lost my watch and pride. In Carl Schurz Park. A couple of basketball hustlers took it off me, and Paul lost twenty bucks.

BOBBY

How? You're a terrific player. Paul's good.

JASON

So are they.

(mocking the names)

LaPhonse particularly, and "Ahmed."

BOBBY squints, trying to recall something.

JASON (cont'd)

They beat kids up if they don't play. I'm sorry, Dad! That was an expensive watch. They've only taken money before.

BOBBY

Not from you!

JASON

No, but from everyone else.

BOBBY

Then what made you stick your chin out? What made you play *their* game?

JASON

I was not not going to my park especially after Nick grabbed me. I'm not a little kid anymore.

BOBBY

No, you're a strong young man. One I'm very very proud of.

JASON

I don't feel very proud today.

BOBBY

You will. We're going back to the park.

Sound of basketball thumping.

Fade out.

Scene 5

The basketball hoop.

*LAPHONSE and EDDIE are clowning around practicing,
as BOBBY and JASON approach.*

JASON

I don't know if you can take LaPhonse. He's fast. He was All-City.

BOBBY

I was second team All-America.

JASON

Don't tell him anything. Don't tell him you were a pro in Italy.

BOBBY

(laughs)

Why not?

JASON

Because they're all business. They'll walk off the court.

BOBBY

Then what will they do when I crank it up?

JASON

By then they'll be suckered in. Just don't talk.

BOBBY

Right now I'm an ex-ad man, fed up with words.

LAPHONSE
(to JASON, mockingly)

You back?

BOBBY

This is our park.

LAPHONSE
(lightly mocks, like a little boy)

Mine!

BOBBY

Is there a sign here: "LaPhonse?"

LAPHONSE
Yes, it says, "No punks or old men allowed."

BOBBY

I just see a punk.

LAPHONSE

This is where I make a living.

BOBBY

How much did you make today?

LAPHONSE

It's my business.

BOBBY

I'm going to put you out of business.

LAPHONSE
(laughs)

With what? Wisdom?

BOBBY

His watch is worth five hundred. I'm going to bet you two to one.

LAPHONSE

You kidding?

JASON
Does my father look like he's kidding?

LAPHONSE
(to BOBBY)
I'll play you one on one.

BOBBY shakes his head, indicating they're going to play two on two.

BOBBY
He's going to recoup in a couple of ways.

EDDIE
(laughs)
His honor.

JASON
We'll win.

LAPHONSE
(to EDDIE, indicates JASON)
Can you take him?

EDDIE, uncertain, nods. JASON, already regaining his spirits, laughs.

The game starts. It becomes clear after a few plays that BOBBY has the edge on LAPHONSE. He muscles him under the boards and drives around him.

JASON
My father's going to take you to school.

BOBBY shoots from the outside, rebounding till he scores. Then he flips the ball to JASON to take out.

BOBBY
(to LAPHONSE)
This is what they call "a clinic."

*JASON passes the ball to BOBBY.
BOBBY drives hard, knocking LAPHONSE down hard.
EDDIE makes for his cap.*

LAPHONSE

Nope. We got ethics.

EDDIE

Whazzat?

LAPHONSE

This is a clean business.

EDDIE takes a closed switchblade out of his cap.

EDDIE

I'm going to clean them out, bone 'em.

LAPHONSE

(to EDDIE)

Put that back or you walk.

EDDIE puts the knife back in his cap.

LAPHONSE (cont'd)

You pull that and no father's going to play us.

BOBBY looks at LAPHONSE with some respect.

EDDIE takes the ball in, passing it to LAPHONSE

JASON

It's our ball.

BOBBY shoots and, if he misses, rebounds and scores.

JASON

My father scores, as usual.

BOBBY takes a long shot and misses.

LAPHONSE rebounds.

LAPHONSE

Not this time.

LAPHONSE drives on BOBBY and scores.

He ain't Superman.

LAPHONSE (cont'd)

LAPHONSE takes in the ball, passing to EDDIE.

BOBBY steals it and passes it to JASON.

No, he's the Batman.

JASON

JASON drives on EDDIE and scores.

What are you, fucking Robin?

EDDIE

That's right.

JASON

EDDIE glances at his cap as BOBBY passes to JASON.

I'm going to cut his wings.

EDDIE
(to LAPHONSE)

Squint, the expression is "clip his wings."

LAPHONSE
(dribbling)

Don't teach me no English.

EDDIE
(hates the nickname)

JASON laughs and throws a pass to BOBBY who fakes out LAPHONSE and scores.

You're the greatest, Pops.

JASON

EDDIE slaps the ball out of JASON'S hands as he's about to take it out.

Only God is great.

EDDIE

EDDIE seizes the ball and throws it in but BOBBY

intercepts it.

BOBBY drives on EDDIE, knocking him down.

EDDIE (cont'd)

Foul.

BOBBY

On you, you moved.

EDDIE

You was charging.

BOBBY
(mockingly)

You was blocking.

Sound of fire engine in the distance unsettles BOBBY.

JASON

We won, Pops.

BOBBY
(abstractly)

We did?

JASON

Ten-six.

EDDIE

Bullshit, we was tied.

BOBBY

In a knot.

*JASON holds up his hand so that they can
high-five each other. BOBBY slaps his hand, then
JASON'S other one for good measure.*

JASON

Batman and Robin.

BOBBY

Robin and Batman!

JASON

The watch and twenty bucks.

EDDIE hesitates.

BOBBY

Tick tock.

EDDIE reluctantly hands JASON the watch which he puts on.

EDDIE

Twenty wasn't part of the deal.

BOBBY

Now give him the twenty.

EDDIE

Uh oh. First show us the money you were going to put up.

BOBBY comically reaches back for his wallet. It's not there.

EDDIE (cont'd)

I knew it! He ain't got it!

JASON

Because we knew we'd win.

LAPHONSE

(reaches for JASON'S watch)

Then this was a con. Bet's off.

JASON

I don't think so. We won.

LAPHONSE

Not according to the rules.

BOBBY

Your rule is over.

EDDIE takes the switchblade out of the cap and opens it.

*BOBBY throws the ball hard at EDDIE,
stunning him.*

*EDDIE drops the knife and BOBBY picks it. Then
BOBBY takes out the twenty dollar bill from the cap.*

EDDIE

Hey, man, gimme my knife back. I can't go back to my hood without protection.

BOBBY stabs the basketball.

JASON

He's letting out your hot air.

BOBBY

I don't want to see you two in this park again.

*BOBBY closes the knife and flings it to EDDIE. He puts
EDDIE'S cap on JASON'S head backwards.*

BOBBY (cont'd)

Now, beat it.

Fade out.

Scene 6

The apartment. JASON and BOBBY are snacking.

JASON

Where did you learn to do that, Dad? Act so tough?

BOBBY

(jokes)

Where I was “brung up.”

JASON

So much for their dynamic duo.

JASON toasts BOBBY’S coke with his.

CHERI enters distressed.

BOBBY

How was Mary?

CHERI

Awful. As sick as she is they got into a knock down battle over us. At the end he threatened to leave her if she didn’t shutup.

BOBBY

Sonofabitch. A woman with throat cancer?

CHERI

She said he’s like a boxer swinging wildly at death...What were you two celebrating?

BOBBY, knowing CHERI will feel this incident was a compensation for his defeat by NICK, is embarrassed to tell her.

JASON

The demise of two shake down artists, Ahmed and LaPhonse. We were in Carl Schurz and beat them in b-ball. Dad also took “Ahmed’s” knife away and punctured his pride.

CHERI

Knife?!

JASON

(lies)

Just joking. It was rubber. Like a basketball.

CHERI

What did LaPhonse look like?

JASON

(holds hand high over his head)

Yea-tall, shaved head, tattoo with a broken heart. What's the matter?

CHERI

LaPhonse was my student five years ago.

(to BOBBY)

You remember LaPhonse. He was smart, a rapper and a great basketball player. The colleges were courting him.

BOBBY, vaguely remembering, slowly nods.

JASON

Why didn't he go? Why is he shaking kids down?

CHERI

Before his graduation, his father was fired from a bank job, when they found he had a record. Small stuff. But then one of his "friends" talked him into a holdup. He knew the bank, drew up plans. He probably was smart as LaPhonse. Then when he was caught he implicated the others and got shot.

JASON

Killed?

CHERI

Before he could take the stand.

JASON

Then why didn't LaPhonse escape to college?

CHERI

He was depressed, bitter. His mother has MS and his older brother, who he hero-worshipped, was mutilated by a crack dealer. Last I heard he was working at the Post Office.

JASON

And his buddy "Ahmed," was he your student too?

CHERI shakes her head.

JASON (cont'd)

His real name's Eddie Quint.

CHERI

(laughs)

Quint is “Ahmed” now”? The kids called him white trash. His brother was LaPhonse’s teammate. Eddie dropped out of school two years ago.

BOBBY

What was Eddie like?

CHERI

Crazy, slow at everything but his rage.

JASON

You didn’t like him.

CHERI

No one did. But I tried. His father had walked out. His mother was a stripper. His brother took care of him but would whack him around. All Eddie could do was look up to him and, become a bully himself.

BOBBY

But you really liked LaPhonse.

CHERI

Yes. I had very high expectations for him.

BOBBY

(checks his cell phone)

I remember now.

CHERI

Something happen with the advertising game?

BOBBY

A free lance gig – already. What’s the matter?

CHERI

Mary says this isn’t temporary. What are we going to do? My job isn’t enough.

BOBBY

Calm down. With my reputation I’ll get a coaching job.

CHERI

In mid-year? You don't have a degree in phys.ed.

BOBBY

I'll approach colleges, private schools.

CHERI

But that's not till next September, if at all.

BOBBY

(ironically)

September is a great time for me.

CHERI

We're in overtime.

BOBBY

(ironically)

Then we'll play the stock market.

CHERI

That's not funny. Coaching is another gamble.

JASON

There is one question I never asked you kids. But I saw it just now on the court. You're great at instinctive quick moves, Pops. When you picked up clues, why didn't you just sell your stock?

BOBBY

The TV touts were getting people high. Everyone was into it. Everything was Go Go Go. It was like the roaring crowd.

JASON

But you Mom? You're so cautious.

CHERI

True, but I procrastinated about selling. I got caught up in greed.

BOBBY

It was emotional for both of us.

CHERI

Dad was on the court again, and I thought for once life was giving me something without fighting for it.

BOBBY

We both drank the Kool Aid.

JASON

What's cool about that?

CHERI

You're too young.

JASON

No, I'm not. I had two business ideas on the court. You want to hear them?

BOBBY

Sure.

JASON

When you called me "Robin" I thought of something we learned in Social Studies. Since we've been losing our power, there's been a big interest in superheroes: Broadway, movies: Spidey, Batman, The Green Lantern. This might sound crazy, Pops, but you have your rare comics and your father's. The idea is to open a comic book store. As far as I know there's only one real comic book store in Manhattan. And it's downtown. You know how to market things. Don't look to Mom who, sorry, has no business sense. Think about it. It would be a gas. My idea is to make it like an art gallery. We could have the artists come in and sign autographs, hire actors to play superheroes.

CHERI

When are "we" going to do this?

JASON

Now, next year.

CHERI

By hook or by crook, you'll be in Maine.

JASON

I told you last night -- and I wasn't drunk -- college graduates can't get jobs. They're moving home.

CHERI

You're not.

JASON

You always tell Dad to listen lately. But you mostly pretend to.

BOBBY

Jason!

JASON

I keep telling you, Mom I'm all burned-out from studying. I need a year off.

CHERI

To peddle comics?

JASON

(to BOBBY)

You built a big business from nothing. What do you think?

CHERI

As I said laid last night, the economy will pick up.

JASON

But what about the meantime? A comic store is a great cash business, and it's fun.

CHERI

Fun, for Dad? Don't be crazy.

JASON

Crazy?

(to BOBBY)

Think about the fun we had in the park.

(to CHERI)

You should have been in the park with Ahmed. Dad worries we can't deal with terrorist threats starting up again? We had great fun in dominating them.

CHERI

Get real. Eddie is a coward. And LaPhonse needs care, not "domination."

JASON

Okay, okay. Look, there are constant plots to blow up subways. What sane parent will want their kids back and forth on them? Mary hates Paul going downtown period.

CHERI

Mary wants everyone to be safe because she can't be.

BOBBY

Can we compete with what's online?

JASON

I'll sell online. And, Pops, you'll work uptown. Parents from my school will let their kids buy from a bricks and mortar store uptown.

To CHERI'S dismay BOBBY smiles, appearing to be intrigued by this.

CHERI

This appeals to you?

BOBBY

You know I'm a good salesman.

(with pride)

And look at the way Jason is pitching us.

CHERI

He's a kid, he's throwing wild pitches because we've struck out.

BOBBY

(kidding around)

I like the idea of selling heroism to kids.

CHERI

Come on, Bobby, give me some support here.

BOBBY

(to JASON, trying to be respectful)

You said you had *two* business ideas on the court.

JASON

When you watch a game Mom, don't they call the best players "creative?" Dad also was a brilliant copywriter and now is digging into his basketball. So Pops, the other idea is for you to finish your basketball book and sell it. Kids and their parents will buy it, if you don't confine it to European basketball. When we teamed up, I thought of Grandma and her saying everything is "genes." Look at the number of father and sons playing: Kobe Bryant and his father "Jellybean" who played for the Knicks. Rick Barry and his sons ...

BOBBY

(laughs)

That's a hook for a book.

JASON

A jump hook!

CHERI

Stop this! We can't count on this...

Buzzer rings. JASON talks into the intercom.

JASON

Come up, Paul.

(to CHERI and BOBBY)

We're going rollerblading.

CHERI

In the park?

BOBBY

They'll be fine. I took care of it.

JASON

Yes, he did.

JASON hugs BOBBY. BOBBY smiles at CHERI who returns his smile, knowing what JASON'S admiration means to BOBBY.

JASON exits to his room – offstage.

CHERI

Why are you letting him go, Bobby? You're worried about him going to clubs and the subway but you let him go to the park?

BOBBY

You're giving me a mixed message. You want me to leave hands off but you want me to baby him about the park

CHERI

I guess you're right. Eddie Quint is just a punk and LaPhonse used to have a good heart.

BOBBY

I don't know if I'd go that far about your LaPhonse. But I know in my gut they'll never come back and bother anyone there.

CHERI

I'm glad you're holding on to your protective, confident self.

BOBBY

No matter what I happens to me, I won't let anything touch you and Jason.

CHERI

And I'm not going to let you stand behind a counter selling comics any more than I'd have you sitting behind the wheel of a cab. What are you smiling at?

BOBBY

If I don't get a coaching job or sell my book, I'll forge ahead -- make my fortune as one of two or three Jewish cab drivers left in New York.

CHERI

Don't joke with me. Or give Jason's adolescent fantasies one more thought. You're well known. You'll get free-lance work. I'll start tutoring big time after school.

BOBBY

That school is awful enough for you. Do you think I'm going to let you work double-time?

CHERI

We need to come up with whatever we can.

BOBBY

Collectibles is not such a crazy idea.

CHERI

Bobby, if you don't drop this, I might ask the bitch for help.

BOBBY

Don't you dare.

Doorbell rings. PAUL stands there on rollerblades.

BOBBY

Hey, Paul.

JASON rolls in from his room. He looks as distressed as Paul.

CHERI

Did you hear what Dad and I just said?

JASON

I don't snoop.

PAUL

(to JASON)

Why are you wearing Ahmed's hat?

JASON

Eddie's. Come on, they're history. Me and Pops beat them in hoops. We got my watch back.

PAUL
(out of *Captain Marvel* comics)

Holy Moly.

JASON
And here's your twenty bucks.

PAUL
Thanks!
(to BOBBY)
I really could use it now.

BOBBY looks puzzled.

PAUL (cont'd)
I don't know if you folks know what's going on in my place, but as I told Jason, Nick's just made me get a job after school. Stocking drugs at the pharmacy. Nick wants me to "learn the value of a dollar." I think deep down his letting you go scared him he'd go under and that *I'd* have to supplement my scholarship. So here I'm concertmaster of the orchestra, editor of the school paper and what does he want me to do? Give that up. I tried to argue with him. But Nick is Nick. All he thinks about is himself.

CHERI
What's your mother going to do?

PAUL
What can she do? She's too sick to leave him.

CHERI
I'm so sorry, Paul.

PAUL
Is there anything you can do about what Nick's done to you?

BOBBY
(touches PAUL'S face affectionately)
We'll work things out.

JASON
We might open a comic store!

PAUL emptily smiles.

JASON (cont'd)

You don't like the idea.

PAUL

(at a loss)

It's great. Good luck.

BOBBY

Paul, tell me what else is involved with Nick putting a thoroughbred like you out to pasture?

PAUL

Mary guessed Nick fired you because of Catherine. Then the fireworks really started. In a rage he finally admitted it. Then she told him to move his act out. Of course he didn't.

(to JASON)

Let's go. Sorry for dumping my troubles here.

PAUL and JASON exit.

BOBBY holds CHERI around the waist and kisses her.

CHERI

What are you doing?

BOBBY

We've paid our dues. It's about time we had some fun.

Their kiss turns passionate. BOBBY starts to lead her to the bedroom but the phone rings, startling CHERI into anxiety.

BOBBY picks it up.

BOBBY

It's your mother on her cell phone.

CHERI reaches for the phone.

CHERI

She hung up. She said she's dropping her taxes off with the doorman.

BOBBY

After what we've just been through, are you really going to help her count her money?

CHERI

Of course. Working on her taxes is a rite of Spring. It's the one time I have a real connection with her. You know the way Hasidic Jews dance with a handkerchief between them? She and I do it with a 1099,

(BOBBY laughs, she adds, darkly)

just to remind me who really has the power – to give me nothing

The doorbell rings.

JASON enters carrying a manila envelope, followed by PAUL.

JASON

Grandma left this.

CHERI

You opened it?

JASON

I wanted to see why she only gives me twenty dollars every year for my birthday.

BOBBY

She's a miser.

JASON

But she likes me. Maybe I can ask her to invest in the comic store.

BOBBY

(laughs grimly)

Sure.

JASON

Paul thought of a great location on the way out.

(to PAUL)

Tell them.

PAUL

There's a small space on 86th Street near the Barnes & Noble. While parents are at the bookstore the kids can go through your files.

BOBBY

Not a bad idea.

CHERI

What!

JASON

Do you want to look at the space, Pops?

*BOBBY considers this which makes CHERI
grit her teeth.*

JASON

Paul also came up with a great name for the store: OLYMPIC COMICS—after
the Greek superheroes and heroines.

PAUL

Shazam!

Fade out.

To finish reading the play, please contact Frederick through the contact page.