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Ballers

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the University of New Orleans in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Film, Theatre, and Communication Arts Creative Writing

by

Oscar K. Gorney

B.A. Louisiana State University, 2010

August, 2012
FADE IN:

INT. ST. JAMES GYM - DAY

State championship banners cover the rafters of the beautiful, recently renovated gym of St. James High School.

Ten students of an all-boy PE CLASS play a full court game of basketball while rest of the class watches with peaked interest.

HENRY ALLEN (18), a short, scrawny mustached teen whose so-called prime was in middle school, drives towards the basket for a lay-up.

The students’ eyes follow Henry’s path to the basket. They know what’s coming.

RUSSELL DAVIS (18), a big-bodied center who’s never needed a fake ID, crashes into Henry and rejects the ball into the stands.

The class goes wild as Henry’s head breaks his fall.

The game stops as the students run over and celebrate Russell’s monster rejection. Some of Henry’s teammates nearly trip over him running over to join in.

LARRY MONROE (18), a tall, flat-footed teen whose body shows his expertise are in watching sports rather than playing, drags Henry over to the bench.

LARRY
So we’re not callin’ fouls anymore, Coach? Is that what’s going on here?

COACH COOPER (40s), a man who firmly believes the rules were written by the losers of the world, looks over at Larry in disgust.

COACH COOPER
He’s fine. Hell, he didn’t call anything.

LARRY
That’s probably because he’s unconscious, coach.

Larry lifts Henry’s arm and drops it.
COACH COOPER
Monroe, if I wanted to hear an asshole I would’ve farted.

LARRY
You sure you’re allowed to have varsity in this PE class scrimmaging us....everyday?

COACH COOPER
Let me check.

Coach Cooper looks up and counts his banners.

COACH COOPER (CONT’D)
State. State...Hold on a sec...St...Nope, hold on. Wow, that one says national. Geez. Looks like they can.

SHAWN JEFFRIES (18), a point guard who’s the best player at St. James and makes sure everyone knows it, steps up to Coach Cooper. He’s exhausted from laughing.

SHAWN
Woo! How are my stats looking, coach?

COACH COOPER

Coach Cooper holds out for a five. Shawn leaves him hanging.

SHAWN
Bro. I got trips deuce.

COACH COOPER
But I’ve been keeping track.

SHAWN
That’s strange, Cooper, because it sure doesn’t look like it.

LARRY
I can come back at another time if you two need some privacy.

SHAWN
Hey, how’s your game been, Larry? We missed you at tryouts. What, fourth time’s not the charm?
Larry’s got nothing.

SHAWN (CONT’D)
That’s what I thought. Get the fuck out there. We need one more loser.

COACH COOPER
You the man, Shawn.

Larry walks back into the game and takes his defensive position in the paint against Russell.

Shawn handles the ball and gets a pick from Russell forcing Larry to switch to Shawn.

Shawn calls for isolation and toys with Larry for a bit with his dribbling skills. Larry can feel the class mocking him.

Shawn drives. Larry holds his hands up as Shawn takes flight.

Shawn dunks on Larry, swinging his crotch into Larry’s face, knocking him down to the court.

The class goes nuts again.

Shawn comes to a landing next to a defeated Larry. He points two fingers at Larry, making him flinch.

SHAWN
Stay down.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Larry and Henry eat lunch at their isolated, crummy table with their friends JEFF BEAUREGARD (18), a great athlete, but would rather a pickup game than a coach in his ear, STEPHEN MCDANIEL (18), a soft-spoken meathead who’s uncoordination is more sad than funny, and PAUL HAMPTON (18), a big body who’ll talk smack while he eats all your food.

HENRY
I can’t believe Shawn Jeffries fuckin’ teabagged you.

JEFF
I can.

LARRY
He just dunked on me.

PAUL
And his balls careened into your face.
STEPHEN
He’s the best.

LARRY
He’s a prick is what he is.

HENRY
He’s all-state.

LARRY
Hey, Henry, at least I didn’t get rag-dolled by fuckin’ Russell “Donkey Kong” Davis.

PAUL
(eating all their fries)
Those fries look good. Can I have some, thanks.

STEPHEN
How’s the head, by the way?

HENRY
Not that bad.

Henry turns his head to show that it is THAT BAD.

PAUL
Hmm. Yeah. Not bad.

LARRY
Having those douches in our PE class now is like having to scrimmage the goddamn Dream Team everyday, without Laettner.

JEFF
Jesus.

LARRY
We had our own little corner of the court, and no one would bother us.

HENRY
People still fucked with us.

LARRY
Well, yeah. But it was less than it is now.

PAUL
Hey, guys, check out Parks over there.
The guys look across the courtyard and see Shawn and Russell harassing ADAM PARKS (18), a pathetic looking short stack who’s the only basketball player that takes pride in his participation trophies, by the soda machines.

TAYLOR (18), PAT (18), and DEVON (18), St. James players that are all about the team to a fault, step up to Parks.

    TAYLOR
    Won’t do it!

    PAT
    No balls!

    DEVON
    You won’t!

Shawn tosses Parks’s soda onto the roof of the school.

Shawn walks away laughing. The rest of the team follows.

    LARRY
    What I tell ya, guy’s a total prick. And it’s just because no one’s brought him back down to earth.

Parks walks around looking for someone to sit with.

    JEFF
    What are you tryin’ to say, dude?

    LARRY
    I mean he’s no Oscar Robertson.

The guys look confused.

    LARRY (CONT’D)
    The Big O. One of the greatest point guards ever. The only guy to average a triple-double for a whole season.

    STEPHEN
    Nobody cares.

    LARRY
    I’m just saying he’s not that good. That’s all.

The guys taunt Larry.

Parks walks up to the guys.
PARKS
Hey dudes, any of you wanna be on my basketball team?

PAUL
Parks, I blocked you online, remember?

PARKS
No, I’m playing for reals, in a rec league. It’s in the city. I gotta stay in shape if I’m gonna play in college. That’s what my mom says at least.

JEFF
Dude, why would we be on your team? You’re worse than us?

HENRY
Yeah, and it’s in the city. I don’t feel like losing and then getting shanked in the parking lot.

PARKS
We could carpool.

PAUL
Fuck off, Parks.

PARKS
OK. Just shoot me an email when you want in. I asked Shawn Jeffries. I think he’s a maybe.

Parks walks away unaffected.

STEPHEN
Weirdo.

LARRY
Good thing he’s around. That guy keeps us afloat at second to last in...everything.

JEFF
Not grades.

EXT. ST. JAMES PARING LOT - DAY

Larry and Henry take their time navigating the parking lot to their cars as the rest of the student body leaves campus at a dizzying pace.
HENRY
So you comin’ over to smoke? My brother says he’s got some shit that’s bomb, just really sticky...whatever the cool way to say you’ve got good weed is, yeah. I think Lil Wayne called it Paul Pierce once. Not sure why, but I’m assuming it’s cool.

LARRY
Anything we smoke is called Kwame Brown.

HENRY
Why?

LARRY
Only good in high school.

HENRY
So you in?

LARRY
Pass.

HENRY
Look, you can just tell me you’re goin’ to see Cate. You can tell me you’re goin’ to go do whatever she asks and not get any. It’s not a crime. The absence of fucking is, but other than that-

LARRY
Please. Compared to you, I’d say I’m doin’ alright. You, my friend, have got the lady problems. Crystal’s been bad mouthing you like it’s her job.

Larry tosses his bookbag in his car. Henry puts his in his truck bed.

HENRY
She’s just blowing off a never-ending amount of steam.

Larry lights a cigarette.

LARRY
Shouldn’t have dumped her.
HENRY
I’m a man with sensitive needs.

Shawn drives by in his truck blaring rap music. Basketball players sit in the back.

SHAWN
Nice shot, Monroe!

LARRY
(waving)
Yep. Just keep driving, pussy.

The truck stops.

Shawn floors it in reverse, almost hitting some students in the process. He stops by Larry and Shawn.

SHAWN
What did you call me?!

HENRY
He said you have a bad-ass truck!
Way to go, bro! You did it!

Shawn flicks off Henry.

SHAWN
Thanks, chode!

Henry’s eyes light up as Shawn drives away laughing.

HENRY
Seriously, though. Move on from Cate, dude. It’s the best thing for you.

LARRY
No can do. Cate and I...we’re gonna be together.

HENRY
Pretty sure you’re wrong. She’s still got the boyfriend. Enjoy getting led on again today.

Henry gets in his truck.

LARRY
I won’t because it’s not gonna happen.
EXT. POOL - DAY

CATE MURPHY (18), a short, curvy young woman trapped in high school but making the most of it, lounges at an empty pool area wearing sunglasses and a life guard shirt over her swimsuit.

A hand holding a drink extends towards her face.

LARRY
Here you are. Just how you like it.

Cate smiles and accepts. She sits up and takes a sip. Larry sits down next to her and lights a cigarette.

CATE
You gotta be careful coming ‘round here so often. Kyle sees you he’s not gonna be happy.

LARRY
What? I’m workin’ on my tan. He never shows up anyway.

CATE
Just clearing my name in case he kicks the shit out of you.

LARRY
How kind of you. Guy hasn’t said anything to me yet. I think he’s too stupid to suspect anything.

CATE
He is stupid. What would he be suspecting?

LARRY
Only this incredible chemistry between us.

CATE
Oh boy.

LARRY
That we’re meant to be together. And...and it doesn’t matter what he does because...

Cate and Larry fight back laughing.

LARRY (CONT’D)
B-because our love will...ring true?
Cate shakes her head.

LARRY (CONT’D)
Come on that was...some steamy stuff, eh?

CATE
I came.

Larry’s speechless.

CATE (CONT’D)
So-um...Bring me to school tomorrow, stud?

LARRY
Yeah, yeah. Sure.

CATE
Just put it on my tab.

LARRY
Oh, you mean your tab of blowjobs you owe me for all the rides I’ve given you?

CATE
That’s the one. You like finger in the ass, too, right? No? Two fingers?

LARRY
Uh...

Cate points across the pool.

LARRY (CONT’D)
Pointing? So you just point now?

CATE
Can you get me one of those umbrellas and bring it over?

They look at each other.

LARRY
It’s always been my dream to bring you an umbrella.

Larry gets the umbrella and sets it up for Cate.

A muscle car drives up blaring death metal.
KYLE BRIGHTON (18), a short, bowl-cut, douche who’ll only work out if there’s a mirror in the room, sits in his parked car and looks at himself in his sideview while he adjusts his hair.

LARRY (CONT’D)
Is that him? Man, I hardly noticed he was here.

CATE
See you tomorrow.

Larry walks out to the parking lot.

Kyle gets out of his car. Larry towers over him.

LARRY
How’s it going?

Kyle brushes his hair.

LARRY (CONT’D)
Yeah, I heard that.

KYLE
Piss off, dude.

INT. LARRY’S ROOM - NIGHT

Larry walks in his room and finds his father, DENNIS MONROE (50s), a gentle giant who’s never had idle hands, hanging a frame of SCHOLARSHIP LETTERS above Larry’s desk.

Larry’s walls are covered in basketball-related posters.

DENNIS
Hey, bud. Just hangin’ up my letters here. I didn’t really like ‘em in the study.

Dennis finishes and they walk past each other.

LARRY
You know I’m gonna be out of here in like less than a year, right?

Larry sits at his desk and watches TV. Dennis stands by the doorway.

DENNIS
Then they’ll be here when you come back and visit.
Larry watches NBA highlights.

DENNIS (CONT’D)
So-uh, you been shooting lately?

LARRY
Net’s rotted off.

Dennis leaves.

Larry opens FACEBOOK on his computer and sees CRYSTAL DALTON’S (18), the kind of teenager who proudly duckfaces in every photo, status: “HENRY ALLEN HAS A CHODE!” Hundreds of LIKES.

INT. LARRY’S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Larry, drives his car and smokes a cigarette. Cate rides shotgun.

CATE
And at choir practice last night we learned Eleanor Rigby.

LARRY
One day you will sing for me, Cate Murphy.

CATE
You don’t wanna hear me sing.

LARRY
Now why wouldn’t I wanna-

CATE
Stop right there. You were about to compare me to an angel and it’s too early in the morning.

Larry nods in agreement. Smokes away.

CATE (CONT’D)
I broke up with Kyle.

Larry coughs. Tosses his cigarette.

LARRY
Why wasn’t that the first talking point when you got in the car?
CATE
It really wasn’t that big of a deal...but you might want to distance yourself from him...He thinks you might have been an influence.

LARRY
Thinks? He’s thinking now? And what do you mean by influence? Does he think we’ve...like...

CATE
Fucked?

LARRY
Y-yeah, or made fuck-I mean love, or whatever. Yes. That stuff.

CATE
No...But the point is I just feel like free now, like I’m down for whatever.

LARRY
Oh...right...Well, if you need a ride home now I can totally pick you up.

CATE
I’m just gonna get one from a friend.

LARRY
Oh...OK, cool. That’s neat. I was just wonderin’ is all. No biggie. Just curious. I didn’t know you had a friend—I mean another friend to take you home. That’s cool.

EXT. ST. JAMES GYM – DAY
Larry and Henry, in their PE uniforms, share a joint behind the gym.

HENRY
I can’t believe she dumped him. I mean it makes sense. I just didn’t think she was that smart.

LARRY
So what do I do?
HENRY
Did you fuck her yet?

LARRY
Hold on let me crunch the numbers.

Henry seriously waits for the results.

LARRY (CONT’D)
No. Can’t say I have.

HENRY
OK, then you fuck her, that’s what you do. Problem solved. You’re welcome.

LARRY
She practically jumped out of my car when I dropped her off this morning.

HENRY
That means she likes you.

LARRY
But she just ended like a really long term relationship and I-

HENRY
Dude. Cate’s what you’ve been waiting for, like a bitch, I might add.

LARRY
I can’t.

HENRY
You know what Charles Barkley said once?

LARRY
Sure. I am not a role model.

HENRY
No. When he got pulled over in Arizona he told the cop he was hurrying over to meet up with a woman who’d given him the best blowjob in his life. His whole life, dude.

LARRY
So what?
HENRY
So what? That guy was stopping at nothing to get to that nice young lady’s house.

LARRY
Didn’t he get arrested for a DUI?

HENRY
The moral of the story is you gotta at least make an attempt for Cate. You gotta at least try.

LARRY
No, I think it’s the man really is not a role model.

HENRY
Who are you gonna trust more, yourself or Sir Charles?

LARRY
Depends on who’s driving.

Larry finishes the joint and tosses it.

HENRY
Alright. Let’s go exercise.

INT. ST. JAMES GYM - LATER

At a side goal away from the rest of the class, Larry practices his jump shots while Henry rebounds.

HENRY
Got a lil streak here. What’s that, two in a row? You’ve been workin’ out?

LARRY
I have been jackin’ off a lot.

HENRY
Good cardio. I get it.

Shawn steals the ball from Henry.

SHAWN
Gotta think fast, pussies.
HENRY
Oh my god, it’s still so funny
every time you do this. Now gimme
the ball.

SHAWN
Nah. I think I’m holdin’ on to it,
chode.

Students, including the St. James players gather around.

HENRY
Oh, look. It knows how to use the
internet.

SHAWN
You could say that, chode.

HENRY
Go right ahead! Crystal’s a liar,
especially about personal matters
like someone’s...width. And don’t
call me that again, moron, or I’ll
return the favor.

SHAWN
Relax, chode. And shave that
fuckin’ moustache.

Students laugh as Shawn bounces the ball off of Henry’s head.

HENRY
Alright, that tears it!

Larry holds Henry back.

LARRY
H, stop. You’re just giving him
what he wants.

SHAWN
And who would’ve thought Dennis
Monroe’s kid would never make the
team? Damn shame, really. Makes me
want to cry, except I’m not a
pussy.

LARRY
Why don’t you get back to practice,
Shawn? Maybe learn how to pass the
ball for once.

Students quiet down.
SHAWN
The fuck’s that supposed to mean?

LARRY
It means...you’re a selfish player, and the rest of your team is a bunch of fucking brainless mongoloids runnin’ up and down the floor. And we all know you only won state because of a bad call.

Larry realizes he’s still holding onto Henry and let’s go. Shawn walks up to the two of them.

SHAWN
That’s a lot of talk from a guy who couldn’t even make JV. You’re acting like, I dunno, like you could do better or something. I’m confused, honestly.

LARRY
Maybe. Maybe we could.

Students laugh and mock Larry.

HENRY
Dude, please stop.

SHAWN
We’re state champs, chodes. You two faggots really want a game? That’s gonna be tough because you need at least three more losers who feel like getting destroyed.

LARRY
It just so happens I’ve got exactly three more friends. Suck on that for a little while.

SHAWN
We’re here all day, ladies.

HENRY
I have noticed that. There’s something really unethical going on there.

Russell gently taps Shawn on the shoulder.

RUSSELL
Uh, Shawn...what about Coach?
PAT
Yeah, he said we gotta take it easy
for the Classic and-

SHAWN
Shut up! I know!

The bell rings. Class disperses.

SHAWN (CONT’D)
We’re gonna play, Monroe. And
you’re gonna get fuckin’ owned.

Shawn throws a hard chest pass at Larry.

SHAWN (CONT’D)
Hold onto that ball. Remember it’s
dribbling. Not skipping around like
you did in grade school.

Shawn walks away. Henry looks disappointed at Larry, shaking
his head.

LARRY
What? Show a little excitement.

HENRY
Oh boy. I can’t wait to get my ass
kicked.

LARRY
Dude, Cooper isn’t gonna let ‘em
play. Tonight’s the Roseville
Classic. After that comes the
playoffs, and they’ll probably go
deeip into the playoffs. After
that’s done, they’ll have forgotten
all about it. So we can safely go
back to y’know...

HENRY
Being chodes.

LARRY
Right.

HENRY
Did you really used to skip when
you dribbled?
INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Larry sits and eats at the dinner table with his mother, AMANDA MONROE (50s), a woman with a constant smile thanks to prescriptions and who’s very aware she has just one child. Dennis finishes setting up the framed letters in the dining room and joins them at the table.

DENNIS
Did you see I put the letters in here?

LARRY
I can see that.

DENNIS
Better, huh?

AMANDA
Of course it is, honey.

DENNIS
So, I-uh heard the Roseville Classic’s tonight. You know I shot twelve-for-twelve that night back when I played.

AMANDA
What’s that mean?

LARRY
It means he was perfect.

DENNIS
Baby, I couldn’t miss. Yep, that game sparked some interest from a few colleges.

AMANDA
A few? Dennis, please. There is such a thing as too much humble pie.

Amanda and Dennis share a long laugh.

AMANDA (CONT’D)
Larry, your father had offers from colleges all over—good ones at that.

LARRY
If only there was a reference point close by.
Dennis
UNLV, NC State, Purdue, Cornell.

Amanda
That’s Ivy League.

Larry
I know, ma.

Larry excuses himself from the table. Walks into kitchen.

Amanda
He had all those letters, but he didn’t tell me. He could’ve gone anywhere, but he didn’t go.

Larry mixes an alcoholic drink. Parents are oblivious.

Dennis
I had all that I wanted right here.

Larry drinks.

Amanda
Aww. Did you hear that, Larry bear?

Larry
Heard it, ma.

Larry sits back down at the table.

Dennis
I just couldn’t miss that night.

Amanda
He was so brave.

Dennis
Everyone carried me off the court, after I hit the game winner of course.

Larry
Of course.

Amanda
He was so brave.

Larry
Already established that.

Dennis takes Amanda’s hand.
AMANDA
Your dad was pretty popular in high school...pretty popular.

Larry leaves the room. Dennis and Amanda hold hands, admiring each other.

INT. ST. JAMES HIGH GYM - NIGHT

The stands are packed with ROWDY FANS from both schools for this rivalry game. Larry and Henry watch the game from the top of the stands.

ON COURT...ST. JAMES and ROSEVILLE trade buckets.

One Roseville player, BLAKE DAWKINS (18), a freakish man-child who’s been on the scouts’ radar since kindergarten, single-handedly keeps the game close by dominating Russell on offense and defense.

LARRY
Blake Dawkins is owning Russell out there.

HENRY
Shit yeah he is. Shawn’s not gonna find the bucket so easy tonight with his goon on lock down.

Shawn drops a three. The crowd CHEERS.

A manic FAN (18) RATTLES the caged windows at the top of the stands. Larry and Henry take cover.

HENRY (CONT’D)
Time to put this game in my own hands.

LARRY
Whaddya mean?

HENRY
Just follow my lead...NUTTY BUDDY!

Henry CLAPS in rhythm.

HENRY (CONT’D)
NUTTY BUDDY! NUTTY BUDDY!

Larry and Henry clap together.

FAN
Hey, man, what’s with the cheer?
Henry whispers in the fan’s ear.
The cheer spreads.
Shawn looks at the stands and his man drives past him for a dunk.

LARRY
H, what the hell does that mean?

INT. BASEMENT PARTY – NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

JUNIOR HIGH STUDENTS dance. A younger Shawn dances with a TALL GIRL who towers over him.
She gets up closer on him.
Closer...Rougher...It’s too much.
Shawn stops. His knees quiver and he limps down.
The lone wallflower, a younger, still mustached Henry, points a STAIN out on Shawn’s pants. Everyone’s grossed out.

INT. ST. JAMES HIGH GYM – NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT)

Larry and Henry watch the game. The cheer is in full force and it’s hurting Shawn’s game.

LARRY
You’ve really been rockin’ that ‘stache for a long time. So you told that guy the same story?

HENRY
Just changed the jerseys.

Shawn goes up for a lay-up. Blake blocks it into the stands.

INT. ST. JAMES PARKING LOT – DAY

Larry, Henry, Jeff, Paul and Stephen relax in lawn chairs. Henry tans with a sun reflector in his truck bed while Paul and Stephen sip coffee, Jeff reads the paper and Larry smokes.

LARRY
Man, they really let that game get away from ‘em.
HENRY
I’d even say they choked.

JEFF
So dude, what exactly did you say to Shawn Jeffries?

PAUL
Yeah. Like when you said your friends would play...did that mean, y’know...us?

LARRY
Well, I didn’t mean the Bulls, Paul.

PAUL
Shit.

JEFF
And you’re saying he won’t bother taking us up on it because of the playoffs, right?

HENRY
Dude. Yes. Calm down.

STEPHEN
So you’re sure that we won’t have to play them?

LARRY
I’m fuckin’ positive.

JEFF
Larry, what’s St. James’ record?

LARRY
Good?

Jeff shoves the newspaper in Larry’s face.

Headline reads “ST. JAMES LOSE CLASSIC, MISS PLAYOFFS”

Henry gets yanked to the ground from his truck.

The guys turn around and see Shawn and the St. James basketball team.

Henry scrambles up.

HENRY
What the fuck? Just tryin’ to get some...
Henry sees the team standing high above him.

HENRY (CONT’D)
Rays.

SHAWN
Stay down, chode.

PAUL
(caughing)
Nutty butty.

Shawn takes Paul’s coffee and slams the cup on the ground.

Empty.

STEPHEN
I’d offer you coffee, but we don’t have enough for everybody.

SHAWN
Monroe, remember you sayin’ something about playing us?

LARRY
I’ve got a poor memory. It’s the drugs. It’s them dang drugs.

SHAWN
We missed the playoffs. By one. Fucking. Game!

JEFF
No shit, douchebag. It’s in the paper.

SHAWN
We’d like to accept your invitation to kicking your ass.

Larry looks to his friends for backup.

TAYLOR
Won’t do it!

DEVON
No balls!

PAT
You won’t!

No support.
SHAWN
I can’t hear anything. Shh. Shh.
You guys hear that? No! All talk.
You fuck with my season. I’m gonna
fuck with you, all of you. Rest of
the year’s gonna be tons of fun
ladies. Enjoy.

Shawn and the basketball team leave.

STEPHEN
Damn. I knew I should’ve brought
more coffee.

INT. LIVING ROOM – NIGHT
NBA TV plays.
Larry sits at his desk and shoots a paper in the trash can.
Miss.
He turns his computer to FACEBOOK.
SHAWN JEFFRIES’ STATUS: CHODES PUNKD OWT. NUTHIN NEW. LMAO!

LARRY
Can’t even spell.

NBA TV starts a classic ‘80s PISTONS/CELTICS GAME.

Dennis walks in holding his framed letters.

DENNIS
Hey, bud, you think the hallway
would work better maybe?

Larry closes his computer.

LARRY
I dunno.

DENNIS
I was sleeping, but then it dawned
on me that the hallway would get
way more traffic than the-

Larry flips the channel.

DENNIS (CONT’D)
Hold up. Go back to that.
LARRY
Just tryin’ to find the highlights.

DENNIS
Highlights? Go back. Click it.

Larry puts the game back on.

DENNIS (CONT’D)
Bad Boys and the Celtics. These guys beat each other up. They were some badasses.

LARRY
I know who they are, dad.

DENNIS
Yeah, but have you watched them?

LARRY
All I know is they wouldn’t be the same in today’s game.

DENNIS
Oh yes they would. These guys, they didn’t take any crap. They just kept playin’ their game. Just some tough guys, man.

Larry flips to the ESPN highlights.

DENNIS (CONT’D)
You know somethin’...I might have another net in the garage if you need me to use the ole reach.

LARRY
That’s ok, dad.

DENNIS
Night.

Dennis walks out.

Larry puts the game back on.

He inches closer to the screen.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

One modest light flashes on.
Larry dribbles out to the driveway. He sets up his shot for the goal.

Air ball.

He walks over to the yard and retrieves the ball.

He tries a baseline jumper.

Miss.

He starts rushing his shots, frustrated.

Brick, after brick, after brick.

He’s slow to rebound.

He goes for an easy layup, but trips on his own footing. He stills directs his shot as he falls to the tough concrete.

He sees the ball fall followed by rotten pieces of net.

He gets back up and keeps doing work.

He goes after the rebounds for quick put-backs.

He gets in a rhythm and starts sinking jump shots over and over.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Larry, Henry, Paul, Stephen and Jeff eat lunch at their table.

HENRY
I don’t think it’s gonna be that bad.

PAUL
Probably not for us, but you two have PE with those wackaloons.

STEPHEN
No, I ran into Russell this morning and he threw my bookbag into the lake. Then he said something like “that fasshole Paul Hampton’s next” as he laughed hysterically.

Paul samples all of their meals, prepping his own buffet plate.
PAUL
What’s a fasshole?

JEFF
A fat asshole.

Larry watches Shawn take Parks’s soda. Larry watches Parks carefully.

Shawn sees Larry.

JEFF (CONT’D)
Aw, man. Why’d you have to go and look at him?

Shawn walks over with the varsity.

SHAWN
What’s up, queefs? You ready to apologize?

Russell slaps away Paul’s massive lunch before he can take a picture of it on his phone.

LARRY
We’re in.

The basketball team laughs.

HENRY
Dude.

Shawn puts Parks’ drink down.

SHAWN
Fuckin’ A-right. So when do you wanna get beat down?

LARRY
Easy, there asshole.

Larry stands up to Shawn.

LARRY (CONT’D)
Gimme four weeks.

SHAWN
Shit. You need more like four years. Fuck that.

LARRY
That’s how long it would’ve been anyway, had you not CHOKED at the Roseville Classic.
Jeff and Paul pretend to choke themselves.

PAUL
One might even argue that he...BLEW HIS WAD...before the playoffs.

Stephen gives Paul a low-five. Shawn’s red in the face.

SHAWN
Better not be bitchin’ out.

LARRY
Don’t worry, stupid.

SHAWN
You’re fucked, Monroe. You’re all fucked.

Shawn walks away the basketball team follows.

Larry looks at his friends with delight.

JEFF
You’re an idiot.

HENRY
What the shit was that?

STEPHEN
Yeah. Now that I think about it, we’re gonna get raped out there.

PAUL
In hindsight I probably shouldn’t have mocked the man. You see that posse he’s rocking? Sure they look like a bunch of Dukies, but every last one of them could curb stomp me, easily.

LARRY
Come on, guys. What have we done with our time here? I’ll recap for you. We’ve gone from being pussies, to tards, to now chodes. Always one inch away from the bottom of the totem pole, and taken shit from douchebags like Shawn Jeffries for four fuckin’ years. No. Not anymore, goddamnit. And who knows, maybe we make it close enough that it’s their team that walks away embarrassed.
STEPHEN
That would kick so much ass, so hard.

JEFF
Yeah, it’s something I could tell strange kids about when I’m senile.

PAUL
Fuck those guys.

Larry looks at Henry. He extends his hand.

LARRY
Sir Charles.

HENRY
Sir Charles.

Larry and Henry pull off a choreographed hand-shake.

JEFF
But dude-uh. How are we like, gonna get ready?

Larry looks around.

LARRY
Hey Parks!

Parks sits alone eating lunch on the ground.

Larry tosses his stolen drink to him. Parks misses and the can explodes.

INT. ROSEVILLE GYM OFFICE - DAY

Larry and the rest of the team sit in a messy office. SHAY, a very big woman who gossips more than she works, sits behind her cluttered desk laughing at them.

SHAY
You boys are at the wrong gym.

STEPHEN
You and I are on the same page, lady.

SHAY
(points at JEFF)
Except him.
PARKS

Me?

SHAY

Not you, ET. Him. Yeah, I’ve seen him ball ’round here. Got some game.

LARRY

Jeff, you got street cred? Good job. I’m proud of ya.

JEFF

I try to set goals for myself.

HENRY

So what’s the comp like in these parts?

SHAY

Just one group of kids in your age group that aren’t doin’ AAU or playin’ for school.

PAUL

Either you’re slangin’ crack rock or you got a wicked jump shot.

LARRY

Dude.

SHAY

No, he’s on the money with that. But these punk-ass kids probably sell drugs, too.

Shay turns her attention to her computer.

HENRY

Real quick. What’s the jersey situation like as far as size scale?

SHAY

Y’all fuckin’ up my spider solitaire. Go on.

She waves for them to leave. They walk out.

Henry pokes his head back in.

HENRY

You got a PA system in this crack den?
EXT. ROSEVILLE GYM - LATER

Larry and Henry wave goodbye as the rest of the team drives away in their respective cars.

HENRY
She’s gonna fuck us with those jerseys, man. I already know.

Larry lights a cigarette.

HENRY (CONT’D)
You should be more worried than me about this athletic nonsense.

LARRY
How ya figure?

HENRY
You wouldn’t pass the presidential fitness test. And chain smoking doesn’t really improve your forty time. Other than that, you’re a fuckin’ specimen.

LARRY
Basketball court isn’t even forty yards, so what’s your point?

HENRY
What about ole Cate Murphy? How’s all that bullshit going?

LARRY
Just waiting for that right moment.

HENRY
Right moment? The right moment’s anytime you can get her to sit on your face before she and Butt-cut get back together.

Larry looks confused.

HENRY (CONT’D)
First break up, dude. This is just a test between them to see which one caves and comes crawling back to the other.

Larry blows smoke at Henry.

HENRY (CONT’D)
Go ahead. Wait.
LARRY
What if I show up and he’s already there? It’s pretty hard mackin’ on a bitch if an ex is present.

HENRY
You ever see those videos of the two deers just fuckin’ each other up with their antlers?

LARRY
I can handle myself. I’m a big guy, and I used to have abs. I mean, it’s not like he’s got street cred.

HENRY
Yeah, see, but you have like negative street cred.

Larry and Henry hear two gun shots go off in the distance.

They fumble around for their keys and make for their vehicles.

EXT. POOL - DAY
Larry walks up to the gate and sees Kyle’s car.

Before he can turn back he bumps into Kyle.

KYLE
What’s up, bro?

LARRY
Kyle. Totally not the last person I wanted to talk to at this moment. What luck.

KYLE
Cate and I split. Sure you’ve heard. It’s all over Myspace.

LARRY
Damn. See, I’m only on Friendster.

KYLE
It’s whatever, though. I mean, I’m a rockstar. I can’t be held down. Look at this hair. Check the hair, bro. Can’t fuckin’ tame this. You kiddin’ me?

Kyle looks back and sees Cate by the pool.
KYLE (CONT’D)
It’s cool though. She blew it. I’m just gonna write a song about her and she’ll hear it on the radio and be really pissed.

LARRY
But your music’s fuckin’ horrible.

Kyle sucker punches Larry in the gut.

EXT. CATE’S STREET – NIGHT
Larry, holding his belly, walks beside Cate.

CATE
I’m sorry Kyle fucked with you. Really, Larry. I feel shitty about it.

LARRY
I could try to make you feel bad and say I was defending your honor, but in all reality I was defending music.

Cate takes Larry’s hand.

CATE
So my pussy never entered your mind at all?

They walk up Cate’s driveway.

LARRY
Well, no, I mean—yeah it was, but I criticized his music and that’s when he socked me.

They stop at her front steps.

CATE
Lamest fight ever. But hey, thanks for walking me. It was nice.

LARRY
Yeah, no problem. So, I—uh I’ll see ya ‘round.

They hug. Larry walks away. He stops. He turns around and finds Cate still waiting at her door.

They smile at each other.
LARRY (CONT’D)
Hey, so-um if you’re not doing
anything Friday, like if you want
to hangout or-

CATE
Eight o’clock?

LARRY
Y-yes. Eight works. I will pick you
up at eight, young lady.

CATE
Awesome. Later.

LARRY
Later.

Larry walks down the driveway, grinning.

Once he’s out of her view Larry runs full speed down the street.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - CONTINUOUS
Larry turns the corner off Cate’s street.

He falls down exhausted, gasping for air.

INT. ROSEVILLE GYM - DAY
The stands are almost empty in the dilapidated gym except for
a few NEIGHBORHOOD YOUTHS in attendance with nothing really
better to do. The energy couldn’t be lower.

Larry enters the gym in a blue basketball uniform that’s a
few sizes too small. The rest of the team, already in
unorganized shoot-arounds, has similar jersey problems.

HENRY
I told ya. I fuckin’ told ya. Look
at these shorts. Good thing my
dick’s...

LARRY
What?

HENRY
Nothin’. Forget it.
Larry shakes his head and flinches when the gym door is kicked open and sees an intimidating group of teenagers strut in laughing.

HENRY (CONT’D)
Finally. Got some fans comin’ in.

The thugs suit up in RED JERSEYS and start shooting.
They showcase major skills as they run practice drills.

LARRY
Are we early?

The tallest player, JIMMY BANKS (18) a talented guy who puts more hours in on his hi-top fade than his post game, catches an alley-oop and throws down a powerful dunk and hangs on the rim.

Henry squats down and takes a moment.

LARRY (CONT’D)
Looks like he’s one-dimensional.

Henry gets back up.

Jimmy drains a baseline three-pointer.

LARRY (CONT’D)
Who is that guy? Think I’ve seen him somewhere.

HENRY
Sure it wasn’t Sportscenter?
(to JEFF)
Jeffrey, come hither. I’m sure I’ve got this guy’s rookie card.

Jeff dribbles over to Larry and Henry.

JEFF
That’s Jimmy Banks. Mad skills. Guy made local news recently.

HENRY
So, you read the paper and watch local news. How old are you?

JEFF
He got caught fuckin’ a cheerleader in the locker room.
HENRY

LARRY
Yeah, that’s like saying I haven’t fucked a cheerleader in the locker room.

JEFF
He did it during a game, dude.

Jimmy misses a shot. He gets his own rebound and dunks over an unsuspecting teammate.

LARRY
I’m so not intimidated by this guy.

HENRY
Totally.

BUZZER RINGS.

INT. ROSEVILLE GYM – LATER

The Blue Team stands at their bench. The Red Team sits ready and waiting for tip-off.

LARRY
You really set up music and everything?

HENRY
Gotta get pumped. And it’ll win the crowd over.

PAUL
What crowd?

JEFF
Stephen, go check what’s wrong with it.

Stephen runs off.

PAUL
Probably stolen.

LARRY
No way.

Stephen runs back.
It’s gone.

Goddamnit!

Fuck it. Let’s huddle up.

Blue Team huddles up.

The REFEREE (40s), a man who takes his lack of sports glory out on teenagers, and if he had a wife she would’ve left him a very long time ago, stands at mid-court.

Turn that fuckin’ music off!

There’s no music on, sir.

Whaddya mean?

He means you’re insane, sir.

The Referee waves them off and sits down at center court, drinking from his flask.

Okay, so um, Jeff, you’re clearly the best player so whatcha thinkin’?

Alright. Let’s start with me, obviously, Henry, Stephen, Larry and Paul.

What about me?

You’re on the bench because you can’t count.

Cool it. Let’s..I dunno, bring it in.

They stacks hands.
LARRY
OK, um. Don’t worry. It’s totally understandable to be afraid right now and it’s unlikely we’ll suffer any permanent injuries.

The team looks at one another and settle for the speech.

They break huddle and take their positions on the court for tip-off. Larry lines up with Jimmy for the tip.

LARRY (CONT’D)
Good luck.

JIMMY
Lock your windows. Close your doors.

REFEREE
Babies, let’s give it a rest and play the stupid game, alright? Terrific.

Jimmy effortlessly wins the tip, and gets the ball back.

He dribbles around Larry, blazes by Paul, crosses-over Jeff, dribbles between Stephen’s legs, and jumps from the free-throw line.

An unsuspecting Henry stands in the paint. He turns around and sees Jimmy in the air, but it’s too late.

JIMMY
Comin’ down!

Jimmy executes a monstrous two-handed jam that sends Henry flying into the wall.

The Red Team runs over and praises Jimmy with chest-bumps and high-fives.

Larry helps Henry up.

Jeff calls for a timeout.

JEFF
Parks. Come on.

Larry helps Henry onto the bench.

HENRY
I think I need to go to the hospital.
LARRY
Really? You need the wahbulance?

HENRY
My whole body’s a contusion.

Larry sees something under the bench. He bends down.

LARRY
Cheer up.

Larry rises, holding an iPod.

LARRY (CONT’D)
Look what I found.

Larry tosses it up. Henry barely catches it.

HENRY
This isn’t mine.

Larry jogs back onto the court. Henry observes the iPod.

LARRY
Alright, lucky shot guys. Lucky shot.

Jeff takes the ball up the court. Before he can cross midcourt, he passes to Parks.

Parks pumps-fakes, but it’s stolen and the Red Team scores with ease on a fast break.

JEFF
I don’t think the fake’s gonna work back here, dude.

Parks passes it in to Jeff. Red Team traps him.

JEFF (CONT’D)
Ball help!

Stephen rushes back court. Jeff lobs it to him.

Stephen dribbles once and stops, travels, then double-dribbles. The whistle blows, and the Red Team can’t control their laughter.

LARRY
Stephen, that’s traveling.

STEPHEN
But I bounced the ball.
The ball’s inbounded to Jimmy in the paint and posts up Paul.

PAUL
Can’t come in here. This is my house, son. My house.

Jimmy fakes left and Paul bites. He gets an elbow to his chest. He gasps for air.

PAUL (CONT’D)
Oh, so we’re droppin’...droppin’ ‘bows now, huh?

Jimmy finishes toying with Paul with a spin-move and a thunderous dunk.

LARRY

PAUL
No take-backs.

Jimmy gets the ball down in the post. Larry tries to guard him as he sweats and pants. Jimmy keeps backing in. Now Larry leans into Jimmy, holding onto him for support.

LARRY
Dude, come on...Just...slow down.

Jimmy hooks the ball in, drawing the foul as Larry collapses to the ground.

Jeff walks over to help Larry up.

JEFF
Larry.

LARRY
Is it over?

JEFF
Dude, we’re only like two minutes into the game.

REFEREE
Yeah, so get your swamp-ass off my paint. We’re shootin’ free-throws here.

INT. ROSEVILLE LOCKER ROOM - LATER

The Blue Team sits around in pain, nursing injuries.
Larry finishes a cigarette.

LARRY
So what could we do differently? Maybe some minor tweaks for next time.

Henry vomits into a trash can.

PAUL
Getting the ball across half-court sounds reasonable.

Henry lies down and closes his eyes.

LARRY
I think we let that one get away from us.

PAUL
I think we need, like, plays and stuff. A little organization. I think the key is to feed me the rock, unless I’m like triple teamed, maybe.

STEPHEN
Doesn’t look like they’ve got plays.

JEFF
They don’t need ‘em.

PARKS
Hey, Larry, your dad was good, right?

LARRY
You mean he hasn’t told you?

JEFF
The man was a highlight reel. My dad told me he was like white Scottie Pippen.

PAUL
Fade and all?

PARKS
Think you could ask him to coach us? I suggest we adopt Duke’s style of play so when I walk on-
LARRY
I, uh, I thought Jeff was player coach. Y’know, like Bill Russell.

STEPHEN
No. I don’t.

LARRY
Jeff, come on, man. You don’t want a coach coming in here. Shit, you quit St. James because of Cooper.

JEFF
Dude, I’m a teenager. I fuckin’ hate authority. I can’t help it. But your dad’s more of like a role model. Positive shit. Words of advice and what not. Coach Cooper should just be tarred and feathered.

LARRY
Holy shit. I’ll ask already...So other than that, what’s the plan?

Larry lights a cigarette.

LARRY (CONT’D)
Now, regarding practice, I’ve got a pretty full plate right now, and we’re gonna have to work around that because I think sacrifice is necessary if we really want to grow as a team, right?

JEFF
Just chuck this up as a loss and roll with it. Get back at it next game.

LARRY
Whaddya think, H? Henry? Henry?

Parks looks at a passed-out Henry.

PARKS
Probably dehydrated.

PAUL
Quick, gimme your water.

Paul takes some big gulps of water before handing Henry the bottle.
A bowling ball rolls down the gutter. Larry stands at the lane, watching it until it drops.

Larry walks back to sit next to Cate.

CATE
Wait. Did it? Nope still zero.

LARRY
I’m just gonna throw you down there next time. See how that works out...So what’s been goin’ on with you?

CATE
Oh, not much...I, um, found out I’m sick. It’s just like a little, uh, don’t know why I’m telling you this, it’s malignant so-

LARRY
Jesus. What is it?

CATE
A tumor...I’m ok, really. Surgery’s in a couple of days so it’ll be fine.

LARRY
I, um, where is the uh-hospital-

CATE
Alright. I can’t do it. I was lying. There. I was trying to see how concerned you’d be.

LARRY
I don’t think so. You were tryin’ to see if I’d ease up on ya. Let you win.

Cate shoves Larry. She gets up and grabs a bowling ball.

LARRY (CONT’D)
That’s so fucked up. You are out of control.

CATE
Was I convincing?

LARRY
Was I?
Cate rolls her eyes and walks over to the lane. She winds up.

    LARRY (CONT’D)
    Miss!
Cate stumbles and falls as she drops the ball down in the gutter. Larry scrambles over to help her.

EXT. PIER - NIGHT
Larry and Cate lie beside each other on the pier.

    CATE
    There’s another one.
    LARRY
    What kind of person lies about shooting stars?
    CATE
    Not me.

Larry tries to play cool. He’s not very convincing.

    LARRY
    Cate...this is a date, right?
    It’s just that I remembered I asked if you wanted to hangout and then I wasn’t sure if that meant a date or-
    CATE
    You don’t have too many notches, do you?

Cate inches a little bit toward Larry. Larry goes to place his arm under her neck, but puts it back.

EXT. CATE’S HOUSE - NIGHT
Larry helps Cate out the car.

    LARRY
    Can I uh, walk you?
CATE
Oooh. See, I’m not sure if this is a date or not.

LARRY
It’s still funny?

Larry walks Cate up her driveway.

CATE
You’re so tall.

LARRY
Yeah... Makes it hard to do this.

Larry pulls Cate in and kisses her. He misses high and gets her forehead, but quickly finds her mouth. They both stop and look into each other’s eyes.

They make out.

They stop. Faces close, smiling.

LARRY (CONT’D)
So, you wanna do this again, sometime?

INT. LARRY’S CAR (MOVING) – LATER

Larry drives and smokes a cigarette as he sings along with the loud music in his car.

EXT. LARRY’S DRIVEWAY – NIGHT

Dennis practices in the driveway as Larry pulls up in his car. Larry, in street clothes, gets out of the car and watches his dad shoot.

DENNIS
Got the new net up there for ya.

LARRY
Thanks.

DENNIS
Where you been?

LARRY
Just a-a scimmage. Little pickup game.
DENNIS
Really? That’s great. Fantastic!
Let’s see how the shot’s doing.

Dennis passes Larry the ball. Larry starts shooting. Dennis rebound.

DENNIS (CONT’D)
Not bad, not bad. Move around some.

Larry shoots from different spots.

LARRY
So the guys on my te-

DENNIS
Backboard.

LARRY
What?

DENNIS
Gotta use the backboard when you’re at that angle.

Larry gets back to shooting.

LARRY
Guys at my scrimmage were wondering if-

DENNIS
Don’t forget the backboard.

Dennis and Larry switch roles.

DENNIS (CONT’D)
It’s higher percentage shot.

Dennis shoots and banks the ball in.

DENNIS (CONT’D)
Still got it.

Dennis shoots again.

DENNIS (CONT’D)
See. You just gotta think sometimes, son...You were saying something?

LARRY
Oh, um...I forgot.
EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Larry and his friends sit at their table and eat lunch.

   LARRY
   We’ll get ‘em next time, gentlemen.

   HENRY
   Dude, I’m rocking three icy hot patches right now.

   JEFF
   Are there patches that’ll stop USS Paul from cramming all those preservatives down his throat?

   PAUL
   Hey, we can’t all look like Harry Hamlin. That’s reality.

   STEPHEN
   And I’m still confused about this whole traveling, dribbling deal.

   PARKS
   Don’t give up, guys. We just gotta try hard and things’ll work out.

Paul swipes Parks’ sandwich, takes a bite, and heaves it as hard as he can.

   HENRY
   What did the ole man say?

   LARRY
   He, um... he can’t do it.

   PARKS
   Can’t do it?

   LARRY
   Can’t do it.

   JEFF
   Besides Parks, do we have any other ideas?

The St. James starters approach Larry and his friends.

   SHAWN
   Heard someone got annihilated in a shitty public league game the other night.
Russell gets a low-five from Shawn.

    PAUL
    Why are you givin’ him five? He didn’t insult us. That’s exactly what happened.

    HENRY
    Yeah, give it back to him, Russell or I’ll sick Blake Dawkins on you.

    RUSSELL
    I can give my come back to you if you want me to...because recently I was at a party and I had a one-night stand with your unattractive ex-girlfriend.

    HENRY
    As poorly crafted as that was, somehow it still hurts.

    LARRY
    (to PAT, TAYLOR, DEVON)
    And so what do you three do all day? You just shadow them, take notes?

    SHAWN
    Can’t wait to play you fuckin’ weirdos. You thought you sucked before?

    LARRY
    Hey! We do not suck.

Paul gives Larry a low-five.

St. James stomps off.

    LARRY (CONT’D)
    I forgot how tall they all were.

    STEPHEN
    Not a runt in the litter.

Henry gets up.

    PAUL
    Where ya goin’?

    HENRY
    I’m ending this.
INT. SCHOOL BUILDING - LATER

Henry knocks on the principal’s door.

Larry, Jeff, Paul, Stephen, and Parks watch.

LARRY
Dude, why are you trying to get the principal?

HENRY
Oh, this? I’m tattling.

PAUL
How old are you?

HENRY
Every guy’s got his limits. I can’t keep up with this. They’re all pricks, and now they’re fucking my slutty, psychotic ex? I say no more!

PARKS
I don’t know how the principal would regulate that.

HENRY
And I’m takin’ Cooper down, too. Guy’s dirty and that team just takes after him. Take out the top guy. Just like how the mob does it.

JEFF
Sure, except their just a tiny bit more mature about it.

LARRY
Leave this alone, man. As long as he keeps winning people are gonna let him be.

HENRY
Not if I get something on him. There’s no way he didn’t buy those players, and he’s either gonna have a trail or I’m gonna catch him. The man’s dumber than a second coat of paint.

The principal’s door opens. It’s Coach Cooper.

HENRY (CONT’D)
Coach, hi. We were just looking for-
COACH COOPER
The father’s not in right now.

HENRY
Look I don’t think you heard us correctly. The acoustics in this-

COACH COOPER
Oh, I might’ve heard some things.

HENRY
So...why are you in his office? One might think you were snooping around. Maybe trying to get something that wouldn’t be in your office, hmm?

COACH COOPER
Yeah.
(holds up slips)
Detention slips.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY
Larry, Henry, Paul, Jeff and Stephen walk around aimlessly while Parks puts litter in a garbage bag. Coach Cooper keeps an eye on them from afar.

PAUL
Well done, Henry, seriously. I was happy being deemed worthless by Cooper, but now we’re all on his shit list.

HENRY
It was a moment of weakness.

STEPHEN
Where’d all this trash come from, anyway?

JEFF
I’d say coach dumped it all. I think he’s trying to establish dominance.

PARKS
Guys, think you could at least hold the bag?

PAUL
You lost the bet. Own it.
LARRY
It’s not my fault you thought the NBA on NBC song was called Heart of a Champion. I shouldn’t be punished for that.

PARKS
But that’s what the Nelly song is called.

LARRY
That awful song sampled the original Roundball Rock, ok? It’s by John Tesh and it’s a fucking masterpiece.

PARKS
But that’s not fair.

PAUL
You could get Henry to tell on us.

HENRY
What if we make the game fair?

PAUL
Like bring ’em way, way down to our level?

HENRY
Impossible. But what if we got close?

STEPHEN
I’m not killing anyone.

HENRY
Let’s try to make someone ineligible.

PAUL
Great. No more Shawn. Fantastic.

LARRY
No...Russell.

JEFF
Because he fucked Crystal.

LARRY
Wrong. If you get rid of Russell they lose that anchor in the middle, their real enforcer. (MORE)
LARRY (CONT'D)
And then Shawn’s not flexin’ nuts as much...Fucking Crystal probably didn’t help out either.

HENRY
So what do we do?

EXT. ST. JAMES PARKING LOT - DAY

Larry, Henry, Jeff, Paul, Stephen and Parks relax in their lawn chairs and observe Russell hand over his bookbag to two cops. The cops discover a substantial amount of weed. Russell is dumbfounded.

LARRY
Kwame Brown.

PAUL
How’d you manage that?

Larry lights a cigarette.

LARRY
Since he’s in PE most of the day his bookbag’s just out in the open.

A crowd of curious students grows and watches Russell get escorted by the two cops.

STEPHEN
Nah-nah-nah-nah...Nah-nah-nah-nah...Hey-hey-hey. Goodbye...Nah-nah-nah-nah...

The guys start to join in.

INT. ROSEVILLE GYM - NIGHT

‘90s dance music plays while both Blue and Red teams warm up. The few people in attendance dance along.

HENRY
Told ya I’d win the crowd over.

LARRY
I think they’re just tweaking.

Paul repeatedly blocks Parks’ shot.

HENRY
Hey, this music’s bad-the-fuck-ass. Wanna know something else?

(MORE)
HENRY (CONT'D)
Not my iPod. It’s Crystal’s. It’s the one you found.

Stephen’s shot sails backwards. He runs after it.

LARRY
(looks at the stands)
So is she...watching you?

HENRY
Most definitely. I kinda dig it. Not knowin’ when she’ll pounce.

LARRY
So you just walk around all day rocking a fear halfsie? What the hell is that?

HENRY
It’s pretty goddamn romantic is what it is.

LARRY
You two remind me of that cute little couple um, wait, who did Sid Vicious kill?

Stephen tries to drive in for a layup, but Jeff swipes the ball from him.

HENRY
I don’t need critique from a rookie, Just sayin’.

LARRY
Rookie? I’ll have you know it’s been a rich courtship. Flawless.

HENRY
Did she halfheartedly accept your full advances?

LARRY
A gentleman nev-

HENRY
So no. Listen, you need to get in and out with Cate asap. I don’t mean rape the young lady, but the longer this drags out-

LARRY
For your information, we’ve made some serious progress.
HENRY
Like what? Wait. How am I trapped in this asshole dialogue?

LARRY
She stopped calling me “dude.”

HENRY
I think that’s the title of a romance novel, actually.

LARRY
I think, I dunno. Cate, she’s special.

HENRY
I get it, buddy, I really do. It’s just that I’d rather run suicides than take this little chat any further.

BUZZER RINGS.

Paul kicks Parks’ ball. It thumps the head of a Red Team player. Paul points at Parks with both fingers.

REFEREE
Alright babies, let’s hurry this up. Silver Spoons isn’t gonna watch itself.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

Henry steals the ball from a guard. He breaks and stops at the three point line and shoots, but the guard leaps from behind Henry and snatches the ball from his hands.

Parks air balls a mid-range jumper. The Red Team breaks and misses. Jeff gets the rebound and flings it down court to Paul, all alone. He lays the ball in narrowly escaping a block.

Jeff, in isolation, crosses-over a guard and drives through the crowded paint and finishes with a graceful layup.

Larry gets an open look and nails a three.

Jimmy sets a monster pick on Parks, rolls, and lays the ball in.

Stephen gets an offensive rebound. He tries the put back, but gets blocked. It’s clearly an up & down call, but he tries again.
Jimmy posts up on Larry. He passes the ball in between Larry’s legs, gets the pass back and makes a nice fade-away.

BUZZER RINGS.

END SERIES

INT. ROSEVILLE GYM - NIGHT

Both Red and Blue teams are huddled up.

JEFF
Look, guys, it’s been a defensive struggle, but we’re still in this.

Larry looks over and sees the point guard for the Red Team has incredibly red eyes. He’s stoned out of his mind; they all are.

JEFF (CONT’D)
They’re up and clock’s on their side, so it’s pretty cut and dry. Quick foul and try to win the free throw battle.

LARRY
Or...you two are gonna trap, ok, but do not foul him.

HENRY
That makes zero fucking sense.

PAUL
Yeah, we could actually win this.

LARRY
The guy’s been turning the ball over all night, correct? We trap him, but don’t foul. We’ll get the ball back....trust me.

Buzzer rings.

JEFF
Let’s get it.

Players take their positions.

The point guard gets the ball. Henry and Jeff trap him.

Larry runs over and shows his opens hands at the trapped guard, signaling he’s open.
The guard passes to Larry. Larry passes to Jeff.
Clock’s winding down.
Jeff pulls up and shoots.
Jimmy tips the ball, and it sails high.
The ball bounces onto the court and back up into the basket.
BUZZER RINGS.
The Red Team looks at one another confused.
The Blue Team celebrates like they’ve won the final four.
Paul jumps onto the first row flaunting the front of his jersey to the few people who stayed for the whole game.

INT. LARRY’S ROOM - NIGHT
Larry sleeps. His phone rings. He answers.

    LARRY
    Cate?

EXT. HOUSE PARTY - CONTINUOUS
Cate, on speaker phone, stands drunk outside of a party that’s got death metal on full blast.

    CATE
    You know it, bitch.

INTERCUT LARRY AND CATE

    LARRY
    What’s up?

    CATE
    Ugh. I’m at this stupid party. So lame! What’re you doin’? What’re you gettin’ into tonight?

    LARRY
    Sleep. I had a game, that you weren’t at I might add.

    CATE
    Come hang out with me.
LARRY
So are you like bored or-

CATE
Anywhere else. I’m game for whtatever. I just can’t...I don’t want to be here. So whaddya say?...Larry?

Larry dozes off.

CATE (CONT’D)
Larry! It’ll be really fun.

LARRY
Are you drunk?

END INTERCUT

INT. LARRY’S CAR (MOVING) – NIGHT

Larry drives and Cate rides shotgun, drinking.

CATE
There’s three things you need to know about me, Larry.

LARRY
That’s it? Just three?

CATE
Uh-huh. Becky Hendrix is a slut, I hate drama, and I look damn good right now.

LARRY
Is she a cheerleader at Roseville?

CATE
Real talk: I’ll go to your next game. Want me to bring some people?

LARRY
Please don’t. Not really trying to advertise how horrible we are.

CATE
Umm, that’s ruined. Word is officially out on you dudes. Someone even said your team’s gonna play the varsity.
LARRY
Damn right we are.

Cate laughs while drinking and some gets in her nose.

LARRY (CONT’D)
What?

CATE
This drink hurts my nose.

Cate tries to stop laughing.

LARRY
Little support would be nice.

CATE
Why would you want to play them?

LARRY
Why not?

Cate shakes her head smiling.

CATE
I’m impressed. Not wet, but impressed...Sometimes you can be real silly, Larry...think I’m gonna keep you around.

She looks over Larry.

LARRY
Oh. Um, then...I don’t really know what to add to that or if I should change the subject, and now my minds stalled so-

CATE
What do you want do tonight?

LARRY
A-ha, an assist. Let’s see. You said fun...Maybe you could start by clearing up some of that tab of yours? We are in a car, so might as well, right?...I’m sorry. That’s was in very inappropriate and immat-

Cate unbuckles and leans in. She and Larry hold a long kiss.

Larry stops the car in the middle of an empty road, and they make out.
LARRY (CONT’D)
So...uh...I was thinkin’...

CATE
Just park the car somewhere else, Larry.

INT. LARRY’S CAR - NIGHT
Cate climbs into the back seat.
Larry gawks.
Cate looks at him.

CATE
What?

LARRY
I don’t know if I can even fit back there comfortably, for sex at least.

Cate undresses.

LARRY (CONT’D)
I can always scoot the seats up.

Larry squeezes into the back seat. He undresses.
Larry lies on top of her and they fool around. Larry stops.

CATE
What’s wrong?

LARRY
I’m putting some music on. Any preferences?

Cate shakes her head no.
Larry gets up and reaches over and turns on his iPod.
He sits back down in the back and tries to put a condom on.
He tries again.
Cate does it for him and leans back.

LARRY (CONT’D)
Hey, do you mind, um bein’ on top.
I got like a phobia of crushing you.
CATE
That’s bullshit. You just want me
to do all the work.

LARRY
I promise I’ll help fuck.

Cate climbs on top of Larry, and helps him adjust.

Larry starts off too hard.

Cate slows him down and they struggle to find a rhythm.

Larry stops.

Cate slaps him.

LARRY (CONT’D)
Ow!

CATE
Hey!

Cate slaps him again.

CATE (CONT’D)
Don’t come yet. What’s wrong with
you?

LARRY
Alright, alright. I’m sorry.

They both start back up, thrusting at different paces.

INT. LARRY’S CAR (MOVING) – NIGHT

Larry drives while Cate sleeps and snores.

He puts a cigarette in his mouth backwards and lights it. He
tastes his mistake and tosses it out the window.

INT. KITCHEN – NIGHT

Larry opens the fridge. He pulls out a water and shuts the
door.

The lights come on in the dining room, revealing Dennis and
Amanda seated at the table.

Larry jumps back in fright.
LARRY
Jesus!

AMANDA
Lawrence.

LARRY
The hell are you two doing sitting around with the lights off?

DENNIS
We wanted to talk to you.

LARRY
You have a cell phone. How long have you’ve been...y’know what, I don’t wanna know. Won’t make it less creepy.

AMANDA
Son, why didn’t you tell us?

LARRY
What? I told you I was going out. I know it’s late. I’m sorry.

DENNIS
The basketball. Your mom ran into Adam Parks’s mom and she couldn’t stop talking about it.

AMANDA
And further more, we think it’s rude and irresponsible to not participate in a carpool, especially during these trying economic times.

LARRY
Basketball? Basketball and carpool?

AMANDA
Why didn’t you tell us, honey? You don’t want us to come see you?

LARRY
It’s just...

DENNIS
Whaddya play? The three? Four?

AMANDA
Do you have enough socks?
DENNIS
You running a zone or man?

LARRY
Didn’t want you guys...

AMANDA
Are you wearing those protective shorts?

DENNIS
Remember to use the backboard.

LARRY
This! This right here is why, alright. Holy shit. Sometimes I can’t breathe around here.

AMANDA
I’m gonna buy him some protective shorts.

INT. LARRY’S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Larry drives and Cate rides shotgun. Larry reaches for a cigarette. He puts it back in the box.

CATE
No, you can smoke. I don’t mind.

Larry lights up his cigarette.

Larry scrolls his iPod up and down until he finds the right song.

LARRY
So, the other night, that was pretty fun.

CATE
What was?

LARRY
The...sex. It was...sexy, right?

CATE
Oh yeah, yeah. It was good.

INT. LARRY’S CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Larry pulls up to Cate’s school and puts it in park.
LARRY
Cate.
Cate casually turns to look out her window.

CATE
What’s up?

She closes her eyes.

LARRY
You wanna...you wanna come to my game tonight?

Eyes open. She turns back to him, playing it cool.

CATE
OK. Just give me a call later.

LARRY
You got it.

Larry slowly leans in for a kiss. Cate kisses him on the cheek.

CATE
The smoke.

LARRY
Woops. Sorry.

Cate opens the door.

LARRY (CONT’D)
I can give you a ride. Maybe we can work out your tab.

Cate looks back.

LARRY (CONT’D)
Y’know the...never mind.

INT. ST. JAMES WEIGHT ROOM – DAY

Larry sits at a calf workout machine. He gets his reps in with the minimum weight. Henry stands under a pull-up bar.

HENRY
Gimme some deets, you glowing bastard, you.

LARRY
She’s been scooped like ice cream.
HENRY
Spill it, come on. This is like the highlight of my day. Well, I did have chocolate milk this morning, but I’m sure this’ll be decent.

LARRY
OK. So we’re in my car...

HENRY
You get roadhead?

LARRY
No.

HENRY
You give her roadhead?

LARRY
So we park and...

HENRY
Whatcha do? Cowgirl? Doggystyle? Gas pump?

LARRY
The hell’s a gas pump?

HENRY
Y’know, like when you got it in her ass and...you go pee...You get it? You understand it, right?

LARRY
Thanks. That’s locked in my brain forever. I probably lost one of my few decent childhood memories for that.

Larry stops working out.

HENRY
Did you do the wheelbarrow?

LARRY
We were in my car! Where do you get all this shit?

Henry does a pull-up.

HENRY
Internet.

Henry tries to do a second pull-up.
LARRY
I’m surprised your computer hasn’t gotten up and raped you in the middle of the night. That’s all that thing probably knows.

Henry gives up and drops.

INT. ST. JAMES GYM - DAY
The entire school is in assembly.
Coach Cooper and the varsity squad stand at half-court.
Larry, Henry, Jeff, Paul, Stephen and Parks sit up high in the last row.

PAUL
I fuckin’ love me some wall seats.

JEFF
Larry. Practice later today?

LARRY
Ooo. It’s tempting. I love suicides, but I think I’m gonna be making fuck with Cate, so...

HENRY
Not like we have to crank it up anyway. They aren’t what they used to be.

COACH COOPER
And so let’s welcome our newest player, uh student, to St. James...Blake Dawkins.

Applause fills the gym as Blake enters and joins his new teammates on the court.

HENRY
God-fucking-damnit!

Everyone turns their heads.

COACH COOPER
I’m glad to see we’re all so, so enthused about next season.

Coach Cooper focuses in on Henry.
And I look forward to every season after. Thanks, guys. Alright, let’s hit the books. Have a blessed day.

The student body clears out.

Henry stays, still staring down Coach Cooper.

Coach Cooper makes an “eyes on you” gesture.

Henry makes a “binoculars” gesture.

Coach Cooper makes a “telescope” gesture, and walks away the victor.

INT. LARRY’S ROOM - NIGHT

Larry dials Cate. Answering machine.

LARRY
(into phone)
Hey, it’s me, I mean Larry. Don’t think we’re at “it’s me” yet. I’m not saying I don’t want, I mean...ok. I’m gonna leave in like five minutes. Gimme a call if you still need a lift....On second thoght, I can wait hang around like ten or twenty minutes. OK, so-uh...yeah, just drop me a line.

Larry hangs up his phone.

He sits down in his chair and waits.

INT. MISS PARKS’ CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Henry sits in back seat. MISS PARKS (40s), a very single, very supportive mother, drives while her son rides shotgun.

MISS PARKS
Are you boys ready for tonight?

HENRY
I was born ready, ma’am.

PARKS
We’re on a winning streak.

HENRY
It’s one game.
MISS PARKS
Just remember winning isn’t the most important thing. It’s doing your best with a smile in your heart.

PARKS
Boy are you right about that, but I would like to have a winning record under my belt when I apply for Duke. It can only help.

HENRY
You really do think you’re gonna play at Duke.

PARKS
Why not?

HENRY
I may be reaching here, but hear me out, what about all the cuts? Don’t you think that’s kind of a red flag? I’ll save the grades for later discussion.

PARKS
Michael Jordan didn’t make the cut the first time he tried out. Isn’t that right, mom?

MISS PARKS
That’s right, sweetie. You can do anything you put your mind to.

HENRY
Pretty sure he made the next cut.

INT. ROSEVILLE GYM - NIGHT
Attendance has expanded with some Blue Team fans, and the St. James varsity squad.

Blue and Red Teams go through warm-ups.

Jimmy and Larry stretch at half-court.

SHAWN
La-ry! La-ry! Get that ass in gear!
Back in the drills, and show some hustle!
JIMMY
Hey, man. What’s this nigga’s deal?
Your boy needs to chill, count to ten, somethin’.

LARRY
He’s not my boy... We’ve got a game coming up against them.

JIMMY
So he’s fuckin’ with y’all? That Bobby Hurley lookin’ muthafucka’s been fuckin’ with y’all?

SHAWN
Nerd!

LARRY
Yep.

JIMMY
Dawg, I don’t think a game’s gonna fix that. Personally, I would’ve knocked his ass out, long before dude started commentin’ on ma ass and shit. Guy can’t be walkin’ around doin’ shit like that. A nigga gotta be civil and what not.

SHAWN
Nerd!

LARRY
He might be your problem after we beat you tonight. I’m just warning you.

JIMMY
Oh, that’s what’s up?

LARRY
That’s what’s up.

Jimmy jogs back to warm-ups.

HENRY
Dude. We’re you just talkin’ to Jimmy Banks? You’ve got like neutral street cred now.

Larry sees Cate walk in and find a seat.

BUZZER RINGS.
SERIES OF SHOTS:

A Red Team forward goes up for a dunk. Henry clings onto him while he finishes.

Jeff steals the ball and leads the fast break. He goes up and drops a flashy behind-the-back dime to a trailing Paul who lays it in.

Parks gets burned bad by a killer crossover. The shooting guard drains a pretty mid-range jumper.

The Red Team point guard drives the paint and lobs the ball up for Jimmy, who throws down a monster two-handed jam.

Jeff pulls off another smooth no-look pass to Larry from downtown. He shoots. Brick.

Paul boxes out and gets the offensive board. He fakes, and draws the shooting foul. Larry sees Cate cheering on Paul.

The Blue Team swings the rock from Parks, to Henry, to Larry. Paul’s got a clear mismatch, but Larry chucks it up and misses.

A Red Team forward takes Larry in the paint. Larry gets burned, and the forward tries a hook, but Paul blocks him.

Jeff dribbles around the perimeter. He passes to Larry, claps for the ball back, but Larry posts up and shoots an awkward fade-away. The ball gets rejected into the stands.

Jimmy gets the ball in the post, Henry sneaks from behind and tips the ball out. He and Jimmy dive to the floor and cling to the ball. Whistle blows. Referee calls for a jump-ball.

INT. ROSEVILLE LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Jeff stands facing the Blue Team. He looks at Larry.

Larry lights up a cigarette.

LARRY

What?

JEFF

I-uh...I think I gotta bench you.

LARRY

You’re joking.
JEFF
You’ve got tunnel vision out there, man.

LARRY
I’m streaky, that’s all.

HENRY
No, no, no. Ray Allen is streaky, and awesome. You just miss.

LARRY
What, you’re gonna put in Parks? Why not a headless chicken?

JEFF
I’m sorry, man, but you’re not feeding it down low.

LARRY
Is dead calories over here really carrying our team? That’s the strategy?

STEPHEN
Hey! Stop bein’ a dick.

LARRY
Look, I need my stats, just for tonight. Please?

HENRY
So five, three and one. He’s right, guys. We can’t win without those numbers.

LARRY
Oh, everybody’s an all-star now.

INT. ROSEVILLE PUBLIC GYM - NIGHT

Jimmy scores a three pointer with Stephen fouling him. Jeff calls timeout.

The Blue Team huddles up, Larry remains seated.

LARRY
Told ya it wouldn’t work.

PARKS
But we’re only down by three.

Larry looks at the scoreboard. Twelve seconds left.
LARRY
Thanks, Parks.

Jeff looks over at Larry.

JEFF
Dude. You’re in.

LARRY
Looks like someone needs me after all.

HENRY
Stephen fouled out.

BUZZER RINGS.
Teams lineup for Jimmy’s free-throw.

The ball rims out and both Larry and Paul go up for the rebound.

They both come down with the ball and fight over it, tugging back and forth until they take it to the ground

PARKS
Same team! Same team!

BUZZER RINGS.
Larry hears Cate let out one big laugh.

EXT. ROSEVILLE GYM – NIGHT
Larry smokes weed with Jimmy.

JIMMY
I’m. So. Nice with it. This pretty motherfucker got shit done tonight.

Larry watches Cate chatting it up with Paul.

JIMMY (CONT’D)
This is the same shit my boy got from you, huh?

LARRY
Huh? Oh, yeah, but it’s not mine. I got it from Henry.

JIMMY
Moustache?
LARRY
Bingo.

Jimmy sees Cate.

JIMMY
Damn. So is this the line?

LARRY
For what?

JIMMY
Damn. If I wasn’t such a monogamous nigga, I’d be on top of that.

Cate walks up to Larry and Jimmy.

CATE
Nice job out there, kid.

LARRY
Wasn’t my night. You know Paul?

CATE
Oh, no. I was just wondering if he could fist me since he’s so much better than you.

Jimmy laughs.

LARRY
Umm, no he’s not.

CATE
Well, whoever hand’s jammed up my sliz’s gonna have the final say.

JIMMY
Baby girl!

LARRY
Cate, this is Jimmy.

They shake hands.

JIMMY
Oh, you comin’ to my place. We all partyin’ tonight...Was you a cheerleader at Roseville ever?

CATE
No, but I’m friends with some.
JIMMY
Yeah...I think I’ve seen you ’round.

Larry’s jaw drops.

JIMMY (CONT’D)
Whatever, whatever. See y’all in a minute.

Jimmy walks away.

CATE
Can you take me?

LARRY
Yeah, yeah.

They start walking.

LARRY (CONT’D)
So-uh. How’d you get here? I-uh didn’t get a response from you.

CATE
A friend dropped me off.

INT. JIMMY’S HOUSE – NIGHT

The Blue Team and Red Team get crazy with other partygoers. There’s drinking games, card games, dice, dirty dancing, and plenty of weed goes around.

Everybody’s having an awesome time, except Larry. He’s too busy keeping an eye on Cate from the back porch.

Jimmy, with a honey for each arm, sits down with the rest of the Blue Team, who’ve gained the company of some BBW’s, as blunts are passed around. Sitting room is at capacity in the cloudy living room.

JIMMY
Look y’all ain’t all that good. But what y’all gotta start doin’ is let yo nuts hang, ya feel me? So what you do-

STEPHEN
You’re telling us to free-ball it out there?
Jeff passes out onto one of the big girl’s lap while she socializes. She uncrosses her legs and his mug plops right onto her crotch. She doesn’t skip a beat.

HANS
Real mature, Stephen.

JIMMY
Fab Five said that shit before every game. They’d get in the huddle and rally cry, gettin’ hype as fuck. That’s just the attitude y’all gotta have, man. Give the people that swagga so delicious.

Parks takes a big hit from a blunt.

PARKS
That’s what’s up.

The whole room cracks up, except Jeff, who’s still lights out on a strange woman’s crotch.

EXT. JIMMY’S HOUSE – NIGHT
Larry and Henry drink together on the back porch. Larry keeps peeking around for Cate.

HARRY
Dude, what’s your deal? You’ve been off all night.

Larry watches Cate drink and socialize with the Red Team inside.

LARRY
That guy. Now who the fuck is that guy?

Henry tries to slap Larry, but misses.

LARRY (CONT’D)
The hell’s that for?

HARRY
I thought maybe I could get your mind right by striking you in the face.

Larry tries to slap Henry and misses.
HENRY (CONT’D)
Hey, hey, hey. You fucked her, right? That was fun, remember?
You keep this shit up no girl’s gonna want to fuck you.

LARRY
You know what? I’m not gonna take relationship advice from some deviant.

HENRY
Deviant?

LARRY
You heard me.

HENRY
Where?

Larry lights a cigarette.

LARRY
The bottom line is Cate’s my girlfriend now, and I don’t want to mess this up.

HENRY
You sure about that?

LARRY
I...I think so.

HENRY
And that you’re not a spare?

LARRY
A spare? Is that like a rebound?

HENRY
Nope. This just flat out sucks. She’s avoiding labels because that would confine her to a sexual living space. This way, she can have you around for the rest of her life, just in case she’s ever in a crisis. Like, when you buy new clothes, you’re like those extra buttons no one gives a shit about.

Larry blows smoke in Henry’s face, then stomps off.

HENRY (CONT’D)
Where ya going?
LARRY

Home.

HENRY

And Cate?

LARRY

She knows how to get a ride.

INT. ST. JAMES GYM - DAY

Larry and Henry practice shooting.

HENRY

You wanna ride with me and Parks to the big game? Carpool?

Henry bounce passes to Larry.

Larry drains a shot.

HENRY (CONT’D)

His mom’s kinda sexy. Not much of a mug on her, but I could get past that.

Shawn picks up the ball and chest passes it to Larry.

SHAWN

How ‘bout you quit playing pretend and make it with a hand in your face.

Shawn and Blake step up to Larry.

LARRY

That’s OK, friend. Thanks for passin’ the ball back though.

HENRY

Gold star for you, dude.

SHAWN

Tell ya what, you make it, we’ll forfeit. Spare your loser friends from humiliation.

HENRY

Don’t you have someone else to embarrass? It’s a big school I don’t think you’ve made the rounds yet.
Larry checks the ball to Shawn. Shawn checks back.

Shawn gets low and slaps the court with both hands, then
assumes the Duke defensive stance: one hand in Larry’s face,
the other extended to block the drive.

Larry pivots left, right, then left again.

Larry stares down Shawn.

SHAWN
Blake, check it out. See. I told ya
he’d be scared shitless.

Larry pump-fakes. Shawn doesn’t bite.

Larry goes to dribble, but Shawn rakes Larry’s face, poking
him in the eye.

Larry trips and falls. Shawn steals the ball.

Shawn nails a jump shot.

SHAWN (CONT’D)
Get beat! Boom, bitch!

BLAKE
Daaaamn! Shawn, show me that move.
You know, that move you just did to
beat this dork with.

Shawn and Blake jog off laughing.

Larry sits up holding his eye and they watch Shawn pick on
other classmates.

HENRY
You alright?

LARRY
It’s not that bad, is it?

Larry shows Henry. It’s that bad.

HENRY
Is that blood?

INT. LARRY’S CAR (MOVING) – DAY
Larry drives and Cate rides shotgun.
Larry scrolls his iPod. Up and down, quicker and quicker.
CATE
You should get an eye patch.

Larry gives up and shuts off the volume.

CATE (CONT’D)
I still don’t know why you want to play them.

LARRY
It’s a respect thing.

CATE
It’s a sandbox thing is what it is. You really think that moron’s capable of respecting you? Would you even want it?

LARRY
I’m fine. Don’t worry ‘bout it.

CATE
Alright, but don’t go changing on me after all this pissing contest has washed over. That’s all.

LARRY
Oh, so you like me just like this, huh?

CATE
Um, yeah, well, not at the moment. You’re acting like a cyclops who didn’t get his coffee.

Larry shakes his head.

CATE (CONT’D)
Why’d you split so soon the other night?

LARRY
I was ready to go.

CATE
Could’ve told me.

LARRY
For a lift?

CATE
Yeah, I got stuck talking with two lamesters. It got boring real quick.
INT. LARRY’S CAR – DAY

Larry parks the car outside of Cate’s house.

    CATE
    I’ll see ya later.

Cate kisses Larry on the cheek and reaches for the door.

    CATE (CONT’D)
    Thanks.

    LARRY
    Am I spare?

Cate looks back at Larry.

    LARRY (CONT’D)
    Cate, what are we?

    CATE
    Excuse me?

    LARRY
    What are we, me and you?

Cate sinks back down onto her seat.

    LARRY (CONT’D)
    I’m sorry, but this has been fucking with me and-

    CATE
    God, Larry, I don’t know.

    LARRY
    I don’t either and I just need something. Anything.

Cate considers her words.

    CATE
    I think we’re really good friends.

    LARRY
    Aw no. No, no, no. You broke up with Kyle and we’ve known each other for a long time.

    CATE
    Uh-huh.
LARRY
And things have been pretty good. We’ve got a real connection here. You know we do.

CATE
Actually, I-um...I don’t, I don’t believe we do.

LARRY
How could you think that? I mean...we, we’ve had sex. That’s gotta count for something, right?

CATE
I hate to break it to ya, Larry, but I’ve fucked a lot of my friends.

LARRY
Didn’t need to hear that.

CATE
And I didn’t want to have sex with you, at first, because it would just makes things weird.

LARRY
Thanks.

CATE
But I was drunk, very drunk, and horny.

LARRY
Oh, don’t be too eloquent about it.

CATE
What the fuck am I supposed to say then?

LARRY
I dunno, anything else would’ve worked.

CATE
Dude, just-

LARRY
Dude?

CATE
Just stop. Just shut up right now, and we can just forget about this.
LARRY
Can’t do it.

CATE
Please.

LARRY
Look, what I’m getting at is I think we’ve always been ahead of the whole dating thing and...I love you, Cate. I’ve loved you for a long time...since the f-first time I saw you.

Cate cringes.

Silence.

LARRY (CONT’D)
Say something, Cate. I’m on an island here.

CATE
Oh, Larry...

Cate tries to find the right words, but chooses the leave.

She tries to open the door, but it’s stuck. She jiggles the hand, then starts yanking. She looks over at Larry, but she’s to afraid to ask.

Larry unlocks the door without looking at her.

Cate gets out of the car.

Larry wipes his eyes, hurting his bad one.

He watches Cate leave.

EXT. ROSEVILLE GYM - DAY

Larry sits in his lawn chair smoking a cigarette and drinking from a mixed drink in a water bottle.

Henry parks his truck and takes a seat next to Larry.

HENRY
Are you day-drinking?

LARRY
Relax. Practice isn’t until...what time is it?
HENRY
Larry, why do you look as cheerful as cervical cancer?

LARRY
Cate dumped me. No, I asked her if she wanted to be with me and she...she said “no”, alright.

HENRY
Could’ve been worse.

LARRY
I told her I loved her.

HENRY
At least it didn’t rain...To be honest with you, dude, I was shocked you got that far with her.

Larry offers him the bottle.

Henry smells it.

HENRY (CONT’D)
What’s in this?

LARRY
I don’t remember.

Henry dumps it out.

HENRY
It’s cool if you want to sit out of practice, dude. Probably be good for-

Larry stands up and stretches.

LARRY
Practice? Practice? Man, we talkin’ about-

Larry vomits.

INT. ROSEVILLE GYM - DAY

With the gym all to themselves, the Blue Team practices three-on-three.

A hungover Larry gets the ball in the corner. He fakes a pass to Jeff and shoots a jumper that sails way off.
JEFF
Hey, drunky, pass it back or try to get it to Paul down low.

LARRY
You think he’s got a better chance? It’s gonna be a block party down there with Blake.

PAUL
Dude, you have one fucking eyeball.

LARRY
It doesn’t matter, guys. We suck.

PARKS
But we won a game.

LARRY
Parks, you’ve got to be the most pathetic moron I’ve seen in quite some time. And that includes me lately.

JEFF
Hey! Give it a rest, pal.

LARRY
Okay, coach! Look, I was dumb to think we could change anything. Just chodes, guys. That’s all we are.

The guys look around at each other.

HENRY
And what’s wrong with a chode, huh? It doesn’t function any differently, it ain’t botherin’ nobody, and if anything I’d say a chode is special, goddamnit.

Larry punts the ball then walks away.

LARRY
OK, well, I’m gonna go vomit again, and then maybe line up a shrink.

JEFF
You walkin’ out on us?

LARRY
Very observant, Jeffrey.
HENRY
See you at the game, buddy. We’ll be the ones in the shitty uniforms, y’know, you’re friends.

Larry flicks off Henry.

EXT. LARRY’S DRIVEWAY – DAY
Larry shoots in the driveway.
Dennis walks into the garage holding the framed scholarships.
He stops and watches Larry.

DENNIS
You just love lifting off the wrong foot.

LARRY
And don’t forget the backboard. You leaving that in the garage?

Dennis puts the frame aside.

DENNIS
Yep. It didn’t really fit anywhere in there.

Dennis walks out to the driveway.
He gets Larry’s rebounds.

DENNIS (CONT’D)
So, uh, how’s the team been doing?

LARRY
Next game’s not gonna be pretty.

Larry switches with Dennis and gets his rebounds.

DENNIS
But you’ll be shooting again tomorrow, right?

LARRY
Probably. Yeah. Why?

DENNIS
I guess it can’t be all that bad then.

Dennis passes the ball to Larry.
Larry banks the shot in.

DENNIS (CONT’D)
Hey, hold up for a sec. I think
I’ve got something for ya.

INT. POOL - DAY
Cate’s “on duty” again at an empty pool. Larry walks up to her smoking a cigarette.

LARRY
Hi.

CATE
Hey. How’s the eye...or eyes?

Larry sits down next to her.

LARRY
Still there.

CATE
Still gross.

LARRY
That’s true.

They both wait for the other to talk first.

LARRY (CONT’D)
So, yeah. I don’t really know what to say. I guess I’m just waiting for the part where you say you still want to be friends.

CATE
That’s all we were, Larry. And I’m sorry you got hurt, but I just don’t feel, y’know, that way about you.

LARRY
Yeah, but Kyle? You felt that way about Kyle, that cheesedick?

CATE
Dude. I did not love Kyle. Come to think of it, I don’t think I even liked him. We would just fuck. I’ve always liked you better than him....feel any better?
LARRY
No! Not at all! You used me. You
kept me on a line for years, and
you knew how I felt about you. You
used me. Just say it. Gimme that at
least.

Cate avoids eye contact.

CATE
Everybody’s loved someone, Larry.

Larry hears a car rumbling through the parking lot.

LARRY
Who’s the scholar?

CATE
That’s um...

LARRY
Someone?

Larry grins and leans back in the chair.

CATE
It’s one of Kyle’s friends. He’s my
ride.

He shakes his head.

Cate gets up to leave.

CATE (CONT’D)
I’ll see ya around?

Larry shrugs and keeps that grin shining.

Cate walks away.

LARRY
Really wished you had a car.

INT. MISS PARKS’ CAR (MOVING) - DAY

Larry, donning sports goggles above his brow, and Henry sit
in the back. Parks rides shotgun next to his mom.

Henry straps on a sparing helmet.

LARRY
Where’d you score that?
HENRY
Oh, um Mrs. Parks thought it was a good idea considering my heroic style of play.

MISS PARKS
He’s so active out there. And that’s Miss Parks, young man.

Henry wiggles his eye brows at Larry and wags his tongue between his v-shaped hand.

Parks looks back holding the iPod.

PARKS
This one?

Larry nudges Henry to stop. Henry looks at the iPod and gives the thumbs up.

Parks plugs it in and turns the volume to the max.

‘90s GANGSTA RAP plays.

Henry goes nuts and raps along.

Larry joins in.

Parks bobs his head to the beat.

Parks’s mom knows all the words.

INT. ST. JAMES GYM - DAY

The gym is PACKED with rowdy St. James students. The Red Team is also in attendance.

St. James and the Blue Team go through warm-ups.

Larry, Henry and Parks walk tall onto the court.

Henry waves his arms up and down to amp up the crowd even more.

Larry straps on his goggles.

HENRY
Could chodes do this?

Stephen jumps up in the paint and dunks.

He hangs on the rim for dear life.
The Blue Team rushes over to Stephen.

PAUL
I guess you can dunk.

LARRY
The hell, dude. You could dunk this whole time?

STEPHEN
It sure as shit looks like it.

HENRY
You never tried?

Stephen shakes his head “no”.

LARRY
But everyone who likes basketball has tried!

STEPHEN
But I don’t really like basketball.

JEFF
Alright show off, come back down to earth.

STEPHEN
Right away, coach.

Stephen falls down and lands awkwardly on his foot. It’s a gruesome twist. He falls to the court in pain.

St. James and some of the student body laugh.

PAUL
He used to be able to dunk.

JEFF
Come on let’s help him over to the bench.

LARRY
Right. Parks!

Parks helps Jeff move Stephen.

LARRY (CONT’D)
Stephen. Ball help?

Stephen nudges the ball towards Larry with his one good foot.
LARRY (CONT’D)
(to HENRY)
What? I gotta warm up. He doesn’t.

Larry takes practice shots.

HENRY
So guess what I did last night.

Larry ignores him. Keeps shooting.

Larry pays him no mind.

HENRY (CONT’D)
Alright, alright I’ll tell ya. We ang-banged all over the place. There was a struggle in the dark, but eventually she got the upper-hand and took over. It was euphoric.

LARRY
Where is she?

HENRY
(pointing)
Over there.

Henry looks around.

HENRY (CONT’D)
She was...here. Let me double check that sext she sent me.

Henry checks his phone and looks around the stands. He sees the Red Team, but no Jimmy.

LARRY
Yeah, I don’t see her either.

Henry sprints to the locker room.

INT. ST. JAMES LOCKER ROOM – LATER

Henry tip-toes through the locker room, following the sounds of lust.

He stops when he’s close.

He takes a deep breath and turns the corner.

HENRY
You little fucking...
It’s Crystal, naked, sitting on Coach Cooper’s face, who’s also very much naked.

HENRY (CONT’D)
Chode?

Henry glances at the phone in his hand.

BUZZER RINGS.

INT. ST. JAMES GYM - LATER
Blue Team huddles up.
Henry proudly joins the huddle.

LARRY
H, what’s wrong?

HENRY
Dude, Coach Cooper picked the wrong year to miss the playoffs.

JEFF
Let’s just stick to the game plan, plain and simple. And Parks, you’re gettin’ some minutes.

PARKS
You can count on me, coach.

HENRY
Dude, don’t call him coach. It’s Jeff.

The gym quiets down. Everyone listens.

JEFF
But you guys named me coach.

PAUL
Yeah, but that was just more of a title than an actual job.

JEFF
Why can’t he call me coach?

HENRY
Because he’s your fucking peer.

LARRY
Henry, do the Fab Five thing.
HENRY
Right...Let yo nuts hang!

The Blue Team performs a complicated, choreographed clapping
and dancing routine.

Blue Team breaks huddle and gets in position for the tip.

The drunken, disheveled Referee stands holding the ball. Larry and Blake wait for the tip.

BLAKE
I guess this is my first game here.
You’re welcome.

The Referee takes a quick swig.

REFEREE
All your shoes tied? Y’all know the stupid rules? Good. Here’s the shitty ball.

Ball is tossed and St. James wins the tip.

Shawn has his way on both offense and defense. There’s no stopping him when he’s in isolation or running through screens.

Jeff gets clocked running into Blake and Shawn waits holding the ball, looks at Jeff, and swishes a three.

SHAWN
I’m not even tryin’ yet.

Blue Team tries it’s best to slow the game down with set plays to Paul down low or Jeff in isolation.

Jeff sneaks a pass between the defender’s legs to Paul who misses and puts his own shot back in.

PAUL
Get off me!

St. James defends with authority, jumping passing lanes and blocking shots.

BLAKE
Block party!

Their speed proves to be just too much, especially on fast breaks. Shawn leads a break and passes the ball of the backboard and Blake throws down a one hand slam.
Jeff takes the ball up. Larry calls for it. Jeff lobbs it to Larry, who posts-up Shawn. Shawn plays aggressive defense, trying to swipe the ball away.

Larry dribbles, pivots, then pulls off a fade-away. Swish.

LARRY
Don’t let me get in my zone.

SHAWN
Oh, alright. I’ve been lucky before, too.

LARRY
Don’t let me get into my zone.

SHAWN
You ain’t your daddy, though. Don’t walk around thinkin’ that.

LARRY
What did you say?

SHAWN
You heard me.

Forty seconds left in the first half. Henry knocks the ball loose and Parks recovers it. A deer in head lights. He hurries the ball down court.

SHAWN (CONT’D)
Three! Two!

Parks hesitates at half court. He stumbles, carrying the ball, and lobbs a shot high.

SHAWN (CONT’D)
One!

Parks falls to the floor. The ball flies out of bound with plenty of time left on the clock. St. James and the students in attendance laugh.

SHAWN (CONT’D)
Nerd! Nerd!

Larry squats down in frustration, but stops when he sees Henry try to help Parks up. Parks waves him off and brushes himself up.

St. James inbounds the ball and Shawn makes a three at the buzzer.
INT. ST. JAMES LOCKER ROOM - LATER

Blue Team sits around in silence, no one wants to speak first.

    LARRY
    Look, guys. I’m sorry I’ve put you through this. This was...this was just a dumb move, and and I don’t know what I was thinking.

    HENRY
    I stole the ball from Shawn Jeffries.

    JEFF
    I scored on him.

    PAUL
    I made state champs eat my ‘bows.

    STEPHEN
    I can dunk.

    PARKS
    I-uh...I started?

Larry looks around, pleased, proud.

INT. ST. JAMES GYM - DAY

The Blue Team plays very aggressive defense. Henry and Jeff guard close, scrapping for the ball every time it comes in reach.

Shawn is constantly double-teamed. He forces shots on the perimeter, and when the ball’s passed down low, St. James players are met with hard fouls by Paul and Larry.

Shawn drives in and lifts off for a layup. Larry and Paul go up and both get their arms on the ball. They SLAM Shawn, holding the ball, down to the ground.

Paul wags his finger Mutombo-style at Shawn, who’s seeing stars. The crowd goes CRAZY.

The Referee blows his whistle.

    REFEREE
    Foul!

Referee points at Paul.
LARRY
What?

REFEREE
That’s your fifth fuckin’ foul. Get ‘em outta here.

PAUL
All ball! That was all ball!

The crowd BOOS.

Shawn calls for a TIMEOUT. Both teams gather at their benches.

JEFF
OK. What’ve we got here? We’ve got four people. Game’s a blowout...Parks, you want the rock?

Players lineup for the free throws.

LARRY
Ball don’t lie, Shawn. You know that ball ain’t gonna lie to all these innocent people.

Shawn shoots and misses.

LARRY (CONT’D)
Ball don’t lie! Ball don’t fuckin’ lie!

The crowd ROARS.

SHAWN
Shut up.

Shawn shoots again and misses. Larry rebounds. He hands the ball to Henry.

Shawn sees Parks laughing at him.

Shawn guards Parks.

SHAWN (CONT’D)
Somethin’ funny, ‘tard?

PARKS
No, no, no.

SHAWN
Fuckin’ bitch.
Parks runs through a screen, Shawn chases him, and Parks shoots.

    SHAWN (CONT’D)
    Nerd!

Parks misses the shot.

Shawn snickers and St. James scores a fast break.

Jeff takes the ball back up.

    LARRY
    (to SHAWN)
    Give it a rest, pal.

    SHAWN
    Just playin’ some D.

Shawn covers Parks again.

    SHAWN (CONT’D)
    Get the fuck outta my gym.

Parks, shaking, waits for his window and runs through screens. Shawn chases him, but misses a step. Parks gets a clear shot.

Shawn runs and pushes Parks down to the ground hard next to Larry.

Referee blows his whistle.

The shot goes in and the crowd CHEERS.

    SHAWN (CONT’D)
    Stay down, you fuckin’-

Larry PUNCHES Shawn in the face. It connects hard, knocking Shawn to the ground.

Shawn looks up in disbelief at Larry.

Shawn and the rest of St. James jumps in and starts attacking an outnumbered Blue Team.

The Referee tries to break it up, but it’s too many people.

Students and the Red Team take the court and help fight St. James off.

The court is divided between St. James and everyone else in the gym behind The Blue Team.
INT. LARRY’S CAR (MOVING) – DAY

Larry, bruised up, smoking, drives through his neighborhood, and sees Cate walking down the road.

He slows down to hear Cate singing a sad song.

She stops when she notices the car pull up next to her.

    LARRY
    Where ya goin’, Murphy? Goin’ home, goin’ back to heaven?

    CATE
    What happened to your face?

    LARRY
    Oh, you like it?

    CATE
    Someone didn’t.

    LARRY
    Yeah, I guess that’s true...Um...So I guess I’ll see ya ‘round?

    CATE
    Oh, OK. Yeah. Later.

Larry drives ahead.

He stops at a stop sign.

He takes a good long look back at Cate through his rearview.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET– CONTINUOUS

Larry reverses the car back to Cate.

He over shoots her a bit and drives back towards her.

    LARRY
    So...you, uh, need a ride? Eh? It’s on the way.

Larry stops the car.

    LARRY (CONT’D)
    Come on.

    CATE
    Thanks.
Larry opens the door.
Cate walks over to get in.
Larry slowly rolls the car forward.

    CATE (CONT’D)
    Hey!

Rolls forward again.

    CATE (CONT’D)
    Larry!

Cate runs after the car and finally jumps in.

    LARRY
    Now was that you I heard singing earlier or was that some other angel?

    CATE
    I have no idea what you’re talking about.

    LARRY
    So when are you gonna sing for me?

    CATE
    ...Never.

FADE OUT
Oscar Koehnemann Gorney was born in New Orleans, Louisiana on a Tuesday. He obtained a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Louisiana State University in 2010. He also minored in Film and Italian. His Italian is a little rusty.