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Dramatic Publishing

Two Beers and a Hook Shot

One-act Drama

by

KENT R. BROWN

Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • England • Australia • New Zealand

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(TWO BEERS AND A HOOK SHOT)

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for Rusty

Two Beers and a Hook Shot premiered in a shortened version at the Tracy Roberts Theater in Los Angeles, CA on November 2, 1986. It was produced by Hilary B. Poochigian and Sara Bartlett, and directed by Michael Haney. Set design by Francis C. Link. Lighting design by Greg Gardner. Stage management by Kerry Hirschberg. The cast was as follows:

Joey David Coury

Frank Carmen Argenziano

The BoarsHead: Michigan Public Theater premiered the full version on January 14, 1987 in Lansing, MI. The production was directed by David Edward Jones. Set and lighting design by James E. Peters. Costume design by Charlotte Deardorff. Sound design by D. J. Krogol. Properties design by Lisa Camilleri. Stage management by Lynda Martin Banghart. The cast was as follows:

Randy Ian Peakes

Dexter John Peakes

TWO BEERS AND A HOOK SHOT

A Play in One Act
For Two Men

CHARACTERS

RANDY JACKSON..... nineteen years of age

DEXTER JACKSON..... Randy's father, middle forties

TIME: Late evening. Summer. The present

PLACE: A playground basketball court

TWO BEERS AND A HOOK SHOT

SETTING: *In the dim moonlight can be seen the outline of a basketball court similar to those in school playgrounds or in recreation areas behind churches. There is a backboard with a chain link net. The rim is tilted down slightly and need not be the traditional ten feet in height. It could very well be the nine foot variety found in elementary school play yards. The outline of several flood lights can also be seen. Perhaps, as well, there is a chain link fence which parallels the upstage wall. An old wooden bench or two and a large trash can are off to one side.*

AT THE CURTAIN: *There is silence for a moment before we hear Rock music and the sound of a basketball being dribbled offstage. Then RANDY JACKSON enters dribbling the ball. He is also carrying a portable stereo. RANDY is wiry, athletic, and full of kinetic energy. He crosses to a bench and puts down the stereo. He scopes out the playground and dribbles up to the basket, laying up the ball gracefully and confidently. He dribbles again, perhaps behind his back or through his legs, gives a head fake and shoots.*

RANDY (*calling off*). Can you see all right?

DEXTER (*offstage*). I got it. Thanks.

RANDY (*calling off*). Want some help? Got your glasses?

DEXTER (*offstage*). Nope. We're all set.

RANDY (*calling off*). What's taking you so long? Lost your nerve?

DEXTER (*offstage*). Nope. Just slow.

(RANDY shoots another shot or two. A moment later DEXTER JACKSON enters. DEXTER is a man in his middle forties, a bit out of shape but able to hold his own. He carries two suitcases. A brown bag is tucked under his arm. He stands for a moment and watches RANDY.)

DEXTER. Nice shot.

RANDY. Got the quarters?

DEXTER. Sure. Quarters. Tickets. All set. (*Moves to bench.*)

RANDY. Wanna play in the dark instead?

DEXTER. Hey! Don't do me any favors. (*Puts down the suitcases and opens up the brown paper bag.*)

RANDY. No one'll see ya' that way. No one to tell.

DEXTER. Nope. Need the light. I can take it. (*Looks in his pocket and pulls out a few quarters.*) How many?

RANDY. Shouldn't take too long. A couple maybe. Three or four.

DEXTER. I'll put in four just in case. Never can tell. Might surprise ya'!

RANDY (*moves to DEXTER*). Here. You warm up. I'll get it. Ya' got to hit the meter just right. (*RANDY gives DEXTER the basketball and exits to put quarters in the light meter. DEXTER holds the ball for a moment, then dribbles it, a little uncertain at first. Then, more confidently, he tries to dribble it behind his back and flubs it. DEXTER laughs and retrieves the ball. Quite suddenly*

the night lights come on. We can see that one bulb is burned out. The flood of light casts shadows across the playing area. The white lines of the key have been rubbed out from hundreds of hours of pick-up games. Offstage.)

How's that?

DEXTER. Oh, much better. I thought this was a tennis court.

(RANDY enters. DEXTER holds up the basketball.)

DEXTER. Thought this thing was a little big for tennis...
but what do I know?

RANDY. Not enough time for tennis, Pop.

DEXTER. Right. Besides you've got a lousy backhand.

RANDY. Deceptive. Not lousy.

DEXTER. Weak. I wouldn't go so far as to say deceptive.

RANDY. You ready?

DEXTER. It's in the bones. All those years of poise and maturity. Trust me.

RANDY. Yeah, but are you ready?

DEXTER. Almost. I got something for ya'.

RANDY. We don't have all night, Pop.

DEXTER *(moves to the brown bag and takes out two cans of beer)*. Ice cold. Took 'em outta the fridge just before we left. Want one?

RANDY. Sure. Why not? *(DEXTER opens the beers and hands one to RANDY who takes a long swig. RANDY takes out a pack of cigarettes and lights up.)*

DEXTER. Those'll hurt ya' down the stretch. Coach used to say, 'Boys... don't abuse your bodies. Remember. You've got to be ready day or night.' I listened to that man and I believed him. And he was right. *(Takes out*

a pack of his own cigarettes and lights up.) I believed everyone older than I was in those days.

RANDY. Yeah? How long did that last?

DEXTER *(pause)*. You got everything?

RANDY. You already asked me that.

DEXTER. Just thought I'd ask again. Never can tell.

RANDY *(takes the basketball and does a little fancy dribbling)*. Quit stalling. It's time to meet your maker.

DEXTER. Socks?

RANDY. Twelve.

DEXTER. Sweatshirts?

RANDY. Eight.

DEXTER. Jeans?

RANDY. Six.

DEXTER. Underwear?

RANDY. Fifteen.

DEXTER. Got all the basics, that's for sure.

RANDY. Told you that. I'm ready.

DEXTER. Not much style ... but all the basics.

RANDY. Kids don't worry about style.

DEXTER. Speed, right? That's all ya' need.

RANDY. You got it! Up in the morning. Bam! Into the drawers. Up go the socks and out the door! Another exciting day!

DEXTER. How about shoes? I didn't hear anything about shoes. Do kids do shoes these days?

RANDY. Yeah, we do shoes. *(Pause.)* Thanks.

DEXTER. You're welcome. They fit OK?

RANDY *(looking at his new tennis shoes)*. Fine. Just what I needed. I'm all set.

DEXTER. Did you pack the ...

RANDY. All packed, Pop! I told you. Toothbrush. Nail clippers. Hair brush. Four button downs. The cords for

the big interview. I'm ready. I'm really ready. (*Getting angry.*) I tell ya' I'm ready! Can't we get goin' here?

DEXTER. Address book?

RANDY (*pause*). Jackie ... 443-4702 ... Bonzo ... 443-3791 ... Dorothy the Dingbat ... 443-2172 ... (*Tapping his forehead.*) I got it all up here.

DEXTER. Your mother?

RANDY (*pause*). 555-1212.

DEXTER. I slipped one in.

RANDY. Slipped what in?

DEXTER. An address book. Just in case you get older and your memory begins to fade. Happens to the best of us. (*Pause.*) Don't leave her out, kid.

RANDY (*pause*). Michelle ... 443-2878 ... Joanne ... 443-1967 ...

DEXTER. Michelle ... isn't she the one with the pretty smile?

RANDY (*defensively*). What about it?

DEXTER. Gonna miss her?

RANDY. Nope.

DEXTER. Gonna miss anybody?

RANDY. Nope.

DEXTER. Got it all worked out, eh?

RANDY. Not now, OK!

DEXTER. No more lectures, right?

RANDY. Right!

DEXTER. Just dribble and shoot ... right?

RANDY. Right! Let's get on with it!

DEXTER. Hold on. Don't rush the old pro. I've got one more swallow left. (*Pause.*) Aunt Jonelle's in there, too, under "A" for Aunt. Just a card now and then ... OK?

RANDY. Right.

DEXTER. That's not too much to ask, is it?

RANDY. This whole damn place is too much to ask! A card now and then! Man, I'm gonna be moving too fast!

DEXTER (*pause*). Quite an adventure, isn't it? (*Rises and stamps out his cigarette. Finishes off his beer.*) You ready?

RANDY. I've been ready for years. Shoot for it? Do or die?

DEXTER. Take it out. Go ahead. It'll give me a minute to get the rust outta my joints.

RANDY. Been a long time, eh?

DEXTER. It's just like riding a bicycle. Once you've got it ya' never lose it. It's all in the poise.

RANDY. We'll see. (*Dribbles the ball to the top of the key with his beer still in his hand.*)

DEXTER. Gonna put that down first? Might need your other hand.

RANDY. What for?

DEXTER. Maybe a rebound or two.

RANDY. Not a chance. Ready?

DEXTER (*walks along the perimeter of the court*). Your mom and I met on this court. Did I ever tell ya'?

RANDY. A million times. Let's go!

DEXTER (*points*). Stood over there. Used to be a water fountain.

RANDY. Came by one afternoon after work. Sat down and watched you play. Said she liked your legs. I remember. Let's go.

DEXTER. Six of us. God, we were something.

RANDY. Come on, Pop! Will ya'? Time's running out.

DEXTER (*still walking the perimeter, DEXTER visualizes the people he mentions as if they were still playing a*

pick-up game). Tall kid. Bushy hair. What the hell was his name ... Ralph! Jesus. Bad breath. Big teeth. Chemistry major. Killed in Vietnam. Let's see... who had the fade away jump shot? Chunky guy with a big gut... Connors! "Chunky" Connors. Just up and left his wife and kids on a subway in New York. Went for a family vacation and just disappeared. Mickey told me. Mickey Clayborn.

RANDY. 'Old Mickey had the best bounce pass in the game. A helluva guy!' Yeah, I know.

DEXTER. Told me that a few weeks back. He'd heard it from O'Sullivan. Did I ever tell you about O'Sullivan?

RANDY. Time's moving on, Dad. Make it-take it?

DEXTER. Spot ya' five points. My experience has gotta be worth something!

RANDY. No way. Even up. That was the deal.

DEXTER (*makes a 'let me see the ball' gesture to RANDY who tosses DEXTER the ball. DEXTER dribbles it a bit then takes a shot. RANDY finishes his beer, shifting his weight from leg to leg*). You used to wash O'Sullivan's car on Saturdays. Lost his wife last year. Cancer. Went on for months. Tough break. (*Pause.*) All of a sudden they're here... and then the subway... cancer. You lose touch.

RANDY. Sounds like a soap opera.

DEXTER (*pause*). You'll find her under "M" for Mother. Address... phone number... birthday. November 13... give her a call. Tell her Happy Birthday... that sort of thing. Makes 'em feel good. Makes anybody feel good.

RANDY. Cut the crap, OK? Are we gonna play or not?

DEXTER (*tossing the ball to RANDY with force*). I've been ready for years.

RANDY. Call your own fouls.

DEXTER. I know how it's played.

RANDY. Do you, old man?

DEXTER. Wait and see, kid. (*RANDY begins to dribble.*)

Oops! Sorry. Just a minute. (*DEXTER walks over to the bench. Takes out his wallet, keys, and a few notes from his pockets. Looks at a ticket stub.*) Damn! Forgot to get your watchband. Sorry. Lots on my mind.

RANDY. Who cares? Everybody's got the time out there.

DEXTER. Don't let me forget my keys, OK?

RANDY. OK! OK! Keys... wallet... Jesus! Let's go!

DEXTER. Used to play on Sundays, too. Three-on-three.

Old "Bad Breath" Ralph and O'Sullivan and I would take on the world. Before they put up metal nets. Swish. Real clean. Quiet. Sully had some shot. Always looked like he had his eyes closed. He'd give you a head fake, then fall back and kinda side-arm it. Swish! Man went crazy when his wife got sick.

RANDY. Not the life history again, Pop. Not tonight. I can't take it.

DEXTER. No more "Old Buddy" stories, eh?

RANDY. Old buddies... new buddies... just can't take it!
(*RANDY leaves the court and moves to the suitcase.*)

DEXTER (*pulls out a \$20 bill from his pocket*). How 'bout this? Interested now?

RANDY. I've got enough. Told ya'. I'm fine.

DEXTER. Johnnie come through?

RANDY. Yeah, he came through.

DEXTER. How much?

RANDY. Sixty-five.

DEXTER. That ten-speed's worth two hundred! What happened?

RANDY. Sixty-five ... OK? Everything's all set. Christ, I'm tired of telling you that.

DEXTER. You owed him a few? Is that it? (*RANDY shrugs.*) Good. Pay your debts, son. Remember... up front and square.

RANDY. Hey, let's do it! Up front and square. That was the deal. This is gettin' real boring.

DEXTER. OK kid. No more boring. Now comes the exciting part. The old man! The flash! Absolutely awesome! (*Pantomimes a set-shot.*) She used to sit over there under a big elm. Not there now. Next to the water fountain. Asked her if she wanted to fill in for Botley! Roger Botley! God, I haven't thought of him in years. Happy-go-lucky type. Bought cokes for everybody. Well, he didn't show up. So I said, 'Hi, how 'bout filling in?' She just laughed and shook her head. 'Aw, come on. It's real simple,' I said. 'Whenever you get the ball just throw it to me!' She had such a beautiful smile. I told her my name was Dex.

RANDY. That must have grabbed her.

DEXTER. Knocked her off her feet.

RANDY. Married her two months later.

DEXTER. Hey, you've been listening all these years, haven't ya'? (*Pause.*) Never did fill in. (*Pause.*) Teaches biology at some university in Idaho. Good, too. That's what I hear. But what do I know about biology, eh? Old Botley. Strange guy.

RANDY. That's five.

DEXTER. Five?

RANDY. That's five. Who was the sixth?

DEXTER. The sixth? Let's see. Mickey... Sully... "Bad Breath"... Roger Botley... and "Chunky" Connors, the subway mystery man. That makes five. Me! Me! I'm the sixth.

RANDY. Oh, yeah. I forgot. The star!

DEXTER. Damn near forgot myself. More splinters than any guy on the team. (*Laughs. Pause. Both are motionless for a long moment.*) How can I make you stay?

RANDY. No way.

DEXTER. Can't get outta your face, can I?

RANDY. You're all right. I've just gotta go. No more war stories. No more anything. Even up. It's time.

DEXTER (*smiling*). You're a little shit, you know that?

RANDY (*laughing*). So you keep tellin' me.

DEXTER. It was the dishes, right?

RANDY. Yeah, right.

DEXTER. The time I asked you to soak the chili bowl, right? I remember the look in your eyes. 'Can't take all this responsibility, Pop. Put the bowl in the sink. Turn on the tap. Fill up the bowl. Swish the cloth around. It's just too much for any kid to bear!' (*Getting frustrated.*) That was it, wasn't it? The chili bowl. Washing out the cloth. The little extra effort! Right!

RANDY. Jesus! (*Walking toward the bench.*) To hell with this. It was a crappy idea. I thought it might be fun.

DEXTER. Hold on. We're not finished yet. We gotta play the game. Remember? To see who's the best? David or Goliath.

RANDY. I just wanna get outta town, that's all!

DEXTER (*pause*). I'm under "D" for Dad. Office number, too, just in case you can't reach me. (*Smiling.*) Maybe it was the trash or the underwear and the soggy towels in the clothes hamper. I'll tell you... I'm really gonna miss you. But not your underwear. (*Pause.*) Failed ya', didn't I? 'Keep a neat room and you'll keep a neat mind.'

RANDY. Grandma's one-liners.