

CAREFULLY TAUGHT

A one-act play by

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CAREFULLY TAUGHT

Characters

(in order of appearance)

CALEB – white male, mid-20's

SHAQUILLE – black male, mid-20's

ABBY – Caleb's live-in girlfriend, white female, mid-20's

TIME:

The present

PLACE:

A rural town in the American South. Action takes place outside Caleb and Abby's trailer home.

Note: There's a famous photograph (see below) of two small boys, no older than three, one white, one black, running towards each other as best friends. This story imagines them twenty-plus years later, re-examining their friendship. A production may want to project the photo at the end of the play.



SCENE I -

(Lights rise on a house trailer seen angled at rear of stage. It has an entrance door that remains open. ABBY exits with two glasses of iced tea. CALEB, her boyfriend, is sitting shirtless at a picnic table on the grounds just outside the trailer.)

ABBY

Caleb, I made some iced tea. Want some?

CALEB

(Takes glass)

Sure, why not. *(Chugs it down)* This is real good. You should sell this - we could use the money.

ABBY

It's just tea. *(Beat)* Are you okay?

CALEB

I'm just...great.

ABBY

Come on, you don't need to be upset. Sometimes, you know...the moment's not right for...

CALEB

Hasn't been right for a while.

ABBY

You've had a lot of stress.

CALEB

Me? Stressed? Not working, we're running low on food...

ABBY

It's okay. I'm very resourceful when it comes to using what's in the pantry.

CALEB

You know I'm doing the best I can. I'll be checking job listings tomorrow. It's Sunday...I needed a day of rest...

ABBY

I know. *(Beat)* I'll be able to go down to the Food Bank this week to get some supplies. Thank goodness they're there for us.

CALEB

I wish you wouldn't go down there.

Why not?
ABBY

It's embarrassing.
CALEB

ABBY
No, it's not. You should see how many people are going there for help. I'm not ashamed to ask for help and you shouldn't be, either.

CALEB
I wish I could be optimistic like you. I can't even get a low-level job at this point.

ABBY
How many times have I told you to go back to community college and get your degree?

CALEB
We can't afford something like that.

ABBY
Yes, we can. You need to stop feeling sorry for yourself and do this. It'll open some doors.

CALEB
Yeah, maybe I'll wind up with a career in...fast food management.

ABBY
What's wrong with that? It's good, honest work.

CALEB
Yeah, great. And so high paying, too. Can't wait for the stampede of blacks, Latinos and Asians who want to make eight dollars an hour.

ABBY
Hey, that's not a nice thing to say.

CALEB
You're right, all the Asians get hired at the Apple store.

ABBY
Caleb, stop it! You're being ridiculous.

CALEB
Don't you mean "politically incorrect"?

ABBY

Yeah, that, too.

CALEB

I can't even say what I'm thinking anymore.

ABBY

That's not true, but you shouldn't be saying bad things about...well, about anybody.

CALEB

Sometimes it's not easy...I'm...stuck. *(Beat)* I'm sorry, sweetheart, I'll try to do better.

ABBY

I hope so.

CALEB

I'm gonna go take a shower.

ABBY

Okay, but don't take too long. I'll be starting dinner soon.

CALEB

Sure. Can I get a kiss?

(ABBY walks over, kisses him)

Thanks.

(CALEB exits, ABBY takes a moment to pick up some trash from around the trailer, SHAQUILLE enters, dressed in "preppie" clothing. He looks at a piece of paper in his hand, then sees ABBY.)

SHAQUILLE

Abby?

ABBY

Shaquille! *(She runs to meet him, they hug)* You came! I'm so happy. Caleb will be so happy to see you.

SHAQUILLE

That remains to be seen. It's been a long time.

ABBY

I'm sorry about your Grandma.

SHAQUILLE

Thanks.

CALEB

(Offstage)
Hey, Abby, who are you talking to?

ABBY

(Walking back towards trailer)
We have a surprise visitor. Come see for yourself.

(CALEB comes to trailer door, now wearing only a towel)

SHAQUILLE

Hey. *(Beat)* Nice of you to dress up.

CALEB

Shaquille Owens! Son-of-a-bitch. Long time, no see. What brings you back here? Can't imagine *anything* getting you back here from *(sarcastically)* New England.

ABBY

Caleb...his grandma passed.

CALEB

Oh, no! Grandma Lurene?

SHAQUILLE

Yes. Her big heart finally gave out.

CALEB

Hey, I'm sorry, man. She was always nice to me when I was small.

SHAQUILLE

She made it to 92. Had a good run.

CALEB

Was she still living around here?

SHAQUILLE

Yeah, all her life.

CALEB

You ever come to visit her, after you moved away?

SHAQUILLE

Sure, of course I did.

CALEB

And you never looked me up? *(Jokingly)* Shame on you.

ABBY

Caleb!

SHAQUILLE

It's okay, Abby. Thought about it many times. *(To CALEB)* Didn't think you'd want to see me.

CALEB

Why not? Or better question is, why now?

SHAQUILLE

I had to come back. My parents asked me to be the executor of Grandma's will. They moved out west for warmer winters, six, seven years ago. Grandma was my last link to the area.

ABBY

I wouldn't mind warmer winters.

CALEB

That's kind of on hold right now. *(Abby exits, shoots a dirty look at CALEB as she goes.)* You're selling her house, I suppose?

SHAQUILLE

Not sure yet. May keep it and, you know, rent it out or something.

CALEB

Would you ever move back down here?

SHAQUILLE

Anything's possible if the situation was right.

CALEB

What would make it right?

SHAQUILLE

Haven't figured that out yet.

CALEB

Right.

SHAQUILLE

(Pause) You working?

CALEB

I wish.

SHAQUILLE

Oh...sorry.

CALEB

Hey, this hasn't exactly been a great time to keep a job. And I *was* working...until recently.

SHAQUILLE

Doing what?

CALEB

It wasn't the type of work that I'm guessing you do. Mostly outdoor stuff – landscaping, some construction. Things are just...dead. Lucky that Abby's dad had this here trailer. Moved in when we couldn't pay the rent during the crisis.

SHAQUILLE

I'm sorry things are bad. What kind of work would you like to be doing?

CALEB

The kind that has a paycheck.

SHAQUILLE

I get that, but...

CALEB

Do you? Can *you* help me get a job?

SHAQUILLE

I'm just trying to get an idea, so maybe I *can* help.

CALEB

Oh, you think you can just sweep into town and find me a job?

SHAQUILLE

Caleb, come on, I didn't mean anything bad.

CALEB

You haven't seen me in years, so you don't really know nothing about me anymore.

SHAQUILLE

I could say the same about you.

CALEB

What kind of work are *you* doing? You with your fancy college degree.

SHAQUILLE

I'm an analyst for a bank.

CALEB

And what do you *analyze*?

(ABBY enters, she has been listening.)

SHAQUILLE

Mostly financial statements and different types of businesses that we might make loans to.

CALEB

Sounds absolutely *boring*.

SHAQUILLE

It pays the rent.

ABBY

You got that scholarship, right?

SHAQUILLE

Yeah. It changed my life.

CALEB

(Under his breath)

Yeah, changed mine, too.

(ABBY walks towards trailer)

ABBY

Would you like some iced tea? I just made it fresh.

SHAQUILLE

Thank you, that would be nice.

ABBY

Coming right up. *(She exits.)*

CALEB

(Awkwardly)

Her iced tea is the best...

SHAQUILLE

She's nice. I remember her from high school.

CALEB

Don't get any ideas.
(They laugh)

SHAQUILLE

Don't worry. *(Pause)* Can you believe five years have passed since I left for Boston?

CALEB

Has it been worth it? Going up there, just to get away from here?

SHAQUILLE

It's been good for me. That's about all I can say.

(ABBY returns with glass of tea, hands to SHAQUILLE)

ABBY

Here you go. Freshly made.

SHAQUILLE

Thanks. *(Takes a sip)* That is good.

CALEB

How do you like that royal treatment?

ABBY

You're such a jerk. *(To SHAQUILLE)* Ignore him. *(Beat)* I just add lime instead of lemon – adds a little surprise taste. Hey, I made a big salad for dinner. Would you like to join us?

CALEB

A salad? Really? That means there's no meat in it.

ABBY

No, cave man. No meat. Just some healthy vegetables. You won't die if you skip meat for a day. *(To SHAQUILLE)* How about it?

SHAQUILLE

If it's okay with Caleb...

CALEB

(Pause) Sure, why not? After all, he came all this way to see us. I was gonna shower before dinner and then you arrived. I don't usually walk around in a towel.

SHAQUILLE

Don't get any ideas.
(This time, they don't laugh)

ABBY

Then it's settled. Let me get the salad and another plate and we'll go from there.

(Exits, CALEB starts towards the trailer when SHAQUILLE calls out to him)

SHAQUILLE

You're lucky to have found Abby. *(Pause)* I sensed you really didn't want me to stay.

CALEB

I don't know what I'm feeling right now. I did think about you a lot over the years and kinda figured you'd be successful by now.

SHAQUILLE

Did I say anything about being successful?

(BLACKOUT)

SCENE II –

(Later, same day. Dinner is over. ABBY is cleaning up inside the trailer, CALEB is still shirtless, but otherwise clothed. He and SHAQUILLE are sitting at the outdoor picnic table, reminiscing)

SHAQUILLE

Remember that video your dad took of us running into each other's arms, twenty-something years ago? We're not those toddlers anymore. *(Beat)* I think about those times a lot.

CALEB

Sure, I remember the video. I made it into a DVD. Still got it somewhere in the trailer. I should post it online. I bet it'd get a hundred thousand likes.

SHAQUILLE

Yeah, getting those likes is *so* important. *(Laughs)*

CALEB

You jerk!

SHAQUILLE

I'd still love to see it.

CALEB

Let me see if I can find it.

(Jumps up from seat, exits. After a brief pause, ABBY enters from trailer.)

SHAQUILLE

Dinner was great. Thanks.

ABBY

I'm glad somebody appreciates a meatless meal.

SHAQUILLE

There were plenty of days I ate meatless salads, ramen...*(Pause)* Anyway...Is Caleb okay? He seems...different.

ABBY

Long time since high school.

SHAQUILLE

Not just that. He used to act like he didn't have a care in the world.

ABBY

Can't argue with that. He's had a rough time this year. Constantly questions his life decisions.

SHAQUILLE

Guess we all do that on occasion.

ABBY

Yeah, I suppose. He needs to get over it. *(Beat)* I'm so glad you came to see him. From what he's told me, you left on bad terms.

SHAQUILLE

I'm surprised he told you *anything* about me. He and I never talked about my leaving.

ABBY

That's why I thought you two needed to see each other.

SHAQUILLE

I guess you didn't tell him that you asked me here?

ABBY

God, no, he wouldn't have wanted me to do that. I'm glad you friended me on Facebook, or I never would have known how to get in touch. That tribute you wrote to your grandma was so moving.

SHAQUILLE

She meant a lot to me.

ABBY

Of course.

SHAQUILLE

Any good qualities I might have, are because of her. She was never judgmental...always believed I could be somebody. I hope I didn't disappoint her.

ABBY

I suspect that wasn't the case. *(Beat)* I wish I could've known her.

SHAQUILLE

She was someone worth knowing. *(Pause)* So, Caleb's had a bad year?

ABBY

The worst. He lost two jobs, a landscaping one and a part-time bartending one. Both businesses had to shut down. Neither one has come back, and they may never come back.

SHAQUILLE

That's got to be tough. Are *you* working?

ABBY

Yeah, for our local insurance agency. People still need insurance. I work mostly from the trailer...or out here if the wi-fi cooperates. There's some money coming in, but Caleb gets upset watching me work when he can't. He has his pride.

SHAQUILLE

Did he ever get his GED?

ABBY

Yeah, finally, then he tried community college, but dropped out. And I've been harping on him for a long time to go back and get his degree. He's never been one to invest in his own future.

SHAQUILLE

He *never* had a plan.

ABBY

He always said that higher education's not for everyone.

SHAQUILLE

It helps in the job market, though.

ABBY

That's what I keep telling him. He has a mind of his own.

SHAQUILLE

That's one thing I remember about him.

(Silence)

ABBY

Hey, tell me about Boston.

SHAQUILLE

It's a great city, lots of culture -museums, theater, dance, awesome outdoor symphony concerts ending with fireworks. Other things I didn't even realize I liked. Ice hockey!
(Laughs)

ABBY

Wow. We've never been up there. Sounds very cool.

SHAQUILLE

Maybe one day you'll visit...

(CALEB appears at door of trailer, with a DVD and a laptop)

CALEB

Found the video! Hey, stop talking about me. My ears are burning.

ABBY

Don't flatter yourself. Shaquille was telling me about Boston.

(CALEB moves downstage to join the others, sets up the DVD in the laptop)

SHAQUILLE

Abby, you can call me Shaq. Even my mother doesn't call me Shaquille anymore.

CALEB

He was named after the basketball player.

SHAQUILLE

We both came along at about the same time, so...

ABBY

Got it...So, do you have to hurry back up north?

SHAQUILLE

No. Not at all.

CALEB

What about your job? You said you had a job at a bank.

SHAQUILLE

I do, but I took a leave of absence...

CALEB

Why? Did you embezzle some money?

SHAQUILLE

What? No!

CALEB

Hey, man, just kidding.

ABBY

Not funny, Caleb.

SHAQUILLE

I needed some time to think about my career – my life, in general. When Grandma died, I decided to take extra time off and try to figure things out. This week I've been focusing on her final affairs.

ABBY

Life is complicated enough when you're alive...

SHAQUILLE

Grandma's stuff was easy. She was plenty smart about money and made sure her house stayed in good shape. Taught me a lot about responsibility.

CALEB

Have you figured things out?

SHAQUILLE

I wish.

CALEB

Do you own her house now?

SHAQUILLE

Yeah. She planned to leave it to my father, but when he decided to move away, he suggested she leave it to me.

CALEB

Lucky you.

SHAQUILLE

I never expected it. She had no other living relatives. Selling the house is one of the options.

CALEB

Must be nice to have options. *(Beat)* So, ready to watch us again as two-year olds?

ABBY

I've seen this before. It's adorable.

(She rises)

I'm gonna leave you two alone.

(Starts to exit to trailer)

CALEB

Hey, honey, you don't have to go.

ABBY

I've seen it enough times. *(Exits)*

SHAQUILLE

What did she mean by that?

CALEB

Every now and then, I get...nostalgic for when I was a child. Maybe too nostalgic. I do miss my simple, untroubled childhood. And I guess I missed us.

SHAQUILLE

Wow. Wish I'd known that sooner.

CALEB

Would it have made any difference?

SHAQUILLE

CALEB

Anyhow, that's when I watch the video. It's been a while, though. *(Beat)* Hey, don't make too much of it. Let's just watch. *(Beat)* Wait. I got some good whiskey in the trailer. Want some?

SHAQUILLE

I could go for some. Careful, I still have to drive home.

CALEB

Don't be a wuss, man. *(Beat)* I see you can still be a wuss.

SHAQUILLE

Some things don't change. Go get the whiskey.

(CALEB gives a "thumbs up," heads to trailer, lights fade)

SCENE III –

(A short time later, still some daylight, but some yard lights have turned on. ABBY is in the trailer, CALEB and SHAQUILLE are sitting at the outdoor dinner table. The iced tea has been replaced by a whiskey bottle on the table. CALEB has drunk most of it and he is starting to slur some of his words.)

CALEB

C'mon, let's watch it again.

SHAQUILLE

Third time's the charm.

(CALEB hits a button on the laptop, the video plays [unseen by audience])

CALEB

Were we ever this young, Shaq?

SHAQUILLE

I can't believe it's twenty-five years since your Dad recorded that video.

CALEB

With his Betamax camera.

SHAQUILLE

Yeah, forgot about that.

CALEB

You and I were such great friends. Look at us, running towards each other and hugging like that.

SHAQUILLE

How'd we even know that at the age of two? We flat out *loved* each other. *(Pause)* What happened?

CALEB

We grew up. You left for Boston and left me behind.

SHAQUILLE

You're kidding, right?

CALEB

Not really. *(Picks up whiskey bottle)* Here, have another shot.

SHAQUILLE

No, I've had enough. Would you have gone to Boston?

CALEB

I don't know. Maybe. (*Pours himself a shot*) Nah, probably not. You always acted like you had a stick up your ass. So serious. No fun.

SHAQUILLE

You know how hard I worked to get that scholarship. It's all I cared about. I wanted to get away from this town.

CALEB

You just got lucky. They were looking to recruit minority students.

SHAQUILLE

What do you mean? I had good grades.

CALEB

There were people who had better grades, that couldn't get squat for scholarship money.

SHAQUILLE

I didn't think they'd give me a scholarship, but they *offered* one, so of course I said yes. They had a good business program, and that's what I wanted to study.

CALEB

It didn't hurt that you were black, is all I'm saying.

SHAQUILLE

Wow, that hurts, man. (*Pause*) Look, you had plenty of the same opportunities.

CALEB

It sure didn't feel like it.

SHAQUILLE

That's not *my* fault. You just didn't apply yourself.

CALEB

Really, that's what you think? That I was dumb, or something?

SHAQUILLE

Did I say that?

CALEB

It sure sounded like it.

SHAQUILLE

You were busy chasing girls. That's what held you back.

CALEB

Yeah, I chased girls. And sometimes, I even caught them.

SHAQUILLE

Well, I went in another direction. And, I studied, so I could have a better life.

CALEB

And *do you* have a better life?

SHAQUILLE

Yes...and no. Is there some law saying I had to rot in my old hometown?

CALEB

That's what you think I'm doing?

SHAQUILLE

I didn't say that, either. But we all make our choices.

CALEB

Yeah, and you're judging mine.

SHAQUILLE

I am *not!* I wanted to experience life in a big city, where there's more...diversity.

CALEB

Diversity? We had...still have plenty of blacks and Latinos living here.

SHAQUILLE

Yeah, the blacks were in the "black section" of town, the Latinos in the "Latino section," the whites were in the rest. Some diversity.

CALEB

And whose fault was that?

SHAQUILLE

Fault? Diversity isn't just about different races. It's about cultural differences, the way people think about things, tolerate things. It's about different kinds of food and music...we haven't got *any* of that going on here.

CALEB

All right, I get it. You wanted to "expand your horizons."

SHAQUILLE

You're saying it like you think it's a joke or something.

CALEB

I'm not jealous, or anything.

SHAQUILLE

I'm not trying to make you jealous. I'm trying to explain why I needed to leave this place. *(Pause)* Do you even remember why we stopped talking to each other?

CALEB

That's another thing we never talked about.

SHAQUILLE

Yeah.

(ABBY peeks out from trailer, calls out.)

ABBY

I've got some ripe peaches and nectarines here if anyone wants...

SHAQUILLE

No, thanks. That salad filled me up.

CALEB

Are you trying to kill us with healthy food?

ABBY

I promise you won't die. You said you wanted to keep your weight down.

CALEB

My weight's fine – thanks to all the stress of being un-em-ployed!

ABBY

It's just a temporary setback. And you're going to look for a job tomorrow, like you said.

CALEB

Right.

(He reaches for the whiskey bottle. ABBY grabs it)

ABBY

You've had enough.

CALEB

Sorry, Mommy.

(He leans over to kiss ABBY, but she backs away)

ABBY

Don't... *(Exits)*

CALEB

Uh-oh. I'm in the doghouse.

SHAQUILLE

Maybe it's time for me to go.

CALEB

(Reaches out, touches SHAQUILLE's hand)

No, don't go. I'm feeling...a little hopeless...and helpless tonight.

SHAQUILLE

(Takes CALEB's hand off his)

Do you drink like this all the time?

CALEB

Probably more than I should.

SHAQUILLE

I can see that. I'm worried it might have gotten out of control.

CALEB

You're worried about me? That's a good one.

SHAQUILLE

Why would you think otherwise?

CALEB

Why? Five years, man. Five years! Didn't hear from you at all. Like you fell off the fucking earth. Then you come back and...

SHAQUILLE

I'm sorry. You know how...confused...and scared I was.

CALEB

Of what?

SHAQUILLE

You know what.

CALEB

Hey, we were teenagers just having fun...experimenting.

SHAQUILLE

It's not how I saw it. Not in *this* town.

CALEB

Two things, Shaq...One, everyone knew you were a little light in the loafers. And two, I didn't ask you to get emotionally involved.

SHAQUILLE

It's not something that happens from *asking*. We were best friends. Then you changed.

CALEB

Grow up, man. I knew you were going away. I changed because the makeup of this town began to change.

SHAQUILLE

What do you mean?

CALEB

People like you started getting all the advantages.

SHAQUILLE

People like *me*? What the hell does that even mean?

CALEB

We had that bad period, after the two factories closed, one right after the other. So many jobs lost. The population around here started to change. More of your people moved in...

SHAQUILLE

I wish you'd stop saying "your people." You never talked like that before.

CALEB

...House prices dropped, stores went under, retail rents were cheap. My dad started losing jobs that his company used to bid on successfully. Bids had to go to a certain number of minority-owned companies. The bids were lower because their businesses were just starting, and they were willing to work for less money. Your dad's business started booming. It's probably why he was able to retire to his "warm weather" site.

SHAQUILLE

That is so ridiculous. He had to work twice as hard to be successful *because* he was black.

CALEB

Yeah, sure, that's *your* story.

SHAQUILLE

Because it's true.

CALEB

There's something else that...bothered me.

SHAQUILLE

What?

CALEB

You were the object of quite a few of the girls in our class. The white girls.

SHAQUILLE

Yeah, so were you.

CALEB

No, but you were the prize catch.

SHAQUILLE

I didn't do anything to encourage that. You know that.

CALEB

Exactly. When it came time for the prom, you asked Lola the lesbian to be your date.

SHAQUILLE

So what? Lola was my friend.

CALEB

You could have had anyone. Even Abby told me she tried to get you to pay attention to her and you weren't interested.

SHAQUILLE

By that time, I knew I was going to Boston. I don't think anyone else knew. I told Lola, though. She could keep a secret and thought it would be good for me.

CALEB

But you kept the news from your best friend.

SHAQUILLE

I waited until after the prom. Didn't want to spoil your night.

CALEB

Yeah, thanks. What else did Lola know about you, that you couldn't tell your best friend?

SHAQUILLE

I think you know the answer to that question.

CALEB

I sure found out after the prom.

SHAQUILLE

Don't pretend you didn't know.

CALEB

Plenty of people knew.

SHAQUILLE

And we ended up having a good time, didn't we?

CALEB

Keep your voice down.

SHAQUILLE

Why? Are you ashamed of what you did?

CALEB

I was drunk.

SHAQUILLE

Oh, that tired old "I was drunk" defense. No, I think it was a long time coming. You just never had the nerve to admit...

CALEB

Hey, shut up. I'm not...that way.

SHAQUILLE

You can't even say it.

CALEB

I'm not a faggot!

SHAQUILLE

You always protested too much.

CALEB

I'm with Abby.

SHAQUILLE

Yes, you are but she told me, before I even got here, about some...sexual problems you're having. And all the drinking. She's the reason I'm here. Wanted me to see you, talk to you, about our time together in high school...

CALEB

Stop it! Stop talking!

SHAQUILLE

She knows what we did the night of the prom. She knows about me. And she's worried about your future together. Who are you, Caleb?

CALEB

I never wanted to hurt...

SHAQUILLE

Hurt who? Me? Abby?

CALEB

No one. I told you, I was drunk that night.

SHAQUILLE

What about the other two times?

CALEB

(Jumps up, runs towards SHAQUILLE)

You son-of-a-bitch! Get your ass outta here!

(They start struggling with each other, fall to the ground. After more of a struggle, SHAQUILLE is on top of CALEB. They both begin to tire from the effects of the whiskey and slow down. SHAQUILLE pins CALEB's arms to the ground, looks into his face, leans down, kisses him. CALEB resists. After a moment, CALEB raises his arms, puts them around SHAQUILLE. They're still kissing passionately as ABBY exits from the trailer, sees what is happening...BLACKOUT)

SCENE IV –

(The next morning. SHAQUILLE is asleep in the front yard. A moment later, ABBY exits trailer, suitcase in hand. She bumps into a chair.)

ABBY

Ow! Dammit!

(SHAQUILLE wakes up.)

SHAQUILLE

Abby?

ABBY

Yeah. Sorry if I woke you up.

SHAQUILLE

It's all right. I need to go, anyway. *(Beat)* What are you doing? Where are you going?

ABBY

I'm leaving. Staying with a friend in town.

SHAQUILLE

I'm sorry. This is all my fault.

ABBY

No, I asked you here. You two confirmed my suspicions.

SHAQUILLE

There's nothing to be suspicious of. I decided to sell Grandma's house and go back to Boston. I think it's the best solution.

ABBY

What about Caleb? Don't you two...

SHAQUILLE

Love each other? Want to be together forever?

ABBY

Something like that.

SHAQUILLE

I did...in high school. But he's changed. He's not the fun-loving, color-blind guy that I...fell in love with, five years ago. *(Pause)* I can't live here. Black, gay...that's two strikes right there.

ABBY

If you were a woman, it would be three strikes.

SHAQUILLE

You're right. But here, a guy like Caleb can still walk down Main Street and he's just another white guy. I can't hide my skin color and I don't want to hide the fact that I'm gay. I can be myself in Boston.

ABBY

That's where you need to be.

SHAQUILLE

He's not like he was when we were kids. He never had any hate in his heart. We did almost everything together...

ABBY

I saw evidence of that last night. Boom! Spontaneous combustion...

SHAQUILLE

I'm sorry you had to see that. It was *not* planned. *(Beat)* I meant that we went everywhere together. Movies, sporting events, restaurants...no one cared back then that he was white, and I was black. Now he's angry about minorities coming to town. I don't get it.

(CALEB appears at door of trailer)

ABBY

He would have been the same no matter who came to town. He's never taken responsibility for his own life, his own failings. I'm done trying to make things work.

CALEB

(Moves downstage)

Abby, please don't go! I can explain.

ABBY

Shit! I wanted to be gone when you woke up.

CALEB

But why?

ABBY

I need some time...alone. You read my note?

CALEB

I don't have to read it to know what it says.

ABBY

Read it, anyway, so you know where I'll be. *(To SHAQUILLE)* Be well, Shaq. And be yourself. *(Starts to exit)*

CALEB

What'll I do if you go?

(ABBY stops)

ABBY

You have to figure out who you are. Who you want to be. Who you want to be *with*.

CALEB

I don't think I can do that in this town.

ABBY

Then you may have to go away, like Shaq did.

(She and CALEB both look at SHAQUILLE)

SHAQUILLE

Don't look at me. I don't have the answer.

ABBY

I really need to go. *(Exits quickly)*

CALEB

(After a pause) You're still here. Thought you would've left by now.

SHAQUILLE

I was pretty drained after...

CALEB

Yeah, you don't have to...

SHAQUILLE

Maybe you can still catch her if you go after her.

CALEB

She doesn't want that. At least, not right now.

SHAQUILLE

What will you do?

CALEB

I promised her I'd look for a job starting today...and I will. Gotta start making things right. What about you?

SHAQUILLE

I'm going to meet with a realtor in town about listing my grandma's house.

CALEB

And then what?

SHAQUILLE

Back to Boston.

CALEB

Figured as much.

SHAQUILLE

You know, I expected to find you and Abby in a happier place, despite what she told me.

CALEB

We invested a lot of time in each other.

SHAQUILLE

I was even going to offer my grandma's house to you. To live in, not to own.

CALEB

Why would you do that?

SHAQUILLE

I wanted to do something nice for you. For both of you.

CALEB

You still would have done something like that for us?

SHAQUILLE

If that was the life you wanted to lead...yes.

CALEB

Well, to tell you the truth, I wouldn't want to live in your grandma's neighborhood.

SHAQUILLE

Oh, really? Well, screw you!

CALEB

(Laughs) I already have.

SHAQUILLE

That's it! I've got to get the hell out of here.

(Starts to exit)

CALEB

Wait! *(Pause)* Why'd you kiss me? Is there still something there?

SHAQUILLE

(Pause) I was drunk.

CALEB

(Pause) Oh, that tired old "I was drunk" defense.

SHAQUILLE

Right. *(Start to exit)*

CALEB

Will I ever see you again?

SHAQUILLE

(Still exiting)

That's up to you. *(Exits)*

(CALEB watches SHAQUILLE as he leaves. Looking lost, he walks to the outdoor table, where the laptop still sits. He sits down, turns on the screen, is transfixed as he watches the old video one more time, then cries. Lights fade.)

END OF PLAY