

# Flyin' High

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## CHARACTERS

TOMMY: 29-early 30's, a former high school basketball star

AGNES: 29-early 30's, a former overachieving fat girl

## LOCATION

City-run cooling center.

## TIME

A record-hot evening in mid-August. The present.

*Lights up on the interior of a community center that is being used this evening as a cooling center for the neighborhood. Temperatures this summer have been hazardously high. As a result, tempers have been flaring across the city. The city has set up various cooling centers in poorer neighborhoods to accommodate the people who desperately need a few hours of fresh, cool air. Tommy, a worn-out man with handsome features, wipes the sweat from around his head. He tries to fix his hair with his hands a bit as he looks anxiously over at Agnes. Though she feels his eyes on her, Agnes, a sturdy broad, doesn't look up from her paper. She appears completely absorbed in the Sunday funnies. This is a technique Agnes has used for years to avoid people hassling her. Unfortunately, Tommy is quite determined. He tries to approach politely, casually.*

TOMMY

Hey, uh, Miss, do you have fifty cents on you? I want to pick up a cup of iced coffee.

AGNES

*(Still reading her newspaper.)* No. Sorry. I don't do that.

TOMMY

What do you mean you don't do that? I'm just talkin' fifty cents.

AGNES

*(Barely looking up.)* Hey, I don't need to get hassled here. I don't do it cause I've seen too many people in this neighborhood, including family members, who use every penny to buy drugs and alcohol. So just forget it!

TOMMY

I wasn't going to do that. *(Beat.)* Fine. *(Sits on a nearby chair.)* I understand. *(Sighs.)* Man, it's hot, huh?

AGNES

*(Putting her paper down.)* It's horrible. I had some stupid kid throw a brick at my air conditioner this morning. I coulda killed him. I had to drag the damn thing to the repair shop on a wagon you pull behind you. I hate coming here. It makes me feel poor.

TOMMY

Well, at least it's cool. It beats sittin' in a room that's a hundred degrees. My air is out too.

AGNES

It just stinks in here. Do you know when this place closes? *(He shakes his head no.)* You look familiar. Do you play bingo?

TOMMY

Do I look seventy? *(Beat.)* Ya know, I think this place stays open all night.

AGNES

*(Putting her paper down.)* They can't. It's not a shelter. They need permits for that.

TOMMY

It's an official cooling center. It's run by the city.

AGNES

So. That doesn't mean it stays open all night.

TOMMY

So what do they think? People don't need to get cool at night? It's been ninety-eight degrees for the last four nights for God's sake.

AGNES

Hey don't get snippy in my direction. I was just asking a question. If you don't know when it closes, fine. The weather gets a little warm and everybody has an attitude. Are you sure I don't know you?

TOMMY

I said I don't know. Do ya?

AGNES

*(Seeing him.)* Oh my God. You're... Are you...? You look exactly like... You're not Tommy Ramsey, are you?

TOMMY

*(Beat.)* Yeah, yeah maybe. Why?

AGNES

Maybe?

TOMMY

Yeah, yeah, I'm him. So?

AGNES

*(Laugh.)* Tommy Ramsey is asking for some change?

TOMMY

No. No, I wasn't. *(Chuckles.)* Oh. I was kiddin' with ya about that. I knew I knew you from somewhere. And I knew that right from the start. So I was teasin' you with that askin' for the change bit. I just left my house in a rush—left my wallet there.

AGNES

Wow. This is amazing.

TOMMY

Nah, it's not that amazing.

AGNES

I didn't know you lived in this neighborhood.

TOMMY

I don't. Well, I moved back.

AGNES

Get out! Nobody moves *into* this neighborhood. They only move out of it.

TOMMY

Well, it's not that bad.

AGNES

What? Every other building is burnt out. I'm the only one on my block with a legit job. That's why I don't have any money of course. Not that I'd ever resort to selling drugs like them. So what's happenin' with you? Do you still play basketball?

TOMMY

Some.

AGNES

Oh God. (*Hits her head.*) I'm so stupid. You probably don't remember my name. I'm Agnes Hawthorne. I was a junior when you were a senior? I headed up the Spanish club. I carried the flag for big class assemblies? (*He nods.*) They used to call me fat Agnes.

TOMMY

Oh. Yeah. I remember. I mean, not cause of that. The flag thing. So you still live here?

AGNES

Yeah. Yeah. I never moved out of my mother's house.

TOMMY

Yep.

AGNES

I never saw you around before tonight. Not that I go out much.

TOMMY

I'm not big on goin' out either.

AGNES

You move into one of those ritzy houses on Park Street?

TOMMY

Yeah, yeah. Got a place on Park. (*Chuckles.*) How'd you know? You must be psychic.

AGNES

Where else would you move? So. Um, I don't know much about basketball, so I don't know what to ask. Did you ever get in with a team?

TOMMY

Yeah.

AGNES

Oh. Which one?

TOMMY

Well, ya know...Not professionally exactly. But I did play for Duke.

AGNES

Oh. Good. You got a scholarship there, right? (*He nods.*) So what did you study?

TOMMY

Umm. I guess you could say "Women Studies" mostly.

AGNES

No kiddin'? Really?! How crazy. That sounds really—

TOMMY

No! I'm jokin'. I meant, I played around a lot—dated a lot of women and...

AGNES

Oh. So what did you get your degree in?

TOMMY

Well...uh, I—didn't. Hell, I don't know why I'm not tellin' the whole truth. I mean, what do you care? I didn't even get to stay on the team after the first half of the year.

AGNES

What happened? You were so good. I remember it seemed like you flew when you made baskets.

TOMMY

Ya know, I don't feel like talking about it. People always want to talk about me. Why can't we talk about the weather or them? Let's talk about you.

AGNES

Me? My life's boring.

TOMMY

Why? You look good, Agnes. Pretty—like you settled into yourself more.

AGNES

Oh yeah, several things have settled that's for sure.

TOMMY

No, I mean, you look good—happy.

AGNES

*(Flattered.)* You think? *(He nods. She smiles.)* Thank you. I never heard anyone say something like that before...especially someone like you. Course you're like a ladies' man so you probably say that all the time.

TOMMY

No. Not anymore. *(She smiles shyly.)* So what have you done with your life?

AGNES

Huh. Taken care of my sick parents for the past twelve years. First my father then my mother—boom, boom. She died six months ago now.

TOMMY

Oh. I'm sorry to hear—

AGNES

*(Waves his sorry away.)* Nah. She wanted to. But I'm sure glad he went first. He woulda been so mean without her. Course he was mean anyway. He was an alcoholic. That tends to make people mean. I can spot an alcoholic like that. *(Snaps her fingers.)*

TOMMY

Yeah?

AGNES

Is that what happened to you, Tommy?

TOMMY

Where the hell did that come from?

AGNES

It was just a question.

TOMMY

It sounded more like an accusation.

AGNES

Well, you gotta admit it's kinda obvious. Here you are—good looking, a natural talent, with this golden opportunity to get out of trashville. And you blow it—real fast. There's only two possibilities really—drugs, or alcohol? So which was it?

TOMMY

Look, I told you I didn't want to talk about it.

AGNES

So you still do it?

TOMMY

What do you want from me? I've been through three programs, okay?!

AGNES

*(She flashes him a look.)* Easy.

TOMMY

*(Beat.)* I'm tryin' to quit it. I don't need you to harp on it.

AGNES

Well trying doesn't cut it, Tommy. You either do it or you don't.

TOMMY

Look, Agnes, I don't need a lecture. I don't know you. Just cause you cheered for me in high school doesn't mean we know each other or that you can talk to me like that. I know you're probably all lonely living in your mother's house but I don't need—

AGNES

Lonely?! You have a lot of nerve. I certainly don't need the company of a washed up, drunk guy who still thinks he's a big high school hotshot if that's what you mean.

TOMMY

I'm not acting like I'm some big hot anything. I didn't walk up to you to say, "I was this hotshot basketball player from your high school. Remember me?"

AGNES

No, you just came up to steal my hard-earned money.

TOMMY

I told you before I was only kidding about asking you for money.

AGNES

Yeah, like hell. Like you really recognized me from the start. You don't even remember who I am now I bet. Do you?

TOMMY

*(Beat.)* Give me a break, okay? I've had better times, okay? I wish I knew you back then. You seem real. You know how it is with the booze. It ruins things. I just wanted some iced coffee. I left my wallet at home. Coffee can help sometimes.

AGNES

I wouldn't give you one cent especially now that I know who you are. You make me sick. You had a golden opportunity in your hands. There were tons of people in this neighborhood, including me, who would have given their right arm to find a way out of this trap. And you were handed it on a silver platter. You want some change for coffee? Get real—be honest. You don't live on Park Street. I don't even think you have a place.

TOMMY

I have a place.

AGNES

Where? *(Beat. Looks at him.)* Oh, right, I forgot, your air's out, right? Then go home and get some change, Mr. Park Street.

TOMMY

At least I tried to do something with my life. Maybe I didn't make it, Agnes. Maybe I had some problems, but at least I tried to get out. That's more than you and a lot of people did.

AGNES

You don't think I tried to get out? That I still don't try every day? I'm workin' sixty hours at Walgreen's for piss. Nobody ever gave me anything in my life.

TOMMY

You got a house to sell, what's your problem? I'm not the only one with opportunities.

AGNES

What's my problem? My problem is the roof's a mess, there's something wrong with the foundation, there's some question as to whether the dump three miles away has toxic waste left there. These are my problems. That and then there's this gang that gives the place its little charm. My mother's house—it's just a golden opportunity for me.

TOMMY

Your mother's dead, right?

AGNES

Yeah. I told you that.

TOMMY

So why do you still call it her house?

**Darn – the ending is cut off – I better buy the book! 😊**