

CHARACTERS

HARRISON GREY

Late 50's

BOY

10-12 years old

HARRISON and BOY have to be the same race, but can be played by any two actors of any ethnicity. BOY's accent can be adapted to any "underclass" or "poor sounding" background.

SETTING

A contemporary street.

Note from the Playwright

The use of — at end of line = interruption

The use of ... at end of line = pause (character stops himself)

The set is a contemporary street. Upstage are upscale boutique-looking storefronts, including a chocolatier and another with a tasteful sign hawking “BESPOKE MEN’S SUITS, HANDMADE SHIRTS.” A thin BOY enters wearing an ill-fitting dark jacket and worn, too-small pants. His whole look is typical of the early 1960’s. It is obvious an attempt has been made to create a “suit.” He has an old, wooden shoeshine box. He is out of place, but he doesn’t seem at all uncomfortable. He spots the men’s clothing store, nods, and sets up his shoe box in a location that allows him a clear view of the door. He crouches, waiting. Now and then, he rubs his neck with his left hand. Moments later, the men’s store door opens, and HARRISON GREY, late 50’s, exits carrying two boxes of new shirts. HARRISON barely glances at the BOY but walks in his direction. His very walk exudes confidence and pride. When HARRISON speaks, we’re not sure if he was born in England or a dictionary.

BOY

(heavy southern/mountains accent) Shine, Mister? Yah wanna shine?

HARRISON

No.

BOY

Shore ya do. Man who wears them fancy shirts. Y’all need me. Yer shoes need me. I kin shine ‘em so purty nobody nevah know where they bin.

There is a pause.

HARRISON

That’s an odd turn of phrase.

BOY

Well sir, where I come from, we all turns our phrases ‘bout lak that. Man o’ the world such ez yourself, you kin well imagine, can ya not?

HARRISON

What does that mean, precisely?

BOY

Only that I'm shore you'd know a lot about all kindsa accents. All kinds. Man lak yourself. I didn't mean nuthin' untowords 'bout yer shoes. I'd simply be mighty pleased ta remove all the grime. Even from the secret place. Places ya cain't see that is.

HARRISON

I...don't need my shoes done. I have a man who does that.

HARRISON turns away.

BOY

"Oi have a mon." Whooohoo you shore do talk purty! Wish I cud tawk half so nice, deed I do.

HARRISON walks a few steps away.

BOY

(*very innocently*) So it's a man you have at yer house?

HARRISON freezes and turns back. He rubs his throat.

HARRISON

What?

BOY

The man who works fer you. Does yer shoes and such?

HARRISON

Ah. He doesn't reside at my house.

BOY

'Course not.

The BOY stares at HARRISON intensely and smiles.

HARRISON

I must be going. Good day.

HARRISON walks away quickly.

BOY

Hey. Hey! Wait, Mister.

HARRISON keeps walking.

BOY

(almost threatening) Hey, Mister, I know yew.

HARRISON turns back, startled.

BOY

(innocent again) From the TV. Ain't you from the TV?

HARRISON

(more relaxed) At times.

BOY

Oh! Oh, I know. Yer that spellin' feller! You say the words fer the spellin' bee. You say 'em all proper n' purty, and then the kids spell 'em out.

HARRISON

Yes. Yes I do.

BOY

Doggone it, that is yew. I knowed it. And you're a collige perffessor too. So smart! And how'd you *ever* larn to talk that purty?

HARRISON

(on familiar ground now) Perseverance. Determination. You could do it too, you know.

BOY

You think that do ya? Truly?

HARRISON

With a great deal of hard work, anything is possible.

BOY

(vaguely accusatory) So you useta talk lak me.

HARRISON

I...well...I didn't say that. I only—

BOY

'Course not. I jist thought, since you wuz sayin'—

HARRISON

I was merely pointing out the possibility—

BOY

'Course, Mister. 'Course. I know I couldn't larn ta talk like that. Why I'm as dumb as Henry in the funny papers.