

OLD BROADS CAN'T DUNK by Art Shulman

ACT 1
SCENE 1

GERTRUDE

What a game!

ESTHER

I am so hot and really tired.

JANICE

I think I'm getting heat prostration.

ANNE

Women don't have a prostate, dear.

JANICE

Really?

BECKY

All I can say is...

ESTHER

Becky!

BECKY

Yes?

ESTHER

Hold your tongue.

(CRAIG is the last to enter)

CRAIG

And you call yourselves a basketball team? This may end up being the most humiliating defeat of my whole coaching career. Now get over there and sit down, while we discuss what we're going to do about it!

(The WOMEN sit on the park benches.)

The score -- 59 to 6! We're losing by 53 points! And it's only halftime! In all my years of coaching in the Over 60 Women's Park Basketball League, I've never been losing at halftime by such a lopsided score! All of you should take a good hard look at yourselves and ask, "Why didn't you play better?"

BECKY

(Looking at and saying to ANNE)

Why didn't you play better?

ANNE

I think Coach meant that we should each ask that question of ourselves, dear.

BECKY

I talk to myself enough during the day. One of the reasons I play basketball is so I won't talk to myself so much during the day. I don't think we should be asked to talk to ourselves.

CRAIG

(CRAIG blows his whistle, as HE usually does when the YENTAS get sidetracked.)
No interruptions! You should all be asking yourselves, "Why do I participate in a competitive sport?"

BECKY

(To herself)

He should make up his mind about what question we should be asking ourselves.

CRAIG

What's it all about, ladies? Why do you play basketball?

GERTRUDE

To exercise our muscles?

CRAIG

That's a reason, Gertrude, but not the main reason!

BECKY

To build up our cardiovascular fitness.

CRAIG

You obviously don't have much of a heart for basketball, Becky. But that's not the main reason.

BECKY

(To herself)

I thought it was.

CRAIG

So what is the main reason?

ANNE

To socialize with fellow members of your team. Party at my place after the game's over, ladies?

CRAIG

Anne, how can you even think of partying after losing like this to a team of ancient nuns? Losing to the Little Sisters Of Mercy -- 59 to 6 at halftime! And them playing in long skirts.

JANICE

Those nuns are strange. None of them said a word the whole game.

ANNE

Their order has taken a vow of silence, dear.

JANICE

Really? So, that's why...

ESTHER

Excuse me Coach, but they are very good players.

CRAIG

You let them pummel you. They elbow you, they scratch you, they push you, and none of you did a thing about it.

ESTHER

Goodness, they were nuns.

JANICE

If we elbowed and scratched them we might end up in hell!

CRAIG

The Little Sisters of Mercy didn't show you any mercy. 59 to 6! At half time!

GERTRUDE

I feel sorry for them. Going without sex their whole lives. Why in one week I've had more action than they've probably had in their whole lives.

ESTHER

Gertrude, such personal matters are best kept to oneself.

JANICE

I've never seen a nun so fast as their shooting guard.

GERTRUDE

I think her name is Sister Mary Margaret.

ANNE

Sister Mary Margaret must have scored two-thirds of their points!

JANICE

Or maybe even more -- two-fourths.

(Beat)

ANNE

Maybe you should have Esther guard her.

CRAIG

Esther?

JANICE

Esther's quick, so she might be able to trip her.

CRAIG

(After mulling that over)

Janice, that's the kind of thinking that will get us somewhere!

ANNE

It's a foul to trip.

CRAIG

It's foul to be losing 59 to 6.

ESTHER

Why, I don't know if I'm capable of doing such a thing!

CRAIG

It figures! Now, ladies, let's get back to why you play basketball!

BECKY

For the camaraderie of being part of a team?

CRAIG

Who can be satisfied in having camaraderie with a bunch of sad sack losers?

BECKY

We're no goddam losers!

ESTHER

Oh my, Becky. Such language!

ANNE

I beg to differ. We're not losers! We've all had successful lives. Most of us have children.

JANICE

My oldest girl owns a beauty shop.

ANNE

My sons are in the catering business.

GERTRUDE

My daughter runs an escort service.

CRAIG

Having children is not a sign of a successful life!

ESTHER

Coach is right! Almost!

(Beats, as everyone looks at HER)

A woman's really successful when she has grandchildren! All three of mine are coming to see us play our next game.

JANICE

My eldest grandson, William, he's so smart.

ESTHER

My grandchildren are all so respectful.

ANNE

My littlest, Susan, she just started walking.

GERTUDE

My eldest grandson just started reading Playboy Magazine.

ESTHER

And Becky, even if you don't have any grandchildren, you know you're an honorary grandma to our grandkids.

BECKY

I just never met anyone I wanted to marry. I have different standards than all of you.

ANNE

My grandkids adore you.

JANICE

Mine do too.

ESTHER

All the grandkids do.

CRAIG

(CRAIG blows his whistle.)

We're talking basketball, ladies! Now, why do we play basketball? What do I always say? That we play basketball to win! Winning is not the most important thing. It's the only thing! How can we win any games if none of you play any defense.

JANICE

How can you expect me to play well when I broke a fingernail in the first quarter. It'll take a year for it to grow back. Things take longer to heal when you get older.

GERTRUDE

I stubbed my finger playing bingo last week. Whenever they call O - sixty-nine I seem to stub my finger. Bingo!

CRAIG

In this league, you've got to play hurt. Do you think the Little Sisters of Mercy are going to show you any mercy because you stubbed your finger?

GERTRUDE

Well, I forgot to take my birth control pill last night. Actually, I haven't taken it all week. That might have thrown off my body chemistry.

BECKY

I had quadruple heart surgery. I can't give 100% effort every minute.

ANNE

That was five years ago, dear!

BECKY

It takes a long time for someone my age to get the circulation going!

CRAIG

How about 100% effort any minute?

BECKY

(Muttering)
Son of a bitch!

ANNE

I felt tired out there today. I had a rough night with Sam. I didn't get much sleep.

GERTRUDE

He was feeling amorous?

ANNE

No, he kept bumping me on the shoulder, telling me to quit snoring.

CRAIG

Let's quit making excuses! Have you no pride? You ladies represent the whole Sun Village Retirement Apartment complex.

BECKY

Oh, they don't care how we do. No one from the complex ever comes to our games even though we play in the gym so close by.

JANICE

But I love living at Sun Village. Especially our large swimming pool. Once, I was a bathing beauty.

ANNE

And I love to cook at our Sunday group barbecues.

GERTRUDE

And bingo on Tuesday nights.

CRAIG

(CRAIG blows his whistle)

What are we going to do to help us play the second half respectably?

ANNE

Maybe we need a different half-time drink. Other teams drink Gatorade. You make us drink prune juice.

CRAIG

The way you ladies move around the court, you need something to get the lead out!

JANICE

Maybe we should change the name of the team. Sometimes you visualize what you should be like as a player by the name of your team.

GERTRUDE

I agree. Yentas is a pretty shitty name.

ESTHER

Goodness, Gertrude.

GERTRUDE

The Yentas is a pretty lousy name! How did we get that name anyway?

JANICE

Our team was founded years ago by this old lady who couldn't stop talking. Yak yak yak.

BECKY

That could be most of us.

CRAIG

That lady was Nancy, my wife.

JANICE

Sorry, Coach.

CRAIG

Originally, the team members were all athletic. One by one they were replaced by you ladies.

BECKY

I'm athletic. In high school I was on the starting basketball team.

ESTHER

I won the Sun Village shuffleboard championship last year.

GERTRUDE

You should see the athletic contortions I do when the occasion calls for it.

ANNE

I won the Sun Village bakeoff last year.

CRAIG

May Nancy rest in peace. I miss her. That's the only reason I'm coaching this sad sack team. Because she started it and asked me to be the coach. Now, I'm doing it in her memory. Nancy, there was a player. She always played hard, clawed her way to the basket.

ANNE

Clawed her way? Maybe we should be something like the Wildcats.

JANICE

Or the Fighting Bubbies.

GERTRUDE

Maybe we should have a team cheer!

JANICE

We already have a team cheer.

ANNE

That's right! (*To GERTRUDE*) You're new to the team, dear, and you haven't heard it yet.

GERTRUDE

What is it?

JANICE

(Gesticulating like a cheerleader. After each letter JANICE says, the OTHERS echo.)

Give me a Y.

(Women respond)

Give me an E.

(Women respond)

Give me a N.

(Women respond)

Give me a T.

(Women respond)

Give me an A.

(Women respond)

Give me an S.

(Women respond)

What are we?

YENTAS IN UNISON

Yentas!

JANICE

What are we?

YENTAS IN UNISON

Yentas!

JANICE

What are we?

YENTAS IN UNISON

Yentas!

JANICE

Go team go! I was a cheerleader in high school. See, I'm athletic too.

CRAIG

A cheer does not win basketball games. Effort does! Look deep into your hearts and ask yourself, did I do all that I could?

BECKY

Do we have to start talking to ourselves again?

ANNE

When you get home, dear.

CRAIG

Real yentas make noise. They have energy. I wish I could have seen some energy from any of you in that first half.

GERTRUDE

You should have seen all the energy I used last night. And the noises I made. Oy!

JANICE

But that's when you forgot to take your birth control pill!

GERTRUDE

Oh, my!

CRAIG

I may have to make some changes. We've got to shake things up! Esther, I'm afraid that next game I may have to replace you in the starting line up with Nora.

JANICE

But Nora's recovering from a broken hip. She's still in a walker.

CRAIG

She's still more mobile than most of you.

ESTHER

But my grandchildren are coming to see me in our next game.

CRAIG

The Over 60 Women's Basketball League is serious cutthroat business. And you're not doing your share.

ESTHER

I scored a basket today.

CRAIG

And got no rebounds. The trouble with you, Esther, is you never learned how to rebound.

ESTHER

The ball never came to me.

CRAIG

That's no accident! You've got to learn to position yourself under the backboard -- how to ass out players on the other team.

ESTHER

What?

CRAIG

Ass out!

ESTHER

Isn't that a bad word?

GERTRUDE

It's something men call me all the time. Although not a whole ass.

JANICE

Half-assed?

GERTRUDE

No! A piece of ass.

ANNE

Esther, dear, ass is a perfectly acceptable word. It's even in the Bible. You can even ask one of the nuns.

JANICE

They won't talk.

ESTHER

What does it mean, then to... to....?

CRAIG

To ass out means you put your ass in the way of the other player so she can't get to the backboard and get the rebound. I'll show you. Now, get up!

(ESTHER stands)

Imagine there's the backboard. You're here, guarding someone. You put your ass against her to keep her from getting to the backboard. Let's try it. I'm guarding you. Now I'm going to place my butt against you to keep you away from the backboard.

(As CRAIG places his butt against ESTHER's body, looking away from her, ESTHER turns so his butt rubs against hers. HE notices and blows his whistle.)

Why did you turn around? How can you get a rebound if you're facing the wrong way?

ESTHER

I don't know.

CRAIG

Let's try it again. I'm guarding you and someone shoots the basketball at the basket over there, and I ass you out so you can't get to the backboard.

(CRAIG's butt knocks against ESTHER, causing her to fall to lose balance.)

ESTHER

Ow! Gracious me!

CRAIG

That's asking out!

ESTHER

Asking out?

CRAIG

(Flustered)

I mean... I mean assing out.

ANNE

You're not being very nice to Esther.

CRAIG

You've got to have a little mean streak when you're under the boards. You've got to want those balls. Be a little nasty.

ESTHER

That's against my nature. I'm a nice grandmother who believes in the Golden Rule. If someone's not nice to me I usually turn the other cheek.

CRAIG

Turn both cheeks! And ass out under the boards! Esther, not only won't you start the next game, but if you can't rebound, I may not be able to get you in the game at all.