



ACT II - SCENE FIVE

THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

The Principal says SPIKE'S DIRE.

~~The Principal is sitting at a table.~~

The PRINCIPAL is sitting in his office, bowed down by the news of SPIKE's death. SPIKE's knife is before him on the table. Enter SPONONO. *He looks*
~~The PRINCIPAL does not look at him, but he stands and watches the PRINCIPAL. At last the PRINCIPAL does see him.~~

PRINCIPAL

He looks up the knife & comes over to the table. He looks off his spectacles & puts his hand over his eyes like a blind man. SPONONO comes & stands looking at him. PRINCIPAL at last sees him. He throws his head down.

Well SPONONO.

SPONONO

I came to see you, meneer (He comes and stands by the table)
How did it happen, Meneer?

PRINCIPAL

(CITOKUS says for a short while)

They waited for him at the bus. Do you know why he is dead? He was here in this office yesterday, and he said, Meneer, can I carry a knife? And I said, No, you cannot carry a knife. And he said to me, meneer, it is dangerous in Johannesburg, and I said, no, you cannot carry a knife. And he said to me, what you say I will do, and I said, no, you cannot carry a knife.

(He puts his head on his hands)

SPONONO

(kneeling at the side of the PRINCIPAL's table)

Meneer!

(there is no reply, so greatly daring, he touches the Principal's hand. The PRINCIPAL lifts his head from his hands and pays attention.)

You must not blame yourself, meneer. You could not do anything else. You are the PRINCIPAL. You cannot tell anyone that he can carry a knife.

(SPONONO never ceases to set the PRINCIPAL wondering as to what kind of person SPONONO really is)

Meneer, ~~I want to~~ ask you a question?
can I

PRINCIPAL

Yes.

SPONONO

Have you been thinking that you would like to leave this place, and go somewhere else, and do some easier work, meneer?

PRINCIPAL

How do you know that?

SPONONO

(gravely)

I know many things, meneer. I saw it in your face.

/PRINCIPAL

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PRINCIPAL

Is it easy to see?

SPONONO

Not easy, meneer. Perhaps no one else saw it. But I saw it. But you can't leave us, meneer. You can do things for us that no one else can do. You can say to a boy, good morning, and you can ask him, how is your mother? and he will never break the law again. How can you leave, meneer, when you can do a thing like that?

(he becomes more persuasive)

~~These things will always happen. Someone is going to marry. The day before his wedding he's killed. Some poor person's going to get some money. The day before he gets it, he's killed too.~~ Always dangers, meneer; Not only in a reformatory. Everywhere, meneer.

PRINCIPAL

You're a strange fellow, SPONONO.

SPONONO

Why strange, meneer?

PRINCIPAL

I don't know. So wise and so.....
(he cannot find the word)

SPONONO

So foolish, meneer?

PRINCIPAL

(laughing)

No, I was'nt going to say that. I was going to say so wise and..... and so deep.

SPONONO

Is that good, meneer?

PRINCIPAL

I meant it to be good. I am older than you, but you have been teaching me - more than once.

SPONONO

(rising)

I want to ask a question, meneer.

PRINCIPAL

Ask it then.

SPONONO

Can I have back my freedom, meneer?

/PRINCIPAL

PRINCIPAL

(looks at SPONONO regretfully and for a long time)
No, SPONONO.

SPONONO

Must I wait six months, meneer?

PRINCIPAL

Yes (softening)
But if you do well, it might be less.

SPONONO

Three months?

PRINCIPAL

Yes, perhaps three months.

SPONONO

Tell me three months, meneer, then I am sure to do well.

PRINCIPAL

~~(regretfully)~~
I can't do that. First you must do well, then perhaps I shall tell you three months.
(SPONONO is disappointed. He shrugs his shoulders) *Enter MABASO*
~~Why do you do that?~~

~~SPONONO~~

~~Because I see you are not ready, Meneer.
(Mr. MABASO comes in just in time to hear this unconventional remark) *enters*~~

~~PRINCIPAL~~

~~(smiling)
Did you hear that, Mr. MABASO?~~

~~MABASO~~

~~(shortly)
Yes, PRINCIPAL.~~

~~PRINCIPAL~~

~~(to SPONONO)
You think I am not ready. Mr. Mabaso thinks I am ready to the point of foolishness.~~

~~MABASO~~

~~Principal, Walter is here.
(the light-heartedness vanishes)~~

~~PRINCIPAL~~

~~Bring him in.~~

~~/(WALTER enters~~

(WALTER enters chewing his gum. SPONONO looks at him with hatred, and the PRINCIPAL with coldness)

PRINCIPAL

I sent for you to tell you that Spike is dead.
(WALTER does not reply. Nothing in his face tells whether he cares whether SPIKE is alive or dead, he chews his gum)

PRINCIPAL

(in a strained voice)
He was killed in Victoriatown. He got off the bus and someone was waiting for him. He was stabbed five times.
(still WALTER gives no sign)
He's dead. He was killed. Don't you care.

WALTER

I care.

PRINCIPAL

(bringing his hand down on the table with a crash)
For God's sake, take that gum out of your mouth.
(He waits for WALTER to obey, but he is also giving himself time to recover)
You know George?

WALTER

(He has taken the gum out, but he still gives the impression of chewing)
Yes, meneer.

PRINCIPAL

You and Spike and Sponono were all in George's gang?

WALTER

Yes, meneer.

PRINCIPAL

Did you bring Spike a message from George that he must go back to the gang?

WALTER

No, meneer.

SPONONO

(fiercely)
That's alie, meneer!

PRINCIPAL

(gesturing to Sponono to be silent)
Are you sure of that?

WALTER

Yes, meneer.

/PRINCIPAL

PRINCIPAL

Elizabeth also told me that you gave Spike that message.

WALTER

I did not, meneer.

SPONONO

(desperately)

Meneer! Listen to me, meneer. I was there.

PRINCIPAL

(sternly)

Be quiet, SPONONO

(to WALTER)

Did you threaten Spike with death?

WALTER

(grieved)

No, meneer.

SPONONO

That's a lie meneer.

PRINCIPAL

(to WALTER)

I gave you your chance to tell me the truth. But if you ~~will~~ ^{will} not tell it to me, perhaps you ~~will~~ ^{will} tell it to the Police. Mr. Mabaso, take Walter to the detention room.

(MABASO puts his hand on WALTER's shoulder.

WALTER shakes off his hand violently) ~~Princ picks up the phone~~

SPONONO

(going forward)

Do you want my help, Mr. Mabaso?

(WALTER looks at SPONONO viciously.

MABASO looks him up and down)

MABASO

No thank you. ~~Princ picks up the phone~~
(Princ picks up the 'phone).

WALTER

Wait, meneer. There is more I can tell you.

PRINCIPAL

(putting down the 'phone)

Yes.

WALTER

You think the gang killed Spike, meneer. But the gang is finished. Wasn't there someone else who wanted to kill Spike? Wasn't there someone else who wanted Spike's girl?
(MABASO looks at SPONONO. SPONONO is apprehensive)
(WALTER points to SPONONO accusingly)

There's the one who wanted Spike's girl, meneer!

/SPONONO

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SPONONO

That's not true, meneer.

WALTER

I can prove it from many things, meneer. Yesterday, in the Visitor's Room, he could ~~not~~ leave her alone. He was telling her she must ~~not~~ marry Spike. She must marry him. He would work and give her all his money and ~~give up~~ the liquor. *keep out of all the troubles.*

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(PRINCIPAL is listening to this story with distaste, and SPONONO, seeing this, begins to panic)

He ~~gold~~ told her her hands were soft, and he tried to catch hold of her. She was struggling, meneer, to try and get away from him.

SPONONO

It's a lie, meneer.

PRINCIPAL

Sonono, I want to ask you some questions.

SPONONO

(he faces the ordeal with anxiety)

Yes, meneer.

PRINCIPAL

Were you in love with Elizabeth?

SPONONO

(more confidently)

No, meneer.

PRINCIPAL

Did you want to marry her?

SPONONO

No, meneer.

PRINCIPAL

You knew her before you came to the reformatory?

SPONONO

Yes, meneer!

PRINCIPAL

But you were not in love with her?

SPONONO

No, meneer.

/PRINCIPAL

PRINCIPAL

You didn't write letters to her?

SPONONO

(beginning to show signs of distress. There is a pause, ~~quite~~ perceptible. ~~Perhaps he wipes his brow with his handkerchief before he replies~~)

No, meneer.

(MABASO unobtrusively picks up the Letter Book)

PRINCIPAL

Did you visit Elizabeth on your first leave?

SPONONO

(in growing distress). ~~(He wipes his brow again)~~
No, meneer.

PRINCIPAL

Didn't you meet Spike there in Elizabeth's room?

(SPONONO does not reply. MABASO puts the open Letter Book on the table in front of the Principal)

PRINCIPAL

You ~~have~~ written to Elizabeth eight times since you ~~have~~ been here.

(There is no reply)

Sponono, did Elizabeth give you up for Spike?

SPONONO

(in a low voice)

Yes, meneer.

PRINCIPAL

Did you hate her for that?

SPONONO

~~(momentarily relieved of pressure)~~ *(convincingly)*
No, meneer.

PRINCIPAL

Did you never say to her, I can look after you too, and work hard, and ~~give up the liquor?~~ *keep out of the troubles*

SPONONO

(lying again)

No, meneer.

MABASO

He's ~~is~~ not telling the truth, Principal. I heard him say those very things yesterday, in the Visitors Room.

/SPONONO

SPONONO

He hates me, meneer!

PRINCIPAL

Is it true that you advised Spike and Elizabeth to postpone their wedding?

(SPONONO wonders what lies behind this question)

Think carefully before you answer. It was Elizabeth herself who told me this.

SPONONO

Yes, I told them, meneer.

PRINCIPAL

Was that because you were in love with her?

SPONONO

(genuinely)

No, it was because he was my friend.

PRINCIPAL

(contemptuously)

Yet you told her she should marry you.

SPONONO

(pleadingly)

Meneer, ~~I'm a fool with girls.~~ *you know what I am. You know I'm a fool with girls.*

PRINCIPAL

How far would you have gone to make sure she married you?

SPONONO

~~(the possible meaning is dawning on him)~~

What do you mean, meneer?

PRINCIPAL

(harshly)

I'm asking the questions.

SPONONO

(desperately)

Meneer, you know where I was when Spike was killed.

WALTER

How can you know, meneer, when he has this secret door in the Games Room?

PRINCIPAL

What secret door.

WALTER

Behind the boxes in the Games Room;

/MABASO

MABASO

Principal, that's how he was seen last month in Victoriatown. *Remember, I drew your attention to it.*

PRINCIPAL

(quietly)
Tell me the truth, SPONONO. Have you been slipping out to Victoriatown?

SPONONO

Yes, meneer.

PRINCIPAL

How often?

SPONONO

Only twice, Meneer.

PRINCIPAL

Did you use that door last night?

SPONONO

(at first, he is too shocked to reply)
Meneer do you think I killed Spike?

PRINCIPAL

(very harshly)
I'm asking the questions. Did you go out last night?

SPONONO

(with defiant hopelessness)
I have nothing more to say to the Principal.

MABASO

(coming forward angrily)
You cannot speak like that.

SPONONO

(shouting hysterically)
I speak how I like, do you hear?
(He takes up Spike's knife as MABASO comes nearer. MABASO halts) *CHORUS sings MALABULABU.)*
~~Yes, I killed Spike.~~ And I'll kill anyone who touches me now.

(The others stay where they are while SPONONO retreats backward to the door, threatening them all with the knife. Then with one quick movement he is gone. MABASO blows a whistle. There is pandemonium. Prefects rush in. The lights go out).

Respectfully