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### **American Streets**

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## SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors Thesis Entitled

"American Streets"

written by

Scott Wozniak

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for completion of the Carl Goodson Honors Program meets the criteria for acceptance and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

thesis director

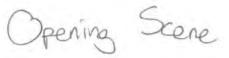
second reader

third reader

honors program director

April 15th, 2000





guy
Here on the streets
You fight to eat
You fight to live
You fight to breathe

girl

Survival--that's the name of the game!

guy Life is a war You have no rights You just survive Fight to survive

girl: survival!

guy and girl
This is life, the way of the streets
This is home, sweet, home!
It's a fight, you versus me

guy:

Night and day, it goes on and on

girl:

Night and day, on and on...

N: enters DR and moves to people nearby, leaning against a wall] Do you know a Rob Dulas? [no response, after a moment of frustration he asks another] Do you know Rob Dulas? [he gives up and is swallowed by the crowd as the Hounds gather downstage]

gang power comes with numbers don't be caught alone taste the power of our family

Jackal

[over the top of the Hounds who repeat on and on]
This is my family
Together forever we'll fight to the end!

Gang 2

[in counterpoint to Hounds and Jackal]
We make the rules
You keep the rules
We are the rulers of this world

[as they begin to face off for a fight, Kelly enters DL, drawing their attention]

Kelly: [noticing their leering uncomfortably] Do you know where Austin Street is?

gang member: [heavy with suggestion, partially for the entertainment of the rest of his gang] Yeah. Yeah I know where Austin Street is...you need an escort?

Kelly: Well--I just need to know how to get there, I can get there--

Roger: [stepping up from the fringes of the other gang, interupting Kelly's awkward reply] Yeah, lady. It's two blocks that way.

Kelly: [quickly] Thank you. [she walks UC to be lost in the crowd]

gang member: [stepping up] You got a problem?!

Jackal [pulling Roger back into gang behind him]
power comes in numbers
don't be caught alone
taste the power of our family
[the other guy backs off and moves to back to his gang, the Hounds, after a last gloating
look, move off singing, the other gang sings back to them as they retreat]

Gang 2
We make the rules
You keep the rules
We are the rulers of this world

[as the gangs drift upstage the 1st girl steps forward]

girl: survival!

together:
This is life, the way of the streets
This is home, sweet, home!
It's a fight, you versus me

guy: Night and day, it goes on and on

girl: Night and day, on and on... Shelter Scene 1

[A brightly lit open room, cheap and simple, but for the most part, clean. The occaisional stain marks the wallpaper and plain chairs surround two or three tables. There is a door leading offstage L and another off R. Lighting is bright and cheery, but definitely yellow and artificial. There are poorly dressed people seated at some tables, eating. Nick enters and puts down a suitcase, looking around. He starts to move to ask one of the people a question, but changes his mind. Kelly enters, looks around and finally notices Nick.]

KELLY: Nick! Thank God!

[they embrace]

NICK: Kelly! When did you get here?

KELLY: Just now. It's not...what I expected. I couldn't find anything! There are no signs anywhere!

NICK: I know--and these aren't the most...helpful people I've ever met.

ROB: [entering from kitchen and seeing them] Nick!

NICK: Rob!

[They throw their arms around each other and pound each other vigorously.]

NICK: You're getting chubby, soldier.

ROB: Yeah, yeah. A year out of the Corps and you'll look just like me.

NICK: Oh, Rob. This is Kelly. Kelly, this is Rob.

KELLY: Rob, I'm glad to finally meet you. I've heard a lot about you.

ROB: From this guy-don't believe a word of it!

KELLY: (smiling) I don't! And don't you believe a word he says about being out of shape. You look just fine to me.

ROB: Thanks. I can't tell you guys how much I apprecitate you making it out here.

NICK: Do you think I would let my best friend start his own inner city ministry without me?!

ROB: There's no one I'd rather work with, Nick. Kelly, I really appreciate you coming with Nick, too. For all his strengths, Nick does lack the--feminine touch.

NICK: I should hope so!

[Anne enters from kitchen, sees Rob and heads towards them]

ROB: Anne! I want you to meet Nick--and Kelly.

ANNE: It's good to have you finally here.

KELLY: It's good to finally be here.

ANNE: Rob...Can I talk to you for a minute?

ROB: Sure, what about?

ANNE: Well--it's about Roger. He didn't come home this weekend--at all.

NICK: Who's Roger?

ROB: Anne's brother...he's, well, he's pretty mixed up right now. It sounds like he might be getting involved with the Hounds, and that's not good.

KELLY: Who are they?

ROB: They're the biggest gang in the area. They're a real rough group.

ANNE: Well...

ROB: Oh! What can I do?

ANNE: Well, I was going to check downtown, to see if he was...

ROB: Right. Sure, that won't be a problem. Especially with Nick and Kelly here.

ANNE: Thanks. There's some more corn cooking on the---

ROB: Go on. I can handle it.

ANNE: Thank you.

[Anne exits.]

NICK: Where's she going?

ROB: She's going to check the jail. If he's been with the Hounds...

KELLY: Are they that bad?

ROB: My little brother was killed by them a few years ago.

KELLY: Oh. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to--

ROB: It's okay. That's life in the hood. You'll learn to adjust. Come on, we probably better check on that corn. You can put your bags back here for now.

[Rob leads them off into the kitchen, lights fade out as the exit.]

Stomp Scene

[A street corner littered with boxes, beat up trash cans (metal?), crates, trash, pipes, etc. The Hounds are scattered around, waiting for something, and one member begins to somewhat absently beat a rhythm to pass the time. Another joins in shortly and soon the whole gang is engaged in a passionate, dramatic stomp number which ends in much laughing and a strong sense of comraderie is felt. Then an awkward silence--more waiting--broken by one desperate Hound, experiencing the painful beginnings of withdrawal. No real speech until that time takes place.]

MARCO: Come on! Jackal, where is he?!

JACKAL: I gave him a deadline, he'll be here. [jokingly] We better give Marco here the first hit--he looks like he's about to pee it down his leg!

MARCO: You said we'd have it a half hour ago!

JACKAL: Are you calling me a liar?

MARCO: Where is it then?! Where's the crack?

JACKAL: I asked you a question. If you got a challenge to make, you can make in the Circle.

MARCO: Man, I don't wanna fight you, Jackal.

JACKAL: You backing down, Marco?

MARCO: Come on. I just wanna know where--

[the gang begins to form a circle with Marco and Jackal in the center]

JACKAL: You don't believe me. You wanna challenge my word?

MARCO: I don't wanna fight you, Jackal!

JACKAL: [hitting Marco and dodging back amidst gang jeers and laughter] Come on, Marco--you not man enough?

MARCO: Man! Jackal, I don't--

JACKAL: [striking again] Come on, Marco. Is that all you got?! Come on--hit me.

MARCO: Man, I didn't mean nothin' ...

[Jackal quickly knocks Marco to the ground and stands over him.]

JACKAL: [barely winded and basking in his felt strength] When Jackal speaks, it happens. My word is law on these streets. Your families don't keep their promises, but I do. What makes the Hounds the strongest?

Gang: [in unison] Loyalty.

JACKAL: What makes--

[Roger runs in, out of breath and scuffed up, empty handed]

ROGER: Jackal!

JACKAL: You're late, Roger.

ROGER: The Skulls got me! There were nine or ten of them! They took all the stuff!

JACKAL: Do you have any idea how much money that was worth?!

ROGER: There were, like, ten guys!

JACKAL: Moses! [a large guy steps out of the crowd] Take some boys and check this out. [to Roger] Take him there, and, Roger, when you come back, you better have it with you.

[Moses, Roger, and about 9 other guys exit]

BLACKOUT

Shelter Scene Z

ROB: [Rob comes through door with a handful of mail. It's the end of the day and Nick and Kelly are cleaning up.] Mail call! Let's see...another check for--[opening it] nine hundred dollars! Man!

NICK: Nothing like mail call to brighten the day.

KELLY: Is that normal?

ROB: I wish it was!

[Anne enters, anxious.]

ROB: Anne--

ANNE: Well, I found him.

NICK: Was he in jail.

ANNE: Yeah, since last night. That's what I want to talk to you about, Rob.

ROB: What happened?

ANNE: Well, there was some trouble between the Hounds and the Skulls and a whole load of guys were picked up--and Roger was there.

ROB: How much trouble?

ANNE: There was crack found at the scene, but not on Roger. And a guy got killed.

KELLY: Killed!?

ROB: A Hound or a Skull?!

ANNE: I think a Skull, but I'm not sure. But they're not charging Roger with that. [she hesitates]

ROB: What it is, Anne?

ANNE: I talked to the police chief and he said they would let Roger out...if you would help out.

ROB: What would I do?

ANNE: If you would agree to serve as probationary officer, they would let him come stay here.

NICK: Hmm. That's a big comittment.

ANNE: I could help out, too, Rob. And with the Nick and Kelly here, it wouldn't even slow down the shelter's work. I just want to get him away from that gang.

ROB: I understand. I think we can do it.

NICK: Are you sure? If he's that involved, bringing him here will just bring the gang with him.

ROB: I'm sure we can handle it.

NICK: How is bringing a gang member to live with us going to do anything but cause problems.

ROB: He confused and desperate, not evil. If there was something we could have done and we didn't do it because it might not work--

NICK: Okay. We'll do it.

ANNE: There's some paper work for you to fill out first--downtown.

ROB: Sure. Nick, do you want to come along.

NICK: Okay.

ROB: Can you girls handle closing up?

ANNE: No problem. Thank you, Rob.

ROB: No problem.

[Nick and Rob exit]

KELLY: I'm sure it will all be fine.

ANNE: Thank you. I'm just worried for Roger.

KELLY: This could be just what he needs--what we all need.

[BLACKOUT—ORCHESTRA BEGINS SCENE CHANGE MUSIC]

Shelter Scene 3

[in the shelter, low lights, Rob and Nick are cleaning up and Roger is offstage]

ROB: [to Nick] I'll be right back. [he exits]

NICK: Sure. Roger? [no response, a bit louder] Roger?

ROGER: [entering] Yeah.

NICK: Can you help me with this for a minute?

ROGER: Yeah. [he awkwardly moves to help]

NICK: [silence for a moment] Roger, if you were die tonight, do you think you would

go to heaven?

ROGER: What?

NICK: Well, if you stood before God, and He asked you why He should let you into

heaven, what would you say?

ROGER: [brusquely] I don't know.

NICK: Well, it's important to know. We're only going to be on earth for a few years,

but where you spend eternity is important.

ROGER: [to himself] Man...

NICK: I know that your life probably hasn't been easy, but God can always make a

difference. No matter what you're facing, God has the answer--

ROGER: What do you know about my life?

NICK: Well, I know that--

ROGER: [starting to leave in a hurry] Man, I'm out of here.

NICK: [moving to stop him] Roger, I don't mean to offend you, but this is the most

important decision in your life.

ROGER: You don't know anything about my life.

NICK: Can you listen for just a minute?

[as Roger tries to exit, Nick puts his hand out and feels a lump in Roger's jacket]

NICK: Hey, what do you--

[Roger keeps going out the door, but Nick grabs him by the shoulder and turns him around]

NICK: What do you have there?

ROGER: [still trying to leave] Let me go!

NICK: [holding on] I said, What do you have?

ROGER: Let go!

[Nick jerks open his jacket to find a metal box--the deposit box for the shelter.]

NICK: Where'd you get this?!

[Roger, pulls to get away hard and almost succeeds, but Nick's military training kicks in as he jerks Roger back into the room, blocking the doorway.]

NICK: What were you gonna do with this? [He checks to box to find it still locked. He fishes in his pocket and pulls out some keys.] Looking for this? After we bail you out, you steal from us. What were you gonna do with the money? [no response] What do you need the money for?!

[Roger tries to leave, but Nick shoves him back into the room.]

ROGER: Man! You don't know nothing about my life!

NICK: Well, then talk to me. You tell me what's so important that you have to steal for it.

ROGER: If I don't have that money, I'm a dead man!

NICK: Why do you--

ROGER: Man, you don't know nothing. You don't nothing about my life!

NICK: I don't care what your problems are, stealing isn't the answer. So you need money. Or, maybe you never got a good education. So you didn't have a good home life. Just because you've had it hard doesn't that the rules don't apply to you. Your "hard life" gives you no excuse to do whatever you feel like.

[Rob enters near the end of his line.]

ROB: What's going on?

NICK: I caught him--

ROGER: You think you know the answer to my problems!? You're gonna solve my problems with some prayers or with some church service!? What good is that gonna do if I'm shot first? When's the last time you filled your stomach by saying enough prayers?! When's the last time you so out on money, you dug through a garbage can for food!?

NICK: This isn't about what I've done.

ROB: No, he's got a point, Nick.

NICK: No, this isn't about me. What I have or haven't done has nothing to do with-

ROB: Yes it does. It has a lot to do with what you know.

[By this time, Roger has maneuvered to find an opening and takes off out the door. Nick goes for him and is stopped by Rob.]

NICK: What are you doing!?

ROB: Why don't you settle down?!

NICK: Why don't you get your hands off me!? He's getting away!

ROB: He's allowed to go outside, Nick.

NICK: I suppose he's allowed to steal all our money, too!? But I wouldn't really understand, not being from here, right Rob?

ROB: What?

NICK: I caught him carrying this under his jacket trying to leave. And then you come in and defend him, and then let him get away--I'm going after him.

ROB: [stepping to stop him] You don't want to do that.

NICK: What do you know about what I want?! I'm different, remember?

ROB: Nick! You don't want to go after him.

NICK: Bye.

ROB: They'll kill you, Nick. They've killed before.

NICK: Look, I understand they killed your little brother, but I'm not a kid, I'm a Marine. I can take care of myself.

ROB: No--they didn't really kill my little brother.

NICK: I thought you--

ROB: My brother declared his old life dead when he took over the Hounds.

NICK: [after a moment] You mean, your brother--we're under legal obligation--I'm going to get Roger.

ROB: Trust me, Nick, you don't--

NICK: Trust you?! I appreciate your sentiment, but I'm not going to stand by while they keep breaking the law.

ROB: Nick, you don't--

[Nick charges out, leaving Rob in the room with the box]

BLACKOUT

Gang Sene

[The gang has gathered in condemned building--their "headquarters" so to speak. On a level above the group is Jackal--the leader. They are already in a frenzy. As Jackal works the crowd, Roger enters.]

JACKAL: The Skulls have jacked with us for the last time! [yelling in response] Tonight, we take back what belongs to us! [more yelling] They want a fight, we'll give 'em a fight! [much cheering as Roger enters. The cheering dies and all eyes are on Roger.] What are you doing here?

ROGER: I came back.

JACKAL: What happened to your baby-sitters?

ROGER: Forget them.

JACKAL: Tired of playing house?

ROGER: Yes. I am.

JACKAL: I knew you'd be back. Once you've tasted real power, nothin' else will do.

ROGER: Yeah! This is where it's at--where the Hounds' will is law!

JACKAL: Right, Roger. Where my word is law. And a man's word to his brothers is never broken, right?

ROGER: Right.

JACKAL: You gave us your word once.

ROGER: Man, that wasn't my fault--

JACKAL: I said you better have some stuff when you come back--where is it?

ROGER: Look, I tried to steal some money, but I almost got caught. Just, give me-

JACKAL: You tried to steal money? From where?

ROGER: From the shelter.

JACKAL: So that's what happened to the baby-sitters. [putting his arm around him] Roger, Roger...you lost the crack, so you tried to bring me money to make up for it. You don't buy loyalty. You earn it.

ROGER: Jackal, I didn't mean--

JACKAL: You can't just walk in and apologize. That doesn't make up for it! And you certainly don't make up for mistakes by just saying the right words.

[Jackal's grip has tightened and he throws Roger to the floor and kicks him]

JACKAL: You've got a price to pay.

NICK: [from backstage] Leave him alone!

[All the Hounds turn upstage and stare as Nick boldly walks to Jackal]

NICK: He'll pay his price to the government. He doesn't need you to give him justice.

JACKAL: And who are you?

NICK: Let's go, Roger.

JACKAL: I asked you a question. Who are you? And what are you doin' here?

NICK: That's two questions, and all you need to know is that I'm leaving. [he grabs Roger] You're coming with me, Roger.

JACKAL: He's not going anywhere.

[Jackal grabs his wrist to get his grip off of Roger, and Nick reacts by jerking free and pushing back Jackal.]

JACKAL: You want Roger--you got to go through me, first.

[The Hounds begin to circle up for a fight, leaving Nick and Jackal in the middle.]

JACKAL: Come on, pretty boy. What you got?

[Seeing the format, Nick assumes a fighting stance and steels himself silently]

JACKAL: Come on, pretty boy!

[Jackal lunges to hit Nick, but Nick blocks it and jabs him in the nose. The gang reacts loudly. Jackal tries another approach, with the same result.]

JACKAL: [checking his nose for blood] I'm done playin' with you. [he pulls a knife out and moves in]

NICK: What's the matter? You can't handle me without your knife?

JACKAL: What's the matter? You forget your knife?

[Jackal sweeps at Nick, who manages to dodge a few times, but finally is slashed on the forearm. Jackal eyes him confidently. Then, before they can start again, a voice rises above the general mayhem to interrupt.]

ROB: Tom! You don't want him--you want me!

[Rob enters and moves in between Nick and Jackal.]

JACKAL: You got some big kahunas, comin' here, [to gang] but I guess that would run in the family, wouldn't it? [to Rob] You don't belong here.

ROB: Leave him alone, Tom.

JACKAL: The name's Jackal.

ROB: He's no threat to you. Leave him alone.

JACKAL: You're not in charge here.

ROB: I can'tlet you do this, Tom.

JACKAL: You don't tell me what to do, anymore, remember, your little brother's dead.

ROB: Let's go, Nick.

[Rob turns to help Nick to his feet and Jackal lunges for Rob, but Rob quickly reacts and deflects the attack.]

ROB: Don't push me, Tom. I'm warning you.

JACKAL: You're warning me?! Let me warn you. I'm not the same little kid you knew.

[He waves his knife around.]

ROB: You'll have to fight fair, this time. I didn't forget my knife. [Rob pulls his knife out.]

[Jackal charges at him, but Rob's military training is superior and he manages to avoid getting hit. A fight ensues that leaves both a little nicked, but nothing serious.]

ROB: What's the matter, Tom? Can't you hit me?

JACKAL: I'm gonna rip your face off!

[Rob clearly has the advantage, steadily avoiding Jackal, while managing to land some punches--using his knife more defensively than offensively. Finally, he wrests the knife from Jackal, and knocks him to the ground.]

ROB: Stay down, Tom.

JACKAL: [starting to get up] My name's Jackal.

ROB: [knocking him down again] Stay down, Tom.

JACKAL: [starting to get up] Tom's dead. Just like mom.

ROB: [holding a knife to him] Then don't make me kill Jackal, too. I'm taking Nick and Roger, and I'm leaving.

JACKAL: [from the ground] You do this, and you're a dead man!

ROB: What are you gonna do, stop me?

[By this time, the gang is beginning to come out of their shock at seeing Jackal so beaten, and Marco, enraged, steps behind Rob and sticks a knife in him.]

MARCO: When Jackal speaks, it happens!

[Rob, wide-eyed, pulls the knife out, and sinks to the floor, next to Jackal.]

MOSES: I'm gone!

[the gang begins to scatter, and as they leave, pulling Marco with them, still consumed in rage/shock, Nick rushes to Rob and while everyone else rushes away, Jackal, steps to go and turns back to Rob.]

JACKAL: Rob?

ROB: Tom--

NICK: You killed him.

[With that, Jackal turns and is the last off stage leaving Nick and Rob alone on stage. Orchestra swells with music as lights fade.]

Shelter Scene 4

[In the shelter--Roger is sitting down in the corner, disturbed. Nick enters and starts to sit down, Roger and Nick see each other about the same time.]

NICK: What are you doing here?! Everyone's been looking for you.

ROGER: I didn't do nothin'!

NICK: You didn't--none of this would have happened without you!

ROGER: You're the one Rob came to save! If you hadn't been so--

NICK: He was there to save you!

ROGER: You thought I needed saving!? You interfered where you didn't belong.

You're a dead man, now.

NICK: What?

ROGER: Do you think that they're gonna let you alive after you this? Why do you think

the Hounds keep outa jail? Leave no outside witnesses.

NICK: You think--I gotta get out of here.

ROGER: Yeah, just leave. Take off! You never did want to be here.

NICK: How do you know what I wanted?

ROGER: You don't belong here. You go back to your--

[Anne enters and sees them.]

ANNE: Roger! Have you been here the whole time? Nick, are you okay?

NICK: I--are you okay?

ANNE: I'll survive. Roger, where have you been? We've got--

ROGER: I'm going outside. [he turns to leave]

ANNE: Roger, wait! [She quickly follows after him]

[Nick sits in defeat and the orchestra begins to play gently.]

verse 1
Memories,
Sweet melodies in my head
Memories,
The dreams that we did dream,
And pain in my heart.

Sweet agony, Some dreams are not meant to be. Good-bye my friend, Forgive me if you can-Oh, God, what have I done?!

### chorus

But I will carry you with me, All the laughter, all the tears. My friend, my best friend--I'll not see you for years.

But I will carry you with me, I'll never let you die. I always treasure these days, And in my heart, you'll live on.

verse 2
Memories,
My brother, my friend.
Yesterday,
Our lives were so carefree,
But Yesterday's gone!

Such Memories,
Lord, I don't know what to do!
But this I swear,
Your death won't be in vain,
I'll never forget you!

### **CHORUS REPEAT**

TAG My friend, my best friend, I'll not see you for years,

But I will carry you with me, I'll never let you die. I'll always treasure these days, And in my heart, You'll live--(orchestra finishes)

[Anne enters.]

ANNE: What are you gonna do now?

NICK: What Rob would have done. Let's go talk to the police about Roger. I'm sure we clear him of any charges.

[Lights fade out.]

THE END

# Opening Scene































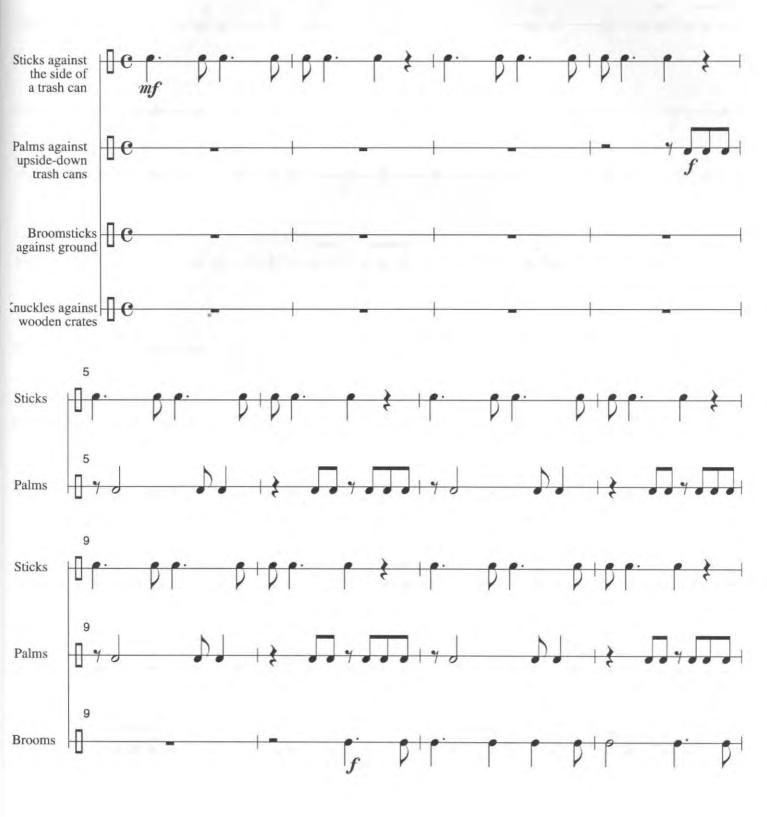








## Stomp











## Scene Change 1



## Scene Change 2



## I Will Carry You With Me









































