

The rim rattled as Mike let go. He landed on his feet with the backboard shaking. That tired rim wouldn't have to worry about Mike after today. My brother and I were leaving in the morning to attend the University of New York.

Every day, Harlem's future stars lined up for a chance to play here. And every day, they went home disappointed. Mike and I owned these courts. But the time had come for us to leave them. Tomorrow, someone else would have a chance to win at the "Jungle."

They call these courts the Jungle because out here, you've got to fight to survive. This is where the best players in New York City develop. It happens right here in Harlem, a place where life isn't easy. The usual crowd stood around the fence during our last game before college. Some of these guys were one-time great players who had wasted college scholarships and NBA dreams. They had messed around with drugs and crime and never made it back. Now they were lost, wondering where their dreams went.

Mike and I watched each other carefully. We refused to get trapped on the wrong side of the fence. We're twin

Excerpt From *Hoop City* © 2005 SCOBRE PRESS
Touchdown Edition

sea of ‘oohs’ and ‘aahs’ I heard another voice from beyond the fence. “Get off that rim. You ain’t Jordan yet!”

The rim rattled as Mike let go and landed firmly on his feet with the backboard shaking behind him. If I were that tired backboard I would have slept easy that night knowing that Mike and I were leaving in the morning to attend the University of New York. In fact, everyone who ever played against us at the Jungle would sleep well that night. Every day, Harlem’s future stars lined up for a chance to play here. And every day, they went home disappointed. Mike and I owned these courts. But with our senior season in the rear view mirror and the two of us heading off to college in the morning, tomorrow will be a different day. Tomorrow, someone else will actually have a chance to win.

They call these courts the Jungle because out here, you’ve got to fight to survive. This is where the best players in New York City develop, right here in Harlem, a place where life isn’t always easy.

The usual crowd stood around the fence surrounding the Jungle during our last game before college. They shook the metal links when we dunked, when we made a shot or a great play. Their love for basketball was unfazed by time and circumstance. These one-time great players squandered college scholarships and NBA dreams for lives of drugs and crime. They were lost, sipping from bottles of beer, wondering where their dreams had gone.

Mike and I watched each other carefully, refus-