

William shakes his head.

JEFF OK, skip it.

WILLIAM My brother's fucked up. He's always been a fuck-up. Always been selfish. Always been wild and selfish: You know the type. Living like a free spirit or what have you while everybody else is trying to work. You know the type? I mean—I don't know, man. Sometimes you just have to wash your hands of a person. Because you just get no recompense. You know what I mean there, Jeff? You must know what I mean. You've seen something of the world. I've never seen anything of the world. I've been working for security firms since I was sixteen years old. Do you know I'm the youngest captain in the history of this firm? But I'm square, man. You know? I'm square. I'm no fun.

JEFF That's very true.

WILLIAM And I will bust your ass, all you guys, if you mess up on my shifts, because I don't let people mess up on my shifts. That's how I got to be the youngest captain in the history of this fucking no-account security firm. I can't believe some of the people they hire, man. Can you? I mean—Did you happen to see that article in *The New York Times* about security companies in New York City? Guys with long prison records, rapists, murderers, anybody at all who can sign his name they stick a gun on his waist and set him up to protect somebody. You want to explain that insanity to me? I personally got rid of three guys they had working for this company, man, because these guys were just out-and-out criminals. You can't just hire anybody who looks like he can manhandle a person, you know?

JEFF Sure.

WILLIAM Anyway, I'm just rambling.

JEFF Ramble away, man. This is the highlight of my night.

WILLIAM So how's it going with you anyway, Jeff?
Everything all right?

JEFF Yeah, pretty good. I been looking for apartments.

WILLIAM Oh yeah? How's that going?

JEFF Pretty good. I saw this one place today that was actually really pretty nice, but it was a little out of my range. I still owe my brother a lot of money.

WILLIAM Maybe he'll forgive the debt.

JEFF I don't want him to forgive the debt. I wanna pay him back every cent I owe him—with interest. The hell with that. I'd rather live in that room for the next five years if it meant I couldn't pay him back. I'm a reformed character, man. I don't take nothin' off of nobody, no thank you, no more.

WILLIAM I can see I've been a very positive influence on you, Jeff.

JEFF You have man, you're a positive inspiration.

Silence.

Begin

JEFF Hey, you know, I got that book you told me about . . .
The Six Habits of Self-Motivated People?

WILLIAM Oh yeah? Did you read it?

JEFF Well, I *tried* to read it . . .

WILLIAM All right, you know what?

JEFF —I just couldn't get past the first two habits.

WILLIAM Yeah, all right—

JEFF —I guess I wasn't really that motivated.

WILLIAM —All right, never mind.

JEFF No, seriously. I did try to read it. I just don't usually respond to that kind of stuff. I mean I'm sure it has good stuff in it . . . It just kind of seemed like bullshit to me.

WILLIAM Well, you have to have an open mind.

JEFF Yeah, I guess . . .

WILLIAM And you have to be willing to address some of your own shortcomings. Otherwise you're just wasting your time.

JEFF Well, see, I don't have any shortcomings. So that's probably why I couldn't get into it . . .

William is not amused.

JEFF I do have a terrific sense of humor though. That's one thing you can definitely say about me.

WILLIAM Yeah. Keep laughing, Jeff.

JEFF I'm just kidding. Maybe it was good. To tell you the truth I couldn't really focus on it too well. I'm having trouble concentrating on anything I read lately.

WILLIAM Oh yeah? Why is that?

JEFF I don't know. I guess I have a lot on my mind these days.

WILLIAM Like what?

JEFF Well, my best friend from when I was a kid, my friend Scott, is getting married in a few days, so I've been roped into arranging this bachelor party we're supposed to give him. So that's distracting . . .

WILLIAM From what?

JEFF What?

WILLIAM Distracting from what? All you do is sit here. You have no interests—

JEFF I have interests—

WILLIAM No family—

JEFF I have a family—

WILLIAM But you have no wife, no children—

JEFF Oh, well—

WILLIAM That's what I mean by a family—Somebody you're responsible for.

JEFF Well—

WILLIAM —You have no ambition, as far as I can see—

JEFF I don't tell you everything about myself.

WILLIAM OK, good. I'm glad to hear it. But that's why I try to get you to improve your mind a little bit and apply yourself to something. Aim a little higher. But I can see it's a hopeless cause.

JEFF You just don't want to admit—

WILLIAM (*Without stopping*) You're probably intended to be just one of those guys who drifts through life doing one job or another, no plan, no specific intentions of any kind . . . ~~And one day you're gonna wake up in a lobby, just like this one, except everybody's gonna be calling you "Pops." And then you're gonna look back and remember "I should have listened to that guy, William. He's the only one that ever took the time to try to encourage me to cultivate~~

~~my potential. My whole family was content to see me fritter my life away, but that William, man, he really tried to get me to focus my energies a little bit. And doddering useless old unemployed Pops doorman that I am, I have to admit he could have been a positive influence on me if I hadn't been such a callous, careless kind of joke-telling, sit-on-my-ass-my-whole-life type of person when I was younger." But I guess that's all right, because you're not really trying to climb any higher anyway. You see what I mean?~~

JEFF I just wish to hell you'd stop trying to butter me up all the time. You know it's embarrassing for both of us the way you're always coming in here trying to kiss my ass.

WILLIAM OK. Keep laughing, Jeff. 'Cause the joker laughs last. And the joker's gonna laugh last at you.

JEFF What do you mean, like the Joker from *Batman*?

WILLIAM No—

JEFF What the fuck are you talking about?

WILLIAM I just mean—Like, you know, like the generic joker. Like the laughing figure of Fate, or whatever you want to call it.

JEFF (*A joke*) Oh, sure, *that* joker. Everyone's terrified of *him*.

WILLIAM Go ahead and laugh, Jeff. The joker laughs last.

JEFF I have interests . . .

WILLIAM I'm glad to hear it.

JEFF . . . Just 'cause I don't tell *you* about it doesn't mean I don't have them.

WILLIAM All right, good.

JEFF

—Anyway you work here too, man! So what are you getting on *my* ass about it for? What do you mean, "No you don't"? *You're* working the graveyard shift!

WILLIAM

Oh no I don't!

WILLIAM *I'm* working the graveyard shift 'cause that's the shift everybody messes up, OK? I told Joe Collier I was gonna weed out the bad apples in this company and that's exactly what I'm gonna do. That's what I'm doing on the graveyard shift, Jeff. I'm not just sitting here getting old before my time . . .

JEFF

I'm not getting old before my time—
Oh good for you!

WILLIAM

. . . I'm working my way through the ranks . . .

WILLIAM . . . and by the time I'm through I'm gonna clean this place up and move up into management, and if they don't want to move me up the way that I deserve, I'm gonna go off on my own and set myself up to compete with these bums, because I know I could do a better job than them with my eyes closed.

JEFF OK, good for you. *I* was in the Goddamn *Navy* for three years . . .

WILLIAM All right, don't lose your temper . . .

JEFF No, man, why you gotta come in here and be ragging on me all the time?

WILLIAM Oh, oh, you can dish it out but you can't take it.

JEFF I can take it, but there's a *limit*. There's a *level*. I been busting my ass all year tryin' to get my shit together.

WILLIAM All right—

JEFF —You of all people should be *encouraging* me. I just had a little bad luck, that's all. Anybody could have a little bad luck.

WILLIAM Didn't you tell me you got kicked out of the Navy for being on guard duty smoking marijuana?

JEFF Yeah, but it was bad luck that I got *caught*. The rest of my friends are still sailin' the ocean blue gettin' stoned out of their minds. I get high *one time* and suddenly I'm out on my ass?

WILLIAM All I'm sayin' is if you hadn't been smoking that stuff in the first place you wouldn't have to be relying on any kind of luck—good, bad, or otherwise. Personally, I believe in giving people a second chance. And I like you. I don't know why I like you, but I do. I regard you as a project. I think you have a lot of potential.

JEFF No you don't.

WILLIAM Yes I do, Jeff. Because every human being walking around on this earth has potential, Jeff, including you.

JEFF Oh Jesus Christ.

WILLIAM Go ahead and laugh. You probably have more potential than the rest of these guys put together.

Pause.

JEFF You think?

WILLIAM Yes I do. ~~If you really applied yourself . . . who knows what you might be good at down the road.~~

END

JEFF Well, thanks, William. I take that as encouragement.

WILLIAM That's how it's meant. But you can't just—

JEFF I always thought I had a lot of potential. I guess I just lost my way a little bit.

WILLIAM That happens to a lot of people, Jeff. But you can't just—

JEFF I know. And I'm not blaming anybody else—seriously. But I really had a rough time the last couple of years.

WILLIAM (*Starts to speak*) —

JEFF I'm not sayin' it's all bad luck. I know you gotta take some responsibility for yourself—

WILLIAM That's right.

JEFF I know, I know. But do you know from the time I came home from the Navy my old man wouldn't even talk to me? I only went into the Navy to get him off my back in the first place. Then I get kicked out—

WILLIAM Why wouldn't he talk to you?

JEFF Because he was ashamed of me, that's why. 'Cause he was this big Navy guy, 'cause he saved all these guys' lives on his ship when he was in Korea. Big deal.

WILLIAM Really.

JEFF Yeah. It's actually a really amazing story. Ship hits an old mine at two o'clock in the morning, twenty-three guys trapped below decks. Everybody jumps overboard except my old man. He finds a blowtorch, goes below decks in the pitch dark, the ship is goin' like *this* (makes a steep incline with his hand), these guys are screamin' for their lives, there's water comin' up to his elbows . . . Two minutes