JIM. I don't know. I'd let me stay.
MR. SCHMITT. My wife thinks some of your poetry is pretty good.
JIM. She does?
MR. SCHMITT. Why are you acting surprised? She told you.
JIM. I guess I didn't believe her. *(Mr. Schmitt thinks.)*
MR. SCHMITT. You're from the Bronx.
JIM. Yeah.
MR. SCHMITT. What's that like?
JIM. I don't know. Normal. Like anywhere else.
MR. SCHMITT. Were you in fights?
JIM. Sure.
MR. SCHMITT. New Hampshire must be a big change.
JIM. It's quiet.
MR. SCHMITT. You're not giving me a lot to work with.
JIM. Me being from the Bronx shouldn't enter in to it.
MR. SCHMITT. Maybe I should call your parents.
JIM. They're not going to be able to tell you anything.
MR. SCHMITT. If I call them, it will be to tell them to come and take you home.
JIM. Please don't do that.
MR. SCHMITT. You've shown no particular desire to protect your place here.
JIM. What do you want me to do?
MR. SCHMITT. I don't know but you'd better think of something, Jim, because you're nine days from graduation and I don't see you getting a diploma.
JIM. I'm passing my courses.
MR. SCHMITT. There's more to this school than grades. Character is an issue.
JIM. What do you want me to say?
MR. SCHMITT. I don't know.
JIM. Mr. Hoffman thinks I'm worth it.
MR. SCHMITT. Worth what?
JIM. The trouble I guess.
MR. SCHMITT. I've talked to Mr. Hoffman.
JIM. What did he say?
MR. SCHMITT. He thinks you should graduate.
JIM. Well, shouldn't that count?
MR. SCHMITT. It's my decision. Alan often chooses a project,

and this past year or so, it's been you. His judgement is colored by your work in his class. You're his star.
JIM. I'm doing so much better than I was. I failed everything in my last school.
MR. SCHMITT. Yes, and I took you in.
JIM. And I'm passing everything now.
MR. SCHMITT. Why couldn't you pass at Cardinal Spellman? Were you stupid then and smart now?
JIM. No, I was always smart. Cardinal Spellman was stupid. I just couldn't do it. I just couldn't listen to them.
MR. SCHMITT. Who?
JIM. The teachers.
MR. SCHMITT. Why not?
JIM. They were just so BORING. It was depressing. I felt like I was going crazy. I wrote stuff. I thought it was cool but I got in trouble for that. So I stopped showing them anything, and I just read all the time. But I didn't read what they told me to read so that was a problem. They sent me to a psychologist… Anyway, here, Mr. Hoffman, when I talked about books, when I wrote stuff, he thought it was good. And he thought I was good.
MR. SCHMITT. Was he right?
JIM. You don't think I'm good.
MR. SCHMITT. Convince me otherwise.
JIM. What if I'm not?
MR. SCHMITT. Then I don't want you here.
JIM. That's not the way it works, you know. First you need to think I'm good, then I'm good. That's the real way things are.
MR. SCHMITT. What are you talking about?
JIM. How to deal with people.
MR. SCHMITT. So you know how to deal with people? The faculty is up in arms over your existence! And anyway, what do you mean? I should say you're good before you're good? How does that work? You're here to get an education. What do you think, that you should get an A before the class starts?
JIM. I think I should've gotten an A the day I was born.
MR. SCHMITT. For what?
JIM. For being alive.
MR. SCHMITT. Using that logic, I should have awarded you a diploma the day you got here.
JIM. The day before I got here.

MR. SCHMITT. Are you crazy?
JIM. Not that crazy.
MR. SCHMITT. Don't you think giving you a scholarship for nothing was enough?
JIM. It wasn't for nothing. You gave it to me because I needed it.
MR. SCHMITT. Exactly.
JIM. Well, I still need it. *(Mr. Schmitt thinks.)*
MR. SCHMITT. So you write.
JIM. Yes.
MR. SCHMITT. And you read.
JIM. I do.
MR. SCHMITT. What do you read?
JIM. I don't know. All kinds of stuff. Amazing things. Everything.
MR. SCHMITT. Why?
JIM. Because I love it. Because the dead tell me everything. Because the stiffs I actually have for teachers are so cheap. Except for Mr. Hoffman.
MR. SCHMITT. What do you mean, cheap?
JIM. Teachers don't tell you what they tell you in books. Charles Dickens tells you everything. Henry Miller tells you everything. Teachers tell you about other people, never themselves. You teach Religion, but I don't know anything about religion from you. I've never seen your soul. I've never met your God.
MR. SCHMITT. That's a provocative thing to say.
JIM. Why did you give me a scholarship?
MR. SCHMITT. I thought you could do the work.
JIM. That's not why. You gave me an IQ test. I didn't break a hundred.
MR. SCHMITT. IQ tests don't tell the tale.
JIM. Why'd you give me a scholarship?
MR. SCHMITT. Mr. Hoffman met you on that retreat.
JIM. So?
MR. SCHMITT. He put in a good word for you. He was impressed about your ready knowledge of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*.
JIM. So Omar Khayyam got me in.
MR. SCHMITT. If you like.
JIM. It was Omar Khayyam. A dead guy.
MR. SCHMITT. Did he tell you to get drunk?
JIM. I didn't get drunk.
MR. SCHMITT. Jim, no one can know another man's God.
JIM. That's not true, Mr. Schmitt. I know Dostoyevsky's God. Lots of other people. Homer. Even Einstein. But if you have a God, he sure as hell hasn't show up in your religion class.
MR. SCHMITT. Watch your language.
JIM. This is so unfair.
MR. SCHMITT. What do you want? I'm giving you a chance to explain yourself.
JIM. What about you? Why don't you have to explain yourself?
MR. SCHMITT. It's my school.
JIM. Right. You're the guy. I'm on trial.
MR. SCHMITT. What would you call fair?
JIM. If it goes one way, I leave the school. If it goes the other, YOU leave. That would be fair. That's fair. This is just you having everything.
MR. SCHMITT. What are you talking about? It's my school. You're here because I've given you an opportunity.
JIM. Why is it your school? Why am I always in the wrong? Why do I have to listen to you when you have zero to say? Because I'm young? All my life I've been young. So I never get a turn? This school is lost, if you ask me. You're lost. But everybody talks to me like I'm the one. I should change. Why should I change? I've never even gotten to find out who I am and you want me to change? That's crazy! You tell me I'm bad before I even get to be anything. What is that? Original sin or something? I read Plato. I read him on a park bench in the Bronx and let me tell you something. Plato wasn't afraid. Diogenes wasn't afraid. Socrates wasn't afraid of anything. They were men. Why are you the headmaster and I'm the student? Do you understand? I have to earn your respect but you don't have to earn mine? What is that? It's you that wants the A before you even start. But when I say I want the same thing, I'm nuts, right? I'm not going to cry. I'm going to find my place in this world. Count on it. This school has been a miracle for me, but not because of you. Because somebody, Mr. Hoffman, finally SAW me. And more than that. Somebody, a grown person, decided I was good BEFORE I WAS GOOD. You want to throw me out of that? Then you know what I say: I've never met your God and I don't want to.
MR. SCHMITT. Okay. That was impressive. You can express yourself. I respect that. It doesn't mean you're exempt from anything. We can't stay in the Gardens of Academe till nightfall discussing and reinventing civilization. We have to deal with the challenge at hand. What about Jesus Christ?
JIM. What about him?