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Finding Forrester

By Mike Rich

Marker.

Hey, Jamal!

Jamal, you awake?

Jamal! I know you can hear me, boy.

Jamal, I'm writing all this down.

I've got that thing with your teacher
and I'm working late.

So you're gonna have to take care
of yourself for dinner, okay?

Okay?

Okay.

Hey, I thought you wanted

to get up by 7:

-Play the ball.

-Ball!

-Play the ball.

-Ball!

-You want to change things?

-Check that.

Play ball, baby. Stop crying.

Hold on. What up, J?

Where you been, man?

-What's up?

-Sleep, yo.

-Hey, what's up, man?

-Up wondering how to save your ass.

-What are you saving?

-Hey, Damon.

Let's go.

J, break him up, man.

Take the ball, man, okay?

-Oh, he broke your ankles, man!

-Yeah!

You can't give him that.

-You can't give him that.

-I'm awake.

Come on, yo.

-You got something for me?

-What you got?

Souffle, baby!

Where's the D?

Got nothing for me, man.

A lot of good that's doing.

-It's something for The Window.

-You ever seen him?

-The Window?

-Yeah.

No. But he see us, man.

Come on, what's wrong with y'all?

Y'all want to play ball?

-All right, baby.

-Wake up.

-You got to help me out, man.

-Shake it!

Hip-hop, man.

In 1845, Poe wrote his
most famous piece, ''The Raven''...

...a poem he wrote while strung out
on coke and obsessed with death.

''The Raven'' is like the football team.

There's a team obsessed with death.

Always get their ass kicked.

Baltimore Ravens, only pro football
team named after a classic poem.

Anyone read it?

''Once upon a midnight dreary
While I pondered, weak and weary....''

Jamal, how about it?

No, I never read it.

Okay, I need those essays
by next Tuesday.

Yo, man, my dad saw The Window, man.

Yo, man, my dad saw The Window, man.

About 20 years ago.

Just like a ghost, like the ones
that be in our science books.

-Just like that.

-So, what, he was white?

Ain't milk white?

-Ever see a ghost that wasn't white?

-Just playing.

I heard he killed somebody.

That's why he stays inside.

You gotta kill an army to hide here.

-True.

-Y'all play too much.

Remember Shurrita?

She used to live below The Window?
She calls me up this one night,
bugging, dog. Bugging.
Saying she heard this tapping
from upstairs by The Window's place.
Tap...
...tap...
...tap.
While she was on the phone,
she started screaming, dog.
Because now the tapping made
its way down the stairs somehow.
Tap...
-...tap, tap.
-Listen to him, fool.
And now it was on
the other side of her door, dog.
She could tell there was some
type of knife he was tapping with.
Before she can even hang up,
the phone disconnected.
-That's the last time we seen her.
-Shurrita from across the street?
Come on, man, yo.
You know that girl is a crack ho.
No, no, she was nice.
Listen, man, all I know is
that The Window's bad news.
Rules was, you go outside,
you stay away from The Window's place.
-No, stay away from your lying ass.
-Yo, J, you believe me, right?
You full of shit, dog.
Damn.
So let me guess.
So you'd go up in there, right?
It's an old man
looking out a window, man.
-You'll go?
-He won't go.
-So you'll go up there?
-Let them know, J.
-He's not gonna go.
-This nigga's scared.

Yo, I got the next call.

-So?

-So....

I dare you to go up there, right?

Right? Right?

-Whatever, man. I'll go up there.

-Yeah.

-He's going.

-Big shot. Superman.

-Bring it, son.

-That's my dog.

You feel me.

D, I believe you, dog.

Man, shut up.

Go to class or something.

Here, man, sit over here, son.

Are you kidding me?

Stop playing with me.

-It's a vibrant thing. Go over there.

-Fine.

Here, take your apple too.

-Ms. Joyce?

-Yeah. Hi.

Good to see you.

Have a seat here.

Thank you.

Okay.

We got Jamal's test scores
back this week.

-Test scores?

-Assessment tests.

The state education department
requires all kids to take them.

He didn't tell you?

Mrs. Wallace,

Jamal maintains a C average.

Which means he does just enough
to get by without standing out.

Now, what makes Jamal's case
unusual are his test results.

Oh, my God.

I see him reading all
these books all the time.

Books I never read.

Some I never even heard of.
And he's always writing
in his notebooks.
Ever since his father left.
But that's what I see.
All he ever talks about is basketball.
Basketball is where
he gets his acceptance.
Kids don't care about
what he puts down on paper.
Let's go! Between the yellow lines!
Let's go!
Yo, T.
What up, Fly?
-How you?
-Maintaining.
Look, look. You looking
for tickets, little bro?
Dead tonight.
Sorry about that.
Come on, man.
We know you got tickets.
I got four words for you:
Bos-ton Red Sox. All right?
The Yanks and Sox tickets, they damn
near been sold out almost a month.
All right, Mr. Fly?
And by the way, why don't you go
tell Camry boy over there...
...that he need to back up
his little cheap-ass bumper...
...on that Mercedes there.
Go handle that.
Let's go, Fly! Let's go!
What the hell, Jamal? Moms called.
Tell me about the test.
What's up with that?
-Nothing, man.
-What do you mean, nothing?
This in the way of your plans?
Remember, it was your plan first, T.
Yeah, I know.
A little college ball and all.
Then start signing checks,

solving everybody else's problems.

Look at me, though.

Whoa, hold a minute.

Hold on to these.

I guess this makes it our plan now.

-One thing.

-What up?

Don't say nothing

about them test scores.

Don't worry, I'm your brother, dog.

Whatever me and you discuss,

it stays between me and you.

-Right.

-Love you, dog. All right?

Make sure you keep one thing in mind:

Moms knows when the game ends,

so take your ass straight home.

-Okay.

-Don't get into no trouble.

Be careful. Stay safe, all right?

-Love, dog.

-All right, T. Good looking.

All right, Jamal. Be careful.

Stink in here.

J, you see that window?

He keeps that one cracked sometime.

Yo, light's been out

for two hours, dog.

You sure he asleep?

That Methuselah's like a thousand
years old. That's all they ever do.

Yo, J, man. For the reals, son,

I don't know about this.

-I know.

-I think I'm-- Oh, shit!

I think I'm gonna pull the call, yo.

-No, yo, I got this one.

-Rats.

All right. Yo, Fly.

Keep it.

You gotta bring something out.

Yo, man, you hear us,

drop down, all right?

All right.

Don't stay in there too long.
Got you.
Damn, this thing's rickety.
Lucy Chapman around?
Last stool on the other end.
Lucy Chapman?
-Yeah.
-I'm Bannion, Homicide.
With this band playing, you need
megaphones to talk at the bar.
-We can sit in a booth.
-All right.
-Yo, look, look!
-Oh, shit!
-Yo, yo, got something?
-Oh, shit!
-Yo, what happened?
-You son of a bitch!
Dickheads, he wasn't asleep.
-Yo, did you see him?
-No, not for long, yo.
Jamal, would you stop bouncing
that damn ball in the house?
I got Michael Jordan's name
written in dirt all over my floor.
Don't worry, I'll clean it.
I got a better chance
of Michael Jordan cleaning it.
If you're thinking of a shower,
the hot water's taking a few minutes.
-I wasn't thinking about it.
-Hey! Hey, where's your pack?
-I don't know.
-Don't know?
What do you mean, you don't know?
We wanted you to bring something,
not leave something.
Leave this one alone, man.
What was in your bag anyway?
I'm not talking about the damn bag.
Bet you ain't, man.
Let me teach you something.
Now watch the eyes.
He's probably watching you right now.

Stop. Stop. See?
You don't know about that, man.
Here's how you do it.
I'm not gonna do anything
to your car, man.
I'm sorry?
You look worried,
like I'll do something.
No, I worry about this car
everywhere, not just here.
-Don't take it personally.
-It's just a car.
No, it's not just a car. It's a BMW.
Those who know anything
about that company...
...know that it's more
than just a car.
Oh, those who know. So I wouldn't
know anything like that, right?
No, that's not what I meant.
Last thing I knew about BMW...
...is, they made plane engines
when they first started.
A guy by the name of Franz Popp
started it all.
Franz Popp. I like that name.
Made this one engine before 1920.
It flew six miles up.
Well, Popp and his boys were
just getting started, man.
Made this one engine,
the 801, World War II...
...14 cylinders,
2300 horsepower, seven miles up.
With more time, they would have
bombed the shit out of England...
...and maybe even won the war.
That's where this comes from.
White propeller zipping
around a blue sky.
After the war, they couldn't
make plane engines anymore.
And that's when BMW gave some
serious thought to making cars.

Kind of like this one.
But you probably knew all that,
since you lease one.
Thanks for the history lesson.
No problem, man.
Messing with my stuff, man.
Hey....
The other night was--
It was just this dare thing
me and my boys do.
Well, I was wondering maybe I could
bring you some more of my stuff...
...or maybe I could
write something else.
How about 5000 words on why you'll
stay the fuck out of my home?!
Come on, man, I know you in there.
Take your goddamn hand off my door!
I just came to drop off
that thing you asked me for.
What thing?
The 5000 words on why you wanted me
to stay out of your place.
That's kind of the way you said it.
Well, try remembering it
exactly as I said it.
Come on in, Jamal.
Hi, honey.
It's okay.
Sit down.
Mrs. Wallace, Jamal. When we got
your recent test scores...
...we figured there may be some
interest from private schools.
Well, it turns out we were right.
Mr. Bradley.
Jamal, Mrs. Wallace,
my name's David Bradley.
I'm with the Mailor School
in Manhattan.
-Mailor? Mailor-Callow?
-That's right. You familiar with us?
Yeah.
Jamal, Mailor-Callow is not only

the best prep school in the city...
...it's one of the finest
private schools in the East.
Only the best go there.
You may know we're a few weeks
into our fall term...
...but every year
we hold some openings...
...while we wait
for test scores to come in.
Jamal, your test scores...
...to put it mildly,
caught our attention.
I'm here to see if you'd be
interested in attending our school.
Jamal, we know leaving
for another school...
...especially a private school,
is not gonna be easy.
But this isn't the right place
for you anymore.
Jamal, it's not a difficult choice.
Mr. Bradley...
...there's no way
that we could pay for this.
We're not asking you to.
When Dr. Simon said,
'Only the best go to Mailor'...
...he neglected to mention...
...that our excellence extends beyond
the classroom.
I figured that.
We thought you might.
Mrs. Wallace, about 40 of our students
have gone on to play college ball.
Three have made it
to the professional level.
We evaluated your play last year.
While this is strictly
an academic offer...
...we won't be disappointed
if you choose to play.
All we ask is you come out for a
few days, take a look, think it over.

-Okay.

-Mrs. Wallace.

-Thank you.

-Jamal.

Goodbye.

We'll be in touch.

-I didn't knock this time, man.

-To whom were you speaking?

I'll tell you that

when I get my 5000 words back.

Bolt the door...

...if you're coming in.

The man in the car?

He was from this private school.

They want me to go there.

We don't have to pay anything, though.

We live a couple blocks from here,
me and my mom.

Well, my brother was there
a couple of years ago...

...but he left after my dad left.

My mom got tired of waiting
for my dad to get himself clean.

And my dad got tired of trying.

But that's when I started writing.

What's your name?

Jamal Wallace.

Sounds like some kind of marmalade.

How old are you?

I'm 16.

Sixteen!

And you're black!

-It's remarkable.

-Remarkable? What?

It's remarkable that I'm black?

What does me being black
got to do with anything, man?

You don't know what to do
right now, do you?

If you say what you
really want to say...

...I might not read any more of this.

But if you let me run you down
with this racist bullshit...

...what does that make you?
I'm not playing this game, man.
Oh, I say you are playing it.
An expression is worth
a thousand words.
But perhaps in your case just two.
Here.
What an asshole.
One hand to give, one hand to receive.
As we eat together in unity...
...may our minds, bodies
and spirits grow strong...
...and congratulations to Jamal.
Amen.
-Amen.
-Amen.
Did you see this?
-Let me see.
-Don't mess it up.
Wait a minute.
From the cover this look like
the funny-man school to me.
Terrell, eat your food.
You'll be fine, big bro, because
Mommy don't make nothing but soldiers.
You could have done the same thing.
I work at a parking lot. And I ain't
no regular parking attendant.
I am the supervisor
of all the parking attendants.
You don't know how much
you'll make from week to week.
One week it's \$50,
one week it's \$1 00.
-That's not a real job.
-Leave him alone.
Ma, look, I rap, I get busy.
You know I got my rap thing going.
Don't bring up the rap.
Eat your food.
-You don't want to hear my songs?
-Eat.
I'll sing it for you now.
When I come due

And I blow the spot
Yourson is supervisor
Of the parking lot
Tell her, Jamal.
My choice is hot, right?
Jamal Wallace?
Hi, I'm Claire Spence.
Bradley asked me to show you around.
All right.
Come on.
Don't worry about answering
any questions or anything.
Not till you decide
what you're gonna do.
Besides, the teachers here...
...aren't all that into
student participation.
They're busy listening
to themselves talk.
-What do you mean?
-You'll see.
This morning we begin our third
required reading of the semester...
...the study of a novel
that offers everything...
...and an author who could
have offered much more.
That's Robert Crawford.
Been here as long
as most of the buildings.
When William Forrester was 23,
in 1953...
...he set out to write his first book.
Many aspiring authors talk about
writing the great 20th-century novel...
...well, William Forrester did it.
On his first try.
Have you read this?
Yeah, you?
Only about a dozen times.
This was the only one
he chose to publish.
For all we know it was the only one
he chose to write.

Your job over the next week--
Your job over the next week
is to read it and tell me why.
So...

...you gonna be back tomorrow?
Yeah, they want me to spend
some time on the court.

Yeah, I heard.

Graduation was a little rough
on last year's team, that's all.
But it's just like college, right?
You get an education,
and they get what they want.
Maybe you both get what you want.
Yeah, maybe.

It was very nice meeting you, Jamal.
You too, Claire. You gonna
be around tomorrow?

Not where you'll be...

...but you might be able
to find me for lunch.

I didn't say those two words.

Why didn't you?

Because I want you to read
more of my stuff.

You know, they talk a lot
about you out there.

All this ''legend'' bullshit.

They got some stories, though.

People wonder if you killed somebody.

That, and wondering

why you been in here so long.

I wouldn't move, though.

I'd stay for the quiet.

You don't hear nothing in here.

Our place got these noisy neighbors.

Their kid's always yelling

because he's only a year old.

Or pops is yelling

because the kid's making noise.

Then mom's yelling--

But that's a different yelling...

...because that's when the old man's
playing the tunes for her...

...and she got her head
banging up against the wall.
She be screaming like....
-Then she--
-You better stir that soup.
What?
Stir the soup before it foams up.
How come ours never
gets anything on it?
Come on. Come on. Closer.
Now.
-You got somebody doing that yelling?
-What I have here is an adult male...
...quite pretty...
...probably strayed from the park.
A Connecticut Warbler.
You ever go outside to do any of this?
You should have stayed
with the soup question.
The object of a question is to obtain
information that matters to us...
...and to no one else.
You were wondering why
your soup doesn't foam up?
Probably because your mother
was brought up in a house...
...that never thought
about wasting milk in soup.
Now that question was a good one.
In contrast to,
'Do I ever go outside?'
Which fails to meet
the basic criteria...
...of obtaining information
that matters to you.
All right, man.
Guess I don't have
any more soup questions.
No?
Why did you say that stuff
about me being black?
It had nothing to do
with you being black.
It had to do with me finding out just

how much bullshit you'd put up with.
You knew I'd come back.
Yes, just like I know
you'll go to this new school.
How you know that?
Because there's a question
in your writing...
...suggesting what is it
you wish to do with your life.
And that is a question your present
school cannot answer for you.
Let's match up.
Wallace, you take Hartwell.
What's up, man? I'm Jamal.
Just check it, all right?
-Check the ball.
-Let's go, guys.
Come on now.
Ball's in.
Come on!
-Cover Danson! Get on him!
-Let's go.
Play him tough, play him tough.
Here, Johnny, inside!
Way to go. Way to go, gang.
Let's go, D up.
-Let's go, garbage.
-Come on.
-Come on.
-Step up. Step up.
Head's up.
Leave the trash-talking
back home, all right?
What?
Get that goofy look off your face.
-I'm gonna make you my son.
-Right.
-You gonna be my son.
-Come on.
Let's go.
-Come on, man.
-What?
-You're too small.
-What?

Nice handle.
Hartwell, a little defense
would be real nice.
Coach is right. A little defense.
Let's go.
-Try and get it past the line.
-What?
I said, get it past the line.
Is this too much? Pressure.
Too much.
I need some help!
Ten seconds. Let's go,
the other way.
I'm taking your spot?
-Taking what?
-Your spot.
Taking nothing. Come on.
My court, man. My court.
That's how we play down here.
That's right.
Hartwell's just a rich kid...
...who wants as much of the spotlight
as he can get his senior year.
That's all it is.
They take things real serious
around here.
Well, it's a serious place.
Serious enough I usually end up
here, getting lunch on my books.
What are you working on?
Forrester's book.
I thought you read it.
I know, but look at this.
My dad got it for me.
It's an early printing.
Listen, I gotta go.
But you just got here.
I know, but...
...I forgot something.
I gotta check up on something.
I'll see you later.
'Born 1930.
In Scotland.'
'Moved to New York with his family

in his late teens.
Mr. Forrester was unavailable
for comment.''
Yeah, I bet he was.
Are we now planning
to make these visits a habit?
Are we now planning
to make these visits a habit?
-You said you knew I'd be coming back.
-Yes, but I thought you meant once.
I need some help with
this thing at school.
Ah, yes, this thing at school.
And what 'thing' are we
talking about now?
You ever read that?
I'm trying, man.
I just can't seem to get past
the first 10 pages.
As I recall...
...I took a while
to get past those pages myself.
Oh, Christ, you've
dog-eared one of them.
Show a little respect
for the author, huh?
That's you, isn't it?
You're the author.
I read the whole thing.
It's not bad. Especially--
Hey...
...I know what it is.
I don't need another person
telling me what they think it is.
I wasn't gonna say that.
What were you gonna say?
I should tell you everything about me?
I told you about me.
You could learn
a little something about...
...holding back.
If I ask you not to say
anything to anybody...
...about here, us...

...is that something
I can trust you on?
Yeah.
I promise.
Fine.
And if I ask you to keep helping
me with my writing?
There'll be no questions...
...about me, my family...
...or why there was only one book.
Then I won't ask.
Good.
And good night.
What's it feel like?
What?
Writing something the way you did.
Perhaps you'll find out.
Listen, you 5-foot-nothing.
He's probably still
sleeping in the crib.
Kenzo, how old are you again?
Why?
Look at your face!
Did your mom do that to you?
She started you young.
You know where that starts from?
Eating too much cookie.
Teresa told me. She told me.
I like them big. You got a problem?
I like them big.
That big?
It's like when I'm with
all three of your mothers.
-You're not talking about my mother.
-Hold on, Oscar Mayer wiener.
Stop playing. You got beat
like Tina in school one day.
I seen Duke smack you up.
Listen, throw it at your mama.
Everything tilts towards your mama.
Your mama. Stop throwing your mama.
Why you laughing?
Yo, man, your glasses
are like Coke bottles.

Classics.

-You ever met somebody famous?

-How famous?

Like, I don't know...

...somebody people would know.

Nobody like that

comes around here, man.

So, you here for good now?

Yeah, I'm just trying to get started.

Well, at least they look good.

Right?

This year's writing competition
has now been scheduled.

For those who choose to take part,
entries must be turned in...

...before spring break.

Meaning, you still have
a few months of procrastination.

Feel free to experiment with
a more proactive approach. The--

Mr. Wallace!

Please.

I had a chance this morning...

...to review the files sent over
by your former school.

Test scores, impressive.

Actual classroom work...

...not so impressive.

Is this...

...the level of work

I should anticipate, Mr. Wallace?

Because if it is...

...it will help me determine whether
I should treat you as a student...

...or as someone here

simply to pursue--

How should I put it?

Other endeavors?

Of course your work will give you
ample opportunity to respond.

Good day, Mr. Wallace.

Just so you know,

you handled that the right way.

How's that?

You didn't say anything.

It's the ones that do
that run into trouble.

-John Coleridge.

-Jamal Wallace.

So how many people do say something?
And actually stay in Crawford's class?
Not many.

I missed what you said.

I didn't say anything.

You read all these?

No, I just keep them
to impress all my visitors.

All your visitors.

We talk about your book at school.

People have been talking
about it for years.

They just haven't been
saying anything.

Yeah, I think I got it down, though.

I figure you were writing
about how life never works out.

Oh, really? You had to
read a book to figure that out?

Yeah, but Crawford's
messed up on it anyhow.

Says the guy having trouble
after the war is really you.

Some symbolism shit for the problems
you were having with everybody.

Robert Crawford?

Yeah, I think it's bullshit, though.

I think there really was
somebody else.

Mr. Johannsen?

Here.

Mr. Massie! Another trip
to your favorite destination.

I've got four bags today.

I can leave them.

Oh, no, no.

Come right in.

How you doing, Mr. Johannsen?

At least a half-hour

before the sun goes down.
Then you can begin your
panic-driven quest back to Manhattan.
This should last you till next week.
Your mail is in...
...this one.
-Mr. Johannsen?
-Essentials are in--
Essentials?
I took care of your bills, and
I put all the copies in this one.
The phone company wonders
if you still want service...
...as you haven't had a call in six--
Okay.
I got your socks
for the next couple weeks...
...which are in this one.
And I have your latest check
from accounting.
They wanted to know if you
cashed the last one.
It's still showing up outstanding.
Not as outstanding as it once was.
I'm sorry, I didn't realize
you had company.
Oh, yes. We were just
having a discussion...
...on German automobile history.
-Care to join us?
-No, I'm in a tow-away.
Of course you are.
See you next week?
Not if I'm lucky.
Why not give that guy a break
and do your own shopping?
-And why are your socks inside out?
-Because socks are badly designed.
The seams are on the inside.
Hurt the toes.
In some cultures, it's considered good
luck to wear something inside out.
And you believe that?
No, but it's like praying.

What do you risk?
And I do go outside.
How do you think those windows
get cleaned?
Now, about this...
...professor of yours.
How did it feel having him
tell you what you can't do?
-Like he knew he was better than me.
-Then let's show him what you can do.
Why are the words we write
for ourselves...
...always so much better than those
we write for others? Move.
Sit.
Go ahead.
Go ahead and what?
Write.
What are you doing?
I'm writing. Like you'll be...
...when you start punching those keys.
Is there a problem?
No, I'm just thinking.
No. No thinking.
That comes later.
You write your first draft...
...with your heart...
...and you rewrite with your head.
The first key to writing...
...is to write.
Not to think.
Jesus!
Is there a chance you might sit down?
'A Season of Faith's Perfection.'
-What's this?
-Start typing that.
Sometimes the simple rhythm
of typing...
...gets us from page one to page two.
And when you begin to feel
your own words...
...start typing them.
Punch the keys, for God's sake!
Yes!

Yes!
You're the man now, dog!
Jamal...
...whatever we write
in this apartment...
...stays in this apartment.
No exceptions.
Okay, let's push it, guys. Come on.
-Heads up.
-Yo, D!
That's a foul, man.
-I had the spot.
-You'll know when you got the spot.
Hey, hey, gentlemen!
-Hey, hey!
-Our season begins in one week.
If I see this one more time, you'll
shoot fouls to see who runs today.
Is that understood?
Is that understood?
One.
Two.
Three.
Eleven.
Twelve.
Thirteen.
Twenty-nine.
Forty-eight.
Forty-nine.
Hold it.
One more.
That's one of the most impressive
things I've ever seen on a court.
Why do I know it wasn't good
enough for either of you?
Shower up and get out of here.
You may think we're the same.
We're not.
Oh, Mr. Wallace.
Mr. Wallace!
-Professor Crawford.
-The latest paper you turned in....
It showed quite a bit of improvement
from your earlier work.

-Thank you.

-Yes.

-How long did it take you to write it?

-I wrote it last night.

Last night!

Well, I have some things

to finish up here.

Good day, Mr. Wallace.

That's right. Select again.

-''Birds of a Feather'' for 600.

-Answer:

Vibrant in color, its name borrows
from this Vivien Leigh character.

-The scarlet tanager.

-It's, ''What is the scarlet tanager?''

What is the scarlet tanager?.

Gotta know the rules to play.

It was written by a writer

you have never heard of.

''Thy duty, winged flame of spring

Is but to love and fly and sing.''

He was writing about the song

of the tanager.

A song about new seasons, new life.

That's James Lowell, man.

I know who he is.

''I'll stay with 'Poor Assumptions'
for 800, Alex.''

You ever see any

scarlet tanagers around here?

They don't stray that far

from the park.

So your professor wasn't exactly

full of praise this afternoon.

No, not exactly.

Well, there's something you should

know about Robert Crawford.

He wrote a book

a few years after mine.

And all the publishers rejected it,

which was the right decision.

And instead of writing another one...

...he took a job

teaching others how to write.
How you know all that?
Just keep in mind that
bitterly disappointed teachers...
...can be either very effective
or very dangerous.
All right, this is
the first step tonight, guys.
'Mailor' on three.
One, two, three, Mailor!
Gold.
Black.
Up here, up straight and high.
Not yet.
-What up, J?
-What up? You was in there tonight?
Twenty-six points.
Eight of 1 0 from the floor.
Ten of 1 0 from the line.
-I'm supposed to miss that?
-All right, it was hot.
You were putting some serious ink
on that stat page, man.
What's going on?
Yo, brothers was going
by Red Rose, man.
I told them we catch up.
Friday night, kid.
Come on. Come on.
Hey, Jamal, you plan
on doing that every night?
-Worked out, I guess.
-I'd say it worked out.
This is Fly.
-Hi, Fly, I'm Claire.
-How you doing?
-You a friend of Jamal's?
-Claire!
Come on!
I'm coming.
Don't hold that bus up too long.
Nice meeting you, Fly.
All right! What the hell
you working there, man?

Shut up, man.
Yo, about Red Rose.
I ain't gonna make it.
I gotta go to this dude house.
They do it every year.
Don't be going off on this.
You big time. You best be going.
I don't want to hold your bus up.
You around this weekend?
Where you think I'm gonna be? In
the Hamptons?
It was very nice talking with you.
Remember, anything you need...
...please give me a call.
Okay? Anything.
Okay?
Building up a collection
of those things?
Yeah, a few.
Do you want to get outside
for a while?
Yeah. You know this place?
I live in this place. Come on.
They'll be in there till midnight,
congratulating themselves on your game.
Which means I get to cram tomorrow
for this test on Monday.
Test on what?
It's on the Sherlock Holmes books.
They have us tracking down
all this worthless stuff, like:
'Who introduced Watson to Holmes?'
They give it to you
to force you to read everything.
Looks like it might be a while.
Maybe so.
So this friend Fly.
How long have you known each other?
For a while. He was born there,
and I was born there too.
-In the Bronx?
-Yeah.
Must be hard.
What?

I don't know. New people, new school.
It's not?
No, what's hard is growing up
in a place...
...where the cops don't
even want to be after dark.
What's hard is knowing
that you're safe there...
...because the people
you need to worry about...
...know you got nothing
to give them.
So it's a good thing you're here.
Yeah, but these people don't think
I got anything to give them either.
Don't let me get by you.
Once I get by you, I'll score.
-Okay.
-You ready?
-Ready.
-Stay in front of me now.
-All right?
-Okay.
I got by you, man.
You're bigger than I am.
You still got to play defense.
How do I do that?
How do you play--?
I'll show you one right here.
Turn around.
Turn around.
Feel that?
I feel it.
I know where you'll go because
I can feel where you're gonna move.
All right, now try and move left.
I'm still here. You can't get around
me because I feel you moving left.
Try and go right.
See, I'm still here.
I feel when you try and go right.
So you can't go there neither.
Now try and get by me.
Hold on.

You gotta dribble first.
Dribble.
Dribble. Okay. Like this?
Yeah.
-Sorry.
-Claire.
Daddy.
Some of our guests are leaving.
I'll see you on Monday, okay?
Oh, Claire.
Yeah?
It was Stamford.
Excuse me?
At the bar in London.
He's the one who
introduced Watson to Holmes.
Might save you some time
after everybody's done in there.
You know how long I worked on that?
'One season of faith's perfection'?'
Feels like I worked on it
for two or three seasons.
Oh, you're in that place where
you can't even hear me.
Like I could ask why you
never moved from here...
-...and you wouldn't even get pissed--
-Paragraph three starts...
...with a conjunction, 'and.'
Never start a sentence
with a conjunction.
-Sure you can.
-Oh, no.
It's a firm rule.
No, no, no, see...
...it was a firm rule.
If you use a conjunction
at the start of a sentence...
...it can make it stand out a bit.
And that may be what the writer wants.
And what is the risk?
Well, the risk is doing it too much.
It's a distraction. It could
give the piece a run-on feeling.

But for the most part,
the rule on 'and' or 'but'...
...at the start is still pretty shaky.
Even though it's taught
in many schools by many teachers.
Some of the best writers
have ignored that rule for years...
...including you.
Well, you've taken...
...something which was mine...
...and made it yours.
That's quite an accomplishment.
Thank you.
The title is still mine, isn't it?
I guess.
Now, it was the neighborhood
that changed. Not me.
I ain't seen nothing change.
You 'ain't seen nothing'?
What in the hell kind
of sentence is that? Huh?
When you're in here,
don't talk like you do out there.
I was messing with you, man.
It was a joke.
I want to hear
about the neighborhood...
...back when people
still read your book.
What did you say?
Nothing.
You said, 'back when people
still read my book.'
Didn't you?
We have 24 copies.
But I'm sorry. They're checked out.
Oh. Well, thank you, anyway.
You're welcome.
Any luck?
Did you get on the waiting list?
Yeah, man, your book was checked out.
And yes...
...I did pay for dinner.
It cost me \$13,

so I guess you made your point.

I called to see what kind of food you wanted, but it kept ringing.

I took the bell out 20 years ago.

Let me ask you something.

How come a guy like you...

...wastes his time reading

The National Enquirer?.

What's wrong with it?

I mean, it's trash, man.

You should be reading

the Times or something.

I read the Times for dinner.

But this....

This is my dessert.

They got a contest at school.

This writing thing.

-You ever enter one of those?

-Writing contest?

-Yeah.

-Once.

A long time ago.

Did you win?

Well, of course I won.

Like money or something?

The Pulitzer.

Oh.

The students have to read

in front of everybody.

What the hell's that got

to do with writing?

Writers write

so that readers can read.

Let someone else read it.

You ever read your own book?

In public? Hell, no.

Barely read it in private.

You know those things you do,

that coffee-shop reading shit?

You know why they do it?

Sell books, I guess.

Because they want to get laid.

Really? Women will sleep with you

if you write a book?

Women will sleep with you
if you write a bad book.
-Did it ever happen to you?
-Sure.
Did you ever get married?
Not exactly a soup question, is it?
No. No, I never did.
I learned a few things
along the way...
...which might be of help with this
young lady you always talk about.
Like what?
The key to a woman's heart...
...is an unexpected gift
at an unexpected time.
You're giving me advice on women?
Unexpected gift, unexpected time.
This is so unexpected!
This is so unexpected!
Oh, Jamal.
It's not a first printing
or anything, but....
Oh, my God.
-What happened?
-This is a signed copy.
I can't accept it.
It must've cost a fortune.
It didn't cost that much. Really.
Maybe the bookstore missed it.
Bookstores don't
usually miss this stuff.
How did you end up going to Mailor?
Mailor was originally
an all-boys school.
So my father did what anyone
in his position would do.
He got on the board
and changed the rules.
And every kid there knows it.
They would've done it anyway.
That doesn't change anything.
I'm still 'Dr. Spence's daughter.'
Jamal.
Yeah?

That night at my home,
after the game...
...when you were showing me
how to play basketball.
Was that all you were showing me?
Listen, I don't think
that's gonna work.
What?
That.
Why not?
Ask your father.
Jamal, I'm not asking for some
kind of prenuptial agreement here.
It's just a question.
Why does everything have to be
so black and white with you?
I forgot what the question was.
You don't forget anything,
Mr. Stamford.
You don't think he wrote it?
That's a serious accusation, Robert.
You come to the board
with something like this....
I'm aware of how serious it is.
It's remarkable work.
You recognize any of it?
It smacks of something.
But I don't know.
The boy does well in my class.
He had good scores coming in.
Maybe all he needed was direction.
Carl, he's a basketball player...
...from the Bronx.
Who just happens
to have won 17 straight...
...for a school that likes winning.
Robert, have you considered
that he might just be that good?
Not this good.
Do you know what
the absolute best moment is?
It's when you've finished
your first draft...
...and you read it by yourself.

Before these assholes
take something...
...that they couldn't do
in a lifetime...
...and tear it down in a single day.
People love that book, man.
I didn't write it for them.
And when the critics
started all this bullshit...
...about what it was
I was really trying to say....
Well, I decided then...
...one book was enough.
William, that was 50 years ago, man.
William.
William, I actually spent money
on these tickets. Come on.
Is it still light outside?
It's nighttime, man.
Well?
You look good, man.
It's not the latest stuff out--
I wasn't asking how I look.
I was asking, are we ready to go?
Oh, yeah. Come on, man.
Let's go.
Come on.
We're playing here in two weeks.
I said we're playing in two weeks.
State tournament.
Come on.
Hold on. They got programs.
Let me get a program.
William.
Yo, William!
Damn.
William!
Hey, William!
William.
Come on, let's get you out of here.
I got you.
You used to get out, right?
Yeah, a long time ago.
-What happened?

-How the hell should I know?
I didn't keep track of the time.
Sorry for losing you back there.
No apology needed.
Good, because I got one more place.
It's quiet and it's on the way home.
You only got 10 minutes.
-All right.
-Keep it going.
-Take that. It's all good.
-Thanks a lot.
Ground level.
House that Ruth built.
Why did you bring me here?
Because it's your birthday, man.
I looked it up in the almanac.
They don't even have you
in the dead people section yet.
I figure with all
the games you watched...
...with whoever you watched them with,
you never got down this close.
-What the hell are they doing?
-What you worried about, man?
You acting like they gonna play
a World Series championship game.
Relax.
My brother and I,
we were here for every game.
Till he left for the war.
I thought it'd be the same
when he came back...
...but he talked a little less...
...and drank a little more.
I promised my mother I would
help him get through it all.
So I caught up with him
this one night...
...and I was already
half a dozen drinks behind.
So we had a few more.
And after a while
he tells me he wants...
...to drive me back to the apartment.

I said, 'No, thanks.'
We were all still living there then.
I just stood there...
...and watched him drive off.
Makes it through
the whole goddamn war...
...and I let him drive.
Later that night...
...the nurse was typing
whatever it is they type...
...and you know what she tells me?
She tells me how much
my book meant to her.
My brother's getting cold
in the next room...
...and all she can talk
about is a book.
Well...
...everything changed from then on.
Within five months,
I buried him, my ma, my father.
All of them here...
...in the Bronx.
We'd spent our summers here.
And if we were lucky, the fall.
A lot of falls with those teams.
Yeah, well...
...not enough.
'The rest of those
who have gone before us...
...cannot steady
the unrest of those...
...to follow.'
You wrote that in your book.
Jamal, I realize that
if I give you enough time...
...you'll find a way to amaze even me.
Does he know?
No, he doesn't know.
This was one of the best evenings
I've had in quite some time.
All of it?
Yes, all of it.
Well, I....

This guy, man.
How do you say you know
this guy again?
-He's my teacher.
-Oh, yeah?
Seems like a different kind of dude.
Anyone in particular?
I sometimes come here in the morning.
Just me, the aspiring...
...and all of them.
I got a note saying
I should come and see you.
Mr. Wallace...
...I think it's time you and I
had a very honest...
...and very open discussion
about your writing.
I thought you liked it.
Your recent work?
I liked it very much.
No, Mr. Wallace, the question
concerning your most recent work...
...isn't whether it's good.
It's whether it's too good.
The speed in your progress...
...from your old school
to this one is unusual.
To the point that I must draw
one of two conclusions.
Either you've been blessed with a rare
gift that has suddenly kicked in...
...or...
...you're getting your inspiration
from elsewhere.
Given your previous education
and your background...
...I'm sure you'll forgive me
for reaching my own conclusions.
I wrote those papers, man.
Then you won't mind showing me.
The next assignment
is due in two weeks.
I'll schedule some time
for you to come to my office.

I'd like you to write it there.
In the meantime, if there's anything
you wish to talk about....
I'm not writing anything, man.
Which proves what?
If a two-comma kid wrote the papers,
would he use this 'background' shit?
-Two-comma kid?
-A million dollars.
-One comma, two commas.
-No.
No, I don't.
Do you know what people
are most afraid of?
-What?
-What they don't understand.
When we don't understand,
we turn to our assumptions.
Crawford cannot understand...
...how a black kid from the Bronx
can write the way you do.
So he assumes you can't.
Just like I assume he's an asshole.
You knew him, didn't you?
Crawford?
No.
But he thought he knew me.
So what's all this stuff
about his book?
A lot of writers know
the rules about writing...
-...but don't know how to write.
-So?
So Crawford wrote a book
about four authors who did know.
And I was the only one still alive.
-And?
-He convinced a publisher to buy it.
So I made a polite telephone call...
...to this publisher,
telling him and others...
...that I was in the process
of writing a second book.
And if they wished to bid on it--

Oh, so that's why
Crawford's book went away.
But you knew there wouldn't
be a second book.
Yeah, but they didn't.
Interesting what happens when
the resources aren't close at hand.
The rich tradition of handing
in competition entries...
...on the final day continues...
...for yet another year.
Ladies and gentlemen...
...may I have your attention...
...please, if you don't mind.
'Ere sin could blight or sorrow fade
Death came with friendly care
The opening bud to heaven convey'd--'
How nice of you to join us.
That's not part of the poem.
'And bade it blossom there.'
Anyone?
A little more early morning
reticence than usual.
Mr. Coleridge.
Please.
Mr. Coleridge...
...how many students would you say
we have here today?
I'm not sure.
Perhaps you could
humor us with a guess.
-Thirty?
-Thirty.
And of that 30, there isn't one person
who knows the author of that passage.
I find that remarkable.
Don't you, Mr. Coleridge?
Perhaps we should back into this.
In looking at this, what, if any,
conclusions might we be able to draw?
You mean about the author?
About anything.
Do any of the words
strike you as unusual?

Feel free to view this as
the appropriate time for a response.

'Ere.'

'Ere.' And why is that unusual?

Because...

...it sounds old.

It does sound old, doesn't it?

And you know why

it sounds old, Mr. Coleridge?

Because it is old.

More than 200 years old.

Written before your father was born,
before your father's father was born.

But that still does not
excuse the fact...

...that you don't know who wrote it,
now does it, Mr. Coleridge?

I'm sorry, sir, I don't--

You, of all people in this room,
should know who wrote that passage.

And do you know why, Mr. Coleridge?

I repeat, do you know why?

Just say your name, man.

Did you have something
to contribute, Mr. Wallace?

I just said that

he should say his name.

And why would it be helpful
for Mr. Coleridge to say his name?

Because that's who wrote it.

Very good, Mr. Wallace.

Perhaps your skills...

...do extend a bit farther
than basketball.

If we can turn to page--

You may be seated, Mr. Coleridge.

Turn to page 120

in the little blue book that--

Further.

I'm sorry?

Don't.

You said my skills extend 'farther'
than the basketball court.

'Farther' relates to distance.

'Further' is a definition of degree.
-You should have said 'further.'
-Are you challenging me, Mr. Wallace?
No more than you challenged Coleridge.
Perhaps the challenge
should have been directed elsewhere.
'It is a melancholy truth that even--'
'--great men have poor relations.'
Dickens.
'You will hear the beat of--'
Kipling.
-'All great truths begin--'
-Shaw.
-'Man is the only animal--'
-''--that blushes...
'...or needs to.'
It's Mark Twain.
Come on, Professor Crawford--
Get out!
Get out.
Yeah. I'll get out.
-Leave it alone.
-Hold on, please.
So they kick you out
if you know something here?
You don't know what Crawford will do.
You're right about that.
Jamal!
-Do you think you should apologize?
-No.
-Do you?
-No.
You did nothing wrong.
Just beat him at his own game.
But...
...it would be a good time
to be careful.
Careful? Careful about what?
You have a gift that will allow you to
do remarkable things with your life.
That is, if you don't screw it up...
...by being a 16-year-old
right now.
-Jamal.

-Yeah.

-You got a call from the office.

-All right.

Mr. Wallace. Please.

As you know, Professor Matthews
is on the faculty board.

And Dr. Spence is chair
of the trustees board.

We've been reviewing the writing
competition submissions.

We were hoping you might clarify some
points concerning your submission.

'A Season of Faith's Perfection.'

Your piece, correct?

Yeah, that's it.

Mr. Wallace, it is standard policy
with us to ask students...

...if they wish to credit
any source material...

...or acknowledge any other writers
when turning in an assignment.

Do you wish to do that?

1 960.

An essay titled

'Baseball's Best Year'...

...with a subtitle that reads

'A Season of Faith's Perfection.'

Published in The New Yorker
and written by...

...one William Forrester.

Your version is actually
quite original...

...but there is the title
and first paragraph to consider.

Isn't there?

Jamal, either you happen to have...

...the permission
of William Forrester, or....

Have you some other explanation?

No.

That's my paper.

Well, then,

your entry is now withdrawn...

...and it becomes a matter

for the board to consider.
The board does have the authority
to place you on academic probation...
...which would, among other things,
prevent you from playing basketball.
Since the board doesn't meet
till next week...
...you can play in this
weekend's state championship.
But I have to warn you, the board has
a history of taking these matters...
...quite seriously.
So we would like to suggest
what we feel...
...is a solution that
may satisfy these concerns.
Robert.
What matters most is to ensure
this type of violation isn't repeated.
So...
...you will write an apology to the
students you took advantage of...
...by submitting this piece.
-You'll read it in front of my class.
-I'm not reading anything.
Then I'm sure the board will consider
that when reviewing your scholarship.
You haven't left us
with too many options, Jamal.
Excuse me.
Don't ever embarrass me
in front of my class.
Please return the pen
when you're finished.
No conventional greetings today?
Why have me rewrite
something you published?
-Be careful where you take this.
-Why not tell me some magazine ran it?
Why the hell does it matter?
Man, you should have told me.
What did you do with it?
I turned it in.
I turned it in.

I had to show them something.
You promised me anything we wrote
in here would stay in here.
I know!
-I just thought--
-Shut up.
What are they telling you?
I go on probation unless I write
a letter saying I was wrong.
Then write the letter.
I said I'm not writing anything.
You got him, he gets you.
Write the letter.
And you'd let him do that?
Is this supposed to be
another damn lesson?
I'm tired of all these lessons
every time I come here.
So your title's
at the top of my paper.
-What's the lesson in that?
-I'm not the one who turned it in.
Yeah, but you were the one
who just had to say:
'Keep this one here because
it got printed in The New Yorker.'
That's all you had to say, man.
-I could use some help on this one.
-Oh, no. That's not an option.
-You don't even have to go--
-I said that's not an option.
That's all right, man.
Got a nice history
of people not helping me.
Oh, Christ. Not that self-pity,
father bullshit.
What did you say?
Man, fuck you, William!
The real bullshit
is me taking it on this one...
...because you won't
walk out the door...
...and do something for somebody else.
You're too damn scared, man!

That's the only damn reason.
You don't know
a goddamn thing about reasons.
There are no reasons!
Reasons why some of us live
and why some of us don't.
Fortunately, you have decades
to figure that out.
What's the reason for having a cabinet
full of writing nobody ever reads?
What is that, man?
I'm done with this shit.
Give him the ball again.
Oh, look. Jamal Wallace,
here to pay us a visit.
What's up?
-What's up, man?
-What's up, y'all?
Come on.
I know, I know. I've seen it.
How's your first game
in the Garden feel?
A little closer than I thought.
That's why I thought it might be
a good time for us to talk.
I know it's difficult handling classes
with the time you spend on the court.
I couldn't handle that load.
Not at this school.
And maybe it was unfair of us
to ask you to do it.
I talked to the board members
and to Crawford...
...and...
...we don't want to pursue this
any more than you do. Any of it.
I'm here to present you with an offer.
We forget about the whole thing.
Next year, your academic schedule
will be less demanding.
You mean Crawford wanted that?
Crawford wants what's best for you
and for the school.
So, what am I supposed to do?

You hold up a championship trophy
at the end of this tournament.
You make that happen,
I'll make the rest of it happen.
All right?
Now go finish up
what you came here to do.
Let's go, Pilgrims!
Let's go, Pilgrims!
Okay, let's go! Throw it to Jamal!
Damn, man. Come on, man!
Defense! Defense!
Jamal, get the ball!
Good pass, man. Good pass.
Get up there.
Pick it up!
Offensive foul! That way!
Ten, gold. Offensive! That way.
Okay, you got them now. Let's go.
Time-out! Time-out!
This is still our game.
We make a stop here,
they'll have to put us on the line.
When that happens, it's all over.
Don't lose your composure out there.
If they score,
we don't call a time-out.
The ball goes to Hartwell or Wallace.
Okay? Hartwell or Wallace.
Let's go, guys.
Go!
What's the score?
It ain't looking good, Ma.
It ain't looking good.
Foul, 22 blue! Two shots.
Foul's blue team, 22.
Hit, two. Go line up, guys.
Two shots.
Come on. We're gonna make these.
I can't look.
It's gonna be all right, Ma.
Do it.
Damn.
One shot.

That's game.
Thank God!
He must have come in after we left.
Let him sleep.
-I'm gonna turn his bedroom light off.
-Turn it off and come on.
You started cleaning up
your room, Jamal.
He looks very happy with himself,
that coyote. Look, ears down....
Jamal, he wrote that for you.
When?
After the game.
He's going back to the school
this morning.
It's funny, though.
They always let you get but so far...
...before they take
everything away from you.
God, he's such a good kid, man. Then
he gets to come back to this shit.
That seat open?
I think so.
This isn't exactly
where I thought I'd find you.
This is still my school.
They want me out,
they'll have to do it themselves.
They will.
Whatever.
' 'The winter's darkness and cold
is but a momentary prelude...
...to the new day of spring.
And while its grip seems endless...
...our perseverance proves equal.
We renew ourselves once again...
...seeking out the bright moments
that will serve--
That will serve therefore....
Therefore serve as the foundation
of our future.' '
Thank you.
Professor Crawford...
...may I read a few words?

What's he doing here?
Yes, of course...
...by all means.
Thank you, professor.
My name is...
...William Forrester.
Excuse me.
I'm that one.
'Losing Family.'
'Losing family...
...obliges us to find our family.
Not always the family
that is our blood...
...but the family
that can become our blood.
And should we have the wisdom
to open our door to this new family...
...we will find that the wishes
we once had for the father...
...who once guided us...
...for the brother,
who once inspired us....
--the only thing left to say will be:
'I wish I had seen this, or I wish
I had done that, or I wish--''
Most of you are too young...
...to know what your wishes will be.
But when I read these words...
...words of hope and dreams...
...I realize that the one wish...
...that was granted to me
so late in life...
...was the gift of friend--
Of friendship.
Mr. Forrester, I'm sure I speak
on behalf of everyone here...
...in thanking you for this
unexpected visit.
The quality of your words...
...is something we should all
aspire to reach.
Mr. Forrester?
Mr. Forrester, may I ask...
...to what do we owe this honor?

Professor Crawford...
...I spoke here today...
...because a friend of mine
wasn't allowed to.
A friend who had the integrity
to protect me...
...when I was unwilling
to protect him.
His name is Jamal Wallace.
Jamal Wallace is a friend of yours?
Yes. Yes, he is.
I helped him to find his own words...
...by starting with some of mine.
And in return, he promised...
...never to say anything to anybody
about me.
A promise which he kept.
Mr. Forrester...
...while your visit
appears to be heartfelt...
...I'm sure you will appreciate...
...that it will not change
or interfere...
...with this institution reaching a
fair and proper decision in his case.
There's one more issue here.
Those words that I read today...
...I didn't write them.
Jamal Wallace did.
Quiet.
Quiet! Quiet, please!
Be still.
Quiet, please.
That has no bearing...
...on the decision concerning--
As director of this competition,
I have final say in this matter.
Robert, sit down.
I have been a teacher
for more than 30 years.
That's long enough to know that
integrity counts for something.
I'd say that Mr. Forrester...
...has cleared up this matter

very nicely for us all.
And as chairman
of the faculty board...
...I have the last word
in that matter.
Mr. Wallace, you are excused
from next week's board meeting.
Mr. Forrester...
...should you ever have an interest
in a teaching position....
No.
Jamal, these are your words?
Sixteen.
Remarkable.
Well done.
I'm thinking you'll make
your own decisions from here on.
I'm thinking you're about to say
something more like, 'I always could.'
No. No more lessons.
But I have a question, though.
Those two foul shots
at the end of the game...
...did you miss them?
Or did you miss them?
Not exactly a soup question, is it?
Let's go.
Do you think our vaudeville act today
will merit the National Enquirer?.
Yeah, definitely.
Whatever happens...
...I'm off.
What's the word that you and
your friends would use for that?
Leaving?
Oh, God.
Where are you off to?
I have a homeland I haven't seen
for too long.
You mean Ireland.
Scotland, for God's sake.
I'm messing with you, man.
Be sure to write.
-Hey, Jamal.

-What's up?
What's up, John?
You heard from William?
Yeah, but I don't know
what he's doing.
He keeps sending letters checking up
on these college recruiters.
I was just downstairs.
Looks like you got another one.
Word?
I'll see you around.
Jamal?
Steve Sanderson.
-How you doing?
-Good.
Thanks for coming
on such short notice.
No problem.
So, what school are you from?
Oh, no. I'm a lawyer here in town.
-I work with Roberts and Carter.
-Oh, a lawyer.
Yeah, but congratulations with that.
That's great.
That's really, really...great.
We got a bunch of the guys
in the office following you.
But we're the legal representation
for William Forrester.
How is he?
Here...
...sit down.
We've received word that William...
...passed away.
I'm sorry.
He wanted you to have...
...these things right away.
What happened?
William had cancer.
They found it a couple years ago.
Jamal, this is crazy.
Oh, my God.
Wow!
-Look at all these books.

-Don't touch anything.

Dear Jamal:

Someone I once knew wrote that
we walk away from our dreams...
...afraid that we may fail,
or worse yet, afraid we may succeed.
While I knew so early
that you would realize your dreams...
...I never imagined
I would once again realize my own.
Seasons change, young man.
And while I waited
until the winter of my life...
...to see the things I've seen
this past year...
...there is no doubt
I would have waited too long...
...had it not been for you.
You gonna be here a while, man?
Just can't watch the eyes this time.
You'll be okay, man. Come on.
Come on, man.
Get up.
You're missing lay-ups now?
What happened to you, boy?
Where did the first step go, man?