JEFF. Pretty good. The police were just here, but they didn't ask about you, and I signed them right in. It was that cop Bill and his partner. He said tell William Bill says hi.
WILLIAM. Was that all?
JEFF. That was all.
WILLIAM. *(Sitting down.)* OK …
JEFF. Oh, yeah, and I told Manuel to clean up the desk.
WILLIAM. *(Takes out cigarettes.)* What?
JEFF. I said, I told Manuel to clean up the desk — to straighten up the desk drawers —
WILLIAM. Oh yeah, yeah, thank you.
JEFF. I really laid into him, too, because this desk is disgusting. I mean, when you open this drawer it should be *spotless*. I told him I want to be able to eat my *breakfast* outta this drawer tomorrow morning. I told him you were ready to kill somebody about these drawers. I really did.
WILLIAM. OK, Jeff. Thanks.
JEFF. You're welcome. Taken care of. *(Long pause.)* You're not very chatty tonight …
WILLIAM. What?
JEFF. I said you're not very chatty tonight. You're not really holding up your end of the conversation very well.
WILLIAM. Sorry, Jeff, I've got a lot on my mind.
JEFF. That's OK. We don't have to talk about anything. I'm just glad to see your smiling face.
WILLIAM. Same here, Jeff. You just keep talking. If I hear anything worth responding to I'll just jump in.
JEFF. OK. *(Pause.)* How's your brother doing?
WILLIAM. I don't know. I haven't spoken to him.
JEFF. Did you find out what he did? Oh no, you knew what he did, you just didn't want to tell *me* about it. That's OK. I forgot. That's completely fine. That is completely fine. I don't mean to sound so inquisitive. I'm sorry. *(Pause.)* So did you see where the mayor says he's gonna shut down all the —
WILLIAM. *(On "shut.")* All right, let me ask you something, Jeff. Suppose somebody who's supposed to be near and dear to you was accused of doing some kind of terrible crime, and was trying to use you as an alibi. What would you do, for example, if it was a false

alibi? That is to say, you weren't with the person when they said that you were?
JEFF. I don't know. I guess it would depend on who they were and what …
WILLIAM. Yeah, see, we already part company. I like to tell the truth.
JEFF. Well, so do I —
WILLIAM. What are you talking about, man? I didn't even get through the details of the hypothetical situation and you're already gearing up to perjure yourself.
JEFF. No I'm not. I was just — I mean if it was my *mother* or something —
WILLIAM. Right, because that's what everybody expects, right? But that's where I part company with ninety-five percent of the human race. So I'm a freak. But I wouldn't do it.
JEFF. Are you talking — I assume you're talking about your brother?
WILLIAM. It doesn't matter who I'm talking about.
JEFF. So but what did he do?
WILLIAM. I don't know what he did, man, because he hasn't been tried in a court of law.
JEFF. What are you, some kind of Robotron? What did they *accuse* him of?
(Pause.)
WILLIAM. They say — They arrested him and two friends for allegedly going into a hospital last night to steal pharmaceutical drugs, and some nurse apparently saw them and they attacked her —
[redacted]
WILLIAM. … and they beat her up with a pipe or something like that, and now she's dead.
[redacted] …
WILLIAM. … And according to my brother's girlfriend, my brother told the police I was with him at the time at some movie.
[redacted]
WILLIAM. Yeah, gave her a whole made-up schedule what we were supposedly doing last night for me to memorize: What movie, who called who, what time we ate, who ate what, you wouldn't believe it. See, he can't handle getting a job or applying

start

himself to go to school, but he has the wherewithal to come up with *that* shit on the spur of the moment when he's in the jailhouse under arrest for murder at two o'clock in the morning.

JEFF. Wow.

WILLIAM. "Wow."

JEFF. Well, would — I mean, God, I mean — do you —

WILLIAM. And it's not like … See, his girlfriend called me tonight, and apparently two of my brother's friends — these *real* criminals, mind — were identified by some doctor, and the cops picked them up and they named my brother as the third guy. But the doctor didn't really get a good look at him, so they're trying to dig up something substantial that would link him to the scene. And meanwhile my brother says he was at home alone, no alibi, and so would I say he was at the movies with me last night.

JEFF. Jesus Christ.

WILLIAM. See, I don't think *he'd* ever do anything that fuckin' heinous, but he's definitely done a lot of other shit. And I know these guys he's always with, and … You know, I want to be objective about it, to some degree. I want to … I can't just be saying, "Well, seeing as how he's my brother, it is therefore impossible for him to have done this ghastly thing." You know what I mean?

JEFF. Yeah …

WILLIAM. I just wish I had more information. But who am I gonna talk to? His girlfriend? She just parrots everything he says; she's got no will of her own. And what's *he* gonna tell me? That he's guilty? He knows what I'll do then.

JEFF. Yeah … Wow.

WILLIAM. And I am not the type of person who sympathizes with the criminal element in this kind of situation. Not at all. But the fact remains that there's a lot of people in jail who don't belong there, a lot of black people in jail who don't belong there, and a lot of cops and prosecutors and what have you who would just as soon throw somebody in jail as nobody. And I hate to say it, but my brother is tailor-made for the part, and if he's being railroaded in some way, I don't know what right I may have to my private reservations. So it's an interesting dilemma. It's interesting. But I'll tell you something, Jeff, and you can quote me on this right now: If he had anything to do with killing that woman I'd sooner put a bullet through his head

myself than lift a finger to help him. Because that is inhuman. Inhuman. Even if he was just standing *by* … Some innocent person … And all she did was show up at work that night? *(Pause.)* But we're hoping it's all some terrible misunderstanding, right?

JEFF. Right. Right.

WILLIAM. So what would *you* do there, Jeff?

JEFF. Me? Oh, well, the first thing I would do is I would definitely try to find out if my brother was with those guys or not. Because that could really inform the whole situation right there. *(Pause.)*

WILLIAM. Well no fuckin' shit, Jeff, how in the world do you expect me to do that?

JEFF
Don't get mad at me, you asked me what I would do!

WILLIAM.
Well what the fuck do you expect me to do? "Find out if he was there or not." Hot *dog*, I never would have thought of *that*.

All right, all right!

All right!

WILLIAM. If I could just find *that* out, the rest of this shit might just fall right into place!

JEFF.
Well can't you go see him? Can't you talk to him? You'll be able to tell whether or not he's lying —

WILLIAM.
No I can't go see him, Goddamn it, he's locked up in fuckin' Riker's Island! I can't go see him till after the arraignment!

OK, what about his girlfriend? Maybe you should go see her —

I already talked to her, Jeff! Look, look, I don't actually expect you to solve this for me. Let's just forget I brought it up.