

SCENE 5. A DARK CAFE.

Aging hippies and youths from various counter cultures mill around drinking coffee. There is a stage with a lecturn and shitty banners that say "Stop Police Brutality" and "Free Mumia." A punk kid nurses his guitar for the last bit of feedback, and bows to moderate applause. JIM takes the stage, smoking a cigarette, and opens his notebook on the lecturn.

JIM  
Hi, everybody.

JIM elicits minimal response.

JIM  
It's a pleasure to be here. I, uh... I like to do what I can to support police brutality. I mean, to oppose it. You know. Anyway, I um... I have two poems.

JIM shuffles some papers and clears his throat.

JIM  
They're still, you know, rough drafts. I wrote them at work today. So hopefully they'll be more polished soon.

In back, LISA takes a swig from a flask. A well-dressed, slightly older, man comes to stand next to her.

MAN  
Hi, I'm Kurt. I couldn't help but notice you drinking by yourself, and wonder 'what is a pretty woman like that doing drinking by herself?'

LISA offers KURT the flask. KURT takes the flask and drinks.

LISA  
Hi, Kurt.

Onstage, JIM drops a sheet of paper and chases it as it blows across the the stage. After he grabs it, he returns to the mic and laughs nervously.

JIM  
Sorry, I needed that. I mean, I don't have it memorized yet, because it's so new.

JIM adjusts the mic clumsily and gets some feedback. He starts snapping his fingers rhythmically

JIM

I saw the man walk the street; The  
cops were there, on their beat;  
They scowled as he moved his feet;  
The man was black, it wasn't neat;  
That he had dreads; Upon his head;  
They needed a man from his  
location; To take downtown to the  
police station; To face a charge;  
Of someone at large; They could  
not catch, To put behind latch;  
and key, in jail; he's get no  
bail; The man resisted; The cops  
insisted...

KURT

This guy's a loser.

LISA

Yeah.

JIM

With club and fist; He could  
resist; No longer ; They were  
stronger ; They took him bloodied  
off to jail; One more time, the  
system fails; When he gets out, no  
restitution; instead he'll meet  
with destitution...

KURT

Let's get out of here.

LISA

Yeah, okay.

KURT and LISA leave.

## SCENE 6. AN ADOLESCENT'S MESSY BEDROOM.

SANDER listens at the door to his room, then lies on the floor by his bed and reaches up into the bedframe. He pulls out a key, goes over to his dresser, and unlocks the top drawer. He takes out a bag of weed, a lighter, and a pack of cigarettes. The drawer also contains a crappy pipe, a bottle of beer, several Victoria Secret catalogues, a bottle of lighter fluid, and a bottle of peach schnapps. SANDER puts on a hooded sweatshirt and sunglasses, and is pulling on his jacket when there's a knock at his door and the door opens. He jumps and turns around.

SUZANNE

Where do you think you're going?

SANDER

I'm going to meet Adam.

SUZANNE

Where?

SANDER

At his house.

SUZANNE

I don't like you walking around at this hour.

SANDER

Mom! It's only 9 o'clock!

SUZANNE

And your bedtime is 11.

SANDER

I'm 15 years old, Mom. I don't have a bedtime.

SUZANNE

I know you got home late last night.

SANDER

I was only a few minutes late. Adam and Jane get to stay out until midnight, and Rob doesn't have a curfew at all.

SUZANNE

Well, it's not my fault that I love you and I worry about you. There's a murderer in our neighborhood.

SANDER

We live in Chicago! There's always a murderer in our neighborhood.

SUZANNE

Well, that's hardly going to convince me to let you go out gallivanting around the neighborhood. These weren't hoodlums of "gang bangers." They were a nice young university couple, not much older than you.

SANDER

So I'm never going to get to out again? I have friends, Mom!

SUZANNE

You've been spending an awful lot of time with Jane lately. Is she a potential girlfriend?

SANDER

Mom!

SUZANNE

Why are you wearing sunglasses? It's dark out.

SANDER

It's what kids do these days. You wouldn't understand.

SUZANNE

It's what drug users do. It's all over the papers. You won't impress Jane by looking stupid.

SANDER

I'm not trying to impress Jane! And I don't care if you think I look stupid. Are you going to make me stay home? Do I need to call Adam and tell him to do his homework by himself?

SUZANNE

Mrs. Richards told me that your homework showed a "lack of dedication." Now it's okay if you want to go hang out, but don't take me for a fool.

SANDER

So I can go?

SUZANNE

You can go, but I want you to go straight to Adam's and come straight home, and I want you home by 11.

SANDER puts in his headphones and turns his walkman way up.

SANDER

Thanks a lot.

SANDER leaves the house. The crappy little dog barks at him the whole time. He turns down the first alley and tries to light a cigarette, but it's too winder. He puts his face into the corner of a doorway, obscuring all vision of the alley, headphones still blaring, and spends several seconds lighting his cigarette. He continues down the empty alley to the park where ROB, JANE, and ADAM sit on a bench, smoking a joint.

ADAM

The paper said it might snow tonight.

ROB

It'd be sweet if they closed school.

JANE

It's not even freezing out.

ROB

I know, I'm just saying it'd be sweet.

SANDER walks up, grooving awkwardly to his music. He take off his headphones.

SANDER

Shit, man. Let me hit that. I need to get stoned.

JANE takes one more long drag and gives the joint to Sander.

ADAM

What's the matter?

SANDER

My mom is so fucking crazy!

JANE

Dude, it's dark out. What's with the sunglasses?

ADAM

What'd she do?

SANDER

She was all like "Don't go out! There are murderers out there!" and she was getting all hysterical and shit. I was like "Mom, I've got to have friends, ok? We live in Chicago, there are always murderers out there."

JANE

That's not a very good argument.

ROB

Why's your mom freaking out about murderers?

SANDER

Two students got pushed from their apartment and fell, like, seven stories or some shit.

JANE

Oh shit. Was that right over there on Thornwood? There's all that police tape up over there.

ADAM

Yeah, the brown building with the flower pots with beer bottles in them. The paper said it was a double suicide, though.

SANDER

All I know is, my mom was freaking out.

JANE

Yeah, it must have been suicide. I mean, those buildings have security and everything.

ROB

Who wants to kill a couple students, anyway? Come on, Sander, puff, puff, pass!

JANE

Man, this neighborhood is going fucking crazy. You know how Mr. Foster hasn't been there all week? I heard he just locked himself in his apartment and he won't come out or answer the phone, or anything. They know he's not dead because he yells shit at anybody who knocks on his door.

ROB

Weird, man. My brother says that when he does inventory at the cafe, all sorts of weird shit is missing. Like, two chairs and crate of tortillas.

Silence.

ADAM

Did you guys tell anybody about last night?

ROB

No.

JANE shakes her head.

SANDER

Hell, no, man.

ADAM

Me either.

ROB

I been thinking about it all day.

Everybody nods and mutters in agreement.

ROB

I mean, after that shit, it's like "fuck it." You know?

SANDER

Yeah, man.

ADAM

No, not really.

ROB

It's like, why bother? It's all bullshit. School and everything. Why not just join a monastery and

get it all over with?

ADAM

Get what over with?

ROB

I don't know, man. It's like, all we do in life is try to make sense out of shit, right? And then some shit just blows all that away. So why bother?

JANE

Dude, are you tripping?

ROB

It kind of feels like it.

SANDER

Maybe the weed last night was laced with something. Maybe we really were tripping.

ADAM

What did you see, Sander?

SANDER

There was a light, and then there was a kid, and then he was gone.

ADAM

That's what I saw, too.

SANDER

Maybe it was some kind of optical illusion.

ROB

No, man. There was a kid, and then there wasn't. It was ghost, but I don't believe in that shit.

JANE

My grandmother believes in ghosts. When my great grandmother died, there was a necklace that my grandma really wanted, but my great aunt really wanted it, too. They fought about it and then they felt bad and decided to bury it with my great grandma. Then, like, fifteen years later, after my great aunt died, my grandma had her picture taken, and in the

picture she's wearing the necklace.

ROB

My brother's girlfriend, Lisa, believes in ghosts too. She told me this story... it was, like, this old woman who died in this room, and then later they saw a window with a shadow behind it, but there was nobody there.

JANE

That story sucked.

ROB

It was, like, through the blinds or some shit. Fuck you.

JANE

(To Adam)

Tell them about the investigators.