

(Beat. HAL enters.)

HAL: Hey, I—

(CATHERINE stands and points triumphantly at him.)

CATHERINE: Harold Dobbs!

HAL: (Confused) Hi.

CATHERINE: Okay? I really don't need this, Claire. I'm fine, you know, I'm totally fine, and then you swoop in here with these questions, and "Are you okay?" and your soothing tone of voice and "Oh, the poor policemen"—I think the police can handle themselves!—and bagels and bananas and jojoba and "Come to New York" and vegetarian *chili*. I mean it really pisses me off so just *save* it.

(Beat.)

CLAIRE: (Smoothly, to HAL) I'm Claire. Catherine's sister.

HAL: Oh, hi. Hal. Nice to meet you. (Uncomfortable beat.) I . . . hope it's not too early. I was just going to try to get some work done before the uh—if uh if . . .

CLAIRE: Yes!

CATHERINE: Sure, okay.

(HAL exits. A moment.)

CLAIRE: That's Harold Dobbs?

CATHERINE: Yes.

CLAIRE: He's cute.

CATHERINE: (Disgusted) Eugh.

CLAIRE: He's a mathematician?

CATHERINE: I think you owe me an apology, Claire.

CLAIRE: We need to make some decisions. But I shouldn't have tried to start first thing in the morning. I don't want an argument. (Beat.) Maybe Hal would like a bagel?

(Beat. CATHERINE doesn't take the hint. She exits. After a moment of indecision CLAIRE takes a banana and a bagel and goes inside.)

fade

Start

Scene 3

Night. Inside the house a party is in progress. Loud music from a not-very-good but enthusiastic band. CATHERINE is alone on the porch. She wears a flattering black dress. Inside, the band finishes a number. Cheers, applause. After a moment HAL comes out. He wears a dark suit. He has taken off his tie. He is sweaty and revved up from playing. He holds two bottles of beer. CATHERINE regards him. A beat.

CATHERINE: I feel that for a funeral reception this might have gotten a bit out of control.

HAL: Aw come on. It's great. Come on in.

CATHERINE: I'm okay.

HAL: We're done playing, I promise.

CATHERINE: No thanks.

HAL: Do you want a beer?

CATHERINE: I'm okay.

HAL: I brought you one.

(Beat. CATHERINE hesitates.)

CATHERINE: Okay. (She takes it, sips.) How many people are in there?

HAL: It's down to about forty.

CATHERINE: Forty?

HAL: Just the hardcore partyers.

CATHERINE: My sister's friends.

HAL: No, mathematicians. Your sister's friends left hours ago.

The guys were really pleased to be asked to participate.

They worshipped your dad.

CATHERINE: It was Claire's idea.

HAL: It was good.

CATHERINE: (Concedes) The performance of "Imaginary Number" was . . . sort of . . . moving.

HAL: Good funeral. I mean not "good," but—

CATHERINE: No. Yeah.

HAL: Can you believe how many people came?
 CATHERINE: I was surprised.
 HAL: I think he would have liked it. (CATHERINE looks at him.)
 Sorry, it's not my place to—
 CATHERINE: No, you're right. Everything was better than I thought.
 (Beat.)
 HAL: You look great.
 CATHERINE: (Indicates the dress) Claire gave it to me.
 HAL: I like it.
 CATHERINE: It doesn't really fit.
 HAL: No, Catherine, it's good.
 (A moment. Noise from inside.)
 CATHERINE: When do you think they'll leave?
 HAL: No way to know. Mathematicians are insane. I went to this conference in Toronto last fall. I'm young, right? I'm in shape, I thought I could hang with the big boys. Wrong. I've never been so exhausted in my life. Forty-eight straight hours of partying, drinking, drugs, papers, lectures . . .
 CATHERINE: Drugs?
 HAL: Yeah. Amphetamines mostly. I mean, I don't. Some of the older guys are really hooked.
 CATHERINE: Really?
 HAL: Yeah, they think they need it.
 CATHERINE: Why?
 HAL: They think math's a young man's game. Speed keeps them racing, makes them feel sharp. There's this fear that your creativity peaks around twenty-three and it's all downhill from there. Once you hit fifty it's over, you might as well teach high school.
 CATHERINE: That's what my father thought.
 HAL: I dunno. Some people stay prolific.
 CATHERINE: Not many.

HAL: No, you're right. Really original work—it's all young guys.
 CATHERINE: Young guys.
 HAL: Young people.
 CATHERINE: But it is men, mostly.
 HAL: There are some women.
 CATHERINE: Who?
 HAL: There's a woman at Stanford, I can't remember her name.
 CATHERINE: Sophie Germain.
 HAL: Yeah? I've probably seen her at meetings, I just don't think I've met her.
 CATHERINE: She was born in Paris in 1776.
 (Beat.)
 HAL: So I've definitely never met her.
 CATHERINE: She was trapped in her house.
 The French Revolution was going on, the Terror. She had to stay inside for safety and she passed the time reading in her father's study. The Greeks . . . Later she tried to get a real education but the schools didn't allow women. So she wrote letters. She wrote to Gauss. She used a man's name. Uh—Antoine-August Le Blanc. She sent him some proofs involving a certain kind of prime number, important work. He was delighted to correspond with such a brilliant young man. Dad gave me a book about her.
 HAL: I'm stupid. Sophie Germain, of course.
 CATHERINE: You know her?
 HAL: Germain Primes.
 CATHERINE: Right.
 HAL: They're famous. Double them and add one, and you get another prime. Like two. Two is prime, doubled plus one is five; also prime.
 CATHERINE: Right. Or $92,305 \times 2^{16,998} + 1$.
 HAL: (Startled) Right.

CATHERINE: That's the biggest one. The biggest one known . . .

(Beat.)

HAL: Did he ever find out who she was? Gauss.

CATHERINE: Yeah. Later a mutual friend told him the brilliant young man was a woman.

He wrote to her: "A taste for the mysteries of numbers is excessively rare, but when a person of the sex which, according to our customs and prejudices, must encounter infinitely more difficulties than men to familiarize herself with these thorny researches, succeeds nevertheless in penetrating the most obscure parts of them, then without a doubt she must have the noblest courage, quite extraordinary talents, and superior genius."

(Now self-conscious) I memorized it . . . **End**

(HAL stares at her. He suddenly kisses her, then stops, embarrassed. He moves away.)

HAL: Sorry. I'm a little drunk.

CATHERINE: It's okay. *(Uncomfortable beat.)* I'm sorry about yesterday. I wasn't helpful. About the work you're doing. Take as long as you need upstairs.

HAL: You were fine. I was pushy.

CATHERINE: I was awful.

HAL: No. My timing was terrible. Anyway, you're probably right.

CATHERINE: What?

HAL: About it being junk.

CATHERINE: *(Nods.)* Yes.

HAL: I read through a lot of stuff today, just skimming. Except for the book I stole—

CATHERINE: Oh God, I'm sorry about that.

HAL: No, you were right.

CATHERINE: I shouldn't have called the police.

HAL: It was my fault.

CATHERINE: No.

HAL: The point is, that book—I'm starting to think it's the only lucid one, really. And there's no math in it.

CATHERINE: No.

HAL: I mean, I'll keep reading, but if I don't find anything in a couple of days . . .

CATHERINE: Back to the drums.

HAL: Yeah.

CATHERINE: And your own research.

HAL: Such as it is.

CATHERINE: What's wrong with it?

HAL: It's not exactly setting the world on fire.

CATHERINE: Oh come on.

HAL: It sucks, basically.

CATHERINE: Harold.

HAL: My papers get turned down. For the right reasons—my stuff is trivial. The big ideas aren't there.

CATHERINE: It's not about big ideas. It's work. You've got to chip away at a problem.

HAL: That's not what your dad did.

CATHERINE: I think it was, in a way. He'd attack a question from the side, from some weird angle, sneak up on it, grind away at it. He was slogging. He was just so much faster than anyone else that from the outside it looked magical.

HAL: I don't know.

CATHERINE: I'm just guessing.

HAL: Plus the work was beautiful. You can read it for pleasure.

It's streamlined: no wasted moves, like a ninety-five-mile-an-hour fastball. It's just . . . elegant.

CATHERINE: Yeah.

HAL: And that's what you can never duplicate. At least I can't.

It's okay. At a certain point you realize it's not going to happen, you readjust your expectations. I enjoy teaching.

CATHERINE: You might come up with something.

HAL: I'm twenty-eight, remember? On the downhill slope.
 CATHERINE: Have you tried speed? I've heard it helps.
 HAL: *(Laughs.)* Yeah.
(Beat.)
 CATHERINE: So, Hal.
 HAL: Yeah?
 CATHERINE: What do you do for sex?
 HAL: What?
 CATHERINE: At your conferences.
 HAL: Uh, I uh—
 CATHERINE: Isn't that why people hold conferences? Travel.
 Room service. Tax-deductible sex in big hotel beds.
 HAL: *(Laughs, nervous)* Maybe. I don't know.
 CATHERINE: So what do you do? All you guys.
(Beat. Is she flirting with him? HAL is not sure.)
 HAL: Well we are scientists.
 CATHERINE: So?
 HAL: So there's a lot of experimentation.
 CATHERINE: *(Laughs.)* I see.
(Beat. CATHERINE goes to him. She kisses him. A longer kiss. It ends.
HAL is surprised and pleased.)
 HAL: Huh.
 CATHERINE: That was nice.
 HAL: Really?
 CATHERINE: Yes.
 HAL: Again?
 CATHERINE: Yes.
(Kiss.)
 HAL: I always liked you.
 CATHERINE: You did?
 HAL: Even before I knew you. I'd catch glimpses of you when
 you visited your dad's office at school. I wanted to talk to
 you, but I thought, No, you do not flirt with your doctoral
 adviser's daughter.

CATHERINE: Especially when your adviser's crazy.
 HAL: Especially then.
(Kiss.)
 CATHERINE: You came here once. Four years ago. Remember?
 HAL: Sure. I can't believe you do. I was dropping off a draft of
 my thesis for your dad. Jesus I was nervous.
 CATHERINE: You looked nervous.
 HAL: I can't believe you remember that.
 CATHERINE: I remember you. *(Kiss.)* I thought you seemed . . .
 not boring.
(They continue to kiss.)

fade

Scene 4

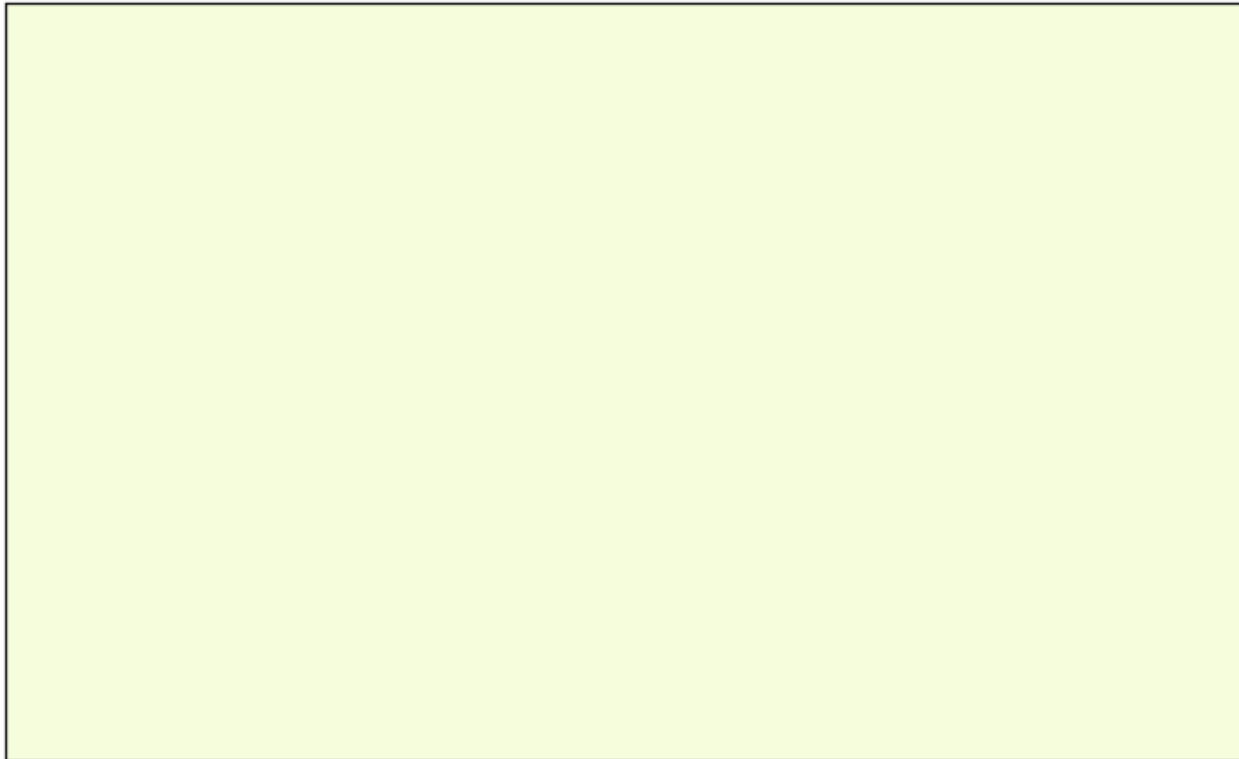
The next morning. CATHERINE alone on the porch, in a robe. HAL enters, half-dressed. He walks up behind her quietly. She bears him and turns.

HAL: How long have you been up?
 CATHERINE: A while.
 HAL: Did I oversleep?
 CATHERINE: No.
(Beat. Morning-after awkwardness.)
 HAL: Is your sister up?
 CATHERINE: No. She's flying home in a couple hours. I should
 probably wake her.
 HAL: Let her sleep. She was doing some pretty serious drinking
 with the theoretical physicists last night.
 CATHERINE: I'll make her some coffee when she gets up.
(Beat.)

Set / Furniture Plan

Draw, below, the "set" you plan to use for your scene.

SR



SL

Downstage