

determinate temperature. In February it snows. In March the lake is a lake of ice. In September the students come back and the bookstores are full. Let X equal the month of full bookstores. The number of books approaches infinity as the number of months of cold approaches four. I will never be as cold now as I will in the future. The future of cold is infinite. The future of heat is the future of cold. The bookstores are infinite and so are never full except in September . . .” (She stops reading and slowly closes the book. ROBERT is shivering uncontrollably. She puts her arms around him and helps him to his feet.) It’s all right. We’ll go inside.

ROBERT: I’m cold.

CATHERINE: We’ll warm you up.

ROBERT: Don’t leave. Please.

CATHERINE: I won’t. Let’s go inside.

*fade*

## Scene 5

*The present. A week after the events in Scene 3. CLAIRE on the porch. Coffee in takeout cups. CLAIRE takes a plane ticket out of her purse, checks the itinerary. A moment. CATHERINE enters with bags for travel. CLAIRE gives her a cup of coffee. CATHERINE drinks in silence. Beat.*

CATHERINE: Good coffee.

CLAIRE: It’s all right, isn’t it? (Beat.) We have a place where we buy all our coffee. They roast it themselves, they have an old roaster down in the basement. You can smell it on the street. Some mornings you can smell it from our place, four stories up. It’s wonderful. “Manhattan’s Best”: some magazine wrote it up. Who knows. But it is very good.

74

CATHERINE: Sounds good.

CLAIRE: You’ll like it.

CATHERINE: Good.

(Beat.)

CLAIRE: You look nice.

CATHERINE: Thanks, so do you.

(Beat.)

CLAIRE: It’s bright.

CATHERINE: Yes.

CLAIRE: It’s one of the things I do miss. All the space, the light. You could sit out here all morning.

CATHERINE: It’s not that warm.

CLAIRE: Are you cold?

CATHERINE: Not really. I just—

CLAIRE: It has gotten chilly. I’m sorry. Do you want to go in?

CATHERINE: I’m okay.

CLAIRE: I just thought it might be nice to have a quick cup of coffee out here.

CATHERINE: No, it is.

CLAIRE: Plus the kitchen’s all put away. If you’re cold—

CATHERINE: I’m not. Not really.

CLAIRE: Want your jacket?

CATHERINE: Yeah, okay. (CLAIRE gives it to her. She puts it on.) Thanks.

CLAIRE: It’s that time of year.

CATHERINE: Yes. You can feel it coming. (Beat. She stares out at the yard.)

CLAIRE: Honey, there’s no hurry.

CATHERINE: I know.

CLAIRE: If you want to hang out, be alone for a while—

CATHERINE: No. It’s no big deal.

CLAIRE: We don’t have to leave for twenty minutes or so.

CATHERINE: I know. Thanks, Claire.

CLAIRE: You’re all packed.

START



75

CATHERINE: Yes.

CLAIRE: If you missed anything it doesn't really matter. The movers will send us everything next month. (CATHERINE *doesn't move. Beat.*) I know this is hard.

CATHERINE: It's fine.

CLAIRE: This is the right decision.

CATHERINE: I know . . .

CLAIRE: I want to do everything I can to make this a smooth transition for you. So does Mitch.

CATHERINE: Good.

CLAIRE: The actual departure is the hardest part. Once we get there we can relax. Enjoy ourselves.

CATHERINE: I know.

(*Beat.*)

CLAIRE: You'll love New York.

CATHERINE: I can't wait.

CLAIRE: You'll love it. It's the most exciting city.

CATHERINE: I know.

CLAIRE: It's not like Chicago, it's really alive.

CATHERINE: I've read about that.

CLAIRE: I think you'll truly feel at home there.

CATHERINE: You know what I'm looking forward to?

CLAIRE: What?

CATHERINE: Seeing Broadway musicals.

(*Beat.*)

CLAIRE: Mitch can get us tickets to whatever you'd like.

CATHERINE: And Rockefeller Center in winter—all the skaters!

CLAIRE: Well, you—

CATHERINE: Also, the many fine museums!

(*Beat.*)

CLAIRE: I know how hard this is for you.

CATHERINE: Listening to you say how hard it is for me is what's hard for me.

CLAIRE: Once you're there you'll see all the possibilities that are available.

CATHERINE: Restraints, lithium, electroshock.

CLAIRE: *Schools.* In the New York area alone there's NYU, Columbia—

CATHERINE: Bright college days! Football games, road trips, necking on the "quad."

CLAIRE: Or if that's not what you want we can help you find a job. Mitch has terrific contacts all over town.

CATHERINE: Does he know anyone in the phone-sex industry?

CLAIRE: I want to make this as easy a transition as I can.

CATHERINE: It's going to be *easy*, Claire, it's gonna be so ~~easy~~ ~~easy~~ easy you won't believe it.

CLAIRE: Thank you.

CATHERINE: I'm going to sit quietly on the plane to New York.

And live quietly in a cute apartment. And answer Dr. Von Heimlich's questions very politely.

CLAIRE: You can see any doctor you like, or you can see no doctor.

CATHERINE: I would like to see a doctor called Dr. Von Heimlich: please find one. And I would like him to wear a monocle. And I'd like him to have a very soft, very well-upholstered couch, so that I'll be perfectly comfortable while I'm blaming everything on you.

(*Beat.*)

CLAIRE: Don't come.

CATHERINE: No, I'm coming.

CLAIRE: Stay here, see how you do.

CATHERINE: I could.

CLAIRE: You can't take care of yourself for *five days*.

CATHERINE: Bullshit!

CLAIRE: You *slept all week*. I had to cancel my flight. I missed a week of work—I was this close to taking you to the hospi-

tal! I couldn't believe it when you finally dragged yourself up.

CATHERINE: I was tired!

CLAIRE: You were completely out of it, Catherine, you weren't speaking!

CATHERINE: I didn't want to talk to you.

*(Beat.)*

CLAIRE: Stay here if you hate me so much.

CATHERINE: And do what?

CLAIRE: You're the genius, figure it out.

*(CLAIRE is upset, near tears. She digs in her bag, pulls out a plane ticket, throws it on the table. She exits. CATHERINE is alone. She can't quite bring herself to leave the porch. A moment. HAL enters—not through the house, from the side. He is badly dressed and looks very tired. He is breathless from running.)*

HAL: You're still here. *(CATHERINE is surprised. She doesn't speak.)*

I saw Claire leaving out front. I wasn't sure if you— *(He holds up the notebook.)* This fucking thing . . . checks out.

I have been over it, *twice*, with two different sets of guys, old geeks *and* young geeks. It is *weird*. I don't know where the techniques came from. Some of the moves are very hard to follow. But we can't find anything wrong with it! There might be something wrong with it but we can't find it. I have not slept. *(He catches his breath.)* It works. I thought you might want to know.

CATHERINE: I already knew.

*(Beat.)*

HAL: I had to swear these guys to secrecy. They were jumping out of their skins. See, one e-mail and it's all over. I threatened them. I think we're safe, they're physical cowards.

*(Beat.)* I had to see you.

CATHERINE: I'm leaving.

HAL: I know. Just wait for a minute, please?

CATHERINE: What do you want? You have the book. She told

me you came by for it and she gave it to you. You can do whatever you want with it. Publish it.

HAL: Catherine.

CATHERINE: Get Claire's permission and publish it. She doesn't care. She doesn't know anything about it anyway.

HAL: I don't want Claire's permission.

CATHERINE: You want mine? Publish. Go for it. Have a press conference. Tell the world what my father discovered.

HAL: I don't want to.

CATHERINE: Or fuck my father, pass it off as your own work. Who cares? Write your own ticket to any math department in the country.

HAL: I don't think your father wrote it.

*(Beat.)*

CATHERINE: You thought so last week.

HAL: That was last week. I spent this week reading the proof. I think I understand it, more or less. It uses a lot of newer mathematical techniques, things that were developed in the last decade. Elliptic curves. Modular forms. I think I learned more mathematics this week than I did in four years of grad school.

CATHERINE: So?

HAL: So the proof is very . . . hip.

CATHERINE: Get some sleep, Hal.

HAL: What was your father doing the last ten years? He wasn't well, was he?

CATHERINE: Are you done?

HAL: I don't think he would have been able to master those new techniques.

CATHERINE: But he was a genius.

HAL: But he was nuts.

CATHERINE: So he read about them later.

HAL: Maybe. The books he would have needed are upstairs.

*(Beat.)*

END