

PROOF AUDITION - Hal-Catherine

CATHERINE. My father wouldn't want anything moved and I don't want anything to leave this house.

HAL. Then I should work here. I'll stay out of the way.

CATHERINE. You're wasting your time.

HAL. Someone needs to go through your dad's papers.

CATHERINE. There's nothing up there. It's garbage.

HAL. There are a hundred and three notebooks. Someone should read them.

CATHERINE. He was crazy.

HAL. Yes, but he wrote them.

CATHERINE. He was a graphomaniac, Harold. Do you know what that is?

HAL. I know. He wrote compulsively, Call me Hal.

CATHERINE. There's no connection between the ideas. There's no ideas. It's like a monkey at a typewriter. One hundred and three notebooks full of bullshit.

HAL. Let's make sure they're bullshit.

CATHERINE. I'm sure.

HAL. I'm prepared to look at every page. Are you?

CATHERINE. No. I'm not crazy.

HAL. Well, I'm gonna be late... Some friends of mine are in this band. They're playing at a bar up on Diversey. Way down the bill, they're probably going on around two, two-thirty. I said I'd be there.

CATHERINE. Great.

HAL. They're all in the math department. They're really good. They have this great song, you'd like it, called "i" — lowercase i. They just stand there and don't play anything for three minutes.

CATHERINE. "Imaginary Number."

HAL. It's a math joke. You see why they're way down the bill.

CATHERINE. Long drive to see some nerds in a band.

HAL. God I hate when people say that. It is not that long a drive.

CATHERINE. So they are nerds.

HAL. Oh they're raging geeks. But they're geeks who, you know, can dress themselves... hold down a job at a major university ... Some of them have switched from glasses to contacts. They play sports, they play in a band, they get laid surprisingly often, so in that sense they sort of make you question the whole set of terms - geck, nerd, wonk, dweeb, Dilbert, paste-eater.

CATHERINE. You're in this band, aren't you?

HAL. Okay, yes. I play drums. You want to come? I never sing, I swear to God.

CATHERINE. No thanks.

HAL: All right. Look, Catherine, Monday: What do you say?

CATHERINE: Don't you have a job?

HAL. Yeah, I have a full teaching load this quarter plus my own work.

CATHERINE. Plus band practice.

HAL. I don't have time to do this but I'm going to. If you'll let me. I loved your dad. I don't believe a mind like his can just shut down. He had lucid moments. He had a lucid year, a whole year four years ago.

CATHERINE. It wasn't a year. It was more like nine months.

HAL. A school year. He was advising students ... I was stalled on my Ph.D. I was this close to quitting. I met with your dad and he put me on the right track with my research. I owe him.

CATHERINE. Sorry.

HAL. Look. Let me — You're twenty-five, right? When your dad was younger than both of us he made major contributions to three fields: game theory, algebraic geometry, and nonlinear operator theory. Most of us never get our heads around one. He basically invented the mathematical techniques for studying rational behavior, and he gave the astrophysicists plenty to work over too. Okay?

CATHERINE. Don't lecture me.

HAL. I'm not. I'm telling you if I came up with one-tenth of the shit your dad produced I could write my own ticket to any math department in the country. (Beat.)

CATHERINE. Give me your backpack.

HAL. What?

CATHERINE. Give me your backpack.

HAL. Why?

CATHERINE. I want to look inside it.

HAL. What?

CATHERINE. Open it and give it to me.

HAL. Oh come on.

CATHERINE. You're not taking anything out of this house.

HAL. I wouldn't do that.

CATHERINE. You're hoping to find something upstairs that you can publish.

HAL. Sure.

CATHERINE. Then you can write your own ticket.

HAL. What? No! It would be under your dad's name. It would be for your dad.

CATHERINE. I don't believe you. You have a notebook in that backpack.

HAL. You're being a little bit paranoid.

CATHERINE. Paranoid?

HAL. Maybe a little.

CATHERINE. Fuck you, Hal. I know you have one of my notebooks.

HAL. I think you should calm down and think about what you're saying.

CATHERINE. I'm saying you're lying to me and stealing my family's property.

HAL. You just said yourself there's nothing up there. Didn't you?

CATHERINE I ...

HAL. Didn't you say that?

CATHERINE. Yes.

HAL. So what would I take? Right?