

PROOF AUDITION - Robert-Catherine

CATHERINE. Dad? What are you doing out here?

ROBERT. Working.

CATHERINE. It's December. It's thirty degrees.

ROBERT. I know.

CATHERINE. Aren't you cold?

ROBERT. Of course I am! I'm freezing my ass off!

CATHERINE. So what are you doing out here?

ROBERT. Thinking! Writing!

CATHERINE. I've been calling. Didn't you hear the phone?

ROBERT. It's a distraction.

CATHERINE. I didn't know what was going on. I had to drive all the way down here. I had to skip class. Why don't you answer the phone?

ROBERT. Well I'm sorry, Catherine, but it's question of priorities and work takes priority, you know that.

CATHERINE. You're working?

ROBERT. Goddamnit I am working! I say "I" — the machinery. The machinery is working. Catherine, it's on full blast. All the cylinders are firing, I'm on fire. That's why I came out here, to cool off. I haven't felt like this for years.

CATHERINE. I don't believe it.

ROBERT. I don't believe it either! But it's true. It started about a week ago. I woke up, came downstairs, made a cup of coffee and before I could pour in the milk it was like someone turned the light on in my head.

CATHERINE. Really?

ROBERT. Not the light, the whole POWER GRID. I LIT UP and it's like no time has passed since I was twenty-one.

CATHERINE. You're kidding!

ROBERT. No! I'm back! I'm back in touch with the source — the font, the — whatever the source of my creativity was all those years ago I'm in contact with it again. I'm SITTING on it. It's a geyser and I'm shooting right up into the air on top of it. I - I'm sorry, I'm being rude, how's school?

CATHERINE. Fine.

ROBERT. You're working hard?

CATHERINE. Sure.

ROBERT. Made any friends?

CATHERINE. Of course.

ROBERT. Dating?

CATHERINE. Dad, hold on.

ROBERT. No details necessary if you don't want to provide them. I'm just interested.

CATHERINE. School's great. I want to talk about what you're doing.

ROBERT. Great, let's talk.

CATHERINE. This work. Is it here?

ROBERT. Part of it, yes.

CATHERINE. Can I see it?

ROBERT. Nothing's actually complete, to be honest. It's all in progress. I think we're talking years.

CATHERINE. That's okay. I don't care. Just let me see anything.

ROBERT. I think there's enough here to keep me working the rest of my life. Not just me. I was starting to imagine I was finished, Catherine, Really finished. Don't get me wrong, I was grateful I could go to my office, have a life, but secretly I was terrified I'd never work again. Did you know that?

CATHERINE. I wondered.

ROBERT. I was absolutely fucking terrified. Then I remembered something and a part of the terror went away. I remembered you. Your creative years were just beginning. You'd get your degree, do your own work. You were just getting started. If you hadn't gone into math that would have been all right. Claire's done well for herself. I'm satisfied with her. I'm proud of you. I don't mean to embarrass you. It's part of the reason we have children. We hope they'll survive us, accomplish what we can't. Well, Jesus, look, enough bullshit, you asked to see something. Let's start with this. I've roughed something out. General outline for a proof. Major result. Important. It's not finished but you can see where it's going. Let's see. Here. It's very rough. (After a long moment Catherine closes the notebook. A beat.)

CATHERINE. Dad. Let's go inside.

ROBERT. The gaps might make it hard to follow. We can talk it through.

CATHERINE. Not now. I'm cold. It's really freezing out here. Let's go inside.

ROBERT. I'm telling you it's stifling in there, goddamn it. The radiators. Look, read out the first couple of lines. That's how we start: You read, and we go line by line, out loud, through the argument. See if there's a better way, a shorter way, Let's collaborate.

CATHERINE. No. Come on.

ROBERT. I've been waiting years for this. This is something I want to do. Come on, let's do some work together.

CATHERINE. We can't do it out here. It's freezing cold. I'm taking you in.

ROBERT. Not until we talk about the proof.

CATHERINE. No.

ROBERT: GODDAMNIT CATHERINE OPEN THE GODDAMN BOOK AND READ ME THE LINES.