

Proof

Written by David Auburn

DRAMA

Characters:

CATHERINE: A young woman, 25 years old, who inherited much of her father's mathematical genius and, she fears, his "instability" as well; she gave up her life and schooling to take care of her father until his recent death.

CLAIRE: Catherine's older sister, a practical and business-minded woman who has been comfortably successful in her work and relationships. She left Robert and Catherine behind, distancing herself from the run-down family home of her youth. She left the family to make a new life for herself in New York City.

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? 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.

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. Catherine puts it on.)

Thanks.

CLAIRE. It's that time of year.

CATHERINE. Yes. You can feel it coming.

(Beat. Catherine 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.

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 fucking 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 Doctor 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 Doctor 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.

(Claire's patience is exhausted.)

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 hospital! 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.