HAL. (Embarrassed.) Or, no, I —
ROBERT. Absolutely, getting the hell out of here, thank God, it's
about time. I'll be glad to see the back of her.
CATHERINE. You will?
ROBERT. Of course. Maybe I want to have the place to myself
for a while, did that ever occur to you? (To Hal.) It's awful the way
children sentimentalize their parents. (To Catherine.) We could use
some quiet around here.
CATHERINE. Oh don't worry, I'll come back. I'll be here every
Sunday cooking up big vats of pasta to last you through the week.
ROBERT. And I'll drive up, strut around Evanston, embarrass
you in front of your classmates.
CATHERINE. Good. So we'll be in touch.
ROBERT. Sure. And if you get stuck with a problem, give me a call.
CATHERINE. Okay. Same to you.
ROBERT. Fine. Make sure to get me your number. (To Hal.) I'm
actually looking forward to getting some work done.
HAL. Oh, what are you working on?
ROBERT. Nothing. (Beat.)
Nothing at the moment.
Which I'm glad of, really. This is the time of year when you
don't want to be tied down to anything. You want to be outside. I
love Chicago in September. Perfect skies. Sailboats on the water.
Cubs losing. Warm, the sun still hot ... with the occasional blast
of Arctic wind to keep you on your toes, remind you of winter.
Students coming back, bookstores full, everybody busy.

I was in a bookstore yesterday. Completely full, students buy-
ing books ... browsing ... Students do a hell of a lot of browsing,
don't they? Just browsing. You see them shuffling around with
their backpacks, goofing off, taking up space. You'd call it loitering
except every once in a while they pick up a book and flip the
pages: "Browsing." I admire it. It's an honest way to kill an after-
noon. In the back of a used bookstore, or going through a crate of
somebody's old record albums — not looking for anything, just
looking, what the hell, touching the old book jackets, seeing what
somebody threw out, seeing what they underlined ... maybe you
find something great, like an old thriller with a painted cover from
the forties, or a textbook one of your professors used when he was

a student — his name is written in it very carefully ... Yeah, I like
it. I like watching the students. Wondering what they're gonna
buy, what they're gonna read. What kind of ideas they'll come up
with when they settle down and get to work ...  

I'm not doing much right now. It does get harder. It's a stereo-
type that happens to be true, unfortunately for me — unfortunately
for you, for all of us.
CATHERINE. Maybe you'll get lucky.
ROBERT. Maybe I will.
Maybe you'll pick up where I left off.
CATHERINE. Don't hold your breath.
ROBERT. Don't underestimate yourself.
CATHERINE. Anyway. (Beat.)
ROBERT. Another drink? Cathy? Hal?
CATHERINE. No thanks.
HAL. Thanks, I really should get going.
ROBERT. Are you sure?
HAL. Yes.
ROBERT. I'll call you when I've looked at this. Don't think about
it till then. Enjoy yourself, see some movies.
HAL. Okay.
ROBERT. You can come by my office in a week. Call it —
HAL. The eleventh?
ROBERT. Yes, we'll ... (Beat. He turns to Catherine. Grave:)
I am sorry. I used to have a pretty good memory for numbers.
Happy birthday.
CATHERINE. Thank you.
ROBERT. I am so sorry. I'm embarrassed.
CATHERINE. Dad, don't be stupid.
ROBERT. I didn't get you anything.
CATHERINE. Don't worry about it.
ROBERT. I'm taking you out.
CATHERINE. You don't have to.
ROBERT. We are going out. I didn't want to shop and cook. Let's
go to dinner. Let's get the hell out of this neighborhood. What do
you want to eat? Let's go to the North Side. Or Chinatown. Or
Greektown. I don't know what's good anymore.
CATHERINE. Whatever you want.