

THE BURNING SEASON

Written by  
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Based upon the short story "What the World Will Look Like When All  
the Water Leaves Us" by Laura Van Den Berg

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CELIA (V.O.)  
Do you remember the first time you  
took me swimming? Before you left  
us, and before Madagascar.

EXT. THE ATLANTIC OCEAN - MONTAUK - DAY

YOUNG CELIA, seven years old, stands before the ocean,  
outfitted in flippers and goggles. She looks back,  
frightened.

CELIA (V.O.)  
Did you know that, since then, the  
amount of water in the world has  
shrunk by nine percent?

From a distance we see her parents, standing shoulder-to-  
shoulder. With a wave of her hand, her mother urges her  
ahead.

CELIA (V.O.)  
There used to be birds the size of  
elephants, hippos that didn't grow  
more than two feet, trees thirty  
meters high.

Young Celia swims. She's gaining confidence when a huge wave  
knocks her over.

CELIA (V.O.)  
Mom says the world keeps losing  
things.

Young Celia pummels her arms against the water, struggling to  
pull her way up.

EXT. THE INDIAN OCEAN - DAY

The other side of the world. A different ocean now, glass-  
smooth in the sun. A small plane zooms near landing,  
disturbing the calmness of the water.

CELIA (V.O.)  
I write this from Ankarana, from  
the jungle. This is the twelfth  
week we are here.

EXT. MADAGASCAR - ANKARANA RESERVE - DAY

CELIA, now 14, poised and watchful, and her striking mother, JUNE, tromp through the forest with six eager, intense GRADUATE STUDENTS, 20s, a German ECOLOGIST, 40s, and ARTURO, a wiry Malagasy fixer in his late 50s.

CELIA (V.O.)

During the day we track the great bamboo lemur. We eat bags of dried food, like astronauts. We drink water from the river with iodine pills.

EXT. ANKARANA RESERVE - FOREST - LATER

They've reached their destination. The students set up camp.

June stares up at a spirited SPORTIVE LEMUR scampering up a bamboo tree.

Celia reaches her mother. They stand shoulder-to-shoulder watching the lemur with quiet focus.

This is our first good look at June. She's in her 40's but she'd never tell you and you'd never guess. She wears her hair tugged back, out of her face.

JUNE

Look at the way his legs move - keep up or die early.

She nods at Celia. Celia swings herself silently up onto a branch without missing a beat. Takes a slim collar from her mother and competently snaps it on the lemur.

CELIA (V.O.)

People visit from all over the world. France and India, an ecologist from Germany. Mom keeps asking about the drought in the south, if the lemurs are changing their eating habits. Maybe that's what they have to do to survive.

Celia watches her mother from her perch. June shows the ecologist the beginning of a budding tree. She touches his wrist.

EXT. TENT - FOREST - NIGHT

Rain drums down on the small camp site. The sportive lemur, collared now, sleeps.

CELIA (V.O.)  
We're lucky here.

INT. TENT - FOREST - NIGHT

June types furiously. The tent is a clutter of camping equipment, vitamins, and re-used paper towels hung to dry.

Celia hides a LETTER she's writing in a book about the world's greatest scientists. She peeks at a bent PICTURE of herself at a swim meet, hidden between the pages of the book.

In the picture, Celia's grinning, wet-haired, wearing a swimsuit and holding a trophy. Her father Len smiles sheepishly next to her. The wavy reflection of a pool in the background.

Wind rips the picture from her hand. She grabs it before her mother sees.

The rain pounds harder.

EXT. TENT - FOREST - DAY

Celia and June step into the mist of outside. The ground is littered with crushed petals and washed-up seeds. June plucks a seed from the ground.

CELIA  
What is it?

Celia knows her mother well enough: an idea is brewing, and has been for a while. June looks up at her and simply smiles.

EXT. ANKARANA RESERVE - LATER - SERIES OF SHOTS

Celia watches June gather seeds, write notes intently. She sits next to her mother, begins organizing the notes in a binder. They have this down to a system.

CELIA (V.O.)  
Mom says you have to make a plan  
but you also have to change it. The  
greatest scientists in the world  
were brave enough to veer off  
course.

EXT. TENTS - NIGHT

A crackling fire cooks freeze-dried food. The ecologist isn't there any longer. Arturo mans the fire with the help of a student. June is mid-story.

JUNE

-and Celia just stands there watching him drink her coke. Doesn't cry. Doesn't seem surprised - how old were you, eight?

CELIA

Nine. I didn't understand how he could drink it so quickly.

JUNE

Ladies and Gentleman, that's when I knew I had a scientist.

STUDENT #1

Was he a full grown?

JUNE

Two year old bamboo, a couple months and change.

CELIA

My mom, I mean June, she convinced our guide to let us bring him back to the hotel so she could watch him for twenty four hours.

JUNE

Oh god help me.

CELIA

He was flirting with her. The guide, not the lemur.

JUNE

He was spitting on me, but he was smart enough, so I tolerated it.

CELIA

The lemur shat all over our room.

The students laugh.

STUDENT #2

(to Celia)

Are you excited to go back to school?

CELIA

I mean, I like physics. In ninth grade we get to take physics. I learn more from June, though.

JUNE

I pay her to say that.

STUDENT #1

I don't miss Ithaca, that's for sure.

June accepts a cigarette from one of the students. She takes a long drag. Thinks for a minute. Addresses the whole group.

JUNE

Let's get back to work.

EXT. TENTS/FOREST - LATER

June and the students are positioned throughout the forest, observing the lemurs with night vision equipment.

Celia wanders towards the tree where she tagged a lemur some days ago. Familiar flowers bloom from this tree. A bamboo lemur is gnawing at a small, tough fruit.

Celia climbs the tree, quick and careful in the dark. Plucks one of the fruits from a branch, examines it. Unseen by her, a BOA winds its way around a branch.

The snake bites her arm. Celia screams.

EXT. TENTS/FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

Arturo injects medicine into Celia's arm. Celia's trying not to cry as June blows in.

JUNE

What the hell happened?

CELIA

I wasn't paying attention. I should have been paying better attention.

JUNE

Does it hurt?

CELIA

No.

JUNE  
 (affectionate)  
 Liar.  
 (to Arturo)  
 How is she?

CELIA  
 It's a boa. It's not poisonous.

ARTURO  
 I give shot, just in case. She'll  
 be fine. Strong girl.

JUNE  
 She really is, isn't she?

ARTURO  
 I ask that we rest after dinner so  
 that there are no injuries. Do you  
 understand now?

June looks at him for a tense moment.

JUNE  
 Loud and clear.  
 (doesn't mean it)  
 And thank you.

CELIA  
 Thanks, Arturo.

Arturo retreats. June sits down next to Celia. Goes through Arturo's bag, lining up medications, ointments. Taking extra precautions.

CELIA (CONT'D)  
 What did you find?

JUNE  
 What did *you* find?

Celia holds out her good hand, revealing seeds from the fruit she saw before. June takes it, glances at her daughter, smiles.

CELIA  
 The lemur was eating them.

JUNE  
 What *genus*?

CELIA  
 Bamboo.

JUNE  
That isn't usual.

CELIA  
Maybe they're adapting?

June looks at her a moment. She's been thinking about this.

JUNE  
Very good.

June rips off Arturo's lumpy bandage. She applies more medication, efficiently and expertly re-bandages Celia's wound.

JUNE (CONT'D)  
Better?

Celia nods.

JUNE (CONT'D)  
So, I'm thinking.

CELIA  
That's a surprise.

June grins, smacks her lightly.

JUNE  
If the bamboo are consuming seeds,  
it's very possible species in the  
south are diversifying, also.

CELIA  
Like the Goldens? In Fort Dauphin?

Off June's silence, Celia's excitement begins to bubble.

CELIA (CONT'D)  
You want to go there, don't you?

JUNE  
You'd miss a week of school. Maybe  
two.

A beat.

CELIA  
We probably shouldn't tell Dad.

June kisses Celia's head. Celia takes the seed back, examines it.



CELIA (CONT'D)  
Can I keep this one?

EXT. TENTS/FOREST - DAY

Celia, arm bandaged, stirs mealy oatmeal over an open fire and watches as her mother carries two small suitcases out of their tent.

Arturo follows June as she loads up a jeep. She hands him a suitcase.

JUNE  
(to Arturo)  
Help me with this, would you?

Celia comes over. Waits till Arturo is done lugging the suitcase, gives him a bowl of oatmeal.

JUNE (CONT'D)  
(to Celia)  
Check the tent. I saw a pair of goggles and a Vogue.

CELIA  
I don't read Vogue.  
(off June's look)  
I *don't*.

JUNE  
Just get your stuff.

With that, June heads to the fire pit. Celia and Arturo watch as June says goodbye to the students.

ARTURO  
An old proverb. There was a woman once who traveled east to find the fountain of youth. She looked for many years. She went farther and farther from the coast of Africa. By the time she gave up, her children were old, too.

CELIA  
I hope you didn't tell that to my mother.  
(a beat)  
Anyway, we're going south.

EXT. MIDLANDS/TANA - DAY

A small plane chugs east over the island.

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY - ANTANANARIVO

June sweeps down onto the tarmac, eager to begin her work.

Celia waits, nervous, on the loose metal stairs, squinting into the sun. From her vantage point, it looks as though concrete and red dirt are all that exist here.

The camera pulls back and up, over crusty palm trees and low stone buildings. Then we're high in the hills, sweeping towards a small blaze that's almost invisible at first, but grows imperceptibly brighter as we cut to:

TITLE: THE BURNING SEASON

EXT. TRAIN - MOZAMBIQUE COAST - DAY

A train hurtles down the coast, Celia's face pressed against the window, the blaze distant in the background.

INTERCUT

INT. MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH -  
CONFERENCE ROOM - EARLIER

A power point presentation. An image of a lush forest switches to an image of a golden bamboo lemur. June at a podium, talking to a humorless committee, commanding their attention. Celia sits in the back of the room, rapt. June is mid-speech.

JUNE

Hapalemur aureus. Otherwise known as the golden bamboo. Otherwise known as the gentle lemur, which they absolutely are. Look at that guy. I'm asking for a little time and space to preserve the forest he calls home.

COMMITTEE MEMBER #1

We have given you many acres of land in the north.

JUNE

Yes, and I'm grateful. But, in relative terms, Ankarana is prospering.

(MORE)

JUNE (CONT'D)

The animals are protected, and  
there's regular rainfall.

INT. TRAIN - DAY - SERIES OF SHOTS

Celia and June watch the passing countryside, stretches of desert-like plants and shallow pools of water. Celia writes a letter.

Malagasy children run after the train. Passengers throw food to them. Celia and June join in.

INT. MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH -  
CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

JUNE

When I discovered the golden bamboo fifteen years ago, their diet was primarily stalks and bark. I believe that's changing. I believe they are now eating fruit and dispersing the seeds.

June switches to a picture of a plush, alert Golden Bamboo Lemur.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Consider him your newest, greatest gardener.

June's winning them over. Celia smiles. One of the youngest committee members - DAUD, a PHD student we'll meet later - watches June with interest. Celia clocks this.

END INTERCUT

INT. TRAIN - DAWN

Celia, sleeping on June's shoulder, opens her eyes to bright sunlight and her mother shaking her, visibly excited. The landscape has opened up to a reddish river bordered by red dirt.

JUNE

You slept for six hours, lazy.  
We're almost there.

CELIA

Why is the water so red?

June thinks for a beat, looks out the window with concern.

JUNE

Erosion.

(off Celia's look)

Don't look so shocked. This from the girl who spends half her life in chlorine.

CELIA

Yeah, but I know it's a chemical.

JUNE

Won't make a difference when your hair falls out.

Celia takes this in. Hard to tell if she's annoyed or tuning out her mother.

CELIA

The following are fady in Fort Dauphin: throwing a stone at the Tolo bird. Eating meat for breakfast. Killing a crocodile. Going to the same bathroom twice.

JUNE

You memorized all that?

CELIA

You've been talking about Fort Dauphin practically my entire life.

June pushes her laptop towards Celia. Taps to enlarge an image of two baby goldens peering through dense canopy. The landscape around them is stunning.

JUNE

They were two weeks old, those guys. I counted twenty nine, my last trip here.

EXT. TRAIN - MOMENTS LATER

June looks out the window at the reddened water, at a stretch of decimated forest that the train chugs past. She lights a cigarette. A CHAMELEON streaks across the land.

EXT./INT. TRAIN - FORT DAUPHIN - LATER

Malagasy children run towards the approaching train.

Celia follows her mother down the aisle of the now EMPTY train, dragging their bags.

They step into the dry heat of Fort Dauphin and are immediately surrounded by curious kids tugging at their clothing. Celia empties her pockets - a few granola bars, a bag of dried fruit.

EXT. TRAIN - LATER

The children have cleared out, lost interest. June snaps pictures of a dilapidated patch of forest. Celia, wilted, sits on her suitcase reading. She digs around her bag, but she's given all her food away.

A GREEN JEEP, driven by HAJA bumps towards them. June calls to him without turning away from the forest:

JUNE

Are you from the hotel? You're late.

Haja doesn't apologize, or think he needs to. He parks in front of Celia. He's in his 20s, skinny, all greetings and smiles.

EXT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - MADAGASCAR - DAWN

Haja pulls up a red dirt road, stopping in front of a hotel book-ended by thick foliage.

The place is a dump - peeling yellow paint and a concrete terrace on which meals are served. The terrace looks sturdy, the rest looks like it could collapse any minute.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - MADAGASCAR - MOMENTS LATER

Haja bounces up the creaking stairs, carrying Celia and June's bags easily. June speaks to him in confident Malagasy.

JUNE

(in Malagasy)

I can carry those. Really, this is silly.

They reach the top of the stairs. There are exactly three rooms in the hotel, all of them empty.

HAJA

(in Malagasy)

The two biggest rooms!

Celia glances around the hotel - the loose banister, the rotting wood, the lack of staff or tourists.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - JUNE AND CELIA'S ROOM - DAY

Two adjoining rooms with wide, hard beds. Haja circles the space, inspecting it.

HAJA  
(in Malagasy)  
And here, you see, Miss. Any  
problems, I fix them.

June gives Haja a huge tip. He counts it, surprised.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - CELIA AND JUNE'S ADJOINING ROOMS -  
LATER

Celia unpacks: a few shorts and tank tops, one swimsuit, a fashion magazine she hides under the clothes. She and her mother travel light.

EXT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - BALCONY - DUSK

Celia goes out on the balcony. Watches her mother, down on the terrace, talking to Haja. He points east.

June looks up, sees Celia. She points to the huge crusty trees that surround the hotel.

CELIA  
Triangulated palms.

JUNE  
They're endangered, Celia. Like  
everything else on this island.

Celia leans over the railing. Around the palms there are stretches of charred, empty land.

June smiles at Celia, trying to cover her concern.

EXT. FORT DAUPHIN - ROAD - DUSK

June drives slowly down a pot holed road, past small thatched-roof huts and over red dirt. It's desolate and a little depressing.

Celia, in the passenger seat, notices a WOMAN and two CHILDREN who duck behind a tree trunk when they see the jeep.

EXT. THEIRRY'S HUT - MOMENTS LATER

June pulls up to a larger HUT. Takes a bottle of rum from her bag, polishes it with a rag and her own spit, then hands it to Celia.

THEIRRY, 50s, the VILLAGE KING, grey stubble on his head and a smooth, kind face, exits the hut. He holds up his hand in greeting. June helps Celia out of the jeep.

JUNE

(to Celia)

Ten years ago, he was a guide. Now he's the leader of the village. That's how it goes.

THEIRRY

(in Malagasy)

Misses June!

JUNE

Mr. Theirry!

June hops out of the jeep. Celia follows her. Theirry shakes June's hand, warmly.

THEIRRY

(in Malagasy)

Do not tell me a beautiful woman such as you has come alone.

JUNE

(in Malagasy)

My husband had classes to teach this summer. This is our daughter, Celia.

June nudges Celia, who gives Theirry the rum.

THEIRRY

(to Celia, in English)

Your mother, smart lady.

CELIA

She really is.

June puts her arm around Celia as Theirry leads them towards the hut.

INT. THEIRRY'S HUT - MOMENTS LATER

Celia looks around - this is where the king lives? General chaos.

Six small kids roll marbles across the floor, catch them. Theirry's wife de-bones a large fish over a metal bowl. Sun leaks through a hole in the thatched roof.

June lays out pictures on Theirry's dirt floor. Two of the kids latch onto Celia, drag her away from her mother. One of the kids offers Celia a plate of fried locusts. She tries one, finds it horrible.

JUNE

(in Malagasy)

These were taken in Ankarana, the conservation I was telling you about.

(pointing)

We've found that when seeds are planted by the lemurs they grow more efficiently than when we plant them on our own. This could be very beneficial for your village.

Celia watches as June nudges a picture of a golden bamboo towards Theirry. One of the kids climbs onto Celia's lap. Another starts braiding her hair.

JUNE (CONT'D)

(in Malagasy)

Do you remember, Theirry? The first spotting of a Golden Bamboo Lemur, and it happened here.

(off his nod)

All I need is a few protected hectares. We don't have much time before the fire season starts.

Celia sees a sick OLD WOMAN (Theirry's mother) in the dark corner on a cot. Theirry's wife, finished with the fish, now tends to her.

EXT. FORT DAUPHIN - RIVER - DAY

A GUIDE rows Celia and June down the river. The water is red, the water level is waning. A crested ibis swoops down. A black heron perches high in a wilted tree. A chameleon peeks out from behind a log. \*

Celia sees the brown head of a CROCODILE in the distance and flinches. June touches her daughter's arm.



EXT. FORT DAUPHIN RIVER - LATER

The guide docks their canoe on the muddy red bank. June climbs onto the bank, briskly flicks water off her jacket. She grabs Celia's hand and helps her out.

A group of SMALL boys are running in the distance, screaming with glee. June zeroes in, concerned.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The boys - 8 or 9, emaciated - throw rocks at a lemur trap perched in a tree. The trap has rusty metal bars, something moving inside it.

June hurries ahead of Celia. The trees are sparse. They are both weighed down by their gear.

Seeing her, one boy begins to SCREAM. The children dart in the opposite direction. June shakes her head, marches to the tree, tugs at the trap. She pulls it open and snags her finger. Curses. A weak white and grey AYE AYE LEMUR is still alive inside it.

Celia catches up to June. Quickly pulls herself onto the lowest branch. Inches the trap closer to June, who gently pulls the lemur out and begins to tend to her.

CELIA

I thought it was fady to hunt  
lemurs.

JUNE

Well, they're starving. Can you see  
if we have any formula?

Celia slides back to the ground, begins to look through their gear. Finds the formula and hands it to June. June begins to feed the lemur. She has a tender and delicate way of handling her. She looks up at Celia, tears in her eyes.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Female. Around five years old. An  
aye-aye.

CELIA

June, you're bleeding.

June's hand is gashed, but June ignores it.

JUNE

It isn't always considered fady to hunt the aye-aye. They think that they're bad luck.

CELIA

Are they the kind Dad said looked like demented cats?

JUNE

Your father would say that. He likes to put down anything that's smarter than he is.

(beat)

Write this down. The first of the brown group. Brown #1. First spotted one and nine tenth miles from the entry point. September 5th.

Celia writes down everything June says.

CELIA

Can we give her a real name?

JUNE

She has a name. Brown #1.

Celia inspects her mother's hand. June continues to tend to the lemur.

CELIA

You need to disinfect.

June pats her daughter's cheek. Stands up. Brown #1 grips her shirt.

EXT. RESEARCH CABIN - ESTABLISHING - MOMENTS LATER

June, still holding Brown #1, nods towards a dilapidated CABIN yards from them. The windows have been broken and the roof has rotted through.

JUNE

I examined the first goldens in that cabin. I was practically a kid.

(off Celia's silence)

How long do you think it will take us to make this functional?

EXT. FORT DAUPHIN - TANAMBOA MARKET - NIGHT - SERIES OF SHOTS

A feast is in process, a roast mostly picked clean. A group of musicians play violins, guitars, accordions. Everyone drinks moonshine.

Celia watches June dance with the villagers - including Theirry and his wives - spinning amongst them, snapping into the rhythm of the music - sweat and shimmying shoulders and pure joy.

Celia turns to see a group of children waiting for food, but the meat is gone.

June grabs Celia's hand and pulls her into the circle.

Celia's self conscious, completely aware that everyone is staring at both of them. But the music grows louder and the dancing gets wilder and Celia forgets herself.

Mother and daughter are clapping and spinning, fueled by excitement and moonshine, when, over June's shoulder Celia sees the swift and brutal slaughter of a live ZEBU.

Celia flinches and grips her mother, who notes the ritual with seasoned nonchalance, pulling Celia deeper into the crowd.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - CELIA AND JUNE'S ADJOINING ROOMS - NIGHT

Celia throws up into the sink. June holds her hair back. Celia accepts the water bottle her mother offers her.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN- CELIA AND JUNE'S ADJOINING ROOMS - PRE-DAWN

Celia opens her eyes to her mother shaking her. It's still dark outside.

CELIA

What time is it?

JUNE

The best time of day to see nocturnal aye-eyes. Come.

CELIA

I feel like someone exploded a rock in my skull.

JUNE

That, Celi, is what they call a hangover. You have sixty seconds to make a decision.

Celia pulls her blanket over her head. June waits for a moment. Pats the blanket, squeezes the bump of her daughter's foot.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - CELIA AND JUNE'S ADJOINING ROOMS

Celia wakes up. The sun is bright. Presses her hand against her dull headache. June has left a bottle of Advil. Celia takes one.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - MOMENTS LATER

Celia goes down the crooked stairway. No one's at the front desk.

EXT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - TERRACE - CONTINUOUS

Celia shoves a couple bites of bread into her mouth. Grabs a few rolls and shoves them in her pocket.

She pours a cup of coffee. Sees the young man - DAUD - from the University of Antananarivo, a heavy backpack by his feet.

He is 29, tall, sturdy, handsome, despite a nose that looks to have been broken more than once.

EXT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - CONTINUOUS

Daud approaches Celia.

DAUD

You, I recognize. I am looking for June Engle.

Celia looks at him, wary.

CELIA

Are you from the ministry?

DAUD

The university. This place does not make itself easy to find.

CELIA

It's the only hotel for twenty six miles.

June runs up, hair back, lightly sweating, lugging gear.

JUNE

Brown #1 is already rallying, I think she'll be ready for re-integration in a couple of days.

(glancing at Daud)

You must be the zoologist.

Celia looks up at her mother, confused. June swings her arm around Celia's shoulder.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Celia and I found a five year old female, pretty bad shape. Couple of kids looking for a meal.

DAUD

(re Celia)

I take it this is your sister, then?

JUNE

Don't bullshit me, mister. Did you know I was the first to photograph golden bamboo lemurs? They were so rare, it took us weeks of trekking in the forest to find them.

DAUD

I've seen your footage.

JUNE

Have you?

DAUD

You have a few fans at the university.

JUNE

I thought it was the opposite.

DAUD

It's not often we meet American women with such intelligence.

JUNE

Something tells me this isn't exactly a compliment.

Celia looks between them. Hands her mother a roll and coffee. June gulps the coffee in a swift sip. Tears off a piece of the roll. Hands it back to Celia.

JUNE (CONT'D)  
 (to Daud)  
 Let's get to work.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

June clips quickly through the forest, Daud keeping pace. Celia trails behind them. June points to a bare gulf between trees, Daud bends to inspect it.

JUNE  
 Another bush fire, there -

DAUD  
 This was recent.

JUNE  
 Day before yesterday.

DAUD  
 Early for them.

JUNE  
 Theirry said they'd leave this area  
 - a square mile around the research  
 cabin. Wait!

Celia and Daud abruptly stop. June kneels next to a half buried pile of dung.

JUNE (CONT'D)  
 Gloves, please.

Celia gives them to her. June plucks a few seeds from the dung.

CELIA  
 Are they planted by a golden?

JUNE  
 It's possible. God, it's possible.  
 Tracks are too wide to be an aye-  
 aye.

June stores the seeds, dispenses with her gloves. She takes a rapid series of pictures.

JUNE (CONT'D)  
 Mark this spot.

DAUD  
One and a quarter kilometers in,  
approximately.

CELIA  
(to Daud)  
You need to give the exact  
location.

Daud looks up at Celia, holds out his pedometer, which looks a bit worse for the wear.

DAUD  
Here. Have a go.

CELIA  
One and three fifth miles from the  
forest entry point. 85 meters from  
the research cabin, once we fix it.  
(nodding at June, who is  
already trudging ahead)  
She'll be mad if you don't tell  
her. You'll see.

June glides ahead. Daud follows, fascinated. Celia watches as he hurries to catch up to her mother.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

Celia, June, and Daud wait patiently in June's designated spot, a few nets spread in front of them.

CELIA  
Is this where you found the first  
one?

June puts her finger to her lips.

JUNE  
(a whisper)  
20 meters from the research cabin.

There's rustling above. June's eyes have not left the trees. A flash of brown fur becomes visible. Then a tail, and another tail, and another tail.

CELIA  
June.

June creeps closer. They speak in whispers.

JUNE

Shh. I see them. Daud, write this down. The largest is approximately 35 inches tall.

(shakes her head)

Chestnut brown pelage.

Celia grabs a slippery tree branch with her good hand and tries to pull herself up. Slips. Tries again. Daud moves to assist her but she waves him away.

JUNE (CONT'D)

(to Celia)

Can you handle more than one?

CELIA

I got it.

JUNE

(to Daud)

She hurt herself in Ankarana.

Celia slips, catches herself. The lemurs scatter.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Shit.

CELIA

I'm sorry.

JUNE

They won't come back to this location.

CELIA

I'm *sorry*.

Daud throws an anesthetic dart, knocking one fleeing lemur to the ground. June snaps a collar on the lemur.

DAUD

(to Celia)

Are you all right?

Celia nods. Does not accept his hand. Daud and June wait for a moment. Celia slowly climbs down.

EXT. RESEARCH CABIN - LATER

Celia hammers planks onto a damaged side of the research cabin. She's sweating. She watches her mother tell Daud a story as she shows him Brown #1. They're laughing about something.



CELIA  
What's so funny?

JUNE  
War stories of the academic  
persuasion.  
(off Celia's look)  
Daud had a semester with my old  
advisor. Convinced him to go  
underwater diving. And we're  
talking about one of the biggest  
cowards I've come across.  
(to Daud)  
You've got to tell me how you did  
it.

DAUD  
For now, this is a secret.

Celia watches them flirt for a moment. Drops the hammer and  
heads in the direction they came from.

JUNE  
Where are you going?

June trudges after Celia.

JUNE (CONT'D)  
Celi. Hey. What's up?

June catches up to her.

JUNE (CONT'D)  
Celia.

CELIA  
You didn't tell me anyone else was  
coming.

JUNE  
It's standard.  
(beat)  
You know that.

CELIA  
I could take notes. I could monitor  
for you.

JUNE  
The powers that be have their own  
rules. I've given up trying to  
understand them.

Celia looks at her mother. Not sure she really believes her.

CELIA

How long are we really going to be here? How many weeks of school?

JUNE

We just got here, and already you want to go home?

CELIA

I didn't say that.

Celia walks off. June watches her for a beat.

EXT. FORT DAUPHIN - ROAD

Celia walks up the road, comes upon a rice field, where VILLAGERS work hard to harvest - among them, the children Celia saw in the forest. All are bone thin, wearing threadbare clothes.

The workers squint warily at her. The children retreat behind their parents.

A tall blond WOMAN and a young boy on a motorbike pass by. Celia turns and sees them.

EXT. FORT DAUPHIN COAST - DAY

Celia walks down the road, in the direction of the motorbike. The OCEAN comes into focus far in front of her.

EXT. INDIAN OCEAN - LATER

Celia writes a letter. Stops to watch fishermen throw puffer fish back into the ocean.

Celia gets up. Walks closer to the ocean. In the pool she's a champion, but the ocean has terrified her since she was a child.

She looks west, sees the edge of the FOREST, where her mother is with Daud. She looks east, sees an ISLAND, far in the distance.

She looks right in front of her, at the vast stretch of water that she wishes didn't scare her. She turns away.

EXT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - NIGHT

June, Daud, and Celia eat dinner. Haja and another worker eat a few tables away.

JUNE

We covered ten acres of the rainforest after you left. I'm ready to strangle this man.

DAUD

I'm a very hard person to work with.

JUNE

Oh, mister, you should have met some of the kids I took to Ankarana. Constantly distracted. And don't get me started on our geriatric guide.

(to Celia)

Isn't that right, Celi?

Celia shrugs. June watches her poke at her food.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Celia wasn't partial to fried locusts. I told her they were an acquired taste.

DAUD

They're good for you. Brain food.

JUNE

(to Celia)

So. What did you study?

(to Daud)

Celia has the most astonishing memory.

(to Celia)

Give him a list - how about pollution?

CELIA

The most polluted places on earth: Ranipe, India. La Oroya, Peru, Linfen, China. Um -Dzerzhinsk, Russia; Haina, the Dominican Republic; Kabwe, Zambia. And you can't forget Chernobyl.

JUNE

Anyone who keeps a nuclear power plant in business should be forced to eat their own plutonium.

DAUD

(to Celia)

What else have you got?

CELIA

A list of all the famous scientists who committed suicide. And how they did it.

DAUD

I didn't know that many had.

CELIA

Adolphe d'Archiac - threw himself into the Seine River. Percy Williams Bridgman shot himself. James Leonard Brierley Smith took cyanide. Viktor Meyer - also cyanide.

DAUD

Sounds like cyanide was the way to go.

CELIA

It does kill you pretty quickly.

DAUD

(to June)

You've given your daughter quite the education.

JUNE

Most parents shield their children from reality. I wanted Celia to learn about hardship early on.

Daud's eyes have barely left June. Celia looks between the two of them, realizing they don't really need her in this conversation.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - CELIA AND JUNE'S ADJOINING ROOMS - BATHROOM

June washes Celia's hair in the sink. The scream of the indri loud through the window.

CELIA  
They weren't stupid. Your team.

JUNE  
There's no point in being  
sentimental.

June hands Celia a towel. Celia rubs her hair dry as June ducks her head in the sink and begins washing her own hair. After a moment:

CELIA  
He seems smart, I guess. Daud.

JUNE  
He is. Clever when he isn't lazy.

CELIA  
What do you mean?

JUNE  
He's quick on his feet.

CELIA  
But doesn't always try.

June smiles: exactly.

JUNE  
You never told me what you did  
today.

CELIA  
Studied. I told you.

Celia begins combing her mother's hair.

CELIA (CONT'D)  
(re hair)  
Maybe you should dye it. Like  
redder or something.

JUNE  
(ignoring her)  
You're old enough to start thinking  
seriously about what you want to do  
with your life.

CELIA  
I want to swim long distance, like  
Lynne Cox.

JUNE  
Celia, you hate the ocean.

CELIA

I don't!

JUNE

Oh, don't get upset. You're a sprinter. You always have been.

(beat)

You're also an excellent scientist.

Celia stops combing. Thinks about this. Still smarting from before.

CELIA

I screwed up though.

JUNE

Everyone does, sometimes.

CELIA

Not you.

Celia leaves the bathroom and gets into bed. The indri screams swell. She covers her ears.

A moment passes. June sits on the edge of her bed. Gives her a pair of ear plugs. Celia turns away.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - JUNE AND CELIA'S ADJOINING ROOMS - LATER

Celia can't sleep. She turns to see her mother passed out in her clothes.

Celia tiptoes over to June, checks to make sure the finger she snagged on the trap is healing. The INDRI (nocturnal lemur) start their nightly SCREAM.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - CELIA AND JUNE'S ADJOINING ROOMS - PRE-DAWN

Celia opens her eyes to her mother again leaving before daybreak.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - LOBBY - EARLY MORNING

Celia walks quietly down the stairs, into the empty lobby. There's an ancient telephone behind the check-in desk. Celia dials.

CELIA  
 I wanted to make a collect call.  
 Leonard Engle?  
 (beat)  
 Yeah, Bryant Avenue. In Ithaca.  
 (beat)  
 OK. You could try his cell. 255-  
 716. 9895.

A moment passes. Then another. Celia hesitates, then hangs up the phone.

EXT. FORT DAUPHIN - TANAMBOA MARKET - LATER

Celia walks through a tiny market, past stands selling fruit, wood carvings, dyed clothes, beautiful embroidery.

The woman who passed Celia near the rice field crouches at one stand, filling a satchel with colorful fabric. This is MELANIE.

We get a better look at Melanie. She's tough and stately. Beads dangle from her neck. She glances at Celia.

EXT. FORT DAUPHIN - TANAMBOA MARKET - LATER

Celia crouches down in front of a necklace with an tiny stone amulet shaped like a moth. A SALESMAN, 30s approaches her.

SALESMAN  
 (in Malagasy)  
 You want her? Five thousand ariary.

Celia flips through her translation book, finds the correct phrase.

CELIA  
 (in Malagasy)  
 What is it?

SALESMAN  
 (in Malagasy)  
 White moth. Protected the ancient  
 people from the forest demons.

Celia flips though her translation book.

CELIA  
 (in Malagasy)  
 Protection?

SALESMAN

(in Malagasy)

If you listen to these demons for too long, your body will turn to stone.

Celia examines the amulet. Reaches into her pocket, counts out coins.

EXT. TANAMBOA MARKET - LATER

Celia, wearing the amulet, reaches the end of the market and comes upon a thatch-roofed shack. It's a small, empty bar, flanked by spiny plants.

Out front an INDRI is chained to a post. Celia looks at him for a moment, his round eyes and filthy fur. She inches up to him, gets as close as possible.

Celia looks into the bar. The bartender - PHILLIPPE, early 20s - is the only occupant.

CELIA

Why do you have him chained like that?

Phillippe looks at her blankly.

MELANIE (O.S.)

He doesn't speak English.

Celia turns. Melanie, a bible in her tanned hand, sweeps past Celia into the bar.

INT./EXT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

Melanie approaches Phillippe, pats the bible on the bar, taps it, and says something in Malagasy.

Phillippe unchains the lemur, who darts into a nearby bush. Melanie winks at Celia.

Celia walks into the bar, looks around. A few rotting stools. A few cheap beer bottles and glass tubs of lychee. Melanie gestures towards a stool. Celia sits.

MELANIE

Melanie Meier. Meier Ministry.

CELIA

What did you say to him?



MELANIE

Proverb number twelve, a man shall  
have no advantage over beasts.

Celia looks at her, confused.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

It's from the bible, darling. You  
want to hear more, we have a base  
south of the market. Anyone is  
welcome.

(beat)

Your mother, too.

CELIA

How do you know my mother?

MELANIE

Yesterday she chased two eight-year-  
olds out of the forest. We've got a  
saying on our mission: you matter  
less than the community you foster.

CELIA

But who said she chased them?

MELANIE

Who do you think? The kids did.

(beat)

This is their land. We're visitors,  
that's all.

Melanie slides a few ariary coins across the bar. Celia  
notices a delicate cross tattooed on Melanie's arm. Phillippe  
gives her a glass of lychee juice, which she gulps with  
gusto.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

(off Celia's stare)

Can't blame a girl for being  
thirsty.

(beat)

Ask him for the lychee juice.  
Delicious.

She swans away, gets onto a motorbike and powers it up. Celia  
watches her go, then consults her book.

CELIA

(in Malagasy)

Could I have the moonshine?

Phillippe places a drink in front of Celia. She sips it. It's  
stronger than she remembered.

EXT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - TERRACE - DUSK

Haja serves June and Daud dinner.

Celia, face flushed, shoulders completely burnt, walks up to the patio.

JUNE

Look who wandered in.

(to Celia)

You're not going to believe the day we had. We watched two bamboo lemurs nearly kill each other over a mate -

DAUD

They nearly scratched each others' eyes out.

JUNE

(to Haja)

Can you get us more of this fish? It's delicious - some kind of curry?

CELIA

You left without me.

JUNE

I would have had an easier time waking one of the bamboos.

(to Haja, in Malagasy)

If you see them, you'll tell your friends to stop burning the forests down.

DAUD

June.

JUNE

No, he'll see.

(to Haja, in Malagasy)

You'll see. We'll help you plant the right crops. Better for everyone. The animals are sacred. You must protect them. Do you understand?

HAJA

(In Malagasy)

I am sorry, miss. To make you upset.

DAUD  
(In Malagasy)  
She knows it's not your fault,  
Haja.

Haja leaves.

DAUD (CONT'D)  
You shouldn't promise things like  
that.

JUNE  
I didn't promise anything I can't  
deliver.

She touches his wrist.

JUNE (CONT'D)  
We can't.

He looks at her shyly. After a beat June begins shoveling  
food into her mouth, barely chewing.

JUNE (CONT'D)  
The goldens exhibit nocturnal  
tendencies. We should get back to  
the site.

DAUD  
(lightly)  
If you choke, you'll never see  
them.  
(to Celia)  
Is she this hard on everyone?

CELIA  
(to Daud)  
When she thinks they're lazy.

JUNE  
I thought you would have wanted to  
see how Brown One was doing.

CELIA  
How's she doing?

JUNE  
Better. Eating on her own.

CELIA  
I met a missionary.

Daud and June look at each other.

CELIA (CONT'D)

That's what she said she was.

JUNE

You shouldn't be talking to her,  
Celia.

CELIA

Why not?

JUNE

Does it matter?

DAUD

Any more lists for us?

JUNE

Oh for god's sake, Daud, she's not  
a robot.

CELIA

Marjorie Gestrung - the youngest  
Olympic Gold Medalist. Jordan  
Romero was thirteen when he scaled  
Mount Everest. Pele was seventeen  
when he scored a goal in the world  
cup. Serjei Karjakin was a chess  
grandmaster at twelve. Lynne Cox  
was fifteen when she swam the  
English Channel.

DAUD

Did you know Pele used to be my  
hero?

JUNE

I wish you'd told me you were a  
jock masquerading as a scientist.

DAUD

Ah, but you would have requested  
someone else.

JUNE

Not that I had much of a choice.

DAUD

Thanks, then.

June grins.

JUNE

I got lucky.

Celia looks between her mother and Daud, trying to read the dynamic between them, their hands almost touching. Haja comes out.

HAJA  
(in Malagasy)  
Miss June? There is a telephone  
call for you. Mr. Leonard Engle.

Celia turns to June.

JUNE  
(in Malagasy)  
Tell him I'm busy.  
(off Haja's hesitation)  
Go on.

Haja turns.

CELIA  
I could have talked to him.

June gives her a look. A beat.

JUNE  
How did he know where we were?

Celia doesn't have an answer. June's face is unreadable. She stands up, motioning for Daud to follow.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - NIGHT

Celia walks quietly towards Daud's room. His door is closed. She hears him hum, "The Impossible Dream," hears June laugh. Celia stands there for a moment, but she can't make out what they're saying.

\*

EXT. INDIAN OCEAN - BEACH - DAY

Celia, dressed in a swimsuit, stands in front of the ocean.

She takes a shallow breath. She takes a small step in. Then another. Then another. The ocean looks so big.

Celia closes her eyes. Opens them. Another breath. She looks back, towards the beach and safety. A familiar man is giving lychees to two children.

Daud. He looks up and sees her. They stare at each other for a moment: a face off. Then Celia turns around, presses into the water, and begins to swim.

EXT. INDIAN OCEAN - LATER

Celia treads water. Begins a tentative crawl. In the pool she's won races with this stroke, but she's slow out in the ocean.

She keeps swimming even as the water gets rougher.

She's so focused she doesn't see a huge WAVE coming. Then she's under water, struggling against the current and the current's winning.

Daud, still wearing his t-shirt and shorts, cuts through the water with the powerful stroke of a seasoned swimmer. He hooks his arm around Celia's waist and pulls her up, past a darting school of fish.

Daud pulls Celia to the shore.

EXT. INDIAN OCEAN - BEACH - MOMENTS LATER

Celia stands on the beach, catches her breath. Daud watches her.

CELIA

That came out of nowhere.

(beat)

Where's my mom? I mean, where's June?

DAUD

I thought I'd re-charge for an hour. Not a lot of sunshine in the field.

CELIA

Lots of dendantium trees.

DAUD

Is that what those are?

CELIA

You should know that. You're from here.

DAUD

Maybe. But Tana has no dendantium trees. And upstate New York has no palm trees. Same country, different region.

(beat)

Your mother thinks you have given up on the aye-aye that you found.

CELIA

She found it.

Celia looks out at the ocean. She'd rather be here, anyway.

EXT. INDIAN OCEAN - BEACH - MOMENTS LATER

Celia and Daud walk up the beach as Celia dries off.

DAUD

We came here, every summer, raced,  
tried to drown each other, tried to  
drown other kids. We were little  
brats.

(pointing south-west)

You can see land if you swim far  
enough. \*

CELIA

I want to swim there. That island. \*

(beat)

June doesn't really think I can.

DAUD

Why do you call her that?

CELIA

It's her name.

(off Daud's silence)

She's wanted me to since my dad  
left. Not because of vanity.  
Because of professional identity.

Daud laughs.

DAUD

Everyone at my university knows  
about your mother.

CELIA

You should tell that to my dad.

DAUD

June says they worked together.  
When she first came up with the  
seed dispersal theory. That was the  
most I could get out of her.

CELIA

She doesn't like to talk about him.

DAUD

They're divorced?

CELIA  
Did June tell you that?

DAUD  
She did not.

CELIA  
Good.  
(beat)  
Have you ever been divorced?

Daud shakes his head.

CELIA (CONT'D)  
Do you have more than one wife?

DAUD  
I have exactly zero.

CELIA  
So you can sleep with my mom.

Daud says nothing for a tense moment. Then starts to laugh.  
Celia stares at him, horrified.

CELIA (CONT'D)  
It's not funny.

DAUD  
I'm sorry. I am sorry. It is not  
funny. What can I say? Your mother  
is quite an amazing woman.

CELIA  
My dad has a girlfriend. He met her  
at the racetrack. She's a  
professional mom.  
(beat)  
He's still in love with June. He  
just isn't strong enough to be  
around her.

Daud thinks about this.

DAUD  
It's something, her theory.

CELIA  
If she proves it, will they stop  
burning down the forests?

DAUD  
This is a practice older than I am.  
Older than your mother.  
(MORE)



DAUD (CONT'D)  
(off Celia's worry)  
If anyone can make them understand  
the damage, it's June.  
(beat)  
Can I give you some advice?

CELIA  
Why?

DAUD  
When you're starting out, you want  
to swim with the current, not  
against it.

CELIA  
I'm not starting out.

A beat.

DAUD  
I'm off then. Wouldn't want to be  
late.

Daud revs up his motorbike.

CELIA  
Daud?  
(beat)  
Thanks for helping me. But I would  
have been fine.

Daud looks at her for a minute, smiles. Celia watches him  
ride off.

EXT. FOREST - RESEARCH CABIN - DUSK

Celia comes in quietly. June and Daud are observing a few  
caged aye-aye lemurs while June types quickly on a clunky  
laptop. CAGES, CAMERAS, TRACKING COLLARS, and LABELED  
SPECIMENS now line the dusty shelves of the cabin.

Celia peeks into the cage where Brown #1 is recovering. June  
stops typing.

JUNE  
(to Celia)  
She looks great, doesn't she?  
(to Daud)  
Done. Give this a look?

Daud starts to read. June motions for Celia to come over.

JUNE (CONT'D)

(to Celia)

We were looking for you. Could have used some help. Come here. Come over here.

Celia stays where she is.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Don't you want to take a look at these guys?

June points to the cages with lemurs, who wear tracking collars. Celia puts the specimen jar down and reluctantly joins her mother.

JUNE (CONT'D)

The aye-aye have been straying from their usual base. Brown has company.

CELIA

Do they bury seeds too?

JUNE

It's possible.

DAUD

We don't have the evidence. Not yet.

JUNE

We just need to find the Golden. And convince the powers that be.

DAUD

What's this phrase, the powers that be?

CELIA

When less iconoclastic humans form a corporate group they lose their individuality and also their humanity.

Daud laughs.

JUNE

She listens to me sometimes.

DAUD

And yet we need their backing, don't we now?

JUNE  
(shooting him a grin)  
I can play nice.

Daud pushes the screen back to June.

DAUD  
You have persuaded me.

JUNE  
Good.  
(to Celia)  
What happened to your shoulders?  
You look like you're molting.

CELIA  
I went to the ocean.

DAUD  
Celia took me swimming. You didn't  
tell me she had such talent.

June looks between the two of them.

JUNE  
Did you?

CELIA  
I have to practice somewhere.

DAUD  
We stayed near the pirogues. Very  
safe.

JUNE  
(to Celia)  
Have you been to the tombs yet?  
Visited the caves?

CELIA  
I don't have a lot of interest in  
meeting another crocodile.

JUNE  
You've got to get over your fear,  
Celia. I didn't even leave New York  
until I met your father. I want to  
make sure you take advantage.

Daud puts his arms around both of them.

DAUD  
Lighten up, ladies. You want to see  
those tombs?

EXT. FORT DAUPHIN - MALAGASY TOMBS - NIGHT

Daud leads them through a colorfully painted stone tomb. His flashlight flickers over images of Malagasy gods. He puts his finger to his lips. June hangs back.

CELIA  
(to June, a whisper)  
Are you scared?

JUNE  
Of course not.

Daud puts his finger to his lips.

DAUD  
(whispering)  
We're not supposed to be here. This  
is when the spirits are asleep.

EXT. FORT DAUPHIN - MALAGASY TOMBS - LATER

Daud leads them through the tombs, a huge stone compound decorated with bright geometric paintings and animal skulls.

Daud points out different paintings.

DAUD  
To ensure a peaceful afterlife. To  
ensure that their descendents are  
fertile.

CELIA  
(giggling)  
Seriously?

DAUD  
(he doesn't think it is)  
This is serious.

Daud points to another animal painting - a lemur.

DAUD (CONT'D)  
You don't see them in many tombs.

CELIA  
Why not?

DAUD  
The first people who settled here  
were scared of them. Got it into  
their heads that they were demons.  
(MORE)

DAUD (CONT'D)

Because of the way they sounded.  
Some of them still think that.

JUNE

They were here first, the indri.  
They used to be as big as we were.  
Their scream was integral to their  
survival.

(a beat)

A thousand years ago, before men  
settled, the crocodiles tried to  
kill the indri. But they were so  
determined to stay here they bit  
off their own legs because they  
knew that would make their arms  
stronger. They used their arms to  
climb the trees. When men first  
settled, the indri learned to  
scream to alert them to the  
crocodiles. The settlers were  
scared of the creatures that were  
trying to protect them.

Celia leans forward, she's never heard her mother talk like  
this. June's face is dreamy and determined.

Daud takes June's hand and kisses it. June tucks her hair  
behind her ear, embarrassed.

JUNE (CONT'D)

It's just a story. I used to think  
that it was bullshit. But it  
doesn't matter, does it? We needed  
their help, now they need ours.

Celia absorbs this, uncomfortable with their closeness. She  
looks away from June and Daud and watches a scorpion crawl  
into one of the tombs.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - CELIA AND JUNE'S ADJOINING ROOMS -  
THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT

Celia wakes up to the sound of frantic typing. She goes into  
her mother's room.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - CELIA AND JUNE'S ADJOINING ROOMS -  
CONTINUOUS

June is sitting on the floor next to her bed, surrounded by  
papers and pictures of lemurs, hard at work, taking tense  
drags from a cigarette.

CELIA  
Did Arturo tell you that story?

JUNE  
What story?

CELIA  
The one you just told me and Daud.

A beat. June looks up.

JUNE  
Arturo doesn't have the  
imagination.

CELIA  
It sounds like him.

JUNE  
That story was told to me by a  
zoologist I worked with years ago.  
I think your father knew him. He  
discovered a new species of mouse  
lemur. He was also a great painter.  
He was Dutch.

(a beat)  
What are you still doing up?

CELIA  
What are *you* still doing up?

JUNE  
I'm on a deadline.

Celia sits down next to June, sifting through the mess of  
papers.

CELIA  
For what?

JUNE  
Celia, don't touch my stuff.

CELIA  
It's just paper.

JUNE  
It's not just paper, Celia, it's  
evidence that their habitat is  
being destroyed and they're smart  
enough to try to fix it. It's  
evidence that the ecosystem here  
will not survive without them. I've  
told you a million times.

CELIA

Yeah, but the evidence is in your computer. It's saved. You could even send it to yourself, if we had internet.

June moves her computer over.

JUNE

Who do you help by swimming?

CELIA

What do you mean?

JUNE

You put on a swimsuit, get in a swimming pool, go to one end of the pool, and turn around. Who does it effect? Who does it help?

CELIA

I'm swimming in the ocean.

JUNE

Answer the question.

CELIA

Why did you tell me all those stories about Lynne Cox? If you've got such a problem.

(off June's silence)

When I was little. When you made me swim in the ocean. With dad.

JUNE

I don't remember that.

CELIA

He told you not to make me go in if I didn't want to. And you said I had to otherwise I'd be afraid forever. How can you not remember?

June types, doesn't answer.

CELIA (CONT'D)

I almost drowned. I bet you don't remember that either.

JUNE

Don't be dramatic.

Celia goes to her camera, fiddles with it.

CELIA  
I miss dad.

June looks up at her, startled and hurt.

CELIA (CONT'D)  
I know you think I'm lying, but  
it's true.

A beat. June goes back to typing, her fingers murdering the keys.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Celia walks. Daud pulls up behind her on his motorbike.

DAUD  
The diligent student returning to  
her classroom.

CELIA  
I've been practicing.  
(beat)  
I guess you're sick of the shade?

DAUD  
Hop on.

CELIA  
I like to walk.

DAUD  
Suit yourself.

Daud's motorbike sprays red dust as he drives towards the ocean.

EXT. BEACH/INDIAN OCEAN - LATER

Celia walks down the beach, pulling off her tank top and shorts, revealing a swimsuit.

Note: from this point on she is almost always wearing a swimsuit, usually under her clothes.

In the distance Daud's already swimming. He treads water, waves at her.

DAUD  
Are you going to come out, then?

Celia stays where she is.



DAUD (CONT'D)

I thought you didn't need my help.

CELIA

Don't be a jerk.

She stares out at the water. It's so stupid that she's nervous.

She runs. Swims as fast as she can, past swimming children, past Daud, too.

EXT. INDIAN OCEAN - MOMENTS LATER

Celia stops, treads water, tired but elated. Daud catches up to her.

DAUD

You've got good speed.

Celia grins at the compliment. Looks at the shore so far away now.

CELIA

I could qualify for regionals if I go back to New York.

DAUD

Your mother must be proud.

CELIA

She says it's not the same as open water swimming.

DAUD

She's right. No rules. The water is not so predictable.

CELIA

That's why I want it.

Daud studies her.

DAUD

Keep going. Swim out as far as you can. Swim east towards that island. Keep your arms straight, like this.

(a beat)

This is the best time of day. There aren't any currents.

\*

EXT. INDIAN OCEAN - MOMENTS LATER

Celia swims out. Looks back at Daud. He motions for her to keep going.

Celia swims farther. Picks up speed. Swims until she's exhausted. Looks back. Doesn't see Daud anymore.

CELIA

Daud!

Celia starts to swim back, to panic.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Daud!

Celia swims faster. Daud pops up a few feet in front of her. She's not sure whether to laugh or be furious.

DAUD

Mahazo Aina. It's a game I used to play, when I was a little punk. To free your breath, you must hold your breath.

CELIA

What does that mean?

DAUD

You need to know what you're missing to appreciate it. Most people don't even think about breathing. They just do.

Celia thinks about this.

CELIA

I want to try.

(beat)

I want to hold my breath like you do. I'm ready. I swear.

Daud swims up to her. Puts his hands on her shoulders. Pushes her underwater.

EXT. INDIAN OCEAN - ABOVE AND UNDERWATER - MOMENTS LATER

Celia keeps her eyes open. Looks all around her. Coral, purple fish.

She starts to struggle. Daud holds her there.

Celia gasps a breath.

Daud thrusts her back underwater.

Celia flails against his hands. Everything fuzzy around her.

Daud pulls her up again.

EXT. INDIAN OCEAN - MOMENTS LATER

Celia catches her breath.

DAUD

It's good for you to struggle  
against the water. You could get  
sucked down by a strong tide. You  
have to know how to fight.

CELIA

I know how.

DAUD

Yes. You do.

Celia floats on her back. Looks towards the shore.

CELIA

I wish my mother had seen that.

EXT. BEACH - LATER

Celia finishes drying off. Gives her towel to Daud.

CELIA

The record for long distance  
swimming is just over two thousand  
miles, set by Martin Strel when he  
swam the Mississippi River.

\*

Daud nods.

CELIA (CONT'D)

I'll come every day. I'll go back  
out, no matter what. That's what  
June does.

DAUD

I call her Demeter. The goddess of  
determination.

CELIA

That's Greek.

DAUD  
You're good.

Celia shields her eyes, looks towards the island in the distance.

CELIA  
I'm going to swim there. To that land. And all the way back.

She looks to Daud for a reaction. His eyes are closed. He's smiling.

CELIA (CONT'D)  
You don't think I can do it?

DAUD  
I think that's up to you.

CELIA  
My mother doesn't.

DAUD  
Your mother didn't think she'd last long enough in Fort Dauphin to spot a rare new species. And she did.

CELIA  
The golden bamboo? She knew she'd find them. She knew she'd find something.

DAUD  
She was young. She tells me differently.

Daud reaches into his bag, takes out sunscreen, gives it to her.

She puts it on, twisting her arm so she doesn't have to ask Daud to do it.

EXT. FOREST - LATER

Daud pulls up on his motorbike, Celia on the back. Villagers are putting out a blaze. June stands near the research cabin, screaming at Theiryry. Daud hurries towards her.

DAUD  
What's this?

JUNE

He promised us a square mile until we could gather the necessary evidence. Two weeks go by and its a fucking matchbox.

(to Theierry, in Malagasy)  
We had an agreement!

THEIRRY

I did not know!

DAUD

June, it's very possible -

JUNE

We had an agreement.

(to Theierry, in Malagasy)  
A pact. Trust. Your people will eventually starve, do you understand me? This will kill them.

DAUD

June -

June kicks the side of the jeep, and stomps towards the research cabin. Daud begins to apologize to Theierry.

Celia follows her mother to the cabin.

INT. RESEARCH CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Celia leans on the counter, watching June tend to Brown #1. Neither of them speak. June glances at Celia, shakes her head, turns her attention back to the lemur.

Daud steps in. Stares at June for a tense beat.

DAUD

You don't want to be yelling at these people.

(off her silence)  
June.

She's still too furious to speak.

DAUD (CONT'D)

He only has control to a point. You know this.

June looks up at Daud.

JUNE

I should apologize.

DAUD  
That wouldn't be the worst thing.

June turns back to Brown #1.

DAUD (CONT'D)  
Is she all right?

JUNE  
Oh, now you want to work?

DAUD  
Normal people need a break, June.

June takes this in for a moment. Seems to accept it. Gestures to Daud.

JUNE  
(to Daud)  
Look at her pelage. And her incisors.

Celia peers into cages at several tagged lemurs.

CELIA  
Are they sick?

DAUD  
(to Celia)  
Let her work.

Celia turns to him, surprised and stung.

DAUD (CONT'D)  
(to June)  
32 teeth. I counted twice.

JUNE  
No, Daud. Her abdomen, her shortness of breath. Check her weight.

Daud slips on gloves, examines the lemur.

JUNE (CONT'D)  
Right? I mean this is...Daud. She's pregnant.

DAUD  
That's what we call fatrata.  
Amazing.

June grins at Daud. Pulls Celia into a hug.

JUNE

Where'd you put that scotch?

Celia hugs her mother back.

EXT. TANAMBOA BAR - DUSK

June and Daud both drink moonshine. Celia a fruit cocktail with a sugar-soaked lychee. June is mid-story.

JUNE

- and like an idiot I cried in front of the head of the committee -

DAUD

In front of Dr. Sophist?

JUNE

The hundred year old who doesn't have a sense of humor?

DAUD

Hundred and fifteen, and, what do you call it, senile?

JUNE

There were more of us, then, we drove two of the dehydrated black and whites into Tana - this was so traumatizing I think I forgot it happened -

DAUD

I have a hard time believing you'd forget anything -

JUNE

You're a liar but cheers to that.

June leans into Daud and they almost kiss. Celia notices and June pulls back. Celia takes a sip of June's moonshine.

JUNE (CONT'D)

(to Celia)

Careful with that.

CELIA

I'm building up an immunity.

EXT. TANAMBOA - MISSIONARY CAMP - LATER

Celia wanders away from the bar. She approaches a bonfire that has been set up in front of a large white tent near the beach. KIDS - native Malagasy and a few white children - eat fruit and Zebu meat. Melanie's at the grill.

A white man, DONALD (Melanie's husband), and their eight-year-old son, TIMOTHY, read Dr. Seuss to a group of Malagasy children.

DONALD

Please sir, I don't like this trick sir. My tongue isn't quick or slick, sir. I get all these ticks and clocks sir, mixed up with the chicks and tocks, sir.

TIMOTHY

I can't do it Mr. Fox, sir.

DONALD

I'm so sorry, Mr. Knox, sir.

TIMOTHY

Here's an easy game to play. Here's an easy thing to say.

DONALD

And the cat said, get out of my salami!

TIMOTHY

(to Donald)

That's not how it goes.

But the kids are laughing, more at Donald's goofy intonation than what he's actually saying. Timothy sees Celia.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

If you want to stay here, you have to be with our mission.

CELIA

How do I do that?

Melanie swans towards Celia.

MELANIE

Ignore him, darling. We don't turn anyone away. Isn't that right, Tim?

Tim studies Celia for a moment.



MELANIE (CONT'D)

He's shy. We don't turn anyone away.

EXT. TANAMBOA - MISSIONARY CAMP - MOMENTS LATER

Melanie and Celia eat from heaping plates. Nearby, Donald and Tim play boisterous bible songs on guitars while the children sing.

CELIA

I didn't realize how hungry I was.

MELANIE

My first mission, I told myself I'd only eat what they ate. I had to be in it with them to actually understand them.

CELIA

What happened?

MELANIE

I'll tell you, I was sick as a dog. Resented my mission. Resented God. Forgot why I came here in the first place. He was trying to teach me a lesson.

(beat)

So what did I do? Started eating fruit and protein. Vitamin supplements. Naps in the afternoon. And voila. Everything was clearer.

(beat)

I have a lot of respect for the work your mother's doing.

CELIA

My mother made it sound like Fort Dauphin was some sort of paradise. I thought it would look like Hawaii.

MELANIE

Have you ever been to Hawaii?

Celia shakes her head.

CELIA

I want to swim there, though. The south shore of Oahu.

MELANIE

The pictures show you the nice parts.

Donald and Timothy launch into a louder, sillier song. Melanie and Celia watch them for a moment.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Looks like a goof, doesn't he? My husband.

CELIA

A little.

MELANIE

We were here through a cholera epidemic before Tim was born. He insisted we stay until he treated every single person. That's how I knew I could never leave him.

JUNE (O.S.)

Celia.

Celia turns. June stands there, quietly stewing.

MELANIE

(to June)

I don't think we've properly met.

JUNE

(to Celia)

Come on.

MELANIE

Stay. Please. Help yourself to anything you'd like.

JUNE

I don't need your handouts and my daughter doesn't either.

(to Celia)

Come on.

MELANIE

It's not a handout. There's plenty, I promise.

June turns and gestures to the camp around her.

JUNE

How much did all of this cost?

(off Melanie's silence)

It's a legitimate question.

MELANIE

How could we do anything without support?

JUNE

(to Celia)

Thousands of dollars. At least.

MELANIE

Those who seek the lord shall not lack any good thing. Psalm 34:10.

JUNE

(to Melanie)

Tell them that the lord believes in preserving the planet. Then we can properly meet.

June takes off, walking quickly.

EXT. BEACH - MOMENTS LATER

June walks focused, quiet.

CELIA

You told me to explore.

JUNE

You want to hang out with Mother Teresa, that's your prerogative.

CELIA

Mother Teresa saved thousands of people from starvation.

JUNE

Is that an exact statistic?

Daud ambles towards them, carrying two bottles of beer.

DAUD

I thought we were celebrating.

JUNE

You celebrate. I've got work to do.

June walks quickly ahead. Daud catches up to her, grabs her hand.

EXT. INDIAN OCEAN - DAY

Celia swims. She stops. The island still seems so far off. From a few meters back, Daud urges her ahead.

EXT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - AFTERNOON

Celia grips Daud's waist as he drives his motorbike towards the hotel. She's in her swimsuit and her shoulders are a painful red. Her hair is disheveled, still wet. She sees the jeep in front of the hotel.

Behind it, June is in a vicious argument with LEN, late 50's, bespectacled and wiry.

Len turns to see his daughter, surprised by her appearance. June turns and heads back towards the terrace, pissed. Daud parks.

CAROL, 50s, attractive in a soft way, waits on the terrace, glancing at her watch.

CELIA

(to Daud)

I didn't know he was going to bring her.

Carol sees Celia and holds her hand up, a half-hearted wave.

EXT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - TERRACE

Len, June, Carol, and Daud sit there with coffees. The tension is thick. Celia comes out with rolls.

CELIA

Haja had some of these in the kitchen.

CAROL

Thanks, honey. We're jet lagged and starving.

JUNE

If you want some fried bugs the market's only a mile away.

LEN

(to Carol)

She likes to shock people.

JUNE

(to Len)

Are you worried about us? Because I have to say, packing up and leaving on a whim is a great fucking way to show it-

LEN

You've been gone a month! A month, June -

JUNE

- that doesn't give you any right to bring her here -

CAROL

-I really didn't mean to make things difficult.

June turns to Carol, glares. A long beat. Daud touches her arm. Len notices. June and Daud stand up.

JUNE

We don't have time for this.

June heads back to the jeep.

DAUD

We have a presentation at the ministry. June is on a very tight deadline. I do apologize.

Daud hurries after June. Len, Carol, and Celia sit in silence. The sound of the jeep starting. Len turns to Celia.

LEN

Your old dad doesn't get a hello? After flying across the world?

A beat. Celia hugs him.

CELIA

I wrote you letters. There wasn't anywhere to mail them.

EXT. FORT DAUPHIN - LEN'S RENTAL CAR

Len drives. Celia's in the back seat, quiet, not quite sure how to act around Carol. Carol pages through a guidebook in the passenger seat.

LEN

I saw your friend Beth last week.  
With some of the other girls at  
that bar near the Moosewood.

Celia hesitates, then decides to talk to him.

CELIA

The one Jason Weiss's dad owns?

LEN

You ever go there?

CELIA

I'm fourteen.

LEN

Ah hah, you see, I was testing you.

CELIA

I mean, I guess, Beth and Jason go  
there. Beth's a junior though.

Carol swivels to look at Celia, in the back seat.

CAROL

I've always wanted to come here.  
The only other place I've been is  
Europe.

CELIA

Ninety nine percent of the people  
who live here have never been  
anywhere else.

Carol reaches for Celia's hand, squeezes it.

CAROL

Your father and I had so much fun  
planning this trip. I've been  
looking forward to meeting you.

CELIA

Couldn't you have done that in  
America?

Len and Carol look at one another, then back at Celia's  
guarded reflection in the rear view mirror.

EXT. FORT DAUPHIN - TANAMBOA MARKET - LATER

Carol tries on a colorful Batik Tunik. Models it for Celia  
and Len.

CAROL

This is stunning, Len. You can't find clothing like this upstate. The colors.

(a beat)

Come here, Celia, hon.

Celia comes over. Examines the dress.

CAROL (CONT'D)

These are pleasantly shapeless for middle-aged ladies like me.

LEN

(to Carol)

Shut up, you're gorgeous.

CAROL

Oh, please.

(to Celia)

Now you...something like this, maybe?

(changing her mind)

No, the color is too harsh.

Something like this, I think.

Carol holds up a handmade sundress, bold blues and greens.

CAROL (CONT'D)

I want to see how this looks on you.

Carol pulls the dress over Celia's head. It's a little big on her but the potential is obvious.

CAROL (CONT'D)

I think we've found a winner.

LEN

(to Celia)

Have you lost weight?

CAROL

No one asked you, Leonard.

LEN

Two dresses for my favorite ladies?

Celia bristles at 'favorite ladies.'

CELIA

I really don't need it.

CAROL  
This is on me.

Carol gives the vendor a lot more money than one would need to.

EXT. BEACH - LATER

Celia leads Carol and Len down to the beach.

CAROL  
Isn't this a far cry from the Long  
Island Sound.

CELIA  
Daud's been teaching me how to swim  
with the current.

Celia strips off her clothes and hands them to her father.

CELIA (CONT'D)  
It's totally safe.

LEN  
Oh, because Daud says so?

CELIA  
You didn't have a problem when mom  
pushed me in the ocean.  
(beat)  
When we went to Montauk. Me and mom  
made an apricot cake. It tasted  
terrible.

Len almost smiles.

LEN  
It did taste terrible.

CELIA  
She wanted me to swim in the ocean.

LEN  
The way I remember it, Celia, she  
didn't push you. You wanted to go.

Celia looks up at her father's sunburnt face, trying to decipher if he's telling the truth.



EXT. INDIAN OCEAN - MOMENTS LATER

Celia swims. Stops. Looks back at the distant shore. Len walks closer to the water.

Celia paddles for a moment. Swims out farther.

EXT. INDIAN OCEAN - MOMENTS LATER

Celia walks up on the beach. Len meets her there. He's visibly shaken. He gives her an enormous hug. This time, she lets him.

CELIA

Dad, I'm fine.

(beat, he doesn't let her go)

Dad, I'm really OK.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Carol has set out lunch purchased at the market. She shows Celia pictures of her horse ranch in Missoula.

CAROL

That giant guy is Bunny, don't ask me why, Sammy named him. Rabbits scare the crap out of me.

She takes out other pictures.

CAROL (CONT'D)

But these - real beauties. I call this one Ben Hur. Ever seen that movie?

(Celia shakes her head)

I've had him since Lana was your age.

CELIA

How many kids do you have?

CAROL

Three and a half.

LEN

What she means is, I'm the half.

CAROL

Yeah, when you act like a teenager.

She takes out another picture.

CAROL (CONT'D)

An art show I did in Billings. A little dinky, but you have to start somewhere, don't you?

Celia looks. Carol's paintings are vibrant water colors, she has talent.

CELIA

Are you guys getting married?

Carol and Len look at each other.

CELIA (CONT'D)

I mean, it's been a year.

CAROL

We're thinking about it.

CELIA

Thinking about it or planning it?

Len shifts uncomfortably.

LEN

Swimming out that far, Celia, I don't like it.

CELIA

I'm almost as old as Lynne Cox was when she swam the English Channel.

LEN

Lynne Cox wasn't my daughter.

CELIA

I know what I'm doing.

She points to the island.

CELIA (CONT'D)

See that? That's where I'm going to swim to. It's not the Mozambique channel but it's a start.

\*

Carol pats Celia's shoulder.

CELIA (CONT'D)

You don't have to believe me but it's what I'm going to do.

LEN

(beat, quietly)

Are we gonna eat, or what?

CAROL  
All right, kill joy. The food is out.

Carol starts dividing food onto plates.

CAROL (CONT'D)  
Listen, honey. We booked a hotel a couple hours down the coast, what's it called, Len? Menabe?

LEN  
The Menabe region.

CAROL  
We'd love you to stay with us while we're here.

Celia looks to her father, who is silent.

CELIA  
Have you asked my mother?

EXT./INT. RESEARCH CABIN - FOREST - DAY

Celia looks through the window. June inspects the lemurs in their cages. Len paces. They are mid-fight.

JUNE  
You're not taking her -

LEN  
- it's four days -

JUNE  
- I'm on a deadline, as hard as that concept might be to wrap your head around -

LEN  
- She's your daughter, not your assistant -

JUNE  
- is that how she sees it? Have you asked her?

LEN  
Your sabbatical is up.

JUNE  
That's none of your business. I'm not your fucking student anymore.

Len moves closer to June, puts his hand on her shoulder. She looks up at him.

LEN

You need to think about coming back, June.

JUNE

(quietly)  
Can't right now.

LEN

You are going to lose your job.

JUNE

I am very close to something. The beginning of forest regrowth. The legacy of an animal that's *this close* to dying out. If I leave, everything I've done, not just these past months, but my entire life, it means nothing.

June tends to the lemurs. Len watches her.

LEN

I'm moving.

JUNE

Finally decided you were sick of a Murphy bed in a studio apartment?

LEN

That's not what I meant.  
(a beat)  
Look at me. June.

June turns to look at him.

JUNE

You came all the way here to tell me you were moving in with her.  
(beat)  
Where?

LEN

Missoula.

June starts to laugh.

JUNE

Missoula. *Missoula*. That's where you met her, isn't it? One of your cushy conferences.

LEN

The university offered me a good job, June.

JUNE

In Missoula. Jesus.

Celia takes this in. Watches as her mother turns back to her work, focused intently on the lemur. A beat.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Have you seen Daud work? I've finally found someone who can keep up with me, and he's just as smart as you are. So why the hell would I come back?

Celia steps away from the research center. A lemur with stunning white fur stares down at her.

EXT. FORT DAUPHIN - NIGHT

\*

Len's rental car, top down, drives down the road. A group of teens blast by on motorbikes. Carol clutches Len's arm.

Celia sits with June's worn backpack on her lap. Watches the ocean get farther and farther away.

EXT. MENABE REGION - NIGHT

They drive past enormous - and sparse - baobab trees.

EXT. HOTEL - ESTABLISHING

A lavish hotel.

INT. HOTEL - LOBBY

The complete opposite of Fort Dauphin. A full staff, a plush carpet. Len pays with a credit card.

Celia looks around. A couple months ago she probably would have been impressed. Now she's a little overwhelmed.

INT. HOTEL - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Celia takes her first hot shower in a long time. She gets out quickly - not used to it.

She flushes the shiny white toilet.

INT. HOTEL - ROOM - NIGHT

Celia lies awake in a big white bed. Carol and Len sleep on a pull out couch.

Celia finds her father's laptop. Quietly carries it into the hallway.

INT. HOTEL - HALLWAY

Celia sits on the floor, connecting to Skype.

BETH's fuzzy image shows up on the screen. She is a little older than Celia, 15, athletic, a streak of purple in her hair. We recognize her from Celia's pictures.

Celia waves like crazy.

Beth jumps up and down, clapping her hands, waving. The picture goes in and out.

INT. HOTEL - HALLWAY

Celia and Beth on Skype.

BETH

- and the fastest girl from Saratoga didn't come close. The Coach keeps asking about you. He thinks you fell off the face of the earth.

CELIA

There's only been school for a week. Anyway, I'm swimming in the ocean.

BETH

(unimpressed)

I guess that's cool. Does your mom still dry paper towels on the dish rack?

CELIA

No dish racks in Madagascar.

BETH

Is she making you watch those boring documentaries?

CELIA  
We don't have a TV.

BETH  
I'd kill myself.

CELIA  
There are definite ways to kill  
yourself. Crocodiles, scorpions.

BETH  
The DMV. And my stupid curfew. And,  
and, we're actually being tested on  
our summer reading. About Indians.

CELIA  
My mom's making me call her by her  
first name.

BETH  
So weird.  
(a beat)  
You look different.  
(a beat)  
You'll come back here, right?

CELIA  
Well, yeah.

BETH  
Cause Johanna's mom told my mom  
that your mom wasn't going back to  
Cornell.

CELIA  
Cornell sent her here, you idiot.  
She's gathering research. It could  
be ground breaking. It could prove  
the hapelemur can make the forest  
grow back.

BETH  
The what?

CELIA  
It's - it looks like a monkey but  
it's head is gold.

Pause. Neither quite sure what to say to each other.

CELIA (CONT'D)  
Have you seen Jason at all?

BETH  
Ugh, he's being such an asshole -

EXT. AVENUE OF THE BAOBABS - DAY

\*

One of Madagascar's tourist attractions - a huge, clear field. An avenue of towering 800 year old trees.

Carol snaps pictures, walking ahead of Len and Celia.

LEN  
Pretty neat.

CELIA  
If you like natural disasters.  
(beat)  
That's what this is. You know how many acres were destroyed so ignorant people could come and gawk?

LEN  
You sound like her.

CELIA  
Good.

LEN  
Celia.

CELIA  
Why did you come all the way here if you were just going to tell me you were moving?

A beat.

LEN  
I was waiting for the right time to tell you.

CAROL  
Come on, slow pokes! We don't have all day.

LEN  
(re Carol)  
She has a lot of energy.  
(off Celia's silence)  
To answer your question. I wanted to see your mother. And I wanted to see you. I'm not going to be right in town anymore.



CELIA

But why?

LEN

I just needed a change.

CELIA

Because of us.

Len shakes his head. They walk in silence. Carol is really far ahead of them now.

CELIA (CONT'D)

Did mom show you her research?

LEN

I looked at it.

CELIA

What did you think?

LEN

I have a feeling this is a trick question.

(off Celia's look)

I think she needs to be realistic.

CELIA

She said when you were younger you stayed in Fort Dauphin for three months, that's how she got the footage of the goldens. She said sometimes she slept and sometimes you did. She said you didn't ask the university permission, you just did it.

LEN

That was a long time ago.

Celia waits. Len stalls.

LEN (CONT'D)

What your mother wants, what your mother has always wanted, is to alter something bigger than she is.

CAROL (O.S.)

Slow pokes!

CELIA

(to Len)

What's wrong with that?

They look at each other for a moment. A stand off. Celia shakes her head, walks to join Carol who is taking pictures of everything. Carol waves to a WORKER.

CAROL  
(to worker)  
Can you take our picture?

Carol poses Celia next to her. The worker snaps their picture.

INT. HOTEL POOL/GYM - DAY

Celia swims in the florescent hotel pool. Rote strokes. It isn't fun or challenging anymore.

INT. HOTEL GYM - CONTINUOUS

Celia passes through the small hotel gym where Carol speed walks on a treadmill and Len pedals leisurely on a stationary bike.

The other TV plays an infomercial: Melanie talking to the camera, surrounded by children.

MELANIE (ON TV)  
You can help these boys and girls  
get food and books and a roof over  
their heads. No donation is too  
large or small.

Carol sees Celia and slows down. Gets off the treadmill. Gulps water from the fountain next to Celia.

CAROL  
I've probably gotten him hooked on  
that. Or my kids have. You wouldn't  
believe the junk they watch.

Someone scores a goal. Len gives a little cheer. Celia looks at him, annoyed.

CAROL (CONT'D)  
Hon, have you - have you thought  
about moving in with us?

CELIA  
You mean leaving Ithaca?

CAROL  
We have an awful lot of space.

CELIA

He can ask me himself. If that's what he wants me to do.

(beat)

Sorry.

They stand in silence for a moment. Both know Len isn't going to ask Celia to come back with them. Celia watches her father pedal.

CELIA (CONT'D)

When he left he didn't even say goodbye. Did he tell you that? He just packed up one night and drove away and didn't even leave a note. Didn't say anything for an entire week.

Carol listens, uncomfortable.

EXT. FORT DAUPHIN - DAY

Len's car drives along the coast.

INT. LEN'S CAR - SAME

Celia's in the backseat, staring at Carol and Len's clasped hands.

EXT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - DAY

Carol hands Celia her suitcase. Hugs her.

CAROL

Take care of yourself, you hear me?

Celia nods. Carol releases her.

CELIA

Bye, dad.

Len looks at Celia for a beat. Pats her cheek. Gives her an envelope.

LEN

Here.

Celia opens the envelope. Travelers checks.

LEN (CONT'D)

You can put in for up to five thousand dollars.

CELIA

Is this for me or for her?

LEN

What kind of a question is that?

Celia folds up the envelope. A beat.

CELIA

If you see Beth or Jason, tell them I say hi.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - CELIA AND JUNE'S ADJOINING ROOMS -  
LATER

Celia opens the top drawer, puts the check under her clothes. Next to a pile of letters to her father.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN- CELIA AND JUNE'S ADJOINING ROOMS -  
TERRACE - CONTINUOUS

Celia pads out to the balcony. Her father's car is already gone.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN- CELIA AND JUNE'S ADJOINING ROOMS -  
MOMENTS LATER

Celia plops down on her bed. Lost and a little restless. Sees a picture on the edge of her bed - a stunning golden bamboo lemur. She turns it over. \*

There's a note in June's tight handwriting. *Daud and I left for the field early. Need to cover more ground. May be gone another night.*

Celia looks at the note for a moment. Turns it over, as though the front might say something else, but there's just the picture of the lemur.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - CELIA AND JUNE'S ADJOINING ROOMS -  
NIGHT

Celia gets ready for bed. The indri scream. Otherwise she is alone.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - CELIA AND JUNE'S ADJOINING ROOMS - MORNING

Celia wakes up alone. The sun too hot and cheerful through her window.

EXT. INDIAN OCEAN - DAY

Celia swims, hard. Stops, catches her breath. She's getting closer to the island.

EXT. MISSIONARY CAMP - AFTERNOON

Celia approaches the missionary camp, sees Melanie's ramshackle white house behind the large open tent. It looks more run down in the daylight.

INT. MISSIONARY SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

Celia approaches the tent. A dozen young men and women and five or six children lean over hand-built desks. Melanie paces energetically, in the midst of a lesson. She spots Celia and smiles broadly at her.

MELANIE

(in Malagasy, to her students)

It looks like we have a visitor.

The students turn to look at her. One of the Malagasy BOYS June chased out of the forest ducks under his desk.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Come on up. I insist.

(beat)

When we have a new member of our community, they tell us their name, their age, their greatest hope, their smallest fear. Not necessarily in that order.

Celia walks to the front of the classroom.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

(in Malagasy)

Tahiry, please demonstrate.

After a beat of hesitation, Tahiry stands up. He is scrawnier than Celia remembers, wearing a tiny blue t-shirt that barely fits him.

BOY (TAHIRY)

(in English)

My name is Tahiry. I am eight years old. I love chocolate, spiders, and I am going to learn to play the guitar. I am scared of crocodiles and I want one day to own a store that sells only blue things.

MELANIE

(in Malagasy)

And I promise to be your first customer.

(to Celia)

Go ahead.

CELIA

I'm Celia. Engle. I'm fourteen. I'm from Upstate New York. America. I'm training to swim the Mozambique Channel. I'm scared of crocodiles, also.

Melanie turns to the chalkboard. Draws the Mozambique channel.

MELANIE

(in Malagasy)

See that, everyone. Celia is going to swim from there, to there.

The kids look at her, impressed.

EXT. MISSIONARY SITE - LATER

Students lean over books, doing simple arithmetic problems as Melanie shows Celia around. Timothy skips from student to student, stopping to help them.

MELANIE

He's very protective of them, my kid is.

(beat)

We've found that if they learn the basics early on, they have an easier time keeping track of their businesses, their day to day. Before we came here they approximated everything. And of course they all want to learn English.

Celia gestures quietly to a small GIRL, absolutely bald.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

Lice. Common. Takes down a whole village in a day if we don't get there first.

Melanie points out a sweet-faced boy bent over a notebook.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

See that gorgeous boy? Lost most of his family to cholera. We're trying to fund a filtration system, but that won't be done before the fire season.

A few teens on motorbikes blast by, spraying Celia and Melanie with red dirt.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

(in Malagasy)

I'll have your heads, you hear me?

She's joking. Melanie starts to laugh. Celia does too. Another bike speeds by. Then another. Melanie looks after them, a shadow of concern.

CELIA

What is it?

EXT. THEIRRY'S HUT - LATER

A crowd of Malagasy villagers wait outside of Theirry's hut. Donald is ushered in. Melanie follows. Gestures for Celia and Tim to keep their distance.

INT. THEIRRY'S HUT - LATER

Donald tends to the OLD WOMAN we saw earlier. Theirry's mother. She's extremely sick. Theirry sits nearby with his two wives.

Melanie kneels in front of the woman and offers a prayer.

Celia and Tim watch from the doorway. Tim reaches out and takes Celia's hand. She looks at him, surprised.

CELIA

(a whisper)

What's she saying?

TIMOTHY

She's saying that there are wonderful things waiting for her and she shouldn't be scared.

Theirry stands up, shakes Melanie's hand. Melanie speaks quietly to him. Squeezes his shoulder. Sways back towards Celia and Tim. A beat.

MELANIE

(to Celia)

It would mean a lot to him if your mother was here.

Celia watches Theirry kneel in front of his mother. He's clearly devastated.

EXT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - NIGHT

Celia approaches the hotel. Daud and June's jeep is parked outside.

In the distance, five clusters of flames burn in the distant hills.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - STAIRWELL/CELIA AND JUNE'S ADJOINING ROOMS

Celia climbs the stairs. June's waiting for her on the landing.

JUNE

Where were you?

CELIA

Where were *you*?

JUNE

I told you we'd be gone a while -

Celia walks past her, into their adjoining rooms. Daud stands, shirtless, in the middle of June's room. His eyes meet Celia's and she turns away, embarrassed. She closes the door between their rooms.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - CELIA AND JUNE'S ADJOINING ROOMS - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

June sits on the edge of Celia's bed. Celia faces the opposite direction.



JUNE

Did you have a good time with your father?

(beat)

I'll take that as a no.

(beat)

The good news, Brown One had her babies. I wish you'd come back a little earlier.

CELIA

I've been here two days.

JUNE

We weren't off having a party. The work I'm doing takes patience. It's like swimming long distance. Patience, devotion, complete absence of fear.

CELIA

Theirry's mom is really sick.

JUNE

I'm sorry to hear that.

Celia rolls over, looks at her mother. Wants to ask for a better response, more sympathy. A beat.

CELIA

Have you even seen a golden?

Off June's silence.

CELIA (CONT'D)

I didn't think so.

EXT. INDIAN OCEAN - ANOTHER DAY - SERIES OF SHOTS

Celia practices. Goes out farther and farther, more determination in her stroke.

EXT. INDIAN OCEAN - LATER

Celia swims back towards shore. She sees Daud walking down the beach. He holds up a hand, as though calling a truce. She ignores him and keeps on swimming.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Celia walks towards the research cabin.

INT. RESEARCH CABIN - MOMENTS LATER

Celia nudges the door open. June tends to the once-pregnant aye-aye lemur and two squirming babies. She seems peaceful, focused. Also paler than usual. She sees Celia.

CELIA

Where's Daud?

JUNE

Our spotting scope cracked. He went into town to get it repaired.

(a beat)

Gorgeous, aren't they?

Celia shrugs.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Do you want to hold them?

Celia hesitates. Steps closer. Her mother hands her the two babies.

CELIA

They sort of look like very skinny mice.

JUNE

They come out with hair all over them. You were practically bald.

June gives Celia a small syringe.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Let her latch onto it. There you go. Still a natural.

Celia warms to her mother again. Feeds the baby.

CELIA

Dad doesn't want me, I don't think. Not to live with him.

JUNE

Is that such a bad thing? I need you here, remember?

Celia grips the lemur babies. Doesn't realize it.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Don't hold them so tight. They like human contact, but it takes them a while to get used to it.

Celia looks down at the lemurs, who looks back up at her - giant ears and tiny yellow eyes.

EXT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - TERRACE - NIGHT

Celia and June eat dinner. June isn't eating. She clutches her stomach, pushes her plate away. Sees a slow spread of flames on the distant hills.

JUNE

Dammit.

\*

CELIA

Are you OK?

JUNE

Don't look at me that way, Celia,  
I'm a little under the weather,  
it's not the end of the world.

Daud's jeep drives up. June notices. June gets up and walks - with effort - away from him and into the hotel.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - JUNE AND CELIA'S ADJOINING ROOMS - NIGHT

Celia tries to sleep as June and Daud argue in the next room. The the indri scream. Celia jams earplugs in her ears.

JUNE (O.S.)

...so you'll what, drive back to  
your little lab? Count teeth for  
the next fifteen years -

DAUD (O.S.)

All I ask, June, is that we do not  
say we've found things that we  
haven't -

Celia pulls her pillow around her ears. It doesn't help.

JUNE (O.S.)

- how many instances of possible  
growth have we documented? We are  
making a leap, Daud. If you were  
committed to this theory you'd  
understand that!

A door slams. Celia sits up, tosses the pillow aside.

EXT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN- BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

Celia bursts onto the balcony, screams into the darkness:

CELIA

Would you just shut up?

The hills now pop with flames. At least ten trees on fire.

EXT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - MORNING

The fires are out. The hills behind the hotel have been cleared for farming.

Daud, June, and Celia load the jeep for a long trip. No one speaks. June is noticeably weaker.

EXT. FORT DAUPHIN HILLS

Daud drives past the newly charred, bare area where villagers now harvest crops. Celia and June watch.

EXT. ANTANANARIVO - DAY - ESTABLISHING

The capitol of Madagascar - big stone churches, mowed green lawns, heavy traffic, motorbikes. We were here before but didn't see the breadth of it.

INT. JEEP - SAME

Daud drives through traffic. June is noticeably under the weather. Tension in the car. Celia's in the back seat.

CELIA

You need to turn right - that road there.

Daud glances at Celia, grateful. He pulls to a stop not far from The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

INT. MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH - DAY

They wait in a narrow hallway outside the conference room. June breathes a few panicked, shallow breaths. Stumbles slightly, holds onto Celia's arm.

DAUD  
(to June)  
Are you all right?

Daud holds his hand out to June, who doesn't take it.

JUNE  
I'm fine.

INT. MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH -  
HALLWAY

Celia waits in the hallway, ear pressed against an office door.

JUNE (O.S.)  
- the support of this institution  
was instrumental in protecting a  
north east segment of the forest  
from loggers. Fort Dauphin was  
deemed unnecessary for additional  
protection.

INT. OFFICE - SAME

June and Daud make their case to an OFFICIAL - 50s, tired,  
slightly bored. We recognize him from June's presentation.

JUNE  
But when, and it won't be long now,  
when you see what these animals are  
planting - I don't have another  
word for it. You'll be amazed.

OFFICIAL  
We have given you much land.  
Ranomafana. Ankarana. We must save  
our resources for our people.

DAUD  
June, why don't you sit down...

INT. HALLWAY - SAME

Celia's still listening, trying to make sense of this.

JUNE  
Look. As promised -

DAUD

- we are working to prove the  
goldens bury these seeds.

JUNE

Daud's being modest. He already has  
evidence. Show them, Daud.

INT. MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH -  
LATER

Celia's still waiting. It's late.

Daud comes out, looking distressed. Celia looks up at him.

June pelts past them, shaking her head, hurrying down the  
hall.

DAUD

June. You can't put me on the spot  
like that. I'm not going to lie.  
June!

They watch June go into the bathroom.

INT. MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH -  
HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Celia knocks on the bathroom door.

JUNE (O.S.)

Can you wait a fucking minute,  
Daud?

CELIA

It's me.

JUNE (O.S.)

Celia. Good. Come in here.

Celia pushes open the door.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Celia opens the bathroom door, sees her mother pale, hunched  
over the toilet. She's been throwing up.

CELIA

Are you OK?

JUNE

Don't let him see me like this.

CELIA

June -

JUNE

I'm fine. Just get me some water,  
will you, sweetheart? I'll drink it  
from the sink.

Celia does as she is told. June drinks from Celia's cupped hands.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Thank you.

EXT. MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH -  
LATER

Daud, Celia, and June - clutching Celia's shoulders - make their way down the stairs. The city of Antananarivo sprawled in front of them. Pink stone houses, a street vendor with a gekko on his shoulder...and so many people.

June stumbles, nearly falls. Daud grabs her.

DAUD

We need to get you to a hospital.

JUNE

Over my dead body.

June pushes Daud away.

CELIA

He just wants you to get better.

JUNE

You weren't in there. He was trying  
to diminish our evidence.

June clutches her stomach, doubles over again.

CELIA

Would you just let a doctor see  
you?

Off June's exhausted face we cut to -

INT. ANTANANARIVO HOSPITAL - EMERGENCY ROOM - LATER

A bustling, overcrowded emergency room. Beeping machines and metal. Daud and Celia sit with a DOCTOR in a curtained-off area next to a small bathroom. June can be heard throwing up.

DAUD

(to Doctor)

She's been filling her canteen with river water. I told her it wasn't a good idea.

CELIA

(to June)

Why would you do that?

June opens the bathroom door. She's a complete mess. A long hospital shirt down to her knees, her face colorless and sweaty.

JUNE

I've been traveling for years and I've never been sick. I'm supposed to be immune.

She turns her back, starts throwing up again.

DOCTOR

Cholera.

DAUD

She's been showing signs of it for days. Leg cramping, drowsiness.

(to June, not meanly)

You should have listened to me.

A NURSE helps June sit back down. The doctor gives June a shot. She doesn't flinch.

INT. HOSPITAL - JUNE'S ROOM - NIGHT

June lies in bed now, sweating, hallucinating. Celia tries to get her to drink water.

JUNE

We're being forced out, Celia, they'll send us back upstate, they'll all die, everything in the entire forest, just crocodiles will live here, and they'll starve, and they'll die too...



CELIA

Shh...

The doctor gives June another shot. She flinches this time.

INT. HOSPITAL - JUNE'S ROOM - NIGHT

June sleeps. Celia curls up next to her.

INT. HOSPITAL - JUNE'S ROOM - DUSK

Celia wakes to see Daud sitting nearby. He's crying.

He sees her watching, tries to cover, gets up and leaves the room. After a moment Celia follows.

INT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Celia walks into the hallway. Daud sits on a rickety bench. Celia joins him.

CELIA

When I was a kid, when I was sick,  
she let me stay in bed for exactly  
one day. Then she'd make me oatmeal  
and tell me to get over it. All I  
wanted was to go with her.

(pause)

You can die of cholera. Can't you?

DAUD

Without treatment, yes, you can.

(a beat)

We need to convince her to go home.  
The people in the village want it.  
They don't believe her theory, they  
tell me.

CELIA

Do you believe it?

DAUD

We don't have any evidence that  
proves the lemurs impact rainforest  
regrowth. Right now, from what I've  
observed, the deforested areas  
don't do better or worse without  
them.

CELIA

In the north there's evidence. I've seen it.

Daud takes this in. It's unclear whether he believes her.

INT. ANTANANARIVO HOSPITAL - JUNE'S ROOM - NIGHT

Celia curls up next to her mother. Wipes down her forehead. Forces her to drink water.

June is shivering violently. She pulls Celia close.

JUNE

This is why I need you here.

It hurts to hear her mother say this, but Celia allows herself to be held.

INT. ANTANANARIVO HOSPITAL - JUNE'S ROOM - DAY

Daud's at the edge of June's bed, leaning over her, stroking her hair.

Celia wakes next to her mother. June smiles weakly at Celia. She touches Celia's cheek, then pushes herself up to sit.

JUNE

How about a drink?

Daud and Celia just look at her.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Scotch would be excellent.

Daud starts to laugh.

JUNE (CONT'D)

How long have I been sleeping for?

DAUD

Probably longer than the last ten years combined.

CELIA

He means three days.

JUNE

Let's get out of here then, shall we?

She taps the IV plugged into her arm. Celia looks at Daud, nervous.

DAUD

Celia, do you mind if we speak  
alone for a moment?

Celia looks between them. Frustrated again. June reaches out, squeezes her hand.

JUNE

We'll be out of here soon, I  
promise.

CELIA

I don't want to go till you're  
better, though.

EXT. HOSPITAL - HALLWAY

Celia walks towards June's room with a tray - ice cream and bread. She stops outside of June's room. She can see June and Daud through the room's shuttered windows. Daud's arm is around June and they are speaking quietly, intimately.

EXT. ROAD - MADAGASCAR

Daud drives. June in the front seat, typing on a laptop. Celia in the back.

EXT. TANAMBOA MARKET - NIGHT

A FUNERAL in progress.

The mood is somber. Theirry's mother's body is covered with a shroud. Theirry presides over everything, flanked by Donald and Melanie.

Daud parks. They get out of the car. Walk towards the ceremony. A few villagers look at June with zero warmth.

Theirry sees June. Their eyes meet - the look of a man who has been deeply hurt. A look that tells June she can't go to him for help again.

The drumming gets louder.

On June, processing Theirry's anger. On Daud, processing the blatant distrust from the villagers. On Celia, struck by the ceremony's beauty, and by fear.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - NIGHT

Daud helps June up the steps. She seems to be on the mend.

Haja approaches Celia, carrying an envelope.

HAJA

This came, for her.

Celia looks at it. It's from the Ministry of Scientific Research.

She looks up at the landing: Daud entering his own room.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - CELIA AND JUNE'S ADJOINING ROOMS -  
MOMENTS LATER

Celia, carrying their bag, steps into the room. June starts to unpack. After a moment, Celia holds out the letter.

CELIA

It's from the ministry.

June takes the letter.

JUNE

Already. Jesus.

June opens the letter and reads.

CELIA

What does it say?

JUNE

Give me a minute, will you?

(beat)

I need to think.

June sits down. Lights a cigarette. Her hands shake.

JUNE (CONT'D)

There was no point in going down there. What a fucking waste.

Celia sits next to her mother. Takes the letter.

CELIA

(reading the letter)

Dear Dr. Engle, we're sorry to inform you that your request for additional conserved land has been denied -

JUNE

I know what it says, Celia. It doesn't change anything. We'll find more evidence. Eventually they won't be able to say no.

June takes the letter back. Rips it up.

JUNE (CONT'D)

I need you to keep this between us.

Celia thinks about this, torn.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Celia follows Daud and June through the forest. They've walked far and she's tired.

JUNE

(to Celia)

The ground we've been covering is a mile deeper. I first found goldens near the water so we have a good shot in this location.

DAUD

I've never seen anyone with so much focus. Your mother, she doesn't even blink.

Celia looks at Daud with some guilt.

JUNE

(to Celia)

What we've been doing is observing ten meters apart. We've got the longest range of vision that way.

Celia nods.

EXT. FOREST - SERIES OF SHOTS

June, Celia, and Daud are positioned apart from one another in the forest.

Celia sees a crested ibis, three aye-aye lemurs. Celia climbs a tree and watches from there. A gecko peers out at her.

The three of them eat a quick meal of beef jerky. June's eyes don't leave the trees.

EXT. FOREST - PRE-DUSK

Celia waits and waits for a golden bamboo. A tiny mouse lemur \*  
peers out at her. Daud approaches, June on his heels.

DAUD  
How's the view up there?

CELIA  
Still nothing.

JUNE  
I knew we should have gone another  
mile west. \*

DAUD  
Well, we have our marching orders  
for tomorrow.  
(holding out his hand to  
Celia)  
Don't we?

JUNE  
Nice try.

Celia looks between Daud and her mother. Climbs down without  
Daud's help. June doesn't look like she's going anywhere.

DAUD  
(gently)  
Don't you think this can wait till  
tomorrow?

JUNE  
Probably not.

DAUD  
I'll take the probably as a sign we  
can negotiate...

If this is a joke June doesn't find it funny.

JUNE  
No, Daud, we can't negotiate. Can  
you focus for more than ten  
minutes?

DAUD  
We'll make more progress when we're  
rested.

JUNE  
You want to sleep, sleep. Celia can  
help me.

(MORE)

JUNE (CONT'D)  
(off Celia's hesitation)  
Are you tired too?

CELIA  
Why don't you just tell him?

June shoots her a harsh glance. A beat. Daud looks between them.

DAUD  
What is this?

CELIA  
(to Daud)  
They said no. To the conservation.

DAUD  
(to June)  
Is this true?

JUNE  
I haven't known for very long.

DAUD  
How long?

June pulls an ORS packet out of her bag and shakes it into her water.

DAUD (CONT'D)  
(to June)  
You cannot ignore me. You tell me,  
now.

JUNE  
(to Daud)  
The ministry sent a letter. It just  
means we need to work a little  
harder.

June drinks her water in one long gulp.

JUNE (CONT'D)  
Now you know.

DAUD  
We work together as we have been.  
Every day. Eighteen hours, twenty  
hours sometimes we are out here.  
And I do this for you.

JUNE

That's odd, I thought you were here because you cared about the research.

CELIA

He does.

JUNE

Stay out of this.

DAUD

I am in a program, you understand. I am accountable to the ministry. I cannot go against them.

JUNE

You can't make up your own mind?

DAUD

June, you have asked me to lie for you!

JUNE

I asked you to take a leap of faith. Not for me, for the theory. It has nothing to do with either of us.

Daud just looks at her.

DAUD

I came here, I thought, if I worked hard, if I learned from the great scientist - I wanted to learn from you - I thought I could make a difference.

JUNE

What do you think we've been doing?

DAUD

We? There is not a 'we' when you lie to me, June.

June says nothing. They look at each other. A long moment.

JUNE

I told them I didn't need you. Celia and I were doing just fine before the ministry insisted you come.

(to Celia)

Weren't we?



Celia says nothing. Daud turns and starts to walk in the other direction.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Great, go on, come on back when you've developed a mind of your own. Jesus Fucking Christ.

Daud keeps walking. June and Celia watch him. A long beat. June turns to Celia.

JUNE (CONT'D)

I thought I could trust you.

Celia doesn't look at her mother. She starts to walk in Daud's direction. After a moment June picks up her gear and follows.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Celia knocks on Daud's door. He opens it. He's holding a cheap beer. A half packed suitcase is visible on his bed. He looks terrible.

DAUD

What do you want?

CELIA

I'm sorry.

Daud softens, steps out of his room. Closes the door behind him. Sits on the floor, gestures for Celia to sit next to him. She does.

DAUD

It's not your fault.

CELIA

She didn't say anything because she wants you here. She doesn't like that many people. She likes you.

DAUD

Ah, but she doesn't. I now know, she doesn't.

(beat)

Respect and affection. They have to go like this.

He clasps his hands together and holds them out to Celia. They sit in silence for a moment.

CELIA  
You're going to leave us.

DAUD  
I have to finish my degree.

CELIA  
If June hadn't lied to you, would you have stayed?

DAUD  
Celia -

CELIA  
Please don't leave us.

Celia leans forward and impulsively kisses him. He quickly pulls away.

CELIA (CONT'D)  
Sorry.

DAUD  
Don't worry.

CELIA  
That was stupid, I'm sorry.

DAUD  
Celia, it's fine.

CELIA  
I shouldn't have done that.

DAUD  
Nothing happened.

Celia gets up. Runs down the hall and down the stairs, to the terrace outside.

EXT. TERRACE - MOMENTS LATER

Celia stands outside. It's completely dark around her except for one lone fire in the distance. Daud comes out. Stands next to her.

CELIA  
Do you want to hear the world's most famous disappearances?  
(a beat)  
Amelia Earhart, Jimmy Hoffa, Ambrose Pierce, the Lindburgh baby.  
(a beat)  
(MORE)

CELIA (CONT'D)  
Probably hundreds more no one knows  
about. Probably hundreds of people  
no one even went looking for.

Daud searches for something to say.

DAUD  
You should go home, I think.

CELIA  
I can't leave my mother.

DAUD  
Would she stay for you?

CELIA  
I don't know.  
(a beat)  
I'm not her.

EXT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - MORNING

Daud jams belongings into his backpack. Fixes a few small pieces of luggage to his motorbike. Celia helps. Daud reaches into his bag, pulls out a picture.

DAUD  
I wanted to give this to you.

It's a picture of June in the forest, holding a bamboo lemur. Her arms and legs are streaked with red dirt. She's beaming, and she looks beautiful.

DAUD (CONT'D)  
I took this my first week here. She  
didn't know I was watching her.

CELIA  
Thank you.

Celia looks at the picture. They stand there for a moment, at a loss for words.

EXT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - DAY

Celia watches Daud drive away.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - CELIA AND JUNE'S ADJOINING ROOMS -  
MOMENTS LATER

Celia tiptoes into her room. Checks her drawer again - the  
travelers' check is still there.

She turns. June's watching her, dressed for the field. Celia  
steps away from the drawer.

JUNE

I'm not going to take your money,  
Celia.

CELIA

I didn't think you were.

JUNE

If you didn't think I was, you  
wouldn't keep it in there. With  
your magazines.

A tense moment.

CELIA

Daud had to go back. He has to  
finish his degree.

JUNE

I know. He told me.  
(beat)  
I'm going into the field. Do you  
want to come, or do you want to  
hang around here?

Celia grabs a top from the drawer.

CELIA

I just need to change.

June nods, leaves the room. Celia quickly takes the check and  
slips it underneath her mattress.

EXT. FOREST - DAY - SERIES OF SHOTS

Celia and June walk through the decimated forest.

June searches for the golden bamboo. \*

Celia takes gear from her.

June stops to rest, walks again.

Daylight starts to fade.

EXT. FOREST - DUSK

Celia's faster than June now. June stops to catch her breath. Celia turns and calls to her:

CELIA

If you don't feel well, we should stop.

Celia backtracks towards her mother. Gives June water, which she gulps. She starts walking again.

JUNE

You can't slow down, Celia. If you do, no one will wait for you.

CELIA

Not everyone thinks like that.

JUNE

Why have you been avoiding the forest?

CELIA

I haven't been.

JUNE

All you think about is water. You can't see any of these animals anywhere else in the world.

\*

June takes the gear from Celia and walks deeper into the forest.

\*

Celia hesitates, then follows her.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

June and Celia set up camp, their vision gear on now. Tense silence between them.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Celia and June stand staring up into the trees. They don't look at each other. Their shoulders don't touch. June watches for the goldens with almost desperate focus.

JUNE

Celia, do you think of me as June?

CELIA

I've been calling you that, haven't I?

JUNE

But do you think of me that way?

Celia thinks. This question hurts more than she'd care to admit.

CELIA

Thinking of you as my mother is a pretty hard habit to break.

A beat. June looks away.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

June sleeps. Celia can't. She hears a rustling above her.

At first she just sees a tail. Then she makes out a lemur feasting on fruit. She steps a few paces back, gets a good look at him. A GOLDEN BAMBOO.

Celia freezes. Girl and animal regard each other. A beat. She looks at her mother. Reaches out to wake her. Doesn't. The bamboo climbs higher in the canopy, and disappears.

EXT. FOREST - PRE-DAWN

Celia and June sit and watch. The sun is coming up. The trees are empty.

CELIA

What if your theory is wrong?

JUNE

Excuse me?

CELIA

What if it's wrong? We've been here forever, and you haven't proven it.

JUNE

Did Daud tell you that?  
(off Celia's silence)  
Important ideas are often discouraged by lesser people.

CELIA

He isn't a lesser person.

JUNE

You're so naive, Celia. Jesus, really. You listen to your father, you listen to Daud. Who are they? What have they done with their lives? What are you going to do with yours?

CELIA

I'm going to swim. I'm going to find a trainer, and I'm going to become great.

JUNE

You're too scared, Celia. When I took you on the river, you wanted to turn back after seeing one crocodile.

CELIA

That's not true.

JUNE

Of course it is.

(beat)

You won't make it, Celia. You don't have it in you.

CELIA

How do you know?

JUNE

Oh, come on.

(beat)

You want me to believe you're strong, you have to prove it. You can either help protect this land or you can destroy it. You have to choose.

CELIA

I want to go home.

JUNE

Like I said. Too much fear.

CELIA

I saw a golden. I didn't tell you. You can be mad if you want.

June looks at her with disbelief. It takes a moment for this to sink in.

JUNE

I was wrong about you. You're lazy. And you're scared. And you don't fight for anything. You'll end up like your father, contributing absolutely nothing.

CELIA

Why do you say things like that?

JUNE

Because they're true.

CELIA

I hear enough about the lemurs. I really don't think I'd mind if they were extinct.

JUNE

Which would leave me with nothing.

A beat. Celia, tears forming, turns around and runs. Her mother does not call after her.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Celia runs.

EXT. FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

Celia slows to a walk. She has stopped crying. Through the trees she sees the ocean. A crested ibis swoops above her. A pair of moths flutter.

EXT. FOREST/INDIAN OCEAN - MOMENTS LATER

Celia looks out at the Indian Ocean. To her right she can see the beach where Daud taught her to swim. The water is all waves, one after the next.

Celia doesn't hesitate. She takes off her shoes, strips down to her swimsuit.

She SWIMS.

EXT. INDIAN OCEAN - MOMENTS LATER - SERIES OF SHOTS

Celia swims against the rough water, farther and farther from any signs of land or people.



Her stroke is swift and confident. She's pushing herself, but the effort isn't as trying. A huge WAVE rises above her.

Celia holds her breath like Daud taught her. She fights against the current and pushes to the surface. When she finally emerges, not so far in front of her, there the ISLAND is.

EXT. ISLAND - DAY

Celia pulls herself up onto a small stretch of land, dense with trees.

EXT. ISLAND - DAY

Celia explores. The island is hopping with frogs and bright blue birds. A lizard slithers across a branch.

No lemurs, no primates of any kind. But there aren't any people, either.

EXT. ISLAND - LATER

Celia looks out at the now-calm ocean. She stretches, takes a tired breath, and begins her long journey back.

EXT. BEACH - DUSK

Celia walks up on the beach, exhilarated, shivering. The beach is oddly quiet.

EXT. ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Celia reaches the road. A few motorbikes speed past. Then a few more. She hears shouting from somewhere. She turns in the direction of the forest as a streak of red cuts the darkness, an enormous BURNING TREE, seemingly smashing the road in two.

Celia starts to run.

EXT. ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Celia runs in the direction of a distant, spreading FIRE. Trees crack and tumble as smoke billows towards her. A white jeep races up behind her.

MELANIE

Get in.

EXT. FORT DAUPHIN - ROAD - LATER

Donald drives, Melanie shotgun. Celia's in the back.

CELIA  
Who started it?

DONALD  
It was meant to clear a hectare. It spread.

EXT. FOREST - RESEARCH CABIN - NIGHT

Flames spread through the forest - a virtual sea of red. The roof of the research cabin burns. June tries to pull the lemurs out.

Celia, Melanie and Donald drive through thick smoke, past Theirry and a few panicked villagers. Donald pulls to a stop. Celia darts out of the jeep.

CELIA  
June!

Donald runs after her, catches her.

DONALD  
Stay back here.

CELIA  
I have to get my mother.

DONALD  
I'll go.

Donald lumbers past Celia towards the research cabin. He finds June, drags her away from the fire. She fights him, curses at him, kicks at him.

JUNE  
Stop, I need to help them. Let go of me!

Donald picks June up and carries her to the jeep, stuffs her in the backseat. Celia scrambles up next to her as June tries to get out.

CELIA  
Mom, please stay.

June dissolves into a fit of coughing. They all watch as the cabin is destroyed.

INT. MELANIE'S HOUSE - LATER

Celia, wearing fresh clothes that are too big for her, takes a cup of tea from Timothy. Melanie tends to burns on June's legs.

The house is half-bare, as though they've been packing.

MELANIE

It's lucky you caught us. We leave  
for Tana in a few days.

Celia sits next to June, who glances at her blankly. Accepts the tea.

MELANIE (CONT'D)

(to June)

They get worse, my dear. There  
won't be a clear mile in the  
forest.

(a beat)

It's hard to believe people capable  
of such beauty are also capable of  
such destruction. We try. We can  
both say we've done that.

June thinks about this. Stands up.

JUNE

Celia, come.

Celia looks at Melanie, still crouched on the floor. At her mother, legs sticky with ointment, half treated.

CELIA

June. Let her finish helping you.

JUNE

I'm fine.

CELIA

You're not.

They stare at each other.

CELIA (CONT'D)

We're staying here until you let  
her finish.

A long beat. June sits down. Melanie resumes bandaging her leg.

MELANIE

(to June)

The animals will thank you. I believe that.

Celia watches Melanie quietly treat her mother.

EXT. FORT DAUPHIN FOREST - DAY

Half the trees have been burnt down. Ash and charred branches where the research cabin once was. June's research appears to have been totally decimated.

Celia helps June bury Brown #1 and her babies.

EXT. FORT DAUPHIN FOREST - LATER

Celia watches her mother, kneeling where the lemurs are buried.

EXT. FORT DAUPHIN - FOREST - ANOTHER DAY

Celia walks through what is left of the forest.

EXT. FORT DAUPHIN - FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

Celia finds June attempting to rebuild the base of the research cabin, hammering rusty nails into rotting wood.

CELIA

That's going to take you forever.

JUNE

Quicker if you help.

CELIA

I want to go home.

A beat. June looks up at her.

JUNE

I guess it's your lucky day then.

CELIA

What do you mean?

JUNE

We're leaving.

CELIA

When?

JUNE

Day after tomorrow.

CELIA

Are you lying to me?

JUNE

You shouldn't talk to me like that.  
I'm still your mother.

CELIA

I thought you didn't want me to  
think of you like that.

This seems to have an effect on June. She looks away from her daughter.

JUNE

Go look in your top drawer.

(beat)

The check your father gave you is  
still under your mattress, by the  
way.

Celia stands there for a moment, uncomfortable.

CELIA

Are you coming too?

June continues to rebuild the cabin. After a moment:

JUNE

Just go look.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - CELIA AND JUNE'S ADJOINING ROOMS -  
AFTERNOON

Celia opens the drawer. Her money is there. And her  
magazines. And two plane tickets, with her name and her  
mother's. Like June said.

EXT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - TERRACE - NIGHT

Celia and June eat dinner. They don't say anything. Celia  
plucks a fried bug from her rice, eats it. It still tastes  
horrible. June notices, eats one as well.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - CELIA AND JUNE'S ADJOINING ROOMS - NIGHT

Celia can't sleep. She looks into June's room. The door opened this night. Her mother's back is to her.

She tiptoes into June's room. June is crying quietly. Celia gets into bed next to her.

JUNE

There used to be enough of them, Celi. The goldens. Quiet, going about their business, not bothering anyone. Smart. Enough for the species to have grown.

CELIA

Twenty nine.

JUNE

I didn't think you remembered that.

CELIA

You trained me to remember everything.

June wraps the blanket around them. Celia thinks for a long moment.

CELIA (CONT'D)

There's an island 22 kilometers east. You didn't think I could swim that far but I did it.

(a beat)

It's not really big enough for farming. Not really big enough for people. Maybe, when you find more, you can bring the goldens there.

JUNE

What do you mean?

CELIA

I want to go home. And you want to stay here.

JUNE

I bought a ticket, Celia.

CELIA

But I know you want to stay.

June sits up. Thinks. After a moment:

JUNE  
What would you do?

CELIA  
I could stay with Beth, maybe. Or I could go with Dad. I'd rather stay with Beth. Then I can ride with her to practice.  
(a beat)  
I'll be fine. It's what I want.

A long beat. On June, thinking.

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - CELIA AND JUNE'S ADJOINING ROOMS -  
PRE-DAWN

Celia wakes up. June kneels in front of her.

JUNE  
Are you sure?

Celia nods. Sits up. Hugs her mother. After a moment, June untangles herself.

JUNE (CONT'D)  
Go back to sleep.

CELIA  
I'm not tired.

JUNE  
Don't lie.

A beat. They almost smile. June hands Celia a postcard. It's old, yellowed.

JUNE (CONT'D)  
I bought this in some airport,  
somewhere. It just struck me.

Celia takes the postcard. It's a picture of red sand, no water in sight. On the back her mother has written, *What the World Will Look Like When All the Water Leaves Us.*

INT. HOTEL LE DAUPHIN - CELIA AND JUNE'S ADJOINING ROOMS -  
MORNING

Celia, dressed now, finishes writing a letter, places it on her mother's bed.

Then she takes off her necklace, the amulet meant for protection. Puts that next to the letter.

EXT./INT. CAR - FORT DAUPHIN - MORNING - SERIES OF SHOTS

Melanie drives. Celia sits in the passenger seat holding the postcard. She looks out at the road. \*

CELIA (V.O.)

There's this story I heard once,  
about a woman who traveled to  
Africa to find the fountain of  
youth.

They pass the market.

CELIA (V.O.)

She made a pact to find it, no  
matter what, and she searched  
everywhere, in the darkest caves  
and on mountains so high it was  
almost impossible to breath.

They pass the bar.

CELIA (V.O.)

She walked thousands of miles,  
fought off crocodiles and lions,  
but she couldn't find the fountain.  
When she finally went home, her  
children were old.

They approach the forest and see June's jeep parked by the side of the road.

CELIA

(to Melanie)

Could we stop for a minute? \*

EXT. FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

Celia walks into the forest. She sees her mother's backpack, her mother's ponytail.

CELIA (V.O.)

I've been thinking, maybe it's  
possible to look so hard for  
something you end up missing  
everything.

Celia walks towards June, who stands a few meters ahead, feet firm in the red dirt, as though she is waiting for her.

On June. Looking up at the forest around her. So much of it destroyed.



The magnitude and perhaps the impossibility of saving it. For a moment it seems as though she might turn around.

CELIA (V.O.)

Is it? I don't know the answer yet.

Celia watches as June walks away. Her shadow disappears into the forest.

INT./EXT. CAR - FORT DAUPHIN - MOMENTS LATER

Celia watches the trees recede in the distance. She's not so scared, anymore.

CELIA (V.O.)

These are a few things I do know:  
Lynne Cox swam across the Bering  
Straight and brought peace to two  
countries during the Cold War. She  
swam with dolphins and icebergs and  
sharks. She swam the coldest  
recorded swim in history. Some  
people thought she was brave. Some  
people thought she was crazy. Who  
is to say what is right?

(beat)

I'll send you more lists. I'll send  
them here. But now I have to go.

The car drives farther away from the forest, in the direction of the ocean.

FADE TO BLACK