

THE GREAT NOTHING

by

Cesar Vitale



February 9, 2017

Untitled Entertainment
Jennifer Levine / Jennifer Au
310.601.2100

CREDITS

... as we go through several TOMBSTONES. Framed photographs.
Flowers.

EPITAPHS. Some commonplace:

- *'Beloved father and husband.'*

- *'Wonderful friend, caring wife.'*

Others unusual:

- *'It's cold down here.'*

- *'Never did quite learn how to play Wonderwall.'*

Etc. We're in a:

EXT. CEMETERY -- DAY

A young girl threads through the tombs.

Stops on a particular gravestone. Drops her backpack on the grass.

MELISSA MORGAN

1975 -- 2016

Empty all around. Windy. Overcast. The prelude to a storm.

This is JUNE MORGAN. She is thirteen. When she speaks, it's in the casual tone usually reserved for the living:

JUNE

Sorry I'm late, ma. Mrs. Simpson
held me back for another lecture.

She sits on the grass, her back against the stone. Fishes into her backpack, produces a TEST PAPER. Shows it to the tomb as if it could see it.

JUNE

Last assignment. Another C. Minus.
Yeah, I know. Sorry. But let's face
it, you're not really in a position
to ground me. *Hehe.* 'Ground' me.
Get it?

A beat.

JUNE

How've you been? I've been kinda shitty. Heather's being a bitch again. Even more than usual. Like, I feel like she's an eye-roll and a smirk away from actually barking. Someone should neuter her, see if that helps. Dad's all right. Well, no. Not really. He looks like crap and he's still sleeping in the guest room.

(beat)

Taylor Swift released a new single.

June pulls a breath, looks up to the sky.

JUNE

You know I had a dream about you last night? Remember Erica Staten? The girl who was held back twice? And now everyone calls her dinosaur girl 'cause she's taller than everyone in her class?

June turns her face to the stone here and there, as if to catch her mother's reaction in her name and date of death.

JUNE

So, I dreamed I was held back -- which might actually happen, by the way, but whatever, you're dead, you don't mind -- anyway, and I was really scared to tell you. But when I did you just smiled and you said 'You should be happy. Seventh grade is the best grade ever, and you're lucky to do it again.' And then the next day it was the end of the year again, and then I failed again, and I was held back again. And this kept happening, every new day was the end of the year and I'd fail, again and again until I was a real old lady, still in the seventh grade. And I kept crying and telling you how sorry I was, but you just kept saying 'you should be happy, you should be happy, you should be happy'.

As she finishes, our **TITLE CARD** fades in and out, brief and subtle:

The Great Nothing.

June rests her head against her mother's death year. Eyes up to the gray sky.

The first drops of rain pluck against her face. She doesn't mind.

JUNE

And then I woke up.

Closes her eyes.

MAN'S VOICE (PRE-LAP)

"Loneliness in the face of death is the defining trait of humankind."

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

The MAN'S VOICE belongs to COOPER, 50s, elbow-patches-jacket professor.

Behind him, in chalk:

POST-MODERN NIHILISM: A STUDY ON DAN HOPKINS' 'THE GREAT NOTHING'

Cooper reads on from a book: *The Great Nothing*.

COOPER

"We alone are expected to live with the notion of mortality," Hopkins goes on, in Chapter two, "Is it fair that we should carry this burden? Doesn't it feel cruel from the part of the universe that we're wired to acknowledge that we exist, but not to understand the nature of what 'existing' means? To understand death, but never conquer it?"

He looks up to the class. Undergrads. Full classroom.

COOPER

It just gets more depressing from here.

Sparse chuckles.

COOPER

How many of you read the book prior to this class?

About a third of the class raises their hands. Cooper picks one. A YOUNG GIRL.

COOPER
Pink jacket. Thoughts?

YOUNG GIRL
I thought it was... sad. But very honest. As a nihilist philosopher, I feel like Hopkins --

COOPER
You would call Hopkins a nihilist?

YOUNG GIRL
Well, it says so on the board, so...

Chuckles. Cooper looks back and smiles.

We focus on a particular student. Back row. A man. A lot older than the rest. Early forties, but his beard looks twice as old.

He is not laughing.

Unkempt. Bum-like. Bags under his eyes. Bag also under his chair, bottle-shaped.

Back to Cooper:

COOPER
Hopkins' work does usually fall under the umbrella of nihilism, among other schools of thought. But there's also a message of hope in his book, that I think is not present in other nihilists' works. Wouldn't you say so?

STUDENT (O.S.)
Not from the passage you just read.

More chuckles.

COOPER
The Great Nothing is bleak at times, and very dark.
(MORE)

COOPER (CONT'D)

But as we read on throughout the quarter, I think you'll see that, while Hopkins' theory does seem pessimistic at first glance, the message in *The Great Nothing* is that, despite the randomness of existence, there's joy and meaning to be found in life.

The class considers this. The BUM in the back row speaks:

BUM

I disagree.

It's mostly to himself, but Cooper hears it.

COOPER

Excuse me?

BUM

I disagree. There's no joy in randomness, I think the book makes that very clear. It's a theory of despair.

COOPER

What is your name?

BUM

Daniel.

Cooper runs his eyes through a ROLL CALL list.

COOPER

Daniel... Daniel...

BUM

I'm not there, I'm auditing.

Cooper looks up.

COOPER

Okay. Well, I like your point of view, Daniel. And I'd be interested to hear more about it as the class progresses, but right now let's stick to the most accepted interpretation of --

BUM

It's not a point of view.

COOPER

Excuse me?

BUM

It's not a point of view. My disagreeing with you. I'm right and you're wrong. There's no point of view.

After a beat:

COOPER

(dismissive)

Uh-huh. We'll come back to that, okay?

(to the class)

So, the second Chapter establishes -

-

INT. HALLWAY -- LATER

Students flood off the classroom and stop in little chat groups by the water fountain.

The BUM goes on his way, backpack dangling from his quasi-rags. Alone.

He is stopped by the door. A student. The Young Woman from class.

YOUNG WOMAN

Excuse me.

She has the book -- The Great Nothing -- in her hands. The acknowledgements page. And a pen.

YOUNG WOMAN

Would you?

(whispering)

I recognized you from the back cover picture. Didn't wanna make a fuss.

That's how we find out: the bum is no bum at all. He's DAN HOPKINS, and he wrote that book.

Dan's eyes stop on the BACK COVER PICTURE for a beat. He's young there. Beardless. Smiling. It's barely the same man.

He signs the book and returns it.

YOUNG WOMAN

Thanks!

Dan steps out into the night.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Quiet. Carpet, stains, messy. Single man's place no doubt about it. Bad even for that standard.

The door comes open to Dan. He stops by the untouched PILE OF MAIL:

A **lot** of past due bills. A stack of copies of THE GREAT NOTHING. On top of it, a post-it:

'Fan-mail, autograph requests. Please sign (or not)' and the stamp from a literary agency.

Dan pushes the pile off the edge directly into a trash bin.

Throws himself on the couch. Laptop. E-mail:

-MIT Guest Lecture Invitation pending.

-Interview for Philosophy Now?

-Your Book Changed my Life. Please Read.

All deleted, *click, click, click.*

Stops on the most recent one:

-Thought you'd want to see her.

The mouse hovers over it. A beat.

Click.

It's an ultrasound picture. A baby. Final months of gestation. We stay on it for a beat. Then...

Click. Deleted.

Dan heads for the fridge and grabs a beer. Back to the couch. Pushes the laptop away. Lights a cigarette. Pulls a ZIPLOC BAG from his pocket. White powder inside. Heroin.

He pours it over a spoon, the back caked black from past burns.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Dan drools on the couch. *Knock, knock, knock* on the door wakes him up.

The word 'hangover' doesn't even begin to cover it.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT BUILDING, HALLWAY -- MOMENTS LATER

Dan opens the front door to CRUSTY, 14, big 1980s hacker glasses, button-up shirt, mild Aspergers.

CRUSTY
Professor.

DAN
I said 'noon', Crusty. You woke me.

CRUSTY
It's four o'clock, professor.

Crusty pulls out a brand new ZIPLOC OF HEROIN from his pocket. Business as usual.

Dan extends his hand. Then stops. Hesitates. Chooses honesty:

DAN
I'm short. Is that okay?

Crusty pauses for a second, then turns around to leave.

DAN
Crusty.

Turns back.

DAN
Come on.

CRUSTY
I'm sorry, professor.

DAN
Please.

CRUSTY
You are a well-established academia writer, professor. *And* a scholar.

DAN
Book money isn't mine to give away. Teaching money only comes in when I'm teaching. Which I'm not. You know my story, Crusty, come on. I didn't even pay my electric bill this month.

Crusty just stares.

DAN
Help a brother out.

CRUSTY

You should go back to teaching. Or write a new book.

DAN

You know I can't, Crusty. Come on. Just one.

CRUSTY

I sympathize with your situation, professor. Nothingness haunts being. I'd want to be on narcotics all the time too, if I were you.

A beat.

DAN

So...?

CRUSTY

I can't. I'm sorry, professor.

A beat.

DAN

(deadpan)
You suck, Crusty.

Crusty fishes in his backpack and gives Dan a copy of an old book: Kierkegaard's *Sickness Unto Death*.

CRUSTY

Thank you for the Kierkegaard.

DAN

Right. How'd you like it?

CRUSTY

Very enlightening. And then my dad found it.

Crusty turns his face, showing Dan a black eye.

CRUSTY

I have learned that I should be focusing on '*gettin sum focken pussy*' instead of spending my time reading these '*faggotry manuals*'.

DAN

Shit. I'm sorry, Crusty.

CRUSTY
 It's quite all right, professor.
 Good luck with the financial
 crisis.

He turns without saying goodbye. Dan watches him go.

DAN
 Thanks, Crusty.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

Couch. Cigarette. Beer.

Dan half-watches some bullshit on TV, drunken eyes.

With a CLACK, the light dies out. TV shuts off. Darkness.
 That ever-present hum of electricity dims away to a full
 silence.

Dan sighs. Stews in the dark.

EXT. PARK -- MORNING

A small CITY PARK in front of Dan's apartment building.

We find Dan in front of a DEAD TREE, eyes up to the crooked,
 swirling branches. Sunlight straining through.

Kids and families around, laughter, distant happy hollers.
 Dan sticks out like a tumor in the green.

A GIRL passes him by, smoking a CIGARETTE.

DAN
 Hey, can I bum one?

She pauses. Hesitates. Dan's a homeless man in her eyes.

DAN
 I'll buy it off you.

He opens his wallet. No bills. Counts pennies.

DAN
 Hang on, I think I have --

GIRL
 Here.

The girl gives him her lit cigarette, eager to get away.

Dan turns back to the tree, now smoking. Sighs a puff of gray. Watches the birds on the branches.

Someone steps in front of him, glues a FLYER to the tree trunk, keeps on their way.

The flyer reads: "Private Tutor -- Math (\$50 hourly)" and a phone number.

Something dawns on Dan.

INT. COLLEGE HALLWAY -- MORNING

A hand staples a BLACK AND WHITE FLYER to a bulletin board:

PRIVATE TUTOR

Philosophy, Pol-Sci

(Non-fiction Pulitzer Prize Winner)

(Flexible Hours)

... along with a photograph of Dan that looks like it was taken on a DUI arrest.

We're in the hallway of a college campus building. Dan's putting up the flyers.

The SCHOOL OFFICIAL notices.

OFFICIAL

Sir. Sir. You're not allowed to put up flyers.

DAN

Yes I am.

OFFICIAL

Do you work here?

DAN

No.

OFFICIAL

Are you a student?

DAN

I audit.

OFFICIAL

Sir, please come with me.

DAN
I used to work here.

The official stops, unconvinced.

DAN
I was head of Philosophy.

Obviously not buying this.

DAN
I have a Pulitzer prize for a book
I wrote while heading this
university's Philosophy Department.

OFFICIAL
Sir. I'll have to call security if
you don't come.

BILL (O.S.)
Dan!?

BILL MORGAN -- 40s, as professor-looking as a professor can
get -- stops by the two:

DAN
Bill.

BILL
Oh my God!

OFFICIAL
(to Bill)
Do you know this man, professor
Morgan?

BILL
Do I know this... yes, I know *this*
man! *This man* was the youngest head
of Philosophy of this university
not three years ago! This is Dan
Hopkins!

The official looks from Bill to Dan, speechless.

DAN
(to Official)
Ask him about the Pulitzer. Go on.

An awkward beat.

LATER

Bill and Dan walk down the hallway together.

BILL
It's been...

DAN
Two years.

BILL
That's right. You look -- *good*.

Of course he doesn't.

BILL
I mean, we all thought you were --

A beat.

BILL
How are you? Are you still --

Bill stops, uncomfortable. Dan sighs, stops too.

DAN
Terminal, yes. Metastasized. Lungs,
liver, kidneys. Thank you for
asking.

BILL
Oh. And. I. How long --

DAN
Months. Maybe less.

BILL
And chemo? Treatme --

DAN
It would buy me weeks. Bad weeks.

BILL
Shit, Dan...

A beat.

DAN
We don't have to talk about it.

Dan resumes the walk, stopping here and there to staple a flyer to a bulletin board. Bill follows -- still processing the information:

BILL
You... you're tutoring?

DAN
 Just for heroin money. It's not
 long term.
 (thinks about it)
 I suppose nothing I do is long term
 now.

Dan gives Bill a couple of flyers.

DAN
 If you know any dumb grad students.
 Or undergrad, I'll take what I can.

Bill stops again, Dan turns back. Awkward silence.

DAN
 I can still make small talk, Bill.

BILL
 Right. Right.

But he doesn't say anything else. Can't get over the cancer
 elephant in the room. Dan eye-rolls. Takes the lead:

DAN
 How's Melissa?

Bill snaps out of his loss for words at the name.

BILL
 Oh, shit. You haven't heard.

Beat.

BILL
 There was a car accident.
 Melissa...
 (long beat)
 ... well, she -- *passed*.

Bill says it like it hurts to say it.

DAN
 (emotionless)
 I'm sorry to hear that.

BILL
 Yeah. Yeah, June took it hard.
 Well, we both did. I was actually
 on my way to the photo lab right
 now. I found some negatives Melissa
 never got around to developing and
 I thought...
 (MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)
maybe it's something worth
publishing, you know? Like in a
posthumous collection?

DAN
Right.

A beat in silence.

BILL
You wanna come with me? See the
pictures?

He pulls from his pocket and shows Dan a couple of FILM
ROLLS.

DAN
Am I in any of them?

A long, awkward beat.

BILL
Huh... I don't think --

DAN
That was a joke, Bill.

BILL
Oh!

Bill laughs. It's awkward.

Dan hands out a couple more flyers.

DAN
Give those to your students, will
you? Good seeing you, Bill. Shame
about the death.

Dan walks away.

INT./ EXT. DAN'S APARTMENT/ PARK -- AFTERNOON

Sunset behind the branches of the DEAD TREE in the park.

Dan watches it from his window, leaned against the sill.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

On TV, a Youtube video: Dan being interviewed.

If we can call that Dan. No beard. Well built. Smiling. Groomed hair. A different, pre-cancer, pre-misery Dan.

Watching it, real life Dan is slumped on the couch like a ragdoll, high as kites.

Onscreen:

INTERVIEWER

And it doesn't bother you? The thought that someday we'll all 'die alone under a godless sky', like you put it in your book? Isn't that a depressing way to see the world?

DAN

Well, you can't *choose* to believe in something, can you? You either do or you don't. And when it comes to life after death... well, I don't. So to me death is the end and that's that. Yeah, it's horrible, but what can I do? Except... I don't know, hope I don't die for a very long time.

TV Dan is confident and handsome and all smiles and charm.

Real Dan drools on his beard from the heroin.

Back on TV:

DAN

Humans revolt against meaninglessness, it's our nature. And with good cause, too. It's... insulting. That we live to die. That we get to *know* that we die as we live.

(beat)

It's almost degrading.

Dan passes out.

CUT TO BLACK

A DOODLE

... of a HAND SPROUTING OUT OF A GRAVE, zombie-like. The pencil tip scratches back and forth inside the contours of the TOMBSTONE, painting it black.

It stops. Then the pencil slips, a single line snaking out of the drawing's frame, down until it slips from the paper itself.

We're in a:

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

Full room. Seventh grade. MRS. SIMPSON is the teacher, and her happiness borders on annoying:

MRS. SIMPSON
 -- you will all be picking your topic for the end of year assignment next class, and it *will* be random and *no* trades. Are you excited!? I know I am! In the meantime, I have your grades for last week's test.

She goes through the classroom delivering tests. Stops on a hooded figure. On the desk, the DOODLE we just saw.

The figure scored a D.

MRS. SIMPSON
 June...

No reaction.

MRS. SIMPSON
 June?

Nothing.

MRS. SIMPSON
June.

Nothing.

Mrs. Simpson pulls the hood. June, our cemetery girl. Eyes closed. Sleeping.

Mrs. Simpson pulls the buds from her ear (loud MEGAETH or something equality trash-metalish).

JUNE
 Uh!? What!?

Mrs. Simpson nods at her grade.

JUNE
 Uh? Oh. Oh.

MRS. SIMPSON

Do you wanna talk about this?

June grabs her test.

JUNE

Is there any chance it will affect my grade?

MRS. SIMPSON

No.

JUNE

Then I'll pass.

MRS. SIMPSON

No you won't. Not if you don't improve your grades.

Nothing from June.

MRS. SIMPSON

Look at me, June.

She does.

MRS. SIMPSON

I know you're going through a rough patch in your family life, but I can't sweep subpar work under the rug for you the whole year. Do you understand? I can't help you if you don't help yourself.

JUNE

Noted. Dead-mommy benefits run out after six months.

(beat)

What if my dad dies too? Do I get any more special treatment? 'Cause he's been kind of annoying lately, and I think I've watched enough CSI to make it look like an accident.

MRS. SIMPSON

You have to improve your work, June, or you'll be held back. Understood?

A long beat as June stares at Mrs. Simpson intently. Finally:

MRS. SIMPSON

What?

June's gaze goes past Mrs. Simpson into the void.

JUNE

I wonder if there's a way to tell the difference between a psychological need to pee and the real one without actually having to go to the bathroom. That would save me a lot of time.

MRS. SIMPSON

June...

JUNE

You know what? I'm not risking it.

Mrs. Simpson sighs and shakes her head. June gets up, goes around her.

Halfway out, she notices two girls. Future sorority material. Whispering, eyes on June.

One of them is HEATHER, and she's a bitch. The other doesn't matter. (But she's also a bitch.)

Heather shows something on her phone to her friend. Eyes on June.

June notices. Heather notices June noticing:

HEATHER

Hey, June. Did you see Erica Staten today? They said she's wearing an *actual* dinosaur shirt.

JUNE

Yeah, so?

HEATHER

You should take her out shopping -- she'd get better clothes and you'd get a friend. Win win.

June rolls her eyes. Steps out into the...

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR

Stops by a DOOR ajar in front of her. Another classroom.

June's eyes stops on a TALL GIRL in the first row. Tall and out-of-place amongst younger kids. Nerdy-looking. Dinosaur shirt.

ERICA STATEN. The 'girl-who-was-held-back-twice'.

A PAPER BALL bounces off her head. O.S. GIGGLES. Erica barely reacts.

On June's somber expression.

EXT. CEMETERY -- AFTERNOON

June has her back against Melissa Morgan's grave, hood up, playing a PORTABLE VIDEOGAME.

JUNE

(playing her game)

You know I blame you for why I have no friends at school? I read this article where this psychology dude explains that children of absent parents develop better social skills than other kids, cause they have to look for validation outside their home.

(beat)

Heather's mom is, like, barely around. And everyone likes Heather.

June plays on.

JUNE

But you had to be the *best friend* mom who understood me and made me feel validated and all that crap, so I never really cared about, you know, making actual friends.

(beat)

And that was really selfish of you.

She says all of it nonchalantly. Half-joking.

Puts her game down. More serious now:

JUNE

Am I a loser, mom?

The stone has no reaction.

JUNE

Remain dead if the answer is 'No, June, you are and will forever be awesome.'

After a beat, June smiles. Returns to her game.

INT. MORGAN HOME, OFFICE -- NIGHT

Bill's got his back to us, leaned over a desk.

He's studying a PILE of RECENTLY DEVELOPED PHOTOGRAPHS. All black and white. All featuring old people looking straight at the camera.

The sound of the front door OPENING and CLOSING. A second later June stops by.

JUNE
Yo, progenitor.

She puts her homework on his desk and turns to leave.

BILL
Where were you all day?

JUNE
Lesbian orgy. No drugs, though.

BILL
Cute.

He notices the 'D' on her test, turns back...

FOOTSTEPS as June climbs up the stairs to her bedroom.

Meh.

He leans back to work. Flips through the photographs, studying the many old faces, intrigued.

INT. JUNE'S BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

June fires up her computer, biting onto a sandwich dinner. No family meals in this house.

Click, click to the school's Blackboard page.

Check Partial Grades.

Not good. She's a hair away from flunking out.

INT. MORGAN HOME, LIVING ROOM -- LATER

June paces back and forth, on the phone.

JUNE
Is this Raymond Cross? From the --
hi, no, it's June. June Morgan.
(MORE)

JUNE (CONT'D)

We have Social Studies together?
Mrs. Simpson? No, not Jane Hoffman.
June Morgan. God, does anybody know
me in this school at all?

(beat)

I'm the one in the back row. You
know, the one who's mommy died?
Yeah, oooh, that June. So,
listen... I heard you stole Mr.
Pinker's midterms last year. Now,
for how much would you be willing
to do the same for --

She stops by the coffee table. Eyes down on...

Dan's flyers. Private tutor. Grabs one.

JUNE

You know what? I'll call you back,
Ray-Ray.

Bill emerges from the hallway:

BILL

Who was that?

June folds Dan's flyer, stuffs it in her pocket.

JUNE

Just... wrong number.

Starts the way up the stairs.

BILL

June?

She stops, turns. Bill has her test in hands. Showcases it
like evidence in a courtroom.

BILL

Huh... study harder. Okay?

All the assertion of a plankton.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM -- MORNING

Dan opens his eyes to a big belly blocking the window sun.

This is his unborn daughter, and she's nested inside
MICHELLE's body, mid-20s. Ex-hookup. Very pregnant.

Dan gets up.

DAN
Did you break in?

MICHELLE
Good morning.

DAN
Good morning. Did you break in?

MICHELLE
You don't lock your door, Daniel.

Dan rubs his eyes awake.

DAN
Well. Who am I afraid of?
Murderers?

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM -- LATER

Dan makes coffee, Michelle sits at the table.

MICHELLE
-- I didn't hear back from your e-
mail, so I thought --

Dan throws fruit in a BLENDER and Michelle has to speak over it:

MICHELLE
-- *I'd drop by, you know, at least
to see if* --

The blender dies out.

MICHELLE
-- you're still alive.

Dan stops, but doesn't turn back.

MICHELLE
I mean... I'm sorry, Dan. I didn't
mean it like that. I. Crap. Crap.
Sorry. It's just an expression.
Crap.

DAN
What are you doing here, Michelle?

He turns back, gives her juice, sits down, sips his coffee,
dead serious.

MICHELLE
I have a Lamaze class this week.

DAN
How much?

MICHELLE
A hundred.

Dan nods.

DAN
Okay. I have to call the bank first. Her money's in a savings account, I don't have the --

MICHELLE
You could come with me.

A beat.

DAN
Maybe. We'll see. I don't think I'm free.

MICHELLE
I didn't tell you the day yet.

Awkward.

MICHELLE
You never come to these things with me.

Dan just stares.

MICHELLE
I know you pay for everything, and I know you're saving all your money for her but...
(beat)
Money's not everything.

DAN
Michelle...

MICHELLE
I'm not asking you to be my boyfriend, okay? I know I was a Tinder fuck, I have no... delusions... in that area. But --

DAN

And you know that I'm dying, so why are you --

MICHELLE

-- there were two people there that night. She's your daughter too. She needs you.

(beat)

I could use some help too.

A tense beat. Dan gets up. Heads for the fridge. Beer time.

DAN

Why did you send me the ultrasound?

MICHELLE

What?

He leans back against the counter.

DAN

I don't wanna see her, Michelle. I told you that.

MICHELLE

You don't wanna see your daughter?

DAN

No. I don't.

A quiet beat. Michelle looks down. Gets up, heads for the door.

DAN

I'll send you a check. For the class.

MICHELLE

(quiet)

Thanks.

Michelle sniffs. Dan sighs.

A quiet beat. Then:

DAN

What do you want me to do, Michelle? Cure cancer?

Before Michelle can answer, the DOORBELL rings.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT BUILDING, HALLWAY -- SAME

Outside, June is by the door, which comes open to a sniffing Michelle. She goes around June hurriedly, disappears down the stairs.

JUNE
That is a big girl.

Dan shows up close behind.

DAN
May I help you?

JUNE
Hi. Dan Hopkins, right? Can I talk to you for a second?

DAN
Do you sell cookies?

JUNE
No.
(beat -- hopeful:)
Why, do you?

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Dan reads an ASSIGNMENT PAPER, leaned against the counter.

June paces restlessly around the apartment: opens cabinets, drawers, cupboards. Opens the fridge, comes out with orange juice.

More cupboards. Finds a cup. Fridge again.

JUNE
Do you have any ice?

Dan looks up. She dangles the cup in front of his eyes:

JUNE
Ice?

DAN
Freezer. Left drawer.

She gets her ice. Drinks it. Grimaces.

JUNE
Do you have like sugar or Splenda or whatever?

Walking back and forth as she speaks:

JUNE

So, are you really like a genius?

DAN

(re: June's paper)
What's this?

JUNE

My dad used to say you're like one of the most intelligent men in North America. And *mom* used to say you're really smart, but a prick. You never looked like much to me, not from what I remember, at least.
(finds a Splenda package)
Ah!

DAN

Not from what you rememb -- do I know you?

JUNE

Don't you have like a Nobel prize, or something? And yes, you know me. I'm June.

DAN

It's a Pulitzer, not a Nobel. June who?

JUNE

Is it a trophy? Can I see it?

DAN

It's a certificate. June who!?

JUNE

Just a certificate? That's boring.

DAN

And ten thousand dollars. Who are you and where do you know me from!?

JUNE

I just told you! I'm June. Morgan. You know me! You used to get me socks for Christmas. I hated them.

Nothing from Dan. Then:

DAN
June Morg -- you're Bill's
daughter?

JUNE
Uh-huh.

DAN
Aren't you supposed to be six or
something?

JUNE
Yes. In two-thousand and nine.
Nowadays I'm thirteen or something.
(beat)
I saw pudding cups in your fridge.
Can I have a pudding cup?

She doesn't wait for him to answer. Heads for the fridge.
Grabs a pudding cup. Looks around for a spoon.

Opens a drawer. No spoons here, but a sea of HYPODERMIC
NEEDLES.

JUNE
Jesus on a stick, that's a lot
needles.

Dan makes his way across the room, puts himself between June
and the drawer.

DAN
Can I do something for you, June
Morgan daughter of Bill Morgan?

JUNE
Yes. I'm flunking Social Studies.
You can help me stop that from
happening.

Dan offers the assignment paper back.

DAN
Sounds like a hard life. Good luck
with it. I don't tutor six graders.

He goes around her.

JUNE
Hey!

Pauses. Looks back.

JUNE

I'm in *seventh* grade.

A beat.

JUNE

And I wasn't asking you to tutor me.

Dan waits.

JUNE

I *was* going to offer you money to do my assignments *for* me. But...

(re: messy room)

I get a feeling you're not much of a material person.

DAN

What do you mean, do your assignments for you?

June speaks as she eats the pudding. Her sales pitch:

JUNE

I get a pretty big allowance now that my mom's dead, and I'm willing to spend it on not flunking out. I saw your flyer and I remembered mom and dad always talked about you like you're this sort of maverick professor, you know, the kind of guy that might just accept money from a thirteen year-old to help her cheat on her assignments. And I know what you're thinking: is it moral to take money from a kid to do her homework for her? But listen, I really think --

DAN

Hundred bucks. A week.

She stops. *That was easy.*

DAN

Plus, if I ever call you and tell you I need money for my *medication* (nods at needle-drawer) -- you have to give me an advance.

A beat.

DAN

And I want twenty bucks now.

June smiles and offers a hand.

JUNE

Deal.

Dan shakes it. June gives him her paper back.

JUNE

A minuses at the very least or no pay.

(re: empty pudding cup)
This is fucking amazing, by the way. Can I get another one?

She doesn't wait for an answer, heads for the fridge.

On Dan's face, watching June.

CUT TO:

AN OLD MAN

... stares straight into our soul. Still. Black and white. Deep wrinkles around his eyes. A PHOTOGRAPH.

We're in:

INT. MORGAN HOME, OFFICE -- NIGHT

Bill studies the photograph. It's one from the pile he developed earlier. We see the full picture now:

It's an old man standing in front of DOZENS OF CLOCKS. Wall clocks, grandfather clocks, small, big, old, new...

June pops up behind Bill, pizza slice in hand.

JUNE

Dad. Dad?

Nothing. Bill is absorbed, almost hypnotized by the man. June crumples a piece of paper, bounces it off his head.

JUNE

Yo, MC Daddy.

BILL

(snapping out of it)
June?

JUNE

I ordered food, 'cause there was no dinner.

BILL

There was none? I'm sorry. Where were you all day?

JUNE

Just out. If you don't wanna eat now, there'll be leftovers. I think. Don't quote me on it. No promises.

She leans over his shoulder to look at the photo.

JUNE

Who's that?

BILL

It's one of your mom's photographs. She was working on this new series on old people, I think, but she never got around to developing these photos.

(beat)

I think she was planning a new book. I think I can finish it for her, too.

JUNE

Cool. Thank God it's not a series on self-portraits, right?

(beat)

Get it? Cause she's dead and all. She's dead and so we can't take any more pictures of her to finish the book. I mean we could, but that'd be creepy. She's like a spooky skeleton by now, probably, right? Though that could be cool. You know, 'Evolution of Life: From Healthy and Alive to Dead and Decomposing', or whatever.

BILL

Don't talk like that, June.

JUNE

Sorry.

(beat)

'From Mommy to Mummy.'

(cuts it out)

Sorry, that's fucked up. I'll stop.

Bill turns back to Melissa's pile of photographs. June waits a bit, but he's absorbed again already.

JUNE

Right. Okay. I'll be upstairs.

June heads out...

JUNE

Don't forget to eat dinner!

... and disappears down the hallway.

Bill looks up to his laptop, wiggles the mouse...

... and the BACKGROUND IMAGE of his computer stares back at us: Bill, Melissa and June. Together. Happy. Oblivious to what's coming.

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

A GIGANTIC SMILEY FACE drawn on the blackboard.

Mrs. Simpson steps in front of it, her super-smile lighting up the whole classroom.

MRS. SIMPSON

Okaaay now! Before we start, I'd like to say that most of you did *really, really* well on the Eastern Religions assignment.

She stops her eyes on June, back row.

MRS. SIMPSON

I'm glad to see there's progress happening.

Smiles.

MRS. SIMPSON

I'm giving you your papers back at the end of the day, but right now we're gonna talk about the --
(fake scary voice)
-- *end of the year assignment.*

No one laughs. It's cringe-worthy. June eye-rolls.

MRS. SIMPSON

We've covered the majority of faiths along the semester, and you all did great jobs researching its elements on the surface. What I would like from you now, though, is that you dig a *liiii*tle deeper in the fertile soil of knowledge.

A smirk at her own remark. The classroom is not amused.

MRS. SIMPSON

So. For the end of the year assignment, each of you is going to pick *one* subject and study its development across *aaalll* the faiths we studied throughout the semester. These will be random subjects, you don't get to pick them. And. No. Trades!

She produces a big jar filled with folded little post-it notes.

MRS. SIMPSON

You can do this assignment by yourselves or in groups of two or three, but no more than that, please.

People shuffle around choosing pairs and groups. June watches. Tries to catch someone's eye. But no one looks her way.

It takes seconds. All the groups are picked and June's left groupless.

Mrs. Simpson approaches.

MRS. SIMPSON

June? Who's your group?

June looks around one last time, tentatively. Sighs.

Grabs a POST-IT from the jar. Opens it:

THE AFTERLIFE

Mrs. Simpson's on her way past her when she takes notice:

MRS. SIMPSON

Oh. June. Give that back, pick something else.

JUNE
You said no trades.

MRS. SIMPSON
Well, yes, but I think it's best if
--

She tries to grab the paper. June pulls back.

JUNE
Nope. Mine.

Holds on to her teacher's stare.

MRS. SIMPSON
Okay. If you think you can do --
okay. Okay, that's fine.
(super-smile)
Of course it's fine, honey.

Off she goes. June raises her eyes.

Heather (that bitch), is showing something to a friend on her phone again. Eyes on June. Whispering.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT BUILDING, HALLWAY -- AFTERNOON

Dan trades bucks for dope with Crusty by the door. Behind them, June pops up from the stairs, quick-stepping towards Dan, a TEST PAPER raised to cover her face.

JUNE
Ta-dah! A plus!

She notices Crusty.

JUNE
Oh. Hi. You're... odd.

At fourteen, Crusty's a year older than June, but that won't stop him from feeling intimidated. He has no reply.

June dangles the assignment in front of Dan.

DAN
Congratulations.
(to Crusty)
Thanks, Crusty.

CRUSTY
Do you have the Becker, professor?

Dan produces a copy of the book DENIAL OF DEATH by Ernest Becker.

DAN
Hide it better than the last one.

CRUSTY
Will do, professor.

As they speak, June goes under Dan's arm into the apartment. Disappears inside.

JUNE (O.S.)
Your money's on the counter!

Crusty peeks over at June, interested. Then leaves. Dan turns back to...

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM

... closes the door.

DAN
(under his breath)
Make yourself at home...

He stops by the counter, grabs his money. Heads for the living room to find...

... June staring down at his spoon, lighter and needle on the table.

Shit.

She doesn't say a word, just looks at it. Dan approaches. She looks at his hand:

The Ziploc packet. Filled with HEROIN he just got from Crusty.

DAN
It's medicinal.

JUNE
My ass it is.

DAN
Not legally medicinal. But still.

JUNE
You're a junkie?

DAN
I have terminal cancer.

JUNE
Oh, shit. Really?

Dan sits on the couch. Throws the Ziploc on the coffee table.

JUNE
Like. *How* terminal?

June sits too, eyes on Dan.

JUNE
Like. Do you have time to finish today's assignment?

She gives him today's paper. Dan skims it.

June studies Dan's syringe as she speaks:

JUNE
I have something else for you, if you wanna make more money. And now I'm guessing you do. How much is a gram of cocaine?

DAN
Hundred bucks from the right buyer. But this isn't cocaine. This is heroin.

Dan starts working on the new assignment. June studies the packet of heroin.

Opens it. Brings it close to her nose to SMELL it. Dan notices.

Snatches the packet from her.

JUNE
Rude.

DAN
(back to assignment)
So? What can't wait?

JUNE
Most things in life. But I was talking about my end-of-year assignment.

Dan waits for more.

JUNE

We have to give a ten minute presentation on a particular aspect of faith across religions. I got 'the afterlife'.

DAN

'The afterlife'?

JUNE

I don't believe in it, but if you do die and it turns out there is one, that'd be a huge help if you could Snapchat it for me or whatever.

Dan looks up.

JUNE

It's cool, my mom died recently, so I can joke about it.

Dan's eyes go back down to the paper. June waits, patient.

JUNE

Is it because you do drugs?

DAN

What?

JUNE

Do you have cancer because you do drugs?

DAN

No, I do drugs because I have cancer.

June considers this, then accepts it. Then something crosses her mind:

JUNE

Was that pregnant girl your wife? The one that was here last time?

DAN

No.

JUNE

Oh. Okay. That'd be really sad if it was your kid she was pregnant with.

Dan pauses at the weight of these words.

Then snaps out of it -- gives June the finished assignment.
Gets up. Kitchen. Beer.

June follows.

JUNE
So? Will you help me?

He grabs a bottle, offers her one.

JUNE
I'm thirteen.

Another beat.

DAN
Right.

He puts the bottle back in the fridge.

JUNE
So? Afterlife?

DAN
What do you have to do?

JUNE
Just talk to a bunch of people.
Priests, rabbis, whatever the
Muslim guy is called --

DAN
-- they're called Imam --

JUNE
-- whatever -- and ask them about
the afterlife and then write about
it.

DAN
Can't you just copy it from a nerd
friend like the normal kids?

JUNE
I don't have a lot of friends at
school.
(beat)
But not in a dorky, she-has-no-
friends way. More in a lone-wolf
Aragorn vibe, you know? Like I'm
too awesome and intimidating and I
keep to myself and everyone thinks
I'm cool.

(beat)
(MORE)

JUNE (CONT'D)

Plus the teacher wants us to have the interviews on video.

Dan sips his beer.

DAN

I don't know how much you researched me, but I don't have a very good relationship with religious figures.

JUNE

So what? You have an Emmy, that's like, guaranteed to give me a few extra points.

DAN

Pulitzer.

JUNE

Whatever. You can smoke your heroin the whole time, I won't mind.

A beat. Dan notices something. Frowns:

DAN

What do you have in your pockets?

We notice the BULGE in June's pockets. She sighs, busted. Pulls PUDDING CUPS from it.

JUNE

Sorry, they're just really, really good. You should lock your fridge -- I'll try again soon.

On Dan, sighing.

EXT. MORGAN HOME -- AFTERNOON

Establishing. June climbing the front steps.

INT. MORGAN HOME -- AFTERNOON

June gets home. All quiet. Stops as soon as she crosses the door.

What the...

The living room is TURNED UPSIDE DOWN like the aftermath of a hurricane.

Very messy.

INT. MORGAN HOME, KITCHEN -- MOMENTS LATER

June's startled face emerges from the living room into the kitchen.

She finds Bill. The table in front of him covered in PHOTOGRAPHS. He stares blankly at one in particular.

JUNE

Dad?

BILL

(eyes on the photograph)
Hey, June.

JUNE

Are you aware that our living room
has exploded?

BILL

Right. That was me. I knew your mom
had another roll of film somewhere
and...

He finally looks up. Taps his pen on the photographs:

BILL

(smiles)
Took me a while, but I found it.

JUNE

Okay...

Bill looks back at the picture in his hands. Transfixed.

A long beat goes by. June doesn't move. Finally:

BILL

I don't know where this photo was
taken.

June goes around him, looks over his shoulder at the photograph -- AN OLD LADY standing in front of a bunch of Arabian-style carpets, rugs, quilts, etc.

JUNE

Looks like... wherever they shot
Aladdin.

BILL

The sign is in arabic. But we never went to an Arab-speaking country.

He runs his eyes through an undeveloped film roll on the table, where we make out SIMILAR SHOTS. Some including Melissa -- doing the old lady's hair, makeup, etc. A MAKING OF of the shot Bill has in hands.

JUNE

Maybe it wasn't out of the country.

BILL

Maybe...

Bill's pretty much in his own world, looking from frame to frame on the roll, taking Melissa in. Her smile. Her gentle touch on the lady's hair. Her eyes.

JUNE

I'm gonna order something from Grubhub, okay, Dad?

June waits for an answer, but Bill's not listening. She turns around to leave.

When she's almost by the door:

BILL

June.

Turns back. Bill stares at her intently. A long beat. Then:

BILL

Never mind.

On June. She looks down.

INT. JUNE'S BEDROOM -- LATER

June by herself, reading on the afterlife.

We stop on STILLS of the WIKIPEDIA ARTICLE she's reading:

Medieval paintings of HEAVEN and HELL -- faces contorted in pain bathed in hellfire contrasted with heavenly angelic faces (somehow still gloomy-looking) over the clouds.

June's eyes go from the screen to the FRAMED PICTURE by the nightstand:

June, Bill and Melissa. The background picture from Bill's laptop. A happy family. Mom looks alive. Bill looks *present*.

A lot has changed.

EXT. PARK -- NIGHT

Sundown behind the branches of the dead tree. All dark and quiet and lonesome.

INT. DAN'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Dan lies wide awake, eyes on the ceiling, emotionless.
He pulls in a breath as if about to scream. But he doesn't.
Silent. Passive. Eyes open.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT BUILDING, HALLWAY -- MORNING

Knock, knock. June waits by the door.

She hears the footsteps inside and tippytoes to reach the peephole viewframe. Knocks again.

Dan opens the door. Tired.

JUNE

You got pudding cups, right? We're gonna need pudding cups. It's essential that we have pudding cups.

INT. CHURCH -- DAY

Dan and June walk down the long aisle. A couple of faithfuls left and right, but mostly empty.

They reach the CONFSSIONAL. June knocks. The PRIEST walks out. June BOWS to him.

JUNE

Your Majesty. I'm June Morgan, we spoke over the phone about a school assignment?

He looks at Dan (who's eating a pudding cup).

DAN

(mouth full)
I'm Dan. I just have cancer.

Confused priest.

INT. CHURCH -- LATER

A CELL PHONE CAMERA POV. STATIC.

The priest sits on a plastic chair. June comes into frame. Then turns back.

JUNE

Come on!

DAN (O.S.)

Why do I have to be in it?

JUNE

I told you! You have an Oscar, I'll get mad respect for bringing you into this!

DAN (O.S.)

Pulitzer.

JUNE

Whatever. Come, come. We'll have like a little debate and I'll be the host.

A reluctant Dan shows up from behind the camera. They both take sits across from the priest.

June, eyes down to her notes:

JUNE

All right. So. You're a Catholic Priest.

PRIEST

Yes.

JUNE

And you believe in God and Jesus and all that shit -- sorry -- all that crap?

The priest nods.

JUNE

Okay. And Dan, what do you have to say about all of it?

DAN

What does my opinion matter?

June speaks like a seasoned talk show host, smiling eyes on the camera:

JUNE

You're a famous academic, surely people would be interested to know how your opinion differs from Our Holiness.

DAN

Why? I'm not a theologian, I don't see how --

JUNE

(angry-whisper)
Just talk goddammit, I have to fill fifteen minutes to get the full grade.

Dan concedes. To the priest:

DAN

Okay. I think it's a very pretty story.

PRIEST

But you don't believe it.

DAN

Not a word, no.

JUNE

Uuh. Isn't that something? And why not, Dr. Hopkins?

DAN

Because it's stupid.
(to the Priest)
No offense.

The priest looks a little offended.

We go into a...

SERIES OF SHOTS

... of Dan and June interviewing several religious figures.

A RABBI

DAN

Why would God put Job through all that shit just to prove a point to the Devil? That sounds unnecessarily mean.

The Rabbi -- making an effort not to roll his eyes.

AN ISLAMIC SCHOLAR AT A UNIVERSITY

This guy's also annoyed. Dan's getting a kick out of messing with all of them:

DAN

Do I have to speak Arabic in Muslim heaven? Or do they have those museum headphones with English translation for all the shows and attractions and stuff?

JUNE

There's *shows* in Muslim heaven?

DAN

I'm assuming there's some sort of entertainment. Right?

The guy sighs.

A BUDDHIST MONK

The Monk sits, eyes closed, lotus position, meditating. June stares at him for a beat. Awkward.

Lean closer. Puts a finger under his nose.

JUNE

(to the camera)
Is he dead?

No reaction.

THE RABBI AGAIN

DAN

I do like the hats, I'll give you that.

JUNE

The hats are awesome.

The Rabbi seems pleased.

THE PRIEST

DAN

How long must the line to meet Jesus in Heaven be, huh? I mean, that guy's gotta be tired of posing for selfies.

JUNE
 (genuine)
 You think Jesus poses for selfies?

DAN
 Oh, definitely.

They both turn to the priest. Who shrugs.

PRIEST
 I don't see why not.

A FIFTH GUY, UNDETERMINED RELIGION

This guy's staring at the wall chanting in a dead language in a sort of trance, wearing ancient robes.

Dan looks from him to the camera.

DAN
 I don't even know what that is.

THE MUSLIM

Heated argument:

MUSLIM SCHOLAR
 No, no, no, no, it was in
 Constantinople!

DAN
 Yes, but it has existed in the
 region for a lot longer than the
 Muslim religion. During the Ottoman
 Empire --

MUSLIM SCHOLAR
 That is not relevant to the
 discussion, you are neglecting --

June shows up on frame.

JUNE
 What are you guys talking about?

DAN
 June, Google this: who invented the
 kebab?

June sighs.

FIFTH GUY, UNDETERMINED RELIGION

The guy leans progressively closer to Dan, caressing the wall and dancing a sort of tribal dance.

Dan leans away. Turns to the camera.

DAN

It's kind of creeping me out.

JUNE (O.S.)

Yeah, let's get the hell out of here.

Dan disappears off frame. Dude keeps dancing. We end the montage in the:

INT. CHURCH

... as Dan and June collect their things and make their way out.

PRIEST

Daniel.

Dan turns back. The priest walks to him. His steps echo across the wide chamber.

PRIEST

I'm sorry about your sickness.

DAN

Yeah, sorry seems to be the consensus.

The priest stops in front of Dan.

PRIEST

My father was not a Christian.

He's serious now.

PRIEST

In his deathbed, I asked him if he was scared to die, and he said he wasn't. I asked him how could he not be scared if he thought he wasn't going anywhere. If he had no soul, that meant that all that exists -- everything he knew -- would die with him when his brain stopped working. His death would effectively mean the death of the whole universe.

(beat)

(MORE)

PRIEST (CONT'D)

And he smiled and said to me: it's a good universe, son. I don't mind taking it with me.

Dan considers this, maybe seriously for a second. Then:

DAN

I have no idea what that's supposed to mean.

The priest smiles a resigned smile.

PRIEST

I hope you find peace, Daniel.

He turns back towards the confessional.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM -- DAY

June takes notes on her laptop, sitting by the coffee table.

Dan steps out from the bathroom, beer in hand.

DAN

Can't you do this at home?

JUNE

(typing)
I can, but I like it better here.

Dan throws himself on the couch. Clearly uncomfortable with June's presence in his personal space.

DAN

Well, hurry up with it, will you?

JUNE

I'm just taking notes, chilax.

DAN

I'm *chilaxed*.

JUNE

No you're not. And chilaxed is not a word.

DAN

Oh, because 'chilax' is in the Merriam Webster Dic -- what am I doing? Why am I arguing?

JUNE

There. Done. Come here. I need to teach you something.

Dan groans -- moves to her side on her couch.

JUNE

See that? That's my school's blackboard page.

DAN

Uh-huh.

JUNE

Now, our next assignments are all online, so I have to deliver them through this website.

(beat)

Do you know what a website is?

Dan stares, blank-faced.

JUNE

A website is --

DAN

I know what a website is.

JUNE

Okay. So what you're gonna do is log in with my e-mail --

(beat)

-- log in means to --

That look from Dan again.

JUNE

Okay, okay. You know what log in means. So you log in and upload the answers to Mrs. Simpson here --

(clicks)

-- *aaand* press 'send'. Got it?

First one is due tomorrow, so *don't forget*.

DAN

Can't you do that?

JUNE

Hey, what am I paying you for?

Dan concedes.

DAN
What's the password?

JUNE
(bright)
Pudding.

Dan nods.

JUNE
Speaking of which --

DAN
Second drawer, by the milk carton.

June goes for the fridge, sticks her head in, looking for pudding.

JUNE
(head in-fridge)
Hey, can I ask you something?

DAN
Huh.

JUNE
It's awkward.

DAN
Okay.

JUNE
Really. You can say no and I won't ask.

DAN
I don't know what you're gonna ask.

JUNE
But I told you it's awkward, so if you don't want me to ask you something awkward, you can say no and I won't --

DAN
Dear God just ask it.

June makes her way back, throws herself by Dan's side on the couch.

JUNE
What's it like to be dying?

Dan pauses.

JUNE

Sorry. Is it too awkward? Sorry.

DAN

It's fine.

JUNE

I'm just... curious. Must be weird to live. Like that. Like. Knowing. Sorry. Like. My mom died out of the blue. Just driving her car one day and *oh gee is that a stop sign BAM*. Dead. But you, like... you know it's happening. That's... different.

DAN

Yeah. It's different.

JUNE

I'm not sure if it's better.

DAN

Well, I never died in a car crash, so I don't know. But this sucks a lot.

JUNE

But what's it feel like?

Dan leans forward. Puffs his cheeks. Mutes the priest speaking on TV.

A beat.

DAN

It's like... standing on the edge of a very tall cliff, with the city lights shining way down below your feet. And you look down at it all and it slowly dawns on you that every one of those window lights shining down there is a life. A person with their own hopes, dreams, demons, thoughts and quirks that you'll never know about... and it's so beautiful, and you realize you want nothing more than to jump down and dive into this ocean of light and life shimmering down there... but you can't. You can't, so you just watch them from far away. And it's really lonely.

(beat)

(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

And then you turn back, and there's a guy standing right behind you in scrubs, and he's like: "Hey, Dan, guess what? You have cancer, you piece of shit."

On June's expression. Somber and serious for a beat. Then a single SNORT. Maybe a chuckle, maybe not.

INT. DAN'S CAR -- AFTERNOON

The SUNROOF frames a blue sky stroked with light clouds. Treetops rushing by tell us the car's moving.

Then DARKNESS. All black.

Then the sunroof again.

DARKNESS. Sunroof. DARKNESS. Sunroof.

We see the whole picture:

We're in Dan's car as he drives June home.

June has her face up to the sunroof, eyes opening and closing repeatedly.

JUNE

Sometimes I think the world only exists when my eyes are open. Like the universe mini-explodes whenever I blink, and then rearranges itself in a hurry before I open my eyes again.

DAN

That's very solipsist of you.

JUNE

What's soliplizipits?

DAN

Solipsist. Google it.

They drive in silence for a beat.

JUNE

Hey, what do you want on your grave?

DAN

What?

JUNE

I see all kinds of weird
inscriptions on people's tombstones
at my mother's cemetery.

(beat)

What will you put on yours?

Dan thinks for a beat.

DAN

Nothing.

JUNE

Nothing?

DAN

Nothing. Just an unmarked grave.
Like Steve Jobs. Or capital
punishment offenders.

June frowns. Dan explains:

DAN

Gravestones are for the living.

Dan pulls over in front of June's house. She steps out. Dan honks ever-so-lightly. Extends his palm.

June walks back. Pays him. A deal is a deal.

EXT. MORGAN HOME -- MOMENTS LATER

June heads straight for the door, fishes in her pockets for...

... nothing. *Shit.*

She turns back in time to see Dan's car rolling away.

INT. DAN'S CAR -- SAME

Dan's eyes go to the rear view. June's waving her arms in the middle of the road for him to come back.

He turns his head and looks back to make sure. Sure enough. There she is.

Hesitates. Keeps driving. She keeps waving.

Nope. Not my problem. Keeps driving.

June's head goes down to her phone. A beat later:

BEEP. Dan's phone. Message: *'I know you saw me, asshole.'*

EXT. MORGAN HOME -- MOMENTS LATER

Dan's car pulls over. June gets up from the porch, heads for the driver's window.

JUNE
I forgot my keys.

DAN
What do you want me to do?

JUNE
I don't know. Take me for ice cream or whatever. I don't wanna stand here all day waiting for my dad to get back.

Dan sighs.

INT. DIVIEST BAR IN CALIFORNIA -- DAY

The SADDEST ICE CREAM BOWL travels its way through the shady crowd of the bar to end on June and Dan's table. The waitress drops a spoon by its side and leaves, no smiles, no 'enjoy'.

This is not the kind of place that serves ice cream.

June doesn't mind it, though. She scoops a spoonful and drops it in her coke glass. Makes a float.

Dan does the same. With his Scotch. Why not?

They eat/drink in silence for a beat. Dan checks his watch.

DAN
A friend's house? How about a friend's house? I can drop you off.

JUNE
(mouthful of ice cream)
I don't have any friends.

DAN
How come?

JUNE
It's like I told you. I'm too awesome for my school.
(MORE)

JUNE (CONT'D)

They don't let me talk to anyone
'cause they're too afraid it'll
ruin the other student's self-
esteem.

On Dan, not amused. June looks up. Goes for honesty:

JUNE

Nobody likes me. I don't know why.

A rare moment with her mask off. She looks down. Dan presses:

DAN

Does it bother you?

JUNE

Whatever.

A beat.

JUNE

It'd be nice to have friends, but
whatever. Who cares?

A beat.

JUNE

I just don't wanna be another dino-
girl.

DAN

Dino-girl?

JUNE

Dinosaur girl. It's like. There's
this girl, Erica Staten. She was
held back twice, and now she's gone
through puberty so she has boobs
and pimples and she's like a foot
taller than all the other girls.
She sticks out in the crowd. You
know, like a dinosaur? And no one
talks to her, 'cause of course,
she's the 'big weird girl who was
held back twice'. I don't think
I've ever heard her voice,
seriously.

A beat.

JUNE

I just. I'm afraid. She doesn't
belong. And I'm afraid I'll end up
like her.

(MORE)

JUNE (CONT'D)

I've never really worried about people not liking me 'cause -- I don't know, I had my mom and dad at least... but now mom's gone and dad's...

Her voice trails off.

JUNE

I don't like being alone.

Dan doesn't react.

JUNE

Does that mean I'm a loser?

DAN

No. No, it just means life dealt you a shitty hand.

JUNE

Yeah...

DAN

You know what would help making friends?

He reaches over and pulls June's EARBUD -- she was wearing it in one ear, half-listening to music.

DAN

Being present.

She looks up. Concedes.

JUNE

How about you?

DAN

What about me?

JUNE

Do you have any friends?

DAN

No one wants to be friends with a dying person.

JUNE

How come?

DAN

Cause they feel like they have to filter everything they say.

(MORE)

DAN (CONT'D)

They feel guilty if they say the word 'death' around me, 'cause they think it reminds me that I'm dying. Like it's something that slips my mind every now and then if no one mentions it.

June gets it:

JUNE

Yeah, that sucks. I had a girl apologize for mentioning her mom in front of me. It's like 'hey, it's cool, I'm not gonna steal your mom just 'cause I know you have one now.'

Dan chuckles. Common ground.

JUNE

What about the pregnant chick?

DAN

She's just a pregnant chick.

JUNE

What is she, like a friend? A tinder date? Are you one of those guys that have the hots for pregnant chicks? I know they exist, I saw a website once by accident, dude, it was like --

DAN

She's just...

Dan doesn't finish the sentence right away.

DAN

... just someone.

June considers this. A quiet beat. Then:

JUNE

Sad.

DAN

What?

JUNE

You. You're sad.

DAN

Yeah, well. You're sad too.

JUNE

Yeah, but you're more.

DAN

No I'm not, you're more.

JUNE

You're more. Way more. You're like that sad lonely man that lives in the house at the end of the street all the kids are afraid of getting close to.

DAN

Yeah, well, at least I was never held back in school.

June opens her mouth, flabbergasted (but not really).

JUNE

I wasn't held back yet. And you're *dying*. That's way worse than being held back.

DAN

We're all dying, just at different paces.

JUNE

Yeah, but you're like, dying *right now*. Like, you probably don't have another Christmas in you.

Dan doesn't answer right away.

JUNE

Sorry. Was that too far? Shit. Sorry.

Dan shrugs.

DAN

At least my mom's alive.

Open-mouth silent gasp from June:

JUNE

Is she really? *Can I steal her?*

DAN

Nah, she's dead. Eat your ice cream.

June smiles. Dan gets up.

INT. BAR RESTROOM -- LATER

Dan exits the stall. Washes his hands. Pauses.

His breathing grows shallow. His eyelids go down. He has to lean against the sink for support.

RANDOM GUY
Hey man, you all right?

The guy rests a hand on Dan's shoulder. Dan pulls himself together. Regains his balance.

DAN
Yeah. Yeah, thanks.

Dan stares at his frail figure in the mirror. A gentle reminder of impending death.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM -- NIGHT

A FETUS on a laptop screen, Rorschach-shaped in black and white. The ultrasound picture we saw earlier.

Dan on the couch. Staring at the picture, laptop in front of him.

A melancholic mood.

Right click with his mouse: *'Are you sure you want to recycle this picture from the DELETED FOLDER?'*

Before he can click YES or NO:

The FRONT DOOR comes open. Crusty walks in. Dan doesn't move.

CRUSTY
Professor?

He gets closer. Extends the DENIAL OF DEATH book back to Dan.

CRUSTY
"We are Gods with anuses". Great stuff. Real page-turner.

Beat. Dan is still looking at the picture of his daughter.

CRUSTY
Professor?

DAN
Yes, Crusty?

CRUSTY

Your book.

Dan snaps out of his ultrasound-picture-induced trance.

DAN

Right. Thank you, Crusty.

Takes the book.

CRUSTY

Who was that girl that was here
before, professor?

Dan heads for the fridge for a new beer.

CRUSTY

Short, pony-tailed, face like a
preteen Sylvia Plath?

DAN

Her name's June.

CRUSTY

June. She's quite alluring.

DAN

Don't get dreamy, Crusty. She would
ruin your summer.

Crusty heads for the fridge too. Grabs a beer. Drinks it.

CRUSTY

I don't like summers.

Dan sits back down. Nods, eyes back at the ultrasound
picture, distracted.

CRUSTY

Professor?

DAN

I'll let her know, Crusty. I'll let
her know.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Dan wakes up. Something's off. Something smells.

He pulls the blanket, looks down.

He's wet himself.

INT, DAN'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

SCRUB SCRUB SCRUB. By the sink, in his underwear, Dan tries to get the pee stain off of his pants.

SCRUB. SCRUB. SCRUB. SCRUB.

It starts with a sob. He fights it, almost confused by the tear. Wipes it away. Keeps scrubbing.

Then another. Sob. Sob again. Scrub. Scrub. Sob. Scrub. Sob.

Stop it stop it stop it!

Then he's done. Drops the pants, the sponge, himself. Slides to the floor.

DAN

God...

Curles and folds onto himself in fetal position by the toilet. Dan in tears. Swollen face and red eyes, big, big desperation tears.

Quiet, but furious like a storm.

He punches his naked leg again and again. *Cut it out cut it out cut it out!*

But it won't.

Head down between his legs.

Defeated.

COOPER (PRELAP)

"We must imagine Sisyphus happy."

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

Back at the class on Dan's book. And Dan's here again. Back row. A contained mess.

Cooper, the teacher, continues reading from Dan's book:

COOPER

"Camus' The Myth of Sisyphus states that the human condition mirrors that of Sisyphus, the Greek hero condemned to forever roll a boulder up a mountain, only to see it roll down again and have to repeat the task the next day.

(MORE)

COOPER (CONT'D)

To Camus, life in the face of death would be much like the punishment of Sisyphus -- an absurdist exercise in futility. And yet, despite knowing the truth of our insignificance, we have to keep on living. We have to, in Camus' words, 'imagine Sisyphus happy'."

(beat)

Hopkins, of course, will defend that to try and imagine Sisyphus happy is itself absurd.

He looks up.

COOPER

Thoughts?

A STUDENT raises his hand:

STUDENT

I disagree. I think it's our mortality that makes our time alive precious and meaningful. I mean, we all love life, but living forever would be much worse than dying.

DAN

How do you know?

The class turns back.

STUDENT

Well.

DAN

If you had to choose between dying right now or living forever, what would you choose?

The student doesn't answer.

DAN

There is *only* mortal life. Of course you cherish it, it's all you've ever known.

(beat)

You don't love life. You have Stockholm Syndrome.

Silence.

CUT TO BLACK

MELISSA MORGAN

... suddenly alive. Right in front of us. Looking right at the camera.

MELISSA

Come here.

She's outside. In a backyard. Sunny. Green. Grainy. Dream-like.

MELISSA

Come on, let me show you.

Our frame shakes with footsteps, the cameraman getting closer. Melissa extends her hands, TOUCHES US...

... turns the camera on herself and a six-year-old JUNE.

MELISSA

(laughing)

You're filming! See here? That's for filming. For pictures, you press *riiight* he --

BLACK.

We're in:

INT. JUNE'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Present-day June keeps her eyes on the blackness of the computer screen. Then she hits PLAY. The video starts again: Melissa saying "Come here" to the camera.

June's been watching this on repeat for a while.

INT. MORGAN HOME, MASTER BEDROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

June walks in. The room is spotless.

Too spotless. Bill hasn't slept here since the accident.

She steps in. Stops by the nightstand.

Her mother's glasses rest on top of a Stephen King paperback.

June takes the book. Opens it. The edge of a page folded down to mark the spot still.

Forever unfinished.

INT. MORGAN HOME, OFFICE -- MOMENTS LATER

June walks in. Looking for support. Down. Sad. Stephen King still in hands.

The room is draped in PHOTOGRAPH PRINTOUTS. All share that same formula: old people staring straight at the camera with different objects stacked behind them. There's:

-The old man with the clocks behind him.

-An old lady standing in front of piles and piles of paper.

-A man in front of hundreds of BUILDING PLAN SKETCHES taped to the wall behind him.

... etc.

Bill is not here.

June looks from picture to picture -- curiosity slowly giving way to a sort of anguish as the faces seem to grow sadder, older, even scarier, as she browses them.

She stops on the OLD MAN in front of the CLOCKS. Looks right into his eyes. He seems to look right back.

Staring straight into her soul.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT BUILDING, HALLWAY -- NIGHT

The long corridor, deserted but for a single figure sitting against the wall under a flickering light. Knees up, hood on.

Dan emerges from the stairs. Walks towards the figure.

Dan gets closer. Stops. It's Crusty. Bloody nose. He looks up.

CRUSTY

It's quite all right, Professor.
But I'm afraid I can't hook you up
right now.

Dan just watches.

CRUSTY

I have to wait for him to fall
asleep before I can go in.

Faint CRASHING NOISES from the other side of the door in front of Crusty. His father.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Dan steps in, throws his stuff aside and...

... notices June on the couch. Her back to Dan. Watching a CARTOON. Something innocent.

All lights out, an eerie vibe to the room.

DAN
I think Game of Thrones is on HBO.
(to himself)
I gotta start locking my door.

Dan makes his way round the couch.

DAN
What are you doing here?

Stops when he notices she's crying. Eyes straight at the TV.

DAN
June?

JUNE
I finished editing the interviews.
I wanted to show it to you so I
burned you a copy.

She says all of that crying. Points at a DVD on the coffee table.

JUNE
There.

Dan sits.

DAN
What happened?

Still crying:

JUNE
Do you wanna watch it?

DAN
June.

JUNE
(crying harder)
I think it turned out really good.

DAN
June. What's wrong?

A beat.

JUNE
Why do people die?

Dan looks down.

DAN
Fuck, June.

JUNE
No. You tell me.

Nothing from Dan. She pushes him.

JUNE
You tell me!

Sobs.

Dan holds her. She cries and cries and cries into his shoulder.

JUNE
(quieter)
You tell me.

He strokes her hair. She just cries.

FADE TO BLACK

A 1950'S SITCOM SCENE:

MALE CHARACTER
Before he dies, a man must plant a tree, have a child and write a book!

MALE CHARACTER 2
That sounds like a lot of work. Can't I write a tree, have a book and forget the child?

Canned laughter.

We're in:

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM -- MORNING

The sitcom plays on the living room TV.

Sleepy-eyed Dan wakes up on the couch, a SEA OF EMPTY PUDDING CUPS OVER HIS CHEST.

He heads for the...

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM

... where June's asleep in bed (holding an empty pudding cup).

Dan towers over her. Doesn't wake her up. But notices the tear stains on her pillow.

INT. COLLEGE OFFICE -- MORNING

Bill looks like he hasn't slept in years. He's on the phone.

BILL

Yes. No, I need to -- my wife, Melissa Morgan? She took a picture of your father back in May? Yes, exactly. Well, I'm compiling a book and -- no, she's not. She's... out. But I can speak for her.

Dan walks in. Kind of pissed.

DAN

Hey, father of the year.

Bill looks up.

BILL

I'll call you back.

Hangs up.

BILL

Dan.

DAN

Your daughter's in my apartment.

BILL

She is?

Dan steps closer.

DAN

How long have you been here?

BILL

You have *no* idea how hard it is to track these people from Melissa's photographs.

(MORE)

BILL (CONT'D)

And I have to get *everyone's* authorization, it's a nightmare. But look at this, the whole thing was a series on old age and legacy she was doing.

Bill shuffles PHOTOGRAPHS on the table for Dan to see. Same style: old people standing in front of different objects, collections, etc.

BILL

She took people at the end of their lives and photographed them standing in front of their life's work. Like this guy, he fixed bicycles for a living, so she --

DAN

Bill. Bill. Your thirteen-year-old daughter didn't sleep at home last night and you don't care. You didn't even *answer your phone*. I had to call the university to find you.

BILL

What? She told me she was taking classes with you, right?

Dan shakes his head.

BILL

She's fine. She's a real grownup.

DAN

Go be with your daughter.

Dan turns back.

BILL

Dan, come on.

DAN

I don't need a kid, Bill, I already have a tumor.

Dan turns around. Slams the door.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM -- DAY

June wakes up. Confused for a second ("where the hell -- oh, right"). She blinks herself awake.

A NOTE on the nightstand reads: *'Pudding in the fridge.'*

She grabs her stuff, heads for the...

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM

... where she finds Michelle stepping in from the front door. MEDICAL EXAMS in her hands.

A beat. Both confused as they stare at each other.

JUNE

Hi.

MICHELLE

Oh. Hi. Is Dan home?

June looks around.

JUNE

I don't know.
(beat -- smile)
But we have pudding.

INT. DAN'S CAR -- DAY

Dan drives. Checks in his pocket -- an EMPTY ZIPLOC. Pulls his phone. Dials. *Crusty*. No answer.

Sigh.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM -- AFTERNOON

Dan gets home, dopeless. June's gone already. The place is empty.

He opens a beer. Drinks half the can in a sip.

Notices the exam papers Michelle brought with her on the coffee table. Pulls them from the envelope, reads. We focus on one part of it:

Expected due date.

It's soon.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM-- NIGHT

Dan; sweaty, restless, trashing. The joys of sleeping through heroin withdrawal.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM -- DAY

Dan, wrapped in a blanket, emerges from the bedroom to face the morning. Looking like shit.

Throws himself on the couch. Deep, bloodshot eyes stop on the DUE DATE on Michelle's exams again.

Grabs a ZIPLOC. Runs his finger inside, rubs it against his gums. Nothing.

He grabs a stale beer bottle from the coffee table and sips. Out the window, the first drops of a rain shower patter the glass.

EXT. CEMETERY -- DAY

Heavy rain.

June sits, leaning against her mother's gravestone, eyes closed, rain pouring down.

A melancholic mood.

COOPER (V.O.)

Dan Hopkins chose to end his book by quoting the last paragraph from Camus' novel The Stranger, which describes the main character's thoughts shortly after being sentenced to death.

JUNE

People suck, mom.

She sighs.

COOPER (V.O.)

"As if this great outburst of anger had purged all my ills, killed all my hopes, I looked up at the mass of signs and stars in the night sky and laid myself open for the first time to the benign indifference of the world."

INT. CLASSROOM -- DAY

Dan, back row. The V.O. is Cooper reading the last pages from his book:

COOPER

"And finding it so much like myself, in fact so fraternal, I realized that I'd been happy, and that I was still happy."

INT. MORGAN HOME, LIVING ROOM -- SAME

Bill by the coffee table, surrounded by the PICTURES of OLD PEOPLE, working tirelessly. Flipping through the photos, he bumps into a peculiar one:

Melissa and Bill. A selfie. Something she took in between professional shots.

Bill stares at it, intently.

COOPER (V.O.)

"For the final consummation and for me to feel less lonely, my last wish was that there would be a crowd of spectators at my execution --"

EXT. CEMETERY -- SAME

June again, curled up under the rain, hugging her knees.

COOPER (V.O.)

"-- and that they should greet me with cries of hatred."

June grabs a few twigs from the ground and stick them in the dirt of her mother's grave. Five of them, in the vague shape of five fingers.

Like a hand sprouting out of the grave.

June smiles. Now just the rain sounding around her.

JUNE

Zombie mom.

CUT TO BLACK

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM -- NIGHT

Dan PUKES violently in the toilet. He's thinner. Weaker.

Cancer taking its toll.

Marches back to the...

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM

... and throws himself on the couch. Exhausted. His PHONE BEEPS, but he's too tired to move.

Falls asleep.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM -- MORNING

Dan wakes up. Grabs his phone. It's a CALENDAR REMINDER:

Pay Lamaze Class.

INT. LAMAZE CLASS -- DAY

Dan walks into the mommy-crowded room. Plastic toy babies and parents sitting in circle on the floor.

They are doing breathing techniques. Fathers behind the mothers, supporting their necks. The INSTRUCTOR guides them:

INSTRUCTOR

Breathe in... breathe out...

Dan spots Michelle. The only lonely mom. Approaches.

MICHELLE

(whispering)

What are you doing here?

DAN

Where do I pay? I forgot, sorry -- where's the... cashier?

INSTRUCTOR

-- breathe out. Breathe in --

MICHELLE

It's paid for already, don't worry.

DAN

I said I'd pay for it. I wanna pay for it.

INSTRUCTOR

-- breathe in. Breathe out. Breathe --

MICHELLE
 (angry-whispering)
 Dan, it's taken care of, okay? Now
 please. You're interrupting.

Dan pulls his wallet. Fishes a hundred.

DAN
 Here.

MICHELLE
 No, Dan, I -- stop it!

DAN
 I wanna pay for it, just --

On cue, a TALL MAN emerges from a bathroom door and joins
 Michelle. Looks from her to Dan.

TALL MAN
 What's the problem here?

One or two couples turn mean looks their way now -- *could you
 please?*

MICHELLE
 No problem. Dan was just leaving.
 (to Dan)
 Dan, please. The class' paid for,
 okay? Everything's fine. Just go.
 Spend that on beer. Heroin.
 Whatever.

TALL MAN
 Is this Dan?

DAN
 (re: Tall Guy)
 Who the hell are you?

TALL MAN
 I'm her brother and you need to
 back off, okay?

Dan steps back, money in hand still.

INSTRUCTOR
 -- breathe in... focus on your
 lungs inflating and deflating --

His eyes go around the room: all the couples holding their
 plastic babies, doing their exercises.

Their hands intertwined. A husband stroking a wife's hair. Another holding a plastic baby, smiling. Someone chuckles at something their partner said.

All this life, all this love, and he's not a part of any of it.

Slowly, Dan back-steps towards the door.

EXT. LAMAZE CLASS

He closes the door and leans against it, lost look on his face. Lights a cigarette.

Looks down at his phone. The CALENDAR reads:

THINGS TO DO:

-- *Pay Lamaze Class.*

And that's all. Dan has nothing else.

He pulls a drag from his cigarette. Drops it, steps on it, turns back to the class.

INT. LAMAZE CLASS

More decided now, Dan marches across the room, money in hand.

DAN

Take it.

Michelle can't *believe* him.

MICHELLE

Dan, *for God's sake*, I --

DAN

Take the money. I want to pay for it.

TALL MAN

Hey, hey!

Tall Man puts himself between Dan and Michelle. Dan tries to squeeze through.

DAN

Take the money!

INSTRUCTOR

Sir, please, you can't --

DAN
 No!
 (to Michelle)
 Take it!

TALL MAN
 (hand on Dan's shoulder)
 Hey, man, I've asked nicely, now --

DAN
 I wanna pay for it! She's my
 daughter!

Michelle's had enough:

MICHELLE
 No she's not! Fuck off!

Dan pauses -- he's never seen Michelle lose her temper like this. She's up on her feet:

MICHELLE
 Fuck off! You don't care about her,
 you don't care about me, you just
 care about yourself!
 (beat)
 So fuck off!

A beat.

MICHELLE
 Fuck off, Dan!

DAN
**No, you fuck off, you get to raise
 her!**

A deafening silence. Even Dan looks surprised at his words, like he's just realized where his anger comes from.

INT. DAN'S CAR -- MOMENTS LATER

Behind the wheel, car pulled over, Dan smokes the anger away.

His phone BUZZES on the passenger.

BILL CALLING.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR -- LATER

June zigzags through the crowd of cheerful and talkative students, earbuds plugged in.

Mrs. Simpson pops out from the crowd, suddenly a feet from June.

MRS. SIMPSON

June.

JUNE

(startled)
Jesus Christ!

Mrs. Simpson looks weird. No super-smile.

INT. EMPTY CLASSROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

June sits across from Mrs Simpson, who runs her eyes through papers. Looks up a grave stare at June.

JUNE

What's wrong, Mrs. S?
(beat)
Shit, that didn't sound good.

Mrs. Simpson turns a paper June's way.

MRS. SIMPSON

This is your in-class test from last week, June.

A 'D'.

JUNE

Oh.

MRS. SIMPSON

Yeah. *Oh*.

JUNE

(reading the test)
Is question four really wrong?
Because I checked on the textbook
and --

MRS. SIMPSON

June, I am going to ask you something, and I want you to be very honest, okay?

A beat.

MRS. SIMPSON

Do you feel like you've learned enough this year?

JUNE

What?

MRS. SIMPSON

Do you feel like you're ready for eighth grade?

JUNE

Ready for -- of course I'm ready. It's eighth grade, Mrs. Simpson not... Xavier's School for Gifted Youngsters.

It dawns on June where this might be going:

JUNE

What are you saying?

Mrs. Simpson struggles with her words. Puffs her cheeks:

MRS. SIMPSON

June, we really don't have enough here to approve you. You were doing better with the assignments, but this --

JUNE

What? *Nonono!* It's one test! I can improve!

MRS. SIMPSON

-- just shows us that you're not ready yet, and you don't --

JUNE

-- I can do better, I can study harder, please --

Mrs. Simpson raises a hand for silence.

MRS. SIMPSON

Being held back is not a bad thing, June. Especially considering what you went through, it's natural to have some difficulty. There's no shame in it.

JUNE

Oh, the hell there isn't! I'm being dinosaured!

MRS. SIMPSON

What's that?

June pleads:

JUNE

I'll do better, Mrs. Simpson. I promise. Straight 'A's from now on. And I'll wow your ass off on the final presentation, I swear.

(beat -- pleading)

Please. Please don't dinosaur me over one bad test!

(remembering:)

What about the assignments!? I've been acing all of them!

A beat.

JUNE

What?

MRS. SIMPSON

June, come on. You didn't even deliver the online ones. To underperform is one thing, but to not even try...

JUNE

(almost to herself)

No, those were the ones Dan was supposed to...

She shuts up in time. Mrs. Simpson doesn't pick up on it. Closes her file.

MRS. SIMPSON

We'll call your father before the weekend.

June just stares, the floor giving out under her.

She's been dinosaured.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD -- DAY

June heavy steps through the clusters of shiny-happy-people. Bad, bad mood.

She goes by Erica, dino-girl, lonely under a tree. June's gaze lingers, only for a second.

And then she turns and --

Heather. Showing her phone to yet ANOTHER BITCHY GIRL. Eyes on June.

That's it.

June marches towards her. Heather tries to pull away, but June's faster.

Snatches the phone.

JUNE

What do you keep showing every --

She freezes.

Onscreen is a photo of her mother, face a pulp of blood and shattered glass, arms at odd angles, lifeless behind a steering wheel.

A PAGE from a TABLOID NEWS WEBSITE -- RENOWNED PHOTOGRAPHER DIES IN CAR ACCIDENT.

June looks up, 'confused' too mild a word.

HEATHER

(stuttering)

Big Head was the one who found it.
I just showed it to the girls
because they kept asking me to.

June is frozen, speechless, emotionless, phone still in hands, eyes still on Heather.

Heather takes a careful step forward.

This jolts June into action.

She **FLINGS** the phone at Heather, who barely dodges in time.

Then June lunges at her, vicious. A circle opens up. People watch.

By the curb, Dan's car pulls over. He sees the commotion. Steps out of the car.

The school OFFICIAL approaches from the other end.

June gets up. **KICKS** Heather on the ground. Brutal.

OFFICIAL

What is going -- oh my God!

Dan gets to June faster. Picks her up like a sack of potatoes. Drags her away.

The official tends to Heather. Dan gets June in his car.

INT. DAN'S CAR -- MOMENTS LATER

Dan drives, June doesn't look at him.

DAN
What did she do?

JUNE
Why are you here?

DAN
'cause your dad doesn't love you
enough to pick you up from school,
so he calls people who don't love
you at all to do it for him. What
did she do?

June reaches for Dan's CIGARETTE PACK and grabs one.

Dan takes it out of her mouth. She grabs another. Dan takes it out again.

DAN
Stop it.

She grabs another. He pulls it out.

DAN
Stop it! What happened?

JUNE
Nothing. Whatever. Just drive.
Idiot.

Dan raises an eyebrow. A beat.

JUNE
I saw my mom.

Dan glances.

DAN
Was she suddenly behind you in the
bathroom mirror when you closed the
medicine cabinet?

JUNE
That's *not* funny.

DAN
Okay. Where did you see your mom?

JUNE
I don't wanna talk about it.

DAN
 Hey, I get that you're angry, but
 why are you angry at *me*?

Nothing.

DAN
 All right, then. Talk, don't talk,
 I don't care.

After a beat, deadpan:

JUNE
 You didn't send in my online
 assignments. I flunked out.

A beat.

DAN
 Oh, shit, June.

JUNE
 Yeah.

DAN
 I forgot. Sorry. Shit. I'll call
 them. Tell them that --

JUNE
 -- that I've been paying you to do
 the assignments for me and you
 forgot to send them in? Yeah,
 that's gonna play out just fine.
 (beat)
 Whatever, I'd probably have flunked
 out anyway.

A beat.

DAN
 June, I --

JUNE
 Can you just... let me out of the
 car? I *really* don't wanna be around
 anyone right now. Especially you.

Dan pulls over by the curb. June just stares. An awkward
 beat.

DAN
 You didn't expect me to actually
 pull over, did you?

She's in no joking mood:

JUNE

Fuck you.

Steps out of the car. Dan rolls the window down.

DAN

Hey, hey, come on! Don't make me
the bad guy here.

June stops, but doesn't turn.

DAN

You're the one who decided to cheat
on your assignments. Don't blame me
cause your little scheme didn't
work out. I'll give you your money
back, but don't try to make me an
asshole 'cause I missed a couple of
deadlines you were supposed to be
keeping track of.

June turns back. Now angry. *Marches* towards Dan.

JUNE

Oh, yeah? Can I make you an asshole
'cause you abandoned your unborn
daughter?

DAN

How did you --

JUNE

That chick came by your house to
tell you the due date, even though
you told her you wouldn't be there.
So excuse me if I won't let the
heroin addict deadbeat dad take the
moral high ground against me for
cheating on my homework.

DAN

It's not that simple, June.

JUNE

Oh, fuck off, that's just something
grownups say when they screw up.
You suck.

DAN

I don't suck.

JUNE

You **do** suck. You're this junkie... abandoner... asshole person who doesn't give a shit about anyone. That girl needs you! You can't abandon her like that! What gives you the right to -- you don't abandon someone just cause...

She pauses, tries to keep it together.

JUNE

(realization)
You're a terrible person.

DAN

Yeah, well, I'm dying, I'm allowed.

JUNE

(serious, calm)
No you're not. You're not allowed. You think the world exists for your benefit and that nothing matters after you die, but it's not true.

A beat.

JUNE

Yeah, I googled solipsism. It's bullshit. The world doesn't stop existing when you die. Other people go on living. And they have to clean your mess after you're gone.

She takes a few steps back, turns her back on Dan.

DAN

What do you know? You're a fucking kid!

She stops. Turns back one more time.

JUNE

I know you don't abandon someone who needs you just cause you're suffering.

She's talking about Dan but she's talking about Bill too.

EXT. PARK -- NIGHT

Dead quiet around the dead tree. A HOMELESS MAN leaned against it, perhaps, singing 'Molly Malone', Clockwork Orange style.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM

Dan on the couch. Wrapped in a blanket. Defeated. Drunk.

A KNOCK on the door.

DAN
Go die a death!

Crusty walks in.

CRUSTY
Hi, professor.

DAN
Not a good time, Crusty.

CRUSTY
There are no good times, professor.
You said that to me once.
(beat)
And I just came for the Campbell.

Dan frowns.

CRUSTY
The Hero With a Thousand Faces,
professor.

DAN
It's in the --

CRUSTY
I got it.

Crusty removes JOSEPH CAMPBELL'S THE HERO WITH A THOUSAND FACES from Dan's book shelf.

CRUSTY
Thank you, professor.

Then heads for the fridge, opens, grabs a beer.

DAN
No.

Crusty freezes.

DAN
No. Put it back.

Puts the beer back in the fridge, confused. *He never gave a --*

DAN
You're fourteen. Stop drinking my
beer. Stop drinking beer. Go bully
people online. Go... make a tree
house. Go have pimples.

Crusty steps away. Heads for the door. Not mad, just
confused.

Walks out, closes the door.

DAN
And stop selling heroin!

INT. JUNE'S BEDROOM -- MORNING

June in bed, eyes open, staring at the ceiling.

NOISES downstairs. FOOTSTEPS and THUDS.

INT. MORGAN HOME, LIVING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

June stops on the last few steps to find her father packing
in the living room.

JUNE
Dad?

Bill stops, turns. Smiles.

BILL
June. Morning! I was waiting for
you to wake up.

JUNE
What's all this?

BILL
We're moving! Well. For a while.

JUNE
Moving?

BILL
(beaming)
Yeah! With Grandma.

JUNE

Grandma as in Grandma, Arizona?

BILL

Yeah. Just for a year or two, until we sell the house. It's for the best, right? Moving on and all that.

(beat)

Plus it gives us time to finish organizing your mother's new book!

Bill resumes packing, all smiles. All excitement. Full on denial.

JUNE

(hazed)

What about school?

BILL

(still packing)

It's a year off, you'll catch up, right? You're smarter than the whole lot of 'em.

June, lost.

INT. MORGAN HOME, KITCHEN -- LATER

Cereal. Milk. Spoon. Pour.

June throws herself on the chair in front. Grabs the spoon. It slips to the floor.

Some cereal and milk spilled. Not a lot. But. *Ugh. God. Jesus.*

June. Indifferent. Eyes on the spilled milk and cereal.

She SLAPS the bowl from the table to the floor. Not angry, just bored. Like a cat would.

It crashes in an explosion of milk and Cheerios.

INT. STARBUCKS -- AFTERNOON

Dan at the end of the cashier line. He's frail. Thinner than ever.

The VALLEY GIRL, first in line, ordering:

GIRL

Can I get it with, like, half two percent milk and half half and half?

BARISTA is confused.

BARISTA

Half half and half?

GIRL

Like, pour a little bit of two percent, then a little bit of half and half, like, half and half of half and half and two percent. Can you do that?

On Dan, annoyed.

GIRL

And the Macadamia nuts too. Oh, no, wait. How many calories in it?

BARISTA

You have to check the label.

She does so, no hurry.

Dan, more upset.

After a beat, he's had enough. Pushes past the line to the front.

Nudges the girl.

DAN

Hi. Excuse me.

The girl turns.

Dan stares at her. About to say something, but... doesn't.

Just stares.

GIRL

Sir?

Blank stare. His breathing goes shallow.

GIRL

Sir?

He collapses.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- AFTERNOON

A TUBE TELEVISION on the wall shows an ad for some bank insurance bullshit: a perfect family on a perfect lawn, smiling and waving.

In front of the TV on a gurney, Dan watches it, his body barely lumping the white blanket it's under.

A lone and dying man. Big contrast with the family ad.

A NURSE walks in. Busy. Indifferent.

NURSE

(in one bored breath)

Hello Mr. Hopkins I'm Sandy how are you how long have you know about your stage four carcinoma?

DAN

Don't call it that.

She looks up at him.

DAN

Carcinoma. Creeps me out.

She looks down at her papers.

NURSE

Well, good news. You're just having some oxygenation issues, which sounds bad, but really, it's nothing to be alarmed about for now. But it *is* bound to happen again.

DAN

I'll be on alert.

NURSE

Are you married?

DAN

Like what you see?

Nurse doesn't even register the joke. Keeps talking:

NURSE

You should consider hiring professional in-home care if you don't have anyone in your life.

(MORE)

NURSE (CONT'D)

It's highly recommended that you don't spend time by yourself in your situation. Do you have anyone? To take care of you?

Dan stares at her. Doesn't say anything. The nurse gives him a CARD.

NURSE

This is for a Home Care service. They mostly deal with old people, but they have experience with patients in your situation as well.

She turns around and a second later she's gone. Dan keeps his eyes on the door, ajar. Then looks at the card.

It dawns on him: he has no one in his life.

A HAND closes in on the door knob. Small. Girly.

June?

Dan raises his head from the pillow.

But a random YOUNG GIRL walks in, sees Dan, pauses. Eye-to-eye. Wrong room.

Then she's gone, closing the door behind her.

Dan rests his head back on the pillow.

Alone.

INT. BILL'S CAR -- NIGHT

Bill drives.

June is in the backseat. Depressed. Indifferent. Angry.

She has her head leaned against the window. Raindrops, pushed backwards by the wind, race each other on the glass.

EXT. BABY STORE -- NIGHT

Dan stares at a ONESIE, newborn sized, on the window display. His thin reflection stares back, translucent, dark, superimposed over the piece of clothing.

He's now sporting an oxygen tank, tubes going into his nostrils.

The onesie reads: *"They shake me."*

INT. DAN'S CAR -- LATER

Dan drives, the onesie by his side on the passenger seat.

EXT. MICHELLE'S HOUSE -- LATER

Dan climbs the steps, onesie in hand. He RINGS the DOORBELL.

A beat.

The door comes open just a crack. It's not Michelle, but an OLDER WOMAN.

DAN
Michelle there?

This lady doesn't like Dan.

OLD WOMAN
She's busy.

Dan shows the onesie.

DAN
I --

She snatches the onesie.

OLD WOMAN
Thank you.

Dan peeks into the room. The glimpse of a stroller. A baby hand sprouting from it, reaching for a mobile.

OLD WOMAN
You should go.

DAN
Where's Michelle?

OLD WOMAN
She's resting.

The Tall Man from Lamaze -- Michelle's brother -- shows up behind the woman.

TALL MAN
Is there a problem here?

Dan keeps trying to peek inside. See his baby.

DAN

No, I --

TALL MAN

Michelle doesn't want you here,
okay, buddy? Let's not start
anything.

Dan gets one more peek, between the two, at the baby. Sees a
face. His daughter.

For a second. It's all he gets. The door SLAMS in his face.

EXT. PARK -- NIGHT

Dan, oxygen mask and all, stands in front of the dead tree.

The HOMELESS GUY that was here earlier stops by his side,
studies the tree too.

DAN

Did you know I planted this tree?

HOMELESS

That true?

Homeless guy goes on his way, uninterested.

Dan keeps looking at the tree.

DAN

(to himself)

No.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT BUILDING, HALLWAY -- LATER

Miserable Dan climbs the stairs with difficulty. Cancer's
taking its toll hard now.

He reaches the right floor to BANGS and THUDS and YELLS.

Stops.

At the end of the corridor, next to his door, a FAT MAN in a
stained sleeveless shirt bangs against Crusty's door.

Crusty's father.

FAT MAN

Open the fucking door you faggot
fucking --

BANG BANG BANG.

The man body-slams the door. It doesn't come open. He's drunk as shit. Turns around. Notices Dan.

FAT MAN

Did I shit my pants or sumthin?

Dan walks. His dragging feet and oxygen tank betray his condition, but his face is fierce. Deep, dark eyes.

Stops an inch from the man's face. Eye-to-eye, breath-to-breath.

A long, tense beat. Then:

DAN

One day there will be a family album and you won't be in it. And no one will know your name, and it will be like you never happened.

Dan lingers for a beat more, then turns back and drags himself and his oxygen tank towards his door.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

Dan, eyes closed, couch. No beer. No cigarette.

He opens his eyes. Notices the DVD on his coffee table. June's assignment.

Then closes his eyes.

Maybe this is how he dies. Maybe he hopes it.

EXT. FLAGSTAFF HOUSE -- MORNING

Establish. Beautiful and idyllic under the first snow.

INT. FLAGSTAFF HOUSE, KITCHEN -- SAME

Scrambled eggs HISSING in a pan.

June is at the table. GRANDMA at the stove. Turns; frying pan in hands.

GRANDMA

How'd you like your eggs, Junebug?

JUNE

Stillborn.

Grandma pauses.

GRANDMA

Scrambled's all we got.

JUNE (CONT'D)

Scrambled is fine.

Grandma pours some scrambled for June. Turns back to the stove.

GRANDMA

Should we expect your father for breakfast?

JUNE

You know him longer than I do.

Grandma turns a look inside the house. Then back at June.

GRANDMA

We shouldn't.

INT. CLASSROOM -- MORNING

Dan, back row.

Cooper:

COOPER

Now that we went through the book together, I'd like to organize a more comprehensive debate on the themes explored in The Great Nothing.

Dan fiddles with June's DVD, distracted. Something on his mind.

COOPER

It's a very divisive book, as I'm sure you're all well aware, and what I'd like us to do now is --

Something clicks on Dan's mind. He gets up, starts for the door. Cooper takes notice.

COOPER

Ah, shame. I was looking forward to your intake.

Dan stops.

COOPER

Well? Did I manage to change your
mind at least?

Dan sighs. Heads for Cooper's table. Grabs his copy of the book. Turns it around.

Raises the back cover to his face, smiles like his smile in the author photo.

Cooper sees through the beard and the sickness into who Dan is.

COOPER

You're --

DAN

Life sucks, we all die, there's no
hope, you suck at interpreting
things. Deal with it.

He grabs Cooper's PEN from his shirt pocket, opens the book, signs it and throws it back to Cooper.

Walks out.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM -- DAY

A DRAWER pulls open. Needles rattle back and forth inside.

A pair of hands grab them all.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM

Dan pours the needles into the toilet.

Turns around. Looks at himself in the mirror. Broken, bum-like and cancer-thin.

Something crosses his mind. He grabs a RAZOR.

ANGLE ON

Thick clumps of hair dripping down to the sink.

LATER

Beardless Dan stares into the mirror. Pale. Sunken eyes.
Really thin.

But it's a *person* again. There's life behind the eyes.

He flushes the needle-filled toilet. Leaves the bathroom.

We stay on it, just enough to see the toilet overflowing, needles pouring out in waves.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT, LIVING ROOM -- LATER

Dan on the phone.

DAN

Yeah. Bill Morgan, please. Daniel Hopkins.

(beat)

Flagstaff?

(beat)

No, I know his mother lives there, I've --

(beat)

Thank you.

Dan hangs up. Dials a different number now. Bill's.

INT. DAN'S APARTMENT BUILDING, HALLWAY -- DAY

Dan steps out. Stops. A small commotion is going on.

Paramedics remove a LARGE BODY covered from head to toe from Crusty's apartment.

Crusty's father. Dead.

Crusty stands by the door, watching as they take his father away. In shock.

Dan locks eyes on him. He looks lost, so lost.

Dan approaches.

CRUSTY

He Oded.

A beat.

CRUSTY

I wasn't even there.

(beat)

I swear.

He says it almost as if he's explaining himself.

DAN
I wouldn't judge.

A beat. Then Crusty hugs Dan hard. Cries.
They break off.

CRUSTY
How soon are you dying, professor?

DAN
I don't know, Crusty. Pretty soon.

CRUSTY
I was looking forward to having you
as a substitute father figure.

Dan makes a fist.

DAN
I do have a good left.

Crusty chuckles.

CRUSTY
(through chuckles)
That is incredibly sad.

They smile. Then they don't.

CRUSTY
It's going to be quieter without
you, professor.

Dan nods.

DAN
Are you gonna stop dealing heroin?

A beat.

CRUSTY
I don't really deal heroin,
professor.

Dan frowns.

CRUSTY
Zack, on the fifth floor, sells it,
I just get it from him and sell it
to you for a profit.

Dan chuckles. Nods. Pats Crusty on the back.

DAN
You're gonna be fine, Crusty.

He turns.

CRUSTY
Professor.

Dan turns. Crusty holds his book up, the one he borrowed: *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*. Quotes by heart:

CRUSTY
*"The hero must put aside his pride,
his virtue, beauty and life, and
bow or submit to the absolutely
intolerable."*

Dan nods.

INT. DAN'S CAR -- AFTERNOON

Dan drives down a highway.

INT. CLASSROOM -- SAME

Mrs. Simpson sits in front of the empty classroom, grading students.

The school OFFICIAL walks in. DVD in hand.

OFFICIAL
Someone left this for you.

Puts it on top of her desk. Walks away.

Mrs. Simpson sticks the DVD in her computer. Curious.

The screen comes alive. The priest, from the interviews.

JUNE (O.S.)
What's Christian Heaven like?

PRIEST
Well, there's no real descriptions
of 'heaven'. But the Book of
Revelations describes New Jerusalem
like this:
(reading from Bible)
*A river, clear as crystal, will
flow from the throne of God and of
the Lamb down the middle of the
city.*

INT. DAN'S CAR -- NIGHT

Dan drives. The road sign reads STATE LIMIT CALIFORNIA ARIZONA.

PRIEST (V.O.)

On each side of the river there will be a tree of life, yielding twelve kinds of fruit every month. The streets will be pure gold. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things will have passed away.

INSERT -- VIDEO

Now the Rabbi.

RABBI

-- there are Jews who believe.

JUNE (O.S.)

What about you?

RABBI

I don't know.

(smiles)

But if there is a place beyond, I'm sure it is beautiful. And I'm sure everyone of kind heart is welcome.

INT. DAN'S CAR

Dan's PHONE rings. Skype call.

He pulls to the side of the road. Takes the call.

It's Michelle.

As the Rabbi speaks, Michelle takes Dan's DAUGHTER on her lap and shows her to Dan.

RABBI (V.O.)

But I think we worry too much about what comes next. I think here is where we should focus our hearts and minds. This life we lead. These people we love. This world we get to inhabit with all its wonderful, wonderful things to experience.

Dan, emotional. Waves at his daughter. Cries.

He's at his frailest here. Weak and thin. But there's joy in his tears.

INSERT -- VIDEO

The muslim.

MUSLIM SCHOLAR

Many are just muslims of tradition,
as they say. Cultural, but they
don't believe.

JUNE (O.S.)

Do you?

MUSLIM SCHOLAR

Yes. Not everything, but --

JUNE (O.S.)

Heaven.

A beat.

MUSLIM SCHOLAR

Yes, I'd like to think so.

JUNE (O.S.)

But you're not sure.

EXT. FLAGSTAFF HOME -- NIGHT

Dan pulls over in front of June's Grandma's farmhouse. Dials his phone. Steps out.

MUSLIM SCHOLAR (V.O.)

No, who can be sure?

JUNE (V.O.)

What makes you believe, then?

Bill steps out of the house. Goes for Dan.

MUSLIM SCHOLAR (V.O.)

Faith? I don't know. It would be
very sad if all of this beauty,
this wonder around us was for
nothing. I hope there is more to
it. I really do.

Bill reaches Dan. It's all dark and cold and it's dead quiet.

MUSLIM SCHOLAR (V.O.)
I really do.

DAN
Bill.

BILL
Dan. Is everything all --

DAN
Bill. Look at me. What are you
doing?

Watching through the window inside the house is June. She makes no attempt to get Dan's attention, and he doesn't notice her.

BILL
What?

DAN
What are you doing here, Bill?

BILL
Oh. I just needed some time away
from it all. To work on Melissa's
book. You know how LA can be if --

DAN
Bill, she's dead.

A beat.

BILL
Dan, I know she's --

DAN
Say it. I'll say it and then you
say it, okay?

A beat.

BILL
Dan, what are you --

DAN
I'm going to die, Bill. I'm going
to die this month.

Bill looks horrified. Dan pulls him close. Breathing fast.
Urgent.

DAN

I'm going to die and it's horrible, and I hate it. It makes me want to scream, and every time I see someone smiling I take it personally, because how can anyone be happy when I'm dying? I want them to die with me, to die instead of me. I want them to suffer too. I want everyone to feel what I'm feeling because I don't think it's fair that the world will go on without me, that there'll be a Superbowl after I die and new popes and presidents and rainy Sunday mornings I'll never get to see, and I feel horrible for feeling like this and I feel so, so alone and I'm so scared, Bill, I'm so scared I can't even say my name out loud. I don't wanna die Bill, I don't. I really, really don't. I'm terrified.

(beat)

But I'm here. I'm still here.

(beat)

I'm still here.

A beat.

DAN

Now you do it.

BILL

I don't have --

DAN

Say it. Say she's dead.

BILL

Dan...

DAN

You're never gonna hear her voice. Say it. You're never going to wake up next to her again. Say it. The smell on her side of the mattress is gone already. Whenever something happens to you, whenever you see something on your way to work, you won't have her to tell later. Ever. It was all for nothing. Say it. That's how you feel. So say it. Say that she's --

BILL
Fuck you.

DAN
Say it.

Bill looks up. Crying.

BILL
Fuck you. She's dead. Melissa's
dead. Fuck you.

DAN
Yes, she's dead. She's dead. She'll
always be dead now. Always. It's
over, forever.

BILL
She's dead! Fuck you! What do you
want from me!?

Dan pulls Bill close. Bill pushes him, Dan tries again. Bill
fights. Then he doesn't.

BILL
She's dead, Dan! She's dead! She's
dead...

Breaks down in tears, holding Dan tight.

BILL
(sobbing)
She's dead.

DAN
She's dead...

Bill is almost on his knees.

DAN
... but she's not.

Over Bill's shoulder, Dan locks eyes with June across the
window in the distance, inside the house.

Bill sobs and sobs.

DAN
She needs you, Bill. Your daughter
needs you.

INSERT -- VIDEO

The priest again.

PRIEST

What was it like, the song? Mansion
Over the Hilltop. It was about
Heaven. It went...

(singing)

*I've got a mansion just over the
hilltop.
In that bright land where we'll
never grow old.*

EXT. FLAGSTAFF HOUSE -- MOMENTS LATER

Dan steps back into the car as a broken Bill makes his way to the house again.

PRIEST (V.O.)

*And some day yonder, we'll never
more wander.
But walk on streets that are purest
gold.*

(chuckles)

That's what I hope it's like,
anyway.

Dan starts the engine. Eyes straight ahead.

Then a figure runs from the house towards the car. June, in a childlike sprint, barefoot on the grass, past her father, urgent bordering on desperate.

The way from house to car seems awfully long. The distance much too great between them. But June gallops on.

She finally reaches Dan. Stops by the car.

Dan looks so old and frail and almost done.

Her eyes stop dead on his.

The driver's window between them. Neither smile. Both look scared.

The moment is not beautiful and it's not sad. It's *intense*.

June takes a step back, almost trips, startled by his sick appearance, highlighted by the lack of beard.

Dan keeps his wide eyes on June. She breathes fast, confused, startled, horrified, depressed, dizzy, lonely, angry, sad.

A long, tense beat.

Dan shifts the gear. Turns ahead. Starts driving away.

JUNE
(whisper)
No.

The car starts down the dirt road.

June's eyes are fierce. Mad. *No he won't.*

JUNE
(louder)
No. No!

She kneels. Grabs a pebble. Runs after the car, throws it, it BANGS against the back window.

Dan keeps driving, eyes ahead, forcing himself to ignore.

June throws another stone, bigger. The car faster by the second. She struggles to catch up, running faster, faster, faster --

JUNE
No! No!

Finally grabs a stone big enough to do some damage. LUNGES it.

It crashes the back window, and the car finally stops.

June pants. Her breath foggy puffs of cold. Her shoulders up and down.

Then the car door comes open.

Dan steps out.

A showdown, eye-to-eye. A long beat.

Then she runs towards him and **BAM** -- the hug almost brings him down.

He doesn't hug back right away. Then he does.

INSIDE THE HOUSE

... Bill watches the scene through a window -- Dan and June two small figures in the barren cold outside.

Around him, the whole room a mess of black-and-white-old-people photographs hanging from the walls.

INSERT -- VIDEO

The priest, staring at the camera. Dan by his side. Both eating pudding.

PRIEST

Wherever it is, however it's like... heaven must be pretty great, if it's better than here. That I'm sure.

He smiles.

DAN

Or... you know: nothing means anything, death is the end, everything is horrible.

The priest nods in agreement.

PRIEST

Either way.

They both smile.

CUT TO BLACK

INT. JUNE'S BEDROOM -- DAY

June sleeps like a drunken sailor -- arms dangling off the bed, mouth open, snoring.

The door comes open to Bill, looking better than we've seen him yet. We get a sense that a few days have passed.

BILL

June. Breakfast. Help. Need daughter. Now.

BANGS the door shut and June wakes up with a start.

INT. MORGAN HOME, KITCHEN -- LATER

June takes her place at the table.

Bill pours some food on her plate, some on his, takes a seat.

Grabs an ENVELOPE from the table.

BILL

Arrived today. They still want you to come by later if you can and pick up your stuff from your locker, but...

JUNE

What's -- *oooh, nooo!*

She SNATCHES the SCORECARD from his hand. Pulls it from the envelope (it's open already). Reads it.

BILL

Mrs. Simpson called, and I explained...

(beat)

Well. She said that someone delivered your final assignment to her.

June looks up.

BILL

She was very impressed. But it still took a *lot* to convince her.

June. Grateful beyond words -- for Dan *and* Bill.

BILL (CONT'D)

It's still a bad grade, even if you passed. I was never a C student.

(beat)

And neither was your mother.

June looks up and, in this brief moment, they both acknowledge Melissa's absence -- now in acceptance.

INT. SCHOOL CORRIDOR -- DAY

June rains down her belongings from her locker to her backpack. Closes it. End of semester.

Turns to look at the deserted school corridor.

EXT. SCHOOL YARD -- MOMENTS LATER

June emerges out to the yard. A few scattered students, but mostly empty.

She spots ERICA STATEN under a tree. The girl-who-was-held-back-twice. Lonely.

A beat. Then: *Why not?*

June approaches, stands between Erica and the sun.

JUNE

Hey.

Erica turns a look like June's an alien. June offers her a hand.

JUNE

I'm June.

Erica scoffs. Gets up.

ERICA STATEN

Freak.

She makes her way past June towards the street in clumsy steps.

EXT. CEMETERY -- DAY

Bright and sunny and beautiful -- the polar opposite of our overcast opening scene.

June plays her videogame at her usual spot, sitting against her mother's tombstone.

Onscreen, her character dies. GAME OVER.

She puts the game down. Gets up. Looks at her mom's stone.

JUNE

Oh! Right.

Fishes in her backpack. Pulls a PHOTOGRAPHY BOOK.

The cover is the old man in front of the clocks we've seen before. The title reads LEGACY -- A COLLECTION BY M. MORGAN.

JUNE

Dad wanted you to have this.

She rests the book by the stone. Pauses.

Stops her eyes on the zombie twig hand she made earlier.

JUNE

High five, zombie mom.

High fives it. The twigs collapse. June gets up. One final SIGH. Peace.

Makes her way back, threading between the stones...

... stops by a particular one. From behind, we can't see the name or the inscription.

She hangs for a beat.

Then **REVERSE ANGLE...**

... shows us the headstone. Unmarked.

June fishes in her backpack, grabs a PUDDING CUP and rests it by the stone.

A beat as she stares, emotional.

CRUSTY (O.S.)
*How horrible it is, to love
 something death can touch.*

June turns. Crusty's here.

CRUSTY
 It's a saying. Often attributed to
 Judah Halevi, a Spanish poet from
 the eleventh century.

JUNE
 Huh.

CRUSTY
 I think it's the most real thing
 anyone's ever said about death.

JUNE
 I like *'How lucky I am to have
 something that makes saying goodbye
 so hard.'*

CRUSTY
 Who said that one?

JUNE
 Winnie the Pooh.

A beat. Crusty offers his hand.

CRUSTY
 I'm Crusty. I liked Daniel.

JUNE
 June. I liked Daniel too.

They shake.

There's a moment here. This is nice. This is oddly familiar.

Crusty pulls something from his backpack and rests it against the stone by June's pudding cup.

She kneels by his side to look. It's a **FRAMED CERTIFICATE:**

THE TRUSTEES OF COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

Make known to all men by these presents that

Daniel Francis Hopkins has been awarded

The **Pulitzer Prize** for **General Non-Fiction**

for

'The Great Nothing'

Crusty nods at the certificate.

CRUSTY

I found it in his apartment.
Thought he'd want it close.

JUNE

Kind of defeats the purpose of the
whole 'unmarked grave' thing,
dontcha think?

Crusty turns the certificate so it's facing the stone now.

CRUSTY

There.

He sits on the grass, and June does too. A beat goes by.

CRUSTY

He was a nice person.

JUNE

No, he wasn't.
(beat)
But so what?

June fishes for PUDDING CUPS in her backpack. We **PULL BACK**.

JUNE

You want one?

Crusty takes one. We keep pulling back. He says something.
June pulls the single EARBUD she has on to hear him better.

We keep pulling. It's sunny. It's a beautiful day.

CUT TO BLACK

THE END