

"The Thing About Jellyfish"

written by

Molly Smith Metzler

Based on *The Thing About Jellyfish*

by

Ali Benjamin

Writer's Second Draft

10/6/17

Molly Smith Metzler

WME (Sarah Self) & Grandview (Jeff Silver & Merideth Bajana)

EXT. UNDERWATER - THE ATLANTIC OCEAN - MORNING

A FIVE-YEAR-OLD GIRL swims in a ray of sunlight. Ethereal. She wears a goggles and a bathing suit with stars on it.

We see: her freckles catch the light, like constellations against her skin. Her long, distinctive RED HAIR. Her smile.

She beckons for us to follow her - this way. Then she swims off into the deeper water, her flippers kicking bubbles...

We MOVE TOWARDS her, trying to keep up with her, but she's WAY too fast. Her long, red hairs disappearing into the dark.

A FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)
Suzanne? Did you hear what I said?

SMASH TO:

INT. THERAPY OFFICE - THE PRESENT

DR. LEGLER (50s, kind-eyed) blinks at us, expecting us to answer. She sits in a standard-issue shrink armchair.

DR. LEGLER
I asked if you know why you're here today.

We see: Dr. Legler's cobalt blue tights, her legs crossed.

We see: a sad fake plant in a cheap basket.

We see: a poster of a cat leaping into the sky. *Go for it!*

DR. LEGLER (CONT'D)
You're here because your parents are *worried* about you. They tell me you haven't spoken in two months.
(silence)
Is that right, Suzanne?

Finally, we REVERSE to REVEAL -

A TWELVE-YEAR-OLD GIRL, in the corner of a couch, staring into a fish tank. She's more child than teen. Doesn't give a crap about boys yet. Black clothes, hair unwashed. Wild.

This is SUZY SWANSON, known mostly as ZU.

From her POV: we see the dark water lapping the fish tank.

DR. LEGLER (CONT'D)
 Grief is a complicated thing, Suzy.
 But there's no right or wrong way
 to talk about it.
 (gently)
 You can use any words at all.

A long beat.

JIM (O.S.)
 We're sorry, Dr. Legler. We don't
 mean to waste your time with this.

REVEAL: Suzy's parents MEG and JIM, (30s, eccentric and
 conservative, respectively). Their faces open and big.

DR. LEGLER
 No no - this is all part of the
 process, Jim.

MEG
 Suzy? Can't you *try* to talk, honey?

JIM
 We love you so much, sugar-sugar.
 We wanna know what's in your head.

We see: the dark water in the tank again. Lapping the glass.

We see: the plastic scuba diver. Scum on his face.

DR. LEGLER
 Where does Suzy spend most of her
 time? You have shared custody?

JIM
 Yes. I get her Saturdays.

MEG
 ...because I'm an ogre. That's the
 rest of that sentence.

JIM
 (to Dr. Legler)
 Do you see? *This* is what I'm
 talking about. Even with *this* we
 can't be a unified team -

MEG
 Really, Jim?! You're gonna -

Jim & Meg start getting into it - VOICES ESCALATING, fingers
 pointing - but the sound CUTS OUT and we stay on Suzy.

SUZY (V.O.)
Dumb old words. Dumb old words that
don't say a thing.

They keep arguing, on MUTE. Zu sees their actual words appear
in the air, as objects that dart and shoot around the room.

WORDS: "MY DAUGHTER" "RED FLAGS" "YOUR FAULT!" "MY FAULT?!"
"HER FRIEND!" "FAULT" "DIED!" "FAULT" "FAULT!" "FAULT" -

SUZY (V.O.)
Sometimes I want things to change
so badly, I can't be in the room
with the way they actually are.

Suzy stands, pushes through her parents' angry words, and
slips out of the room. *Absolutely no one notices.*

EXT. DR. LEGLER'S BUILDING - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

On the other side of Legler's door, Zu takes a deep breath.

At the end of the hall, there's a window with a view of the
OCEAN. Bright and blue. She heads towards it.

SUZY (V.O.)
I saw a video on YouTube once. Of
the saddest polar bear on earth. He
was trapped in a small glass cage
in a Chinese Shopping mall.

We see: the Youtube clip of this polar bear, lying catatonic
on his side, dead eyes, lips moving noiselessly. (Google it.)

SUZY (V.O.)
He laid on his side all day, like a
lumpy white rug, one paw up in
surrender. And he kept trying to
roar... but no sound came out.

CLOSE ON: the bear's lips, moving without sound.

SUZY (V.O.)
That's what it would be like if I
tried to talk.

Suzy's at the window now, her nose pressed against the glass.

SUZY (V.O.)
Franny Jackson is dead and things
ended between us in the worst
possible way. Words can't fix that.
So why bother?

INT. MEG'S SUBARU - CONTINUOUS

Meg drives. She peeks in the rearview mirror.

We see: Zu in the backseat, eyes trained on the sea.

MEG

I'm sorry your Dad and I weren't our best selves in there, honey. We're still figuring out how to be around each other, you know? And we're both out of our skulls worried about you.

We see: the surf, crashing against rocks.

We see: a seagull pecking at a dead fish on a boulder.

Out Meg's window, we see South Grove, MA go by. It's a small, blue collar town. Cape Cod-y. Sun beaten. Backlit by ocean.

MEG (CONT'D)

I know you're still hurting. Of course you are, Zu. Tragedies are just that: tragic. They don't make sense and they aren't fair. But...

ZU (V.O.)

Here they come. The four most useless words of all:

MEG

Sometimes things just happen, Zu.

Those words: "SOMETIMES" "THINGS" "JUST" "HAPPEN" dart by Zu's face and she angrily swipes them away.

SUZY (V.O.)

Things *don't* just happen. There's supposed to be a *reason* why they happen. Logic. A leading to B. Like we've been learning in Life Science class.

SMASH TO:

INT. MRS. TURTON'S SCIENCE CLASSROOM

Suzy at a black board in a science classroom with a pointer. Behind her, the board says "The Scientific Method."

Zu doesn't speak, but she is Vanna White during this, providing the visual aids for this confident presentation:

SUZY (V.O.)
First, you state your question.

ZIP! Zu pulls down a CHART on a string, from above. It says:

SUZY (V.O.)
"Why did Franny Jackson drown?"

ZIP! She pulls down a PIE CHART called: "Accidental Drownings in North East, 1950-2017."

SUZY (V.O.)
As you can see, there are three leading causes of drowning.
(pointing)
A.) The victim could not swim.
B.) The victim was under the influence of drugs and or alcohol.
And C.) The ocean was too rough.

SUZY (V.O.)
Now you interpret the data.

Zu picks up the SmartBoard remote, and presses it. A picture of Franny Jackson in a bathing suit holding a HUGE trophy.

SUZY (V.O.)
Fact: Franny Jackson was an expert swimmer. Captain of the JV team as a sixth grader, which is unheard of. So "A" is out.

ZIP! She pulls down a GRAPH, "Autopsy Toxicology Reports."

SUZY (V.O.)
(pointing)
Fact: Franny Jackson's autopsy results showed no signs of alcohol or drugs. (Duh.) So "B" is out.

ZIP! She pulls down a REPORT, "Surf Reports South Grove, MA"

SUZY (V.O.)
(pointing)
Fact: On July 3, 2017 the sea was unusually calm. There was no rip tide in the surf report, not a cloud in the sky. And Franny knew Cove Beach like the back of her hand. Swam there every summer since she was 5. So "C" is out.

ZIP! ZIP! ZIP! Suzy pulls the strings on all her visual aids, dismissing them all back into the ceiling.

SUZY (V.O.)
 Conclusion: Franny Jackson didn't
 drown.
 (writing it on the board:)
Something killed her.

Zu adds an exclamation point!

EXT. EUGENE FIELD MIDDLE SCHOOL - SCHOOL YARD - CONTINUOUS

We see: Meg's Subaru pull up to the bustling school. HUGE CROWDS of 'tweens, cliques already, make their way in.

INT. MEG'S SUBARU - CONTINUOUS

MEG
 Hey, don't forget your shirt for
 the field trip. I ironed it for ya.
 She leans over and hands Zu a tie-dyed shirt.

MEG (CONT'D)
 I love you, you know. Very much.
 Zu stuffs the shirt in her bag and climbs out, into the crowd.
 WE TRACK with her as she gets jostled and bumped by elbows,
 No one seems to even register she's there...

INT. EUGENE FIELD MIDDLE SCHOOL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

SUZY (V.O.)
 Fun fact. Did you know that you can
 become invisible in middle school
 simply by not speaking?
 A STUDENT opens a locker RIGHT INTO HER FACE, banging her
 square in the nose and knocking her to the ground.

SUZY (V.O.)
 Not that being invisible is without
 challenges.

MONTAGE:

We see: Suzy reading in the library. The motion-detecting
 lights turn OFF.

We see: Suzy on the school bus, silently but frantically
 trying to get the driver's attention. He drives by her house.

We see: Suzy on the ground, her nose bloody from the locker attack, people stepping over her. Or on her. She's not there.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL CAFETERIA - CONTINUOUS

Zu's in the lunch line in a LOUD cafeteria, her face buried in book called, "PREDATORS OF THE SEA." She flips through it.

We see: illustrations of bad things happening to swimmers. A SHARK biting a leg. An OCTOPUS strangling a throat.

CAFETERIA WORKER

Kid. What do you want?

Zu points to the tater tots. Gets a nasty scoop of stew.

She sighs and turns to search for somewhere to sit. Many unfriendly, unwelcoming face glare at her until...

Something stops her dead in her tracks.

It's the smiling face of 12-year-old FRANNY JACKSON on a huge poster up on the wall. Her most recent school portrait.

Zu takes her face in, and for an instant, we see: Franny's beautiful freckles project constellations across the ceiling.

JENNA (O.S.)

Hey. You're blocking our sign.

Zu startles and we see: MOLLY, JENNA, and AUBREY (all 13) at a folding table under Franny's picture. They're all perfectly coiffed and effortlessly cool. (Jenna's the leader; Aubrey's the nice one; Molly's the most boy-crazy.)

The sign Zu is blocking says: "Memory Board for Franny."

JENNA (CONT'D)

Hello?

Zu doesn't move, just stands there, staring at the portrait.

JENNA (CONT'D)

(to Molly & Aubrey)

Is she pretend-deaf now, too?

AUBREY

(whispers)

SHH! My mom said we should be nice.
Because she's special needs.

JENNA
 (whispers)
 She's not special needs - she's
 like a super genius.

AUBREY
 Hey Suzy - you ok?

Zu doesn't answer. It's very awkward, how silent she is.

MOLLY
 Wow, love your new look this year.
 So free and... um... natural.

Jenna and Molly snicker under their breath.

AUBREY
 Shh!
 (back to Zu)
 We're making a display for Franny's
 memorial, see? They're rose petals.
 Everyone's writing memories of
 Franny on them, and then we're
 gonna make a big rose garden.

JENNA
 We saw it on Pinterest.

MOLLY
 Dylan Parker's petal? Oh my God. So
 sweet. We were like ugly crying.

Zu stays silent. Then Audrey makes a bold move:

AUBREY
 Do you want to write one, Suzy?

MOLLY
 Aubrey.

AUBREY
 What?

JENNA
 (whispers)
 After what she did to her??

A beat. Zu stares at the yellow petal in Aubrey's open palm.
 The girls are whispering, but Zu can hear...

MOLLY
 It was pee. *Actual pee.*

Zu backs away, upset, and takes off with her food tray.

INT. EUGENE FIELD MEMORIAL MIDDLE SCHOOL - LIBRARY

Zu sits down with her lunch, the lone student in the library. Rows and rows of empty tables.

We see: the super sad beef stew in her tray.

FRANNY (PRE-LAP)

Pst. Who circumnavigated the world?

INT. LIBRARY - FLASHBACK - A YEAR AGO, SEPTEMBER OF LAST YEAR

Zu startles and turns to see FRANNY (12) beaming at her from the table behind her. She has distinctive, frizzy RED HAIR and a face full of freckles. She wears uncool glasses.

FRANNY

I'll give you a clue. He wiggled
and jiggled all over the globe...?

SUZY

...Ma-Jell-O!

The girls start snickering. [We see now that Zu looks different in flashback, too. She has a mouth full of BRACES, and she still takes care of herself. Hair combed.]

FRANNY

Bingo! Alright Alec, she'll take
Spanish explorers for five hundred.
Who was the first European to
explore the southern United States?
(then)
Clue: he needed a soda?

SUZY

Hernando De Soto!

FRANNY

DING DING DING! YEAH ZU!

A LIBRARIAN (60s, dour) looks up, pissed.

LIBRARIAN

Franny Jackson.

FRANNY

Sorry, Miss P. My sixth grade
education just makes me so
exuberant!

The librarian rolls her eyes. These damn kids.

SUZY

Hey - you want to come over after practice today? To study?

FRANNY

(yes)

Duh.

SUZY

Got us a *rainbow pack* of index cards.

FRANNY

So things are about to get lit is what you're saying.

SUZY

Yeah, super "lit."

They LAUGH. Two total dorks who love each other. But then --

INT. LIBRARY - THE PRESENT

The motion-detector lights overhead turn OFF.

We see: Zu is alone in the dark library. No Franny, no joy. Her motion not detected.

She starts eating her sad stew.

EXT. SCHOOL BUS - SAME DAY, SHORTLY LATER

CLOSE ON: THE DOOR on a school bus jolting OPEN.

WE see: thirty SEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS next to the bus, lined up to get on board. [Note: all the kids on the bus are wearing matching tie-dyed "Eugene Field JHS" tee-shirts].

Upfront, MRS. TURTON (40s, down to earth, been doing this too long but still cares) checks their names off her clipboard.

MRS. TURTON

(to students)

'Sup... 'sup... afternoon, Mr. Nevins. Ms. Tinsley.

(to the line)

Oh come on, people. Can I see some Aquarium excitement?!

The students GROAN as they pass her and climb in.

MRS. TURTON (CONT'D)
 (more students)
 Wow, maybe just two pumps of
 cologne next time, Mr. Cook.

Zu is last in line, wearing her tie-dye shirt.

MRS. TURTON (CONT'D)
 There she is! Suzy Swanson's TV
 dinners!
 (with a high five)
You must be excited about the
 Aquarium! You've been signing out
 all the shark books from our class
 library, you go-getter!
 (then)
 Can I get a "what what"?

Zu shakes her head, she won't speak.

MRS. TURTON (CONT'D)
 (warmly)
 It's the second week of school.
 Probably time to start talking.

Zu looks away and climbs up onto the bus...

INT. SCHOOL BUS - CONTINUOUS

...where she starts scanning for an open seat. There is only
 one seat available, and it is next to, Oh God...

JUSTIN MALONEY (12). He has a full set of braces, a distinct
 mullet, and a hoodie that says ASK ME ABOUT MY T-REX.

JUSTIN
 Hey, Suzy! Got an open one here.

Zu slides in next to him, wanting to die.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 (re: breakfast sandwich)
 Want some? There's no cheese
 because I'm lactose intolerant. And
 the bacon is actually bacon-shaped
 wheat gluten slash tofu, hence the
 smell. Sorry 'bout that.

Zu tries to put as much space between them as possible.

Justin wears a wristwatch BEEPS, and he throws a pill into
 his mouth. Swallows it dry.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 It's for my ADHD. Don't worry, I
 have't been on anti-psychotics
 since 5th grade. Well, 6th.

Mrs. Turton's at the front of the bus, trying to use the
 microphone.

MRS. TURTON
 (to the driver)
 Is this broken? It's not working?
 (into microphone)
 Testing, testing...

She gives up and just uses her regular voice.

MRS. TURTON (CONT'D)
 ALRIGHT PEOPLE! EYES UP HERE. I
 need you to quiet down now and --

The microphone snaps on and it is SUPER LOUD:

MRS. TURTON (CONT'D)
 - LISTEN TO ME!!!!
 (joke)
 Whoa, is this thing on?

No one laughs at her corny joke. Silence. Not a smile.

MRS. TURTON (CONT'D)
 Okay hello, my greasy little
 petunias. I want to see excellent
 behavior at the Aquarium today. Any
 shenanigans? Any mouthing off? What
 will happen to you?
 (beat, then calling on:)
 Kai? What will happen to you?

KAI
 The cow birthing video.

MRS. TURTON
 Correct. So let's have good day.
 Assignments coming around now.

GROANS as she makes her way down the aisle with worksheets.

MRS. TURTON (CONT'D)
 For this project, you're going to
 be working with a partner. And drum
 roll...the person you're sitting
 with on the bus is your partner.

CHEERS and GROANS throughout the bus. Justin smiles at Zu.

SUZY (V.O.)
Oh God. Not Justin Maloney...

INT. SCHOOL - MAIN HALLWAY - A YEAR AGO - QUICK FLASH

A HUGE CROWD of students watch the train wreckage as Justin smears his naked chest with little packets of butter.

JUSTIN
HUMAN SLIP N' SLIDE! YES!!!!

Students CHEER as he takes a RUNNING LEAP onto the floor. Instead of sliding he SQUEAKS to abrupt and painful halt. He pops up, his belly a bloody mess -

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
NO! OW OW OW OW OWWWWW!

INT. SCHOOL BUS - PRESENT

MRS. TURTON
You and your partner will be formulating a hypothesis together at the Aquarium. What's a hypothesis again, Tamara?

TAMARA
The thing you prove using the Scientific Method.

MRS. TURTON
Exactamundo.

Mrs. Turton arrives at Zu and Justin's seat --

MRS. TURTON (CONT'D)
Justin. Suzy. Think you guys can come up with a great hypothesis?

Suzy looks away.

JUSTIN
Maybe something about Sea anem- sea anem-a ma ma

MRS. TURTON
Sea anemones?

JUSTIN
... yes! They shoot venom out their tentacles. Which is impressive.

MRS. TURTON
What do you think, Suzy?

Suzy still looks away.

JUSTIN
Don't worry, Ms. T. She can talk.
She did a whole thing on vampire
bats at science fair last year.
(to Suzy)
Big fan, by the way.

MRS. TURTON
You two will be giving an oral
report. Public speaking is an
important part of the grade.
(kindly)
Let me know if you need any help.

Molly, Jenna, and Aubrey appear behind Mrs. Turton, making
their way to the back of the bus. They have knotted the
corners of their shirts at their hips, making them midriffs.

MRS. TURTON (CONT'D)
Girls! You're late!

AUBREY
No we're not. Dylan saved us seats
in back.

MRS. TURTON
Sit down! And untie those. No one
needs to see your belly buttons.

JENNA
They don't *need* to, but they might
want to, actually.

They continue down the aisle, LAUGHING. As they approach ZU:

MOLLY
Oh my God. Look. How perfect is
that couple?

JENNA
Hope you like pee, Maloney.

Zu tries to stare straight ahead as their little midriff-
exposed bodies pass her seats and head to the back.

JUSTIN
Hey why do they always tease you
about pee, anyway? Did you pee your
pants or something?
(MORE)

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

(then)
Yes? No?

Zu looks out the window.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

I've got an idea: sign language!
Do you know sign language? Well,
wait, that won't work because I
don't know sign language.

Zu closes her eyes, and the screen goes BLACK.

JUSTIN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

You want me to pull out some, like,
Miracle Worker stuff? Because we
read it in Mr. Sullivan's class -

YOUNG FRANNY (PRE-LAP)

Oh my God, Suzy - look at this!

INT. SCHOOL BUS - FLASHBACK - OCTOBER OF LAST YEAR

Suzy (with braces) opens her eyes and we see Franny sitting
where Justin was, in the seat next to her. Her hair dorky.

She's holding up her iphone and we see a pic: a white puppy.

SUZY

Awww. He's adorable!

FRANNY

I know. I'm naming him
"Fluffernutter."

SUZY

Really? Kinda on the nose...

FRANNY

No, "White Dog" would be on the
nose. "Guilt Dog" would be on the
nose. Fluffernutter is perfect.

SUZY

What's your mom guilty about?

FRANNY

Working weekends again. She's
worried I'm gonna be sad and lonely
in our sad lonely apartment.

SUZY

But you've got me!

FRANNY

That's what I said. I was like,
Mom, Zu lives three blocks away,
pull your shit together.

Zu laughs. She looks back at the puppy picture.

SUZY

Pretty cool to get a dog, though.
Definitely in my top five animals.

FRANNY

Too bad your parents are so gross
in love. Divorce is how you get the
big ticket items.

(then)

I did the 200 in 2:25 yesterday.

SUZY

You did not.

FRANNY

Better time than Rachel Blum, which
means: varsity starter next year.

(then)

Just 317 days to go.

SUZY

You're the only person in the
history of the world who has ever
counted down the days until seventh
grade, you know that?

Their conversation comes to a sudden halt as Molly, Jenna and
Aubrey come down the aisle. They talk too loudly on purpose:

JENNA

Hey, Aubrey. Do you have any hair
product with you? Something for
frizzy, fugly red hair?

AUBREY

No. Why do you ask, Jenna?

JENNA

NO REASON.

They all LAUGH as they pass. Franny stares at her hands,
trying not to cry. Face blotchy. Tears right on the cusp.

SUZY

Hey. Wanna know something awesome
about rabbits, Franny?

FRANNY
 ...Not now, Zu.

SUZY
 I think you really need to know.

FRANNY
 Stop.

SUZY
 Their teeth never stop growing.

A moment. Franny can't help herself. She looks up, curious.

FRANNY
 Like never?

SUZY
 Ever. Also: they can't throw up,
 their ears can be up to 31 inches
 long, and they eat their own poop!

Then both girls burst out LAUGHING. OFF Franny, full of love -

INT. SCHOOL BUS - PRESENT

Zu opens her eyes. Justin Maloney is mid-monologue:

JUSTIN
 I'm also allergic to nuts. And
 beans. If I have beans...whoosh,
 watch out - I mean get out. I'm
 allergic to Cool Ranch Doritos,
 too. Not regular nacho flavor -

Suzy glances back at Aubrey, Jenna and Molly, holding court
 in the back of the bus to a rapt crowd of pre-teen girls.

EXT. AQUARIUM OF NEW ENGLAND - TOUCH TANK AREA

All the tie-dye shirted Eugene Field students have clamored
 around the touch tank, excited. Justin is so into the touch
 tank, he's almost *in it*.

An AQUARIUM EDUCATOR (20s) tries to keep the kids calm.

AQUARIUM INSTRUCTOR
 Remember! Hands flat, two fingers.

DYLAN PARKER (12, future convict but gorgeous) splashes the
 girls with water and they all SCREAM like they might DIE.

MRS. TURTON
Dylan Parker! *Do you cow birthing?*

Zu keeps her distance - watching the spectacle of her class. When no one is looking, she backs away from them and escapes.

We TRACK with her as she finds a sign [with an arrow] for "SHARKS & PREDATORS!" and follows it into....

INT. AQUARIUM OF NEW ENGLAND - MAIN LOBBY

...the lobby, which boasts a massive floor-to-ceiling, two-story tank of sea life. (See: Aquarium of the Pacific.)

Zu hurries across the lobby towards SHARKS & PREDATORS, but she stops abruptly because...

We see: a SMALL BLOOM OF ELECTRIC RED JELLYFISH (Atolla Jellyfish) in the huge tank seem to be looking at her.

She walks a little closer and... yes, they are watching her. They are congregated against the glass, facing out.

It's creepy, but it's also very beautiful.

She puts her hand up to the glass and gives them a small wave. Incredibly, the jellyfish move back and forth, as if waving back.

Zu is stunned! She looks around; is anyone seeing this??

No. THE TOURISTS to her left and right are on their phones. She is alone with this magical moment.

She moves her hand a few feet to the right. They follow!

She moves to her had a few feet to the left. They follow!

Then: the jellyfish SHOOT ten feet to their right.

They wait until Zu catches up, then shoot ten feet further.

A game of follow the leader has developed, the jellyfish zig-zagging across the tank. Zu runs to keep up with them.

At the end of the tank, the bloom stops short. They can go no further, but they clearly want Zu to see what she now sees...

INT. A DARK AND ABANDONED CORNER OF THE AQUARIUM

...a blocked-off room, concealed by curtains. A slight glow emanating from within. A placard on the wall says:

IRUKANDJI: THE BEAUTIFUL ENIGMA

Zu parts the curtains, and slips inside.

INT. IRUKANDJI EXHIBIT

We see: a pitch dark room that contains a single tank in its center. It's made of very thick, magnified glass.

There is a large button below the tank and Zu presses it.

Suddenly, A BLACK LIGHT illuminates the water -

We see: A DOZEN of what appear to be little baby jellies. They look like delicate flowers. Little ballerinas, really.

A recorded voice (Male, Australian, which we will soon know to be the voice of DR. JAMIE SEYMOUR) begins to play:

RECORDED VOICE

Don't be fooled by their delicate appearance and tiny size; inside this tank are the most deadly creatures of the sea... the dreaded Irukandji Jellyfish, whose venom is among the most lethal in the world.

CLOSE on the Irukandji. So sweet-looking. Dainty.

RECORDED VOICE (CONT'D)

They live in large numbers off the coast of Australia, but unlike the rest of their box jellyfish family, who prefer the warm waters of the Pacific, these silent killers have begun to migrate over greater distances, and have begun appearing in Atlantic waters. This bloom was trapped off the coast of Maryland.

ON Zu, listening.

RECORDED VOICE (CONT'D)

The few people who have survived a sting report symptoms that include excruciating headache, brain hemorrhage, and cardiac arrest.

On Zu, really listening.

RECORDED VOICE (CONT'D)
 Which is why most victims of the
 Irukandji bite will appear to have
 drowned.

Zu presses the button and plays it again.

RECORDED VOICE (CONT'D)
 Which is why most victims of the
 Irukandji bite will appear to have
 drowned.

Zu gets very close to the tank, her nose up to the glass.

There, in the water, we see it...

A long red hair. One of Franny's beautiful red hairs swirls
 around the tank!

Zu reels back, startled. Breathless. She looks again, and the
 hair is gone, disappeared into the dark water.

Zu runs from the room, grabbing all the Irukandji pamphlets.

EXT. SCHOOL BUS - CONTINUOUS

Zu sprints up to the bus where Mrs. Turton is waiting outside
 the bus, not looking happy with her.

MRS. TURTON
 COME ON ZU, COME ON! We've been
 waiting ten minutes for you!

Zu gives Mrs. Turton her most apologetic look, slips onto ...

INT. SCHOOL BUS - CONTINUOUS

... where THE ENTIRE CLASS is glaring up at her. *You suck.*

Zu does a long walk of shame down the aisle, enduring the
 shaking heads and cruel eyes of her peers.

Someone throws a yogurt at the back of her head and it
 breaks. Yogurt all through her hair. Everyone LAUGHS.

Finally, she plops into the seat next to Justin.

JUSTIN
 (tasting yogurt)
 Mmm. Strawberry banana.

He hands her a tissue.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 Hey where did you go in there? I
 thought we were going to study sea
 anemon- anemon- ma ma -
 ...goddamnit.

He sees the Irukandji pamphlets.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 O! Who are those cute little guys!?

Zu tucks the pamphlets away from his prying eyes - turns her
 body away from his as much as she possibly can.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 Partner means two, you know. *Dos*.

Zu pulls out a notebook, and, shielding it from him, writes:

HYPOTHESIS: FRANNY JACKSON WAS KILLED BY AN IRUKANDJI JELLYFISH.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 I feel like maybe you just aren't a
 nice person.

SUZY (V.O.)
Things don't just happen. Maybe I
 could actually prove that. Maybe I
 could prove that there was a real
 villain in Franny's story, a
 villain far worse than me.

The bus She underlines the words: Irukandji Jellyfish.

The bus comes to a stop at a RED LIGHT, and Zu glances out
 the window. Something catches her eye, and she sits forward.

We see: a Stop n' Shop parking lot.

We see: A WOMAN (30s) crosses the lot, going in the store. Zu
 raises her hand, as if to wave to her, or touch her somehow.

But then the bus pulls away and the woman's gone.

INT. STOP N' SHOP - SOUTH GROVE, MASSACHUSETTS - DAY

THE WOMAN (30s) comes down the aisle with a shopping cart. We
 don't know yet, but this is NAOMI JACKSON. Franny's mom.

The lights are too bright, and this is still hard for her.
 Being out in public. Trying to buy milk and bread.

She puts some cereal in her cart and continues along until - she realizes she's standing in the Baby Section.

We see: diapers, wipes, baby food, bottles, pacifiers.

We see: a beautiful freckly toddler on a box of baby soap.

A beat.

Naomi has a bursting desire to weep. But she forces herself to continue down the aisle, not looking back.

She passes TWO MOMS (30s, Lululemon-ed out) who appear to be engrossed in organic flour but are actually staring at her.

Naomi meets their eyes, and both women quickly dart their eyes back to the flour, pretending to be engrossed.

INT. STOP N' SHOP - CHECKOUT - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Naomi with her cart at checkout, pawing through a magazine.

In the next aisle over, we hear: the MOMS gossiping softly.

MOM

No, it was her. I'm sure of it.

MOM #2

God. Poor woman. She looked awful.

MOM

Of course she did. I mean...

(quietly)

Can you imagine? The guilt?

MOM #2

Ugh. I can't even think about it.

(then)

That's why - God help me - I'm fine being a helicopter mom. If it means my kid's not gonna drown, fine.

Naomi abandons her cart mid-checkout and exits. Fast.

EXT. SUZY'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING

The school bus doors open and Suzy climbs out. A trail of paper airplanes and general pre-teen debris follow.

But as the bus pulls out of the frame...

We see: a shiny red Jeep in the driveway of her house. It has Boston University and Red Sox stickers all over it.

For the first time since we've met Suzy, we see her smile.

INT. SUZY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

She races in though the front door. *Where is he?* She hears VOICES coming from upstairs, darts to the stairs...

INT. AARON'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

...and flies into Aaron's room, where we find Meg talking to two handsome men who row crew: AARON and ROCCO (both 19).

Zu tackles Aaron with a huge hug, crashing him onto the day bed (which is covered with frilly pink throw pillow crap).

AARON

Z! What's up, monkey?!

She clutches her brother tightly. We see that she adores him.

AARON (CONT'D)

Hey, I wanna introduce you to my friend here. This is Rocco.

Rocco offers his hand to Suzy, flashing a lovely smile.

ROCCO

You must be Z. Or does only Aaron get to call ya that?

Zu doesn't answer, but Rocco does earn a shy smile.

MEG

Don't mind her silence. Suzanne's in a bit of a shy period right now.

AARON

Which I wish would end. You should've told me what *this monster* was doing to my bedroom, Z.

We REVERSE to see: Aaron's room is now a craft center. Ribbons. Bows. Stickers. Glue guns. Mason jars. Faux fur.

MEG

It's not like I threw anything out. Your rowing machine's in the garage with the kayaks.

(MORE)

MEG (CONT'D)
 Everything else is in the closet,
 with Dad's stuff that he still
 needs to pick up.

Zu abruptly exits.

AARON
 Where's she going?

INT. SUZY'S ROOM

Suzy stuffs clothes into a backpack. She grabs the pillow off her bed, books, pajamas. Her retainer. Most importantly: Irukandji pamphlets. She can't wait to tell Aaron about this!

WE TRACK with her as she bolts out of her room and back to -

INT. AARON'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Suzy appears at the door, wearing her backpack, ready to go!

AARON
 Whoa! Going someplace, Z?

She LAUGHS, like he's made a joke. But he doesn't seem to get the joke. He looks confused.

MEG
 Oh. I think, you maybe uh...
 (quietly)
 You said something about maybe
 taking her back to your dorm for a
 sleepover. Last time you were here.

AARON
 ...Ohh.

Aaron has clearly forgotten that.

AARON (CONT'D)
 Shoot. I'm sure I said that,
 monkey, and I meant it, but we have
 an away race in the morning. And
 Rocco and I have a thing tonight...

Zu's face falls.

MEG
 Rocky, why don't I show you that
 casserole dish I mentioned to ya.

AARON

It's Roc-co, Mom. Not Rocky, Rocco.

MEG

Rocco, right. Like Morocco.

(as they exit)

Have you been to Morocco, Rocco?
Beautiful country. I hear.

Meg closes the door behind them.

AARON

The first few weeks of college are
crazy, Zu. I'm sorry.

He rumples her hair, lovingly. Her eyes are down.

AARON (CONT'D)

Look, I know you're miserable right
now. And you're supposed to be. Mom
and Dad got divorced the same year
your best friend died, AND you
started junior high. I mean. Do you
know how eff'ed up that is, Suzy Q?

(then)

But it won't always be like this. I
promise. Things get way better.

ROCCO (O.S.)

AARON? DO WE WANT A BROKEN FONDUE --

MEG (O.S.)

HEIRLOOM FONDUE SET! HEIR-LOOM.

ROCCO (O.S.)

DO WE WANT AN HEIRLOOM FONDUE SET?

AARON

We'll put a sleepover on the books
for October. Okay, kid? Gimme paw.

Suzy gives him paw (bops his hand) and he takes off. A moment
later we hear A DOOR CLOSE downstairs.

INT. SUZY'S ROOM - DAY

From the window, we see: Aaron and Rocco emerge from the
house and head to Aaron's JEEP, beaming at each other.

Aaron tries to toss the fondue set into the trash can; Rocco
faux-chastises him. Then Aaron spins and hook-shots the pot
into the trash. LAUGHING, the guys climb into the jeep.

Off the fondue in the trash, we flash to --

INT. SUZY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - A COUPLE YEARS AGO

Meg, Aaron, and Zu (slightly younger) are seated around the table wearing French berets. Jim appears with the fondue pot.

JIM

Viola! Hot cheese for dinner!
(re: fondue forks)
Alright - everyone chose a weapon.

MEG

This smells amazing, honey.

JIM

No, *you* smell amazing.

Jim leans down and give Meg a long, wet kiss. They are very adorably happy. Which, of course, the kids find revolting.

AARON

Are you trying to make me throw up?

MEG

You should be proud we love each other. That makes you a love child.

AARON

Barf.

ZU

Can we eat the cheese soup now?

JIM

First, a toast! To Fondue. It's how I got your mother back to my apartment 19 years ago today.

MEG

Well. "Apartment" is strong.

JIM

One-room shanty. But still. It had a mattress. *All we needed.*

AARON

For the Love of God. If not for me, for the young one.

But ZU is beaming at her parents, so deeply in love.

JIM
Okay ready guys? On three!

They all raise their forks. Four happy dorks in berets.

EVERYBODY
One- two...

INT. SUZY'S ROOM - PRESENT

Zu lies on her bed, clutching her packed bag, going no where.
Aaron's long gone. So is fondue.
Out her window, the sun has set.

INT. NAOMI JACKSON'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

A "Hello Kitty" landline next to a child's canopy bed RINGS.
It RINGS several times before a hand reaches for it.

NAOMI
(groggy)
Hello?

Naomi sits up in her daughter's polka dot-themed bed, covered
in stuffed animals. She turns ON the bedside table light.

We see an empty wine bottle and glass on the table.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
Suzy? Is that you?
(then)
It's okay, I'm awake.

We hear: BREATHING on the other end.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
I know it's you, honey. You're the
only one who knows this number.
Everyone else called her cell.

INT. SUZY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

We see Suzy in bed with a phone to her ear.

INT. FRANNY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

NAOMI
Is everything okay?

Silence.

Then we hear: A PHONE BUTTON PRESS ONE TIME.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
Just missing her?

...ONE PRESS.

We see on Naomi's face: a wash of utter anguish...

NAOMI (CONT'D)
Oh me, too, Zu. So much. I'm
cuddled up with Fluffernutter as we
speak. Want to say hi to him?

ONE PRESS!

NAOMI (CONT'D)
(to the dog)
Come here fluffynut. Stop snarfing
and say hi. It's Zu. Your favorite!
It's Zu, stinker butt.

We hear: a DOG BREATHING and SNARFING.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
He doesn't seem to want to talk
right now, girlfriend. Sorry.

INT. SUZY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Zu smiles. We hear: Naomi LAUGH a little on the other end.

NAOMI
Poor guy. I had to put him on doggy
valium, Zu. He kept sitting by the
door waiting for her. Just...

Naomi's voice cracks.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
....24-7. Looking out.

Silence. They sit in silence together a long beat.

When Naomi speaks again, her voice is clearly tearful.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
Is school going okay? You like
seventh grade?

ONE PRESS.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
I'm going to come for that memorial
thing in a few weeks. Everyone
keeps telling me it'll be good for
me. *It'll be good for you, Naomi.*

Silence.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
Why do they say that, Zu?
(then)
You think it'll be good for us?

TWO PRESSES.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
Me, neither.
(dark)
More people staring at me.

Silence.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
Maybe you'll be talking by then and
you could say something about her
at the memorial. That'd be nice.

Silence.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
She loved you so much, Zu. You were
best friends, since you were five
yours old.

TWO PRESSES.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
What do you mean, "no"? Yes. You
were best buds since you were five.

A beat.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
Zu? You still there, honey?

Zu hangs up. A tear sneaks down her cheek. OFF her dark room -

INT. FRANNY'S BEDROOM - SIX MONTHS AGO - FLASHBACK

We see: a FLASHLIGHT landing on Franny's LAUGHING face.

She's striking a bitchy pose, pretending to be Jenna from school. She's wears a tin-foil "crown." A hairbrush as a mic:

FRANNY

Silence! I will now speak!

SUZY

You look *just like* Jenna when you make that face!

FRANNY

Silence! I, Jenna the Great, will now bestow upon you a performance in honor of my reign over the entire sixth grade.

(to Franny)

Minions: Molly! Aubrey! Press play!

Franny signals Suzy, who gleefully pushes play on her iPhone, and IGGY AZALEA's "I'm so Fancy" plays LOUDLY.

Suzy and Franny know every word, and co-rap surprisingly well. This is a favorite song.

There's a KNOCK, and Naomi appears. She looks well. Happy.

FRANNY'S MOM

Girls. It's 10:45 and I've got a double tomorrow. You have to stop being fancy.

FRANNY

Sorry, Mom.

SUZY

Sorry, Miss Jackson.

FRANNY

(cueing Suzy:)

Yeah... "sorry Miss Jackson..."

SUZY & FRANNY

(co-singing Outkast song)

"Ooo! I am for re-al!!
Never meant to make your daughter cry! I apologize a trillion times!"

NAOMI

Go to sleep. I am for re-al.

She kisses them both on the head and exits.

Franny and Suzy topple back onto the polka-dot themed canopy bed, the best of friends.

FRANNY

Hey. Will you do me a favor?

SUZY

'course.

FRANNY

Will you shoot me if I ever become like Jenna, Aubrey and Molly?

SUZY

No. I'm anti-gun.

FRANNY

I'm serious. Do *something* then. Send me a signal. If I ever become like Jenna, Aubrey and Molly.

SUZY

What kind of signal?

FRANNY

I don't know. Make it big. Get my attention. I don't want to be like them, Suzy. Not ever. Promise me.

SUZY

Okay. Promise.

OFF their entwined pinkies we cut back to -

INT. SUZY'S ROOM - PRESENT.

Zu closes her eyes in bed. Her ceiling goes BLACK.

INT. EUGENE FIELD MIDDLE SCHOOL - COMPUTER LAB - PRESENT

It's a bright, beautiful morning.

Zu is at a computer, scrolling through photos of graphic Irukandji bites. She makes notes.

Justin taps her on the shoulder. He has a worksheet.

JUSTIN

Um. Suzy? Mrs. Turton says we have to fill out this worksheet updating our progress on our evidence but -
 (noticing)
 - whoa, a *jellyfish* did that? Sweet Hell. Where'd his skin go?

We see on the screen: a picture of a leg covered in slashes. Like the leg has been whipped. Tortured, down to the bone.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Anyway I'm not sure what to write down because you don't talk to me and you don't seem to be doing any research on sea anem- anem- whatever and I feel like maybe you're doing a secret hypothesis which isn't very cool of you because we're partners - *God...*

Suzy's has clicked on and BLOWN UP another photo. This one of a woman's FACE. She survived, but barely. Justin is woozy.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

And I sorta feel like you should be including me in said secret hypothesis or else I'm gonna fail out of school and end up in a van down by the river and yep, I'm having an asthma attack...

Justin takes a hit of his inhaler, closing his eyes.

When he opens them, Zu is fanning him with the worksheet, a hint of concern and sympathy in her eyes.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Can I please *please* help with our project, Suzy?
 (then)
 There must be something I can do?

Now that he's okay, Zu stands and walks off, ignoring him.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Is that a no?

INT. SUZY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Suzy, tucked into her bed (with the covers all the way to her chin), pours over videos of jellyfish on YouTube.

SUZY (V.O.)

A jellyfish, if you watch it long enough, begins to look like a heart beating.

They beat like a heart.

SUZY

It's their pulse, the way they contract swiftly, then release. Doesn't matter what kind of jellyfish. The blood-red Atolla with its flashing siren lights or the near-transparent moon jelly. They're all like a ghost hearts. A heart you can see right through. Right into some other world where everything you ever lost has gone.

Zu looks out her window at the sea. At the big, full moon.

We hear: THUNK THUNK. Hearts beating out there in the ocean.

We see: her hypothesis worksheet on her side table, the words "Get Evidence" circled.

MEG (O.S.)

Wow. In bed already?

Zu startles and closes her laptop as Meg enters.

MEG (CONT'D)

You okay?

Zu nods. Faux-yawns.

MEG (CONT'D)

Okay. You sleep tight, pumpkin.

Meg kisses her on the cheek and turns OFF the lights.

The moment she's gone, Suzy throws off the covers.

We see: She is fully clothed. She hops out of bed and pulls a bulky backpack out from under her bed. Then a fishing pole.

EXT. SWANSON HOUSE - NIGHT

Suzy climbs out of her bedroom window with her gear.

SUZY (V.O.)

If anyone's gonna believe me, I need to catch an Irukandji, and the only time to catch an Irukandji is at night, during a full moon.

She shimmies down the gutter, climbs on to her bike and rides off through the silent sleeping town.

SUZY (V.O.)

They light of the moon lures them to the surface. It's the only time they're ever vulnerable.

EXT. SOUTH GROVE BEACH - NIGHT

Suzy rides her bike up to the empty beach in the middle of the night, the CRASHING SURF the only sound.

She stows her bike behind a sand dune.

She pulls a pair of high waders out of the backpack and wiggles them on. She snaps and shakes some glow sticks.

Her face illuminated by the glow, she tapes the sticks together and hooks them to the end of her fishing line.

Then, in her coup de grace, she extracts a Red Sox hat with binoculars taped to the underside of the bill and places it on her head, her eyes perfectly aligned to the binoculars.

Net in one hand, fishing pole of glowing bait in the other, Zu waddles towards the surf to begin her hunt for Irukandji.

EXT. COVE APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING

A run-down apartment complex on the edge of the beach. The kind of place that's fine in the summer but sad in off-season. An empty pool. A chain link fence.

Cove Beach is literally its backyard.

EXT. NAOMI'S DECK - CONTINUOUS

Naomi, in her nursing scrubs, peers through the sliding glass door towards the beach where she sees something... glowing?

She strains to get a better look. Through the mist and spray she sees a ghostly figure moving through the surf's glow.

Naomi disappears from the window.

EXT. COVE BEACH - CONTINUOUS

The water up to her waist now, Suzy is methodically sweeping the glow sticks through the water.

POV through her binoculars: a bloom of tiny thumb-size, translucent white jellyfish appear by the glow sticks.
Irukandji!

Suzy catches her breath, begins to sweep the net towards it -

NAOMI (O.S.)
FRANNY? FRANNY!

Startled, Suzy turns toward the beach.

Her POV veers widely through magnification of the binoculars strapped to her hat. For a moment she catches the sight of a highly magnified NAOMI running towards the water and screaming -

A wave SMACKS Suzy from behind and she falls into the surf, dropping her hunting tools as she goes down. She tumbles underwater, and the screen goes dark. WAVES CRASH.

HANDS REACH DOWN and pull her up.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
Hold on to me! Hold on to me!

A struggle ensues as Suzy tries to get to her feet and Naomi fights to pull her to shore.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
...I've got you. I've got you,
baby. You're okay.

Suzy shoves Naomi off of her in frustration - she almost had one. She looks back out at the surf, at the glow sticks drifting out to sea. The jellyfish capture ruined.

Naomi sees Suzy's face clearly now. Realizing it's her.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
Suzy...

She falls back on the sand, her hands still shaking.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
I thought you were someone else.

A beat.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
 I thought... I don't know what I
 thought. What was I doing?

With a sudden and almost scary abruptness, she starts to sob.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
 What are you doing? Why the hell
 are you out here, Zu?
 (off Zu's silence)
 Answer me! Do you want to drown,
 too?

Zu gets up and RUNS AWAY.

Naomi, wet, panting, is too exhausted to give chase -

NAOMI (CONT'D)
 ZU! WAIT! WAIT A MINUTE!

INT. DR. LEGLER'S OFFICE - THERAPY - MORNING

Dr. Legler's got new tights on today. They're a deep purple.
 She's looking at us, expecting an answer.

DR. LEGLER
 Is this true, Suzanne? That you
 snuck out of the house in the
 middle of the night and went to
 Cove Beach?

We see: the fish tank. The dark waves lapping the glass.

DR. LEGLER (CONT'D)
 Why did you do this?
 (then)
 Any idea?

Jim and Meg, on their couch, look more worried than usual.

JIM
 (confidential)
 It's the beach where her friend
 drowned. I think that's why.

MEG
*She knows that, Jim. She was being
 rhetorical.*

DR LEGLER

It's okay, Meg. We're all in this process together, one step at a time.

(to Zu)

Were you looking for something at the beach, Suzanne?

We see: the books on Dr. Legler's shelf: *The Miracle of Mindfulness. Loss and Grief. Overcoming Bedwetting Is Easy..*

DR. LEGLER

Were you looking for your friend?

We see: the words on the spine of the books lift off, shuffle, and rearrange so the books say: *Loss of Mind. Depression is Easy. The Bedwetting Miracle.*

DR. LEGLER (CONT'D)

Are you aware that you could've drowned or hurt yourself?

MEG

Not to mention the horrible fright you gave Naomi, Zu.

(to Dr. Legler)

You should've heard this woman on the phone. Can you imagine? She thought it was Franny's ghost, risen from the surf.

(to Suzy)

You can't do that to that woman, Zu. You have to let her grieve.

DR. LEGLER

Is that what you were looking for out there, Suzanne? Your friend?

MEG

We just want to understand. So we can get through this as a family.

Jim and Meg's faces fill the frame. Big and open as the moon.

INT. ELMER SUDS DINER - FLASHBACK - FALL OF LAST YEAR, NOV.

A plate of pancakes land in front of Suzy.

We PAN UP to Meg & Jim's faces. Big and open like the moon.

MEG

Oh, good. Here comes your brother.

Aaron slides into the booth next to Suzy and says to her:

AARON
Gimme paw, kid.
(they dap, then)
What's this about? Why are you guys
being so opaque and creepy?

Now Meg and Jim smile, in a creepy opaque way.

MEG
We have something we want to talk
about with you guys. As a family.

JIM
And before we say it, I just want
you to know that I think your mom
is a very beautiful woman. She's
going to date again for sure.

MEG
(you are an idiot)
You buried the lead, Jim.

JIM
It's going to be a very smooth
transition for you kids. Your mom
found me a great apartment.

MEG
Hard wood floors, EIK, good light.

JIM
With a bedroom for both of you.

Beat.

AARON
I don't understand. Are you guys
getting divorced!?

JIM
Let's stay calm, son.

AARON
Do you know how crazy this is?! I'm
leaving for college in the fall.
This is supposed to be your victory
lap. One down, one to go.

JIM
Well. We aren't feeling very
victorious. Towards each other.

SUZY

But this doesn't make any sense.
You just celebrated your
anniversary with that cruise.

JIM

And it was a lovely memory we will
both treasure forever. But we'd
kind of prefer to take our next
cruises... alone.

MEG

Or with you guys!

JIM

Or with new boyfriends.

MEG

Or with sluts who work at Costco.

Beat.

SUZY

I thought you guys loved each
other. How did this happen?

MEG

I don't know. Sometimes things just
happen, Zu. You know?

OFF Meg's patient, calm face, we MATCH CUT to -

INT. SCHOOL BUS - STILL IN FLASHBACK - MOMENTS LATER

Suzy 's face on the bus, staring out the window. She's still
stunned from the divorce bombshell her parents just dropped.

Her spirits lift as Franny plops down on the seat.

SUZY

You're not going to believe this.
My parents just told me and Aaron
that they're getting a -

FRANNY

Hey: who do you like?

SUZY

What?

Franny scans the bus, too wrapped up in boy-garbage to notice
Suzy's despair.

FRANNY
Boys. Who do you *like*?

SUZY
No boys. Zero boys.

FRANNY
You have to like someone, Zu! We'll be in middle school in September. You have to have an answer when people ask and they WILL ask.

We hear the BOYS LAUGHING, the way they do in a big group.

CLOSE ON Dylan Parker, the cutest and meanest.

SUZY
Why? Do you like someone?

As if it's the biggest secret ever, Franny points at Dylan.

SUZY (CONT'D)
Are you kidding me? DYLAN PARKER?!

FRANNY
Shhhh!! Geezus Zu, quiet -

SUZY
He's a masochist. And a misogynist.

FRANNY
I don't know those words.

SUZY
They mean AWFUL. He's awful, Franny. And you're awful if you like him.

FRANNY
God. What's with you today? Geez.

Franny pulls out a compact and starts adjusting her intricate lipliner and gloss. OFF Zu's betrayed and sad face, we cut -

EXT. COVE APARTMENTS - SIDEWALK - AFTERNOON

Zu pulls Justin up the walkway leading to Cove Apartments. Justin holds a stack of pink index cards.

JUSTIN
So I'm supposed to read these cards? To who? I don't understand. And where are we?

They've arrived at a door and Zu knocks on it.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Who's house is this?

After a beat, Naomi comes to the door. Sun in her eyes.

NAOMI
Zu?
(then)
Who is this?

JUSTIN
Justin Maloney, M'am. Kenneth and
Joyce's son, from over on Emerson.

Those names don't ring a bell.

NAOMI
Okay. Come in, I guess.

INT. JACKSON HOME - KITCHEN

The kitchen is a mess. Dishes piled high in the sink. Flowers that are so dead they are now wilted to black.

Zu and Justin sit at the kitchen table, Fluffernutter in Zu's lap, licking her face happily. Suzy pets his ears.

Naomi looks in the fridge for something - anything - to eat. Finally, she gives up and brings them over some tap water.

JUSTIN
By the way, I'm very sorry for you
loss, M'am. She had such rad hair.
I like red.

NAOMI
I like red, too.

JUSTIN
That's not written on any of the
cards. I just wanted to say that.

Naomi smiles at him warmly, then looks like she might sob, having two children her daughter's age in her kitchen again.

NAOMI
...so what can I do for you two?

JUSTIN
Uh. Well.
(reading)
(MORE)

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

We're doing a science project and I'm Suzy's lab partner. And I guess her voice, too. Like how Ursula speaks for Ariel in *The Little Mermaid*?

(then)

Anyway. Suzy has some inquiries. If you don't mind.

NAOMI

(slightly irritated)

Isn't *enough enough* already, Zu? With the no-talking?

Zu looks down. Like her feelings are hurt. She pets Fluffernutter behind the ears.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Sorry...I'm tired today.

(then)

Go ahead, Justin. Ask away.

Zu hands Justin some carefully-prepared pink index cards.

JUSTIN

Okay. Great. Question one.

(reading)

"What was the official..."

He stops. Looks at Zu dubiously...

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

I'm not sure we should ask this.

Zu nods, *yes we should*. Justin turns back to Naomi.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

(resuming)

"What was the official cause of Franny's death? On her death certificate."

NAOMI

She drowned, Zu. You know that.

JUSTIN

(consulting the card)

So: "Fluid in the lungs"?

Naomi nods, unsure where this is going.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

"Any blood in the lungs or signs of hemorrhage?"

NAOMI

No.

JUSTIN

"Any signs of cardiac arrest?"

NAOMI

No.

This next card gives Justin real pause. He looks at Zu, hesitant. Zu nods. *Ask her.*

JUSTIN

"Did you witness the accident?"

NAOMI

No. I was going to meet her at the beach after I'd...

(beat)

After I'd had some coffee and loaded the dishwasher.

JUSTIN

"Did anyone see what happened?"

NAOMI

No. She was alone down there.

Naomi looks down.

Silence.

Then, almost to herself -

NAOMI (CONT'D)

I mean. Bill Carpenter saw her standing out there at low tide, in the waves, putting her goggles on.

(then)

But nobody saw her after that. Until her body washed up in the cove and scared those toddlers.

JUSTIN

"Were there any marks on her body? Anything that looked like..."

Justin flips to the next card - sees what he's supposed to show Naomi - and stops.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

(to Suzy)

You want to show her that you can. I'm not doing that.

(MORE)

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

(to Naomi)

It was nice to meet you, Ms.
Jackson. I'm uh... I'm sorry.

He exits.

Naomi and Zu look at each other, from across the table.

Then, Zu slides the index card (the one Justin refused to show her) towards Naomi.

We see: a picture of a child's leg that's been stung to hell by Irukandji bites. Like it's been whipped raw to the bone.

Naomi takes it in, processes.

NAOMI

....is this why you were out there
the other night in the water? You
think a jellyfish killed Franny?

Zu nods. Certain of it.

NAOMI (CONT'D)

Zu. I want you listen to me.
(then)
Franny drowned in a rip tide.
Or she drowned because she swam out
too far.
Or she drowned because she choked
on that gum she was always chewing.
We don't know why she drowned but
we know that *she drowned*, honey.
While her mother was loading the
goddamn dishwasher. No one heard
her cry and no one saved her and
she drowned.

Zu shakes her head, pointing at the card - *no, you don't understand*. But Naomi pushes the card back, firmly:

NAOMI (CONT'D)

I'm going to have to ask you to
leave right now, Zu. I'm sorry...I
can't.

(upset)

But you have to go, honey.

OFF Naomi's bereft face, we MATCH CUT to -

EXT. THE COVE APARTMENT - OUTSIDE THE LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Justin's innocent face as he waits outside. As Zu arrives:

JUSTIN

Are you crazy? You can't show a
grieving mother that medieval crap.
Even I know that. Jesus, Suzy.

Suzy walks right past him, distracted by the sound of
CHILDREN PLAYING ...

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

And I am going to request the right
to PREVIEW all material in the
future. That was really uncool,
springing those pink cards on me -

Suzy bolts around the side of the apartment building.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Suzy? Where are you going?

Justin follows, confused, and as we TRACK with him and turn
the corner of the building we cut to -

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

SUZY!

EXT. SOUTH GROVE BEACH AT LOW-TIDE - CONTINUOUS

A group of A DOZEN OR SO TODDLERS are playing in the surf.
They are throwing crabs at each other and splashing around
while THEIR PARENTS (30s) chat with their Starbucks nearby.

We see: Suzy sprinting towards the beach, waving her arms in
alarm, signaling: GET OUT OF THE WATER! NO SWIMMING!!

We stay with Justin, and from his POV: we see her run into
the water, fully clothed. She starts yanking and pulling the
children out of the water and rushing them to safety on the
sand.

We see: the mothers all go red-alert: *Don't touch my child!*
What the hell's wrong with you? Get away from her/him!

OFF Zu, thrashing in the water, realizing a beach-full of
adults have decided she is mentally unhinged --

INT. CAFETERIA - FLASHBACK - NINE MONTHS AGO, LAST DECEMBER

Franny and Suzy on the lunch line. Dylan Parker is a ahead of
them, messing around with THREE PALS. He turns and looks
Franny up and down, approvingly. She's hot.

(And she is now. Franny has started blowing her hair out straight. Her glasses replaced by contacts. Clothes tight.)

Zu glares at Dylan, and he gives her a look like, *what's your problem?* Like she's mentally unhinged.

FRANNY

BTW. I saw the cutest pair of Chuck Taylors at the mall yesterday.

SUZY

....are you talking to me?

FRANNY

Yeah. Obvi.

SUZY

No, not "obvi" because you aren't looking at me - you're looking at Dylan Parker. And I dunno who Chuck Taylor is, "btw."

FRANNY

Chuck Taylors are *sneakers*. It's super-cute you don't know that.

ON Zu. Did she just say "super-cute"? As if to confirm Franny is now an alien, Jenna appears next to them.

JENNA

Frances. We'd like to invite you to join our lunch table today.

FRANNY

....really?

JENNA

(congratulations)
Really.

FRANNY

Wow, that's so cool. I mean. So long as there's room for Suzy, too?

Jenna looks Suzy up and down, assessing.

JENNA

...sure. Shouldn't be a problem.

FRANNY

Great, we'll be right over! Stat! *Not stat*. That's a weird thing to say. My mom's a nurse, sorry.

JENNA
 No, I'm into it. Stat.
 (warmly)
 See you "stat," girl.

Jenna smiles and walks off. Suzy leans into Franny:

SUZY
Are you kidding me? We are not
 sitting at the Barbie table.

FRANNY
 (stunned)
 I can't believe she knows my name.

SUZY
 She doesn't know your name. No
 one's called you Frances in the
 history of your whole life.

FRANNY
 Come on. Do I look okay?

SUZY
 YO! Earth to Franny. I'm not
 sitting there. What's wrong with
 our usual table? I like it there.

We see: the dork table. Kids dressed as wizards playing
 Magic: The Gathering and building a rice cake tower.

FRANNY
 Can't you just try, Zu? Please?

A beat. Zu takes in Franny's excited, hopeful face.

SUZY
Fine.

Gleeful, Franny rushes over. Zu follows begrudgingly.

AT THE COOL TABLE:

Jenna has make-up out and is working on Aubrey's face. Zu and
 Suzy slide into the two open seats.

FRANNY
 Hey! What'd I miss?

AUBREY
 Jenna's 80th contour tutorial.

JENNA
 Defining your cheekbones is goals.

FRANNY

Wow. You're good at that. My face would just look dirty if I tried.

JENNA

You just need the right products. We should all go to Sephora today!

MOLLY/AUBREY

Yesssss!/ For sure!

Franny beams. This is the best day of her life.

JENNA

When are you out of ballet, Moll?

MOLLY

Four. But I can't go in public. The plastic wrap makes me so sweaty.

SUZY

You wear plastic wrap? To ballet?

A beat. Everyone is surprised Suzy has addressed them.

AUBREY

She wears plastic wrap *under* her tights, so she sweats more.

SUZY

Why would you want to sweat more?

JENNA

(duh)
So her skinny jeans fit better.

SUZY

Then you should put plastic wrap on your feet. We have the most sweat glands in our feet, you know.

The three vipers stare at her.

SUZY (CONT'D)

Fun trivia: sweat is also completely sterile when it leaves the body. Just like pee. Did you know that? Everyone thinks pee is gross, but it's actually totally clean. *Some people even drink it.*

The table has gotten very quiet. Mouths are agape.

FRANNY
 (fake laugh)
 She's joking. People don't drink
 pee.

SUZY
 Sure they do. They drink it in
 emergencies or for health reasons.

The girls are trying not to laugh, but this is too much.

SUZY (CONT'D)
 Like butterflies. They drink their
 pee to get salts and minerals. And
 other animals communicate with
 urine. Send each other messages --

Jenna stands up, which means the others do, too.

JENNA
 Well...we gotta get going, I think.
 (to Franny)
 See you later, yeah?

FRANNY
 Definitely. Let me know if you hit
 Sephora. *I'm so in.*

The three of them turn and exit, whispering amongst
 themselves. Franny turns to Zu, furious.

SUZY
 What?

OFF Zu's genuinely confused face...

A YOUNG VOICE (PRE-LAP)
 The next thing that happens is A
 FUNGUS takes over the ant's brain,
 controlling what the ant thinks.

INT. MRS. TURTON'S SCIENCE CLASS - THE PRESENT

A student, SAMIRA NASRI, is mid-presentation. A picture of an
 ant on the smart-board behind her:

SAMIRA NASRI
 It makes the ant do things that no
 ant would do otherwise. The fungus
 turns ants into actual zombies.

Justin is gripped by Samira's presentation. He leans to Zu:

JUSTIN

Zombie ants? Why didn't we do our presentation on this??

The rest of the students don't look as bored as usual.

ON Suzy, looking nervous. She pours over a small stack of pink index cards in her hands, under the desk.

SAMIRA NASRI

The ant stumbles away from the colony like a drunk. Until now everything the ant did was for the good of the colony, but not anymore.

JUSTIN

(whispering to Suzy)
I think Samira's presentation is way better than ours. Wayyy better.

(off her look)
You ok?

We see: Suzy's hands shaking, holding the index cards.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

(to Suzy)
You gonna be able to do this? You have to speak for us to pass.

Suzy nods weakly.

SAMIRA NASRI

When the ant dies a stalk begins growing out of his head.

Samira clicks and a time lapses video appears of a desiccated ant with a stick growing from it's corpse.

JUSTIN

HO-LY SCHNIPPERS...

SAMIRA NASRI

Then one day that stalk explodes raining spores down on a new colony and a new generation of zombie ants are born. Thank you.

The class claps politely. Justin leaps up clapping furiously.

JUSTIN

BRILLIANT! JUST BRILLIANT!

Mrs. Turton is sitting way in the back of the classroom.

MRS. TURTON
 Excellent job, Samira. Thank you.
 (referring to her list)
 OK. Justin and Suzy. Get up here
 and tell us about sea anemones.

JUSTIN
 Actually, we switched to killer
 jellyfish. At least, I think we
 did. Honestly, I have no idea what
 we're doing. She doesn't give me
 my lines until right before.

MRS. TURTON
 Killer jellyfish? I sense a theme
 today. Can't wait. OK, sally forth.

Justin gets up but Suzy stays seated.

JUSTIN
 (whispers)
 Come on. It's go time.

Suzy takes a deep breath and they make their way to the front of the room. She hands Justin some pink index cards and keeps some for herself. She presses the smart-board control and -

And the first slide comes up: a pic of Irukandji jellyfish. Justin begins, reading from his card.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 Okay. So um this might not look
 like much, but the uh...
 (sounding it out)
 Ir-u-kon-gee jellyfish is one of
 the most lethal and poisonous jelly
 fish in the world. If not *the* most
 lethal! And our hypothesis is...
 (then)
 That these deadly creatures have
 invaded South Grove Beach.

MRS. TURTON
 South Grove Beach, our town beach?

JUSTIN
 Correct. That's our hypothesis
 heretofore, your eminence.

Suzy hits the next slide: "HYPOTHESIS: The deadly Irukandji has invaded South Grove beach."

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

And now, my esteemed colleague will present our evidence. Take it away, Suzy.

Justin gives Zu the floor. She looks very, very nervous.

We see: thirty SEVENTH GRADERS staring at her, slight concern on their faces about the invading jellyfish.

We see: Molly, Jenn and Aubrey smiling fake smiles.

We see: Mrs. Turton, thinking their hypothesis is unlikely...

Zu clicks next slide: a picture of the melting North Pole.

Zu is supposed to talk but she does not.

Justin improvis. He gently takes the card from her and reads:

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

We uh... present to the jury evidence #1: Global Warming. Irukandji jellyfish are migrating from Australia in increasing numbers because global warming is changing the temperatures of the world's oceans.

(then)

Back to you, Suzy.

But Zu is still frozen.

Justin takes the remote, clicks to the next slide: a giant bloom of jellyfish clogging a beach at low-tide.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

(to Suzy)

Want to tell them about the increase in blooms in the Atlantic?

Suzy is trying to speak, but nothing is happening.

We see: that polar bear, the saddest one in the world, from YouTube again. His lips moving, no sound coming out.

We see: Dylan Parker miming taking a piss in the corner.

We see: Molly, Jenn and Aubrey whispering and giggling.

We see: the whole class as a bloom of jellyfish.

We see: the whole class as a group of zombie ants.

MRS. TURTON
Do you need a second, Suzy?

JUSTIN
No, she's fine. Evidence #2 -

But Suzy grabs the remote in a panic and clicks quickly through the PowerPoint presentation - skipping ahead.

Justin's not sure what she's doing, until:

She stops on the final image. A picture of Franny Jackson.

She clicks again and text appears beneath Franny's picture:
"Evidence #5: Franny Jackson killed by Irukandji sting."

MRS. TURTON
OK. Stop - stop right there. Justin and Suzy, sit down.

SAMIRA
...What does that say?

PANICKED STUDENTS
Franny Jackson was stung by a jellyfish??/ Oh my God./ She was?

Mrs. Turton is making her way to the front to shut this down.

MRS. TURTON
Someone unplug the PowerPoint!

HIMKAR
I thought Franny drowned.

SUZY (V.O.)
That's what I'm saying! NO! She didn't! She didn't drown!

MRS. TURTON
JUSTIN. SUZY. SIT DOWN.

SUZY (V.O.)
But they aren't listening to me! If they would just LISTEN TO ME -

Zu is incensed and determined. She points emphatically at Franny's picture and opens her mouth to speak...

HOLD ON HER OPEN MOUTH.

SUZY (V.O.)

Interesting fact. When you don't use your vocal cords for two months, and then you suddenly try to use them *to shout*, this is what happens.

Suzy emits a strangled, hoarse, almost animal cry of protest. Like a bird's CAW, a wolf's HOWL, and a human ORGASM at once.

It's a horrible, guttural sound.

And it's met with: utter silence from class. Mouths agape.

A beat. Then -

The class ERUPTS into hysterical LAUGHTER.

Aubrey, Jenna and Molly laugh hardest. OFF them, we cut to -

EXT. ROCK LAKE - FLASHBACK - FOUR MONTHS AGO, IN MAY - NIGHT

- the four laughing faces of Molly, Aubrey, Jenna and Franny, lit by a nearby bonfire. We're at a camp out in the woods. A Ranger's sign down by the lake says, ROCK LAKE.

We see: the four girls are in front of a huge group of SIXTH GRADERS, all of whom are laughing and pointing at Zu.

We see why: Suzy is cradling a dead frog in her hands.

Franny's LAUGHING FACE almost looks demonic.

FRANNY

Freak-show.

All the SIXTH GRADERS start to chime in, chanting while they point at Suzy:

SIXTH GRADERS

FREAK SHOW FREAK SHOW FREAK SHOW
FREAK SHOW FREAK SHOW FREAK SHOW -

INT. MRS. TURTON'S SCIENCE CLASS - CONTINUOUS - PRESENT

The whole class is still LAUGHING and pointing at Suzy.

MRS. TURTON

OKAY. Quiet down, everyone - that's enough. I mean it.

Justin puts his arm around Zu, gently.

JUSTIN
Come on, Suzy - let't sit down.

DYLAN PARKER
Ew! Don't touch her, Maloney!
You'll get Rabies or whatever the
eff that was.
(imitating her cry/howl)
"ERRRRRRGGGGKKK!!!"

Everyone in the class LAUGHS. Dylan's imitation is spot on.

JUSTIN
Why don't you *shut up*, Dylan
Parker.

Whoa. A record just scratched.

DYLAN PARKER
...what?

JUSTIN
You're just a big Zombie Ant, you
know that? You're all a bunch of
big dumb zombie ants -

But he doesn't finish his sentence because Dylan Parker
pushes Justin hard, and he falls back over a desk.

The class erupts into CHAOS. Girls SCREAM. Boys yell
"FIGHT!!!" Mrs. Turton screams for everyone to calm down, but
we don't hear any of this because the SOUND CUTS OUT and we
stay on Zu...

INT. PRINCIPAL HALL'S OFFICE - FEW HOURS LATER

...as she takes a seat in the Principal's office.

She is ringed by PRINCIPAL HALL (40s, stern), Jim, Meg, and
Mrs. Turton.

Mrs. Turton is speaking, but there's no sound.

Meg and Jim are agreeing, but there's no sound.

Zu looks out the Principal's cracked door, and we see a
sliver of Justin waiting for her in the hall. Leaning against
the lockers, an ice pack to his lip.

We hear: the crisp tissue in Meg's lap. CRUMPLE. CRUMPLE.

We hear: the car keys that her father is nervously jingling
in his hand. JINGLE. JINGLE.

We hear: Hall's pen, writing in a file. SCRIBBLE SCRIBBLE.

Meg taps Suzy's knee, indicating she should pay attention.

A beat.

All the adults look at Zu, expecting an answer to some unheard question.

A beat.

MRS. TURTON
Come on, Suzy.
(gently)
Why don't I take you back to class.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Justin stands up as Mrs. Turton and Suzy arrive.

MRS. TURTON
Shouldn't you be in lunch, Justin?

JUSTIN
They expelled Dylan Parker for pushing me. So no, I can't show my face in lunch ever again.

Mrs. Turton can't help it, she laughs and gives the top of his head a little love-pat.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
So we got an A today, am I right?

MRS. TURTON
No. You did not get an A, Justin. But I will accept a *written* paper about sea anemones. With a hypothesis you actually support.

JUSTIN
How do you know we didn't support the jellyfish claim? You didn't get to hear the rest of it.
(then)
I mean, I didn't either. But Zu worked really hard on it, Ms. T.

Mrs. Turton regards Zu patiently, kindly. Tries to make this a teaching moment.

MRS. TURTON

You know the scientific method, Zu. If you were to successfully prove that a rare jellyfish was here in South Grove, you'd need evidence. A specimen. Or an expert to back up your claim. You'd need his or her scientific analysis and testimony.

JUSTIN

A jellyfish expert? That's not a thing.

MRS. TURTON

Stick to sea anemones.
(gently)
Due next Monday, okay?

JUSTIN

Thanks, Miss T. Sounds great.
Doesn't it, Suzy?
(then)
Suzy?

She has already taken off down the hall, excited.

SUZY (V.O.)

That's what I need. A jellyfish expert. The question was, how would I get one?

OFF Justin as he watches her disappear, yet again.

INT. SUZY'S ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Zu throws herself into the desk at her chair, opens up Google on her computer and types:

"Jellyfish Experts"

A bunch of results pop up, pages and pages of results.

Zu starts scrolling through them, but there are too many. She goes back to the google homepage, and adds:

"Irukandji Jellyfish Expert"

A PAUSED VIDEO comes up, looking like a news desk of some sort. She clicks on it.

EXT. A BEACH IN FLORIDA - CONTINUOUS

KIP (30s, windbreaker, bad newscaster hair) stands on a dock with a sizable crowd. Wind whips his hair. He points to:

DIANA NYAD (64, very muscular, not at all grandmotherly) on the edge of a dock. She adjusts her goggles and cap.

KIP

...live on the scene this morning
with champion long distance swimmer
Diana Nyad as she attempts to make
the daring and dangerous swim from
Florida to Cuba.

Diana waves to the crowd and flexes her biceps. Diana yanks a silicone mask over her face. It's super creepy (google it).

KIP (CONT'D)

She's been fitted with a new
silicone mask designed to protect
her face from jellyfish stings,
which is what ended her last
attempt in 2009.

We see: old photos of Diana's face on the screen, blistered and swollen beyond recognition by jellyfish bites.

Yikes! Suzy leans towards her monitor, getting a better look -

EXT. SOMEWHERE BETWEEN CUBA AND FLORIDA - CONTINUOUS

Suzy is suddenly next to Nyad, on a big swan floatie. She holds a microphone, like she is reporting to us on the news:

SUZY

Potential expert #1. Advantages:
Has firsthand expertise with
jellyfish stings. Could be useful
as an expert. Also, she looks
tough. Might be good to have
someone tough helping me.

Suzy and Nyad are suddenly surrounded by a ring of jellyfish.

SUZY (CONT'D)

Disadvantages: She seems to be some
sort of a jellyfish magnet. And
she's a horror movie in that mask.

Nyad turns towards Suzy, wearing the freaky, scary silicone mask, a swarming jellyfish bloom climbing up behind her...

SUZY (CONT'D)
 Potential Expert #1 Denied! Too scary!

DR. LEGLER (O.S.)
 Anything, you would like to talk about today?

Suzy's swan floatie starts rapidly deflating...

DR. LEGLER (CONT'D)
 Maybe what happened in Science class yesterday? Suzanne?

OFF Zu sinking into the water, we cut to -

INT. THERAPY BUILDING - CONTINUOUS - PRESENT

Dr. Legler blinks at us, expecting us to talk.

We see her cross and re-crosses her legs. She's wearing weird tights again. Plaid this time.

DR. LEGLER
 I understand a lot of students were upset by your presentation.
 (then)
 They were bullies about it?

Silence.

DR. LEGLER (CONT'D)
 Suzy, your parents aren't here today, as you can see. They aren't here because I have to fill out an assessment form on you for your school. About how I think you're coping with all this.
 (then)
 How do you think you're coping?

We see: the form in her lap. Boxes that are not yet checked.

DR. LEGLER (CONT'D)
 I understand you had a bullying incident last spring, too, at Rock Lake. The sixth grade retreat?
 (no answer)
 Did it make you angry? Did it make you want to scream?

Dr. Legler has decided to take another tactic today:

DR. LEGLER (CONT'D)
DO. YOU. WANT. TO. SCREAM?!

EXT. ROCK LAKE - FLASHBACK - FOUR MONTHS AGO, IN MAY

DYLAN PARKER
BLUE 52! BLUE 52! HUT HUT HIKE!

Dylan Parker and KEVIN (12, big forehead, feral eyes) are tossing something back and forth in front of a SMALL CROWD.

Franny is standing a couple feet away with Aubrey, Jenna and Molly, delighted. Their hands on their hips, laughing.

Suzy abruptly enters the frame, goes right up to Franny.

SUZY
Make him stop! He's gonna kill it!

Aubrey, Jenna and Molly exchange a look. *Ugh, her again.*

We see why Zu is upset: it's A FROG Dylan and Kevin are playing catch with.

We see: the poor frog is trying to hop out of Dylan's hand, but it's too beat up to stand. It's suffering.

SUZY (CONT'D)
He's just doing it to impress you.
If you tell him to stop, he will.

Dylan arrives at their side, wiggling the animal in Franny's face. Franny SQUEALS, pushing him away, loving the attention.

SUZY (CONT'D)
Dylan!

DYLAN
Kiss it! Make it a prince, Frances.

FRANNY
(coy)
Ew! Don't touch me with that thing!

DYLAN
(as the frog)
"Come on, kiss me, Frances. Give me a big, wet french kiss, baby!"

Franny pushes him away coquettishly and without a word, Dylan turns and bunts the frog as hard as he can into a tree.

We hear: A JUICY CRACK as it splats against the tree. The kids scream and laugh, crying "Gross!" "Ew!" "Nasty!"

SUZY
NOOO! YOU STUPID JERK!

Suzy runs over to pick up the mangled frog, cradling it in her hands. The campground FALLS SILENT. All eyes on Suzy.

SUZY (CONT'D)
It's a life! You just stole a life, Dylan. Don't you care about it's life?

DYLAN
No. It's a frog, you weird little freak show.

KEVIN
(starting the chant:)
Freak show, freak show, freak show!

ENTIRE 6TH GRADE
FREAK SHOW FREAK SHOW FREAK SHOW!

SUZY (V.O.)
Possible Expert #2: Angel Yanagihara, Biochemist in Hawaii.

INT. SUZY'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT DAY - PRESENT

Back at her computer, Zu continues her hunt for an expert. She's now watching Webcam footage on youtube -

INT. DR. YANAGIHARA'S LAB - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Yanagihara clutches a cute MOUSE in her rubber-clad hand.

SUZY (V.O.)
When she was a young woman, Dr. Yanagihara was stung by a box jellyfish. Barely made it to shore before blacking out.

Dr. Yanagihara tapes the mouse belly-up to a table in her laboratory and shaves the fur off his belly.

SUZY (V.O.)
Since then, she's developed the first-ever treatment for stings.

She fills a long injection needle. Turns towards the camera.

DR. YANAGIHARA
 (no emotion)
 I will now inject the mouse with
 box jellyfish venom.

The cute little mouse contorts in fear as Dr. Yanagihara lowers the needle towards its gut.

POV of MOUSE as the needle bears down. The mouse SQUEAKS.

INT. CABIN - ROCK LAKE RETREAT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

We hear: GIGGLING in the pitch dark, then whispers:

AUBREY
 Shhhhh!

MOLLY
 Do it, Frances.

FRANNY
 I don't know you guys...

JENNA
 She's totally asleep. Do it.

We hear: the sound of someone HACKING A HUGE LOGIE.

We see: a face appear above us, too dark to make out at first...but then her red hair catches the moonlight.

Then we see: Franny Jackson's spit coming towards us, in slow motion, landing on Zu's face.

We hear: the other girls GIGGLING.

MOLLY
 Come on! Before she wakes up!

OFF Zu, wiping her best friend's spit from her face...

INT. SUZY'S ROOM - NIGHT - PRESENT

Suzy on her computer, the dying mouse on her screen.

SUZY (V.O.)
 Potential Expert #2: Denied.
 Unnecessary cruelty!

Zu goes back to the "Jellyfish Experts" search results.

She scrolls, then stops on a clip from an Australian TV show.

We see a frozen (candid) image of DR. JAMIE SEYMOUR (40s, Australian, more surfer than scientist, kinda dreamy really). He is in a stinger suit, smiling, holding up a test tube.

Suzy presses play and the video comes to life.

INT. JAMIE SEYMOUR'S BOAT - GREAT BARRIER REEF - DAY

A breathless and dramatic narrator speaks with reverence:

AUSTRALIAN NARRATOR(V.O.)

Dr. Jamie Seymour has been studying the deadly Irukandji jellyfish for over two decades. But on a fateful night off the Great Barrier Reef, the famed jellyfish hunter had suddenly become the prey!

From the POV of a wobbly, hand-held camera we MOVE IN on Jamie, as he emerges from the water, clutching his lip.

JAMIE

He got me. Bugger got me.

HIS CREW MEMBERS

GET THE VINEGAR!/ He's stung!/ GET THE GODDAMN VINEGAR!

FIRST MATE

ALERT EMS ON THE SATELLITE PHONE!

JAMIE

He just brushed me, I might live.

(laughing)

Little bugger, got me right in the kisser. One place I was exposed.

(relaxed)

Let's get to hospital. My pulse is starting to race. Throat closing.

The crew members start dousing him with vinegar solution, sitting him down and taking his wet suit off.

We stay on Jamie, who speaks directly to the hand-held.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

I won't be able to breathe in about eight minutes, and the vomiting will start any minute now.

We see the boat take off, speeding back towards land, and Jamie starts projectile vomiting off the side -

AUSTRALIAN NARRATOR (V.O.)
 As Jamie's condition rapidly
 deteriorates his crew races him to
 shore. Hoping against hope that
 doctors could save his life!

INT. INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - HOSPITAL - QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

We see Jamie writhing in pain in a hospital bed now. All the
 monitors BEEPING; his vitals are all CRASHING.

Jamie, curled in a ball, turns to the hand-held camera:

JAMIE
 Yeah. Pain level's about an 11
 right now. On a scale of 1 to 10.
 Not very comfortable, no.
 (laughs)
 But you should see the other guy!

He holds the test-tube up again. Zu is rapt by him.

SUZY (V.O.)
 Jamie Seymour isn't like Dr.
 Yanagihara, who stung a mouse and
 then watched it die. Jamie Seymour
is the mouse. The Irukandji
 inflicted great pain on him...

Jamie peers into the test-tube with empathy. Curiosity.

SUZY (V.O.)
 But he doesn't hate them. He wants
 to understand them.

Meg pops her head into Zu's room, and she slams her laptop.

MEG
 After midnight, honey. You know the
 drill. Chop chop. Get in bed.

Zu climbs into bed, pulls the covers up. Meg kisses her.

MEG (CONT'D)
 I got a note from the school about
 Franny's memorial. Coming up in a
 few days, huh?
 (no answer)
 Your Dad and I are both gonna take
 a day off from work, and come.
 Would you like that?
 (no answer/beat)
 (MORE)

MEG (CONT'D)

Okay. We can talk about it later,
sugar pie. Good night.

Meg closes the door and the screen goes BLACK.

We see: the frog contorting in pain.

We see: the mouse contorting in pain.

We see: Jamie contorting in pain.

We see: the spit falling from Franny's cruel face.

We see: the frog hitting the tree.

We see: Jamie's kind eyes, wanting to understand jellyfish.

Suzy turns ON her light, grabs her laptop and starts to type.

SUZY (V.O.)

Dear Doctor Jamie Seymour. After
considerable research and much
deliberation, I've decided that you
are the jellyfish expert I am most
interested in speaking with.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - MORNING

Suzy getting her books from her locker.

SUZY (V.O.)

I'm writing I'm writing to report
an Irukandji sighting in the South
Grove, Mass. Please contact me as
soon as possible, Dr. Seymour.
Yours in Science, Suzy Swanson.
SEND.

We hear: the WHOOSH! Sound of a sent e-mail, just as Justin
slides up next to her locker.

JUSTIN

Hey. Asking for no real reason, but
you haven't been on line in the
last 24 hours, have you?

Zu looks at him.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Just. Might be some content you
don't need to see. If you smell
what I'm stepping in.

Suzy gives him a knowing look.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Oh. You've already seen?

She nods.

We see: videos of her ANIMAL CRY in Science class.

We see: her Facebook wall's endless tags of photos of her, standing in front of the class, terrified and angry.

We see: all the posts about #PeeGirl #freakshow #pathetic.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
You didn't see the meme, did you?

We see: a meme of her emotional outburst during her presentation, with vomit shooting out of her mouth.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
They're just a bunch of idiots who we won't even remember at our reunion. Which we won't even go to cause we'll be too busy heli-skiing on the mountain *that we own*.

Suzy shoots him a look.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Not "we" like we own the mountain together. Like, each of us have our own mountains. Near each other.

Suzy shoulders her book bag and SLAMS her locker, taking off.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
See you for lunch then?

SUZY (V.O.)
Dear Dr. Seymour, Perhaps you didn't get my first email. Following up again. Send. [Whoosh!]

She passes a gauntlet of girls MOCKING HER CRY and staring.

SUZY (V.O.)
Please get back to me. [Whoosh!]

INT. ENGLISH CLASS - CONTINUOUS

Suzy enters and sees that the mean meme is up on the SmartBoard, a prank for all to see. Zu holds her head high.

SUZY (V.O.)
 Dear Dr. Seymour, Suzy Swanson
 again, trying to reach ya [Whoosh!]

INT. LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Suzy enters the locker room, just as Jenna, Molly and a GAGGLE OF GIRLS finish doing something mean to her backpack.

SUZY (V.O.)
 Jamie, it's Suzy again, from Eugene
 Field Middle School. Hit me back
 when you can. Okay, pal? [Whoosh!]

They girls watch as Zu picks up her backpack. Someone has drawn a huge cartoon Jellyfish and the words: "#FREAKSHOW."

SUZY (V.O.)
 Look, I really can't do this
 without you, Dr. Seymour. *There is
 death and destruction here!* The
 Irukandji have unleashed a blood-
 tide and I need you. Send, send,
 send. [Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!]

JUSTIN (PRE-LAP)
 No. Absolutely not.

INT. LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Zu and Justin at a library table in a quiet corner. She presses a pink index card into his hand.

JUSTIN
 No, I told you: I'm not doing this
 anymore. Hard pass. Passing hard.
No means no.

ON Suzy's face, streaked by sunlight from the window. She really needs him to do this. Her eyes, a [pretty] plea...

Justin takes the card, dials a number on his iPhone.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 0 11 61... what country code is
 this? Middle Earth?

He puts the phone ON SPEAKER and we hear it RINGING. We wait.

INT. RESEARCH LAB - JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY - QUEENSLAND, AU

A busy oceanology lab. MAY (early 30s, overworked, white lab coat) answers in a thick Australian accent.

MAY

Lab. This is May.

INT. READING ROOM - LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

JUSTIN

Yes. Hi, May. May, I'd like to ask you something. If I may!

Zu rolls her eyes; he's a such a disaster.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

(reading off a card)

Is Dr. Jamie Seymour there? We want to report an Irukandji sighting.

MAY'S VOICE

Who's calling?

JUSTIN

Uh.

(going off-script)

Two oceanography students. From Harvard. Summa Cum Laude.

MAY'S VOICE

Oh! Is Larry Barnes still department chair there?

JUSTIN

...he is, yep. Helluva guy.

Zu shakes her head. So hard to get good help.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

So listen, we've been trying to reach Dr. Seymour by e-mail, but -

MAY'S VOICE

Yeah. Jamie's out on the reef. Don't hear from him for months when he's there. Just like he likes it.

JUSTIN

Any other way to reach him?

MAY'S VOICE

You can take a dingy out to the Great Barrier Reef and find him?

JUSTIN

Okay, thanks May.

Justin hangs up. He knows immediately what Zu is thinking.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

No. You can't go to Australia to track down a stranger in a dingy.

Zu takes her phone back. Opens Australian Air on web browser.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

"Why not, Justin?"

I'll tell you why not, Suzy.

A.) You don't have any money.

B.) You can't fly alone.

C.) You probably don't...

INT. AARON'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

JUSTIN (O.S.)

...Have a passport. Most 13 year olds don't.

D.) I'll miss you. Did I say that out loud?

Suzy digs through her brother's boxed belongings, tearing through cleats and uniforms and trophies and oars.

She finds:

- a picture of the whole family together, from happier times.
- a collage Aaron made in middle school of soccer star Cristiano Ronaldo festooned with heart stickers. Suzy smiles.
- an old jockstrap... oh God.
- Aaron's passport. Eureka!

She turns to his photo and takes a long look. It's a photo of Aaron from four years ago. He has a Bieber cut and baby face.

Zu looks at herself in the mirror, pulls her hair back, adopts her best "teenage boy" scowl.

Could it work? They do look very similar...

INT. MING PALACE CHINESE RESTAURANT - NIGHT - LATER

Zu sits across from Jim in a mostly-empty Chinese restaurant. He stares at the menu, deep in thought.

We hear: NOODLES FRYING.

We hear: THE NEON SIGN FLICKERING IN THE WINDOW.

We hear: LAUGHTER. Zu turns to look, and we see a quick flashback of the Swanson family in one of the booths, laughing and passing the Lo Mein around. Aaron has chopsticks up his nose, being a Walrus. All four of them LAUGH.

But A WAITRESS (50s) interrupts Zu's memory.

WAITRESS

It's my Saturday night regulars!
You two ready to order?

Zu looks back at the booth, now empty.

JIM

Sure. Uh. Zu will have the Lo Mein
and I'm gonna go with -

WAITRESS

Moo Shoo Pork, extra Pancakes on
the side?

JIM

The usual, yes.

SUZY (V.O.)

Now he'll order a Rolling Rock.

JIM

And maybe a Rolling Rock tonight.

WAITRESS

You got it, Jim.

SUZY (V.O.)

Now my dad will pretend not to
watch the ballgame playing on the
screen behind me while we sit in
awkward silence.

(then)

Not much to see for a little while.

Time speeds up to 2x or 4x speed, as if Suzy can control it.

We see: the waitress on super-speed serving the other tables, dropping checks, serving and clearing their dinner. Fast.

Then time normalizes.

WAITRESS
Another Rolling Rock?

JIM
Whoo-boy... I better not.

SUZY (V.O.)
He never orders a second beer. He
always says Whoo-Boy first. He also
irons his jeans, but I digress.

Time speeds up again. The waitress clears their table, brings
dessert menus, clears dessert menus, drops Jim the check.

He dabs his mouth with a napkin, time slows down again...

SUZY (V.O.)
Here it comes...

SUZY (V.O.)
Gonna go wash this Moo Shu
Pork off my hands.

JIM
Gonna go wash this Moo Shu
Pork off my hands.

Jim gets up and puts his credit card down as he exits.

Zu moves fast. She pulls out a pink index card and scrawls
her dad's credit card info down. Even the CVC on the back.

Jim returns, sliding into the booth with fortune cookies.

JIM (CONT'D)
I got a bad one. "Land is always on
the mind of flying birds."
(laughs)
What birds? Boo. What'd you get?

Suzy opens hers and reads it. "A smooth long journey ahead!"

OFF Suzy's smile, we cut to -

INT. SUZY'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING - THE NEXT DAY

Justin spies on Meg's Subaru from the window. It pulls away.

JUSTIN
You sure she won't be back?

Suzy nods. She's seated by the mirror, down to business.

Justin takes in the wonderland that is a girl's bedroom. So many stuffed animals. Lots of pictures of Aaron and Zu.

She SNAPS her fingers, getting his attention.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 Sorry... I've never been in a girl's bedroom before. So many textures. I'm very tactile. Does it smell like coconuts in here? Mmm.

He joins her by the mirror and Suzy holds out the scissors.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 You sure about this?
 (then)
 It's going to physically hurt me to Bieber you. I don't think I can.

Suzy serves him up some super cute Disney eyes.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 (softly)
 Sigh.
 (like a surgeon)
 Scalpel.

She hands him the scissors and he starts at it. A lock of Suzy's hair falls to the floor, then another. Then one more.

Justin and Suzy stare at her new Bieber fever in the mirror.

Suzy holds Aaron's passport up. Resemblance is darn close.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 I'll add some layers through here, some texture. But yeah. They just might buy it. Let's talk costume.
 (pointing to the closet)
 Look for something three sizes too big. Clown pants.

Suzy disappears back into her closet.

Justin eyes her boarding pass (for "Aaron Swanson") and travel documents. She also has: a reservation with Cairns Cab Company, Coral Sea Coach shuttle service, Tropicana Lodge motel. A weather report. Exchange rate form. She's serious.

Suzy returns in baggy sweats, a Boston University sweatshirt, and Red Sox hat. Justin nods.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 Not bad. Now remember: firm
 handshake, eye contact.

Justin holds his hand out and Suzy clasps it hard. Strong.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 Okay, you aren't trying to *kill* the
 Aussie. Firm but gentle. Lock eyes.

They make firm eye contact until Zu GIGGLES. A slight blush.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 No, you gotta laugh in a much lower
 register. Like this. Manly.

He giggles, it's actually WAY HIGHER than Suzy's. He adjusts and goes lower. She tries it. He adjust and goes even lower. She COUGH-CHOKES and they both LAUGH. Hands still clasped.

EXT. SUZY'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - AFTERNOON

Justin and Suzy stand on the street corner with her luggage.

JUSTIN
 This charter boat. Did you check
 them out on Yelp? It's not a guy
 with an inner tube, is it?

Suzy sees her Uber coming towards them, grabs her stuff.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
 How are you going to find Dr.
 Seymour in the middle of a reef?

Suzy's Uber pulls up.

UBER DRIVER
 Swanson?

JUSTIN
 Suzy, wait. I don't have a good
 feeling about this. Something could
 happen to you out there, and I
 don't have a passport yet so I
 couldn't come find you and I don't
 know anyone in Australia I could
 even call except that weird kid
 from my camp but he's from New
 Zealand actually and that's not -

Suzy gives him a genuine, grateful hug and he melts.

She climbs into the Uber.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
Please call my cell and let me know
you got there ok? Breath into the
receiver. I'll know it's you!

The door closes and Justin watches her drive off in an Uber.

INT. AIRPORT - SECURITY CHECKPOINT

Suzy nervously waiting in line. Her turn. She hands the TSA agent her passport.

TSA AGENT
Remove your hat.

The TSA agent looks at her (Aaron's) passport for a moment. Then her. Then her passport again.

Then he stamps her boarding pass and waves her through. *She's through!*

Suzy can't believe how easy that was. She heads towards the metal detectors with a sigh of relief, as -

TSA AGENT (CONT'D)
Wait! Hold right there, son.

Suzy freezes and turns back to the agent. Her heart in her throat. Is she busted?

TSA AGENT (CONT'D)
B.U.?

Suzy has no idea what B.U. means. She nods weakly and shrugs?

The TSA reaches his hand out, giving her a big thumbs up -

TSA AGENT (CONT'D)
Me too, class of 92.
(re: her BU sweatshirt)
Go Terriers!

Oh. BU! Boston University. Suzy gives him an enthusiastic thumbs up and heads to the metal detectors. Close one!

INT. AIRPORT - GATE

Suzy in a crowded gate. She looks out at the plane, catching her reflection in the glass. She looks like a determined boy.

AIRLINE AGENT

We will now continue boarding
flight 1409 to Brisbane. Passengers
in Zone 3 are welcome to board.

Suzy's line starts moving towards the door.

INT. AIRPLANE - ECONOMY - CONTINUOUS

Suzy seated with a neck pillow, waiting for take-off.

We see: two security officers enter the plane, looking
concerned. They head down the aisle towards us.

Suzy pulls her cap down low, tries to become invisible.

But the officers stop at her seat. They are looking at her.

INT. AIRPORT SECURITY OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Suzy sits in a plastic airport chair in the office.

We hear: FLIGHTS being announced. People going places.

We hear: THE ROLLING of luggage carts and bags.

We hear: People GREETING each other, excited to be reunited.

Stony-faced, Zu watches out the window as Meg's Subaru pulls
up at the curb outside at lightening speed. She bolts out her
car, barely managing to close the door.

One second later, Meg bursts through the doors and throws
herself at Zu, grabbing her. Not letting go.

We hear: Meg SOBBING into Zu's lap.

OFF Suzy's detached and somber face, we cut to -

INT. THERAPY - MORNING

A tense beat.

Meg and Jim are in their usual seats. Dr. Legler is wearing
red and blue striped tights today.

The adults are all very serious today.

DR. LEGLER

Help us understand, Suzanne. What
you were thinking.

JIM
 Christ! She doesn't talk, Doctor.
 How many times do we have to do
 this? Week after week.

MEG
 Jim!

JIM
 (to Meg)
 Where the hell were you when this
 was going on anyway? Huh?

MEG
 Where was I? It was your credit
 card she used!

SUZY (V.O.)
 Bang.

JIM
 Zu, you need to start speaking
 right now, young lady.

MEG
 Or what? You gonna ground her?

JIM
Of course we're gonna ground her.
 No e-mail. No phone. No TV. She was
 on her way to Australia! We have to
 ground her until the end of time.

SUZY (V.O.)
 Bang, bang, bang.

DR. LEGLER
 Jim. Meg.

JIM
 What happened to my well behaved,
 well adjusted daughter?

MEG
 What do you think happened to her?
We happened to her!

Suzy holds her fingers together, to form a little GUN with
 her hand. None of the adults notice.

SUZY (V.O.)
 BANG, FRANNY JACKSON!

EXT. A SWIMMING POOL - FLASHBACK - FOUR MONTHS AGO, MAY

Zu marches to the edge of a pool, where we see Franny doing fast, serious laps. Zu tries to flag her down.

Finally, Franny sees Zu and stops swimming, annoyed. When she emerges and takes off her goggles, her gaze is cold.

FRANNY

What are you doing here? I told you
I couldn't hang out today.

SUZY

I need to talk to you.

FRANNY

Just! I'll see you at school, okay?
(putting goggles back on)
Varsity try-outs are at the end of
the summer, I'm behind in my
training --

ZU

Why did you spit on me at Rock
Lake?

A beat.

FRANNY

...I didn't.

ZU

You spit in my face, Franny.
(then)
I saw you do it.

Franny takes her swim cap off. Unsure what to say.

FRANNY

Look, it was really dark in the
cabin. You probably don't know what
you even saw -

ZU

I. SAW. YOU. DO. IT.

FRANNY

Alright, fine, okay?! I spit on
you. But t wasn't supposed to be
this big thing. It was just a dare.

SUZY

Someone dared you to spit on me,
and you said yes?

FRANNY

It wasn't like that. You wouldn't understand.

A beat. Franny looks away, into the water.

SUZY

Are we not best friends anymore?

FRANNY

(hard)

Sometimes you have to make a choice.

SUZY

And you're choosing them? A bunch of vapid Barbie dolls?

FRANNY

They aren't vapid. They're actually really nice Zu, and *I tried so hard* to bring you along with me. I introduced you to them, tried to get you to use some hair product...

SIZU

This is because I wouldn't use gel?

FRANNY

(an outburst:)

No! You *almost blew this for me*, Zu. Going on about pee in the cafeteria?? What were you thinking? I almost got dropped from their table *because of you*.

SUZY

So? Get dropped from the table! Who cares what they think?

FRANNY

I do, Zu. *I want to sit with them*.

Zu puts her hands together in a gun and points it at Franny:

ZU

You know what? BANG!

FRANNY

...what?

ZU

You told me to shoot you if you
ever became like them - SO I'M
SHOOTING YOU! BANG!

FRANNY

You're so weird now.

Franny turns around and heads back towards the water.

ZU

DON'T YOU GET IT!? BANG!

Franny pulls her goggles on and dives in to the water.

ZU (CONT'D)

I'M SENDING YOU A SIGNAL! I'M
MAKING IT BIG, LIKE I PROMISED YOU!
DO I NEED TO MAKE IT BIGGER?

But Franny is already out of earshot, swimming steadily.

ZU (CONT'D)

I'm going to make you hear me,
Franny Jackson. *I'm gonna make you
be you again.*

INT. SUZY'S HOUSE - NIGHT - PRESENT

Zu is lying on her bed, utterly destroyed by her failed trip.
A tear SNEAKS down her cheek, but she wipes it away.

MEG (O.S.)

Honey? Justin Maloney is here.

Without turning, Suzy shakes her head: no.

MEG (O.S.) (CONT'D)

He's really sweaty, honey - I
think he ran here. He's really
insisting on seeing you.

We see: Meg step aside to REVEAL Justin. He is indeed very
sweaty. Guilty, sorry, worried and relieved all at once.

MEG (CONT'D)

(to Justin)

Just make it quick, she is
technically grounded.

Meg exits, closing the door. (Then she re-opens it again and
leaves it slightly ajar. They are pre-teens, after all.)

Suzy glares at Justin from her bed. A thousand yard stare.

JUSTIN

I'll just get right to it:
I'm sorry I narc'd on you. But your
plan was basically the premise of
all the *Taken* movies. And you are,
you know, super pretty, and the sex
slavery thing is real...I panicked.

(then)

I know I broke your trust by
calling your Mom and I'm sorry. But
I only did it because I like you.

(softly)

I've liked you since third grade.

Suzy continues to stare at him. Ice cold.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Even though you've given me no sign
that I should continue speaking,
I'm going to.

(summons his courage)

The Fall Dance is coming. The theme
is Heroes and Villains, which is
actually strangely cool for our
hellhole of a school...and I'm
wondering if you want to go with
me. I could be Boba Fett and you
could be Princess Leia. Or, with
that new hair cut, maybe Hans
Solo?.but Boba Fett is a
villain and Leia and Hans are both
heroes and you are a hero to me for
being so brave and trying to help
your dead best friend. So think
about it. But I need an answer now,
actually, because I forgot my
inhaler. Will you go with me?

A beat.

SUZY

No.

JUSTIN

Hey! You spoke! Suzy, you spoke!

(beat)

You broke your months-long silence
to say no to me...

(realizing)

I'm that big a "no," huh?

A beat. Justin is crushed. The wristwatch on his neck BEEPS.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Of course.

Justin pops his pill and tries to exit with dignity.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

I'll just. See you in Science,
then. Good night.

Suzy watches him go, a flicker of remorse.

INT. SCIENCE CLASS - PRESENT - NEXT MORNING

Suzy at her desk, depressed. She has a hoodie up over her head. She's grounded. Justin betrayed her. Australia was stolen from her. Now she'll never meet Jamie Seymour.

Justin glances at Zu. A quick peek. She turns away from him.

Mrs. Turton at the SmartBoard, pointing to a picture of the huge, colorful, happy Earth rising above the moon.

MRS. TURTON

Now, I know you guys have grown up with this famous image, but I want you to try to imagine what it must have been like to see it for the first time. To be the first living humans to see our Earth, in full color like this, shot from outside.

Mrs. Turton clicks the remote and another photograph of outer space appears. This one is mostly BLACK, with just a few pale brownish rays of light streaking across the vast nothingness.

MRS. TURTON (CONT'D)

Now, here's a different view. Taken more recently.

She points to a tiny dot.

MRS. TURTON (CONT'D)

That little speck is *also* Earth.

MRS. TURTON (CONT'D)

Shot from three billion miles away. Earth doesn't seem so big now, does it. When you see how alone we are.

We see: Suzy walking alone down an empty school hallway.

We see: Suzy changing for gym alone in an empty locker room.

MRS. TURTON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 The cosmologist Carl Sagan once
 called Earth "a mote of dust
 suspended in a sunbeam."

We see: Suzy staring out the window on an empty school bus.

We see: Suzy walking through her empty neighborhood.

MRS. TURTON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Isolated and alone. Surrounded by
 nothingness.

We see: Suzy eating alone in a completely empty cafeteria.

We PAN OUT to a view of the cafeteria from above: Suzy
 becoming a tiny pin dot in a huge galaxy of nothingness.

MRS. TURTON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Nothingness in every direction.

Suddenly, a CRACKLING VOICE comes over the PA speaker, which
 is located above the classroom door.

PA ANNOUNCEMENT
 Suzanne Swanson, please report to
 the office.
 (firm)
Suzanne Swanson to the office.

A beat. Unsure what to do, Suzy raises her hand.

MRS. TURTON
 Imagine that! Three billion miles.
 (calling on her)
 Yes. Suzy.

Zu points to the PA speaker [above the door]. *Should I go?*

MRS. TURTON (CONT'D)
 Yes, go. Fine. Make it quick.

Suzy hurries out of class. Justin watches her go, curious.

INT. EUGENE FIELD MIDDLE SCHOOL - MAIN OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Suzy enters the busy office and sits down on the bench, next
 to a couple students. The phone on the front counter RINGS.

Zu looks around. The Secretary has her hands full. No one
 else looks like they're gonna answer it. It keeps RINGING.

Finally, Zu picks it up and clears her throat.

We hear, in a deep, winning, fantastic Australian accent:

JAMIE'S VOICE (O.S.)
 Oh Good! Hello? Is someone there?
 I was cut off I think. This is
 Jamie Seymour. Holding for Suzy
 Swanson?

Suzy is dumbstruck. She tries to reply, nothing comes out.

JAMIE'S VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Hello? Can you hear me?
 (then)
 Bugger, this is a bad connection,
 I'm on my mobile... anyone there?

Suzy swallows hard. Summons all her energy and says:

SUZY
 I'm... here.

Words! They are working! She smiles.

SUZY (CONT'D)
I'm here! This is Suzy Swanson!

**INT. LECTURE HALL - GRADUATE SCHOOL OF OCEANOGRAPHY,
 UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND - MORNING**

JAMIE
 (into phone)
 Oh, good. I found you.

We see Jamie now, standing in front of a busy lecture hall. His lecture has just ended and he's balancing his phone on his shoulder while he packs up his stuff. He waves BYE to -

Some GRAD STUDENTS. They all adore him.

GRAD STUDENT
 See ya, Jelly Dude from Nemo Land!

JAMIE
 Shut it, you little ripper.
 (back to phone)
 So is this the same Suzy Swanson
 who's been sending me all those e-
 mails? Too many. Lost count at 65.

SUZY
 Yes, that's me. Sorry. I was eager
 to get a hold of you, Dr. Seymour.

Jamie's making his way out of the lecture hall.

JAMIE

Well I'm back on land and I go to call you, dolly, and your phone's deactivated. E-mail bouncing back.

SUZY

Oh yes. Sorry. I'm on a bit of a ...forced communication black out.

JAMIE

Well, good ol Google helped me track ya down. Only one Eugene Field Middle School in America.

INT. EUGENE FIELD MIDDLE SCHOOL - MAIN OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Zu is excited. Jamie Seymour's on the phone with her!

JAMIE

So listen. I'm actually at URI today. What's your schedule like?

SUZY

What's URI?

JAMIE

University of Rhode Island. Bay campus, in Narraganset.

A STUDENT enters the office and takes a seat on the bench.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

I've got a consult on transgenics and pathogens now but I can fit you in at 2 if you can get over here?

SUZY

(quietly)

Yeah. I can be there. Yes.

EXT. UNIVERSITY PARKING LOT - RHODE ISLAND - CONTINUOUS

Jamie exits the building now and heads towards his car, still on the phone. He BEEPS the car unlocked.

JAMIE

Great. I'll be in the Seawater Facility. Bring the specimen.

SUZY
...the specimen?

JAMIE
The jellyfish. I seriously doubt
it's an Irukandji you caught, but
either way, I'll need to see it.

SUZY
No, yes. I'll...bring it.

JAMIE
Two o'clock. Don't be late.

Jamie climbs into his car.

INT. EUGENE FIELD MIDDLE SCHOOL - OFFICE

SUZY
Great! I'm on my way!

Zu exits quickly. Exuberant.

OFF the students on the bench, giving Zu the hairy eyeball.

INT. SCIENCE CLASS - CONTINUOUS

Justin's anxious, wondering where Suzy has gone. She's been gone awhile.

He glances out the window and sees Suzy running across the school yard and jumping on her bike, making her escape.

OFF Justin's concerned look, we cut to -

EXT. BUS STATION - MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Zu bikes up and tosses her bike aside, hurries inside.

INT. SEAWATER FACILITY - RHODE ISLAND COAST - 2:06 PM

Suzy hurries into the facility, late.

Her eyes travel to a tall tubular tank in the center of the room that is ringed with a staircase to the rooftop.

We see: a multiple blooms of jellyfish clustered around a VERY CALM SCUBA DIVER who appears to be playing with them.

He turns and we see: "SEYMOUR" on the back of his suit.

Suzy RAPS on the glass to get his attention.

He waves at Zu, indicates she should take the stairs to the top of the tank. He heads to the surface, a glowing tail of jellyfish following him. Like the Pied Piper.

EXT. ROOFTOP - SEAWATER FACILITY - DAY

Zu steps onto the roof. There are various outdoor tanks and exhibits out there, in the bright sun.

She sees Jamie, his arms resting over the side of the tank. She runs over. He pulls off his mask and scuba hood.

SUZY

Dr. Seymour!

JAMIE

Let's see it. Where is it?

SUZY

Oh. Uh....

JAMIE

I told you to bring the specimen.

SUZY

I know. I'm afraid...it's still in its natural habitat.

JAMIE

You don't have anything to show me?

Jamie pulls his mask back on, done with her.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Waste of my time.

SUZY

No! I'm sorry I lied, but I did see one. A whole bloom! At Cove Beach.

JAMIE

Not possible. They're almost impossible to see with the naked -

SUZY

Without magnification, I know! I had binoculars taped into my hat.

(a plea)

There was a full moon and I was this close to catching one.

JAMIE

Sorry, kid. I'm too busy for this.

He pushes off the side, about to go under...

SUZY

So that's it??

JAMIE

Yes. Evidence is the only language. You can't offer an unsupported claim - or worse, an outright lie - and expect your findings to be taken seriously. It's just bad science, Miss Swanson.

(bye)

Careful on the stairs.

Jamie goes under water, disappearing from Zu forever...

SUZY

An Irukandji killed my best friend. She didn't drown, she was an excellent swimmer. The waters were calm. Not a cloud in the sky.

(as loud as she can:)

HER NAME WAS FRANNY JACKSON AND AN IRUKANDJI STUNG AND KILLED HER.

Jamie reappears at the surface. His face softer, patient.

JAMIE

How do you know?

(beat)

Was there evidence of a sting?

SUZY

... I didn't get to see her body.

JAMIE

Anyone log her symptoms? Was there evidence of cardiac arrest?

(Suzy shakes her head no)

Anyone drag the beach? Check the sand for salp? Test the water?

SUZY

I was hoping that's where you'd come in. What I need is an expert.

JAMIE

Look, dolly. I'm very sorry for your loss. I really, truly am, but.

Jamie studies this small, unkept girl. Her intensity.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Crap. Fine. 8AM tomorrow. I'll take a few readings. You bring coffee.

SUZY

Oh my God. Really??

JAMIE

Venti dark roast. Two sugars.

Jamie pops the oxygen back in his mouth and goes under.

SUZY

THANK YOU, DR. SEYMOUR!

INT. NAOMI JACKSON'S HOUSE - EARLY THE NEXT MORNING

Fluffernutter is BARKING HIS BRAINS OUT at the beach.

Naomi enters, coffee in hand, almost afraid to look out.

We see: Suzy alone on the beach in her waders again. She's filling up test tubes with water and scooping sand into jars.

OFF Naomi, what the hell's she doing out there?, we cut to -

EXT. SOUTH GROVE BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Suzy's not alone on the beach, Jamie was just underwater. He emerges from the surf now, in his stinger suit, hands empty.

SUZY

See anything?

JAMIE

No. Didn't expect to. They've surely gone out deep at this point. No evidence of rip tide, though. You were right about that.
(pointing)
Someone is waving at us.

We see: Naomi waving from her deck with a look of concern.

SUZY

Oh. Just wave back.

Jamie and Suzy wave.

JAMIE

She's a beaut, who's she?...

SUZY

Franny Jackson's Mom.

JAMIE

Oh. The gal that...?

SUZY

Yeah.

(teasing)

So it would be super appropriate to go mack on her right now.

JAMIE

Hey! I was just making a scientific observation, ya cheeky bugger. She's pretty.

NAOMI

ZU! SHOULDN'T YOU BE AT SCHOOL??

Suzy smiles and waves. Points to Jamie as an explanation.

SUZY

(to Jamie, softly)

Why don't you tell her you're the famous jelly dude from Nemo land.

JAMIE

(to Naomi)

I'M A SCIENTIST. WE'RE ON A FIELD TRIP. IT'S OK - SHE'S WITH ME.

SUZY

(laughs)

Are you done? We should get going.

JAMIE

(re: test tube)

I *am* done. Got everything I need.

Suzy and Jamie gather up their equipment.

We see: Naomi advancing down the beach towards them, a football field away. Lots of questions on her face.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Shouldn't we at least say hi to her? She clearly wants to meet me.

SUZY

No. Come on.

JAMIE
(to Naomi)
BYE! MEET YOU ANOTHER TIME I GUESS!

Suzy drags Jamie away. Waves bye to Naomi as she hurries off.

EXT. A PARKING LOT - LATER

Jamie examines the water and sand samples in the trunk of his car using scientific-looking instruments.

SUZY
What do you think?

JAMIE
Conditions are right. High concentration of salp, the little shrimp they love to eat. Water's unseasonably warm. High PH, also indicative of Irukandji.

SUZY
So: yes? I'm right?

JAMIE
No. All we did was *not disprove* it. Scientifically, we don't have any evidence. Just could've's. Circumstantials.

SUZY
But if you don't tell everyone I'm right then nothing will change.

JAMIE
Wouldn't change anyway, Suzy. We don't have enough to get a city ordinance or drag of the water.

SUZ
So we're going to give up? Even though you think I'm right?

JAMIE
Thinking you're right isn't enough.

SUZY
Maybe we could go out and catch one. Maybe the moon will be full again soon and we can -

JAMIE

I'm due in Cairns tomorrow, love.
Back in Australia.

Suzy's face falls, and she crumbles into a nearby bench.
Jamie studies this odd girl. How upset she is.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Why's this mean so much to you,
dolly?

SUZY

...I didn't think it would be the
last time I ever saw her.

JAMIE

Your friend?

SUZY

She told me to send her a message.
She said to make it big.

INT. SUZY'S KITCHEN - FLASHBACK - THREE MONTHS AGO, IN JUNE

We see: Suzy pulling Ming Palace take-out containers from the
freezer, trying to be ninja quiet and stealth. It's dawn.

They contain a yellow frozen liquid. She puts them into an
insulated bag. Just as she finishes, Meg appears.

MEG

Wow, look who's up early! Excited
for the last day of sixth grade?

SUZY

I volunteered to help my homeroom
teacher clean out the classroom.
Ok if I go in early?

MEG

Sure. Give me a minute and I'll
drop you.

SUZY

That's okay! Got my bike. Bye, Mom!

INT. SCHOOL - EARLY MORNING - STILL IN FLASHBACK

The hallways are deserted. Suzy walks up to Locker #605.

We see: the locker is covered in heart stickers and swimming
stickers. Someone's grafitti'ed Franny's name in a cool way.

Zu takes the containers from her bag one at a time. There are tons of them. She opens the containers, removes the frozen discs of urine, and slips them into the slats of the locker.

Then Zu ducks around the corner of the hallway to watch.

INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL - HALLWAY - AN HOUR LATER - FLASHBACK

The hallway is now crowded with STUDENTS.

We see: Franny head down the hall, flanked by Dylan and Jenna, like this is any other day. Too cool for school.

We see: Franny approach her locker and unlock it casually.

We see: the liquids POUR all over her, and all over the floor. Buckets of it. She is soaked. And in shock.

We see: STUDENTS cluster around her, GROANING IN DISGUST and POINTING at Franny. Aubrey and Molly run over, in shock.

DYLAN PARKER

Holy shit, it's piss!

(laughing)

SOMEONE PISSED IN FRANNY JACKSON'S
LOCKER!

MOLLY/AUBREY

OH MY GOD. / Someone get Ms. Hall!

JENNA

Someone get Ms. Hall! It's PISS!!!!

Zu watches as Franny slinks to the floor, sobbing. Humiliated. Her freckles covered in tears.

FRANNY

WHO DID THIS? WHO THE HELL PUT PEE
IN MY LOCKER?!

But she knows who did it. She looks up and down the hall until she finds Zu's face, poking around the corner.

FRANNY (CONT'D)

ZU. *How could you do this to me?*

Jenny, Molly and Aubrey turn. The whole hallway does. They look at Zu like she's a *monster*. WTF's the matter with her?

OFF Franny's face, she will never forgive Zu, we cut back to -

EXT. BENCH IN SOUTH COVE - PRESENT

Jamie puts his arm around Suzy's shoulders.

SUZY

I hurt her. Worse than she hurt me.

JAMIE

Look. I've been stung by jellies more times than I can count. And they damn-near kill me every time. But I don't blame the jellyfish for lashing out. They're doing what *all species* do when they feel threatened. Protect themselves.

(then)

You were protecting yourself.

SUZY

I thought I was helping her.

JAMIE

Doesn't make you a bad person, Suzy. Just makes you alive. Like the rest of us.

(tenderly)

Besides. Urine is completely sanitary.

Zu LAUGHS, loves her new friend.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Come on. I'll walk you to school.

They walk off, his arm around her.

EXT. EUGENE FIELD MIDDLE SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

We see: STUDENTS pouring into front doors of the school. They are all dressed in black.

The mood is somber. It's a sad morning. ADULTS in black, too.

JAMIE

Geezus...that's a dreary school uniform you've got. Black?

SUZY

Oh no....what day is it.

JAMIE

Thursday the 12th. Why?

SUZY
Franny's memorial is today.

A beat.

SUZY (CONT'D)
 Will you come in with me?

JAMIE
 Oh.
 (beat)
 Won't your parents be there?

Suzy nods.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
 Probably better to sit with them
 then, right? I didn't know her.

Suzy nods, she understands.

JAMIE (CONT'D)
 I'll tell you something, though,
 Suzy Swanson. I think you're gonna
 be one hell of a scientist, kid.

Jamie exits, with a gentle wave. OFF Suzy, dreading this...

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

We see: A sea of black clothes. The entire school is in this
 airless, dark space. Too loud for such a somber occasion.

Zu shuffles in with a large crowd of students. Blending in.

We see: a picture of Franny projected onto a SCREEN onstage,
 where a slideshow will surely be shown.

We see: a podium ringed by funeral flower arrangements.

We see: The flower garden memory board, proudly displayed.

We see: Jenna, Molly, and Aubrey, in seats up on stage. As
 VIP speakers. They bestow royal waves to their devotees.

We see: Meg and Jim, sitting a few seats apart.

We see: Justin Maloney, reading the program.

IN THE FRONT ROW:

Naomi is ushered in by Principal Hall. Hand on her back.

NAOMI
 ...Where's Zu?

PRINCIPAL HALL
 Suzanne Swanson?

NAOMI
 Yeah. Why isn't she up on stage?

PRINCIPAL HALL
 (confused)
 Was she supposed to be?

Naomi scans the auditorium looking for Zu. Meg and Jim catch her eye, a couple rows back, and give her a sympathetic wave.

NAOMI
 Is Suzy with you?

They can't hear her.

NAOMI (CONT'D)
 IS ZU WITH YOU?

Jim shakes his head. They haven't seen her yet.

We see: Meg, Jim, Naomi and Justin all scan the crowd for Zu.

IN THE BACK ROW:

Zu DARTS into an empty seat and buries her face in the program. She does not want to be found by any of them.

We see: the interior of the program. Franny's face.

Then a hush falls over the room as Ms. Hall takes the podium.

The principal steps to the podium and the crowd hushes.

PRINCIPAL
 Good morning students, parents,
 faculty, friends.
 (then)
 Today, we take a moment to honor
 the extraordinary life of Frances
 May Jackson.
 (then)
 Before we begin, Franny's best
 friends would like to present a
 Memory Board in her honor. Girls?

Jenna, Molly, and Aubrey step up to the podium.

Zu's face BURNS HOT with anger. She's not sure she can sit here and listen to this. She looks for the nearest EXIT sign.

And then she sees him... sliding through the door in the back corner of the auditorium.

It's Jamie Seymour.

He sees her immediately and gives her a little nod. *I'm here.*

Zu is so touched, her eyes well up with tears.

JENNA

Thank you, Ms. Hall.

Jenna clears her throat, preparing to recite a speech.

JENNA (CONT'D)

When we think of our friend
Frances. We think of...

MOLLY

Sunlight.

AUBREY

Giggles.

JENNA

Trips to Pinkberry!

Some polite GIGGLES.

MOLLY

We think of radiant red hair.

JENNA

We think of...

AUBREY

Shopping.

JENNA

Makeovers.

Zu's eyes narrow, looking murderous.

MOLLY

The huge crush she had on...

MOLLY/JENNA/AUBREY

We'll never tell.

ON Naomi, confused. Franny had a crush? Who are these girls?

AUBREY
We think of...

AUBREY (CONT'D)
Laughter.

MOLLY
Cute shoes.

JENNA
Dance parties!

We see: the screen on stage change from Franny's picture to an underwater ocean scene.

MOLLY
(re: the Memory Board)
Frances, your memory garden may be
full of beautiful sunlit flowers.

JENNA
But you are the one and only...

JENNA/AUBREY/MOLLY
Rose.

They point to the single red rose. Then they begin an
Acappella performance of "The Rose" by Bette Midler.

JENNA/ MOLLY/ AUBREY
(singing)
Some say love, it is a river...
that drowns the tender reed.

It is terrible.

JENNA/ MOLLY/ AUBREY (CONT'D)
(singing)
Some say love, it is a razor...
that leaves your soul to bleed.

ON Zu, blood boiling.

We see: A bloom of blood-red jellyfish appear on the screen
on stage.

We see: water pooling around Zu's feet. Water seeping under
the auditorium walls, spilling down the aisles...

JENNA/AUBREY/MOLLY
(singing)
Some say love, it is a hunger!
An endless aching need!
I say love, it is a flower, and you-

ZU
NO! STOP! THIS IS BULLSHIT!!!!

The auditorium falls silent. Everyone looks to the back.

Zu charges towards the stage.

We see: water streaming down the walls now, waterfalls.

ZU (CONT'D)
Franny Jackson *hated* this GIRLY
PINK-ALICIOUS ROSE PETAL CRAP. SHE
LIKED GANGSTER RAP AND POOP JOKES
AND SHE DREAMED OF SWIMMING IN THE
OLYMPICS AND HIKING THE APPALACHIAN
TRAIL AND *YOU DIDN'T EVEN KNOW HER!*
ALL YOU DID WAS RUIN HER!

The girls on stage are dumbstruck. Everyone is.

MEG /JIM
Suzy! Honey! / Sit down, Zu.

We see: the jellyfish multiplying on screen now.

We see: the screen starting to ripple and bend, buckling.

Zu hoists herself up on stage and stomps to the podium.

PRINCIPAL
Ms. Swanson! Sit down right now!

ZU
SHE WAS MY BEST FRIEND AND I'M THE
ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS HER. WHO KNOWS
WHAT HAPPENED TO HER.

MEG /JIM/ PRINCIPAL
Zu!/ Suzy!/ Sit down, Ms. Swanson!

ZU
Why won't you listen to me? They're
here. They killed her and they're
here. THE IRUKANDJI ARE HERE.

We see: screen is pulsing with beating, venomous jellyfish.
Waves of seawater spill over the top of the screen.

Naomi sprints across the stage to Zu, and tries to drag her
from the podium. Zu holds on with dear life.

NAOMI
Let go - come on. Let's go outside.

SUZY
LISTEN TO ME!

NAOMI
A jellyfish isn't what killed her.

SUZY
YES IT IS! LISTEN!

NAOMI
What killed her was me, Zu.
Don't you know that?
(then)
Everyone in this auditorium, in
this whole town knows it. She died
because she had a shitty mother who
wasn't watching her at the beach.
Who let her go out there alone and
die a horrible, unspeakable death,
her mouth full of salt. This was *my*
fault.

SUZY
It wasn't your fault! I can prove
it was an Irukandji! My friend!
He's an expert! He'll tell you -
JAMIE!
(to the back of the house)
JAMIE! COME UP HERE!

Zu holds her hand up to her forehead, straining to see him in
the bright stage lights. The whole auditorium turns to look.

We see: the corner by the EXIT door's empty. He's gone.

WE see: HUNDREDS of people staring at Zu. She is humiliated.

Then -

The screen on stage explodes, and a giant wave filled with
twitching jellyfish pours into the auditorium.

Everyone runs for cover. It's chaos. Water everywhere.
Students drenched, SCREAMING. A tidal wave of seawater.

Zu runs off stage and out the backstage EXIT door...

EXT. PARKING LOT OUTSIDE STAGE DOOR - CONTINUOUS

... and finds Jamie, right outside, waiting for her.

ZU
Where did you go? You abandoned me!

JAMIE

I had no choice! You can't present half-baked research like that. *I told you.* We don't have definitive proof.

ZU

I'm so sick of science rules.

JAMIE

Really? That's too bad because I just changed my flight.

ZU

What do you mean?

We see: a wave roll under Zu's feet on the asphalt. Coming out the stage door. We hear the SCREAMS within.

JAMIE

Come on. We gotta get out of here.

ZU

Where are we going?

Jamie holds up his phone, open to an advanced weather app.

We see: a picture of the moon and the words: "97% Full Moon."

JAMIE

Let's go out deep and catch ourselves an Irukandji!

OFF Zu's elated face, as she sprints off with Jamie.

EXT. SUZY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Meg opens the front door to REVEAL Naomi standing outside.

MEG

Naomi. God, I'm so sorry you had to go through that today...

NAOMI

I'm okay - is Zu here?

MEG

No. She just called and said she was gonna go to Justin's.

(then)

She was upset - so I thought I'd give her a little space.

NAOMI

Oh. Well, tell her to call me, ok?

MEG

Of course. Hey. Why don't you come in?

(off Naomi's hesitance)

I'll put on some tea. You'll love my tea. I add whiskey and lemon.

NAOMI

(laughs)

You really don't have to do that.

MEG

I think I do.

EXT. URI SPEEDBOAT - ATLANTIC OCEAN - NIGHT

Suzy grips the gunwale in the bow of a small speedboat as Jamie mans the outboard motor from the stern. Seas are rough.

While small, Jamie's boat is equipped with state-of-the-art oceanography equipment. "URI" is printed on it's side.

Jamie whistles to Suzy and points towards the horizon.

We see: dark thunderheads in the clouds.

JAMIE

Better be quick about it! Don't like the way those heads turned.

Zu nods, determined. Holds on tighter. They speed ahead.

INT. SUZY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Meg and Naomi at the kitchen counter over cups of tea.

MEG

When was that 2009? 10?

NAOMI

Eleven.

MEG

God. Where does the time go. That woman was such an ogre! With her faux British accent.

NAOMI

"Miss Geneva from Yorkshire."

MEG

No wonder Zu hated ballet.

NAOMI

Didn't she take off one time? Right in the middle of a performance?

MEG

Right in the middle, yes. Just *exited stage left*. Wasn't pleased with her performance. She's always been so hard on herself, that Zu.

(then)

But *you're* the one with the great ballet story. Remember? When all those girls struck their final pose and Franny broke character and turned to the audience and shouted -

MEG/NAOMI

"I love you, Mommy!"

NAOMI

Yep. Got it on video. Somewhere.

A beat.

Meg takes hold of Naomi's hand.

MEG

I'm so sorry.

NAOMI

Don't be. It's good to remember happy stuff.

MEG

No, I'm so sorry that I haven't been a better friend to you.

NAOMI

... you were going through a divorce. I know what hell that is.

MEG

That, yes - and our kids stopped hanging out. That's the worse part of these dramatic friend breakups. It trickles down to the parents.

NAOMI

What do you mean our kids stopped hanging out? Zu and Franny did?

MEG

Yeah. They had a falling out.
Around the time me & Jim broke up.

NAOMI

Wait - didn't Franny spent weekends
here all summer last summer?
(off Meg's blank face)
When I worked? She was with Zu.

MEG

Not this past summer, no. I
think... she had some new friends.

NAOMI

The Barbies up there today?

MEG

Yeah. And I don't think Zu was very
welcome at the Barbie Mansion.
(a confession)
They were pretty mean about it, I
think.

The DOORBELL rings.

EXT. URI SPEEDBOAT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

The ENGINE cuts out. Wind picking up, Jamie has to shout:

JAMIE

ALRIGHT - WE'RE OVER A ROCK REEF
NOW! IF THERE ARE IRUKANDJI OUT
HERE THIS IS WHERE THEY'D BE. HELP
ME GET THESE LIGHTS OVER THE SIDE!

Jamie hits a switch. A string of metal halide lights come to
life, SHINING BRIGHT.

They drag them to the side of the boat and start throwing
them over, but Jamie is distracted by the sky.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

I THINK WE SHOULD HEAD IN! DON'T
LIKE THE WAY THE SKY'S LOOKING.

SUZY

NO! IF WE WAIT UNTIL THE NEXT FULL
MOON, THE WATER WILL BE TOO COLD!
WE'LL MISS OUR CHANCE.

Determined, Suzy doubles her speed.

We see: the lights sinking into the depths of the sea, illuminating the reef and rocks and sea life below.

EXT. SUZY'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Meg and Naomi open the front door to find Justin.

JUSTIN

Hi, Ms. Swanson. Is Zu here?

MEG

No... because she's with you. At your house.

JUSTIN

Uh. I haven't seen her, M'am.

MEG

Well if she's not with you, then where the hell is she?

EXT. URI SPEEDBOAT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Suzy and Jamie peer over the side of the rocking, buffeting boat. The lights illuminate for leagues below them.

They each hold a fancy plankton net (a long-handled net with a narrow conical). A crack of THUNDER. Rain starts to fall.

JAMIE

We have to go!

SUZY

No - not yet! NOT YET!

Suzy peers desperately into the sea, they must be here. Then -

We see: several pale white jellyfish, the elusive Irukandji, dancing in a beam of light.

SUZY (CONT'D)

There! I see them! Look!

JAMIE

BINGO!

INT. SUZY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Meg and Naomi interrogating Justin in the kitchen.

MEG

What do you mean a scientist? What scientist?

JUSTIN

I dunno - he's a professor at James Cook University in Australia. An expert in jellyfish. We left him a message at his lab and -

MEG

Wait. This is why Zu was going to Australia?? To meet a stranger?

JUSTIN

A famous stranger, yeah. But anyway it turns out she didn't *have* to go to him - he came to her. They've been hanging out this whole week, doing research in town.

MEG

Hold on. Zu has been "hanging out" with an adult man this whole week?

JUSTIN

Think so. I mean, she's not really talking to me right now, but she's been sneaking out of school to meet someone and she called out to "Jamie" at the memorial today, so.

Meg's face turns very grave.

MEG

I'm calling the police.

NAOMI

You said you called this man's lab? Do you still have the number?

Justin scrolls through his phone.

JUSTIN

Yeah. I should...

EXT. URI SPEEDBOAT - NIGHT

Jamie's net is poised above the water about to strike, but a strong wave knocks the boat and his net jerks, shakes.

We see: the jellyfish scurry away. Opportunity blown.

JAMIE
DAMN IT! IT'S TOO ROUGH OUT HERE!

SUZY
LET ME TRY!

JAMIE
NO! IT'S TIME TO GO!

Jamie throws his net, heads to the stern to start the boat.

But Suzy picks up his net and goes to the side again.

We see: they're back. The bloom of Irukandji swim into the light. Their long tentacles like a string of pearls.

Suzy leans way over the gunwale with the net. She's going to get one of them if it kills her...

INT. SUZY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Meg paces back and forth, Justin's phone to her ear.

MEG
(into phone)
YES! Hello. I need to speak to
Jamie Seymour please.
It's an emergency.
(beat)
I don't care - transfer me to his
cell then.

Naomi looks out the window. Looking worrisome out there.

We see: the full moon. Big and open. The rain. The wind.

MEG (CONT'D)
Yes! Is this Dr. Jamie Seymour of
James Cook University?

INT. DR. JAMIE SEYMOUR'S BEDROOM - CAIRNS, AUSTRALIA - NIGHT

DR. JAMIE SEYMOUR (late 50s) sits up in bed, a cellphone to his ear. He was sound asleep. HIS WIFE sleeps next to him.

[Note: Dr. Jamie Seymour is a real person. Might be cool if we got him for this cameo?]

REAL JAMIE SEYMOUR
Hello. This is Jamie Seymour.
What's the emergency?

MEG

This is Meg Swanson, Dr. Seymour.
Suzy Swanson's mom.

REAL JAMIE SEYMOUR

...who?

MEG

Suzy Swanson! The 13-year-old
you've been "palling around" with
in South Grove.

REAL JAMIE SEYMOUR (O.S.)

Sorry, what's South Grove?

MEG

Massachusetts! South Grove,
Massachusetts. And you better bring
her home right now!

A beat.

DR. JAMIE SEYMOUR

M'am, I haven't been to
Massachusetts since 1978. I have no
idea what you're talking about.

MEG

...You're not with my daughter?

DR. JAMIE SEYMOUR

I am in bed. I'm in Cairns,
Australia. Where it's 7AM.

OFF Meg, shock and worry flooding her face...

EXT. KAYAK - ATLANTIC OCEAN - NIGHT

We see: Suzy is not on a well-appointed URI speedboat with
Jamie Seymour and his intricate equipment.

She is in a beat-up kayak. Alone. In the middle of these
rough seas, with a jerry-rigged net and single glow stick
around her neck.

We see: Suzy stand in the swaying kayak. She leans over the
side with her net. So unbelievably dangerous.

From SUZY POV's we see: the Irukandji. She takes a swipe!

SUZY

THEY'RE TOO FAST, JAMIE!

EXT. URI SPEEDBOAT - CONTINUOUS

From SUZY'S POV we see: Jamie, at the stern, yanking on the starter cord of the outboard Engine.

JAMIE
ENOUGH! WE HAVE TO GO NOW!

SUZY
I ALMOST HAVE IT!

The ENGINE ROARS TO LIFE and the boat LEAPS FORWARD.

We see: Suzy fall over the side of the kayak, into the water.

INT. SUZY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Meg's on the phone. Naomi leans into Justin for more info.

JUSTIN
I don't know!

NAOMI
Anything you can tell us, Justin.
Anything. An address. A location.

JUSTIN
Besides the beach, I don't know
where she'd be. And she's not
there, I looked.

Meg hangs up the phone.

MEG
The police are on their way.

JUSTIN
I mean, she really wanted to catch
one? I know that. Obsessed with it.

Naomi looks out at the moon, a terrible thought dawning...

NAOMI
Meg. She doesn't have access to a
boat does she?

SMASH TO:

EXT. MEG'S GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

The garage door opens. There's a big, dusty spot where a kayak was.

MEG

... oh God... Aaron's kayak.

NAOMI

I'll call the Coast Guard.

MEG

Oh my God. That thing is so tiny.

EXT. KAYAK - NIGHT

We see: the kayak, now empty, tosses in the rough waves.

EXT. UNDERWATER - ATLANTIC OCEAN - CONTINUOUS

Suzy tumbles through the water, sinking down down down. The single glow stick around her neck is her only light.

It's so dark.

Her head SCRAPES the side of the reef and blood STREAKS through the water.

Zu puts her hand to her head. It hurts. Where is she? She holds the glow stick up and -

We see: An Irukandji. Two inches in front of her face.

It extends its pearl-string tentacles towards her. The end of it SPARKS with a secret electricity.

Zu jerks away, afraid. Treads water. The Irukandji advances.

And now we see: he is not alone. Two dozen other Irukandji are behind him. An army of them, now lined up to attack Zu.

Zu's defenseless.

As they take a murderous lunge towards her, she closes her eyes and the screen goes BLACK.

We hear: ZWIRP! as they sting her.

ZWIRP! and we see: Franny drenched in pee, weeping.

ZWIRP! Meg and Jim's faces, breaking the news of the divorce.

ZWIRP! Franny's casket, being lowered into the ground.

ZWIPR: Aaron waving from Meg's Subaru, leaving for college.

ZWIRP! Naomi standing alone in the surf, staring out.

ZWIRP! That polar bear's lips, not moving.

ZWIRP! Five year-old Franny, happily kicking away from us.

ZWIRP! Spit falling from Franny's cruel lips.

ZWIRP ZWIRP ZWIRP ZWIRPPPPPPP

A beat.

We see: Suzy's body falling away into the dark cold water.

The screen goes BLACK.

INT. SOUTH GROVE GENERAL HOSPITAL - MORNING

Still in BLACK, SOUND starts to FADE IN...

We hear: OXYGEN PUMPING in and out.

We hear: the TICK-TOSH-TICK of a heart monitor.

We hear: the PUSH-PUSH-PUSH of a blood pressure cuff.

Suddenly, Suzy's eyes JOLT OPEN.

We see: Jim and Meg at the foot of our bed.

We see: Aaron in an armchair studying a textbook.

We see: a NURSE (30s, in white) adjusting our IV and noticing our eyes are open. She turns and whispers to Jim and Meg:

NURSE

I think someone's waking up.

Jim, Meg, and Aaron leap up - their faces fill the frame.

Meg's eyes are teary. Jim takes Zu's hand. Aaron smiles.

AARON

Z? Can you hear us?

SUZY

(groggy)
...where am I?

MEG

You're in the hospital, honey.

JIM

You're going to be okay, but there was a lot of water in your lungs. The Coast Guard had to do CPR.

MEG

And you have concussion. You hit your head, honey.

AARON

You almost drowned.

Zu sits up, alarmed.

SUZY

Where's Jamie?? Is he okay?

Meg and Jim exchange a look. Aaron takes Suzy's other hand.

MEG

Dr. Seymour's in Australia, Suzy.

SUZY

He went back?

MEG

No. He was never here, sweetheart. You must've imagined him.

Zu laughs. Because that's the only possible reaction.

SUZY

What are you talking about? We were in his boat last night.

JIM

You weren't, honey.

SUZY

Yes. In his URI Research Vessel.

AARON

You were in my kayak, Z. Alone.

A beat.

Suzy looks down at her body, expecting to see welts and lashes and Irukandji butchery. But there's nothing there.

Suzy struggles to make sense of this. Reality starts to unfurl...

We see: Suzy talking to herself on the roof of the Seawater Facility at URI. Pleading her case to an empty tank.

We see: Suzy on the beach with test tubes, reassuring Naomi she's with him - pointing to absolutely no one on the beach.

We see: Suzy raising her hand in class. Mrs. Turton saying, "Yes. Go. Make it quick" - assuming she has to go to bathroom. There's been no PA announcement.

We see: The corner of the auditorium during the memorial was always empty. Jamie was never there.

We see: Suzy talking to herself on a parking lot bench.

We see: Suzy pushing off a dock alone in a kayak.

SUZY

Oh God....I made him up?

Suzy starts to CRY. Like a child. Unfiltered, big tears.

SUZY (CONT'D)

...I'm crazy?

JIM

No! You aren't crazy. You were trying to tell us you were in pain.

AARON

We weren't listening to you.

MEG

Your silence was a scream for help and we missed it, Zu. We all missed it. But we're here for you now.

(beat)

We love you so much, Zu.

Jim, Meg, and Aaron's faces fill the frame, full of love.

NURSE

She should lay back. We can't let her get too excited.

JIM

Here, honey. Lie back now and rest.

Jim gently guides Zu's head back to her pillow. Meg kisses her cheek.

JIM (CONT'D)

When you wake up, we'll all be sitting right here.

AARON

All of us.

Zu's eyes drift back to sleep.

INT. DR. LEGLER'S OFFICE - SOMETIME LATER - MORNING

We see: tie-dyed tights this time.

DR. LEGLER
How do you feel about that?

SUZY
I don't know. Lucky? But also,
like, whoa, my brain did that?
(then)
It's a lot.

DR. LEGLER
... it is. Though delusions are not
uncommon. When we lock away or
repress our feelings - like guilt,
and grief - they find ways to
escape. Alter our worlds for us.

SUZY
I didn't know I even felt guilty.

DR. LEGLER
We are complicated creatures.
Especially in the face of grief.

Suzy considers this.

SUZY
Question. Do you always wear such
crazy tights? Or was that a
delusion, too?

Dr. Legler laughs. So does Zu.

DR. LEGLER
No, these are very real. We all
have our obsessions.

A beat.

SUZY
I don't want to see things that
aren't there again, Dr. Legler.
(then)
How do I do that?

DR. LEGLER

You talk about it, Zu. You come next week and we talk about it some more. Lather, rinse, repeat.

Zu nods. That's a promise.

DR. LEGLER (CONT'D)

In the meantime, try to enjoy what *is* real. If you can.

(then)

Forgive yourself. Take baby steps.

MEG (PRE-LAP)

You ready for this, honey?

INT. MEG'S SUBARU - EARLY EVENING

Meg pulls up to a curb and puts the car in park. She points.

MEG

Oh! Cute! They went all out!

EXT. EUGENE FIELD MIDDLE SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

We see: kids streaming into the school in their heroes and villains costumes. Harry Potter & Voldemort. Hamilton & Burr. Cruella DeVil & a Dalmatian. The Titanic and an iceberg. Katniss Everdeen & President Snow.

We see: Aubrey, Molly and Jenna pass by, all dressed as Harley Quinn, of course.

We see: Zu in the front seat of Meg's car, not in a costume.

SUZY

I don't think I can do this, Mom.

MEG

Well, okay. You don't have to. We can always go home and order pizza.

SUZY

No. I want to. I just...

Zu stares at the heroes and villains again, paralyzed. Until -

Justin appears in the school yard. He's dressed as a Zombie Ant. His costume is elaborate and gross. He sees Meg's car, waves, and heads over. Happy to see Zu.

She climbs out of the car and takes a deep breath.

JUSTIN
Hey. You showed.

SUZY
What are you supposed to be? A fly?

JUSTIN
No. A villainous Zombie Ant!
(pointing)
Hence the stalk sprouting from my
brain?

SUZY
Oh, right.
(laughs)
It's awesome, Justin.

JUSTIN
I know it is. Here.

He hands her a small shopping bag.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)
It's all they had left at the
costume store. Best I could do on
such short notice.

Zu pulls out a long cape and... a rainbow clown wig.

She puts the cape and wig on. Not the most inspired costume,
but it's a costume anyway.

SUZY
Am I a hero or a villain?

JUSTIN
Up to you.

Zu smiles.

Justin offers her his arm and they head into the building.
Suzy turns for a second and waves good-bye to Meg.

Meg waves back, watching her daughter go to her first dance.

As Zu climbs the stairs to the school with Justin, we see
Mrs. Turton smile at her. Samira, too. Even Aubrey. A feeling
that this dance will be the beginning of a new chapter.

SUZY (V.O.)
Turns out there are many things to
be scared of in this world...

EXT. SOUTH GROVE BEACH - MORNING

Suzy stands on the beach in the surf. Waves lapping her feet.

SUZY (V.O.)
 Blooms of jellies.
 A global extinction.
 A middle school dance.
 Someone you love dying.

ON the ocean, so wild and free, CRASHING against the shore.

SUZY (V.O.)
 But that's what makes us us.
 (then)
 Jellyfish don't have hearts.
 They don't feel fear or pain or
 love or grief.
 They just float along, unaware of
 the life they're missing up here.
 (then)
 How beautiful it can be.

A dog BARKS.

We see: Fluffernutter on the beach, darting towards her.

We see: Naomi approaching, hair blowing in the sea air.

SUZY
 Hey, Mrs. Jackson.

NAOMI
 Done. Can you believe I got all
 that stuff in one van?

SUZY
 (laughs)
 No.

We see: there's a U-HAUL parked at Cove Apartments.

NAOMI
 I think it'll be good for me. A
 place with less reminders.
 (off Zu's nod)
 You're gonna come visit me in
 Boston, though, right?

SUZY
 Of course. Gotta see Fluffernutter!

NAOMI

Actually... that's what I wanted to talk to you about. How would you feel about him staying with you for awhile?

SUZY

...really?

NAOMI

Shared custody. Your mom said okay.

SUZY

Oh my God - no way!

(to him)

You're gonna come stay with me, Fluffynut?! Wanna stay with me?

Suzy drops to the sand, petting the dog behind the ears and the belly. He's so excited, lapping her face with kisses.

Naomi takes this happy sight in.

NAOMI

I'm sorry I didn't know how unkind Franny and those girls were to you last year, Zu. I wish I'd known.

A beat.

SUZY

It's okay, Mrs. Jackson.

NAOMI

She didn't mean it. She loved you.

SUZY

I know she did.

(then)

Sometimes things just happen.

Naomi smiles. A moment between them.

NAOMI

Ready for a walk?

Suzy and Naomi begin walking along the beach, as Fluffernutter trots happily behind them.

Miles of empty beach ahead of them.

END.