

FADE IN:

INT. TRAILER 67. DAWN -- **PAST**

CLOSE ON:

JIMMY KEAN, 19, white-faced, sweaty, trembling.

With a gun in his mouth.

A haze of smoke distorts his face, turns it almost dreamlike. Distant voices swell into a single, urgent heartbeat.

The boy closes his eyes.

EXT. TRAILER. TWO PINES MOBILE HOME PARK. DAWN.

A flash of light in the window. A giant bang.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. TRAILER 68. DAWN -- **PRESENT**

Bang.

HEATHER NILL, 18, lets the door slam shut behind her.

HEATHER, V.O.

No one knows who invented panic, or when it first began.

She starts walking. A curious thing happens to #67 as she passes: the trailer, previously pristine, deteriorates.

The paint grays. The windows collapse. The flower boxes empty. Graffiti sprouts on the door. \*

By the time she leaves it in the dust, we see that it has been abandoned for a long, long time.

HEATHER, V.O. (CONT'D) \*

When summer comes, the game comes with it. \*

EXT. DOT'S DINER. DAWN. \*

HEATHER, V.O. \*

Every year, there are new players, new challenges, new judges. \*

EXT. DOT'S DINER. DAWN.

\*

DODGE MASON, 19, empties the previous day's fryer oil into old paint cans. He looks up when he hears footsteps.

\*

Then: another disturbance. This time it's Heather, head down, walking down the empty street. He watches her go.

HEATHER, V.O.

\*

But the game stays the same.

\*

EXT. HOLLINS & SONS PAPER FACTORY.

HEATHER, V.O.

Some blame the shuttering of the paper factory, which overnight placed sixty percent of Carp on unemployment.

A stray dog sniffs at the litter strewn across the parking lot, but slinks off as Heather approaches.

Graffiti covers almost every inch of the abandoned hull. One piece especially stands out: a vast pair of eyes, in highly realistic detail, floating above the words JUDGMENT IS COMING.

As we float toward the roof, we're shocked to see a dark-haired boy crouching on the edge of the roof. Watching her.

WILLIAM ROURKE stands up. His coat, slick with invisible rain, billows behind him.

He closes his eyes. Spreads his arms.

Jumps.

And dissipates into a scream of air...

CUT TO:

INT. THE NILL FAMILY'S TRAILER. MORNING.

SHERRI NILL, 42, bangs around the tiny kitchen, rifling through cupboards, cranking open every drawer.

Sherri straightens up, swiping bleached blond hair off her forehead. She is a woman who proves the relativity of time: SHE easily passes for a decade older than she is, and easily dresses like someone several decades younger.

SHERRI NILL  
(shouting --)  
Bo, you seen my Newports?

GIRL, O.S.  
They were in your purse.

Sherri startles and whips around. LILY NILL, 12 years old, \*  
watches her with grave intensity.

SHERRI NILL  
Yeah, well, they ain't there now.  
(then)  
Is Bo up yet?

Lily shakes her head. Sherri resumes her search.

SHERRI  
(offhandedly --)  
Heather left breakfast. We're out  
of milk, though.

Heather has, indeed, poured out some cereal, and cut up an  
apple, carefully layering each slice with peanut butter.

Lily jumps as Sherri slams yet another drawer shut.

SHERRI (CONT'D)  
Where the hell are my cigarettes?

CUT TO:

EXT. UNDERPASS.

A homeless guy, mid-30s, twitches off his high next to a heap  
of old belongings. Heather fumbles in her bag. Pulls out a  
crumpled pack of Newports -- only three are left -- and tucks  
them neatly into a pair of boots.

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER. DAWN. CONTINUOUS.

HEATHER, V.O.  
Some say it started with the devil.

In the vivid turquoise water of a public pool, LAUREN WILKES, \*  
hands and feet bound, is thrashing beneath the surface...

But once again, as Heather passes, the pool dries up. Cracks  
seam the bottom of it, growing a chokehold of mold.

CUT TO:

INT. SQUAD CAR. MORNING.

HEATHER, V.O.

Some say it started with a girl.

The sheriff, CHARLES KEAN, wheels around the corner onto Main Street: a pawn shop, a dingy hair salon, Dot's Diner, two liquor stores, three bars, a convenience store, and a forlorn looking church, bracketed by a gas station and a rundown supermarket, are the town's only open businesses.

A woman, teetering on very high heels, and wearing a very short skirt, weaves her way down the sidewalk, nearly clipping Heather with her purse.

The woman sways on her feet as the Sheriff rolls by. She just crooks her mouth into a smile.

CUT TO:

INT. GENERAL CONVENIENCE STORE. MORNING.

HEATHER V.O.

Mike Dickinson, class of '08, likes to take credit. That's why he still comes to Opening Jump, eight years after graduation.

MIKE DICKINSON, late 20s, transfers a few bills from the cash register into his pocket.

A bell chimes. Mike leans back, affects an attitude of casualness, as a trucker swings inside.

TRUCKER

Morning.

Mike lifts his chin. Notices Heather, a passing blur behind the grease-streaked windows.

HEATHER, V.O.

But none of these stories is right.

EXT. INTERSTATE 22. DAWN.

A drunk is sleeping it off on the three bench seats of the bus stop. Heather stands a little further down the road. She is wearing a boxy polo shirt ("Wally's Wireless and Appliance"). She is tall, and a little overweight, and deeply self-conscious about both. But she would be pretty, if she didn't look like she was trying so hard to disappear.

HEATHER, V.O.

The truth is, the game started like  
so many things do out here.

Heather ventures into the road to look for the bus, then  
takes a quick step back as an eighteen-wheeler comes  
thundering around the bend.

As it blows by her --

CUT TO:

EXT. INTERSTATE 22. DAWN -- **PAST**

Heather is replaced instead by ABBY CLARKE, 19, blindfolded.

She teeters on the edge of the highway. Whimpering. Hair  
plastered to her forehead by sweat. Cars blur past her,  
almost drowning out the roar of voices calling her name.

Almost.

VOICES, VARIOUS

Now, Abby. Now. Now, now, now.

She can't hear the pattern of traffic anymore. She can't hear  
anything but her name, but that word, go, taking hold of her  
whole body...

She steps into the road. A mistake.

A horn blasts the air into vibration.

Then --

EXT. INTERSTATE 22. DAWN -- **PRESENT**

A bus grinds on the brakes in front of Heather. She boards.

The bus moves on, spitting a crushed can from beneath its  
wheels. It settles at the base of a roadside memorial.  
Exposure has almost obscured the words written in marker  
across the wooden cross.

*Rest in Peace, Abby Clarke.*

HEATHER, V.O.

Because it was summer, and there  
was nothing else to do.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STRIP MALL. MORNING.

Willie's Wireless and Appliances, sandwiched between a Dunkin' Donuts and a discount clothing store, sports bunting and a huge banner that reads CONGRATULATIONS SENIORS !!! The effect is awful, like seeing makeup on a corpse.

INT. WILLIE'S WIRELESS AND APPLIANCES. MORNING.

Heather leans on one elbow, watching sun motes spinning in the aisles. Her coworker, SUMMER, sits cross-legged on the floor, glued to her phone.

Heather straightens up as the door chimes a new arrival. But it's only DANNY, the manager, a Most-Likely-To-Succeed-Type gone tragically awry.

DANNY  
(cheerfully)  
What is this, a funeral?

SUMMER  
(without looking up from  
phone--)  
People actually come to funerals.

Danny plops a Dunkin' Donuts bag on the counter.

DANNY  
Happy graduation.

HEATHER  
Wow. You sprang for jelly.

DANNY  
Don't be shy. I know you like your  
donuts.  
(then)  
Aw, don't blush. Boys like girls  
with a little meat on their bones.

SUMMER  
Please stop talking before you  
injure yourself.

DANNY  
Good morning to you, too.

She waggles her fingers at him without glancing up from her phone. He sighs.

DANNY (CONT'D)  
 (to Heather)  
 Heather, can I talk to you for a  
 minute in my office?

Summer looks up as he bustles off.

SUMMER  
 Think you're getting promoted?

HEATHER  
 God forbid.

She hesitates. Then takes out a donut. Fuck it. Offers the  
 bag to Summer.

DANNY, O.C.  
 Heather?

He is holding open his office door for her.

SUMMER  
 Go get 'em, kiddo.

CUT TO:

INT. THE VELEZ HOUSE. KITCHEN. MORNING.

A very, very different place than Heather's house. Bright,  
 airy, extremely clean, very match-y.

SUSAN VELEZ, mid-40s, scrapes scrambled eggs onto four  
 plates, next to neat stacks of pancakes and a fan of cut  
 fruit. Her sons, MIKE and DEVON, 9 and 6 respectively,  
 squabble over a Nintendo DS at the table.

JOHN VELEZ, dressed in the uniform of a sheriff's deputy,  
 enters. He gives his wife a quick peck on the cheek.

SUSAN  
 Is Natalie up? We have to pick up  
 her cap and gown before eleven.

JOHN  
 Didn't see her.

SUSAN  
 (shouting--)  
 Natalie! Time to get up!  
 (then)  
 Mike, will you go and get your  
 sister up?

MIKE  
She's not my sister.

SUSAN  
Don't start with me, young man.  
I've already told you --

JOHN  
Let it go.

Susan swallows whatever she was about to say. As she deposits the breakfast onto the table --

SUSAN  
Natalie!

NATALIE, O.S.  
What?

NATALIE, 18, still in her pajamas, goes for the coffee pot, purposely dodging her father.

SUSAN  
I made breakfast.

NATALIE  
I'm on a diet.

MATT  
Nat's fat.

She whacks him on the arm.

SUSAN  
Say you're sorry, Matt.

JOHN  
Say you're sorry, Natalie.

Both children ignore them. Matt mouths "fat," when neither parent is looking. Natalie gives him the finger.

She slugs coffee in a mug, then adds a teaspoon of skim milk.

SUSAN  
Don't forget. We have to pick up  
your cap and gown --

NATALIE  
By eleven, I know. I heard you the  
first ninety-seven times.

JOHN  
Don't speak to your stepmother like  
that.



SUSAN  
It's all right.

JOHN  
It's not all right.  
(to Natalie, sternly--)  
Go on. Go get dressed.

Natalie rolls her eyes and heads for the stairs.

John leans in to give Susan a peck.

JOHN (CONT'D)  
See you there.

SUSAN  
Where are you going?

JOHN  
I gotta pop by the station for a  
minute.  
(off her look--)  
You know how things get at  
graduation. And after last  
summer...

SUSAN  
(shaking her head --)  
I can still hardly stand to look at  
Mary Clarke. Like a walking ghost. \*

JOHN  
That's all done now. Promise.

Natalie, who has been lingering on the landing, darts quickly  
upstairs as her father heads for the front door.

CUT TO:

INT. WILLIE'S WIRELESS. DANNY'S OFFICE. MORNING.

HEATHER  
You're firing me?  
(beat)  
But I'm the only one who actually  
does anything.

DANNY  
Believe me, I'd take you all on  
full-time if I could. But I've only  
got a few shifts on the schedule,  
and with Summer and Coop coming  
on... \*

HEATHER  
Starting when?

DANNY  
(sheepishly--)  
I can get you all squared up for  
last week.  
(beat)  
I'm sorry, Heather.  
(then)  
Did you get a donut, at least?

\*

Heather stands up, disgusted, and bangs out of the office.

EXT. WILLIE'S WIRELESS. PARKING LOT. NOON.

Heather, holding the Dunkin' Donuts, is the picture of misery  
as she watches the approach of a cherry red, 90s-era  
Chevrolet, lovingly maintained.

\*  
\*  
\*

INT. BISHOP'S CAR. CONTINUOUS.

BISHOP MARKS, 19, a messy kind of cute, frowns when Heather  
slips into the car.

BISHOP  
What happened?

HEATHER  
Consolation donuts.

She plunks them in his lap.

\*

HEATHER (CONT'D)  
(off Bishop's confusion -)  
I got fired.

\*  
\*

BISHOP  
What? You're the only one who ever  
does anything.

\*

HEATHER  
That's what I said.

\*  
\*

BISHOP  
Aw, man. I'm sorry, Heathbar.  
You'll find something else.

\*  
\*

HEATHER  
Like Panic?  
(off his look --)  
I was joking.

BISHOP

Yeah, see, the thing about jokes is they have to be funny...

HEATHER

Oh, come on. You know I would never.

(then)

I owe two thousand dollars to hold my place at JCB. And I'm still two hundred short.

BISHOP

Two thousand dollars?

HEATHER

And another two by September.

BISHOP

Jesus. How much hairspray does that place need?

She punches his arm.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

I know, I know. They teach more than just hair.

HEATHER

Look, in two years, I'll be able to start at double what my mom makes hourly. I can get my own place. I can get my own car.

BISHOP

(solemnly --)

Oh, sure.

(then, cracking --)

Plus, think of all the free nail polish.

She punches him again.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

(laughing --)

Ow, ow. All right. Point taken. It's a good career move.

HEATHER

Not all of us are smart enough to get a scholarship to college.

BISHOP

How would you know? You didn't even  
apply.

\*  
\*  
\*

HEATHER

Because I'm just smart enough to  
know the difference.  
(then, growing somber --)  
Fucking Danny. I can't believe it.  
(a little quieter--)  
I really needed that job.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

In the short silence, Bishop glances over at her.

\*

BISHOP

You know what the good news is?

HEATHER

What?

He grins.

\*

BISHOP

We're not in high school anymore,  
Toto.

He cranks the music, starts head banging like an idiot --  
*"School's Out for Summer"*.

She rolls her eyes. But he's finally gotten a smile out of  
her. As they whip down the road, she even begins to sing  
along ...

PRELAP:

PRINCIPAL, O.S.

...This is not my first graduation  
ceremony, or my sixth, or even my  
tenth...

FADE TO:

EXT. LEWIS AND CLARK HIGH SCHOOL. FOOTBALL FIELD.

Graduation is unexpectedly lovely: a white tent under a bowl  
of brilliant blue sky. Balloons roped through the chainlink  
fence mostly conceal signs warning against smoking, drug use,  
and loitering. Nonetheless, a deputy sheriff leans against  
the fence, smoking.

EXT. GRADUATION TENT. DAY.

PRINCIPAL

But at every graduation I struggle  
to find the balance between  
encouragement and advice.

Scanning the assembled crowd, we latch onto Heather, Nat, and  
Bishop sitting together in the last row. Behind them, at a  
discreet distance, is Sheriff Kean.

THE PRINCIPAL

In the past five years, I've walked  
six students across the stage in  
June only to attend their memorials  
before September.

He glances at the sheriff, who gives him a slight nod.

THE PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

Fearlessness looks a lot like  
recklessness. And recklessness  
looks a lot like giving up.

Heather glances over at Natalie, who resolutely ignores her. \*

THE PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

Life is not a game. It's not a  
gamble, either. It's your only  
chance.

NATALIE

(whispers --)

That's why there's one winner... \*

THE PRINCIPAL

So I say: be afraid. Be afraid of  
missing out on all the joy life can  
bring you. Be afraid of losing the  
chance at a good future. \*

And please...be careful. This town  
has had enough tragedy already.

There is a second of silence before the crowd realizes his  
speech is done.

PRINCIPAL

And now, I'm pleased to present to  
you, in alphabetical order, the  
newest class of Lewis & Clark  
alums...

Bishop reaches for Heather's hand and squeezes it. For a second, they stare at each other, smiling. For a second, they might be the only two people in the world.

Then Natalie slips her hand into Heather's, too. Three best friends, standing together at the teetering edge of the rest of their lives. \*

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

Abigail Adder ... Tom Addison...

HEATHER

(whispering, to Natalie -) \*  
I'll give you twenty bucks to drop  
trou when you go up for your  
diploma ...

NATALIE

Don't be a moron. \*  
(beat) \*  
That's worth at least fifty.

Off Heather and Natalie, cracking up. \*

CUT TO:

EXT. LEWIS AND CLARK HIGH SCHOOL. FOOTBALL FIELD.

Beaming families embrace and pose together for endless photographs.

Heather scans the crowd for Heather and Bishop. Instead, she spots MRS. LEE, a pretty Asian-American woman, bustling through the crowd.

MRS. LEE

Congratulations, Heather. I'm so  
happy for you!  
(beat)  
How do you feel?

HEATHER

(honestly --)  
I'm not sure yet.

MRS. LEE

Is your mom here? I'd love to meet  
her.

Sherri, conspicuously underdressed, is hanging back by the fence, struggling to get a cigarette lit. Her t-shirt says Miller High Life. She spots Heather and gives a half-wave.

Heather pretends not to notice.

HEATHER  
(to Mrs. Lee)  
I don't see her...

MRS. LEE  
Well, tell her I'll miss having you  
in class.  
(beat)  
So? What's next? Have you thought  
more about our conversation?

HEATHER  
(dismissive --)  
Oh...yeah...I'm not sure about the  
whole writing thing...

MRS. LEE  
(disappointed)  
Really? But you're so talented. I  
still think about the beginning of  
that fairy tale you shared with me.  
*"Once upon a time there was a girl  
made all of dirt..."*

HEATHER  
Anyone can make up a story...  
(beat)  
I start in cosmetology this fall.

MRS. LEE  
Cosmetology?  
(then, With effort --)  
Good for you. I'm sure you'll be  
great at whatever you decide to do.  
(beat)  
Don't be a stranger, okay?

HEATHER  
Thanks, Mrs. Lee. I won't.

Mrs. Lee peels off. But she hasn't gone more than a few feet  
before she spins around again.

MRS. LEE  
Did you ever finish it?  
(then, off Heather's blank  
look --)  
The fairy tale. Did you ever finish  
it?

HEATHER  
(shrugging --)  
Couldn't think of an ending.

\*

Mrs. Lee looks like she isn't totally surprised.

\*

\*

EXT. LEWIS AND CLARK HIGH SCHOOL. FOOTBALL FIELD. CONTINUOUS.

\*

Heather waits until Mrs. Lee has been swallowed by the crowd before she heads toward her mother and sister. Immediately, Lily barrels into her arms.

LILY  
Look. Flowers!

She offers Heather a small cluster of dandelions.

HEATHER  
Thanks, Lilybug.  
(to Sherri--)  
I didn't think you'd come.

SHERRI NILL  
What kind of mother do you think I  
am?  
(then)  
Here. I got you something.

\*

She passes Heather a small box, messily wrapped in Christmas-themed paper. Inside is a snowglobe: a dog dressed in graduation robes holding a sign that says #1 Graduate.

SHERRI NILL (CONT'D)  
You remember how you used to go coo-  
coo for snowglobes? One time at the  
Walmart you musta shook up about a  
hundred of them...You wanted to  
know how the people got inside.  
Remember?

Heather says nothing. Sherri takes the snowglobe and shakes it up. Inside is a confetti of colored glitter.

SHERRI  
See? This one's got a rainbow  
inside.  
(then, off Heather's  
silence--)  
Anyway, it's just something little.

HEATHER  
Thanks, mom.



SHERRI NILL  
Congratulations. Proud of you.

She hesitates. Looks like she might go in for a hug. Stares a beat too long.

HEATHER  
What? What is it?

SHERRI  
Nothing, I --

HEATHER  
Why are you looking at me weird?

Sherri shakes her head. Annoyed. Maybe even disappointed.  
Then --

SHERRI  
You got twenty bucks? My car's in  
the shop again and Bo's truck needs  
gas.

\*  
\*  
\*

Heather gives her a look.

SHERRI (CONT'D)  
I had to pay the cable bill.

Heather sighs and forks over a ten.

HEATHER  
That's all I got.

SHERRI  
Oh, yeah? How about all that back  
pay they owe you down at the store?

Heather hesitates for a fraction of a second.

HEATHER  
I can't make them pay me, ma.

Sherri stares for a beat longer. Then palms a kiss, tapping  
Heather's cheek.

SHERRI  
See you at home.  
(then)  
C'mon, Lily. Time to go.

As Heather watches them stomp off toward the parking lot...

FADE TO:

EXT. THE GULLEY. EVENING.

CLOSE ON:

Two graduation caps, whirling mid-air.

BLASTED from the sky with a BB Gun.

We're at an indoor-outdoor party: music blasts from a speaker cabled to a pick-up truck. Light overflows a sagging porch cluttered with furniture. Kids pass in and out clutching solo cups.

Bishop, Heather, and various other kids are sitting around a bonfire. Picture high school like a box of chocolates: these kids like the coconut-almond chews everyone skips over.

BISHOP

So what are we toasting?

BOY #1 raises his cup.

BOY #1

No more gym.

GIRL #1

No more gym shorts.

GIRL #2

No more math tests.

BOY #2

No more abstinence ed. Or, for that matter, abstinence...

He starts mauling his girlfriend with his tongue. Everyone laughs. Someone throws a cup at him. *It's not abstinence just cuz you use a condom, etc.*

GIRL #3

Okay, okay. I have a real one.

She struggles to seem sober, and largely fails.

GIRL #3 (CONT'D)

To the beginning of the rest of our lives --

BOY #2

Is that supposed to be a good thing?

They dissolve into laughter.

BOY #1  
To cold beer and long nights.

BISHOP  
Hear, hear.

But before he can drink, a beefy jock-type crashes into him from behind.

This is RAY HANRAHAN, 19 -- big, good-looking, dangerous, a classic apex predator-type. Without apologizing, Ray wheels and tackles his buddy, leaving Bishop to try and blot beer off his t-shirt.

HEATHER  
New toast -- to selective amnesia.

Bishop glances over at Ray's friends. These are the homecoming kings and queens--the fast-living, bright-burning types, human tinsel, full of cheap and obvious shine, extraordinarily combustible.

BISHOP  
Personalized, you mean.

For a moment we see Bishop from Heather's perspective: those bright hazel eyes, the half-dance of his smile, the freckle sitting above his lips...those lips...

Natalie plunks between them. She throws an arm around Heather.

\*  
\*

NATALIE  
What'd I miss?

She spills a little when she tries to drink. She's a little tipsy.

\*

HEATHER  
We're making toasts.

NATALIE  
Ooh. I got one.

She fishes her brand-new diploma from her bag -- then tosses it onto the fire.

HEATHER  
Natalie!

\*  
\*

NATALIE  
See? Toast.

HEATHER

You shouldn't have done that.

NATALIE

I don't need it. You know why?

(in a sing song--)

Cuz I'm gonna win. And then?

Hollywood, baby.

(beat)

But don't worry. I won't forget the little people.

She kisses Heather's cheek.

\*

BISHOP

How charitable of you.

HEATHER

(to Bishop--)

Can you please talk some sense into your best friend?

\*

BISHOP

She's your best friend, too. And based on historical precedent, no.

\*

\*

NATALIE

(pouting --)

Oh, come on. You guys should be rooting for me.

\*

BISHOP

If you were about to jump off a building, would you expect us to root for you? Oh, wait.

NATALIE

It's not a building, it's a cliff. And yes, I would.

HEATHER

People die, Natalie. Two players died last year --

NATALIE

People die in car accidents too. They die in bathtubs, and at bus stops. You can't be afraid of dying.

\*

\*

HEATHER

But you don't have to go looking for it.

A small beat of tension. Natalie looks into her cup.

Then tosses back her drink.

NATALIE

(melodramatically --)

The game must go on, Heather. The game always goes on.

It's hardly a comfort. As the music shifts, Nat shrieks.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

This is my jam.

She hauls Bishop to his feet.

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Come on, Heather.

She tries to grab Heather's hand. Heather resists.

HEATHER

Maybe later...

But she's not getting off that easy. Bishop and Natalie exchange a look that speaks of pure and unadulterated collusion.

They attack together, hooking a squealing Heather beneath the underarms and lifting her toward the circle of dancers.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

(laughing --)

What are you doing?

BISHOP

It's called compulsory fun, Nill. No woman left behind. Come on. Get up.

HEATHER

I don't even like this song...

BISHOP

You do now.

Bishop pulls her into the crowd: a chaos of happy shouting, chaotic grinding, hormonal joy. Natalie is happily dancing with both arms up, screaming lyrics at the sky.

Bishop cracks Heather up with extremely exaggerated and very poorly executed dance moves, twirling her around on the grass, very So-You-Think-You-Can-Dance.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

Ready?

He dips her. She screams. But he catches her.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

Don't worry. I got you.

For a moment their lips are inches away. He smiles...

Then the music shifts again and Bishop pulls back, drawing her again into a dizzying spin...

The crowd is an impressionistic blur of motion and joy, a wave of color. And for a single, perfect second, they are all riding it together. For a single, perfect second, there is nothing but the wave, no shore at all, no distance to travel, no final break.

\*  
\*

Just a joyful ride under a big-ass sky.

Heather, breathless, breaks away from the group to refill her cup. She blinks as the wind temporarily shifts a curtain of smoke from the bonfire in her direction.

Then she freezes. A cluster of motionless figures is just barely visible through the flame.

One of them is WILLIAM ROURKE, the boy we saw earlier leap from the factory roof. LAUREN WILKES, whom we saw struggling in the town pool, is still dripping wet, her lips faintly blue. ABBY CLARKE, whose memorial still stands by the side of the road, is still wearing her blindfold. TOMMY O'HARE is a tall, lanky boy, sharply good-looking, flipping a casino chip in one hand: his wrists show horrible gouge marks. Next to him is KATE WINSLEY, a beauty-queen type, perfect-looking except for the angle of her head, which seems to be slightly...off.

JIMMY KEAN looks almost normal...until he turns to smile at Heather, and we see he's missing half his head.

NATALIE, O.S.

Heather?

Heather blinks.

HEATHER

Coming.

In a second, all of them have vanished.

INT. THE NILL FAMILY TRAILER. BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Two twin beds and a shared dresser are the only pieces of furniture the tiny room can accommodate. Despite the limits of space, the room is profoundly neat, even cozy. There is even a shelf of used paperback books, ordered by the color of their spines, wedged beneath the window A/C unit.

Heather, just getting home, maneuvers as quietly as she can into bed, trying not to disturb her sister. But as she knees the dresser --

LILY

Heather?

HEATHER

Go to sleep, Lilybug.

LILY

I can't sleep.

(beat)

Can you tell me a story?

HEATHER

It's late...

LILY

Please.

Heather is quiet for a bit, trying to think of one.

HEATHER

Once upon a time, there were two beautiful princesses. They lived happily together in a beautiful castle, and ate ice cream for breakfast every day.

LILY

Chocolate or vanilla?

HEATHER

Both.

LILY

I hate vanilla.

HEATHER

Okay, so chocolate.

(beat)

But then a jealous witch captured them.

(MORE)

HEATHER (CONT'D)

She put them in a hole deep underground, with only the beetles and centipedes and spiders for company.

LILY

I hate centipedes.

HEATHER

The witch told the princesses they would never get out, so long as they lived.

LILY

But they did, right?

(beat)

Heather?

Heather glances over at her sister.

HEATHER

Of course they did. That's the end of the story.

Lily looks satisfied. But then --

LILY

How?

HEATHER

How what?

LILY

How did they get out?

Heather has no answer. She forces a smile. She reaches over and taps her sister on the nose.

HEATHER

It's a secret.

(beat)

Now go to sleep.

Lily rolls over obediently. But after a second --

LILY

Maybe a firefly helps them.

HEATHER

Hmm?

LILY

Fireflies glow even underground. Some of their eggs glow, even.

(MORE)



LILY (CONT'D)

So maybe a firefly helps them find  
their way out.

HEATHER

You know what, Lily?

(beat)

That's exactly what happens.

\*

Satisfied, Lily draws the sheets to her chin and settles into  
bed.

But Heather lies awake, staring at the ceiling.

\*

HEATHER, V.O.

There was only one way out.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. NEW YORK CITY. MURRAY HILL BAR. NIGHT.

HEATHER, V.O.

The ones who made it became gods.  
We worshipped them, and said their  
names out loud again and again,  
like they might carry some magic.  
Lauren Davies. Mariah Harrison.  
Conrad Spurlock. John Dobbs.

(then)

But the game had ghosts, too.

\*

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOLLINS & SONS PAPER FACTORY.

WILLIAM ROURKE is teetering along the perimeter of the roof,  
to a chorus of distant chanting. The rain is hard and heavy.

The roof is wet.

HEATHER, V.O.

And even though we all knew their  
names, we didn't speak them.

He slips --

CUT TO:

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER. POOL.

Crash. Underwater, LAUREN WILKE'S hair makes a halo around her face. She thrashes, struggling against the restraints around her wrists, which, like her legs, are bound. \*

HEATHER, V.O.  
We didn't have to.

Her screams make silent bubbles. As she thrashes, flumes of water make a vertical tunnel.

She sinks.

CUT TO:

EXT. INTERSTATE 22. NIGHT.

CLOSE ON: ABBY CLARKE'S eyes, terrified, telegraphing animal panic. \*

And then: the blindfold that conceals them.

Zooming out, we see that she stands near the bus stop, on the shoulder of a four-lane highway blurry with truck and car traffic. The vehicles pass so quickly in the dark they reveal her only in jump cuts: a rhythm of white and red, high beams and taillights, alternating.

HEATHER, V.O.  
They knew where to find us.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. VEGAS CASINO.

Smoky, dizzying, loud: we careen through the labyrinth of slot machines and poker tables, cocktail waitresses and bachelor parties, hookers and regulars.

We land on TOMMY O'HARE, carefully dressed, flips a casino chip in his hand. This is the boy we have just seen, watching Heather from a distance at the party. He stares intently at a whirling roulette wheel as it begins to slow...and slow...and slow... \*

ROULETTE DEALER  
(to Tommy)  
Rough luck, kid.  
(beat)  
There's always another roll, right?

Tommy turns away without answering. He's almost smiling.

CUT TO:

INT. CASINO HOTEL.

HEATHER, V.O.

After all, we weren't going  
anywhere.

A maid raps on the door of room 118, not for the first time. Disregarding the DO NOT DISTURB sign, she enters. The room is impeccably made up. If it weren't for the backpack in the corner, she might think that it had not, in fact, been occupied.

The backpack, and the blood. The towels Tommy thoughtfully laid down in the bathroom were not, in fact, enough.

HEATHER, V.O. (CONT'D)

Not unless we played.

FADE TO:

EXT. MAIN STREET. AFTERNOON.

\*

Easy Pawn and Loan is an explosion of cheap color on an otherwise drab strip: promises of cash-for-gold, same-day money advances, and thirty-day no-interest loans shout from various signs in the window.

Heather, clutching the handlebars of her old bike, stoops to peer inside before spotting the handwritten sign taped to the door: WENT FOR SMOKES BACK IN 20.

\*

Frowning, she looks around for somewhere to kill time.

Her eyes land on Dot's Diner: *Cool Drinks, Hot Food, Good Friends.*

Squeak-squeak-squeak. The wheels protest slightly as she starts across the street.

INT. DOT'S DINER. AFTERNOON. CONTINUOUS.

A throwback place, but not intentionally. Everything is stained, ripped, discolored, or otherwise decayed.

Dodge Mason is manning the counter. Heather takes a seat.

DODGE  
Want to see a menu?

HEATHER  
Just a coke, please.

He checks a glass for cleanliness, loads it with ice.

HEATHER (CONT'D)  
I didn't see you at graduation.

DODGE  
Yeah. Never got into the whole  
school-spirit thing.

HEATHER  
Graduation is more of a no-school  
spirit thing.

Dodge smiles. Touché. He slides her the glass.

DODGE  
Coke on the rocks.  
(then)  
Heather, right? I'm Dodge.

HEATHER  
I know who you are.  
(beat)  
You're the new guy.

DODGE  
Still?

She gives him a look.

HEATHER  
Everyone around here knows each  
other from diapers.

DODGE  
I noticed.  
(then)  
Any big plans for the summer?

HEATHER  
See? Newbie-speak.  
(beat)  
First rule of living in Carp. There  
are no big plans. There are no  
plans, period.

DODGE  
That's not what I heard.

He leans across the counter.

DODGE (CONT'D)  
What about Panic?

HEATHER  
(sharply--)  
There's no such thing.

DODGE  
Then how'd those two kids die last  
summer?

HEATHER  
Keep your voice down, for shit's  
sake.

DODGE  
So it is real.

She says nothing.

DODGE (CONT'D) ^  
I didn't believe it at first. "One  
dollar a day, every day that school  
is in session." I thought Hanrahan  
was just shaking me down.

HEATHER  
We all pay in.  
(then)  
We shouldn't talk about it. After  
Jimmy Kean died...

Dodge stares at her blankly.

HEATHER (CONT'D)  
Jimmy Kean. As in, Sheriff Kean's  
son.

DODGE  
(lightbulb --)  
No shit.

HEATHER  
Yeah. Shit. A whole lot of it.  
(then)  
The sheriff swore to put a stop to  
the game. You could get in trouble  
just for watching.

DODGE  
 I don't want to watch.  
 (beat)  
 I want to play.

HEATHER  
 You can't.

DODGE  
 Why not?

HEATHER  
 I just told you. People die.

DODGE  
 Some people die. Some people win.

HEATHER  
 (sharply)  
 Only one person wins.

DODGE  
 So why not the new guy?

Heather jumps when the door jangles a new arrival: Sheriff Kean.

There's a split-second of tension. Then --

SHERIFF KEAN  
 Hot as Hades out there.

Kean sidles up to the counter and takes the stool next to Heather. She fumbles for her wallet.

DODGE  
 (to Heather--)  
 It's on me.  
 (to the sheriff--)  
 You need something?

Sheriff Kean's eyes move from Dodge, to Heather, then back again.

SHERIFF KEAN  
 You got root beer?

Heather uses the moment to duck past him and elbow out the door. Dodge slides a glass across the counter.

SHERIFF  
 Your mother around?

DODGE  
Not until tonight.

Sheriff Kean removes his hat. Slicks sweat from his forehead.

SHERIFF  
Funny kind of weather. They say a  
storm's coming...

Dodge watches him warily.

CUT TO:

INT. EASY PAWN AND LOAN. CONTINUOUS.

A single overhead fan pushes the musty air around. Heather  
tries not to look nervous as the pawn broker takes his sweet  
time evaluating the bike. \*

PAWN BROKER  
I'll give you eighty bucks for it. \*

HEATHER  
Eighty? It's got new gears and  
everything. \*

PAWN BROKER  
That's why I'll give you eighty  
bucks. \*

HEATHER  
A hundred and fifty. \*

The pawn broker maws his gum some more, looks her up and  
down. His eyes land on the very small gold necklace she  
wears, and its single charm -- a small bird, wings spread. \*

PAWN BROKER  
Throw in your necklace, and you've  
got a deal. \*

HEATHER  
My...? \*

Her hand flies to her neck. \*

HEATHER (CONT'D)  
It was a gift. \*

He shrugs. \*

PAWN BROKER  
Lucky. That's a clean profit. \*

She gives him a look, like -- really?

PAWN BROKER (CONT'D)

Otherwise, you're looking at eighty  
for the bike.

\*  
\*

Off Heather, debating ...

\*

EXT. MAIN STREET. AFTERNOON. CONTINUOUS.

When Heather emerges from the pawn shop, she pauses to  
recount her cash. A dark line of storm clouds gathers like  
smoke on the horizon. It is as if, somewhere out of view,  
whole worlds are burning.

\*  
\*  
\*

One hundred twenty, one hundred forty, one hundred fifty.  
Heather stuffs her cash deep in her bag. Lifts her head,  
squinting in the light. Her necklace is gone.

\*  
\*  
\*

EXT. HANRAHAN SALVAGE + JUNKYARD. AFTERNOON.

Metal salvage and rust-eaten cars form alleys in the vast  
field. The sky is a queasy mix of sunlight and storm-belly  
clouds.

Ray Hanrahan is working on the engine of a 70s-era El Dorado  
to the beat of a song blasting through a cheap outdoor  
speaker. His girlfriend SARAH MILLER is wearing a bikini,  
hilariously trying to tan in the reflection cast by several  
rearview mirrors.

MICHAEL CASTILE and ADAM LYON look on. Sarah, Michael, and  
Ray pass a bottle of Jim Beam between them. Adam is busy  
rolling a joint.

A roll of thunder makes them all look up.

MICHAEL CASTILE

No way the judge'll call it  
tonight. He's gonna chickenshit.

SARAH MILLER

The judge could be a girl, you  
know.

MICHAEL CASTILE

Could be. But isn't.

SARAH MILLER

Emmie Kahler was judge, two years  
ago.



ADAM LYON

No one knows that for sure.

SARAH MILLER

How else did she afford that new BMW?

ADAM LYON

Like the Hanrahan's get all their cars -- by stealing 'em.

RAY HANRAHAN

(nonplussed)

It's not stealing if you don't get caught.

\*  
\*

Sarah rolls her eyes. As a tumbleweed of old trash comes spinning across the dirt --

SARAH MILLER

(to Adam)

Spark it already. It's gonna dump.

ADAM LYON

All right, all right. Keep your tampon in.

He has to turn his back against the wind to light up. A gust of wind plasters a white flyer to his back.

\*

MICHAEL CASTILE

Hey, check it out. White trash.

Ray peels away the flyer from Adam's t-shirt. Suddenly, his face changes.

SARAH HAIMES

What? What is it?

Silently, Ray passes her the flyer.

On it is a single graphic: an eye similar to the one we saw graffitied on the old factory, and beneath it the words: JUDGEMENT IS COMING.

The wind whips the swings into a frenzy of moaning.

RAY HANRAHAN

It's starting.

As the first curtain of rain begins to fall --

CUT TO:

INT. TRAILER 68. LATE AFTERNOON.

Heather, soaked, shoulders open the door. Her mom and Bo are watching TV on the couch. A lit cigarette teetering in an ashtray sends a single thread of smoke toward the ineffectual ceiling fan. \*

Sherri doesn't look away from the TV.

SHERRI

You comin' in or what?

Heather hooks a right to the tiny kitchen. \*

SHERRI (CONT'D)

Your phone's ringing.

Heather gives her a dirty look and fishes her phone from her bag. Natalie's speaking before Heather even has a chance to say hello. \*

NATALIE, O.S.

It's happening tonight.

CUT TO: \*

INT. NATALIE'S ROOM. \*

Natalie is frantically sorting through bikinis. \*

HEATHER, O.S. \*

What is? \*

NATALIE \*

What do you think? \*

(then) \*

The Jump is on at Pike's Point. \*

We're supposed to meet as soon as we see the signal. \*

HEATHER, O.S.

Signal?

NATALIE

Please, Heather. You have to come...

HEATHER, O.S.

I can't, Nat. I'll have a heart attack just watching. \*

NATALIE

Fine. But when I'm rich and famous,  
I'm going to complain about you in  
interviews.

(then)

You are rooting for me, right?

HEATHER, O.S.

I'm your best friend...

INT. TRAILER -- VARIOUS

HEATHER

I'm always rooting for you.

Heather hangs up.

IN THE KITCHEN --

Heather slots through a stack of bills piled on the counter.  
Opens up several drawers, one after another. Sorts through  
the mail again. Even looks under the kitchen table.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

Mom, have you seen my stuff from  
JCB?

SHERRI, O.S.

What stuff?

The kitchen and TV room are the only common areas and  
separated only by a high counter. Heather slides around it to  
make eye contact with her mother.

HEATHER

All my stuff. Information packet,  
course offerings, payment  
vouchers...

SHERRI

Payment vouchers.  
(shaking her head --)  
You want to cut hair, you can come  
down with me to the salon tomorrow  
and start cutting.

HEATHER

All the good salons in Albany ask  
for degrees now, ma.

SHERRI

(unimpressed --)  
That right?

BO

After high school, they woulda had  
to pay me to step foot in a  
classroom again.

Heather swallows a sigh.

HEATHER

(to Sherri --)

It was sitting right there on the  
counter. You really haven't seen  
it.

SHERRI

(shrug --)

Your sisters was making a mess of  
drawings up there yesterday. Maybe  
it got put away with her stuff.

IN THE GIRLS' BEDROOM --

Heather wiggles a plastic bin of art supplies from beneath  
Lily's bed. Her school packet was in fact shuffled in with  
various drawings, mostly of animals. From the packet, she  
extracts the FIRST SEMESTER PAYMENT VOUCHER \$ 2000.

Kneeling in front of her dresser, she paws through the bottom  
drawer -- a confusion of old nightgowns and sweaters -- until  
she lands on a stash of twenty-dollar bills.

A very, very small stash.

She counts the money. Four hundred dollars. Sifts through the  
entanglement of clothing again, looking for the rest of her  
savings. Gone.

She's getting frantic now. She turns out the whole box onto  
the rug. Nothing, nothing, nothing.

Then: she tunes in, suddenly, to the laughter in the living  
room, to the roar of the TV.

To her mother.

IN THE TV ROOM --

It takes Sherri a minute to notice Heather staring at her.

SHERRI (CONT'D)

You find it?

HEATHER

You stole my money.

Sherri finally looks at her. Then --

SHERRI

Bo, how about you go grab me a beer  
from the cooler outside?

Bo is only too glad to get out of there. He dodges Heather as she steps a little farther into the room.

SHERRI (CONT'D)

I told you. The brakes on my car  
went out again.

HEATHER

I needed it. That money was for  
school.

SHERRI

Yeah, well, I need a car for work.

HEATHER

You have no right --

SHERRI

(sharply)  
You're living in my house --

HEATHER

I've been working for months --

SHERRI

-- wearing clothes I bought you,  
chowing food from my paycheck --

Heather loses it.

HEATHER

What food?

She rams a foot against the coffee table. Sherri yelps. A  
beer bottle spins to the floor.

Heather freezes. Seems to know she's gone too far.

There's a long, long moment of silence. But when Sherri  
speaks again, her voice is extremely controlled.

SHERRI

I'm doing my best here, Heather.  
You think you can do better, you  
can walk right out that door and  
find out just how easy it is.

(then)

You're blocking the TV.

After a second, Heather turns around and storms to the front door, snatching Bo's truck keys on the way out. \*

CUT TO:

EXT. NILL FAMILY TRAILER. \*

Bo, kneeling by the cooler, straightens up as Heather makes for the truck. \*

BO  
Hey. Hey! \*

She slides into the driver's seat and starts the engine. \*

BO (CONT'D) \*

What the hell are you doing? \*

She slams a foot on the gas, and leaves him coughing up dirt. \*

INT. SHED. EVENING.

CLOSE ON:

A complex arrangement of stacked fireworks, strapped together in the dark, rigged to the same snaking fuse. A match flares in the darkness.

EXT. 7-ELEVEN. PARKING LOT.

John Velez, emerging with two coffees, slides one to Sheriff Kean.

JOHN VELEZ  
How's it looking?

SHERIFF KEAN  
Ghost town.

He shakes a cigarette out of the pack, offers one to John, who demurs.

JOHN VELEZ  
Susie'd kill me.  
(beat)  
Think we spooked 'em?

SHERIFF KEAN  
Oh, yeah. Sure.

He lights up. Takes a drag.

SHERIFF KEAN (CONT'D)  
But not for long.

John Velez smokes for a while. Then clears his throat. \*

JOHN VELEZ  
You know, we can handle this. Me  
and Wright and Hernandez -- we're  
all over it.

SHERIFF KEAN  
What are you saying?

JOHN VELEZ  
I'm saying if you wanted to -- I  
don't know -- go home, be with your  
wife, drink a beer --

SHERIFF KEAN  
Jimmy's dead, John. My son's dead.

He grins out the cigarette.

SHERIFF KEAN (CONT'D)  
I'm not going home until I make  
sure it wasn't for nothing.

For a second, they stare at each other.

Then: EXPLOSIONS. Both of them duck instinctively.

Dozen of homemade fireworks break against the night sky,  
leaving trails of neon color.

The signal.

INT. SHERIFF KEAN'S SQUAD CAR. EVENING.

DEPUTY HERNANDEZ, OVER RADIO  
*This is Hernandez, we got another  
bundle over by Heron Pond --*

DEPUTY WRIGHT, OVER RADIO  
*Goddamnit. The Hughes just called  
in gunfire from Hopkins' place.  
What do you wanna bet he's shooting  
at the damn fireflies?*

\*  
\*

SHERIFF KEAN  
He's going to light the whole place  
up. Get over there, fast.

Boom: another firework shatters above the trees, almost directly overhead.

SHERIFF KEAN (CONT'D)

Goddammit.

\*

He throws down the radio.

INT. THE MASON APARTMENT. LIVING ROOM.

DANA MASON, 22, wheelchair-bound, is sitting by the window, braiding and unbraiding her hair. She sees one squad car, and then another, tear down the street, hurling a rotation of lights.

She turns at a noise behind her: Dodge is tugging on his shoes.

DANA

(re: fireworks )

What are they for, do you think?  
Something good?

He pauses to muss her hair.

DODGE

Something coming.

He exits. As Dana once again lifts her eyes to the sky --

EXT. CARP. COUNTRY ROAD.

Against the ink-dark sky, the fireworks look like underwater anemones, trailing long tentacles of color. And then --

The sky ripples.

As we pull back, we see we are looking at a reflection in the water puddled on a country road.

Then: car tires slam through the wet, carving the reflection apart.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD. CONTINUOUS.

A beat-up Chevy, then a Ford truck, then a jeep: a caravan of cars nose down the dirt lane -- hardly more than a footpath -- into a dense thicket of woods.

We pull up a little higher. A half dozen cars are already clustered in a dirt patch near the river.



Flashlights, winking through the trees, look like distant fireflies.

PRELAP:

DIGGINS

Ladies and gentlemen, let the games begin...

EXT. PILOT'S POINT BEACH. NIGHT.

About a hundred kids have gathered on the beach, many of them carting six-packs or bottles of alcohol. The mood is raucous, anticipatory.

DIGGINS JOHNSON, 19, struts across an overhang of rock. He has a megaphone and he is not afraid to use it.

DIGGINS

My name is Diggins, and this summer I'll be your host with the most --

MALE SPECTATOR #1

Hey Diggins! Go suck a dick!

DIGGINS

(batting eyelashes--)

You offering?

(then--)

So let's get right down to the good stuff. This year, the winner of Panic will take home the grand prize of ...

(beat)

Fifty thousand dollars.

The announcement brings a short, stunned silence.

NATALIE

(to Bishop)

That's got to be the biggest pot ever. Last year it was only thirty.

BISHOP

Last year Hanrahan wasn't collecting.

NATALIE

(to herself --)

Fifty thousand dollars...

(then)

I wish Heather was here.

She scans the crowd again. Her eyes latch onto Dodge, newly arrived, and standing apart from the rest of the crowd. He half-smiles at her. Lifts a hand, as if to wave.

EXT. PILOT'S POINT BEACH. CONTINUOUS.

DIGGINS

You know the rules. You want to play, you make the jump. But first...

The camera spins across the short expanse of water, suddenly churning with competitors --

DIGGINS (CONT'D)

...You've got to climb.

-- and veers up the stubbly face of a thirty-foot outcrop of rock. The fastest players are already hauling out of the water and picking their way up toward the launch-point, like enormous and waterlogged spiders.

DIGGINS (CONT'D)

Take the leap from the Lookout, and welcome to the game.

NATALIE

I guess that's my cue...

She struggles out of her t-shirt and shorts, revealing a frilly purple bikini.

BISHOP

You know I have the same bathing suit?

She tosses him her clothes.

NATALIE

Wish me luck.

BISHOP

I wish you wouldn't.

She heads for the water just as Dodge edges out of the darkness. For a second, they stare at each other.

DODGE

Ladies first.

She wades into the water, gasping at the temperature. Then, all-too conscious of Dodge standing behind her, she goes under.

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. THE LOOKOUT.

Already, the first contestants are preparing to jump from The Lookout, a large overhang about twenty-five feet above the river.

DIGGINS  
Announce yourself.

ADAM LYON  
Adam Lyon, motherfuckers.

He jumps. Surfaces with both arms raised. The crowd goes wild.

DIGGINS, O.S.  
Ladies and gentlemen, we have our first competitor. *Adam Lyon Motherfuckers* is in.  
(then)  
Hot damn, looks like we got a player trying for the High Jump.

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. HIGH JUMP. CONTINUOUS.

We blast vertically up the rocks: Ray Hanrahan is making a secondary climb, this one trickier, to an overhang ten feet above the first one.

DIGGINS  
For the virgins out there, a quick reminder -- a jump from High Point gets you a five-point buffer in the next challenge. Side effects may include dizziness, paranoia, sweaty palms, and breaking your fucking neck.

MALE SPECTATOR #2  
How about a jump from Suicide Leap? What's that get you?

DIGGINS  
A funeral.

MALE SPECTATOR #3  
C'mon, man, it's in the rules...

Diggins doesn't even bother with the megaphone for this one.

DIGGINS  
No one jumps from Suicide Leap.

MALE SPECTATOR #3  
Tommy O'Hare did.

DIGGINS  
(*fine --*)  
And for those of you drunk, high,  
or dumb enough for really really  
bad decisions, Suicide Leap is  
always an option...

Now we careen past the High Jump, where Ray is climbing  
carefully to his feet.

A final jagged tooth of cliffside ends twenty feet above the  
high jump in a single divot, no wider than the seat of a  
chair. It is nearly fifty feet above the water.

DIGGINS (CONT'D)  
If you don't die, you get immunity  
from elimination in a challenge of  
your choice.

He loses the megaphone.

DIGGINS (CONT'D)  
Happy now?

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. HIGH JUMP.

Ray edges out onto the narrow overhang.

DIGGINS  
Say your name.

Ray shouts something indecipherable.

DIGGINS (CONT'D)  
Louder.

RAY HANRAHAN  
(shouting --)  
Is someone snapchatting this?

Yes, obviously.

DIGGINS  
We've got cameras rolling. State  
your name, player.

RAY HANRAHAN  
You know my name.

He jumps. He is in the air for three, four, five seconds, aiming for a small circumference of depth. The crowd holds its breath. He punches through the surface...

And comes up roaring.

RAY HANRAHAN (CONT'D)  
Ray Hanrahan, for the win!

Ray's jump electrifies the crowd. Suddenly, competitors hurl themselves off the jump so fast, Diggins has trouble keeping count.

Cynthia Wu...Aaron Harkins...Todd Bunkley...Chris Tanner...Deirdre Gillinson...

Fourteen players. Then fifteen. Then twenty. Then twenty-five.

Everyone, it seems, wants a shot.

CUT TO:

EXT. MIDDLE OF ABSOLUTELY NOWHERE.

Kean and Velez sprint toward an old toolshed, now consumed with flames, tailed by the fire brigade. But even as the fire fighters douse the blaze, it becomes clear that the area is clear. \*

An elaborate arrangement of cables and old milk crates has kept the pyramid of fireworks shooting off periodically. Whoever rigged it, however, is long gone.

SHERIFF KEAN  
God damn it.

PRELAP:

DIGGINS, O.S.  
I don't believe it...

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. NIGHT.

DIGGINS  
Ladies and gentlemen, chicks and dicks...We got a second player for the High Jump.

It doesn't seem possible. But someone is, indeed, climbing.

FEMALE SPECTATOR #1  
 (squinting--)  
 Who is that?

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. HIGH JUMP. NIGHT.

A second later, we get our answer, as Dodge pulls himself to his feet. If he's nervous, he shows no signs of it.

DIGGINS  
 State your --

DODGE  
 Dodge Mason.

And, without further preamble, he jumps.

DIGGINS  
 That's player thirty-one.

Only a few people applaud.

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. BEACH.

ADAM LYON  
 (to Ray -)  
 What's the new kid doing, trying to play?

RAY HANRAHAN  
 Don't worry about him. He's nobody.

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. THE LOOKOUT.

A small knot of players wait impatiently for their turn.

Natalie is up. But she's losing her nerve.

DIGGINS  
 State your name!

She peers down toward the water, teeming with contestants who have successfully jumped.

DIGGINS (CONT'D)  
 Your name.

Natalie opens her mouth. Closes it again.

SPECTATOR #3, O.S.  
 Take your top off!

Laughter.

DIGGINS

Look, you're gonna have to jump or  
get out of the way--

NATALIE

For fuck's sake, Diggins,  
just...give me a second, okay?

DIGGINS

(wryly--)

That's Natalie Velez, ray of  
sunshine.

She gives him the finger. Still, she can't bring herself to  
jump. Suddenly --

Suddenly, Matt Castile grabs her from behind.

MATT CASTILE

Scared?

They're inches from the edge. She shrieks.

NATALIE

Let me go. I'm serious. Let me go.

MATT CASTILE

(into her ear --)

Connor thinks your tits are real. I  
say they're bought and paid for.  
Want to settle it for us?

\*

She wrenches away from him.

MATT CASTILE (CONT'D)

Aw, come on. Just a little  
preview...

He reaches for her again. Pivoting away from him, she  
launches into the air --

DIGGINS

Ladies and gentlemen, we have  
another one!

Matt leans over to peer over the edge, just as Natalie  
crashes into the water.

MATT CASTILE

(shouting--)

You're welcome!

Then, addressing the crowd --

MATT CASTILE (CONT'D)

Matt Castile, player thirty-three!

\*

He jumps, landing only a few feet away from where Natalie is treading water. As soon as he surfaces, she palms water at him.

NATALIE

Asshole.

MATT CASTILE

Aw, come on. I got you to jump, didn't I?

He paddles after her as she sloshes through the shallows.

MATT CASTILE (CONT'D)

So? Real or fake?

Natalie stares at him. Then leans in...

NATALIE

You lose.

...And yanks his bathing suit down to his ankles. The crowd howls with laughter.

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. BEACH.

Natalie, shivering, can't find Bishop in the crowd.

DODGE, O.C.

Towel?

She turns. After a momentary hesitation --

NATALIE

Thanks.

She cinches his towel around her like a cloak. After a beat --

NATALIE (CONT'D)

You went for the High Jump.  
Weren't you scared?

DODGE

To jump? Nah.

(beat)

It's the landing that gets you in trouble.



He smiles. He has a killer smile.

Then: another name, another jump, another burst of megaphone static, and the moment passes.

As Dodge returns his gaze to the water --

DODGE (CONT'D)  
Isn't that your girl?

A little farther down the beach, Heather is standing, shin-deep in the water, motionless.

NATALIE  
(happily--)  
Holy shit. I knew she would come.  
(then)  
Heather!

She peels away from Dodge, waving frantically.

NATALIE (CONT'D)  
Heather!

But Heather doesn't seem to hear.

And just as Natalie closes the distance between them...

Heather dives.

Now Natalie's expression turns to shock -- and then anger. \*

NATALIE (CONT'D)  
(shouting --) \*  
Heather! \*

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. THE RIVER.

Silence. Darkness. The heartbeat rhythm of the deep.

HEATHER, V.O.  
Once upon a time, there was a girl  
made all of dirt.

The jumpers leave trails as they plunge, like falling stars.

HEATHER, V.O. (CONT'D)  
She lived in a town of stone  
people.

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. THE CLIMB. CONTINUOUS.

Heather comes up gasping. The rocks here are slick. She tries to pull herself out of the water and slips. She tries again.

HEATHER, V.O.

They spoke with stone tongues, and  
waved with stone arms, and their  
eyelids were so heavy.

She finally pulls herself out of the water.

HEATHER, V.O. (CONT'D)

Their hearts were stone, too.

PRELAP:

VOICE, O.C.

Dude, check out her wedgie.

EXT. BEACH. NIGHT. CONTINUOUS.

From a distance, Heather looks especially ridiculous. Her shorts, soaking wet, cling to her thighs. Her bra, cheap and pink, is visible through her t-shirt.

ADAM LYON

No dogs allowed!

RANDOM GUY

Hey. That's no dog.

(beat)

It's a cow.

He cups his hands to his mouth and starts to moo. Other kids soon pick up the chant.

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. THE CLIMB.

HEATHER, V.O.

You're nothing, they all said.  
Nothing.

Halfway through the climb, Heather is struggling.

HEATHER, V.O. (CONT'D)

And the girl was lonely.

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. BEACH.

Finally, Natalie locates Bishop in the crowd. She practically lunges at him. Her face is a collision of dark feelings, exactly like a storm. \*

NATALIE

Where the hell were you?

BISHOP

Jesus. I had to pee, okay? Calm down.

NATALIE

Calm down?

She spins him around to face the river. The color drops from his face when he recognizes --

BISHOP

(whispering --)  
Heather...

NATALIE

Now want to tell me to calm down? \*

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. THE CLIMB.

Heather's progress is painstakingly slow. She selects a new handhold carefully, then tests her weight, then shuffles sideways.

SPECTATOR #4, O.S.

You're supposed to be going up, you know!

She closes her eyes.

HEATHER, V.O.

Every night, the girl would talk to the wind, and the wind would only sigh...

VOICE, O.C.

*C'mon, Kate. You gonna jump or what?*

KATE, O.C.

*It looks so much higher from up here...*

Heather opens her eyes. Above her, KATE WINSLEY has materialized out of nowhere. Blond. Pretty. Cheerleader-type.

She, too, was watching Heather at graduation.

Now, she weaves on her feet, and turns away to address the phantom crowd behind her.

KATE

*One more shot. Then I'll go. I  
swear I'll go.*

*(then)*

*I'm not even drunk. See?*

She throws her hands in the air and spins. And then --

She stumbles. There is a sharp scream as she goes over.

Crack. She crashes hard against the surface of rock. Her neck twists horribly. Her body pivots mid-air.

She drops hard, and soundlessly, and is swallowed by the water.

Heather freezes.

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. BEACH.

ADAM LYON

How long do we wait before we send  
in the crane?

RAY HANRAHAN

Just throw her some Cheetos. Maybe  
she'll bark like a seal.

He begins yelping, and clapping his hands, pantomiming a seal.

Bishop snaps.

BISHOP

Shut the fuck up.

A shocked beat. Even Bishop looks startled.

Ray takes a step forward. His smile is like a shark's -- like he's already tasting blood.

RAY HANRAHAN

My bad. I forgot ... You like them  
desperate.

Bishop takes a step toward him. Natalie grabs his arm.

NATALIE

Don't. He isn't worth it.

With a huge effort, Bishop turns away again. He is shaking with rage.

RAY HANRAHAN

Just answer one question for me...

NATALIE

(to Bishop)

Ignore him.

RAY HANRAHAN

...When you fuck a seal like that,  
does your dick stink like fish?

Bishop snaps. He throws himself at Ray, dropping Ray to the ground. But in a second, Ray is on his feet again.

RAY HANRAHAN (CONT'D)

Bad move, you fuck.

Before Bishop can dodge, Ray decks him. Once. Then again. Bishop's nose geysers blood.

NATALIE

Stop it! Stop it!

She throws her arms protectively around Bishop. Matt Castile grabs hold of Ray at the same time.

MATT

Dude. Let it go.

Ray seems for a half-second as if he's going to lunge again. But then, abruptly, he shakes Matt off, puts both hands up.

RAY HANRAHAN

I'm good.

He turns away from Bishop. Natalie, whimpering, holds a towel to Bishop's nose, trying to stanch the bleeding.

Once again, it's Dodge who appears to offer help -- this time, in the form of a cold beer. Bishop and Natalie stare at it.

DODGE

It helps with swelling.

Bishop takes it.

DODGE (CONT'D)  
 Keep your head back. The cold will  
 slow the bleeding.

BISHOP  
 Thanks.

Natalie turns back to the river. Heather has stopped moving  
 entirely.

NATALIE  
 (shouting--)  
 Come down! Heather!

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. THE CLIMB.

NATALIE, O.C.  
Come down!

Down. Heather has to get down. She can't do it. It's too  
 high. She's too afraid.

She tries to backtrack and slips.

She cries out, and just manages to catch herself. Dislodged  
 stones plummet down toward the water.

She clings to the rock, breathing hard. She tries to blink  
 away the feeling she will cry.

VOICES, VARIOUS  
 Come down! Come down! Come down!

But they are distant, almost inaudible. Nothing exists but  
 Heather, and the rock, and the drop.

Blink. Water beads off her hair and tumbles.

Blink. The rocks wink with hidden mica.

Blink. A spiderweb trembles across a surface of deep green  
 moss.

Blink. An insect twitches, a few inches from her nose.

Heather watches, suddenly entranced: this small, winged  
 thing, crawling horizontally and with focused dedication,  
 totally engrossed in the mission of its short life.

She removes a hand from her perch almost without meaning to.  
 As she reaches out --

It flares, and launches into the air.

Heather almost laughs -- A firefly. So close she could almost kiss it. She can still see its light, even as it weaves away.

And for the first time, she notices how far she can see: past the trees, above them, across the broad sweep of woods and all the way to the distant, winking lights of a distant town. From this faraway, it looks like so many fireflies, suspended on the horizon.

Heather is no longer looking down. She's looking out.

Heather begins to climb again. Faster now.

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. BEACH.

The crowd stills: this was unexpected. Heather reaches Lookout Point.

And keeps climbing.

NATALIE

What the hell is she doing? \*

Bishop is mesmerized. \*

BISHOP

(awestruck --)

She's playing...

PRELAP:

HEATHER, V.O.

Then, one day, there was a flood.

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. THE CLIMB.

HEATHER, V.O.

It rained for days and days...

She reaches the High Jump. A sharp gasp runs through the crowd. . .

...As Heather keeps climbing.

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. BEACH.

No one can believe it. No one wants to believe it.

She's going for Suicide Leap.

ADAM LYON

What the fuck is she doing?

MATT CASTILE

She must be on something...

RANDOM GIRL #1

Maybe she's trying to kill herself...

RANDOM GIRL #2

Should I be snapchatting this?

NATALIE

(with urgency --)

Listen to me, Bishop. You have to stop her.

\*

\*

She seizes his shoulders. Her eyes are wild, furious, anguished.

\*

\*

NATALIE (CONT'D)

Stop her.

\*

\*

BISHOP

How?

\*

Natalie releases him with a short noise of frustration.

\*

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. SUICIDE LEAP.

Finally, Heather reaches her destination: a tiny spit of stone, enormously high, barely large enough to stand on.

Carefully, she climbs to her feet. The drop is dizzying. From this height, she won't jump.

She will fall.

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. BEACH.

Diggins has forgotten all about his official duties.

RANDOM GIRL #3

(uneasily --)

She won't really jump...

(then, to Diggins --)

You won't let her, right?

Diggins fumbles with his megaphone.



DIGGINS  
Contestant 42...

His voice breaks. He clears his throat. The crowd is watching him. Waiting to see what he'll do.

He takes a deep breath.

DIGGINS (CONT'D)  
State your name.

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. SUICIDE LEAP/THE BEACH, ALTERNATING

HEATHER, V.O.  
The water climbed so high, all the  
stone people were stranded in a  
high tower, with nothing but death  
around them.

She inches forward. A stone skips over the edge and  
disappears soundlessly.

HEATHER, V.O. (CONT'D)  
All the stone people begged the  
wind to bring them down to safety.  
Help us, they said. But the wind  
could do nothing.

DIGGINS  
We need your name.

Heather takes a deep breath. Once again, she closes her eyes.  
The wind stirs her hair.

HEATHER, V.O.  
They were all too heavy.

DIGGINS  
If you're not going to --

Heather opens her eyes.

HEATHER, V.O.  
Heather. Nill.  
(louder)  
Heather Nill.

Her voice rings out across the silence.

Natalie and Bishop are holding hands. Natalie's lips are  
moving soundlessly. She appears to be praying.

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. SUICIDE LEAP. CONTINUOUS.

HEATHER, V.O.

Then the wind spotted the girl  
among them, the ugly girl, the one  
made of dirt.

From this height, the people on the beach are a mass of  
faceless shadow. From this height, Heather can see the trees  
swaying together, as if moved by an invisible current.

From this height, it's beautiful.

HEATHER, V.O. (CONT'D)

*You're nothing*, the wind said,  
relieved. *You're nothing at all*.

Heather smiles. She lifts her arms.

HEATHER, V.O. (CONT'D)

And the wind opened its arms.

Heather jumps.

EXT. PILOT'S POINT. CONTINUOUS.

HEATHER, V.O.

And the girl made of dust turned to  
air...

On Heather, mid-air. Time slows. Everything slows. For a  
second she is not falling, but suspended: her hair a ribbon,  
unfurling. Her arms outstretched as if something good is  
rushing toward her. Her face strangely composed, strangely  
beautiful, strangely content, as if she has just heard the  
first notes of a song she loves in the distance.

HEATHER, V.O. (CONT'D)

...And flew.

Time speeds up. Heather drops.

SMASH TO BLACK.